3-Dimensional

Christianity

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

In the Bible, the number three is very important. Jesus raised three people from the dead: Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-24, 35-42), Lazarus (John 11:38-44), and the widow's son (Luke 7:12-15). Three.

On the Cross, the sign above Jesus' head (naming the "offense" he was guilty of) was written in three languages (John 19:19-20), indicating the fullness of man's rejection of the Messiah.

Jesus was raised on the third day (Luke 13:32).

As members of the human race, created in the image of God, we have three dimensions: the spirit (God-consciousness), the soul (self-consciousness), and the body (world consciousness), in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Together, these three dimensions form the instrument through which Jesus performs it all (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Everyone has problems. Yet, a person who is

always worn down by problems often lives in only two dimensions—the soul and the body—in his relationship with God. The human spirit, which is the God-conscious dimension, is designed to bring in light from the Word of God through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (Psalm 119:130). If we are not functioning in the truth of the Word of God stored in the human spirit, God's light will not enter in, no matter how much we go to church.

There two kinds of Christians around today: those who do not see heat when it comes and those who do not see good when it comes (Jeremiah 17:5-8). We are talking about positive Spirit-filled Christians versus negative thinkers. The difference is that when the Word of God enters into Spirit-filled believers, they experience divine good and do not see the "heat" of adversity. They allow the Word of God to quicken their human spirit, engaging the third dimension of Christian living.

How can you live in the third dimension and go from being a person who doesn't see good when it comes to a person who doesn't see heat when it comes? This booklet will show you how.

Chapter One

THE SPIRIT BEARS WITNESS

"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

"For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

"For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jeremiah 17:5-9).

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit

of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:14-16).

Two dimensions cannot describe an object that has substance. Two lines cannot enclose a figure or form. Three lines—marking the dimensions of length, breadth, and depth—are necessary. The number "three" stands for things that are substantial, complete, entire, and necessary. In the natural realm, objects are divided into three kingdoms: the plant kingdom, the mineral kingdom, and the animal kingdom. In the spiritual realm, we have body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

But until a person is saved, his human spirit is inactive because of Adam's sin (Romans 5:12). Once he is born again by receiving Christ as his Savior, he has the opportunity to choose life continually (Romans 5:21). That keeps him "seated above" in his experience—living in three dimensions of Christian life.

Three distinct Persons who have absolute oneness make up the Trinity. God the Father is sovereign; Jesus Christ the Son is our Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit, co-equal with God and Jesus Christ, glorifies Jesus Christ in us (John

16:14) and also guides us as adopted children.

If the third Person, the Holy Spirit, is not allowed to have His way in us, we are never guided into God's truth. We may be sincere, but we are not led in divine guidance. We need to have this third dimension at work in us. Only the Spirit can bring this divine dimension to life.

It is important that we learn three-dimensional praying. Discover the Father's plan, experience Christ's execution of that plan, and witness the Holy Spirit's power and revelation of Christ's availability—three dimensions in action.

Tender Mercies in Action

"To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions" (Psalm 51:1).

"Tender mercies." I recently learned something brand-new about this. It means that God makes an unconditional commitment regardless of us. It is God committing us to the Finished Work of Christ, to the sealing of the Holy Spirit, to eternal life that we can never lose. God has

committed us to sonship forever. This is exactly the picture that is expressed in this verse.

These tender mercies come toward us. For this reason, David will be prince in the Millennial Reign in spite of the sinful things that he did in his life. In God's mind, David never turned aside (1 Kings 15:5). The Word of God tells us that we have the sure mercies of David (Isaiah 55:3; Acts 13:34).

When we understand this, we will see God move as we have never seen before.

The Power of Expectation

My soul waits only upon God. My expectation is from Him (Psalm 62:5), and this expectation shall not be cut off (Proverbs 23:18, Proverbs 24:14). In entering into the third dimension, we enter into a phase of consistency. The Resurrection is over and the Ascension is ours. The power of God is now available for three-dimensional friendships, three-dimensional relationships, and three-dimensional marriages.

Though we are saved and the Trinity dwells in us, if the Spirit is grieved, then we do not have the life of three-dimensional Christianity. We are powerless. Christ is not glorified in the details of life.

The most beautiful thing is three—God's number of fullness. There is the principle of being filled with the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Ephesians 3:19). There is the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13, Colossians 2:9).

When I operate in the third dimension, my marriage becomes amazing. The third dimension brings in abundant life. It brings in absolute forgiveness. It brings in the tender mercies of God.

A man who had some very serious health problems was healed recently. He was even healed of a herniated disk. Three-dimensional praying brought in a wonderful healing, praise God. We have many documented reports of healing as the direct result of prayer.

Overcome Strife

"Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me" (Psalm 18:43).

David praised God for delivering him from the strivings of the people. Oh, I know a lot of precious people who strive nonetheless. A striving person comes out of experiencing a problem about six times a week, only to go right back

into another one.

Thank God that all of us can be delivered from that kind of lifestyle. If we understand that Jesus' tomb is empty, then striving will go away. We won't see the heat when it comes because we know that nothing is impossible with God. God Almighty is on our side. Beyond that, He is in us. The power of the Holy Spirit is in us.

Chapter Two

THE SUBSTANCE OF CONVICTION

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

"And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

"And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

"Jesus said unto him, It is written again,

Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

"Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

"And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

"Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (Matthew 4:1-11).

Notice, Jesus always answered the devil with "It is written….It is written….It is written." Three times Jesus said this, speaking of the perfection of the Word of God. It other words, Jesus was telling Satan, "You can't touch this, devil!"

"It is written…."

"It is written…."

"It is written…."

Satan had to flee.

Still, Satan does try to take away from the Word, add to the Word, and alter the Word (Revelation 22:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:2; 11:16-20). He tries to take from the Word so that we won't be complete, so we won't be mature. Satan tries to

add to the Word so that we will live in a kind of "liberty" that is not the liberty we have in Christ (Galatians 5:1; Romans 8:21). Also, the devil tries to alter the Word of God so that we think that we don't have to submit to it.

In Genesis 3, Eve failed three times when confronted by Satan. But Jesus Christ answered, "It is written" three times when tempted by Satan. The truth experienced in the third dimension of the human spirit gives us complete and full victory.

"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

"Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

"And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass" (Psalm 37:4-7).

When we began our ministry, the desire of our heart was to have a building, fill it up, and send missionaries into all the world. Our desire was to have oneness, unity, and peace. Our desire was to go forward with supernatural grace and supernatural power in a supernatural expecta-

tion.

Oh, the things God is going to do for those who let Him by committing their way unto the Lord. Trust in Him, and *He* will bring these things to pass. Pick up some promises from God today and believe, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

When the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit take over, we have fullness. We see that nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). The very things that seem impossible for us are possible with God (Matthew 19:26).

Bible Evidence of Conviction

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

"Of sin, because they believe not on me;

"Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:8-11).

If a Christian is not living in the third dimension, he will have no conviction. He may be living with God the Father and redemption through Jesus Christ, but without the Illuminator—the Holy Spirit—fully operating, he will

have no conviction. God's viewpoint cannot be interpreted through the Holy Spirit in his life. God may do something supernatural right in front of him, but he will not be moved by it.

Many decent churches preach the Gospel but do not go soul winning. They have no outreach program and they are grieving the Holy Spirit. There is no conviction prompting them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The first thing the Holy Spirit does is to convict. When a Christian makes a decision to withdraw from attending a Spirit-filled church, he is not convicted. He can hear any kind of message, but he rationalizes, regulates, and eliminates its effect in his life. No conviction.

The Spirit convicts as He did in the Word of God. Joseph's brothers were convicted when they met Joseph again years after selling him into slavery (see Genesis 45:4-5). They came under great conviction when he revealed himself to them.

Isaiah was convicted when he saw the Lord high and lifted up, in Isaiah 6. Three seraphim were singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts." All Isaiah could see was the seraphim's wings. Smoke came in and the temple began to

shake.

"Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips," Isaiah said (see Isaiah 6:5). As far as we know, this was the first time in his ministry that the prophet was convicted. Then the seraphim took a live coal from off the altar and touched Isaiah's lips, saying, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (Isaiah 6:7).

The Trinity asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

"Here am I; send me," responded the prophet.

Conviction is such a precious and sacred thing. We are so limited in our knowledge of absolutes. When we start with absolute love, absolute grace, absolute power, absolute holiness, and absolute promises, we will find absolute answers.

God's Moves Bring Changes

God moves in the third dimension and the result is conviction.

Jonah ran when he was told to preach in Nineveh. He spent three days in a big fish and, finally, came under conviction. He went and preached and the city repented for the wicked, wicked things it was doing. Many lives were

saved.

Ezra was convicted and he then identified with the people of Israel (Ezra 9:6). He preached to them and the people got right. Ezra's conviction led to their conviction and ultimately obedience.

Another picture of conviction involved Peter after he denied Christ three times. Jesus appeared to Peter and the disciples many times after His resurrection. Peter didn't want to see Jesus. He was so filled with guilt, so filled with shame and remorse. But the Holy Spirit, breathed out by Jesus upon the disciples, began to convict Peter's conscience. God wooed Peter through love and through forgiveness by conviction.

In the seventh chapter of Romans, we can see Paul the apostle under tremendous conviction and in deep trouble with his soul. But he came right out of it by receiving the revelation of Romans 8, starting with verse one, "There is therefore now no condemnation…."

As long as a minister and ministry have conviction, they have something very, very precious. One of the most difficult things to watch when you are praying for someone is when the Word isn't received as a two-edged sword,

bringing conviction the way it should.

This is important because, sooner or later, every one of God's people has to come to a decision. We are constantly in a place where we have to come to a decision. Conviction leads to right decisions. Without right decisions, we have no conviction.

Whenever I read something or hear something that I know is for me, I immediately write it down. I allow the conviction to lead me into a conversion. No matter how small a thing it is, I agree with the Spirit and say, "That is for me."

I believe with all my heart that God wants His people to come to right decisions through choosing life (Deuteronomy 30:15), so we can be blessed. We have a tremendous future in front of us. We have such possibilities. We don't know when Christ is coming. We know not when we are to meet Him. So, we need to be a people who allow the Word of God to bring in faith and let faith execute conviction and let conviction bring in a conversion to make right decisions.

Chapter Three

COMMUNION, CONSISTENCY, AND COMMUNICATION

When we consider decisions, we are brought into conclusions. Every single matter has a conclusion. As we get alone with God and let the Holy Spirit minister, we realize that in every area of our lives we need a conviction for a conclusion. We have to continually ask ourselves, "If I keep making these decisions, where will they lead me in my conclusion?" What will be the end result?

As a pastor, it is most difficult to watch seasonal Christians throw their lives away. I feel so helpless in seeing isolated individuals make a series of decisions against convictions. No longer do they respond to the Word of God, because they have established their own Christian philosophy, void of the whole truth. They have already decided what they will believe and what they are not going to accept, based upon self-prefer-

ences.

It is so crucial that we do not react negatively when God allows us to face verbal or physical challenges in our lives. We must not respond in self-defense and self-preservation. As we abide in faith-rest, filled with the Holy Spirit, God will operate freely through us. We will reveal His character in the situation.

God wants us to have a conviction of what sin is. God wants to have the conviction of judgment because the prince of the world is judged. He wants us to have the conviction of God's righteousness and Satan's defeat. God's righteousness is our righteousness, and that takes away any possibility of satanic victory in our lives.

Steadfast and Immovable

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

With conviction comes consistency. To be steadfast means that we determine to go forward without change or equivocation. There is no hesitation but a determination to do right.

I thank God for everyone who is steadfast. The blessing of a pastor is when he sees people remain steadfast as an army in the Finished Work. Steadfast people don't leave the devil much room to play with them.

Another thing conviction does is make us immovable. "I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Psalm 16:8). Finances, health troubles, domestic problems—none of these things can move me because the Lord is before my face. Consider someone who is immovable because of conviction and conversion; one who has humility in agreeing with God no matter what is happening.

Those who are steadfast and immovable always abound in the work of the Lord. If I am abounding in the Lord's work, then I am occupied with Christ. When I am occupied with Christ, then I enter into faith-rest. Resting in God's love by faith is the greatest manifestation of maturity we can ever have (Zephaniah 3:17).

Thank God for faith-resting in love. That means I am not resting in what I do, I am not resting in how I feel, I am not resting in what I don't do, but I am resting in what He did. I am resting in Calvary's love, which never changes

and is so supreme.

Effectual Communication

"That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus" (Philemon 6).

Another effective principle for three-dimensional Christians is godly communication. Philemon 6 refers to how we communicate according to the power of the residency that is at work in our hearts in a residual process of responding.

We have this precious life of God. Oh, I am so grateful for the life of God. It is so precious, so precious. Just to be saved, to have God's life and get up with it, to go to sleep with it, to face situations with it is a marvelous, wonderful, glorious thing. As His vessels on earth, we have the privilege of communicating what is within us—releasing that life according to the power in us.

It is a very sacred thing to be on this planet at this time, in the midst of everything that is going on in terms of worldly compromise and lasciviousness. Here, we have the privilege to be able to communicate life from heaven through our human vessels.

All of this leads to communion, which is so

precious. As I release and express the Word of God, I am also eating His bread, feeding on His doctrine, drinking the "new wine" of the Holy Spirit, experiencing the joy of eternal life.

No wonder the psalmist and Joshua said that their delight was in "meditating on the Word of God day and night" (Psalm 1:2; Joshua 1:8). From meditation comes communion. Communion is being still before God: He speaks, we respond. He speaks again, we respond. Then, He gives illumination that blesses us now and will help us in the future. Our communion is by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. It is that great and wonderful principle of meditation in the third dimension of the resurrection power of Christ.

CONCLUSION

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

"And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy [Spirit]" (John 20:19-22).

After He was resurrected, Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room. The doors were locked because of fear. Yet, Jesus showed Himself to the disciples—and they were glad that they saw the Lord.

"Peace be unto you," Jesus said to them.

"Don't fear. I want you to have a three-dimensional peace. I am risen. Peace, love, forgiveness—it is all yours. Access to the throne of God—it's yours! Power is now inside of you. Promises are inside of you. The Trinity is inside of you."

As we use the promises of God, we leap forward in areas we have never known. God will go beyond what we ask or think. More than waiting to be gracious to us, God gets the greatest blessing out of blessing us, to give us happiness and joy. He gets a great blessing out of answering our prayers. He gets a great blessing when we let Him love us.

The Spirit, the water, and the Word bear witness on earth. They bear witness to the grace of God; they bear witness that His Work is finished. We have all things pertaining to life and godliness through living in the third dimension, which is complete, substantial, and more than enough.

We have all received a gift of grace—a grace that is so beautiful. Everyone who is born again has been given a measure of that grace (Ephesians 4:7). As three-dimensional Christians, we have the opportunity to grow in grace and in exceeding faith (2 Thessalonians 1:3). We have an

amazing privilege to have the wonderful, matchless, unsearchable grace of God as the premise for our every presupposition, the premise for every decision, and the premise for every new opportunity.

Father, thank You that you have given us the provision to participate in Your life in every way—body, soul, and spirit—as three-dimensional Christians. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A Cross for Yesterday,

Today, and Tomorrow

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INTRODUCTION

On the Cross, Jesus Christ paid for the sins of the world and made a way for us to be saved. He made us His own through His death on the tree of Calvary. That moment in time marked the pivotal point in the history of the world. There, God established His Tree of Life.

What God did on Calvary takes care of everything about us. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and His Cross takes care of our yesterdays, today, and tomorrows.

Through the Finished Work of Calvary, we have been hid with Christ in God. As this booklet will reveal, what we have done is no longer an issue; who we are can be governed by Who He is; and, what we shall become is being fashioned according to His eternal purpose.

Chapter One

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF THE CROSS

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:1-2).

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

"(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy [Spirit] was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:38-39).

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water

that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

In the twenty-second chapter of Revelation, the Word of God speaks of a throne, a Lamb, and a pure river, clear as crystal, flowing out of the throne. Think of that scene and the awesome beauty of it.

This passage also mentions the Tree of Life on each side of the river and in the midst of it. No curse is there—just the Throne of God, the Lamb of God, and the redeemed people of God. I have received more joy and happiness from the blessings that come from the throne and that river because of the Tree of Life and the fruit that grows there.

The Past, the Present, the Future

From the very beginning of time, God has spoken of the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:9). Through the years, I have pondered on that tree and the river. As you consider the river, there is nothing cloudy about it. It is all pure, all clean. And where God places a river, there is also a tree.

Why is it that the Tree of Life was said to be in the middle and on both sides of the river? It is because we need three dimensions of that tree to

take care of three dimensions of our lives: the past, the present, and the future.

According to the picture we have in Revelation 22, the tree yields fruit every month. First Peter 2:24 calls the Cross that held Jesus Christ "the tree." And though it cost Him his life as a man, it was indeed a Tree of Life for all mankind. What He has done for me, He has done for you.

One aspect of the Tree of Life on the side of the river refers to the Cross that takes care of all the things that relate to our yesterdays. Jesus died on the Tree of Life, and on that tree He also bore our sins. This tree takes care of everything in our past. God's Tree of Life takes care of everything pertaining to guilt, sin, failure, heartache, wounds, and bruises. What people have done to us is covered by the precious grace of God.

Taking Care of Today

That tree, as it stands in the center of the river, takes care of what is happening to us today, right now. Right now, God is taking care of every single thing through the Cross. Regardless of what we have done, regardless of how we have failed, we have that Tree of Life. Thank

God, it wasn't just for yesterday. It is for today as well.

"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31).

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

Paul was saying, "I want you to know that I have received a Tree of Life, and God forbid that I glory in anything but the Cross."

The Cross takes care of my yesterday. The Cross takes care of my today. And then there's a Tree of Life for my tomorrow, my future. All three dimensions of my time are taken up in the "Eternal Is" of Jesus Christ: Yesterday is gone, Now just passed by, and Tomorrow doesn't exist.

Chapter Two

RESURRECTION LIFE CONQUERS DEATH

Think of how trees seem so barren in the wintertime. Nothing on the outside of the tree indicates life, and yet on the inside the tree is very alive. That is when the sap (much like blood to our bodies) is being produced and moves the strongest, bringing a life flow to every branch and twig. Then spring comes, and the trees turn beautiful with blossoms and leaves. All of the life on the inside is now flowing out.

Do not underestimate the winter times. Life is at work in the destitute, dark, and gloomy moments. Remember that when times seem their darkest, life is building up from the deep places. Soon, just as the trees blossom and create the beauty of spring, summer, and fall, the time of prosperity will come.

When we see everything prospering around us, it is easy to think only of how great and how

wonderful that is. But remember this: During the times of prosperity, all the life is flowing out. That would not be possible without the life that is developed deep within during the dark winter seasons of life.

Released from the Grave

"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

"(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

"Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

"When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

"When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

"Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again.

"His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou

thither again?

"Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

"But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

"These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11:1-11).

"Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

"But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

"Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

"Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:21-26).

"And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said

it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

"And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

"And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." (John 11: 42-44).

Lazarus was sick and he died. When people are sick, they are taken to the hospital. When they are dead they go to the funeral parlor, and then they are buried. We were not born into this world to meet Jesus Christ as sick people but as spiritually dead people—people who are without a source of eternal life until we meet the Savior and are born again.

God quickens those who believe on Him. Even though we were dead in trespasses and sin, He meets us in death, where His resurrection power takes over. And, whoever believes on Him lives and never dies again.

That is what Jesus was trying to explain to Martha in the midst of her grief over her brother Lazarus' death. She was upset that Jesus had not visited earlier as He had so many other times.

"Look, Martha, I *am* the resurrection and life, right now!" He told her. "All that I will be tomorrow, I am today. All that I was yesterday, I

am now. I am resurrection and life, Martha. He who believes on Me, though he was dead, he shall yet live. And whoever believes on Me will never die."

Jesus was led to the gravesite of Lazarus. He saw the unbelieving Jews wailing over the man's death. There was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, falling at Jesus' feet saying, "If You had been here, my brother would not have died!" With that, Jesus groaned in His spirit and wept, for He so well understood the pain of sickness and death and the pain of their sorrow.

The Smell of Sin, the Triumph of Grace

Standing near the grave, Jesus asked that the stone be removed. "What?" He was asked. "Surely, the body stinks." Behind the stone was a rotting, smelly corpse. The Lord wanted these people to get close so they could get a good idea of what sin smells like and what happens when bodies die and decay.

"Come close to the grave," Jesus was saying here. "Get a good look at what sin does to a body of death."

Finally, Jesus spoke, saying to Lazarus, "Out! Now!" That is exactly what He said, according

the original Greek text. At that moment, life came back into Lazarus, and he came forth from the grave. Jesus then told the people who stood there in amazement to help him get out of his grave clothes. The Lord brought in resurrection life and released the grip of death.

Reading on into chapter 12 of John, we find Lazarus alive and enjoying fellowship around the Gospel. Martha and Mary were back serving Jesus Christ. What a beautiful story of life coming out of death.

Chapter Three

THE FLOW OF THE FINISHED WORK

"Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

"Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

"And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.

"Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the

knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.

"Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

"And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.

"Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

"Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed" (Ezekiel 47:1-8).

The waters flowed in all directions from the house of God. The river of life comes from heaven and travels through us wherever we go as believers. This is the life that has been reproduced as our ministry has taken the Gospel into all parts of the world.

God's life flows from the Throne into our lives. This is why we are able to face terrific trials, one after another, and come out as more

than conquerors. God causes us to triumph, and no one can stop our victories.

The man with the line in his hand went east, meaning he was traveling the road of Resurrection. He measured out a thousand cubits, a figure that points to the perfect life of Christ. At this spot, the water in the river reached the ankles.

There is a great meaning to be grasped here. No matter where you are with Christ, even if you are just up to your ankles with Him as you start out in your Christian walk, you are okay. You are complete in Him, hidden in Him, and seated together with Him. This perfect Man has taken your sins away. He died, He was buried, and He was resurrected. Christ has taken you and hid you in Himself, and that guarantees that the devil can never touch you.

Power Through Prayer and the Word

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Next, the line went out another thousand cubits and the river was up to the knees. This speaks of our relationship to the Great Intercessor, Jesus Christ. When we pray, we are praying

with the One who intercedes before the Throne for us at all times. Not a moment goes by but He is standing before the Father, pleading our case.

Go out into the river another thousand cubits and the water reaches the loins. This means that categorical doctrine is at work in our hearts, souls, minds, emotions, wills, and bodies. The Word of God has now become totally operational in us.

The Crucified Life

Another thousand cubits are measured out and here the waters are over the head. This represents to us the Finished Work of Jesus Christ in our lives. We can no longer be seen. Everything about us is Christ because we are experientially crucified. Adam, our old man, is finally out of the way.

A scientist developed a functional electronic brain. This mechanism was fed numerous bits of information, which the scientist called the "word." This "brain" processed the information and developed conclusions. And these conclusions led to "experiences" that were recorded.

Now, this scientist was asked by one of his fellow scientists, who happened to be a Christian, what would happen if wrong information

were fed into the brain.

"I have no idea," he said. "My guess is it would come to wrong conclusions and wrong experiences. I have been troubled by this thought, because there is no way to erase a mistake."

"Well, we will have to fix that," the Christian told him. "I am going to help you put in a process that will cleanse a mistake so thoroughly that there is no record of it." He did, and that process was called "erase."

This man of God showed that scientist how to be saved and he was gloriously converted. Then, the two men proceeded to develop a process of cleansing, purging, and rebound for the "electronic brain," which we call a computer: "erase," "escape," and "refresh."

The Tree of Life will do this with our lives. It takes all that is wrong and makes it right. We are cleansed and purged, and the record of our failures is wiped clean by the Cross.

CONCLUSION

These thoughts about the Cross bring many people to my mind. One woman was struggling against the onset of cancer. She told me, "I don't mind dying, but I just don't want to leave my children."

"That's understandable," I told her. "But somehow, some way, the grace of God is going to pour into your life, and God will triumph."

God used her situation and brought life out of it, just as the spring brings life out of the tree following the winter season. God is so faithful to do this.

The Tree of Life is not there to bring out the best in Adam. Instead, it brings out the life that comes from the resurrection of Christ. This is a life worth experiencing. It is life that will never see death.

Sometimes the answers are difficult to come by—and yet, there is an unending river that flows from the Throne of God. That crystal clear

water proceeds from the throne where the Lamb of God is seated. And there, the Tree of Life reveals a Cross for our yesterdays, a Cross for today, and a Cross for our tomorrows.

A Faith Based on Absolutes

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Day and night for three years, the apostle Paul taught believers in the city of Ephesus (Acts 20:31). During those days, people came out twice every day to hear the Word of God preached. Believers were hungry for the truth and recognized their need for a sure foundation in the midst of the turbulent times they were living in. Paul clearly understood this and made himself available to preach and teach so that these Christians would possess a stable faith.

Isn't it true that we as Christians must be careful not to enter into a casual attitude about hearing and receiving the Word of God? Coming to church needs to be a priority for every believer. Many professing Christians consider reading the Bible and receiving instruction in the truth unnecessary. This continues even as things spin out of control in this world.

Our faith must be established on the absolutes of the Word of God. But, before they can

be established in us, our hearts and minds need to hear these truths many times. This booklet discusses the importance of hearing and receiving the Word of God so that we can walk in the Holy Spirit in absolute faith.

Chapter One

SPIRIT-LED INTO ALL TRUTH

"The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.

"And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure" (Isaiah 33:5-6).

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:26-27).

We live in an age where certain religious movements worship the Holy Spirit independent of His relationship to the Father and the Son. Therefore, I believe it is important to discuss the role of the Holy Spirit and the impor-

tance of having a living faith in every word that proceeds from God.

In the government of heaven, each member of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is fully God. While they are distinct persons in their expression, they are identical in their character and equal in rank. The Father is the planner, the Son executes the plan, and the Holy Spirit convicts us of truth regarding the plan that is revealed in the Word of God. Together they operate as one Being, in absolute unity, and one is never jealous of another. The Holy Spirit (who is God) understands His role, which is to glorify Christ. Instead of drawing attention to Himself, the Holy Spirit works to convict people of the truth and lead them to Christ through the Word of God.

Human nature tends to be "religious." Most people try to commune with God through natural forms of worship in human energy. Often, those forms of worship take on levels of emotional expression. But as Christians who have a capacity for God's righteousness, who desire to experience the life of God, we can move in the Holy Spirit's river. There, He fills us with wisdom and assurance as we abandon our lives to Him.

Indeed, the Holy Spirit is our Teacher, revealing Jesus Christ to our hearts by renewing us, convicting us, and guiding us into all truth. The Spirit takes everything that the Son says and reveals it to us. With this in mind, it should be easy to recognize how crucial it is for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He evaluates situations to give us wisdom. He completes judgment through the Finished Work, and testifies of Christ and His work in our hearts.

Each morning, we can recognize that we are broken vessels and begin to acknowledge God in all our ways through the Holy Spirit. As we trust Christ with our heart, we are renewed. We become sensitive to God's initiations of love and life, truth is revealed, and we begin to have discernment. At that point, the Spirit can actually control us.

The beautiful thing is this: Jesus Christ gives us freedom to be motivated and He starts the river of the Spirit flowing inside of us for that day. We receive streams of revelation of God's truth into the streams of our consciousness.

This can be such a powerful experience. We can grow in righteousness with God to the point where the moment the Holy Spirit is grieved, we are instantly aware and automatically respond.

His divine power in us makes us very sensitive as He guides us into all truth.

Filled with Rivers of Life

"Wherefore as the Holy [Spirit] saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

"Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Hebrews 3:7-8).

People who allow their feelings to be hurt and wallow in their insecurities do not experience the flow of the Holy Spirit within them. Because these people only focus on themselves, rivers of life do not move in their souls, and the divine energy of God is not allowed to work.

We are in bodies of sin and death in the midst of Satan's world system. Therefore, it is impossible to deal with our carnality unless we permit the Holy Spirit to empower us. We cannot afford to be caught up with natural impressions, careless opinions, and wild personality swings. Those things will cost us too much in our walk with God.

A Mandate and a Provision

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians

5:18).

"Be filled with the Spirit" is a commandment —a mandate from God—which is our provision for life. In our daily lives, some of us get so upset over the simplest things. We get upset when we are not filled with the Spirit. If we are not filled with the Spirit, then we are living in personal sin.

We have a mandate to be filled continually with the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit, we will live a selfless life. The Spirit takes self out of the picture and puts God in its place.

Under certain conditions, some believers act strange and abstract around other Christians. They blame their reactions on phobias—but phobias are not the problem. The real problem is a violation of the mandate to be filled with the Holy Spirit. There is no fear in love. Therefore, if I am filled with the Spirit, I can be around other people without submitting to my emotions of fear.

A Christian who is filled with the Spirit glorifies God with everything his hands find to do. His silence, his greetings, his handshakes, his countenance—everything about him points in some way to Christ. He is not "performing," rather, he is honoring the royal law of love

(James 2:8). He lives in Divine energy without mood swings. When someone is acting immaturely around him, he doesn't react. Instead, that moment becomes an opportunity to glorify God and to minister love—either with his silence or through some other form of divine wisdom.

Chapter Two

HUMAN ENERGY VERSUS THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

Quenching the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), means I put out His fire within me and stop His work in me; I do something to stop the flow of God's river in my soul. When I am made aware of it, I need to instantly repent and rebound, asking the Lord to fill me afresh. But before I ever quench the Holy Spirit in me, I grieve Him.

Grieving the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) speaks of trying to control what He is doing in me. Suppose I am called to a specific ministry, wherever it may be in the world, and I know it is a definite call. If I refuse to be faithful to that call, though I may go to church and try to do everything right, throughout those years I have been grieving the Spirit, struggling to control the work He is doing in my soul. What I need is to follow Christ with every part of my life.

Some preach Christ and appear to worship

Him, but they have been grieving the Spirit for eight, nine, ten years. They may be prospering financially; however, much of what they do is in self-effort—human energy—and in certain areas, they simply are not obeying what the Spirit is telling them.

Human energy can be a powerful force, particularly when a group gets together and operates in unison. Some religious groups can put up an entire church in just a weekend. The call goes out and hundreds of workers show up at a site with materials and tools. Yet, it is very possible that they organized with human energy under the motivation of a religious spirit instead of the Holy Spirit.

As a ministry, we will continue to go to every door and every neighborhood. We have a commitment to the Father and the privilege to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit always glorifies Christ, taking us out of the picture and putting God in.

Quickened According to the Word

"My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word" (Psalm 119:25).

This psalm speaks of Ezra's teaching, which he imparted to the people as the nation of Israel

was taken into captivity by the Chaldeans. The soldiers abused the children, the women, and the men who were chained together as they traveled from Jerusalem to Lachish and from Lachish to Babylon. Each day at dawn, they would begin marching, so Ezra prayed in the night for God to give him something to share with the people. He asked God to teach him in the night so that he could give doctrine to the people during the next long, difficult day. He developed an amazing ability to isolate the indescribable things being done to him. He knew the people would be looking to him for instruction.

"Cleaving to the dust" might have referred to how dirty Ezra felt after being mistreated by the soldiers. Constantly he had to isolate those feelings and enter into thinking moment-by-moment according to the Word of God.

"Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

"And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border" (Jeremiah 31:16-17).

The prophet Jeremiah wept as he watched Israel being marched out of Jerusalem. But he

kept teaching as they walked on. He had instructed Ezra, telling him, "Son, you will return. God will bring you back to this place." And we know from the Scriptures that God was faithful. Ezra did come back to Jerusalem and led in the rebuilding of the city and of the temple (see Ezra 3 and 4).

Truth Chiseled in Our Souls

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:5).

"Form of godliness" is *morphosis eusebeia* in the Greek text, and it refers to someone who has a semblance of reverence toward God—an outward appearance of godliness but no inner power. On the outside, everything seems right; but inside, the foundation is just not there.

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Romans 6:17).

"Form of doctrine" is *tupon didaches*. *Tupon* describes the mark left by a stroke or a blow—such as a hammer and chisel being used upon a rock. *Didaches* decribes the teaching of doctrine. This is great picture of how God chisels the

foundation of truth into our hearts by the Spirit. Objective truth becomes the stability of our lives as we exercise faith that is secure, built on absolutes, having a solid foundation—the Word of God that remains through the most violent assaults.

Chapter Three

RENEWED MINDS KEEP COMMANDMENTS BY LOVE

A Christian with the objective truth of doctrine hidden in his heart has so much more than knowledge. The objective Word brings in Resurrection life because it is built upon absolutes from God. Resurrection life clears away our Adamic personality. That leaves us with divine individuality, allowing the Holy Spirit to glorify God through us.

When the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth, we begin to make supernatural decisions that glorify God. The Spirit takes the words of Scripture and reveals what they mean, releasing God's words to operate in us.

Then, a beautiful thing happens: our minds are renewed (Ephesians 4:23).

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and ac-

ceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

Notice these verses refer to the renewed mind, never to the emotions. The various words for "new" imply that nothing old is left. Everything about the mind is renewed when our faith is built on the absolutes of the Word. God's words are spirit and life (John 6:63). Walking in the Spirit means that we do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. The Holy Spirit and the Word—that vital combination—guide each step we take (see Psalm 119:133).

This World Is Not Our Home

We are in the devil's world system. There is a real battle going on in our midst. Always keep that in mind. This is not home for us. We are strangers; we are pilgrims and foreigners in hostile territory. Our home is heaven.

Therefore, the objectivity of the Word must be our foundation. For example, a husband should receive an hour of doctrine somehow every morning. As the head of his home, he needs to receive the mind of Christ for each day.

We cannot afford to get occupied with any priorities without doctrine flowing into our souls for this day. What we know means noth-

ing if it is not operating as life in our souls. A message we heard three months ago means nothing for the adversity we may encounter today. God reiterates themes, because each time we hear a particular theme expanded upon, it helps us prepare to deal with the current activity of the kingdom of darkness.

God's Timely Communication

God wants us to have a faith built upon absolutes. He wants us to pay attention to what is being preached *now*, as we hear it. Each message is for our sakes. To ignore a message is an insult to God's initiations. If we are not in a place where we can get to church, we need to hear tapes and watch videos and read the Bible and other related books of life. Absolutes from the Book are imperative in order for us to walk in the Spirit.

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Why do some Christians have such a problem bringing every thought into the captivity of obedience? It is because the proper flow of the

Spirit is not at work in their lives. They do not put themselves in the place where they can receive divine truth through the Holy Spirit, along with divine checks and balances. "Bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). This is a commandment—and God's commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:3).

Tithing is a commandment. It is not a suggestion. More than four hundred years before the Law was given to Moses, Abraham tithed. Abraham commenced it, Malachi commanded it (Malachi 3:8-12), Jesus Christ commended it (Matthew 23:23), and the Word of God tells us to continue it. Abraham gave because the Holy Spirit taught him to do it.

To give a tithe is simply to pay dues to God from the first fruits of the increase He has provided me. He did not say, "Do it when you feel gracious." God commanded that we tithe. This is an absolute we need to live by. Some believers will get to the Bema Seat and suffer loss of rewards simply because they refused to obey God's absolute truth about tithing. They will see how they robbed God and rationalized it away.

Read the blessings of God and the commandments of the New Testament. Then, read John 14:15: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." The commandments are kept by love, not by works or by law. I am talking about being filled with the Holy Spirit in order to keep them.

The absolutes of the Word of God are there for us to live by. We cannot be forgetful hearers. God desires that we grow into something deeper than the place where we are right now.

The Holy Spirit will renew our minds for this day and give us the absolute truth to live victoriously, moment-by-moment, in this present evil world.

CONCLUSION

"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23).

The Greek grammar of this verse indicates, through the instrumental case, that the mind of Christ (the foundation of all doctrine), and the Holy Spirit are the instruments God uses to establish absolutes in our minds. We are to receive this action as it is initiated by heaven toward each of us.

God imparts His righteousness to us apart from our works, and He imparts His truth to us apart from our own efforts. The Holy Spirit works in our souls, going beyond our faculties and expanding our capacities, filling us with the doctrines of Finished Work righteousness. He equips us to obey His mandates through grace and through the filling of His Spirit.

Our faith, therefore, is not based upon a system of human energy. It is built upon Christ's sure foundation of righteousness.

Everything I need for today is supplied through the absolutes that God communicates to me through His Word. This is the integrity of God's character towards me as He fills me, takes me out of the way, and lives through me by the Spirit and the Word.

A Friend in Time of Failure

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INTRODUCTION

The most sacred relationships are friendships that have gone through the Cross. Many people do not have real friendships because they haven't allowed their relationships to go through the Cross.

Often, marriages lack the quality of friendship. For example, a wife who is very insecure because of wounds from her past may need lots of attention. Yet, if her husband has not established or maintained a godly friendship with her, he will react instead of understanding and covering her when her emotions flare up.

The Bible says in John 15:13 that the greatest friendship is manifested when someone lays down his life for a friend. Jesus said to His disciples, "You are my friends if you do what I tell you. I will no longer call you servants, for a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have told you every single thing that My Father has told

Me" (see John 15:14-15).

Think of it! Jesus Christ knows everything about us. There is not one thing hidden from Him; yet, He desires to be our personal friend. This booklet reveals how secure that friendship is and how we can become true friends to others. Friendship reveals the Father's heart of love.

Chapter One

THE TRUEST FRIEND

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

"For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" (Luke 7:33-34).

Jesus said to His disciples, "You are my friends." Though they were not trustworthy friends at that time, they were His friends, and He told them everything the Father told Him in His humanity. He didn't hold anything back from them.

So the religious people, including the Pharisees and the scribes who interpreted the original texts of Scripture, had a tremendous problem. They couldn't figure out the Messiah, because

He was always hanging around with sinners.

In Luke 15:1 and 2, the Word of God says that publicans and sinners drew near to Jesus so they could hear Him. "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Because they were self-righteous, the Pharisees thought it was wrong for Jesus to be around crooks and prostitutes. But the Word of God says in Hebrews 7:25 that "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Jesus' heart was to reach out to sinners with His saving love.

Separate from Sinners, He Still Draws Us Near

Hebrews 7:26 says we have a high priest "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Jesus has always been separate from what sinners do, yet He is with us to help us in our time of trouble. That is why we must understand this message.

First of all, every person needs to be loved in his failure. That is so vital to understand: *All* people need to be loved in their failure.

Secondly, Jesus loved each of us while we

were failing. This is how you can know whether or not somebody loves you with God's love, and whether you have God's love for others: God's love goes on in the midst of failure. That is why it is so much fun to go knocking on doors and to see souls get saved. We never know what people are going through. We simply care for their souls, and we want to love them in their failure.

Thirdly, God's love is consistent and will always love people out of their failure. Think of that: God's consistent love always loves us out of our failure. Consider what Paul went through. He did everything he should not have done, and he didn't do the things he should have done (Romans 7:15). Yet, the Holy Spirit loved him right out of his failure and brought him into Romans chapter eight, where he consistently referred to the work of the Holy Spirit (after primarily referring to himself and his failures in the seventh chapter).

Something changed for the apostle Paul. At the end of himself, he somehow grasped the truth about grace and the goodness of God (Romans 2:4). That is the purpose of the grace of God: to love people in their failure—just as they are—and then, to love them out of their failure by patient, consistent love.

After three years of walking with Christ and even vowing to die for Him, Peter failed and denied Christ three times. Because of his guilt, he didn't want to be near Christ, even after seeing Him twice in post-resurrection scenes. But on the shore of Galilee, in John 21:15-18, the Lord ministered very personally to Peter.

Jesus loved Peter in his failure. But most importantly, the Lord didn't point out his failure; He never mentioned Peter's failure. He just loved him. By the time of Acts chapter two, Peter had become the first preacher to the Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans.

God loved Peter out of his failure. Do you know how He accomplished that? Through friendship. The resurrected Jesus, who had been the friend of sinners while He lived on earth, was still a friend to Peter.

Love That Is Willing to Take a Risk

The Bible says in Matthew 9:10 that when Jesus sat down to eat, the publicans and sinners (which included the disciples), sat down with Him.

Looking on, the scribes and the Pharisees said, "Why does He eat with publicans and sinners?" That really bothered them. Imagine what

you would think every time you saw Jesus with sinners. They didn't look good, and they weren't living right, and there was Jesus. Of course, they thought the worst; however, Jesus was separate from sinners, and He knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). But His love was willing to take the risk to win them.

Jesus heard what the religious hypocrites were saying (Matthew 9:12), and this is what He said: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

Then He said, "Go and learn what this means: 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to change their minds" (see Matthew 9:13).

The Pharisees said in Luke 7:33 that John the Baptist *didn't* eat and *didn't* drink, and they accused him of having "a devil." But Jesus came eating and drinking, and they accused *Him* of being gluttonous, a winebibber, and a friend of publicans and prostitutes!

Jesus' reply? "Wisdom is justified of all her children" (Luke 7:35). This is what He was saying: "First, I'm going to meet them where they are. Second, I'm going to love them where they are. Third, I'm going to keep right on loving them where they are. Fourth, I'm going to love

them out of where they are. And fifth, I'm going to love them to keep them from going back in it."

What a Friend!

Chapter Two

BORN FOR ADVERSITY

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17).

It is a beautiful thing when we realize that from eternity past, everything Jesus did was for sinners. Everything.

He came to die for sinners (Romans 5:8). He ate with sinners. He never gave up on a sinner. He was numbered with the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12). He became sin, though He knew no sin, to make us the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). He ever lives to make intercession for us as sinners (Hebrews 7:25). That is what God calls being a friend.

You talk about having a friend? We have One! We have the dearest, truest, kindest friend in all the universe: Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Thank Him for that, and praise Him.

He is the friend of sinners. Yes, *sinners*. He wouldn't give up on Abraham, though for thir-

teen years, Abraham did not speak with God (Genesis 16:16 to 17:1). Anxious to see God's promise fulfilled, instead of waiting on God he went in with Hagar, the bondwoman, and produced Ishmael, "the wild man." Nevertheless, three times in the Bible (2 Chronicles 20:7, Isaiah 41:8, and James 2:23) Abraham was called a "friend of God."

The Lord would not give up on His friend, and this is why: Proverbs 17:17 says that a friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. Jesus Christ is a friend that sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24). It doesn't matter what the adversity is—whether it is caused by our own disobedience or by something outside of our control—a friend is born for adversity, and in the time of trouble, a brother never stops being a friend.

Can you see why married couples should develop this kind of friendship with each other in Christ through the Cross?

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Isn't that wonderful news?

Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love

Peter, you can't get out of God's love. Stop trying. So, you don't want to see Him. You are

afraid. You are guilty. Still, you cannot get out of His friendship. He loves you at all times, and He was born for what you are going through right now, Peter.

David, you will never be able to get out of God's love. He is going to say that you fulfilled all the will of God as a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22).

Samson, you have really been a bad example, but you are going to end up being a hero of faith (Hebrews 11:32).

Proverbs 17:9 says, "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." A friend is not somebody who goes around criticizing everything and everyone he sees. But he who covers transgressions seeks Calvary's love. And he that repeats the matter separates even friends, because he is of the devil.

Love Others As Yourself

The Bible says that in order to have friends, you need to show yourself friendly (Proverbs 18:24*a*); and when you are in trouble, "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24*b*). There are many great men in the Bible whose lives serve as examples to live

by. But regarding the subject of friendship, I have always been touched by the life of Jonathan.

In 1 Samuel 18:1-3, Jonathan's soul was knit with David's soul. Because he loved him as his own soul, Jonathan made a covenant with David.

In 1 Samuel 18:4, Jonathan gave David his robe, his garments, his sword, his bow, and his girdle. He was saying, "I'm supposed to be king, but David, you are the man. You are God's man to be king." So Jonathan gave up his right as an heir to the throne of his father, Saul.

In 1 Samuel 19:1-5, Jonathan heard his father's desire to kill David, so he warned David of Saul's plan. Then he pleaded with Saul not to kill David.

In 1 Samuel 20:4, Jonathan told David, "Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee."

In 1 Samuel 20:15-17, Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David that when he died, David would take care of his household with the same kindness he had shown Jonathan while he was alive.

And then the Word of God says, in 1 Samuel 20:34, that Jonathan would not eat at his father's

table because he knew Saul planned to kill David. Jonathan was not sentimental. He warned David and helped him plan an escape.

Empty Places

"Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty" (1 Samuel 20:18).

Later, in 1 Samuel 20:25, "The king [Saul] sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty."

After my first wife died, I remember the empty seat. Even though I knew she was in heaven, completely free from the pain of her illness, her place was empty, and I missed her so much. I remember the empty place after a friend has died. When a member of our church goes home to be with God, if they usually sat in the same place, I will look to where they used to sit. It is as though they left an empty seat, and they are greatly missed.

A wife told me that her husband had left her for another woman after twenty-five years of marriage. She said, "Every time I eat, the place where he always sat is now empty."

A mother told me that her son was shot in

cold blood. Now at the dinner table, his seat is empty.

A young girl wrote that her mother committed suicide. She didn't know why it happened, and she said that her mom was a wonderful mother. "No longer can I go sit with her in her room at night; and at the table, her place is empty." We were able to share the gospel with this girl and to tell her about the Savior, the Friend who will never leave her nor forsake her (Hebrews 13:5), and she got saved. Still, the mother's seat is empty, and her daughter misses her so much.

Jonathan said, "You will be missed, David, because your seat will be empty."

A Friend in Life and in Death

In 2 Samuel 1:23, after Saul and Jonathan died in battle, David said, "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions."

Talk about friendship! Saul had tried to kill David, yet David was still his friend. As many times as Saul made attempts against his life, David refused to bring that up. He would only

bring up the good about him—that He was lovely and pleasant in his lifetime: "I don't remember the bad he did; I only remember that he was once a good man."

Lovely and pleasant in their lifetime, and in death, they were not separated. The Holy Spirit wrote these things through David's heart. Then in verses 24 and 25, he said, "Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!..."

In other words, he was saying, "Weep over this wonderful and mighty man. Remember all that he did for you, Israel."

This "wonderful" man? On more than one occasion, he tried to kill David. But that is not how David remembered him. How was that possible? This was David's philosophy: "I will not seek for men to love me. I am just going to seek to love them. If they love me in return, that's wonderful; but if they don't, I will still love them." When Saul was gone, David's confession was filled with the mercy he received for the rest of his life: The *sure* mercies of David (2 Chronicles 6:42; Psalm 23:6; Acts 13:34).

Chapter Three

THE FRIEND OF SINNERS

"…But I have called you friends..." (John 15:15*b*).

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The first and most important thing is to love God and to love men. The second most important thing is to be loved by God's people. The love we experience as members in particular in the Body of Christ helps us to know we are loved by God. We need to know that because of the things that go on in this world we live in. David was able to be a friend to Saul because Jonathan taught him how to be a friend. Think of that!

Jonathan knew he was in line to be king. He was an excellent military man, with extraordinary diplomatic skills, while he also had integrity. But with all of his qualifications, Jonathan rec-

ognized God's anointing. Therefore he said, "I know that you are God's man, David. So I will give you five things that relate to battle: my robe, symbolizing my kingdom; my garment, to be worn with special ornaments; the sword, to fight with in battle; the bow; and then the girdle, which speaks of the strength of a king."

A Friend, through Thick and Thin

A friend loves at all times. God loves us at all times; that is certain. Is there ever a time that you or I could have stopped God's love? No, because He loved us when we were yet sinners. He loved us when we didn't respond. He loved us when we failed, and loved us dearly and sweetly. And after all of that, He loved us out of our failure. But if we fail again, He will keep on loving us.

In the end, God's love keeps us from failing in the same way, over and over again. This is why: God is not a "fair-weather" friend. He never remembers one sin you or I have ever committed. In Jeremiah 50:20, people tried to search out the sins and iniquity of Israel and Judah. But He declares, "they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." In other words, neither Israel nor Judah have any sins ac-

cording to God's record. Is that our attitude toward ourselves and each other? It is what God Almighty says. That is the Word of life. That is the Word of grace. That is the Word of God.

Oh, I thank God today that one of the dearest, most sacred things on earth is friendship—not conditional friendship but *true* friendship. I am so thankful for that.

That is why God said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will" (Acts 13:22) He said it because He knew that David would not touch Saul, even when he could have (1 Samuel 24:12 and 26:11). David would not touch God's man, though God's man was trying to kill him. Instead, he was Saul's friend. He chose to be a friend.

Let It Go through the Cross

When a friendship goes through the Cross, self is crucified and buried, and Christ is risen within the spiritual souls of the individuals. A marriage based on such a friendship is the kind of marriage God intended. They live as people who have been raised from the dead (Romans 6:13).

The Bible says very clearly that no man has

ever known greater love than the love of one who is willing to lay down his life for a friend. But, how do you lay down your life? It is by going through the Cross.

I say this and mean it with everything that's in me: My wife is my friend! God bless her. And there are so many people who are treasured friends. I don't know anyone who has more pure friendships than we have in the Body of Christ. Of course, we all may need to use rebound on occasion, but love says, "Just rebound and come right back."

Seeking the Lost

Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. He didn't come for the self-righteous murmurers, although He died for them. He came to seek us.

He found some of us living in adultery, others in barrooms, and others lying and cheating. He found others who were living in self-righteousness—good people but proud. But it didn't matter where or how He found us. He said, "I want you! I am going to die for you. I want to be your Friend."

When you say, "Shouldn't I clean up my life first?" He says, "No. I will come and eat with

you. Where are you eating today?"

"Well, I don't think You would want to go there."

"Yes, I would. You just tell Me where you're eating today. I'll go where you go. I will come and sit down at your table."

The scribes hated that. Oh, they hated that! In Luke 7:36-48, when the prostitute came into Simon the Pharisee's house, she began to cry. She took her long hair and began to wipe Jesus' feet, which she had shed tears upon. Then she anointed Him with oil and started kissing His feet.

Simon said to himself, "He's doing *that* with a prostitute?"

Then Jesus gave this illustration: "If somebody owed you fifty million dollars, and you forgave him, and somebody else owed you five, and you forgave him, what do you think, Simon? Who would be the most thankful?"

And Simon the Pharisee said, "The one whom I forgave fifty million."

Jesus said, "You have judged rightly."

Then He turned to the prostitute, and He said, "Though your sins be many, they are all forgiven." And she walked out of that Pharisee's house just as white as snow.

He also went to the woman at the well. She

was living with a man who wasn't her husband, though she had been married—five times. When Jesus saw her, He said, "If you drink the water that I give you, you will never thirst again" (see John 4:10-14).

Do you know what she said? "Give me a drink of that water right now!" She got saved at that moment, in verse 15, and she went up to town to tell everyone about what had happened.

What we need is to know that Jesus is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. He is a friend who has loved you in your failure. Then, He loved you as you continued to fail. Then, He loved you out of your failure. Finally, His love kept you from doing the same old things over again.

If God gave His own Son for you, and if you will believe that God can heal you, then just as you exercised personal faith in Christ for salvation, exercise personal faith in Christ for a promise for healing. Just believe God to heal you of the moods, bad memories, and mental blocks that have kept you from being the kind of friend you desire to be. Let Christ be your friend. Receive resurrection power for the present and hope for the future because you can't remember the past.

CONCLUSION

A friend loveth at *all* times, not just when we are living right. Our hope for the future is not based upon our past. It is based upon the true friend, Jesus Christ, and His promises. He laid down His life and calls us friends. Our future is as good as the promises of God. Our past, on the other hand, is as bad as we remember it. And there is not one verse in the Bible where God can remember a bad thing about any one of us (Psalm 103:10; Hebrews 8:12). That is true, even after we go home to be with Him.

Imagine Saul looking down through the crystal sea in heaven and saying, "Why is David saying that about *me*? I was a wicked man, and he is calling me 'lovely and pleasant.' Wow! I can see that even in death, grace really works for me. Thank You, Lord."

Dear Father, we thank You for all the precious friends You have given us. Most of all, we are thankful that You are our friend and that we can be Your

friends. Because of that, we can be friends to each other. Help us to let our friendships go through the Cross, Father, so we can experience the fullness of Your provision in every relationship. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

A Great Door Is Open

Unto You

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:9).

If I were to ask you, "What is a door?" I wonder what your answer would be. Three times Jesus uses the word "door" in John 10:1-9. He declared, "I am the door."

An opening in a wall is not a door; that would be a doorway. Jesus did not say, "I am the doorway," yet He *is* the door and He *is* the way.

A door is something that opens and closes. It has to swing on hinges. A door needs to have operational parts so it can swing open or be closed, and, if necessary, be locked.

This booklet will reveal that not only is Jesus the entrance into the Kingdom of God, but also He is the One who makes certain that our enemies are kept outside of the door. It will also define to Christians today the nature of the Door that is opened unto us: Jesus Christ—the Door,

the Lamb, and the Shepherd; the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Chapter One

THE BLOOD MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

After the Fall, Adam and Eve taught Cain and Abel categorical doctrine. God had rejected Adam and Eve's aprons of fig leaves, so He gave them skins to wear by shedding the blood of an animal. Abel magnificently chose to bring the blood of the first-born lamb as a sacrifice to honor God. He brought the blood because he was taught that this was how his parents were saved—by blood that was shed for their sake. In fact, it was shed in their place, since breaking God's commandment in the Garden meant death (Genesis 2:16-17). Cain, however, did not hear his parents correctly, concerning the blood offering.

A person who follows a Christianity that neglects the necessity of the Blood of Christ does not come in properly by the Door, Jesus Christ. The only way we can come to the Door is by His

Blood.

When Israel prepared for the Passover in the land of Goshen, the blood of a lamb was to be put above the door, on its sides, and on the threshold. There had to be blood on the door. Not only do we need to have a door, but we must have blood on that door representing the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It also represents the life and death and resurrection of Christ, because of the Blood shed on the Cross for sinners like us.

Abel brought a blood offering to God. No blood, however, was brought by Cain, though he had heard the same message that Abel did. Cain was there for the same teaching, but he brought the fruit of the field instead of the blood of an animal.

Cain refused to present a blood offering, but he did bring an offering. How many Christians today refuse to present the Blood? Oh, they bring themselves to church, but they do not present the Blood offering. People who are saved but still worry and fret all the time do not reckon on the purifying power of Christ's Blood. When we apply the Blood, we recognize the fact that it has cleansed us from all unrighteousness. The Blood covering does away with living up to the

standards of the world that can weigh us down and result in tension, tiredness, trying to satisfy God through a system of works, or any number of symptoms.

The Right Offering

God said to Cain, "You didn't bring the right offering." Cain did not offer a blood sacrifice. Imagine the conversation God and Cain must have had:

God says, "Cain? Are you listening? This is what I'm going to do. There at your door is a lamb, the sin offering. That sin offering is right there! All you have to do is take that lamb and sacrifice it. Take it at your door, sacrifice it, and bring the blood to Me as an offering, and you will be saved, Cain. I want you to be saved. I'm giving you another opportunity to be saved. So what do you say?"

Cain says, "No. I am not going to bring a blood offering. It doesn't make sense to me. It is not real to me. I mean, I am not going to do it. I will not kill the animal. I worked hard in my garden. These vegetables ought to be proof of my devotion to You. But, I am not going to bring a blood offering."

Thus, Cain rejected forever his opportunity

of salvation. Eventually, in Genesis 4:16-17, he went out from there and built a city without the presence of God.

Religion's Rage

It is my opinion that these brothers got into a fight. What do you suppose the argument was about? Religion.

A short time after they brought their sacrifices, I picture Cain and Abel working on the farm, and Abel says to Cain, "I want to know why you would not bring a blood offering. Dad taught us to do that. Mom taught us to do that. God did that for them (see Genesis 3:21). They were saved by the blood of a substitute, by the blood offering that pointed to the Savior who will come one day—the Lamb that will take away the sins of the world. Why wouldn't you do it, Cain?"

Though the Bible does not say that this is what happened between them, it is a possible scenario.

Cain became enraged. He was probably so angry over the argument of the Blood versus religion that he killed his own brother. In fact, when God approached Cain, the Bible says that Cain was "filled with wrath." Even when God

approached him, he was filled with wrath.

Thousands of people in churches today do not believe in a Christianity that bases Redemption on the shed blood of a perfect Man. There are preachers who do not believe it is necessary to teach the importance of the Blood, and they do not believe the redemptive value of the literal shed blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. They emphasize Christ's physical death and, most of all, His spiritual death that lasted for three hours on the Cross (Matthew 27:45-46). Those facts are important, too. Yet thousands of professing born-again Christians have never heard proper teaching on the efficacious Blood of Christ.*

**Read* Victory Is Ours through the Blood*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

Chapter Two

ONE WAY TO KINGDOM LIVING

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

"But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

"To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

"And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

"And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

"This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

"Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily,

verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

"All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:1-9).

Just One Door

Genesis 6 tells us that God told Noah to build an ark. The Lord said, "Noah, after you build the ark, you have to fill it with animals—two of every kind."

Then, He said, "I want the ark to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high."

The ark was 475 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high, yet this massive structure was to have only one window. And where was that window? *Above*. Now, can you imagine constructing something such as this? It was only to have one window, above.

Furthermore, the ark was to have only one door (Genesis 6:16, 7:16)—only one way in—because there is only one door by which we can enter God's presence, and that door is Jesus Christ.

Jesus did not say, "I am *many* doors." He

said, "I am *the* door. If any man enter in, he must enter in by Me. I am the door for the sheep." The Door is also the Shepherd of the sheep.

He said, "You can enter through the door and go in, and then you can go out and find pasture." Pasture speaks of receiving categorical doctrine taught in mercy (see Psalm 23).

There were not two doors in Noah's ark. There was one door. Genesis 7:16 tells us that *God* shut that door. God shut it, making sure that the crying, fearful unbelievers who rejected God and were outside that door could not get in. Just as Jesus explained in the parables, the unbelievers could not get in because God shut the door. Can you imagine how it would feel to see the flood waters rising and to be outside the safety of the ark?

We boldly evangelize and minister to our city for one reason: There are thousands and thousands of people outside the Door. Thank God, we can offer them the way in, which is Jesus Christ. They can be saved now. But the day will come when the door will be shut. Jesus Christ is the only Door into heaven. There is no other way (John 14:6).

Don't Close Out Jesus' Fellowship

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus said to the Church of Laodicea, "I stand at the door and knock." The members of that church had closed the door. They had closed the way for Jesus to come in and fellowship with them.

Many of the Laodicean church members were saved. They were saved because the Bible tells us that at one time they had been "hot." If they had been hot, then they had to have been saved. Therefore, they still were saved when Jesus said this to them.

The problem with the Laodicean people was that they would not partake of Bible doctrine, the Word of God, or the Holy Spirit. They went through religious motions, but they were neither hot nor cold. They were lukewarm and not on fire for God. So Jesus finally said to them, "I stand at the door and knock because you are saved, but My Kingdom is not inside of you. I am inside of you, but My Kingdom is not reigning in you."

Letting God Rule in You

When Jesus is in you, you are saved. When the Kingdom is in you, you are delivered. Having God's Kingdom operating inside of you, the

Father, the Son, and the Spirit, with categorical doctrine controlled by God Himself, govern your life with your consent. By free volition, you make yourself available to receive and respond and reflect the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

In Laodicea, the Christians were not cold but they were not hot. Their problem was that they did not have the Kingdom of God operating inside of them. This is why 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves to see if you be in the faith." The Greek grammar reveals the instrumental case, meaning we are to examine ourselves to see if the government of God is the main instrument inside of us. If God's Kingdom is not in a Christian, he is reprobate. This is what God has said, and to be reprobate means to be disapproved.

You can be saved but disapproved of by God. When you are disapproved by His plan, His purpose, and His government and leadership, you are disapproved in terms of the Kingdom. It is the Kingdom of God that has the power. It is by the Trinity—the Planner, the Executor, and the Revealer—that we are guided and given definition according to the Word of God.

Why don’t people let the Kingdom of God reign inside of them? Often it is because they are too lazy, too careless, or too proud.

In Joshua 7, Achan, his wife, and their family were cursed, stoned, and burned because he coveted and took something that God told him not to take. The family tent was burned. Their belongings were burned. Their animals were burned. They were burned. Everything about them was cursed and burned. Then it was all covered by a heap of stones. The valley of Achor was cursed because of what Achan did.

But then, in Hosea 2:15, God said, "I will take the valley of Achor and turn it into a door of hope." God takes that which is cursed and turns it into a blessed hope for every believer.

Chapter Three

CARRIED BY THE WATERS THAT FLOW FROM THE DOOR

"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3).

Our lips are a kind of door, and every time we open our mouths and do not edify the listener, we are not watchmen. We have not set a watch over our mouth, and we have not kept the door of our lips. Our lips can reveal a silver tongue of redemption (Proverbs 10:20) that has the power of life. Or, we can reveal a tongue of death that can kindle a fire of destruction (Proverbs 18:21).

Pray that God would set a watch over our mouths and keep the door of our lips, because they are a door for God. They can let people in, and they can keep people out. They can bless people or hurt people, so we need to pray for God to set a watch over our mouths and to keep the door closed if it ought to be kept closed.

"Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door" (James 5:9).

This verse makes an interesting point. If you want to criticize, to malign, or to find fault with somebody, the Judge stands at the door while you do it. Jesus did not come to judge the world, yet He said that the very words He spoke will eventually judge us (John 12:48; Acts 13:46). He is at the door, listening to every word you have to say, and you will be accountable for your words (Romans 14:12).

In Song of Solomon 8:9, a group of brothers speak of their little sister, saying, "If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar." Though a wall can have a negative meaning, often in the Scriptures it is good (Proverbs 25:28). This wall speaks of having categorical doctrine as the basis for a life of Redemption. If this little sister is a wall of doctrine, then a silver palace of Redemption will be built upon her; and if she is a door for God, she will be enclosed with beautiful and precious boards of cedar.

Everything we say and everything we listen to is some type of a door. Every day of our lives,

we have the opportunity as believers to be a door for others to gain entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Measured for Service

"Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

"Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

"And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.

"Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.

"Afterward he measured a thousand; and it

was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over" (Ezekiel 47:1-5).

The prophet Ezekiel used spiritual language to explain his vision of God's throne. The waters issued forth "from under the threshold of the house eastward." The east speaks of resurrection. Every morning the sun rises in the east. The waters came from the throne of God—the Spirit, the power, the grace, and the energy of the living God. God's operational provision came down from heaven, in resurrection form.

Also, the waters came "from under the right side of the house." The right side speaks of the Finished Work. After He died on the Cross, Jesus was seated at the right hand of the Father. This is the resurrection power of the Finished Work operating through us.

The "south side" is the world's side. "North" is heaven (Job 26:7, Psalm 48:2). At the south side was the altar, which refers to the Cross where God's Lamb was sacrificed. The Cross was for the world. There Christ died for the sins of the world.

In Leviticus 12:6, the children of Israel had to bring a lamb at the door. It had to be at the door. It could not be on the side at the wall. It

either had to be at the altar or at the door, because there is only one Door: Jesus Christ.

The measuring line went out 1,000 cubits—1,000, speaking of God plus nobody. God is number one, and He needs no one else to accomplish His purpose.

In the vision he received from God, Ezekiel was being led through the waters. The first measurement took him into waters were up to his ankles. That speaks of the believer becoming saved and walking in the Spirit. Again, the measuring line went out, and the waters were up to the knees as he developed a prayer life. Next, the waters went to the loins, picturing a life of service.

Finally, Ezekiel was brought to the point where the waters were risen over him, and the waters carried him. This speaks of the place we reach where we are carried by God's government in the Kingdom of God. In this state, we are carried by the power of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit operating in us as we become operational parts of the Door. We offer entrance into God's Kingdom so that whosoever will may come.

CONCLUSION

"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:9)

A tremendous door is open—a great door, an effectual door. We will have adversaries; but in spite of opposition, we need to pray as the apostle Paul did for "a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ" (Colossians 4:3). That is a beautiful verse. There needs to be prayer, and prayer, and more prayer for a door of utterance. There needs to be intercession. There needs to be supplication. We need to pray often, with many brief prayers through the day, whenever we can, so that our utterance will be like an open door as we reveal the mystery of Christ who is in us, the mystery of the Church Age, the mystery of the dispensation of grace (Ephesians 3:2).

By definition, a door must have moveable parts. Where a number of people honor the vi-

sion and obey the Great Commission to seek the lost, God sees an open door. The more people praying for souls to be saved will determine the extent of the Word of God revival we will experience. Everything is dependent upon the door of our lips, the door of utterance, the door with the Blood on it, the door of our mouth that opens and closes with resurrection life coming out. Everything points to the Door—our Savior, our Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

A Heart After God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will" (Acts 13:22).

It is important for me to know that the knowledge I have of God becomes God's life in me. The patience that I develop through following God becomes contentment for my life. The truth that I understand turns into love, grace, and mercy through the indwelling Spirit. Then, we have fellowship with God because of an inward revival that makes us meek. Meekness that comes from a revival inwardly makes us gentle outwardly. With gentleness comes kindness that always produces a spirit of faith-rest. The Cross of Calvary always brings in a Christ-like attitude. A heart that is up-to-date with God is a heart that has a fresh response to God.

I want to show you from the Bible how one

man practiced a life of revival. In His foreknowledge, God saw this man and decided that he would be the man, thirty years before this man was born. In 1 Samuel 13, the prophet Samuel said to Saul, "But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee" (1 Samuel 13:14). He was referring to David.

God kept looking for a man. What was the qualification God was looking for? He was looking for a man who had a heart after Him.

He could have found Samuel who was a beautiful man of God. He could have chosen Jesse, the father of David, whose name indicates "living water of the Almighty God." He could have chosen Saul also, and He did choose him to be king, but He did not choose Saul as the man after His own heart. He could have selected Abner, the commander-in-chief of the army, but He didn't. God selected a teenager, a young man who remained committed to caring for his father's sheep.

You know, many people have this idea that teenagers are not supposed to be spiritual, that

they don't know what they want to do with their life. But God chose a teenager. Why did He choose this teenager? You will find out in these pages. Read on and you will see that this teenager knew how to fellowship with God. He knew how to get to know God. He knew how to be trained by God, how to trust God—how to go after God.

Chapter One

A POINT OF REFERENCE AND A FRAME OF REFERENCE

What is a man who is after God's own heart? First of all, the word "heart" refers to a point of reference and a frame of reference. A man after God's heart is a man who is after God's point of reference, which is salvation through the Cross. This is God's frame of reference, which is governmental doctrine through grace.

David was a man after God with his point of reference and with his frame of reference. When something happened, he had both a point of reference and a frame of reference, and he got to know God's heart.

A man after God's own heart must learn to know what God's heart is—to know God's point of reference all the time and to understand God's frame of reference for every subject and for every detail of life. We've got to know God's heart if we're going to go after God's heart. So

David, at a very young age, got to know God's point of reference and God's frame of reference.

If a man is after God's own heart, he has to agree with God's heart. David agreed with God's heart. If a man is after God's own heart, he must have a heart like God, and he must fulfill all of God's will. According to the Bible, David was that man.

God Makes His Choice

Many years before David was born, God was searching for a man after His own heart. Why didn't He choose Abner, the commander-in-chief, or Samuel, the prophet? I do not know. But He was searching for a man after His own heart.

One day, the Philistines came against the army of Israel, boasting and bragging. The nine-foot giant Goliath was taunting the army of Israel, and he had the feeling that a victory was just around the corner. The name "Goliath" means "alienation from God; banishment; exile because of God's wrath." The Philistine would be alienated from God and banished from God's sight because of God's wrath over his rebellious indifference.

David's three brothers were with Saul at the

battle site, but David was still at home, caring for the sheep. He was a teenager in training for a great task ahead.

This is a beautiful picture. Often, teenagers do not realize that of all the men, women, preachers, and famous men around them, they can be chosen as people after God's heart. Here was a little boy back home, taking care of the sheep, but he was fellowshipping with God. He was getting to know God's heart. When God told him how to rescue the lamb from the mouth of the bear and from the mouth of the lion, he agreed with God on how to do it. When God told him to humble himself, he agreed with God. As a teenager and as a young man, he was learning how to agree with God.

David was not even the most desired one of his family. His three elder brothers did not particularly respect him because of his humility and his favor with God. This young man accepted his training in the field with the sheep.

The Boy Beats the Giant

One day, David was told by his father to take food to his brothers who were on the front lines where Goliath was. This young man, who was seemingly left behind, revealed the results

of the training program of honoring God's heart. All would see that David had developed into a man whose knowledge became filled with compassion; whose faith became courageous and bold; whose truth turned into love, mercy, and grace; whose point of reference and frame of reference, no matter what would happen in his life, was like Christ.

As he arrived on the scene, the Philistine was screaming and hollering. Saul was afraid. The soldiers were afraid. Then David said, "One day I rescued a lamb from a bear and from a lion as well, and I did smite the beard of the raging animal. Just as God delivered that lion and that bear into my hand, so He will deliver this Philistine."

He had courage, he was bold, and he was faithful to the Word of God. David did not fear as Saul feared. His trust was solely in God. He was not occupied with his enemies. His elder brothers mocked him. They told him that he was arrogant and proud and that he should go home and take care of the sheep. But the situation was desperate. No one else was there to do the job. The three brothers did not want him to do it, but they couldn't do it. They didn't have the courage.

There is always someone who is willing to take on the enemies of this world. Somewhere there is a man after God's heart. Reading this very booklet, there are special men and special women who are willing to take on the Philistines of the world. They are willing to let God train them, and they are willing to be occupied with Christ.

David tried on Saul's armor, but he said, "I have not proved it. The armor I want to use is armor I have already proven."

When the Word of God is the means of our obedience, then our testing ground is with the Word. David's testing ground was the Word. He was tested by the Word, and he proved the Word.

The Philistine was mocking him and confronting him with all kinds of statements, but David simply said, "God will deliver you into our hands, for the battle is the Lord's."

God says the battle is His, and David agreed with Him. God was David's point of reference for victory, and the doctrine of victory was his frame of reference. He said, "The Lord will deliver you into our hands."

How could David, a teenager, be so victorious? Just one way. He had a heart after God.

Chapter Two

A STONE MADE SMOOTH BY LIVING WATERS

God knew David's life before He chose him. He knew everything about David before the foundation of the world. He chose David, and He didn't make a mistake. Nothing David ever did was a surprise to God. He chose him because He knew He had a man after His heart.

David took a little stone. The streams of the living water had shaped that stone and fashioned it over the years, making it smooth. He had five stones in all, but he took this smooth little stone, put it in his slingshot, and said to the giant, "I come against you in the name of God."

He was a teenager going up against the world in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He went against all the mocking voices and all the temptations that came into their path. Here was a teenager representing God's heart and representing the army and the nation of Israel. Here

was a teenager who talked with his God in the wilderness, who had been with his God.

The battle was going on in the valley of Elah, and it was a valley. It was a valley where Saul didn't have any strength. But you know what "Elah" means? It means "a place of derived strength."

Saul didn't have any strength. David's three elder brothers didn't have any strength. The army of Israel didn't have any strength. Judah had been invaded. Israel was being terribly threatened and was often humiliated by the Philistine army. In this valley, threatened by Goliath, they didn't have any strength.

Here was an enemy upon whom was the wrath of God because Goliath was alienated from God. He was a man who would be banished from God's sight. If anyone had God's heart, then this enemy would be placed in exile, banished, and destroyed because God said he was His enemy. But in this valley of Elah, Saul and his soldiers didn't have any strength.

The Valleys

A problem for many people today is that they lack strength in the valleys. They fear the valleys. There is no job, no proper apartment,

and no security in sight. Business is going poorly. They get discouraged after two months when God might want to train them for forty years. You'd think that for their whole life they were in poverty, as some have been. They don't have a happy day when they are in a trial. It is a training period, but they are not happy. It is the trial of their faith.

We face the job that we have to do with multitudes of enemies in our midst: carnality, fear, insecurity, rebellion, pride, self-righteousness, and temporal security. We live in the midst of these enemies, but greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4).

First John 5:4 says that this is the victory that overcomes all the world system, even our faith in our God. David said, "I'm not afraid. This valley is a valley of strength. I'm not afraid. My God is a God of the valleys."

The Assyrians found that out in 1 Kings 20:27-28. They mocked Israel and said: "God is the God of the hills, but He is not the God of the valleys." God said, "I'll show them that I am the God of the valleys."

Some of you don't treat the people you live with like God would. You don't have God's heart. You're not after God's heart. You don't

love your neighbor as yourself. You're not a good neighbor, living in your home. You're not a neighbor as a husband. You're not a neighbor as a wife. You're not a neighbor as a friend. You are indifferent. You ought to be ashamed, and in humility you ought to repent. You don't understand the valleys.

The valley is to reveal that God is the God of the valleys—that Jesus Christ gives victory, life, and power in any valley situation. He converts the knowledge into life. He takes the truth and turns it into love, mercy, and grace. He takes patience and turns it into contentment. He takes kindness and turns it into meekness.

David took the stone. It speaks of the Chief Cornerstone of 1 Peter 2:6 and Isaiah 28:16. The five stones speak of grace, and here was God's grace with the Chief Cornerstone being hurled at the enemy. The enemy fell to the ground, and David ran over with his sword and cut off his head. The head that was mocking David was now dissembled. The Philistines were running, and the Israelites went after them. They were a foe defeated. The enemy's head was cut off.

The Enemy is Defeated

Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, and res-

urrected. He ascended through the atmosphere of demons and is now in heaven seated at God's right hand as the God-Man, the glorified Man, the One who defeated the enemy.

Some of you act as if life is so difficult. Don't you know we have a defeated foe? Don't you know the devil's head has been cut off? Don't you know that everything he says is a lie? He has convinced you that you have to be sick the rest of your life, and that becomes an escape mechanism so you won't have to be responsible, as other people. "Remember, I've been sick for twenty-five years. I can't go out today. I can't be responsible because my stomach aches." The point is that sickness can be manufactured as a way of escape so you don't have to work.

The Christian who has God's frame of reference and point of reference—Calvary and resurrection and ascension—is chasing a defeated foe. The devil is defeated.

Chapter Three
HONOR GOD'S WORD

David arose in the darkness and then he went and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe. Afterward, David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

"And he said to his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD" (1 Samuel 24:6).

David revealed what happens when a man has a heart after God. Saul was very fearful. No longer was he fearful of the Philistines, but he was jealous of David. David had showed courage that he didn't have. David had showed him faith in God and God's favor. Saul didn't have it. David showed him how he was used to be a deliverer, and Saul didn't have it. So, Saul sought to kill him.

Now, David had an opportunity to get rid of

Saul, but he would not make a move that was not according to God's heart. First of all, he knew that Samuel had anointed Saul to be king.

David's life was a life of revival because he agreed with what God's Word said. He failed momentarily, but he adjusted to what God's Word said. Sin, as we will discover, is not the issue with God. David's life ended with the Holy Spirit writing that God didn't make any mistakes in choosing David.

David checked his men with the words in 1 Samuel 24:6 and did not let them rise against Saul. So, Saul rose up and left the cave and went out of the way, and then David went out of the cave and called to him saying, "Saul, my lord, the king." When Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth, and he humbled himself.

In verse 12, David said, "The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee; but mine hand shall not be upon thee."

This was a man after God's heart. First, he recognized that Saul was God's anointed. Second, he understood that God does the judging, so he couldn't touch Saul who was trying to kill him. Third, he humbled himself before Saul and submitted to him when Saul was trying to take

his life. He bowed to the earth in absolute humility.

A Heart of Humility

Why was David so humble? Why did David treat a murderer who had murder in his heart like that? There isn't one in a million on this planet today who even knows this kind of humility, not one in a million. I don't think there is one in twenty million who would practice this today.

David said, "The Lord judge between me and thee. I will not stretch forth mine hand to touch thee. You are the Lord's."

In 1 Samuel 26, the same thing happened again, and they found Saul and his guards sleeping. David's men wanted to strike Saul dead right there, and again David stopped them. David took the spear and the bottle of water that sat beside Saul's head, and they got away.

In verse 19, David called to the king. "Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord have stirred you up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of

the LORD… ."

Saul said, "I have sinned. I have sinned. I will do thee no more harm, because my life was precious in your eyes today. I played the fool and have erred exceedingly."

Then David offered back his spear and said, "I would not stretch forth my hand against the LORD'S anointed."

David's humility and heartbeat humbled Saul and changed Saul emotionally. Saul was touched by God's heart through David—temporarily, to be sure, but he was touched. For the second time, Saul was chasing him and trying to take his life. Once again, David humbled himself and would not touch Saul in any way, shape, or manner. Why? His point of reference, in principle, was Calvary. His frame of reference was God's mercy, God's love, and God's grace. God is the Judge. God is the One who makes the final decision. God is the One who implements the plan, and David would not go against the heart of God.

Mercy Makes A Difference

The problem with the Church today is that it knows nothing about revival in mercy. Twenty-six times in Psalm 136, David wrote, "His mercy

endures forever." David gave Saul mercy. He gave Saul unconditional love. He gave Saul godly patience. He was longsuffering. He let God be the Judge. He would not take anything into his own hands. He returned good for evil because he had a heart after God. That's revival.

As the story continues, David fell into deep sin. You say, "Does he have a heart after God now?" He fell into deep sin, and he did not have fellowship with God for a year. He had Uriah killed and he took Bathsheba to be his wife. He was silent. He was subdued. He covered up his guilt.

It would seem that his life for God was over. He was a murderer and an adulterer. It would seem that God would just let him go to the synagogue but not serve anymore.

Not so.

David understood something magnificent. God gave him a tremendous revelation (Psalm 32:1-2) that Paul reiterated in Romans 4:6-8, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

David knew and understood God's heart about sin. He understood that forgiveness forgets. He understood that grace followed him to the grave. He understood that mercy endures forever, and it followed him until he went home to be with God. He understood God's point of reference and God's frame of reference. He understood that God would use him, though he had done the one sin that was so serious—killing Uriah—because it took away Uriah's right to choose before his God in divine institution number one, free volition.

Was David's life over? No. He had a heart after God. He agreed with God about forgiveness. So, he repents in Psalm 51, the great psalm of repentance. In Psalm 51:4, he said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned."

That is what David understood about Saul. He gave Saul mercy. He let Saul answer to God. Now David was going to answer to God. That was his frame of reference. He was not bothered by people. He was not bothered with having rapport with others. He was not bothered by what the church thought. He said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." He had a heart after God. He had God's doctrine on grace, God's doctrine on forgiveness, and God's doc-

trine on mercy. In the midst of that terrible sin, God looked down and said, "David still has My heart. He is after Me."

Oh yes, he failed. Yes, he was chastised. Yes, he failed God miserably. Yes, he did wrong, and yes, he was penalized, but he had a heart that had God's frame of reference for his sin and God's point of reference for his recovery. David's pattern of repentance for his sin was to name it, forsake it, come back, and continue to be king.

Agree with God and Get Right

David understood God's heart. He didn't listen to men. He didn't listen to theologians. He didn't listen to this one and that one. He knew that God couldn't remember his sin. He knew that God had paid for his sin, and he knew that God had judged his sin. All God wanted him to do was admit it, confess it, get it behind him, and go on in the plan of fulfilling His will.

David had a heart after God. He was out to do one thing: fulfill God's will. Whatever would come up in his life, he would agree with doctrine. He would agree with the Word of God. He would agree with Calvary as the point of reference. Whatever happened, he would be patient,

longsuffering, and gracious. If he failed, as he did, his point of reference would be Calvary and restoration. The same ministry he gave others, he would then receive from God.

CONCLUSION

I want you to go all the way with Christ. Go after God with all your heart. Get to know Jesus Christ. Pray to Him and get to understand what is on God's heart. You've got to know what it is. Don't be caught up with people; be caught up with God. Don't be caught up with your feelings; instead be caught up with the Word. Don't be caught up with knowledge unless it's transferred into life. If you need to get patience, let it be transformed into meekness and contentment. God guides us with His heartbeat, with His thoughts, and with His plan.

David never turned aside. David fulfilled all of God's will. David was a man after God's heart, before he was born and all during his life.

That's why, throughout my many years of ministry, I have had a problem communicating with "modern" Christians. They do not have Calvary as their point of reference, nor do they have Finished Work mercy as their frame of ref-

erence. Somehow, they get in between with "this, that, but, and, if, all." They take things in their own hands, and they don't set God before their face in revival!

Let me ask you this question. Do you think I've added to the Bible? Do you think I've taken away from the Bible? Do you think I've privately interpreted the Scriptures? Well, I have not. I could go on with a lot more if I wanted to. I gave you a New Testament commentary.

Have a heart after God. Have heart like David's.

A Journey into Grace

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INTRODUCTION

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

The journey of grace begins the moment a person first receives God's free gift of grace for salvation, accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ's blood as the atonement for his sin. Now, along with every other believer, we share the privilege of glorifying God by walking in His grace and radiating that grace to others. In fact, this is the very reason God created us.

Grace—God's favor and high esteem for us—is not based on anything we have done to earn it, but upon His eternal, omnipotent, omniscient love for us. God's mercy is what saves us from the pit of hell and keeps us from getting

what we deserve because of sin. God's grace, however, gives us what we do not deserve: the opportunity to be quickened by His Word with eternal life and to glorify God in this life.

The journey of grace is learning how to continually receive God's grace for every area of our lives. If we keep that in mind, we won't be concerned with how far we have yet to travel. With each step, we will be filled with awe at the goodness of the Savior, who said, "I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the world."

Chapter One

WALKING IN GOD'S PROVISION

God will do what He says He will do in His Word. In Jeremiah 28:7, God says, "Nevertheless *hear thou this word that I speak in thine ears,* and in the ears of all the people." Then He says in Ezekiel 12:25, "For I am the LORD: I will speak, and *the word that I shall speak shall come to pass;* it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will *I say the word, and will perform it*, saith the Lord God." God is saying that what He speaks will happen just as He says. It *shall* come to pass.

A major difference between Christians in every church service is that some believe God's Word when they hear it and are changed, while others come and listen, yet they remain in Adam (the old sin nature). They do not receive their place at Calvary, and they will not accept their death with Jesus Christ as a finished work (Galatians 2:20). Oh, they do accept Christ's death for

them, but they do not accept *their* death with Christ.

According to Jeremiah 30:12, those who choose to live in Adam cannot be cured. Their wounds and bruises are incurable. Adam will never be healed. As a result, these Christians will leave a church service condemning themselves and running down themselves. They foolishly forsake God's program of grace in the Bible.

The psalmist said in his despair, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word" (Psalm 119:25). Do you ever wonder why you are so miserable when you live in Adam? The answer is found when we look at God's Word—the Manual that outlines every detail of who we are and how we operate. Because He made us, only God knows the answers to the internal and external problems we face.

Let God Quicken You

Consider Isaiah 57:15, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive [quicken] the heart of the contrite

ones." According to this verse, Christians who are humble and contrite will be just as quickened—filled with spiritual life—now on earth as God is in heaven.

Every person born into this world lives, speaks, and moves in this world. Ultimately everyone will die. And unless their human spirit has been quickened by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, they will die without Christ (see Ephesians 2:1, 5). No one will be quickened unless he is first made contrite (broken) and humble. That is God's plan. When we refuse His declared provision, we limit the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78:41).

Consider Your Options

If you choose to walk in the Spirit, you can have everything that you desire with God while you live in this world. But if you want to live in misery, you also have that option. The Christian who refuses to walk in the Spirit can choose to become morbidly depressed. It's an option. He can choose to live with the effects of the world, the flesh, and the devil. That's an option. The barroom, for those who want it to be, is an option. But some Christians have ruled out those options. They refuse to consider them because

they are not options for the Spirit-filled believer.

We have an option to *live* today! We have an option for joy, for power, for love, for thanksgiving, for hope, and for understanding. We have the option to make this the very best day of our lives because God made it. By God's grace we will only accept *His* options. And according to Ezekiel 12:25*b*, we let Him perform it; God does the work in us.

Accept the Gift of Grace

As Christians in the Church Age, we have a greater provision, a greater privilege, and a greater responsibility than believers in any other time. Acts 2:23 speaks of the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (the meeting of the Trinity in eternity past to discuss the eternal purpose and plan for the human race). Because they had foreknowledge of all human decisions, the Trinity decided to treat man only according to grace. Grace was to be revealed by the supernatural, unconditional love that sent Jesus Christ to the cross. He would bear our sins in His own body (1 Peter 2:24) and pay for our iniquities.

According to this plan, whoever believes upon Christ with all of his heart will have the record of his sins erased forever. But if a person

continues to sin after believing upon Jesus Christ, God will chastise him in love in order to restore fellowship. The chastisement is first mental and then emotional. If there is still no response, God intensifies the emotional chastisement and brings it into the physical realm through the central nervous system.

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. *There is a sin unto death*: I do not say he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16). If necessary, God brings chastisement into domestic relationships, and eventually, the believer's refusal to get right may culminate in scourging with the sin unto physical death. God takes the believer home to heaven early when they continue year after year without repentance or accepting pure grace.

Grace depends upon the character of God never upon the character of a man, and the whole purpose of chastisement is never to condemn a Christian, because the price for our sin was paid in full at Calvary; it is a finished work. Now, God's purpose is to draw us with cords of love back to Himself. But the consequence of a decision to continue in sin results in a loss of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.*

Romans 11:6 says, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." We can do *nothing* to merit God's favor. Why do we struggle so much on this point?

In 1 Peter 5:10, God is described as the God of all grace. Jesus Christ finished the work when He paid for the sins of the world on Calvary. John 1:16 tells us that when we were saved, we all received of His fullness, "…and grace for grace."

The word "fullness" in the Greek is *pleroma*. It means that Jesus Christ has done everything that He could ever do for us by shedding His precious blood, and there is nothing more He can do to add to it. God said in Isaiah 5:4*a*, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"

"And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17). Whenever we hear the name of Jesus Christ, we should remember that He is constantly revealing His mind about grace

and all He has done for us forever through the Finished Work.

Can you grasp this? Without even understanding it, using it, or revealing it, *we have already received the fullness of grace.* The problem is that we just don't understand how to apply it for deliverance, salvation, or healing, whether physical or emotional. That is why we need messages like this, that we would know Him.

**Read the first booklet in this series,* A Judgment of Grace, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998, and* The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?, *Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

UPHELD BY THE POWER OF GRACE

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). Grace has supreme authority because the Lord Jesus Christ is grace. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." That "all power" (omnipotence) is released in grace. God will never release His power to anyone except through grace.

When a person's faith responds to grace, faith and grace are "married." In this union, they have communion through the Word of God and love is manifested. The manifestation of this love goes deep inside a person no matter what condition they are in, regardless of whether they are neurotic, psychotic, born with a genetic defect, or suffer from a chemical imbalance. When the power of this love is internalized, it does a miraculous work because of the nature of grace

that is demonstrated by love and experienced through faith, while God's mercy rejoices against judgment.

Let me illustrate this principle. Recently, our church put on a play entitled, *Heaven or Hell: The Final Destiny*. One person who came to the play was an eighteen-year-old drug addict from the inner city who had been using cocaine and heroin for five years. During a scene about the White Throne Judgment showing the unsaved being cast into hell, the young man began to weep. At the end when the invitation for salvation was given, he raised his hand to receive Christ. Several days later, he sent me a letter saying, "I'm free. I am so *free*!"

Two couples who had been involved in sexual perversions came to the play on another night. I asked the person who was playing the role of the pastor in the play that night to address adultery, homosexuality, and lesbianism—which he did. All four people got saved.

Another man who attended the play was thirty-eight years old and had been drinking hard liquor since he was twelve or thirteen. When he heard about the grace of God and saw the scene with the angels at the Bema Seat, he said, "I don't want the alcohol any more. It

doesn't do a thing for me." He came forward weeping and was gloriously saved and delivered.

Grace is the most marvelous thing in all the world. There's nothing like it under heaven. It is unfathomable, incomprehensible, and overwhelming to the human mind. Grace is God's nature—it is who He is. It is God acting through Christ, on behalf of all sinners, at Calvary. That's where we find grace. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is how grace functions: through child-like faith.

Quickened by God's Grace

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:1-3).

This passage is saying that though we have been quickened, we, like all people, have wicked

old sin natures. In times past, we were spiritually dead, walking according to the course of the world system and Satan. Our conversation, or manner of living, was not right. By nature, we were just like Satan, who recreates his personality through people in the form of self-defense mechanisms.

"*But God*, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us…"—this applies to *everyone* including homosexuals, alcoholics, drug addicts, liars, and thieves—"…even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-7).

But God—! The first moment that we believe, God does these things for us, justifying us while we are yet ungodly (see Romans 4:5). Before our condition has changed one iota, grace has done it all.

Grace is a Free Gift

The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:7-9, "Whereof I was made a minister, according to

the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, *is this grace given*, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And *to make all men see* what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

The "fellowship of the mystery" in this passage refers to grace in me, grace in you, living, loving, and transcending every imperfection. Paul said that the "gift of the grace of God" was "given" to him. The verb "given" in the original is an aorist passive indicative, which means that the subject—Paul, as well as all believers—receives the action of grace dogmatically.

The phrase "to make all men see" (what is the fellowship of the mystery) is an aorist active infinitive in the Greek, pointing to God's purpose in giving grace: to bring to light the fellowship of the mystery of grace.

Revealing Grace

Ephesians 3:10-12 continues, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places *might be known* by the church

the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."

The phrase, "might be known" is an aorist passive subjunctive. This means that the subject—the church—chooses to receive the action of God's manifold wisdom. We *choose* to see what grace is in a man or woman by choosing to do more than just receive grace—we choose to absorb it, comprehend it, and live in it by faith. Then we become instruments of manifesting grace to a world that doesn't know God. We are ambassadors of Jesus Christ to reveal grace and love to sinners in the world.

Grace is the authority of our victory, the badge of overcoming, and the transforming power to be continually renewed. The old things like lust, pride, and arrogance pass away, and grace comes inside to stabilize our faculties, making us brand new—edifying, creative, constructive, happy, and joyous—as God shares His life with sinners who have become saints.

Chapter Three

WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO GRACE

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (I Corinthians 3:9-17).

If a Christian is building upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, he will receive gold, silver, and precious stones. If he lives as a carnal Christian, his work will be wood, hay, and stubble. "Gold" speaks of the divine word of Deity; "silver" speaks of the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit; and "precious stones" speaks of being a member in particular in the temple, the Body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:17; 1 Peter 2:5). "Wood" speaks of human works, a Christian working things out in his flesh; "hay" represents emotionalism; and "stubble" is hearing doctrine and knowing it intellectually but never experiencing it.

The Bema Seat Judgment is a result of the journey of God's grace on earth trying the Body of Christ in heaven with the fire of the Holy Spirit. Everything about this judgment comes under the government, authority, and power of grace. And remember: God cannot deal with man apart from grace.

In the final analysis, we will be accountable to God for what we have done with the grace He has given us. God wants us to "…grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). He gave us grace so that we could grow. Grace has been given to us so that when we suffer, His strength will be made perfect in our weakness (see 2 Corinthians 12:9).

God gave us grace so that we could "…come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). He gave us grace so we could become great intercessors, praying through grace, weeping through grace, asking through grace, praising Him through grace, and loving Him through His perfect grace.

We have grace to suffer, so that if there is a problem in our family or friendships, we treat each one in grace. We must always deal with everything in the power of grace.

Paul said to Timothy, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1). God desires for us to become strong in the power of His grace.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am…" (1 Corinthians 15:10). God will look to see if we labored in His grace; to see if our marriage was established in grace. Was our conversation in grace?

"Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28). At the Bema Seat, God will ask, "Did you serve Me totally in grace? Were you obedient to grace? My grace saved you, but did it control you? Did it transform you? Did you manifest grace to others through the Holy Spirit?"

The Word of God says in 1 Peter 4:10, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." The word "manifold" means "on every side." The purpose of God's grace is for us to receive it and then just keep on giving it.

The Bema Seat is a grace judgment, not a sin judgment. It is based on what we did with the grace we received. The question will be, did grace become effective, working in us, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live quietly in doctrine in this present evil world? Did grace give us the mind of Christ and

produce God's value system in us?

God's Justice

Many Christians live in pettiness, moodiness, and negativity. Even those who have been saved for years need to have their emotions pampered because they have never grown in grace. They need approval because of a poor self-image and poor self-esteem. If they are not clean inside, they do not draw near to God to receive grace, but instead they withdraw. They need to get to know the God of all grace.

The Bible says in Isaiah 59:14-16 that "*judgment is turned away backward,* and *justice standeth afar off*: for *truth is fallen in the street,* and *equity cannot enter*. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey. And the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

"And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor…."

What is judgment? The Lord's judgment is found in Isaiah 42:2-4: He did not lift up His voice—He didn't cry out nor cause His voice to be heard on the street. A bruised reed He would not break. A smoking flax He would not quench. He brought forth truth unto judgment. *He did*

not fail, neither did He get discouraged. And according to Isaiah 3:13, the Lord stands up and pleads for His people, and *He* judges His people.

God Pleads to Give Us Grace

In Proverbs 23:11, the Lord is a mighty Redeemer, and He pleads for the cause of His people; but what is He pleading?

Watch the progression: "Judgment is turned away backward…." There we see mercy rejoicing against judgment (James 2:13).

"…Justice stands afar off…." God desires to give us something that goes beyond justice.

"…Truth…" that is fallen in the street refers to grace in the Person of Jesus Christ, "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14*b*), despised by the men He came to save.

"…Equity…"—God's provision of mercy and grace for growing—"…cannot enter."

"Yea, truth faileth…." But why does truth fail? Because people will not mix faith with what they hear. They will not realize what a miraculous story this is! This revelation can take a weary man who has had no sleep and fill him with power. It will fill a man with joy when he knows that he is justified by faith in Christ. He will have peace with God through Jesus Christ

—and by this faith we all stand.

This is what God is pleading. Because of grace, we can have access to the glory of God right now and rejoice for the future glory that is ours in heaven. But like any gift, it must be received.

Receive Not the Grace of God in Vain

"We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye *receive not the grace of God in vain*. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses…" (2 Corinthians 6:1-4).

Once again, *everything* about the Bema Seat judgment and the gain or loss of rewards is directly related to grace. We cannot stress this enough. Listen to what the apostle Paul goes on to say to the Corinthians in verses 11-12:

"Our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels." Paul was say-

ing, "Your emotions are damaged, not by me but because you would not receive grace."

"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15). When a Christian fails the grace of God and doesn't rebound, he will be troubled by a root of bitterness and his negative confession will begin to defile those around him.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Christ did not die on the cross alone. I died with Him, I was buried with Him and I was raised up with Him; and so were you. By the grace of God, I now live by His faith in me. "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21).

What can we do in response to this marvelous grace? We can only say, *Thank You*. This is why we give thanks in everything and for everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20). The praises that will go forth throughout all of eternity are the endless expressions of gratitude

from all the saints for this gift of grace.

Our Stewardship of Grace Exposed

At the Bema Seat, God is not going to expose a Christian's sins or iniquities. The Lord Jesus Christ will reveal the fact that He did everything for us and gave us the fullness of His grace, and He will expose where it was received in vain. God will expose whether we, as Christ's ambassadors in Satan's world, revealed the stewardship of grace or frustrated it. If we frustrated grace consistently, we will experience shame at the Bema Seat (see 1 John 2:28).

Christ will show each one of us the scars in His hands, His side, and His feet, and He will say, "I did it all for you; I paid for all of your sins. You know that is true, because the pastor I sent to you taught you these things. But you received My grace in vain. When the message I sent to deliver you in a certain area was preached, you became negative instead of letting Me turn you."

We need to take our minds off ourselves. God couldn't accept us in Adam, so He crucified us. The old sin nature is incurable, so death is the only remedy. And now we need to put our minds on Jesus Christ and grow. As we venture

forth together on this journey into grace, *know* that no man can take away what has been given to us by God.

CONCLUSION

Grace is a teacher. Grace never condemns, but it commends us through love and through our faith. Whether you are living in adultery, passivity, drug addition, or alcoholism—whatever the sin, come to God and let Him turn you and give you the gift of repentance to forsake your sins and never go back to them again.

Come out and be free today because God loves you. He is for you and He wants to use you as an instrument of grace to manifest His precious life. While we're on earth, on the journey of grace, God wants us to show His life by ministering grace to every person we can.

Father, in these days when everyone seems to be looking out for himself, teach us to be able ministers of Your grace. We cannot perform it in our flesh and our failure has left us so broken. Thank You for always coming again with a fresh revelation of Your perfect plan and provision through Your amazing grace. Amen.

A Judgment of Grace

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The thought of standing before Jesus Christ face to face is awe-inspiring. One day, every believer will be brought before the Bema Seat and the record of his life will be there for evaluation. How does that make you feel? Are you fearful? You shouldn't be, provided you are operating in the power of His grace with His love being shed abroad in your heart.

God is the God of all grace and His "all grace" extends to the Bema Seat as well. Every reward we receive will correlate to the demonstration and experience of His grace in our lives. It will not be the work of *our* righteousness that matters at the Bema Seat. Those things we produced through self-effort will be burned up as wood, hay, and stubble, leaving no eternal results. But what was rendered through grace will remain forever as gold, silver, and precious stones.

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, will sit as our

judge. He will judge as the Lamb, the One who laid down His life as a ransom for us. Keep this in mind as you read this booklet and discover the truth about God's judgment of grace.

Chapter One

THE RECORD OF GRACE

In His fullness, Jesus Christ as a human being satisfied the justice of God the Father by living a perfect life on earth (Psalm 85:10-12). Pure and spotless because He never sinned, Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb, accepted by the Father. He went to heaven where He entered into His royal session at the throne of grace. Seated as God and accepted as a Man, Christ made it possible for all men to go to heaven freely through grace and mercy, and all of us can have help any time we need it.

The moment he is saved, because of perfect redemption, forty-six irrevocable things happen to a believer by grace. We are under grace, not under law. Even if our wrong choices cause Him to take us home to heaven early, He takes us home because of grace.

When we do get to heaven, Christ will examine the record of our lives to determine our

eternal rewards. Everything said in the judgment for believers will be relative to grace. When we come before Christ at the Bema Seat, the question He will ask is, How did you build? Out of His fullness we are to receive grace for grace, and we are to build on a foundation not laid by man. That foundation is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

The apostle Paul was a wise masterbuilder who established the foundation for the Church by receiving the grace of God. But what happens when I am part of a local assembly for years and never grow? Even if I don't commit overt sins, the Bible says that I'm supposed to have a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). I will be saved because of grace, but when the production of my life is tested by fire at the Bema Seat, all the rewards I might have earned will be lost (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Edifying Communication

When I open my mouth, do I edify and minister grace to the hearers? Or do my words manipulate people to give *me* grace and pay attention to my needs? I am to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, operating according to the honor code of the royal family, esteem-

ing others as better than myself and honoring their individual freedom (Philippians 2:3).

I am to owe no man anything but love (Romans 13:8). Called to be a good steward, I am to love others as God loves me through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Whatever I do, I do not need special attention. I have no approbation lust, so I don't need to hear someone say, "Good job" for everything I do.* I don't need the praise of men, although some people may express their love because of honor. There is no power lust driving me to usurp authority or to control people through manipulation. I am hid in the Body of Christ, participating as a member in particular. I am a steward of the grace that is coming toward me on every side (1 Peter 4:10).

Turned by Grace to Deliverance

If I cannot receive grace to give up overt sins, then I am receiving grace in vain. Grace is a relationship with a Person, Jesus Christ, and "the effectual working of his power in me" (Ephesians 3:7). The whole purpose of grace is not that it would be only a provision for salvation; it is also a provision to be exactly like Christ in the details of life. For the areas in my life where I have a hard time, I receive grace for

recovery, and I rebound. Of course, grace will continue to come toward me until I die. Yet God's purpose is that I would not only receive grace but grow in His grace all the time.

We need to say to God, "You turn me, Lord, and I will be turned; turn me and I will repent" (see Jeremiah 31:18-19). There are people who play little emotional games of manipulating everyone around them. They continue in sin that grace may abound, but in these cases, sin reigns unto death (Romans 6:2; 6:15). In other words, sin keeps reigning because they have not died to self, therefore grace cannot abound through righteousness by one, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:21).

Stewards of a Mystery

"And to make all men see what is *the fellowship of the mystery*, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9).

God will give me a process of grace for victory to meet me where I am, in any area of weakness. As far as salvation goes, sin is never an issue. But sin *is* an issue that can adversely affect my fellowship with this mystery. My sin will keep others from seeing Christ in me, the

fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning was hid in God. We carry this mystery—we are stewards of it—and we must be very careful with it. We do not bring the mystery of Christ's life in us into legalism, but instead we bring it into the journey of grace.

The point is this: either I'm graced out or I'm stressed out. Being graced out doesn't mean that I never fail. It means that I am honest. I don't live in denial. I use rebound and never accept failure as an excuse for not having God's power effectively working in me. I receive beyond what I ask or think, according to the power that works in me (Ephesians 3:20).

Power toward You, Power in You

Everyone likes the power that works *toward* himself. In Luke 15:13, the prodigal son went out into a far country. God's grace couldn't work *in* him any more because of his rebellion, so grace worked *toward* him, waiting until he got right. God always waits that He may be gracious to people (Isaiah 30:18). This doesn't mean that He ever withholds grace. Instead, He is waiting for His grace to work effectively in me.

If I have received the fullness of God, and grace for grace, then there are certain times

when I must keep on receiving grace through rebound. As an adopted child of God, I grow, and I can say, "Abba, Father," (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15). When I can say, "My Father," we have a very intimate, personal relationship—the effectual working of God is in me. Now God doesn't have to keep working *toward* me, He can work *in* and *through* me (Galatians 1:16). Paul, the apostle of grace, said that Jesus Christ was revealed in him through the "manifold" grace of God—grace on every side (1 Peter 4:10).

By the time grace works through me, I have entered into stewardship and I have also begun to experience 2 Corinthians 4:10-12: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you."

Bema Seat Rewards

Things that rub me the wrong way serve to reveal grace being worked through me. That's where I begin to build up rewards. First, grace must be revealed *in* me (Galatians 1:16), but I

will never receive rewards at the Bema Seat unless I become a good steward of the manifold grace of God for every relationship in my life: as a husband to my wife, as a pastor to God's people, as a friend to my neighbor, as a soul winner to the lost. That's the key.

By our fruit, we are known (see Matthew 7:16-20). At the Bema Seat, the judgment will be this: Did I bring forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit because of God's righteousness? (Romans 6:17-22). My eternal rewards will be based on whether I had love, joy, and peace on the inside (toward myself); longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness on the outside (toward others); and faith, meekness, and temperance upward (toward God).

The test of my life will show whether I glorified God to the maximum of divine production in grace (1 Corinthians 10:31). For that to happen, I must not receive grace in vain—but I must express the grace I receive.

The maiden in Song of Solomon didn't want the bridegroom to go anywhere without her. She wanted to possess him, to have Him only for herself. But a possessive person will not get a single reward at the Bema Seat of Christ unless he says, "Turn me, God, and I will be turned."

The minute we repent, *God* brings a change

in our mind. He will work in us and through us in many areas. People around us will be happily surprised at the change. It comes because of 2 Corinthians 4:15: "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace [of God] might through the thanksgiving of many [be multiplied] to the glory of God." A changed life makes everyone thankful for the grace that is being revealed.

God may work into my life things that are not good so I can give grace to everyone I meet in the process. When that is the case, as I grow I respond to God without reacting to people.

**For more about the six lust patterns common to men, read chapter one in* Dealing Precisely with Demons *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

TO DO OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (Philippians 2:12-17).

Our lives are to be a demonstration of God's work in us: an offering to God for people (1 John 3:16), a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). In 2 Corinthians 6, God desires that we would

cross over from mere knowledge of theology into the revelation of its meaning—from knowledge to wisdom, from theology to application, and from knowing to revealing. God's plan is for us to work out what He has worked within. But if that doesn't happen and we begin to murmur when God sends a trial, we will go to heaven, but we will suffer loss of rewards.

By God's design, each of us has an intellect, disposition, temperament, personality, complexion, and character. Through the *intellect*, information is processed in our minds. When it is a godly intellect, the information we perceive is transferred to the soul by way of the human spirit. That information is locked into our new frame of reference with a point of reference in the memory center, taking over the soul through the conscience.*

My *disposition* is who I am by experience. It is a changeable manifestation of my essence. My *temperament* is determined by the mixture of my past and present circumstances, genetics, and the decisions I have made in my life. Temperament is revealed by tendencies in response patterns. Some people tend to be happy, others tend to be passive, and so on.

Complexion is a more subtle view of the ways

a person thinks or feels. It is reflected through impressions toward other people—my mental attitude in response to people. Personality is who I have become as a person in the sum of my human attributes, both emotional and behavioral. I will present either my individuality in Adam or the individuality of God in me.

Character speaks of the inward qualities and traits that may or may not be reflected in the more obvious qualities of personality, disposition, temperament, and complexion. Godly character is the spiritual production of morality because of God. It is being patient and living in divine essence, cooperating with God through human faculties and a positive volition. God and I coexist and I give Him lordship. This is how it should be. Still, it is possible to exhibit a "good" disposition, a wonderful temperament, and a pleasing personality and yet be motivated by seemingly "good" character that is actually self-righteous and immoral (Luke 18:10-14).

The Process of Grace Multiplication

For some people, thinking about the Bema Seat Judgment produces "religious anxiety." You say to yourself, "I know I am not living in the maximum manifestation of the application of

God's principles of grace." So, how do you get plugged into this process and correct your attitude toward yourself?

As humans and sinners, experience has everything to do with *how* we hear. When I hear a message about the journey of grace, am I willing to *grow* in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ? Growth speaks of a process. In 1 John 2:12-13, "little children," "young men," and "fathers" are references to positions in the process of grace living. Still, there are people who tend to condemn themselves when they hear a revelation like that, because they are *not* living in grace. Don't fall into that trap. Grace depends upon the Giver, never the receiver. We have already received the fullness of His grace in positional truth. Now we just need to adjust to grace and be established in it in the experiential impartation of truth.

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory [reflecting His character] and virtue [the divine essence of his supreme love]" (2 Peter 1:2-3).

God provides all the things that we will ever need through the knowledge of His glory. How do we receive the knowledge of God's glory? By having grace multiplied toward us with peace. It is not an *addition* of grace, it is a *multiplication* of what has already been imparted to us. We enter into this journey, a pursuit with God, faith-resting with Him as we grow.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

How do we receive God's nature? By letting His righteousness be revealed *in* us from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). We escape the contamination of the world and its lust patterns automatically. We don't *do* anything to escape; we escape by *receiving*. Receiving the multiplication of His grace leads to the multiplication of peace. Faith becomes substance to us and brings evidence of God's effective work within.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kind-

ness charity" (2 Peter 1:5-7).

Faith pleases God; God rewards faith. And to that faith, we add virtue.Virtue is *not* mental excellence. It is the supernatural, unfathomable, perfect love of God. It is perfect because it is not *our* love, but love that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

To virtue, we add knowledge, or doctrine. To doctrine, we add temperance, which is divine control. To divine control, we add patience. To patience, godliness. To "add godliness" is to receive spirituality. Then, add brotherly kindness, which speaks of love communicated through the Holy Spirit, fellowship that appreciates others. It is by that Spirit, which sheds God's love through us, that we add charity.

Victors, Not Victims

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:8-9).

When grace is multiplied toward you, you are not barren. Neither are you a victim. You are

a victor, fruitful in the Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise, you are blind and cannot see afar off to what awaits you at the Bema Seat. The problem? Spiritual vision becomes dim when you are not fellowshipping with God on the inside. You have forgotten that you were purged from old sins. Though you are saved, you don't have any joy in being saved. You have forgotten what grace did for you because you are not growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The moment we turn inward to analyze our condition, we only compound the problem. As we have said in so many different ways, we need to see our provision. We need to gaze upon the Lamb of God.

**For more about this process, read* The Hearing Heart, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Three

BEHOLD THE LAMB

Twenty-seven times in the book of Revelation, we see the Lord Jesus Christ depicted as the glorified Lamb. In Revelation 17:14 and Revelation 19:16, He is called the King of kings and Lord of lords. But He says, "I want you to see that I am still the Lamb." He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—the wounds in His hands, His feet, His side, and His brow, visible for all of eternity.

In Revelation 5:1-5, the Father was there with the title deed to earth, and the angel came out and said, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" Where is there a man who is worthy to take back the title deed to the earth and that held Adam's soul?

And John "wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe

of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book." This is the only time in the book of Revelation Jesus is called a "lion." The Lamb is called the Lion because of His victory over the demons, shaming them publicly when He ascended into heaven (Colossians 2:15-16).

One day, there will come the battle of Armageddon. Jesus Christ will simply speak the Word to end the most devastating war the world has ever seen. That will mark the end of every religious battle and the reign of Antichrist and his system.

After all of this, the Word of God tells us that in heaven there will be a new song sung to the Lamb that was slain. Jesus wants us to know that in heaven, He is the Lamb that was slain but is now glorified.

We will have no problem recognizing the Lamb. Four six-winged seraphim, four and twenty elders, and hosts of angels will surround Him and worship Him who is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, blessing, and glory. Thousands upon thousands will worship Him who is worthy. Who are they honoring? The Lamb that was slain.

In Revelation 21:14, there are the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem, representing

the twelve apostles. Who was the Head of the apostles? The Lamb.

In Revelation 21:9, as the born-again members of His Church, we are the Lamb's wife, His bride for eternity. But at a certain event called the White Throne Judgment, He opens the Lamb's Book of Life, and those whose names are not recorded in it will be cast into hell.

But for those who are saved by the blood of the Lamb, there will be eternal rejoicing in a city with streets of gold. There will be no temple in the city called the New Jerusalem, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Revelation 21:23).

The Lamb that was slain—the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world (Isaiah 53:7, John 1:29)—is the same Lamb glorified in heaven. And who will we face at the Bema Seat? The Lamb. It will be the Lamb who passes judgment upon us and determines our rewards.

All Things End Up in Grace

"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to

the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:6).

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21).

Malachi, the final book of the Old Testament, ends with the threat of a curse. But God's final word in Revelation is "grace…be with you all." He is the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10). His grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (Titus 2:12). We are not bound by a system of works or a program of condemnation where we try to work our way up to God's approval. If that were the case, we would all go to hell. But grace is at work in me and it teaches me to put the Lord Jesus Christ first and to make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). This is the work of grace.

Grace to Break Sin Cycles

When I walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), I do not fulfill the lust of the flesh. I don't deal with my flesh first. I don't deal with *anything* first. Instead, I make a decision to put on Jesus Christ; I *choose* to walk in the Spirit. That takes care of every other thing that I might otherwise be tempted to do.

There's no need for me to become worldly periodically. I don't need to have lustful thoughts. First, it wouldn't do any good. Secondly, I'm never going to fulfill such a thought. And, thirdly, it would only bring guilt. Grace has taught me to hate lustful thoughts and suggestive comments. Why? Because 1 Timothy 5:22 says "keep thyself pure."

In 1 Corinthians 3, regarding the Bema Seat, we are told this: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (verse 16). By grace, we have been made temples of God. We are joined to Him by the one Spirit. "What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh" (1 Corinthians 6:16). What Paul meant is this: Fornication is a sin inside the body, and that is why people who do it have such difficulty getting out of it. Sins outside of the body are bad enough, but fornication affects the libido, which is part of the central nervous system. Actual physical response patterns are established in the chemistry of the human body and sent through the bloodstream—stimulated because of choices. Just as liquor and drugs go into the bloodstream and affect the whole body, so do the effects of lust,

anger, and fornication.

Fornication destroys souls and can ruin compatibility in marriage, either by making one cold and unresponsive or by causing the other to be insatiable in their sex drive, because of response patterns established through a history of premarital sex.

Thankfully, God can break this cycle in an instant when we simply confess to Him, "I can have *anything* from You. You died for me. You were buried. And now You live inside of me. Whatever I have done in my past has been done away with. I accept my place with you, and I'm not going to leave You alone on that cross. It was *my* cross. With You, I am crucified and buried, and the life I now live, I live in the Resurrection (Romans 6:13). Now I accept that there is no condemnation, despite all of my problems in the past. I will not live in guilt because the blood of the Lamb has taken care of it (Leviticus 5:7)."

That's it.

In Leviticus 23:17-18, the loaves of bread that were baked for an offering had leaven in them, yet they were first fruits unto the Lord. God knows there is leaven in us, referring to the old sin nature, but He will still use us. All He asks is that we take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23).

Taking up my cross simply means that I accept what is mine. I receive God's provision right now, realizing that I am dead and buried with Christ. It is not just a theological concept to get familiar with; it is a fact of my life with Him. I died with Him (1 Corinthians 15:1-31), and I take up my Cross today. It's a moment-by-moment walk with Him (Isaiah 27:3). The Truth has made me free (John 8:32), and the Son has made me free indeed (John 8:36). This is not only for my past but for today.

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Jesus said, "Now." Then He said that unfruitful branches are cast into the fire, which speaks of my works being burned up and being walked over by men when we fail to produce fruit by God's living power of grace.

I Am What I Am by Grace

I can have whatever I want from God because all things are mine, I am Christ's, and Christ is God's (1 Corinthians 3:23). He is able to do exceedingly above all I ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). He supplies all my needs (Philippians 4:19). He is able to make grace abound toward me so that I will have all that I need for

everything that I face (2 Corinthians 9:8). Wrapped in this package is the possibility of spirituality, stability, and maturity (1 Peter 5:12; Isaiah 33:6). I am to maintain certain disciplines in my walk with Christ, but the Holy Spirit brings the spiritual provision for the process of grace. Nothing there can cause intimidation. There are no indictments—no weapon formed against me can prosper.

My thought life is an area that God wants me to keep in check. I need to be aware of projections and make sure that they don't become my feelings through processing vain imaginations. My part is to recognize temptation because of the things I experienced in Adam. I must discern impressions that come from the satanic kingdom. Also, I must understand that receiving wrong impressions can lead to oppression which can lead to depression, causing me to condemn myself in negative reactions. But whenever negativity or lustful projections come, I can boldly say, "I am what I am by the grace of God" (1 Corinthians 15:10). At the Bema Seat, my life will be evaluated by that revelation.*

Our lives should reveal God's nature, whether by our words or by our actions. Rebellious, self-righteous, arrogant people have for-

gotten 1 Corinthians 15:10. Their problems started when they began living by the letter of the law instead of by the Spirit of truth. We do not live under law; but by the living Word and the grace of Almighty God, we become living epistles. Our lives write things on the hearts of men even when we cannot speak the Word to them. And though the law strengthens sin in a soul, the Spirit of life strengthens grace in us.

We can be testimonies of God's grace. When we go through the valley of weeping, in Psalm 84:6-7, we can leave behind fresh pools of water. That way, the next person who goes through such a valley has fresh water to drink because we have been through it. We go from strength to strength and appear before God in Zion. Where is our strength made perfect? In weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). The grace of God is sufficient in our weakness; and God's weakness is stronger than the strength of men (1 Corinthians 1:25). Thank God for a judgment of grace!

**Read* Imaginations of the Heart, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith;

and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained *that we should walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:1-10).

I wanted to conclude with this passage: "that we should walk in them." This is a unique grammar structure in the Greek that means that my walk is not expected to be a straight line, rather it is better represented by a dotted line. In other words, God's grace has provided a covering for my failures. A straight line would indicate no space for failure. But when I fall, I rebound by grace. Yes, there is leaven in me, but I can come to my heavenly Father in any situation and find grace to help in my times of need.

When I accept that God's judgment for every believer is a perfect judgment of grace, then I will be motivated to live purely. The Bema Seat experience can be an unbelievably joyous one. We have been called to be stewards of His amazing grace, and by that grace we will bear much fruit. His grace will add to our account immeasurable rewards and blessing for us to enjoy for all eternity.

A Life of

Faith Action

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus challenging the legalistic rituals of the religion of those days, a religion in which so few found it possible to measure up. Why? Because it was unnatural. But through His life, Jesus was constantly restoring people to the place where they could be fulfilled. Sinners were drawn to His message because it reflected the true nature of God.

Because He understood the true nature of the Father as no one else did, the Son operated in complete *faith action*—a faith that served by love. Jesus was always confident and His testimony was positive: "I will speak the Word and you shall be healed." He knew that the Father would hear and answer His prayer. He was always absolutely certain it would work, and He never lost this confidence. We, too, can have the confidence of Jesus. Because He lives in us, we can act in faith.

Allow the thoughts in this booklet to be used to develop intimacy with God in the chambers of grace and the rooms of mercy being built in our souls. My prayer is that we will continue to be led by God on the road of victory, and that we will witness permanent restorations to the *normal* Christian life: life as God intended it—life in the power of faith action.

Chapter One

OUR EXAMPLE OF OBEDIENCE

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared: Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:7-8).

Because Jesus learned obedience by the things that He suffered in His humanity, He learned a secret: *He knew the Father*. He knew the Father's nature. He knew His justice. He knew His love. Therefore, Jesus Christ, God the Son, could trust God the Father. And because He could trust Him, He could obey.

The Order of Faith Obedience

Jesus' life is an example that is not beyond us, because He is alive *in* us. This is the way to live. First, I get to know the Master. Then, I can

trust Him. And then, I can obey Him. That's the order. It doesn't matter what I am dealing with. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him," the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:12*b*. Paul knew the Master.

Once we know Him, we can trust Him for the worst situation in our marriage. Once we know Him, we can trust Him to deliver us from any kind of mental illness, emotional problem, or physical sickness. It all rests on getting to know Him. Then, as we trust Him, as we act in faith because of knowing Him, we desire to obey Him. As we enter into faith obedience to His Word, He imparts to us the very authority of God.

The Manifestation of God's Presence

God is interested in manifesting His presence. It's not enough to have a grasp of knowledge, a catalog of theology in the mind. Seminary professors have all that. But I would dare to say that very few of them experience the manifestation of His presence.

The soil of our hearts must be broken up. Once this is done, the Bible becomes rich. Every verse and every line becomes so precious to us,

leaping out as the Spirit brings it to life. Everything is recognized as sacred and the dynamics of God's Word are realized in our midst.

This is revival, fired and fueled by the Word of God. As a result, fields of faith are built up. The manifestation of His presence becomes so strong that distractions are minimized. Capacities are enlarged as believers are taken from one degree of faith to another. Hearts are fixed upon Christ, so nothing can hinder the move of God. Obedience flows freely and becomes the master of the revival; not feelings, not emotional outbursts, but obedience.

It's so simple. Jesus sends the Word to heal; as we believe it, our faith goes into action.

Jesus told the man at the pool called Bethesda in John 5:1-9, "take up your bed and walk." He obeyed and was healed. To another he said, "Stretch out your withered hand"—he obeyed. To blind Bartimaeus He said, "Go to the pool and wash." This man, too, obeyed. In each case, the issue was obedience to the words of Jesus. Three obeyed, three were healed.

How can you look at Jesus and be anxious, angry, petty, or distracted? You can't! When the fallow ground is broken up, there's a fellowship of light, a fellowship of life, a fellowship of love,

a fellowship of power, and God goes into action.

The God Man In Action

The key thing for us to understand is that in His humanity, Jesus was committed to His Father. Jesus did not use His diety to perform miracles, even though He was and *is* God. Rather, He wanted the focus to be upon His obedience to preach the Gospel, proclaiming the Good News—His mission on earth.

Chapter Two

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE WORD

The Bible remains the most precious book in all the world. It's still the best seller after all these years. It is precious because 2 Timothy 3:16 says "*All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God." In light of this, we must take heed *what* we hear and *how* we hear (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18). What we listen to must be the Word of God.

"... It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

These are words from the Bible. We do not live by what our spouses may say or what society may expect of us. We are to live by *every* word that proceeds from the mouth of God. I'm not expressing my opinion here, but what God's Word says.

In Luke 8:11-15, we have the parable of the seed and the sower. The scattering of the seed represents the Word being scattered in people's

hearts. In some hearts, the Word cannot take root, because the soil—the capacity of the heart—is hard and rocky. For others, their hearts may be choked with thorns. Though the seed takes root, it is soon strangled, suffocated with the anxieties, cares, riches, and pleasures of life. The fruit does not ripen to maturity. But in Luke 8:15, those who allow the seed to fall on *good* soil have their hearts properly prepared. Hearing the Word and keeping it, they bring forth fruit with patience.

The Meaning of Substance

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

Ponder that verse for a moment. *Substance* in the Greek text is *hupostasis*. *Hupo* means *under*, *stasis* means *to stand*. This means I stand under the absolute truth of the Word of God as my foundation. *Evidence* is the proof that something is real. It speaks of the ownership of personal property and the experience of fact.

Remember, faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). A lot of talking won't do anything for your faith. But hearing the Word provides substance.

This is how it works. As I hear the Word, I believe with all my heart that every Word of God is pure (Proverbs 30:5). Then, I recognize it as profitable, as the source of abundant life that can transform my mind, revive my soul, and quicken my spirit.

As substance is developed, a durable foundation of absolute truth is formed. No longer do I live by what I can see; faith does not reveal truth to the senses (then it is no longer faith). In many cases, Jesus healed people by speaking the Word only. The substance of the Word in my soul brings in a conviction that what has not yet happened *will* happen. What I cannot see with my eyes, I can see with the heart of God. I have substance, and the things that aren't yet seen already exist in eternity because of the Word of God in my soul.

I'll never forget Jane, a girl in the first church I pastored in Maine. She was led to Christ in Sunday school at the age of nine. At fourteen, she had cancer. We all prayed and believed God. Unfortunately, the physical healing did not come. But her emotions were healed. Her mind was completely well. Every time I went to her hospital room, I could sense such contentment from her. She had such assurance and such con-

viction that God was there with her in the final two months of her life. She was convinced that God's will was being done; she was assured of His love for her.

When I think of Jane, I think of a hero of the faith. What a darling. In her last days, eleven people were led to Christ, including a doctor and two nurses. Her expression of faith was very simple. Her attitude was one of loving contentment. Her response to her illness was peaceful. She was just a teen-ager, yet what *substance* she had in her soul—evidence for her that she would soon be home with the Lord.

I remember a five-year-old boy whose father was in a terrible accident. This boy kept pleading with his father: "Don't die, Daddy. Don't die." Then he would pray, "Please Jesus, don't let Daddy die." Everyone thought the man was unconscious, but three months later, after he had recovered, he said that during those days he could hear his son and he trusted Jesus for the healing. Nine months later, the father was totally restored. The boy's cries had triggered something in the father's heart. It brought forth the substance that was there, the Word of God.

Christians need substance so that the cares and the challenges of this world, the deceitful-

ness of materialism and pleasure, will not strangle the Word of God. Even families and relationships cannot be exalted above the Word. When everything seems to contradict your faith, your feelings, and your reasoning, it doesn't matter. God's Truth goes beyond reason. His peace passes understanding. That's why, as a pastor, I'm very diligent and dogmatic to preach the Word in season and out of season. *This* is the substance—not the emotional foolishness, the superficial and counterfeit gifts that are being exalted in many places.

The Bible teaches us that God honors and rewards those who seek Him. Seek Him with earnestness (Proverbs 8:17). Seek Him with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13). All who seek Him find Him. They find solutions and provisions for every situation.

The Christian finds a spiritual reality and an eternal dimension that brings warmth to the heart, a glow to the countenance and brokenness to the soul. The love of God motivates faith to action. And that action results in repentance and submission and victory in a surrendered vessel of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Three

HEROES OF FAITH ACTION

Consider all the men and women of God mentioned in Hebrews 11; they are called heroes of faith. We can read the Old Testament record of their lives and see their failures and sins. But here, the failures and sins are not recorded! These men and women had substance. They believed just what God said; that their sins would be washed away by the blood of the Lamb.

Abel is the first hero mentioned. His sacrifice was found to be more excellent than that of his brother Cain. Where Cain's sacrifice was the result of sweat and labor with his own hands, Abel's offering was the blood of a lamb. This was the first Old Testament picture of the kind of offering that would be acceptable to God: the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb. Abel's life represents faith worship. Today, his offering speaks of ministering to the Lord with true worship in

the power of the New Covenant.

Think of Enoch, the next man mentioned in Hebrews 11. He lived every day fellowshipping with God, believing His promises, and then it happened: Enoch was "translated that he should not see death" (Hebrews 11:5). This is what will happen during the Rapture of the Church. One day, we will all go to work—to the factories, the offices, the hospitals, and the stores. Then, as it says in I Thessalonians 4:16-17, the Lord shall descend from heaven and we will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, to spend eternity with Him. Our mortality will put on immortality, our corruptible will put on incorruptible. Death will have no sting (1 Corinthians 15:51-57). These truths are substance for our souls—evidence of what God *will* do.

Enoch's life portrays a faith walk with God. Just as he walked in constant communion with God, so can we. We can walk in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:2; Galatians 5:16). We can walk in wisdom and in the application of truth in all situations (Colossians 4:5).

The Obedience of Faith

Next in line we have Noah, a man moved with faith, reverence, and honor for God. What

substance his faith revealed. For 120 years he preached of the flood that was to come upon the whole earth. Though he continually warned people of the judgment to come, they refused to listen.

For us, Noah's life represents proclaiming the Gospel in obedience. Many witness for Jesus Christ and never see results. They knock on doors and get turned away; still, they keep on doing it. What motivates them? Faith obedience. Noah preached for 120 years and didn't have a single convert. How many pastors could stand that kind of test? When the flood finally came, God sealed Noah and his family in the Ark; but it was too late for the others.

When I think about the Great White Throne Judgment, in Revelation 20:11-15, I wonder: Of all those who have heard the Word of God preached in the cities of this nation, how many will stand before God only to be cast into hell for eternity? I remember when God gave me a sermon about the tears that would be shed on that day—the last looks, the last thoughts, the last words people would exchange before being separated for eternity. Those who were lost had postponed their obedience, and did not honor the Word of God.

Judgment day for unbelievers will be just like it was in the days of Noah. I imagine that when the rain began to pour down, many people rushed to the Ark, banging on the door. They probably cried, "Let us in. We believe you now!" That, however, isn't faith. Their evidence wasn't based on "things not seen."

The Call of Faith

In Genesis 12, Abraham left his friends and family behind in Haran so he could journey to Canaan where he would find his inheritance. Abraham honored God's call, and entered a new dimension of faith. He set out with no idea where God would take him, or how God would provide for him. But God told him to go, and he obeyed. He left his old position for a new position.

The life of Abraham represents faith that honors the call of God. Just as Abraham left his old position in Ur of the Chaldees, so we leave our position in the world, and stand against all forms of ungodliness and worldliness.

What a great thing it is to be moved by faith; for a husband to be moved to love his wife because of reverence for God; for a wife to be moved to love her husband with unconditional

love. How great it is when children and teenagers are moved to love God and their parents.

Fellowship with grace and Truth. Fellowship with love and mercy. Let the presence of God begin to impress your soul and give you personal illuminations. The Word will begin to dwell richly in you. Faith's substance will be revealed as you focus upon the character of Christ and the transforming power of His love. Faith believes without wavering, it knows without seeing.

It's a very beautiful and sacred thing to realize the potential of faith. Neither Satan nor sight can limit it. Senses and feelings cannot deprive it of the nurturing provision of power as the capacity for hearing the Word of God is developed in the heart and soul.

Chapter Four

THE PROGRESSION OF FAITH

Satan, the enemy of our souls, will try everything he can to oppose and overrule our faith. The devil tries to disguise his initiations in 'light'—bits of truth mixed with rationalization. Think of his program—counterfeiting, deceiving, making people feel worthless, and bringing in condemnation. That's why it is important to keep drawing near to the Word of God. Hear it. Meditate upon it. Cherish it.

The Word is our only defense against Satan's assault on the souls of people. This planet is polluted by false education, by entertainment that stimulates lust and sensuality. Then there is the pollution of self-righteousness—so-called believers who are not humble, judging people and circumstances by sight.

To all of this, the pure Word of God cries out. Jesus says, "Come to me and I'll forgive you. Come, and be delivered. Come, put Me first, and

I will add to you the things that you were trying to hold onto." Discover life as it's really meant to be—a life of substance. You will know without a wavering mind or a doubting heart that God will do just what He said he would do. Faith will see the unseen and go forward in action, walking with God, fellowshipping with Him, deriving substance from the evidence of the Word of God.

Picture it. The Lord Jesus Christ calls us by name (John 10:3). He is so intimately acquainted with us that He knows the number of hairs upon our heads, and He will know when there are no more.

God also numbers our steps. When you get to heaven, will you be interested in knowing how many steps you took on earth? The number will be there to look up. According to Psalm 56:8, He bottles our tears. He knows our thoughts afar off (Psalm 139:2). When we make our beds in hell, the Lord is there (Psalm 139:8). He fills up the whole earth and is hidden in the dark places (Jeremiah 23:24). We cannot hide from Him.

Our Savior is perfect. His sacrifice on the cross was perfect. His love and grace are perfect. When He met the demands of a Holy God and took our sins upon Himself, His sacrifice pro-

vided a perfect provision for the sinner's salvation. Saving faith comes when we truly believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and that His shed blood makes us clean.

Through saving faith, God justifies us even when we are ungodly (Romans 4:5). But we must understand that saving faith leads us into an active faith. To develop active faith we enter into the process of hearing doctrine, which is able to deliver our souls from all of our weaknesses and frailties through God's perfect patience and love.

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:20). If a Christian doesn't have a faith that acts in the royal law of love operating in his soul, then that Christian's faith is dead, or inactive.

Faith in the Heart

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Faith takes its place in the heart. Knowledge will only leave a man drowning in his intellect with dignified confessions but an empty heart. Intellectual faith never delivers a woman from

emotional problems and pressures, and it only frustrates a man, never transforming him into the new creation God intended him to be.

The heart comprehends things that the mind cannot. There is no limitation to what the heart can comprehend in the Holy Spirit's illumination of life. The heart experiences what the mind cannot fathom; there is a love that passes by the knowledge of the mind, and a peace that passes by the understanding of the intellect. Still, the heart's experiences will be derived from truth in the mind. When faith comes into my heart, I will respond by reaching out to others. But until it does, I will keep drifting in my experience.

True faith serves in love. Let's say, for example, that two people come against me. I have a tendency to react because my perception is that they are being unfair. My self-defense mechanisms are ready to kick into gear. But by functioning in the perfect doctrine of the Finished Work, the Holy Spirit stirs in me the royal law of love toward these people. Then I see that there's nothing too good for them. My intellect would say they don't deserve it, but the love shed abroad in my heart says they were created in the image of God; they are fearfully and wonderfully made by the Creator.

In word and deed I love them beyond my understanding, not operating in morality which would legislate "an eye for an eye" in revenge. It's beyond turning the other cheek, it's turning my attitude over to the Spirit. More than praying for them, the love I express goes beyond knowledge. His mercy rejoices against my intellectual judgment. My faith goes beyond intellect, and becomes spiritual substance as it is manifested by God's work of love.

The Justification of Faith

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon that altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (James 2:21-23).

These verses seem to indicate that Abraham had to do something in order to make himself righteous and to be justified before God—an incorrect assumption. Proper exegesis of the Greek text reveals that the verb tense used here—the historical aorist—indicates that Abraham's righteousness was something he *received* from

God, not something he attained. For the rest of his life, Abraham received righteousness and faith from the Word of God. God was his source and his works were the expression of the Holy Spirit producing life through his obedience. In other words, Abraham's behavior corresponded to his belief.

Abraham had something beyond intellectual comprehension; he was giving God's love back to God. "Where's the lamb?" Isaac asked. "God will provide the Lamb," Abraham said, putting his son, whom he treasured, on the altar and raising the knife in obedience. But the angel of the Lord stopped the sacrifice (Genesis 22:10-13), and Abraham found the substitute—a ram—in the thicket. Through this test, Abraham revealed tremendous growth in his life. He trusted God's promise to always be gracious in response to obedience to truth.

In phase one of his life with God, Abraham believed and God justified him while he was still ungodly. But, phase two brings the inner work to outward manifestation. Likewise, God desires that every believer would grow in faith, continuing in the Finished Work revelation of Truth, until we become the hand of God, passing out His life in this world.

CONCLUSION

As Christians, we will face some great crises that will be very challenging. They may come suddenly, but if we function in a life of faith action, motivated by God's love, each crisis—no matter how overwhelming—can become an opportunity to praise God. What a precious thing to be a Bible-believing, Blood-washed Christian who fears God. How precious it is to love Him, to hate sin, to ever grow in the revelation of Truth through the glorified Christ.

Within each believer there is a force that overcomes the world—our faith (1 John 5:4). Within us there is an eternal incorruptible seed. We possess a life that cannot be explained. Educators cannot rationalize it. Religion cannot understand it. The worldly, the double-minded, and the distracted cannot fathom it. It is simple, it is deep. It is a precious faith that pleases God, in all of its nobility and virtue, in response to the Word of God.

A Living Faith

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The thing that many of God's people lack periodically and frequently is understanding. I can have all the knowledge in the world and a great grasp of memorizing Scripture. I can be able to say the right thing in the right place to the right crowd but lack understanding. I can give you rhetoric that will explain a chapter and a verse and have it make a tremendous impression upon you when it's said but lack understanding. I can live a pious Christian life that is free from overt sinning, a life where I'm not noticeably negative in any way, and still lack understanding.

Do you understand that these are the last hours? Do you understand it's the latest time in human history? Do you understand that only spiritual people make an impact upon a nation? Do you understand that we are to redeem the time because the days are evil? Buy up every moment. Do we understand that our days are

numbered on earth? Do we understand that wasted time and wasted hours means a waste and loss for eternity? Do we understand that God gives mandates for our spirituality through His grace and love twenty-four hours a day?

We have to ask ourselves, what's my capacity? Is it to react? To get nervous? To be insecure? To be fearful? To walk by sight? To hold back on God? To keep back what's God?s anyway? Is that our capacity?

As you will see in these pages, we may very well have an orthodox faith but not a correct faith. We may have the words of faith but a faith without the tune of grace. We may have statues without salt. It does not glow and it does not burn. We may have intentions but no experience. We may have confession but no communion. We may speak the words of faith and not live in faith with our words. We may make promises and conviction is found wanting.

Chapter One
THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING

The Bible says, "Be careful how you hear." Be careful how you listen. In other words, to those who really listen, God will give a greater capacity. To those who do not listen properly, God will take away the capacity that they already have. Remember this, every word of God is pure.

Every time I see someone who has been away from his local assembly for two weeks or someone who only goes to church occasionally, my spirit always picks up that he is not as spiritual as he was three weeks ago. Why is that? Because every word of God is pure, and the Word of God is God's only standard for quickening the soul of man into a spiritual capacity to hear and participate in a fellowship with Jesus Christ so He can express and reveal Himself in a life.

I want you to see something that is lacking sadly in the lives of multitudes of Christians and

any one of us are in danger of it. "To know wisdom and instruction and to perceive the words of understanding."

There are things that we do not understand. There are things that we have never really learned.

Real Fellowship

In some of our relationships, we are not really fellowshipping in Christ. These are just wasted relationships based upon material things — clothing and things of that nature. And when you relate with any person in that way for any period of time, I'll guarantee you, you'll become dull spiritually. Husbands should notice it, and people should pick up on it and understand something about any relationship that isn't a pure and honest fellowship around the Word of God.

"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels" (Proverbs 1:5).

"So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart understanding.

"Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding." There it is again.

"Then shalt thou understand (to trust in) the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

"The LORD giveth wisdom: and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

"Then shalt though understand righteousness"(Proverbs 2:2-6, 9).

"So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:4-5).

This word, "understanding," is the key over and over again in Proverbs. In chapter 1, verse 22, "How long, you simple ones," and the words "simple ones" means people that have knowledge here in this particular verse but no understanding. "How long will you love simplicity?" Love knowledge without application, love illumination without appropriation. "And the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate the (application of knowing the reality of God in a personal experience)?"

A believer can have everything going in the world but not have understanding. It doesn't mean you do not grasp the message. Knowledge will do that. It doesn't mean that you don't know the doctrine. Classes will perform that

function.

Understanding means you take the Word, you receive the message, and you use it in the test, and it leaves you with understanding how the Word of God is pure when it's tried in the furnace of your life. So when it says, "Trust in the Lord and lean not on thine own understanding," in Proverbs 3, it means never trust in your own experience through personal application without the power of God. Trust in the Lord with all thy frame of reference, and lean not unto thine own understanding. Acknowledge God in all thy ways, and he shall direct your paths.

Look at some of the other verses in Proverbs

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding" (Proverbs 3:13).

"The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth by understanding." Then it says, "Hath he established the heavens" (Proverbs 3:19).

"Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding" (Proverbs 4:1).

"Get wisdom, get understanding" (Proverbs 4:5).

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get

wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7).

Do you see it? What is he talking about? Understanding.

There are many areas where people do not understand a living faith in a living God but substitute for it a natural faith in natural circumstances by sight and how the substitution isn't even realized if the heart is sincere in a moral frame of reference. The contrast is the eternal purpose versus the temporal purpose.

Righteousness Revealed from Faith to Faith

"For the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.

"For as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

"Wherein is the wrath of God revealed from heaven unto all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:17-18).

What is the righteousness of God? Perfect integrity, perfect justice, perfect kindness, perfect patience. Jesus Christ in His state of being perfect in His essence. For the characteristics and nature and essence of God with His attributes—love, grace, mercy, integrity, immutability, ve-

racity—these things are revealed from heaven from faith to faith. If we stop expressing a living faith in the promises and categories of God, we do not reveal God's characteristics.

What does that mean? It means that we receive doctrine and don't have understanding and don't reveal it. The momentum test comes and we don't reveal it in the only opportunities that we have. We hold the truth about unconditional love in our unrighteousness and do not express it, do not give it. It means that I have doctrine but it doesn't become living faith. I may hear categories, but I don't implement them. I want to show you why they're not implemented.

Identification in Love

A woman may have an identification with another woman that's out of line with God and not have an identification with the living Word to supercede it. Her life does not reveal the character of God; the essence of compassion, kindness, humility, brokenness is not in evidence. That woman gets involved with the cares of this world—material things, clothes, having good things excessively—and her identification in that relationship becomes so important to her that

it's needed to make her spiritual life happy.

Thank God for the unity of a marriage. And God established the home in its sacred order, and it's divine institution No. 2, and the family is No. 3. Free volition is divine institution No. 1. Families should pray together, love each other, stay together, hold up each other, share God together, and grow together to be conformed to Christ's image. And it's one of the greatest, most sacred institutions when it's spiritual. But if a wife is attached to her husband without being identified to the Cross, to doctrine, to the Holy Spirit, I'll guarantee you, her days are numbered before she sells out to lukewarmness.

One woman held out for three years after her husband sold himself out for the world. And finally she said, "I'm giving up." She had an identification with the institution of marriage instead of the God who created it. The institution is beautiful but it must never be elevated above the living God who initiated it and instituted it.

Consequently, she sold out, and today, as far as we can tell, she is in no church anywhere. She started out going down to once a week, then once in two weeks, then once a month, then not at all. Most people who start down that road end up out of fellowship. An identification with

each other in the marriage but no identification with the Cross.

I must sacrifice my temporal happiness to bring in divine principles of truth. If need be, I must sacrifice my temporal happiness to bring in divine principles of truth and appropriate them in understanding. A godly husband will tell his wife if he ever deviates from doctrine, don't agree with him.

I've said that myself more than once. When I get off from categories, never agree with me. Stand up to me. Get in my face privately and disagree with me head-on and never give in. Why? Because it's the most subtle trap in the world.

A man has dominion over the woman in equal circumstances from Genesis on. That's why when a man initiates lust and indiscretion and becomes suggestive with a woman who likes him. That man is heavily responsible before God, because if the woman isn't on guard, the male has dominion over the female. She gets emotionally seduced, then physically she surrenders.

Therefore, the husband has one of the most sacred responsibilities. If he is the reason that his wife doesn't grow in grace, if he stops her ca-

pacity from growing with God, if he prohibits her understanding, he will pay for it at the Bema Seat, and he'll be responsible for the loss all eternity.

"Prove it to me," you say?

OK, when Eve sinned, God addressed Adam. When Eve sinned, God blamed Adam. I think there was a reason why Eve sinned first, and she's guilty, and women have somewhat paid for it ever since, but I think there's a reason why God addressed Adam.

Now if you're identified with your marriage but not Calvary, then you'll never have a stabilized mind, a mature heart, and a living faith.

What's wrong with Sarah saying to Abraham, "Get Hagar out of the house" if that's God's mind? Sarah didn't waver one inch. Abraham started to pull this headship trip but it didn't last too long because God intervened and said, "Get rid of the woman like your wife says." That time God didn't allow Abraham to pull the headship trip, did He, because Sarah had connections with the Head that he didn't have.

Chapter Two
THE NEED FOR PRECISENESS

Some women sell out to materialism, to the cares of this life, to pleasure, and lose their spirituality in the test of time by drifting and wandering into the land without promises, the land without life. Their identification progressively is sealed by something outside of a precise, pure Calvary.

The messages I am receiving are for the entire Body, and I'm getting them I know in prayer and through your prayers. I'm not talking about rebellion. I'm not talking about negative reaction. I'm not talking about listening to God as to when to be quiet. I'm talking about walking with God in precise light.

When the Bible says, "The entrance of God's Word gives light," in the original Hebrew it says, "The entering of categories give accurate precision for appropriation."

When the Bible says, "The Word of God is a

lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my pathway," one translation puts it this way. "There's preciseness of God's Word always gives accurate light and precise understanding available to experience the light of the one that releases the Word."

When it says, "Let the word of God dwell richly in us" (Colossians 3:16), it says this. "Let the accuracy and preciseness of exactness become that that has dominion over your mind." Precise, accurate information that is precise.

I'm shocked that some older Christians don't have preciseness. They lack accuracy.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world, and they that followeth me shall not walk in any thing that is dark, but shall abide in precise, accurate definition through divine information available for the powerful understanding of the individual's response."

Do you know why we can go through international persecution and lies and assassination and still go forward? Because by the mercy and grace of God we have preciseness in our teaching. Accurate information is available through the power of the Holy Spirit. It can be not a single word less than precise. It must be accurate so there will not be human deviations from divine

inspiration.

You would be shocked at the things that Satan uses in relationships and in good businesses to hinder the man and woman and family of God for training in order to reign with Christ forever in heaven. I'm going to train, and win the lost, and go in the world, and go into the third world, and love the Body, and lay down my life, and be motivated by love and evangelism to build up the Body a million times over than to make it down here and lose it all up there!

Many people who do that get a little colder, a little lukewarm, just a little. They don't go way off, they get a little off. A little more off. A little more off. Ten years later they're gone. They didn't realize the leaven of material things. They didn't realize their indifference to relationships. They had too many relationships where the fellowship of Calvary, the burden of prayer, and the love of God was missing. They weren't bad people. They just weren't spiritual people.

Mark this down: if I am one quarter of one percent off, I am carnal. The spiritual way is to be confessed up-to-date, relaxing in faith, growing in grace, living precisely by the Word accurately by faith.

Some people have said to me, "God is telling me to go here." That calling sometimes stops suddenly when a challenge comes up. Now God doesn't change His mind. The flesh changed its mind because it walked by sight, it looked at circumstances, and it decided what was better for the old man.

See, the attitude is this: be challenged and tested, and if your faith can live through it in faith-rest, you're all right. If you get convicted and not condemned, you'd better get converted.

If there's one tremendous need for every one of us, it's to understand what are we identified with the most. Are you identified with the personality of a influential leader who doesn't communicate Christ? If you are identified with that, we'll be swallowed up by personality ego. I don't care who it is.

Don't identify with a personality ego.

Live by every Word of God.
Live by every Word of God.
Live by every Word of God.
Live by every Word of God.
Live by every Word of God.
Live by every Word of God.

I am repeating myself on purpose because it is so important to live by every word of God.

Walk in the Spirit so that you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

The thing you don't want to do is probably exactly what God would have you to do if you'd open your eyes to heaven. The thing that's inconvenient to do is just exactly what the Cross wants you to do. We sang this little song the other night. In fact, we made it up. It goes like this:

Order my steps in thy Word, dear Lord,
Thy Word, dear Lord, thy Word, dear Lord.
Order my steps in thy Word, dear Lord.
Let iniquity not have dominion over me.

Millions and millions are going to hell. Where can I best win them? That's the question I must ask myself. Is Jesus Christ establishing your steps precisely, accurately, and absolutely through the Word so that mental attitude presumption does not have dominion over your volition? That's the principle when we are identified with the Cross.

Do you know why we have so many teams go out into all the world? Do you know why that is? Let me tell you—because people have the right identification.

"Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

Jesus said He loved the Word more than His name (Psalm 138:2).

When people love the Word of God more than what it is seemingly necessary, then naturally they'd rather listen to it than watch TV, or play sports. They'd rather listen to it than go swimming. They'd rather listen to it than wandering around in their homes. If they love the Word of God more than their necessary food, naturally they're going to go to where the Word of God is taught providing they can do it.

These believers follow the Word of God, no matter who preaches it, if he's precise and accurate. So shame on you double-crossing, double-minded backsliders who live in loyalty to the flesh, loyalty to the personality, loyalty to a denomination, loyalty to an organization, loyalty to ties that aren't spiritual, loyalty to relationships that have no fellowship.

Where Do Your Loyalties Lie?

Some people have loyalty to clothes without the clothes of righteousness; loyalty to money

without the riches of heaven; loyalty to the old nature without the refinement of the Cross; loyalty to things, and people, and situations in order to be accepted, in order to have a rapport, in order to be elevated in personality and ego.

It is so much better to be crucified with Christ and live a life that is unattached to all things, going forward in Satan's world as a stranger, as a pilgrim sojourning and going forward with a living faith in a living God, motivated by love, with fire in your bones, character in your soul, guts in your mind.

I am going forward in Jesus? I am not backing up and cooling off because of an attachment to something else which is temporal and going to die! You know that's true, and you're going to hear it precisely, boldly, without anybody being ashamed to preach it right.

I am not going to worry about the few details of a transition and act like they are overburdening my carnal soul. I don't need a vacation, either. I'm not burned out. I'm not worried about details. Why? There's a resurrection power of God that's in my soul—quickening my body, quickening my tongue, quickening my soul, quickening my heart, quickening my emotions, quickening my consciousness and my self-

consciousness and making my volition ready to go—frustrating the old nature with the power of the Living Word in preciseness, in light, and in accuracy!

Chapter Three
LET GOD GIVE YOU THE BEST

Abraham said to Lot though he deserves to choose first, "Lot, you choose." Lot lifted up his eyes toward the watered plains of the Jordan and Sodom and Gomorrah. He walked by natural sight in natural circumstances because of natural needs for his herds and flock. He chose southward. Abraham lifted up his eyes to heaven. He had faith in the living God, and he said to Lot, "If you take the left, I'll take the right. If you take the right, I'll take the left."

Now, what was Abraham's attitude? Unconditional love derived from a living faith in God. Abraham didn't care what he got, because he was identified with Jesus Christ and his divine call and not temporal things in time.

Abraham lets Lot choose first, and he takes the leftovers. We've got so many godly men here that would do that for each other. That's what they do. We're thankful for them, women as

well.

It is so great to minister to people with capacity. Boy, it's good to have people with capacity, who know categories, who know preciseness, who don't get occupied with the cares of this world; who don't occupied with the deceitfulness of riches; who do not become occupied with pleasures and other things (Mark 4:19). The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and pleasures choke the Word and a person becomes unfruitful.

What do these things do? Choke the Word.

Now, if you should put your hand to your throat tonight and start choking yourself, you wouldn't have air. It's called self-destruction. That is ridiculous. But imagine choking off the Word of God that is pure, the Word that lasts forever, the Word that's going to judge us at the Bema Seat. When we choke off the Word, we cut off heavenly light, heavenly knowledge, heavenly wisdom, and we go on without experiencing heavenly understanding.

Do you know what Lot could have done? He could have let Abraham choose. No sir. He didn't pray. He didn't do anything. He just said, "I'll choose. Right down there, that's what we want, isn't it, honey?"

Abraham had self-sacrificing love, confidence in God, a living faith. He lost all things on the earth and counted them but dung. Abraham did not compare himself with Lot. Abraham did not measure himself with somebody else and make a human comparison. Abraham had a capacity for God, and Lot only had a capacity for the seeming pleasures of Sodom. Abraham could have spoken evil against Lot, but he was too busy revealing the righteousness of God. Abraham could have criticized. He could have gossiped.

Every day of my life I hear amazing stories and I try to turn away and not listen to what people say about people. Sometimes they are about well-known people. Sometimes respectable Christians let words slip out and reveal that their hearts are in wrong relationships with people who profess to be Christians, but are not deeply committed to the Cross. Instead of that Christian lifting the weaker one up, the weaker person drags him down to a level of acceptance in the relationship.

Abraham lived in self-sacrificing love. The words that he spoke were words of edification.

Follow it with me. He didn't criticize Lot. He didn't gossip, and he didn't listen to negativity.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give a place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, given him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Romans 12:19).

Now what does that say? Don't take vengeance. Always give God a place to do it justly because you wouldn't do it justly.

"Be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful.

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged: condemn not, and you shall not be condemned: forgive, and you shall be forgiven.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down: shall the Father have people give it unto your bosom" (Luke 6:36).

That is precise doctrine. But many Christians do not seal their tongues when they have wrong relationships with worldly Christians, backslidden Christians, hypocritical Christians, self-righteous Christians.

James 4:11 says, "Speak not evil against a brother or sister ever again. For if you speak evil

against a brother or sister, you speak evil against the law, the Word.

"And there is one law giver, who is able to save and to destroy."

Jesus Christ says, "Never speak evil against a brother or a sister ever again." That means you don't hear a word against your pastor, or any believer for that matter. If you have any issue with your pastor or a brother or a sister, you go alone and you don't talk it over with anybody else—ever. You're careful how you hear. You're careful what you speak. When you speak, you minister grace to the listener, not negativity. Your speech is seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6). You speak the truth but it's in love.

Let Your Love Grow

In Christ Jesus, there is a faith that works by unconditional love (Galatians 5:13).

Do you know what that means? Edify through faith-love. I have the substance of God's truth without evidence toward you, and I operate toward you in faith love, and I serve you in faith-love, and you serve one another in faith-love, and you serve one another in grace-love, and I serve you in grace-love, and you serve me in grace-love. Then we serve each other in faith-

rest love. And then we serve each other in faith-rest grace love. You see how it grows?

Faith love, grace love, faith-rest love, faith love rests grace, you see.

What does it mean? It means like Abraham we are self-sacrificing in our love in our attitude toward the other party who doesn't deserve to choose first because we have the rights. But Abraham was selfless and he was so occupied with God because he was identified with Jesus Christ at Calvary and not things, and not his rights, and not circumstances, and not what would be convenient.

He was identified with Calvary. He knew nothing but the Cross. And the world was crucified unto him. So was his flesh, and he was manifesting the works of Christ to reveal the destruction of Satan in that situation in 1 John 3:8.

That's the way it ought to be, don't you agree?

CONCLUSION

How does God establish our steps? In the preciseness and accuracy of His light in His Word. His Word says to love, so we respond. His Word says to forgive, so we respond. His Word says to lay down our life, so we respond.

We don't get an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth, and become troublemakers. We do not come between peace and joy and the happiness of a vision. We lay down our lives for God, and we do it gladly because it's our reasonable service. We don't listen to evil reports. We seek edification. We don't listen to carnal opinions. We speak doctrine. We don't live in the flesh—we walk in the Spirit. We don't live in doubt—we stagger not at the promises of God through unbelief. Instead, we are strong in faith, giving glory to God because we are persuaded that what He has promised, He is able to perform.

Identification with Calvary leaves me out of your life and puts God in. Identification with

Calvary leads your wife out and puts God in—and then He'll help you to love her. Identification with Calvary puts God in, and God will direct you how to live in accuracy.

You know, time is quite a thing. People in wrong relationships over a period of time usually are weakened by the circumstances to be conformed to the person that they're related to. Learn the difference between a relationship and a fellowship. Learn the difference between Word orientation and flesh orientation. Learn the difference between fellowshipping around clothes and fellowshipping around the robe of righteousness. Learn the difference around fellowshipping around material things and fellowshipping around spiritual things. Learn the difference around edification and just loose wasted talk. Learn the difference between a living adventure of faith and a natural adventure of sight prompted by natural faith because of circumstantial support. Learn the difference.

Learn the difference between an eye-for-an-eye and a tooth-for-a-tooth and loving your enemy. Learn the difference between getting what we deserve and not getting anything at all but giving it to others who don't deserve it. Learn the difference, because the difference is

death working in me that my life from Christ might work in you.

Father, I pray that the power of God will rest upon us corporately. There must be a corporate identification, and I certainly believe there is. There must be a corporate identification. There must be more than an organizational identification, a church identification, a personality identification, an organizational structure. There must be more than that. There must be an identification with the old rugged Cross with the Holy Spirit quickening our mortal body.

Grant that we might build up Christians with the ever-filling Finished Work of God's Lamb. Grant that the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and pleasures of this life and other things might not choke the Word. Grant that the Word of God and all of its light in purity might come forth into our hearts with great power.

A Mind to Work

Pastor Thomas Schaller graduated from Northeast School of the Bible in South Berwick, Maine, under the tutelage of Dr. Carl H. Stevens. From 1975 to 1981, he led a team to Helsinki, Finland, establishing a church and the Scandinavian School of the Bible. That ministry, which grew to 9 churches, has sent out over 80 missionaries to more than nineteen countries. In 1981, he returned to the United States where he served as Missions Director for The Bible Speaks in Massachusetts and Greater Grace World Outreach in Maryland. Then in 1990, Pastor Schaller led a team to Budapest, Hungary, again establishing a church and Bible college. The Budapest church has established 7 new churches.

In 2003, Pastor Schaller came to Baltimore to serve with Greater Grace and teach at Maryland Bible College and Seminary. He is now the Presiding Elder and Pastor of the Greater Grace Church in Baltimore, working with Dr. Carl H. Stevens, the Founder and Senior Pastor of GGWO.

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INTRODUCTION

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

From beginning to the end in the Bible, there are three times when God says, "It is finished," regarding His work. In Genesis 2:1-3, we read about the first work of God. He created the heavens and the earth, He finished it, and on the seventh day He rested.

In John 4:34, Christ spoke about the work that He must finish that was not finished. When Adam and Eve sinned, He killed an animal and clothed them (Genesis 3:21). That was the beginning of the work of redemption. This work was not finished until Jesus Christ shed His blood on the Cross as the Lamb of God to take away our sin. In John 19:30, He said, "It is finished."

We will see the end of His work when He finishes His operations with men in this age, in Revelation 21:4-6b:

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

"And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end…."

This is the third "it is finished" that we have in the Scripture regarding God's work. He finished the affairs of men as we know it—with the devil, with unbelievers and with believers, in all the diversities of gifts, administrations, and operations of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). First, it is finished. Finally, it is done.

We will enter into a new age, an eternal age, where there is no sin, no death, no devil, no false prophets, no beast, no demons, no lies, and no darkness. God fills the universe, and in the city of God, the New Jerusalem, there is no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will be the temple and the light thereof (Revelation 21:22-23). That day is coming. Until then, we are working.

Chapter One

DEFINING THE WORK OF GOD

"Jesus said unto [His disciples], My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." (John 4:34).

"But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). In other words, "The Father is working up until now, and I am also working with My Father."

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

What does it mean, "I must work the works of him that sent me"? Jesus was healing the blind man in this chapter. That is the work of God. In Matthew 8, Jesus met the leper, and He healed him. In John 6, Jesus spoke to His disciples and then multiplied the bread. He was doing the work of public ministry through the Holy Spirit until it was time to go to the Cross. At that time, He stopped His public ministry, and

He was revealed as the Lamb, slain from the beginning (Revelation 13:8), that takes away the sin of the world.

The crucifixion was seen in public. The Lamb was on the Cross, He was both the expiation and the propitiation for our sin—an offering made unto God on our behalf, satisfying both the judgment and the justice of God for the penalty of our sin. That work was done out in the open so that everyone could see the salvation of our God (Isaiah 52:10), though we cannot really "see" until the Holy Spirit reveals it to us.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14).

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

This is the work of God. Creation, and He did it. Redemption, and He did it. Now what is He doing? In 2 Corinthians 5:20, it says that we are here in His place, in His stead—ambassadors representing the kingdom of God. He sent the Holy Spirit into our lives, and He is ministering to us, in us, and through us.

Seeing the Grace of God

"And when James, Cephas, and John, who

seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision" (Galatians 2:9).

When the others saw Paul, they saw that he had personally received the grace of God. They saw him as a Spirit-filled believer. They knew about his background as one who persecuted believers, but now he was different. Perhaps he had a beautiful smile. We don't know. But when they saw his countenance, his spirit, his heart, his words, and his attitude, they saw the grace that was given unto Paul for his personal life.

Secondly, they extended the grace of God in fellowship. We not only have grace for our personal life. We also have grace for our fellowship.

We give the right hand of fellowship to our brothers and our sisters. We are not policemen. We are ministers of grace, and we say, "Grace, grace" unto that mountain (Zechariah 4:7), for this is the work of God in this period. Someday we will be finished, and He will say, "It is done, for I am Alpha and Omega." We will enter into an eternal age where there is no question or doubt, no shame or guilt, no fear or insecurity. But now there is a work of God and the work of

grace.

Extending Grace to Others

We love each other in the Holy Spirit, and out of our bellies flow rivers of water (John 7:38). God has commanded a blessing where we are. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). It is the work of God, the work of grace, among us.

We do not shun people. We do not judge people's motives. Instead, we give the right hand of fellowship that was extended to Paul and to Barnabas because they saw the grace of God. This right hand of fellowship is the characteristic of our heart, our spirit, our mind, and our life. It is the life that we now live.

The third work of God, as we see in Galatians 2:9, is reaching out to the lost: "…that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." Grace was seen in Paul and he was given the right hand of fellowship. And then they had the faith and the grace to believe that they were to go on and to reach out and to touch. It says, "that we should go unto the heathen."

We could change that word and say, "Go

unto various people groups." Beginning with the apostles, we go unto the various ethnic groups throughout the earth. In India alone, there are 17,500 different people groups with hundreds of languages. It would seem impossible, but the apostles had the right hand of fellowship. They had the grace of God that they knew was with them, and they had the desire and the vision to go into the world with the Gospel message. They believed that Paul and Barnabas were to go unto the heathen and they were to go to the circumcision, to the Jewish people.

Health to Thy Bones

Grace makes us healthy on the inside. Grace builds us up with words, Kingdom words in our heart and spirit. Grace gives us a vision for the regions beyond. When you are healthy on the inside, this is God's work, and He is still working. Jesus finished His work on the Cross, and then on that third day, the Father did a great work for us when He raised up His Son, our Savior.

Then God sent the Holy Spirit into us. This is the work that God is doing until the day when all the tears will be wiped away, when the world that we live in will be perfect, when we will be

absolutely glorified, and we will live in a universe that is perfected. Until that day, this is the work that we are doing right here. First, we perceive that we are objects of grace. Next, with love in our hearts we give the right hand of fellowship to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Then, we are here for the various people in the world who have not heard the Gospel. We are here on the earth to have a ministry and to do the work that God has sent us to do.

Chapter Two

REMEMBERING ALWAYS YOUR WORK OF FAITH

"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father" (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

The New Testament is filled with people like us who are laboring in a labor of faith and love. This is the work that God does in this world. He uses us in the Holy Spirit, and we do the work of God now in this time.

We also find men in the Old Testament who performed a work of faith and a labor of love. Because of rebellion, God allowed Israel to be taken captive by her enemies and the walls of Jerusalem were destroyed. Nehemiah was overcome with grief when he heard of it, but God put it in his heart to rebuild the wall. Whole families responded to the call, and side-by-side they set about to do this great work.

What happens any time that God's people go forward with a vision in the call of God? Read Nehemiah 4:1-6:

"But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

"And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"

"Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall."

"Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:

"And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.

"So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work."

The passage does not say, "The people had

emotions to work." No, it says that "the people had a mind to work. They had a mind that was from God and they were busy in building a wall as a small group of people with a lot of opposition. But you couldn't discourage them because they had a leader, Nehemiah, and Nehemiah knew that this work was God's will.

When God does His work, there will always be a Sanballat resisting because he is angry with what God is doing. He also gathered others to his side, mocking and saying, "What are these feeble Jews doing? These are poor little people. The people of God are feeble."

Proverbs 30:4 says, "The conies are a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." Conies are little animals like gophers or prairie dogs, and they are a feeble folk, but they hide in the rocks. We are like this. We might be a feeble folk, but we live in the fortification of God. We may be weak, but we are in the work of God. We are walking in the way, living in the mind of God and living in faith. God is our strength, and He will strengthen us and lead us in the way that we should go.

Don't Underestimate the Work of God

In the face of his detractors, Nehemiah said,

"The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem" (Nehemiah 2:20). This is how he answered his enemies. "He will prosper us. We will arise and build." He was saying, "Don't underestimate God's work. The Lord God Almighty is manifesting His name in the world through His feeble people."

The people had a mind to work because God gave them a mind to work. That is like us in the New Testament. We walk around in our homes, and we worship the Lord. We may see destruction in our homes, and we seek God for an answer. The Holy Spirit has come into our hearts, and when we call on His name, He will speak to us. The enemy always projects against the people of God: "The stones are no good. The wall is weak. What you are doing is meaningless and worthless." But we have an answer because we have the mind of Christ.

We pray, "Hear, O our God, for we are despised." We haven't been paying too much attention to the opposition, yet we also know there is another mind out there, and we are despised. Still, the Lord is the lifter of our heads; He is our glory and our shield (Psalm 3:3). The Lord is the

one who puts the integrity of His nature in us. This is what the enemy resists, mocks, and ridicules.

No Striving in God's Work

Do you know if you ask the Lord something, He can answer you? Do you know that as you worship Him and you put Him before your face, He will take care of things? That is His work. He has a work for us, His people, and we are in the work. We have a mind for it.

It does not have to be labor. Rather, it is a mind that knows His will, like Jesus as He was doing His Father's will. Have you noticed that Jesus never ran anywhere?

We can run in a spiritual way, but not in our flesh. There is no striving in the work of God. There is an amazing walk of patience and hope and peace. There is the right hand of fellowship and a persuasion in your mind that we are in God's place. We are with God's people. And we are doing God's work, loving one another (John 17:26).

When Nehemiah went about to do this work, he didn't tell anyone in the beginning. In Nehemiah 2, he kept it to himself. And then he went to the leaders and told them what "the

good hand of my God" had put upon his heart.

Look at 2:16: "And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work."

He didn't tell them right away what God had showed him. But as they started, God gave the people a mind, and this mind was a spiritual mind for they were doing the work of God.

Today, what is the work that God is doing? He has given us a mind where we would now do the will of God and the work of God in this earth on this generation. There will be a time when it will be finished, and we will enter into the eternal age. But until then, we are privileged people to be like the group of people who were building the wall of Jerusalem with Nehemiah.

We Have Seen the Enemy

When Sanballat heard that they were building the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. Whom does he represent? He represents the carnal, natural-minded, envious, jealous mind that opposes the work of God. In the New Testament you see this at various times very clearly—even among the

disciples themselves on more than one occasion (Matthew 16). When this rises up, either on the outside or on the inside, I have an enemy that is against the work of God. This is my own sin nature.

Since the Fall, when sin entered the world, three things characterize the sin nature: shame, fear, and guilt. We may be conscious of our guilt and say, "I can't do the will of God or the work of God because I have this amazing sense of shame, fear, guilt." We do not say these words, but we live in these emotions.

Now, because Christ has come into our life, instead of shame we have confidence. Instead of guilt we have a freedom and forgiveness. Instead of fear, we have boldness, confidence, and love. Love casts out fear, and love is in our hearts now (Romans 5:5, 1 John 4:18). We are not guilty anymore. We don't attribute it to some mechanism of the flesh or some mechanism of the works of man, psychologically speaking, but we attribute it to the power of the blood of the Son of God who died and shed it for us. The Blood has washed our consciences (Hebrews 9:14). Now we are free.

Chapter Three

DO NOT DESPISE THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

"And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

"Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by [Sanballat], and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall" (Nehemiah 4:2-3).

I remember years ago when we wanted to have a mission ship, and Pastor Ed Canino and a crew went over to Norway, where we bought a 300-ton ship. They sailed it over here to Baltimore. "What a small thing! What a little thing. How little. How feeble. How small," the enemy can say. But if it is the work of God, there is no small work of God (Zechariah 4:10).

Some pastor said, "I just have a little church."

There is no small church with God. Jesus said that "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst" (Matthew 18:20). You can move mountains by prayer. There is no small work of God. It is the work of God that He is doing.

The great work that Nehemiah was to do was also resisted by a group of people from Canaan. But Nehemiah said, "Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity." He said, "Lord, we are despised. We are little. Look at the little thing we are doing! But, Lord…," said Nehemiah.

You see, when we know the Lord, we see the Lord in everything. When God is in our life every day, there is no small thing. When we see the work of God, we are amazed at the work of God, and the work of God is all around us. We are in the midst of the work of God, the work of grace, the right hand of fellowship, and the desire to reach the peoples of the world with the Gospel.

Hundreds and hundreds of people have gone out into the highways and byways and

they have made an impact. Entire nations have been and are being affected by people that once sat in the chairs of church and Bible school. What an amazing work of God!

For what we do in our walk of faith, we have a mind. It is a mind to work, to believe, to love, to worship, to forgive, to rest, to go, to pray, to believe. We have a mind for this work. It is in our hearts.

Other things come behind this work because we have found something that is so beautiful. Christ is at the center. Jesus promised us that He would take care of the second and third and fourth things, if we would just make His tabernacle our delight and our chief joy. Let us take His purpose, His Spirit, and His mind and lift that up in our hearts and believe that this is primary. This is the work that God is doing now. Let's just jump in the river, and let the river take us where God is leading. In this river, there is healing, a future, and an opportunity.

While visiting my family in upstate New York, I would go through these little towns, and I'd think of young men and young women there. I used to live there, and I used to think, "What is here? What is my purpose? Where shall I go? How can I order my footsteps?"

The answer is this: Step into the work of God, have a mind that is for God's work, and God will take care of you, bless you and multiply you a hundredfold.

So Built We the Wall

"So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

"But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very [angry]" (Nehemiah 4:6-8).

The more progress we make in His work, the angrier the devil will get. The activity of evil will not stop. Of Solomon, it is said that he was greatly beloved of God, and God made him king of Israel; "but even him did outlandish women cause to sin" (Nehemiah 13:26).

You may greatly be favored of God but do not underestimate your sin nature. You might be blessed mightily and greatly, but do not underestimate the day of foolishness. I could do something extremely foolish. Solomon was a great wise man who wrote Proverbs 5, 6, and 7 by the

way. Read those chapters and you will see that he knew all very well about the dangers of women in a lustful way. Yes, he was greatly beloved of God, but oh how terribly Solomon suffered because of his foolishness though he was the wisest of all. What a story that is.

There is a great work happening here among us. It's a work of kindness, gentleness, love, grace, and mercy. It is a work in the Spirit and in faith. God has given us a mind for it.

Knowing Who We Are

It is so sad to see what sin does to the human psyche. It causes a person to have a very low esteem of who he is. There is a sense of hiding, insecurity, fear, and shame. How much work is hindered because we live in the guilt complex of our own failure? "God could not use me." All of that is wrong and sadly effectual when the projections in the air connect with the subjective nature of a man. People say, "We cannot build. We have personal problems. There's no way we could get anything done here."

Yet, God says, "This is My work that I am doing on the earth, and I want you to co-labor with Me. I am for you. I am with you. I equip you, fill you, satisfy you, and anoint you. Follow

Me, trust Me, believe Me, and I will give you My mind."

This is the mind that blows the devil away.

We actually know how to live in this walk of faith. We are all learning together. But around the corner is Sanballat. Out there is an "outlandish" woman (Hebrew word means "foreigner"). There will be someone out there waiting at the corner to interfere with the work of God because the work of God is always resisted by the work of evil.

If you are where God has put you, then continue and abide. God will give you His mind, and you will have a mind for His work. You will pick up the discernment, and you will understand that something is going on that is beyond flesh and blood. You will see the grace of God, you will extend the right hand of fellowship, and you will talk about the people who need the Gospel. You will be a part of the team of workers, co-laboring to train them, to love them, to build them up, and to send them out. That is the grace that has been given to us. That is God's heart and God's mind for His great work.

There will always be those little guys out there. They are going to say, "Aha! That's nothing." We will say, "Fine. That's your world. This

is ours. We are busy. God gave us a mind to the work. We are excited about it. We are focused on it. We are quietly praying and living as families joined to families in this great work."

Soon there will be a day and all will be done regarding these phenomena. Let's jump in and walk in the Spirit, in the Word and in the Body …until it is changed.

CONCLUSION

"That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.

"And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:2-3).

Picture it. They were building, and there were stones in the field—rubbish everywhere. It's like seeing piles of building materials, broken beams and stones and piles of rubbish in ruins all around. The workers are weakened by the sight of the task. They are not doing their jobs and they are not motivated in their work. One problem becomes fuel to feed another problem. So Nehemiah used families. Not an army, but whoever was there. Family was joined to family because they were fighting for their lives and for their sons and their daughters (Ne-

hemiah 4:14-15).

Wherever God is doing a great work, the enemy will always be trying to distract us. The enemies of Nehemiah wrote five letters, but each time the answer was, “I cannot come down. I cannot come down. I am busy. I am busy. I am busy.” The attacks may come from without or within. We may be a feeble folk, but we are the family of God, and God has put His heart in us. Neither shame, nor guilt, nor fear can stop us because we know how to hide in the Rock. We have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and filled with the Spirit of God, and we love one another heart-to-heart and side-by-side.

Soon it will be finished. There will be no time, as we know it. So let’s have a mind to work for God while we have these opportunities.

A Ministry of Mercy

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INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare wrote, "The quality of mercy is not strain'd. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven, Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed; It blesses him that gives and him that takes." It could be that he understood something about this amazing provision of God to sinners. In fact, when mercy becomes a reality in the heart of a Christian, that person's life becomes a beacon to people who are struggling.

So many of us are trying to stay afloat by our own strength, playing the part of the "good Christians" yet feeling defeated at every test. In fact, the main purpose behind every trial that comes our way is to conform us to Christ's image. A significant part of His essence is the manifestation of mercy.

As we will see in this booklet, mercy is one of the most releasing characteristics of the nature of God. Without it, we could never receive all the benefits of His love and grace, since we

would always be trying to measure up to His standards. Only a broken vessel can be made available to this ministry of mercy. And only one who has received mercy can rest with the Lord in the midst of the storm.

Chapter One

MERCY THAT KEEPS US FROM FAINTING

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not" (2 Corinthians 4:1).

That is a very powerful verse. It says that because we have received mercy, we do not "faint" —we do not become despondent, we do not become depressed, and we do not lose heart.

Paul made a point of saying that we have "*this* ministry." It is a very special kind of ministry. But the part that is such a blessing says that Paul did not faint because he had obtained mercy.

At salvation, God gave us sixty-eight things that we don't deserve.* That is an operation of grace. In terms of divine discipline, while grace means that we get what we do not deserve, mercy means we do not get what we *do* deserve.

Many married couples do not give each other mercy. It takes knowing God to have mercy

toward a wife who nags. The husband who has received mercy from God will not give her what she deserves: He won't react with anger, he won't treat her unkindly. Instead, he will give her what she does not deserve: gentleness, kindness—*grace*. While the world may call that weakness, the Bible calls it God-likeness.

Mercy Enables the Disabled

Oh, to understand mercy and to understand grace! In twenty-six consecutive verses, Psalm 136 speaks of mercy.

Every one of us could choose to dwell on the difficulties we face; but seeing that we have this ministry, "we faint not." It is a ministry of mercy and grace.

According to 1 Timothy 1:12, God enabled Paul and counted him faithful, putting him in the ministry. This shows me that it is God who calls us, and it is God who enables us to do what He requires. Every humble pastor I have ever known would agree that God is the faithful One. *He* enables us to serve in the ministry.

Who could be placed in the ministry if God didn't enable him? I don't know of anybody. The apostle Paul said, "I was a blasphemer. I was a persecutor. I was an injurious person." But he

was then able to say, "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Furthermore he said, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ was with me, along with His love and His faith."

Then he said, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners…." And I would like to have been there when he wrote this next phrase: "…of whom I am chief."

Paul didn't say, "I was chief." I could understand that. He said, "I *am* chief." What amazing humility!

He said, "I obtained mercy first, that the Lord Jesus Christ might show longsuffering, so that could be a pattern for everyone else who would believe unto everlasting life."

This is such a beautiful passage. What Paul said was, "What happened to me will happen to every believer. They will obtain mercy and find grace along with faith and love from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Less Than the Least

"I was a blasphemer, a persecutor; I killed people and injured them. And here I am! A minister of mercy." Afterward, through God's mercy and grace, Paul became one of the greatest ministers who ever lived.

He said that by grace, God placed him who was "less than the least of *all* the saints" into the ministry, that he might preach to the Gentiles (see Ephesians 3:7-8).

"Less than the least…." That is such an unusual phrase in the Greek text. If you can imagine what the least is, Paul was saying, "I'm not even there; I am less than that."

Think of what you consider the worst thing a person could be, and Paul was proclaiming, "Once you get there, I am less than that. To me, who am less than the least was this grace given. Why? That I would preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ."

Now you can understand why he said in 2 Corinthians 4:1, "…Seeing we have this ministry…." The use of the participle speaks of this truth that has been made a reality by mercy.

"Seeing we have this ministry, we faint not."

Again, the word "faint" means to lose heart, to be despondent, to enter into cycles of depression, and to let your emotions take the place of thinking with God. Do not become "weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

**Read* What Happened When You Received Christ?, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Two

HOW TO FLY LIKE AN EAGLE

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isaiah 40:28-29).

God said in Isaiah 40:25, "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal?" And I want to say, "Nobody, God. The devil is not equal to You. The demon armies all put together are not equal to You. No wicked man is equal to You; no man can do anything against You. No one is Your equal; nothing can match your strength and your greatness."

He said, "Lift up your eyes on high, and see the One who created all of these things and who bringeth out the host by his might. Look at the billions of stars I created—and I call them all by

name, for I am strong in power."

Then He addressed Jacob, saying, "Why do you think you can hide from me, or that I don't see what's going on in your life?" (See Isaiah 40:26-27). He went on to say that young men faint and get weary; and even special young men will fall:

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength…." I love that promise. "…They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31)

God wants to teach us how to be "eagle" Christians. The eagles fly so high that they soar above the clouds and the storms.

Deuteronomy 32:11 explains that when the young eagle is eight to twelve weeks old, the mother trains it in such a beautiful way. She nudges the eaglet out of its nest and lets it drop, then she flies under it, catching the young one before it falls to the ground. Amazing!

So the young one falls on the mother; then she does it again and again. Eventually, after about the fourth time, the little baby eagle learns to use its wings, and it flies with the mother underneath.

Do you know what verse that reminds me

of? "Underneath us are his everlasting arms," God's eternal hands uphold us. And no matter how close to the bottom we think we are, His arms are always underneath (Deuteronomy 33:27).

The Secret to Looking and Feeling Young Again

"Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psalm 103:5).

Every spring, without exception, eagles grow new feathers. So an eagle can be very old, yet, with its brand-new feathers, it can look so beautiful every spring.

Also, eagles dwell in high places. Often they make their nests high on rock ledges, in the strong places that can withstand the harsh weather (Job 39:27-29).

Psalm 92:12-14 correlates with these verses perfectly. It says that the righteous will flourish and shall bring forth fruit "in an old age" because they are established upon the Rock, Jesus Christ.

As we get to know Him and His ways, we fall more deeply in love with the Lord Jesus Christ. What a beautiful thing! Here is the Lord, and He says, "Listen! I want you to get to know Me. Don't just enjoy knowledge about me. Get

to know Me; get to know who I am. I am the Creator of the ends of the earth. I do not faint—I do not get weary; I do not lose heart; and I do not become despondent."

The Beauty of Wings

The eagle is mentioned more than any other bird in the Bible. They are able to look right into the sun, able to soar higher and swifter than any other bird can fly.

God says, "I want you to realize that instead of looking at circumstances, and instead of looking at people, wait on Me." The youth fall, and young men get weary and faint, and then they utterly fall. But not so with those that wait upon the Lord, because "they that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength, and they will mount up with wings as eagles."

The concept of wings is interesting. Wings serve as protection for the baby chicks, and they enable the birds to fly and to soar up high. Oh, the beauty of wings! They have such power and such strength.

What does God mean when He says, "they shall run and not be weary"? We are always having our strength renewed. Later, however, our life may slow down to a walk and we may

no longer work, perhaps because we are sick and confined to bed. But when all of that is going on, God still has a plan and a provision. In the Hebrew texts, to "run" means that we can go full-speed ahead at whatever we do in life. To "walk," however, means that we can't do those things now, yet we go on with integrity and the capacity God gives.

So if you are sick and laid up in a hospital, thank God for His mercy. You did run and did not get weary; but now you have slowed down to a walk, and you do not faint.

Chapter Three

CALLED TO MANIFEST HIS MERCY

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

"For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

"Even so have these also now not believed, *that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy*" (Romans 11:29-31).

It is important to remember that, at first, our calling is not to a place; it is to a *Person*—the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God says that He gives us a sound mind—not one of fear, "but of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). Second Timothy 1:9 is referring to us when Paul says that God has called us with a holy calling. This means that no matter what we do for a living, we work as men and women with a holy calling.

One of the mistakes many people make is that they don't understand their calling. Your calling is holy. That is why you don't need to get nervous. That's why you don't need to get frustrated. Everything you do, everything you touch, relates to a holy calling.

To be "holy" means to grow in our spiritual life by completely embracing God's life and being embraced by God. Then, we execute the promises, execute our faith, and if we fail, we execute rebound without becoming discouraged.

A holy calling is to a Person. That makes our eyes, our tongue, our hands, and our feet *God's*. He satisfies our mouth with good things, and He renews our youth as the eagle's.

A New Kind of Health Insurance

Oh, if only we would grasp what the three top psychologists in the world have said regarding stress. Stress, in their conviction, causes 75 percent of all the problems we have. They add that people do not understand stress, because it isn't something that we can easily define. We face so many stress factors that seem insignificant, yet unless we learn to deal with the root, the combination of stressors can cause a complex of mental, physical, and spiritual illnesses.

Seventy-five percent! Scores of the ailments that you have are simply related to stress.

Jesus said, "I created everything, and I call out the stars by name. I am strong and mighty in power. But don't you know that I don't get weary and I don't faint? Wait upon Me. Trust Me with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. Acknowledge Me in all of your ways. I vow to you, I promise to you, that I will renew your strength, and I will direct your paths (see Proverbs 3:5-6). You will become an 'eagle' Christian, a manifestation of mercy."

Mercy Teaches Us to Wait

"Seeing we have this ministry, we faint not, because we have obtained mercy." I love to think of this.

We have the ministry of the Word of God, a ministry of mercy: We will never, ever get what we deserve—and we deserved hell. What's more, because of a ministry of grace, God will never take away from us what He has given us that we *don't* deserve. His unconditional love and His faith will always be toward us.

I am so overwhelmed that this precious Lord is like that. No wonder the Bible says, "Unto you which believe, he is precious" (1 Peter 2:7).

In your heart, speak to Him; tell Him how precious He is—what value He has: "The value of Your mercy, my God. The value of Your grace. The value of Your love. The value of our redemption by you through faith alone, by grace. Lord, with all of my heart, I love You and I thank You. You are so precious."

Faith-Rest Drills

A problem is only a test, a "drill" from God. As we dwell upon how precious He is, we won't think of any problems. We will deal with our problems, but very quietly through faith-rest. And when we mix faith with what we hear, we enter into faith rest (Hebrews 4:2,3 and 9-11).*

The most beautiful thing about a faith-rest drill is how God approaches us with the test. He will not test us beyond what we can handle (1 Corinthians 10:13). God says, "I am in you. We have supped together. We love each other; you are My child, and I cherish you. My purpose is not to hurt you but to have you grow and become able to enjoy all the riches of your inheritance. Now it is time for the faith-rest test. Are you ready?"

By God's grace, we are ready. And we can stand before Him boldly and say, "Yes, I'm

ready, because in my worst state, when I am faint, You give me power and strength. When I have no might at all, You increase my strength, and You renew my mind. I could not ask for more than You do. I would never expect You to care for me and to provide for me the way You do. So Lord Jesus, with a single eye, I thank You, and I praise You. In this trial, I express my total love to You."

He tells us how *not* to faint, but then He says, "If you do faint, I understand. That's okay. You can be strong in Me, but if you don't have any strength at all, it's all right. I'll increase your strength. The only thing I ask you to do is to just wait upon Me. Things will happen very quickly, because you are a member of My family. I am your Father, Jesus is your elder Brother and your Savior, and the Holy Spirit is your Comforter and guide, with the Word of God as your counsellor."

The mercy of God! So often, we don't even recognize the benefits of mercy toward us. By definition, to receive mercy is to see God withhold discipline or correction that we deserve. As we grow in our understanding of the greatness of His love toward us, we will not always live in fear of divine retribution. We will have a holy

and wholesome reverence for His Word and all that He is. We will be set free to minister the same gifts of grace and mercy that were given to us.

**To learn more about the subject of faith rest, read* Walking in Faith*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

We have a divine provision that will take care of every ounce of guilt, shame, and condemnation we could face. But more than that, we have a divine proposition to deliver to lost people everywhere. Whether you are a mother at home, a factory worker, a lawyer, or a student, each one of us has a ministry that we can execute with joy:

"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful*" (Luke 6:35-36). This kind of mercy will draw others to the God we represent with a ministry of mercy.

A New Name

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

There is more to a name than any of us realize. The name given to us determines how we are known, both in this world and in the invisible realm of the angelic contest. So many people allow themselves to be known by the defeats and the failures that have plagued them. Others are held up by the successes they have gained through their strivings and their works in flesh.

God, however, wants us to be known and to know ourselves after the new name that He has given us. For us to live is Christ, and all that goes with His wonderful name is ours. This is how heaven knows us. In eternity, we will receive a great inheritance according to our new name.

This booklet will examine the awesome privilege we have to carry His name and to experience the great blessings that come with it.

Chapter One

THE REAL VALUE OF A NAME

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

"And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

"And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

"And he said unto him, *What is thy name?* And he said, Jacob.

"And he said, *Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel:* for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

"And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

"And Jacob called the name of the place Pe-

niel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

"And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

"Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank" (Genesis 32:24-32).

What is the real value of a name? To the Hebrews as well as the Greeks, throughout the Word of God, a person's name often expressed his character, nature, and habits. A name referred to what the parents giving the name thought the child would be like, or what they were going through when the child was born in the Hebrew nation.

When we consider Exodus 3:15, the Lord's name is "Everlasting" or Yahweh. His name is so important. Ephesians 1:21 and Philippians 2:9-10 say that the name of Jesus is above every name "in earth and heaven."

Speaking of the people of God, the Bible says, in Deuteronomy 28:10, "They shall be called by My name." When we arrive at the place where we are called by His name, the demons of hell are afraid.

In Acts 19:15, the demon said to the seven sons of Sceva, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" In other words, "We know their nature. We know their lives. But you are using the name of Christ to cast me out, and I don't know you: I don't recognize your authority."

In Zechariah 13:9, God said, "When you pray and use My name properly, I will hear you."

Through faith in God's name, the lame man was healed (Acts 3:16).

It is overwhelming that we are able to preach in His name, pray in His name, love, forgive, and rejoice in His name. We can have friendships, marriages, and families that operate in His nature revealed by His name. Every decision should be made according to God's nature, honoring the divine order of the Word. This is available to a Christian called by His name.

Please understand that too easily we take the Lord's name in vain. Most often it happens when we do not take the Word of God seriously. When the Holy Spirit impresses us with a verse of Scripture and we don't respond, we are taking God's name in vain.

Christ's name is above every name. This means that His nature (which is mercy, love, forgiveness, divine goodness, and truth, in Exodus 34:6) is above everything else on this earth. If two of us are walking in the Holy Spirit, and one of us says, "Let's agree about something in Jesus' name," we are saying that what we agree upon is based upon the nature and character of the One who is our Savior (Matthew 18:19-20).

In 1 Chronicles 4, an interesting story is told of a woman who had a child and became very angry. She did not like her child, so she said, "I will call his name Jabez, because he has brought sorrow into the world. He has caused pain, and wherever he goes, there will be pain." (see 1 Chronicles 4:9). She put a name on her son: 'sorrow bringer,' 'pain giver'.

So, according to 1 Chronicles 4:10, Jabez called upon the *name* of the Lord.

He said, "Bless me indeed. Please enlarge my coasts. I don't want to live out the name my mother gave me and what she thought of me." He said, "Put Your hand upon me, and do not let me be grieved" (see 1 Chronicles 4:10).

Jabez said, "I will not accept what my

mother has given me. I'm going to let the name of the Lord change my life," and the name of the Lord changed his life. This verse says that God granted his request.

Some children are called 'stupid'. They have been given that name. Many of them end up using drugs and committing other crimes. They grow up with a negative identity—born into this world with a certain name, and all they know is what they have been called—in some cases by the way they are treated by their parents.

But in Zephaniah 3:20, God said to Israel, "I will give you a very special name." And in Isaiah 62:2, God promises to give the Gentiles a new name, too.

Chapter Two

PUTTING ADAM BEHIND US

It is important to understand that in Genesis 5:2, God called Adam and Eve "Adam."

Though they may have a name such as Bill or Joe or Betty, people who live in their old nature are called Adam. That means that their hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked by nature (Jeremiah 17:9). It means that if they do well in their flesh or in their own strength, they become proud and arrogant. The old nature is fallen, and they do not know God. They do not seek after God, and they have all gone out of the way (Romans 3:10-12). Their name is Adam.

When you watch the news, you will hear news about people that have many different names; but unless their identity is in Christ, all their names are Adam.

When we are born again and we enter into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, we enter a brand-new life. From that time,

God never sees us as Adam.

Deuteronomy 28:10 says we are called by His name. The first believers were called Christians (Acts 11:26). Instead of 'Bill Adam', it is 'Bill Christ', 'Bill Jesus'. Instead of Joe Adam, it is Joe Christ. Instead of Elizabeth Adam, it's Elizabeth Christ.

It is so crucial to understand that when we are born a second time, we enter into a brand-new nature with a brand-new name.

The Name of Blasphemy

In Revelation 13, Antichrist has on his head the name of "Blasphemy." In verse 16, he places a name in the right hand and foreheads of those that follow him. Revelation 13:17 says that no one can buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast in their foreheads and in their right hands. What does that mean?

In the Bible, the number seven speaks of perfection. Man's number, which is "six," falls short of perfection. During the Tribulation Period, everyone will have a name—it is "6-6-6". That is the name of Adam. So they will all have the name of Adam, and they will follow Antichrist.

But in Revelation 14:1, as the Lamb, Jesus Christ stood, and He put the Father's name on

the foreheads of a hundred and forty-four thousand people. That name is "Mercy, Love, Forgiveness, Grace, Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth" (see Exodus 34:6-7). You could also say, they were given the name of the Lamb. God gave them the name of the Lamb Who stood as their leader.

Sons of Belial

In 1 Samuel 2:12, Phineas and Hophni were called the sons of Belial, and they knew not the Lord. According to ancient isagogics, seven different groups of demon armies were working together through them like a "tag team."

One group promoted lust to live outside of God's will. The second perpetuated a program of living in a lie and calling it truth. In other words, their job was to make people believe a lie.

The third group promoted rebellion. The fourth was for stubbornness. The fifth was for gossip. The sixth was for stealing. And, the seventh promoted pride and deceit.

Those are the seven characteristics of a tag team that totally overcame two sons of the high priest. The sons in turn overcame the high priest with their behavior. Their father protected them

when they didn't know God. They lied to him and lived outside of God, so they were called the sons of Belial.

Cursed No More

Jacob's mother, Rebecca, was not a good woman. Her brother Laban was not a good man. When Jacob and Laban were together for twenty years, it was one crook taking advantage of another crook, and the older crook won during that twenty-year period.

However, in Genesis 32:26, the Lord Jesus Christ came to wrestle with Jacob. God was trying to get Jacob's heart right. That's what that wrestling match was all about. "I love you, and I want to get your heart right," is what Jesus was saying there. The Word says that Jesus could not defeat Jacob. Now that seems strange, but it means that He couldn't break Jacob's will.

So Jesus touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh and said, "The morning has come, and I have to go." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, except you bless me." That, by the way, is a beautiful way to tell God something.

"God, I know You love me, and I will not let You go unless you bless my health, my marriage, my family. I will not let You go."

Then the Lord Jesus said to him, "What is your name?"

He said, "Jacob."

"You will no longer be called Jacob, which means 'cheater and crooked'. Instead," the Lord declared at that moment, "You will now be called 'Israel' because you have power with God and with men."

Then Jacob made a strange statement to the One he had wrestled with. He said, "What is *your* name?"

God said, "Why are you asking Me this? Why are you asking Me what My name is? Just because you have been twenty years away from Me, don't you know that My name is Yahweh? Don't you know that is why I am changing your name? Because of My nature revealed by My name, I let you prevail and I am changing your name to Mine. I am doing all this because I am Yahweh."

The Word of God then says that this place was called Peniel, which means 'heart-to-heart and face-to-face with God.' Then the next verse says, "And the sun rose."

Jacob was now limping, but he had a brand-new nature, and the sun was rising. Yes, he limped, but now he's going to be God's man. He

will fail, and he will use rebound, but his name is Israel—'power with God.' The name Israel means "God's special people."

God was saying to Jacob, "You are My special man, and every time you limp, remember one thing: I beat *you* in that wrestling match!"

A New Contract

In Genesis 12:2-3, God entered into a covenant with Abraham, and He said, "I'll make thee a great nation. I'll make your name great. I'll bless everybody that blesses you and curse those that curse you."

But Galatians 3:29 says we are Abraham's seed. Galatians 3:13 says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law… Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." This is so we might receive the blessings of Abraham through the promise of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be blessed? It means to be empowered and added unto in every area of your life.

God had a special covenant relationship with Israel. In Deuteronomy 28, they were God's people, and God said, "I will bless you in the city. I will bless you in the field. I will bless the fruit of your body. I will bless your cattle. I will bless your baskets. I will bless your store."

And, in verse 6, He said, "When you go out, I will bless you. And when you come in, I will bless you. When you're cooking, I will bless you. When you go to bed, I will bless you. When you meet people, I will bless them because of you."

In Genesis 41:45, Joseph was given the name *Zaphnathapaaneah*, which means glorious rest, and a man who had Yahweh's blessing upon him everywhere he went.

Chapter Three

DIVINE DISTINCTION AND ETERNAL RECOGNITION

I want you to see that God's desire is to call us by our new names. His desire—please hear this—is to bless our prayers, to make our children great, to give us the best marriages on earth, or if you are single or a widow, the best life, and to bless us in business.

"Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee" (Hebrews 6:14). God's desire from eternity past is to bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places that we should be blameless before Him and filled with love in His presence.

God wants to put a difference between His people and the world (Exodus 11:7). He does want us to be a blessing to them, but He also wants to put a difference between us.

All believers are part of the family of God. We are sons and daughters of our Lord and Savior. In Hebrews 2:11, He is our elder brother.

God wants us to know that through faith in His name that He is more than willing to bring in waves of healing, blessing, grace, and restoration.

In Christ, your name isn't drug addict. Your name isn't alcoholic. Your name isn't pornography. Your name isn't sickness in Luke 13:11.

You Are Not Your Situation

A girl was diagnosed with cancer at the age of seven. She had cancer for nineteen years, but, at the age of twenty-six, she was gloriously healed. She could say, "My name isn't cancer. All I've known is cancer, but my identity isn't cancer."

A wife was being beaten by her husband, and she took the abuse repeatedly. For a time, her name was "a beaten-up wife." God took him home. She married a wonderful man of God who is now a pastor. Her name is no longer "I'm beaten up." Her name is missionary, soul-winner, lover of men, mother, and sister, a member of the highest order. She has a new name in Christ.

She and all of us will be called by the name of the Lord (Deuteronomy 28:10).

"And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made;

"And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make.

"And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.

"For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much" (Exodus 36:4-7).

Gifts were needed for the tabernacle. The Israelites honored God, and they gave so much that in verse 6 of that chapter, Moses said, "I won't accept any more. Your name is 'givers'. You're such amazing givers, I have to stop you from giving."

Some people have a name of being gracious. They have a name of patience. They have a name of kindness. They have a name of edification. They have a name of forgiveness. They

have a name of loving and compassion. They have a name of intercessor in their prayer life. God has given them a name on "their foreheads" meaning their minds. He has given them a new name.

It is so important that Jesus said, "If you ask any thing in my name…." So, according to John 14:14, we go to God in prayer, and we say, "Father, with all of our hearts, we believe in Your nature, in Your character, in Your promises. And this prayer, dear Father, is in Your Son's name. It is the name of the Miracle Worker. It is the name of the One who loves us. It is the name of Somebody who will never, ever forsake His own."

Many of you are going through real problems. You are going through serious problems. There is a Name above every name, and He is ever living to make intercession for you. He calls you by your name, and He doesn't call you 'failure'.

Time and time again, many children are told that they are no good—told that they won't make it. But we must not accept that name. That girl who had cancer wouldn't accept that as her identity. We must not accept anything less than the identity God has given us.

Thank God tonight, we can literally experience this name change in the kingdoms. Satan calls us names, but God has a real name for us based upon His redemption.

The Title to Our Inheritance

Did you ever wonder what is meant in Revelation 2:17 when God says, "I will give you a white stone"? The white stone was given at festivals, according to isagogics, and the white stone meant absolute acquittal of everything with an eternal promotion.

On the white stone that Jesus will give believers, there will be a message. The message will have a new name. Only that person will know what that new name is. The new name is the title to his inheritance for all eternity. Each of us is going to look at our stone, and we will say, "That is my title to my inheritance for all eternity because of the nature God has given me just like His Son" (Revelation 2:17).

They were all in one place and in one accord (Acts 2:1). The Word of God says they had one heart and one soul (Acts 4:31). With great power, they gave witness of the Resurrection, and great grace was upon them all (Acts 4:33).

When we live in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

it means we are in the unity of God's nature, the unity of God's attributes, the unity of God's character, and the unity of God's plan and God's purpose. We can have the unity of the oneness of the name of God when we come together in His name. In 1 Samuel 20:42, Jonathan and David had God's name between them. So as we come together as a group in God's name, God pours out blessings that we cannot contain. We agree with God on subjects where we never agreed with Him before. In Amos 3:3, we walk with God, and we agree with our God.

His name means everything to us. His promises mean everything to us. And when we utter our praise and our prayers to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are bringing fear into hell. Deuteronomy 28:10*b* said, "When they are called by My name, [the demons] will be afraid of you."

Blessing will follow you everywhere you go, unless you are at the center of the angelic conflict between God's Kingdom and the kingdom of darkness—a contest for the angels to recognize your faith in action so you can be promoted forever, to reign with Christ.

Respond to His Nature

I cannot begin to share with you the sacredness, the value, and the preciousness of what it means to be a Christian walking in the Spirit of the Lord's name through faith in His name. As we drive our cars, as we listen to songs, as we minister to the Lord, we are ministering to something about His nature, something about His attributes. And, the Holy Spirit is in our midst as the Spirit of truth (John 16:13, 15:26). Let's begin to walk in the truth of a promise, in the truth of a relationship, in the truth of fellowship, in the truth of His nature. As we begin to be moved by God, there isn't a single thing in this universe that can even compare to submission, obedience, and responding to the nature of Jesus Christ's name.

God made an unconditional covenant with Abraham, which meant, "I will keep My promise to you even if I have to die." And, He did have to die on the Cross.

Under the New Covenant, Jesus Christ now allows us to be called by His name. It is a brand-new name. It is "Not I, but Christ." That is now our name, and the world and the demons know it. We have a name by which our friends call us,

but our new family name is Jesus. As He is in heaven, so are we on earth.

CONCLUSION

In Revelation 2:17, we made reference to the white stone, which represents our acquittal with promotion. We also talked about the new name is our own title deed, our degree of reigning or our degree of glory in eternity. That verse also mentions the hidden manna—all of the doctrine we have stored up and hidden inside.

God will say to us in heaven, "You don't have an old sin nature any more. So I'm giving you hidden manna—the Word of God stored up in your memory center. But at last, it has become reality because you have been made perfect. Though hidden, it paid off when you were on earth because you received My Word by faith."

Dear Father, thank You for Your plan that included giving us a new identity. We desire to bring you glory as Your children, called by Your name. We ask You to keep blessing us, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

A Personal Cross for a

Personal Resurrection

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a world-famous singer was scheduled to tour all around the world. She had a tremendous voice and the tour was bound to be a great success. Suddenly, her father fell sick and became an invalid. She, being his only daughter, immediately cancelled the tour in order to take care of her dad.

Her singing career came to an end right then. "Well, I cannot sing around the world, but I can write songs that others can sing," she said. Soon, she had penned a song that is still being sung around the world: "Brighten the Corner Where You Are."

This woman's hope was not destroyed, because whatever is from God cannot be destroyed. A singing career may have died, but her talent was resurrected in her song writing.

As this booklet will show, what we bring to the Cross of Christ must go through death and burial, just as He died and was buried. But the

most precious thing about the Cross is that it wipes out everything so that all of it that is of God can be resurrected. All that we take to the Cross is soon resurrected in triumph for eternity.

Chapter One

FROM DEATH TO RESURRECTION

According to Genesis 21, before the promised child, Isaac, was born, Abraham had another son, Ishmael. After Isaac was weaned and circumcised, Ishmael began mocking his half brother. Ishmael, representing the natural man, could never serve God's purpose. But Isaac, the child of promise, did serve God's eternal purpose.

The old man can never serve God's purpose. The sad part of it is that many Christianized Ishmaels are out there in the world, trying to represent God. These people do not function in an eternal purpose. Even though they speak things that seem to be of God, the motives of the heart may not be right.

Many marriages and families are not doing well. As individuals, they may be saved and attend church three times a week, but they go as

"Ishmaels" and receive the message as natural men. They may not live in overt sins, but they are natural men, trying to fulfill the purpose of God. What they need is to walk in the plan of God, continually being filled with the Holy Spirit and practicing rebound when they fail.

Isaac was led to the place of death on Mount Moriah. And just as Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, God provided the substitute—the ram in the thicket. That pointed to Jesus—the One who would become the Substitute for us all.

The one who carried the great burden that day was Abraham's mule. He was saddled with the wood for the burnt offering. On the way home, however, the mule was free. The mule pictured the sinner being weighed down with his burden. But when the weight is gone, then there is freedom.

The Old Comes to an End

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

"God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

"For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:1-7).

Follow this as we examine the historical death of Jesus Christ. It was part of the greatest historic event of all times. Think of the historical burial of Jesus Christ—the most solemn burial that ever took place. Then came the Ascension, Jesus went to heaven to assume His Session as He sat down at the right hand of the Father.

One of the things Romans 6 teaches us is that everything that is of God is eternal and cannot be destroyed. The Cross removes everything that is not of Him. Everything that is old must come to an end, and what remains becomes new through the Resurrection. His own transformation transforms each of us completely.

God made it possible for every single thing

in Adam to come to an end. What an amazing provision this is for us. It is an absolute reality. Every single sin, every wrong habit came to an end with His historic death and burial. Now, in Christ, everything—without exception—is brand-new because of His historic resurrection.

What God has made cannot be destroyed. The passage in Revelation 19:19 through 20:3 refers to the beast and the false prophet being cast into hell, while Satan is bound and cast into the bottomless pit for one thousand years. All of them are still alive and in torment. Here is the principle: No one can destroy a soul, because God created it. You cannot destroy a thought or a word. You cannot destroy hope, faith, or love. Many of these things can be taken away from us, but they cannot be destroyed; they go on.

Years ago, a man named Bill Rice and his wife had a little baby girl. They so much wanted that little girl. Soon, they noticed that the little girl did not respond to sounds, and they found out she was deaf. That, however, did not destroy the hope that they had in their precious little girl. Mr. Rice sacrificed and prayed and gave everything he had to buy a ranch in Tennessee. Soon deaf folks from all over the world were coming to this ranch for a great vacation, and

every one of them heard the Gospel preached in sign language. Hundreds and hundreds have been saved through that ministry. The hope they had for their little girl was transferred into a worldwide ministry for the deaf.

Very few Christians really live consistently as men and women who have been crucified with Christ. They know the verses from the Bible. Yet, they do not understand that the Cross wipes out everything that is not of God. Their problems would be so few, their solutions so great, and their prospects so amazing if they just recognized this. Resurrection makes the Word alive, it makes love alive, and it makes faith alive. The Resurrection represents a new starting point for every moment we live in its power.

Chapter Two

THE SOLUTION THAT LEADS TO GLORY

"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

"Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

"For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:8-13).

These verses speak of such a fabulous solu-

tion. For the worst person in the world, here is the solution. For the worst sinner, here's the solution. For depression, for lying, for lusting, for addiction, here is the solution. Here is the solution for pain, for wounds, for hurts, for damaged emotions.

The solution God has given us is this: What God has resurrected cannot be destroyed. I know a man who went through a time at his job when he was lied about and accused of doing terrible things. He was so distraught, but his precious wife said, "Let's take it to the Cross and bury it." So they took it to the Cross and buried it. The Cross proved to be the solution for the pain and wounds that come from attacks of the enemy.

"Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

"To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Galatians 1:3-5).

One of the unique things about the Cross is that God wants us to glory in it. God gave His Son to save us from our sins and to save us from this present evil world. This powerful, worldly

system is operated by the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world, and is controlled by his evil infection (see Ephesians 2:2, 1 John 5:18-19, 2 Corinthians 4:4).

God says, "I have given you the Solution. You are guests here in Satan's territory, but his world cannot touch you."

Why? Because of the Cross. Oh, we need to glory in the Cross. The glorying comes from Resurrection power. We make progress when we present ourselves to God as those who have died and as those who have been raised from the dead. That gives us progress. That gives us process. That gives us power.

Bright Lights, Big Rewards

"All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is

sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

"It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:39-44).

The sun's brightness differs from that of the moon. Stars have different degrees of glory. Likewise, we as believers in resurrected bodies will have different degrees of glory. Our rewards will differ. Some of us will attain the highest honor given to men in heaven: the Morning Star Order (Revelation 2:26-28).*

In 1 Corinthians 15:43, we are sown in dishonor, but raised in glory; sown in weakness, but raised in power; sown in a natural body, but raised in a spiritual body. This is the dogmatic, dynamic truth about what happens to those who glory in the Cross.

Everything I take through the Cross lives in God. I have to know the Cross experientially. I need to know that the Cross does more than take care of all of my past sins and iniquities; it also takes care of my present temptations and weaknesses. The Cross does this as I take it up daily.

It is the Cross that brings joy out of sorrow. It

is the Cross that brings joy in the morning, after the tears are cried at night (Psalm 30:5). It is the Cross that keeps hope alive when it has lost its object in this life.

If someone goes against you and hurts you, you will not give up on him, but you take your faith and apply it to another person. Don't stop believing in people just because people hurt you. Your faith doesn't ever die. Your hope never dies. Your unconditional love does not die, because the Holy Spirit goes to work and sheds that love abroad in the heart (Romans 5:5).

* *For more about this reward, read* The Morning Star Order *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

EDIFICATION AND MEEKNESS

"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Psalm 45:10).

"And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given" (Mark 4:24).

"For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words" (Ecclesiastes 5:3).

It is so important to be godly listeners and to be careful with our speech. We have to be careful with what and how we hear as well as what and how we speak. So much of who we are depends upon hearing the Word of God properly, but also hearing the edification that comes from those who are right with God.

One who does not listen in a godly manner cannot be delivered completely from his bondage

to Adam. Furthermore, our speech should be seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6). We should always speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Oh, we need to be careful with this.

If you listen properly, then you will never have to speak improperly. Be very careful how you receive doctrine. Be careful how you hear truth. Be careful how you hear from heaven, from God. Be careful how you listen to people, and learn to give a deaf ear to things that are not of God. Do not listen to things that are not of God.

We need to make sure our words on earth are few. I know a woman who has mastered the right way to receive and to end potentially lengthy telephone calls. She is a gifted, excellent speaker. When she gets a call, she listens for a couple of moments and then graciously ends the conversation. This woman will not let anyone waste her time on the phone. She is careful to manage her time and her schedule.

Sure, there are times when you need to stay on the phone to help someone. But truthfully, it is very important to manage what you hear and what you say. Many people may hear something and then go tell someone else. We need to learn to keep confidences and not to repeat things we

hear, even if they seem innocent. Let your words on earth be few.

Anointed Ears

"And he slew it; and Moses took of the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot.

"And he brought Aaron's sons, and Moses put of the blood upon the tip of their right ear, and upon the thumbs of their right hands, and upon the great toes of their right feet: and Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about" (Leviticus 8:23-24).

"And of the rest of the oil that is in his hand shall the priest put upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the blood of the trespass offering" (Leviticus 14:17).

Listening is a vital thing. This is why the blood and the oil were placed on the right ear first. It all had to do with hearing. Hearing will always affect my speaking, and my speaking will always affect other people. My behavior is the result of hearing properly and speaking properly. Most of all, I must learn how to listen

and receive with meekness from God.

Just as we learn to receive with meekness the Word of God privately and to have it engrafted in us, we ought to receive with meekness the Word of God from one another. When they tell us the truth about ourselves in the light of Redemption, let's receive their edification in meekness.

Also, we edify God when we edify ourselves. When we edify ourselves through the Word and through the Spirit, we are edifying God because we love Him with all of our hearts. When we can love ourselves, we do not have problems with people.

We need to get to the place where we can say subjectively, through the Holy Spirit, that we love everyone. I may not be able to have fellowship with everyone, but I can love everyone with the love of God.

We may get wounded and become self-conscious; we may feel hurt and then react. We need to practice loving everyone. Mentally, we can practice not letting bad feelings come in when we are alone. God loves each one and He died for each one. Just because someone is not with us and doesn't like us, that does not mean we cannot love him.

We can love him with the same love God had for us when we were against Him, and that edifies us as it edifies God. We speak words of peace and refuse to make negative comments. This is how to be careful in our listening and careful in our speech.

But, to have this kind of love available to us required a Cross. Once we believe that all Jesus said and did is true, we can take up a personal Cross and experience the freedom to love others through the power of a personal resurrection.

CONCLUSION

The Cross is the most precious, dearest thing for our lives. And of course, Satan will try to distract us from it even though we believe in all that it represents. Sadly, a man can believe in the Cross and still not appropriate its power.

A Christian could go all day living cleanly, not committing overt sins, and still not take up the Cross mentally during the day. He could let the little things that are said or done trouble him, and he could be easily hurt all because he failed to experience a personal Cross.

The personal Cross means one thing to me: personal Resurrection. The Cross doesn't just leave me dead and buried; it brings in the newness of life where I can walk in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:6). With that, God guides and orders every step so iniquity will not reign (Psalm 37:23; Psalm 119:133).

Just think of it: we can have right thoughts

that never die, right words that never die, and a right walk that will always make an impact for the glory of God, all by embracing a personal Cross.

A Victorious Self-Image

in Virtue Love

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INTRODUCTION

Subjectivity is the cause of so many problems for believers in churches today. It establishes a mindset that is a direct result of Adam's Fall. Beginning with a preoccupation with self, subjective Christians evaluate people, situations, and even the Word of God according to relative righteousness (with self as the standard). Their arrogance masks a poor self-image, and they are often suspicious of people's motives and even paranoid. The good news is that no one has to live that way!

Be careful how you hear. Satan will tempt you to hide yourself from objectivity if you allow him to make you subjective when the Scriptures are being taught. Remember, *you* are never the object of the preacher's message, but each of us is the object of God's living Word, which enables us to grow in grace and knowledge and to be renewed in His image.

God's grace is inexhaustible; it depends

upon the Giver and never the receiver. His forgiveness is incomprehensible; His mercy is eternal; and His love is unconditional. It is this quality of love—'virtue love'—that sets captives free, because *this* love never demands a response from its object.

Successful men and women are those who hear the Word of God and do it, who find the will of God and honor it, and who find the virtue love of Christ and experience it. The foundation for this victorious self-image is secured in the believer's heart by faith: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF SUBJECTIVITY

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:6-9).

Adam and Eve were in a perfect environment, but Eve was deceived because, as a re-

sponder, she didn't abide under her covering—and she didn't receive doctrine from God. You see, Genesis 3:8 reveals that God came to the garden every evening in the cool of the day, seven days a week, to personally teach doctrine to Adam and Eve. The Hebrew imperfect tense reveals that He *continued* to meet them at the same time every day. We also read in Isaiah 50:4 that the Father awoke the Son each morning to teach Him categorical doctrine. From the beginning, it was clearly God's plan for every believer to receive daily instruction in His Word.

But the day came when Adam and Eve didn't show up. God came to teach them on the day they ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. They didn't come to Bible class that day because the fruit of that tree made them subjective, choosing to become the subject of their own thoughts—to be as gods. Instead of operating from the objective mind of God imparted through His Word, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God with their volition.

Volition always determines a man's condition. Adam and Eve's eyes were "opened," and they realized that they were naked. Although they had been naked all along, they had never been self-conscious, only God-conscious. They

tried to cover their nakedness by sewing fig leaves together to make aprons. But that's not all they did. The Word says they hid themselves from the presence of God (which is pretty hard to do since He is omnipresent!). In other words, they didn't show up for "church" because of their negative self-consciousness and poor self-image.

In Genesis 3:9, God asked "Where are you?" They said, "We hid ourselves because we were afraid of You." From that point on, everything God said would make them feel guilty, no matter what it was, because of subjectivity.

Subjectivity will cause a person to think that people are taking notice of him when they are not. "Everyone knows what mistakes I made by the way I was acting last night," he thinks to himself. He becomes tense and fearful, preoccupied with his old self-image in Adam.

Subjective people are always occupied with themselves. We have all experienced it to some degree. But taken to extremes, this occupation causes Christians to hide themselves from church. Relationships with others often become sarcastic because of the old sin nature. Eventually, they will want counseling, but they will never receive better counsel than they can get from the Bible.

So, how does a person get out of subjectivity? The opposite of self-consciousness is God-consciousness, and we get there through *meekness*. Practically speaking, meekness means to live in God-consciousness, thinking with Jesus Christ. There are a number of steps toward becoming meek.

The first step is in studying to be quiet and doing your own business with quietness (1 Thessalonians 4:11). It is being still and knowing that God is God (Psalm 46:10). When you make a decision not to be preoccupied with self, you will not react in the flesh. Remember, a man only reacts because of what is in himself and not what is in God. But if a man is born again, God is in him. Therefore, instead of reacting to 'self' (Adam and all of his productions), he begins to respond to God who is in him.

Once he is quiet, the next step toward meekness is in understanding that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). Every born-again Christian needs to find a pastor-teacher and receive a regular diet of Bible doctrine, learning how to think with God precisely. We receive faith by hearing

the Word of God from a preacher, realizing that without faith it is impossible to please God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (see Hebrews 11:6). It follows that a regular intake of the Word will result in a faith that has objective substance.

Then, in James 1:21, we are to lay aside all "superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word." We rebound from anything we have done that made us naughty (1 John 1:9), laying it aside to receive the Word of God with *God*-consciousness—without subjectivity and without condemnation. Through the Holy Spirit, the Word is borne in a believer and is able to deliver his soul (James 1:21). This is meekness.

Next, as soon as he hears the Word in the freedom of grace, mercy, and love he will begin to obey it mentally, and he is on the road to having meekness internalized in his soul.

Now that he is set free in his soul by the truth he has received, this believer begins to experience virtue love in the local assembly where God leads him. He becomes part of a living organism in that assembly (Ephesians 5:30), and his heart is comforted as he is knit with others

in the Body of Christ by virtue love (Colossians 2:2). Through the knowledge and understanding of doctrine and the Holy Spirit, he experiences being knit together as a member in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Next, he loves every single person as much as God loves him (John 15:12; 1 John 3:14; John 13:34-35), and he is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). The only way that can happen is by the Holy Spirit who sheds God's unconditional love abroad in his heart (Romans 5:5). This is meekness.

Advancing to Thanksgiving

"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Thanksgiving is the gauge of your spiritual condition produced through your volition. Whatever the circumstances, you will either continue to advance moment by moment, or you will go backward. There is no standing still on this road.

A Christian can recognize the moment he is off, because he is outside of the will of God pertaining to thanksgiving. Even when we watch and pray, we need to be thankful (Colossians 4:2), "Giving thanks always for all things unto

God and the Father in the [nature] of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). When we are giving thanks, we are not subjective.

A woman in our church had a rough time growing up. She had fears and subconscious effects that were always with her because of the terrible things that consistently went on in her home. But during one service, she was completely delivered. None of those things have come back to hinder her. She didn't have to go through a process—*it was a miracle*. She can no longer relate to any of the things that happened. All of her natural subjectivity about that situation was taken away to Calvary and buried once and for all (Hebrews 10:10, 14). She is free! She just believed and received and it was gone.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep [guard and establish] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7).

Did you know that another meaning for the word that is translated as "rejoice" is "relax"?

Relax always, and let your *moderation* (*epieikes* in the Greek) be known unto all men, for the Lord is with you. This unusual word speaks of mercy that rejoices against judgment, mercy that goes beyond justice because of God's Finished Work. We all quote Psalm 119:165, "Great peace have they which love thy [doctrine]: and nothing shall offend them." *Nothing* shall offend them. Have you been offended recently? It happened because you don't love God's Word, and you are subjective. Subjectivity will follow you to the grave—and it could put you there years ahead of time.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

If there is anything with virtue love in it, if there is anything to praise God about, let *this* be the boundary line in your thinking. Bring every thought to God with prayer and thanksgiving. Your mental attitude determines where you're at. Your *volition* causes your condition—not another person. You are responsible for your own choices. The problem isn't what people have

done to you, even if they were monsters.

Of course there are wounds that require a healing process, and the provision is in Christ's Finished Work. But if you continue to live in the effects of the past rather than what the Finished Work says about you, you have a problem. Your volition has chosen the wrong response to what those people did and your emotions will get beaten up because of continual wrong choices (Isaiah 30:26).*

The Problem of Unthankfulness

Every day we either advance or go backwards. Satan hates to see us advance, and he will try everything he can bring about our downfall. Romans 1:21*a* says, "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." One of the first things to happen when people will not glorify God in a situation because of subjectivity is that they are not thankful. Instead, they live in self-consciousness, suspicion, and the blame game.

Let's look at 2 Timothy 3:1-5: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

Unthankfulness and covetousness will mark these last days we are living in. When you get mad and tell someone off, you are unthankful, and you need to repent. Don't let the skeletons of 'damaged goods'—wounds and failure from the past—make you the devil's representative as he fires his artillery at your soul.

So many love pleasures more than they love God. They would rather go out with the world than with Christians. Having a form of godliness, they make a fair show in the flesh. They may show up in church, yet deny God's power. They are subjective. Subjective people deny God's love, mercy, grace, stewardship, power, peace, poise, and wisdom. They live acknowledging their potential but never experiencing the reality of advancing in grace.

God said, "Where art thou?" Good question. "You certainly haven't been in Bible class."

Adam and Eve said, "We hid ourselves. But, look at our new aprons! Oh, we had to do it. We

saw that we were naked." The answers of subjectivity.

Proper Self-Examination

Revelation 7:12 says we are to give thanks and honor to Jesus Christ. *My attitude of praise will determine the attitude of my heart*. It will determine what is in my heart, in my mind, and in my soul. Do you realize that it is possible to be Spirit-filled seven days a week by being quick to rebound, not living in subjectivity at all, and by simply being thankful? "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Of course there are days when subjectivity tries repeatedly to get into our thought patterns. But it's over when we simply identify it as subjectivity.

In order to be meek, I have to obey them who have the rule over me and follow their examples as they follow God (Hebrews 13:7). I should communicate with my pastor-teacher (Galatians 6:6). In order to reveal meekness, I need to edify every person around me and minister grace to the listeners. I want people to say of me, "Even when he tells me truth that hurts, I like it because he edifies me" (see Ephesians 4:29).

If I am truly meek, I will build myself up as a

believer-priest in the holy faith of categories, having a specific word from God for the detail I'm facing. I will keep myself in the love of God, even if all hell comes against me. I will look for mercy to come every day (see Jude 20-22).

God prepared a draft of each of our lives billions of years ago. He had a perfect plan for you and me. In His foreknowledge, He saw some of the stupid things we would do to try to ruin His plan.

Get back into the perfect plan of God; live in it and think in it. Speak according to the power that is in you (Philemon 6). Respond to His provision. The greatest thing in the world is to accept His plan, execute His provision, and walk in the light of grace.

Subjective people don't relate to the plan of God. Cain was subjective; Abel was not. Absalom was subjective; David was not. Saul was subjective and ended up taking his own life (1 Samuel 31:34). He feared David because he was occupied with himself as the subject, even though he started out well (1 Samuel 10).

A subjective person privately interprets people's words and actions in the distorted viewpoint of their fallen self-image because of self-conscious preoccupation with the Fall. Con-

trast that with 1 Corinthians 13, where we are told to believe all things, endure all things, and hope all things. Virtue love never thinks evil. But subjective love always thinks negative thoughts. Do you see how virtue love works? Virtue love is thankful. It is appreciative and happy. Virtue love is never sarcastic. It is kind. If virtue love wrongs anyone, it asks for forgiveness. It is good to ask for forgiveness when you get off, because it humbles you.

Put these truths into your marriage and you will enjoy an eternal honeymoon. Instead of privately interpreting the motives of people around you as you put on fig leaves and hide in subjectivity, live in the words of virtue love. *Your volition will determine your condition.*

The Fall of Adam is still making people subjective today. Our past will cause us to evaluate others subjectively, based on how we interpret those events. But we can be liberated experientially from the past forever. Remember, if you are not advancing, you are going backward. But by God's grace, we can live in our new self-image, because that is always God's viewpoint of us in Christ.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your

own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

"Examine yourselves" is *peirazo*, a present active imperative in the Greek text. This doesn't mean to be introspective; it means to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal if there is any infection within. If there is, then just deal with it through the Blood of Christ and the Word of God. Take up the provision God has given to abide in Him, and allow His words to abide in you (John 15:7).

"Prove your own selves" is *dokimazo*, which means to see how much divine good you are operating in. Not everything is all bad, even in the worst of us. "Reprobates" is the Greek word *adokimos*. This word doesn't indicate that you are lost and going to hell, but that God disapproves of the things you do because you are not fulfilling His will with an attitude of praise.

Furthermore, to examine yourself does not mean to condemn yourself. It simply means to make sure you are well with grace and living up-to-date in an attitude of love. This starts with God loving you, then you loving yourself. When that is established, virtue love will automatically flow from you.

*Freely Receive from God, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998, discusses the stroke of a wound in depth.*

Chapter Two

LOSE CONTROL AND LET GOD REIGN

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

When Eve was at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the serpent deceived her by saying, "You will not surely die as you have been told" Oh, how some people argue and rationalize God's Word away.

A subjective person makes himself the subject of all of his decisions. He wants control of his life because of his needs, his past, and the

scar tissue from wounds in his soul. Think about Paul who said, "Brethren I have suffered the loss of all things." *Come on, Paul! You're not in control.* "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ…" (Galatians 2:20*a*). *Paul! That doesn't make sense.* Jesus said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it brings forth fruit." We have to lose control and turn our selves over to God's system of virtue love.

God *is* love. When He becomes the object of our lives, we love Him because He's the only object that has perfect value and perfect virtue.

First, we receive Him as our personal Savior. He gives us power to become the sons of God (John 1:12). Then we hear the Word of God from a pastor-teacher sent by God (Romans 10:17), and the Word produces faith in us. Then, we enter into academic discipline. The pastor communicates doctrine and the listener receives the whole counsel of the Word in the local assembly. Once he has heard, the listener stands or falls before God as a believer-priest.

When we receive the Word with meekness, it is able to deliver our souls from *self*-control and from the image of Adam because we were created in the image of God (Genesis 5:3; 1:27).

When a believer lives in the image of Adam, he is self-conscious. His self-image in the Fall struggles to be in control of people and situations. Afraid to give everything over to God, as the subject he becomes his own god, controlling his life and privately interpreting the Scriptures. He prays to God without submitting to the Word.

Often, people (as subjects) answer their own prayers in self-preference, appeasing their conscience. They honor their self-image and fulfill the desire for a comfortable, convenient Christianity. They have no firm convictions that come from hearing the Word of God. Paul wrote, "Faith cometh by *hearing*", not by reading. But notice Hebrews 4:2, "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but *the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it*."

Today Jesus would tell us, "When I was in the desert being tempted by Satan, I lived by every Word of God. I didn't have to pray about whether I should build Myself up in categories for the trial or consult with My feelings about it. I simply quoted the Scriptures. I could have

turned to human resources, but I relied on the divine resources of the Word of God. 'It is written!'—that's what I told the devil, and I came out of forty days and nights of fasting in the desert in excellent condition."

Jesus made the Father the object of His life on earth. The Father filled Him with Holy Spirit as He was taught the Word every morning (Isaiah 50:4). The result? Jesus Christ had virtue love that was unconditional.

Subjective Love and the Ego

Many Christian marriages are in trouble because their love is subjective and relates to the ego. For example, two people fall in love, come to the altar, and exchange vows. "By the grace of God, will you keep these vows to your own hurt?" the pastor asks.

"Yes," they answer.

"Do you take this person, for better, for worse? In prosperity, or bankruptcy? Do you take this person, no matter what happens, in sickness and in health for the rest of your life?"

"I do."

Sure they do, because at that point the object of their love has certain value. The husband is handsome, tall. The wife finds value in him until

she has lived with him five to ten years. Then she finds a reason to leave him. She says she can't go back. Yet, there has been no adultery.

Subjectivity will do that, because in subjectivity, you are the subject, and everything you do in life is related to how the object of your love relates to you. In this case, the object didn't produce any value for the subject because the subject lived as a god in subjectivity, making decisions to honor her own preferences, her own lust patterns, and her own needs.

Here's a young man who marries a beautiful girl. He vows to love her until death do they part. She comes down with a crippling arthritic disease that puts her in a wheelchair. In time, he divorces her and remarries. Why? The object of his love was no longer desirable.

The only time subjective love is acceptable is when it is in Jesus Christ's virtue love. That is when verses such as "Greater is [H]e that in you than he that is in the world" really make sense. Inside each of us is something that can take over the streams of consciousness, that can flood our self-consciousness with God's thoughts, giving us the mental attitude of Christ and the emotional stability of the Holy Spirit. But when a man's affections are set in heaven and *God* is the

object of his love, then he will have God's love for himself and everyone else.

Virtue Love Goes beyond the Condition

Consider the story of the prophet Hosea. His wife, Gomer, goes out on him in adulterous affairs, keeps going out on him, and eventually becomes a prostitute. Years later, Hosea finds Gomer as she is brought to the slave auction. She is old and wrinkled, disfigured by the effects of her sin, but Hosea says, "That's Gomer! I'm going to buy her back and take care of her because I love her." God was teaching the fallen nation of Israel a beautiful lesson of how much He loved them. It's called virtue love.

Virtue love is unconditional. All we, like sheep, were gone astray, and every one of us turned to his own way, yet the Father laid upon Jesus Christ the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53). That's virtue love. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). Was there any value in us as the objects of His love? None whatsoever.

In Luke 15, the shepherd left the ninety and nine to search for the one lost sheep. The woman lost a coin, lit a candle, and diligently sought

until she found the coin. Virtue love is always seeking.

When the prodigal son came home, the father saw him afar off, ran to meet him, and kissed him repeatedly on the neck. Before the prodigal could finish his confession, the father interrupted, gave him a robe, a ring, new shoes, and then held a tremendous banquet.

Mercy assures that we never get what we *do* deserve. Beyond mercy, grace adds to our life what we *don't* deserve. With the prodigal, we see mercy in action. The father wouldn't let the son finish his confession. He received the full privileges of his sonship because he never lost his position.

The Lord is waiting to be gracious to us (Isaiah 30:18). He will be exalted that he might have mercy on us. He won't give us what we deserve; that was settled forever at the Cross. Now He is waiting to add something to our lives that we don't deserve. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). He will give us these things richly and freely to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17).

God is waiting to get our attention, to give us what we don't deserve in this lifetime so He will be exalted in His grace and mercy. He wants to give us mercy; He wants to make sure we know that He's not going to give us what we really deserve.

When we receive the Word of God, we receive something from heaven, something outside of us. The truth goes into our human spirit for a few moments and then the human spirit brings it back into Channel A—the part of our mind that is committed to perception and awareness.* Then we must make a decision. Do we want to live by the Word we've received? We decide with our volition. God doesn't force us into a choice. No pastor can enforce choices upon people. He communicates the truth, but it is the responsibility of the hearers to make decisions with every Word of God that is taught.

By mixing faith with the Word, we enter into total humility and meekness with God-consciousness. We are no longer self-conscious, but God conscious; we no longer control our lives. The Cross takes us out of control. We can no longer control anything.

The Holy Spirit now guides us (Romans 8:14), the Word leads us (Psalm 119:133), and meditation reinforces the life of Christ in us. We are now led by what we have received, assimilated, and circulated through the grace of God into our conscience. For us to live is Christ.**

No longer do we play God with all our emotions, old wounds, and reactions. God takes over, sets us completely free and liberates us through the Cross. Daily we take up our Cross, which means daily we surrender control over our lives. The One who does control our lives is Jesus Christ, the Written Word and the Living Word. And as the Spirit fills us, we walk in unconditional virtue love.

We know that we have passed from death to life because we have unconditional love for the brethren (1 John 3:14). And even as God laid down His life for us, we are to lay down our lives for each other (1 John 3:16). This is virtue love!

Virtue love surrenders control so that God's objective Word controls the soul, the heart, and the human spirit through the Holy Spirit. It is the Word of God in the heart—the premise for all of our motivational thinking, the center of operations for all of our behavior, and the supreme center of communication for all the

thoughts of the mind, decisions of the will, and appropriations of truth. That is the new heart and the basis for a victorious self-image through virtue love.

From Weakness to Capacity

Satan consistently attempts to rob us of our capacity, because capacity and the Cross are connected. Details of life can take us away from our daily Cross, but the Cross brings a personal solution for every problem, by God's Word and through His power.

If we have divine viewpoint as our capacity (and that only comes through the inculcation of the Word of God), then we have something millions in the world do not have. Unless they are in Christ, politicians do not have it, historians do not have it, and scientists do not have it. But Christians have the ability to experience a divine thought pattern.

The more I receive the Word of God in meekness, the greater my self-image. My self-image depends upon the operation of God's precise thoughts for the moment. No matter what has happened in the past, my self-image depends upon Jesus Christ's Word for this moment.

Imagine waking up every morning and un-

derstanding with conviction that you have a personal destiny. When you sin, you don't have to run to the high priest the way the Old Testament saints did. We go to Him who ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). He is our High Priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separate from sinners, higher than the heavens.

Jesus Christ pleads our case (Hebrews 9:24). He is our only mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). He is our Advocate (1 John 2:1). When we sin, we go directly to Him as a believer-priest. We are royal priests (1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:5-6). If we fail, we declare our royal priesthood and go directly to the Father. The issue is settled just like that, because we use our priesthood.

We can have mercy through propitiation: Christ's fulfillment of justice on our behalf. Our part is to keep on receiving the Word of God to build and develop our self-image in virtue love.

**Read* The Hearing Heart, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

***Read* Categorical Meditation: The One Answer to All Problems, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

OVERCOMERS THROUGH WEAKNESS

"For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you" (2 Corinthians 13:4).

The serpent tempted Eve by saying, "God knows that in the day you eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." This is the problem with subjective people, including many Christians: They make themselves a god.

In essence, the devil told Eve, "Your conscience is hanging on that tree. You're not self-conscious yet—you don't even know that you're naked. But if you eat of that tree, your eyes will be opened. As the subject, you will be able to judge between good and evil." That, my friends, is subjectivity.

Of course, in order to rightly judge between good and evil, we would need to be omniscient and omnipresent—having all knowledge and existing everywhere at all times. Yet, subjective people seem to think that they can do a pretty good job of judging without being omniscient and omnipresent.

When we're tempted to judge, we need to remember that *all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God and all of us are weak. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25). The foolishness of God is grace. Grace seems foolish to the average person—especially to those who are subjective. But the weakness of God was revealed when Jesus Christ was crucified in weakness though He lived by the power of God (2 Corinthians 13:4*a*). The weakness of God is Christ taking all of our sins and becoming sin for us at Calvary that we might be made the righteousness of God through faith.

Of the Son it was said that the Father will "make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears" (Isaiah 11:3). Jesus Christ said, "The Son

can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19). "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge" (John 5:30*a*).

The Son of God was saying, "I'll show you what subjectivity *isn't*! I fear God my Father, and I will not judge after sight nor reprove based on something somebody tells me they have heard." Jesus didn't open His mouth without the Father. He didn't think a thought apart from the Father. But *we* do, and we ramble on for hours in subjectivity.

Jesus was perfect, but we can act like we are so good that we play God, thinking we know good and evil. We judge by what we see and reprove by what we hear, though we cannot look upon a man's heart as God can (see 1 Samuel 16:7).

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

"Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's" (2 Corinthians 10:4-7).

For one week, decide to be accountable before God and purpose in your heart not to be subjective one time. Refuse to judge by what you see and refuse to reprove by what you hear. Our weapons must not be carnal; we must never make ourselves the subject in any situation. We are to cast down everything that is subjective.

"For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you" (2 Corinthians 13:4).

We are living with Christ by the power of God within us. Our source of observation, perception, and evaluation toward others must be by the power of God. There is no subjectivity in that, only objectivity. Subjectivity is the problem. You can carry on in it until you die, or you can shout, "Alleluia! I've been counseled by the Word of God today and I am renewed." You will feel like a million dollars.

In 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul speaks of "a messenger of Satan," a demon, that was sent to buffet him. God sent a demon to buffet one of the greatest men in all of the New Testament so he wouldn't be overcome by the pride of his pharisaic background in Jewish legalism. Paul prayed three times for God to remove the thorn. But prayer wasn't the answer. Paul desired a natural resource yet he was offered a divine resource. God said, "My *grace* is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Paul's response? "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Paul's necessities, persecutions, and reproaches helped him realize that when he was weak, God was strong.

Every one reading this booklet has an outstanding weakness. It is there to keep you humble. My weakness is there to make me so weak that I will be like the Christians in Hebrews 11:34 who "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the *aliens*," speaking of demons, in the original text. We need to stay humble and depend on Christ,

but we will be conquerors, because when we are weak, then we are strong.

The Christian community is a weak community. We can't look at ourselves and play God—*even* when we fail seven times in one day. I guarantee that I wouldn't be walking with God if it were not for my weakness. Why would I need God? Nevertheless, we are not to live in our weaknesses, but believe 1 Corinthians 1:27-30: "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and…the weak things of the world to confound…the mighty; and the base things of the world, and things which are despised…things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence." But of Him are we in Christ Jesus, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

The Wealth of Weakness

We are weak. Our weakness may be human goodness. It may be self-righteousness. Or it may be personal sins of human evil or unrighteousness. Whatever it is, weakness breaks us down. As we become weaker and weaker, God will bring in a crisis. And in the crisis we discover grace. We discover that His grace is suffi-

cient because it's the Cross for us. Before we know it, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God—the government of God's Kingdom—become the power reigning within.*

We are no longer the subjects of our own lives. We become the objects of Jesus Christ, who is the Subject in us. For us to live is Christ. Our life isn't subjectivity; it is Christ. The strength of grace is made perfect in our weaknesses. We glory in infirmity, because it sends us to Him. We glory in our reproaches, because they bring us to Him. We glory in necessities and persecutions, because they lead us to Him.

When we are weak, we are so strong! In Psalm 84, our strength is in the valley of weeping. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca [weeping] make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Psalm 84:5-7).

Weakness that reckons on Christ's strength removes subjectivity. It also removes unrealistic expectations toward others and toward myself. Unrealistic expectations are nothing more than the skills of pride acting in subjectivity. I may be extremely weak, but if I don't deal with my

weakness by receiving grace then I will build a defense provision of pride. I will become subjective toward others so I can transfer the blame for my problem to them.

God says to each one of us, "Will you let My mind be in you? Will you let the Word dwell richly in your heart? (Philippians 2:5; Colossians 3:16). Will you speak to yourself with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs? Will you relax? When your weakness comes back, will you receive the strength of My character to be forgiven? Isolate your weakness and go on, 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,' and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

The Purpose of a Thorn

People have more problems because of subjectivity than from any other cause. When we are subjective, we become a god, deciding who is spiritual and who isn't, who is right and who is wrong. We decide by what we see with our eyes and what we hear with our ears. We make demands based upon the subjectivity of our personality and unmet needs. When the demands are not fulfilled, we are thrown into greater sub-

jectivity, and weakness never becomes our strength.

It is so important to discern when we are being manipulated by someone's subjectivity, especially in the area of counseling. Though there are legitimate cries for help, there may be times when our "availability" would only reinforce a person's carnality, ungodly imagination, and a driving spirit.

God gives a thorn in the flesh so we will trust in the Lord with all our heart, not leaning on our own understanding but acknowledging Him in all of our ways, allowing Him to direct our paths. The thorn should cause us to say, "I am so absolutely weak, Lord, I have to trust You. I can't even live without trusting You."

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through Christ to the pulling down of all those strongholds of subjectivity. Therefore, we must exercise our will in the provision of God and cast down imaginations and high things that exalt themselves against doctrine. Every thought must be brought into the captivity of obedience to Christ. Revenging disobedience with obedience, subjectivity is gone, because we are no longer the subject acting on behalf of self. A positive volition produces a

brand-new spiritual condition, and we are able to advance instead of going backward.

Shout Alleluia! The Lord Reigns

For the moment, we know what we have been saved *from*. But in heaven, we will see what we have been saved *unto*. We will have glorified bodies. We will look upon Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords over those who made war against Him. He is the Lamb of God and He overcame them. We will finally see Him receiving the dignity, honor, and respect He should have. When we see what we have been saved unto, we will shout "Alleluia"—a perfect word, pronounced the same in every language. Get used to saying it! (Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6).

The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). We shall be like Jesus Christ, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). We will see the glory of God. We will see loved ones, friends, and best of all, we will see the Lamb, Jesus Christ. We will see the characters of the Bible who were so precious to us, and we will see them glorified. There will be no fear, no insecurity, no withdrawal, no self-consciousness, and no human weariness. We will shout

"Alleluia!" over and over again.

Out of my weakness will come His strength. Thank God, His grace is sufficient. I can do all things through Christ. Though I am weak, I have the power of God Almighty in me toward the objects outside of me. He controls circumstances and situations; Satan cannot do a thing to me without God's permission. Everything I experience works together for my good and for my sake so that I will learn to be "graced out."

With my attitude of praise, I will edify those around me, never thinking evil, never being sarcastic or unkind. As a listener, I will minister grace to you, letting God and you deal with your problems (while I will always be available to help).

The foolishness of God—grace—is wiser than the wisdom of men. The weakness of God—His crucifixion by men—is stronger than anything men can do. It reveals God's amazing character. Imagine, the day is coming very soon when we are going to be perfect, like Him.

Today, we choose to have our conversation in heaven, according to Philippians 3:20. That is objectivity! And in Colossians 3:2, "Set your [mind] on things above." *That is the answer*—the absolute solution to be delivered from subjectivity.

They who are Christ's have crucified the

flesh with its lusts (Galatians 5:24). Our old man is crucified; therefore, reckon that you are dead to sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:11). Yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God and not as instruments unto sin. Live as someone who is raised from the dead and who will be in heaven's "Alleluia" chorus forever.

Satan cannot touch the Christ who is in us because we have the fire of positional truth as a wall around us (Zechariah 2:5). The only way the devil can get through is to lie through our subjectivity. But if we bring every thought to God in objectivity, we will not fall into his trap.

Shout "Alleluia!" The devil doesn't like to hear that. We do not present ourselves to him, but we present our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We may be weak, but the power of God is inside of us. The virtue love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Now we can love as He loves us, which is our whole purpose in life.

**Read* Operating in the Authority of God's Kingdom*, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

The most vital thing we can do for our self-image is to receive total deliverance from ourselves. Stop trying to be in control of your life, and get "lost" in the Lord Jesus Christ and His living Word. We have virtue love because of our value in God's family as members in particular.

Learn to give thanks in everything, for this is God's will. Subjectivity can't get in when we are praising God. Relax! Rejoice always so the effects of mercy can be seen by all men.

We have no idea what people are really thinking, so why become subjective? We don't know what others have been through, but if we receive the Word of God with meekness, we will have right thoughts toward others and let Jesus Christ do the rest.

Father, bless us with an attitude of praise and thanksgiving and a positive volition that brings us into a brand-new spiritual condition. Alleluia! Amen.

A View Toward Forever

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Our days are numbered. We have only so many moments upon this planet. God Himself holds the issues of life and death. None of us knows the hour or the moment we will go to be with God, but soon all of us will pass out of time and into eternity.

That is what this booklet represents to me: A consideration of forever. It is a heart-to-heart talk between those of us who know where we are going to spend eternity and those who do not know. The people in that second group are on the other side of the street, so to speak.

I would encourage you to please read these pages with your Bible open. Search the Scriptures for yourself and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. Times such as this are very rich and very stabilizing for the struggling soul.

Chapter One
THE VALUE OF OUR SOULS

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

"Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:35-38).

Why is a soul so important? Why does it hold such value? The reason is that all souls are made for forever. All souls also belong to God, according to Ezekiel 18:4: "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." A soul that dies is a soul that is separated

from a relationship with God. It is a soul that never gets to know Him. That is true both in this life and in the life to come. The life to come is the life of forever.

This is so crucial for us to understand. A person may take a gun and blow his brains out, but that person did not kill himself. The bullet may take someone out of time, but it did not take him out of forever.

Celebrating Our Differences

For this reason, we planted our church in a city neighborhood. It is a beautiful area in our minds. We had a chance to wind up in the suburbs, but God put us here. He wanted us in a place where people are in need. It looked as if we would not be able to get our building. There were promises of money that never panned out. Some gifts came and others did not come. But God made a way and planted us in the perfect spot.

What has been the result? We have reached people that no one else wanted to reach. We have developed an amazing relationship with the folks in our city. Our community has been transformed because of our presence. Other churches have noticed and appreciated our ef-

forts. We have been knit into a oneness from God. A deep love has developed, and this deep love is something we will carry into forever. You cannot take money, cars, or buildings with you to forever, but the love that we share with members of the Body of Christ is something that will come with us.

One thing we all should realize about our forever in heaven is this: It will be a place of diversity. Diversity is what we have worked toward creating in our fellowship. We have been recognized by one nationwide Christian organization as one of the most integrated ministries in the United States. It was one of the greatest recognitions one of our ministries has ever gotten. To me, it showed that there are no bridges that cannot be crossed and no walls that cannot come down.

Chapter Two
BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

Our soul includes our mind and our emotions. Our mind is designed to do the thinking and to communicate proper responses to the emotions. The mind tells the emotions how to respond. Angry feelings are the result of angry choices. Good feelings are the result of good choices made in the mind. Our emotions are ordered according to our thoughts.

Our thinking is affected by our learning, and learning provides food for thought. Thoughts become responses in our emotions. These things are also regulated by our conscience, which establishes the norms and standards for our minds. These norms and standards help determine the way we think and ultimately influence the decisions we make.

The conscience can be very influenced by our circumstances. Suppose you were raised in an abusive and violent home where you were

beaten or perhaps sexually assaulted in some way. Somehow you covered over those memories and experiences, but you are still deeply affected in your behavior. Why? The norms and standards of your conscience became rooted in fear. This type of conscience manifests itself in various sublimations—provisions made for the flesh such as drinking and drug abuse. People become hooked, then their consciences speak to them and say, "Get more and you won't feel any pain."

Self-consciousness is another part of the soul. This is what determines whether I am occupied with God, occupied with myself, or occupied with others.

The Power of Choices

Then, there is the volition. Accountability and responsibility belong to the volition. This is the decider, the button-pusher. It answers this question: What will you do with what you know? This is what you have learned. Will you think along that line? This is what is right. Will you do right?

Volition was the first gift given to people by God. Adam and Eve had the right to choose. They were told the consequences of their choice,

but they were never manipulated or controlled from making any choice. Death—spiritual and physical—resulted from their choice to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but the right to make that very wrong choice was given to them by God.

Within each of us is our old sin nature, an inner monster that cannot reason in reality. It is the part of us that reacts and gets angry. It is the part of us that goes after pleasure at any cost. Pleasure is really fine if it is pleasure centered in the will of God.

All of these facets of the soul work within our bodies and in conjunction with the human spirit of the believer. The human spirit is really dead until a person is truly saved. This part of us is given by God to develop our capacity for God-consciousness, whereby we receive the words of God.

So our natural makeup consists of the human spirit, which is God-conscious; the soul, which is self-conscious; and the body, which is world-conscious.

This is the reason our souls are so valuable. They reveal our distinctions, and these distinctions are going to continue in eternity. Agriculture reveals something deep about spiritual

things. A seed of wheat goes into the ground and dies and comes up as grain. Our physical bodies may go into the ground, but they will come up and go out of the ground and into forever.

For the Christian, there is the sacred reality that to be absent from our physical bodies is to be present with the Lord. Our sense of self, our soul, will take on a new awareness. The angels will come and escort us into the presence of God, and as believers we will not even taste death.

Chapter Three
ETERNAL REALITIES

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-48).

"And the beast was taken, and with him the

false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20).

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

"And whosoever was not found written in

the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:10-15).

A second death comes to those who never receive Jesus Christ as their Savior. With the first death, the souls of the unsaved go into a place of torment. The body goes into the grave and is separated from the soul. At the second death, bodies and souls are reunited and cast into the lake of fire together.

This lake of fire is a reality. Heaven is also a reality. By grace through faith, we receive Christ as our personal Savior. We believe with our hearts, and we confess with our mouths. We recognize that Jesus died in our place, that He came as God in the flesh to shed His precious blood. He was crucified and buried and numbered with transgressors. He took upon Himself our sins. He was raised from the dead, and He ascended into heaven. Someday soon, Jesus will come back and meet Christians in the clouds. That's the Rapture. That, too, is a reality waiting to be revealed in time.

Death for the believer is simply a departure. A Christian who dies is carried away to heaven in an instant. This is another reality.

Because we understand these realities, we are a soul-winning church.

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

"And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

"And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:4-7).

When one soul gets saved, there is rejoicing in heaven. This is why I have never liked it when people in the congregation start moving around during the invitation at the end of a church service. It is really very rude. Heaven is waiting for the chance to rejoice, and some people just cannot wait to get to their cars.

As a pastor, I am very concerned about certain perceptions. I do stand or fall before God. I believe that I am doing my level best for the Kingdom of God. When I fail—and I do, and I

will—I am quick to rebound and apologize to any offended party. I am very careful about the church's finances. Others handle everything. I cannot sign a check that is drawn on the ministry's accounts. I simply do not want anyone to ever be hindered from receiving Christ and coming to my church because he might think that I am getting rich off of him. I want the atmosphere in our ministry to allow everyone to see the reality that whosoever will may come to Christ just as he is.

Jesus walked the road of Calvary that we might walk the streets of gold. Christ wore a crown of thorns that I might have the crown of life. He bore all of my sin and my shame so that I might go forward bearing His name. I made a decision for the Lord, and I am forgiven and free—free to live for Him and free to enjoy His people all the days of my life.

God has called us to reveal this reality to a lost world. He needs every one of us. We are precious parts of His vision to seek and to save people. We can do it because He will do it. He will give us all the grace and knowledge and ability that we need. All we need is to see with His eyes and keep our view toward forever.

CONCLUSION

The world we live in now is a place of wildness and wantonness. The news programs show all manner of death and trouble. Someone is shot over at that place, another is killed in this place. Satanic influence runs rampant.

Oh, but what a thrill it is to be part of something that makes a difference. We minister, and some of that activity is stopped. The souls of precious, precious people get delivered. God loves the drug addict and wants to get him off the street and into the house of God. We can go and help lead him to Christ and see him get used mightily in the future.

Why is soul-winning so crucial? Because people are in hell, and they are screaming in torment. There is no way out for them. They rejected Christ and there is no other way for them to enter into any other kind of forever. Their forever is settled—forever.

There are also those rejoicing forever be-

cause their forever is with Christ. The pains are gone. The sorrows and heartaches and defeats and tragedies are gone. That's the Gospel. That's the Good News. And that is what we can share—here, there, and everywhere.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21) .

Simply pray, "Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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A Walk That

Defeats the Enemy

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

After iniquity was found in his heart and he was cast out of heaven (Luke 10:18), Satan became the prince of the power of the air. This meant that he was above us as the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), invisible and inaudible but supernatural as an angelic creature. Therefore, Satan has a tremendous advantage over man.

To the Pharisees who accused Jesus of being an illegitimate child, the Lord said, "You are of your father the devil, and his lust you do." He was saying, "You are murderers from the very beginning. You do not abide in truth, neither is there any truth in you. When you speak a lie, you speak of your own, because you are of the father of all lies."

There isn't one ounce of truth in Satan. In any moment that we walk in the flesh, there is no truth in us. It may appear to be truth, it may seem like truth on the surface, but it is not truth.

If we do not abide in truth, there is no truth in us. This is why we have so many problems in the world today. This is also why Christians do lustful things—and lust is anything outside of the will of God.

Though our weaknesses and failure can seem overwhelming at times, they can be overcome through Christ. This booklet will detail Satan's defeat and how we can overcome the devil's emotional attacks as we learn to see that every place the sole of our foot shall touch is ours (Joshua 1:3).

Chapter One

THE SERPENT EATS DUST

"And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

"And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:13-15).

Before the woman fell in the garden, her name was "*Ishshah*," which means created in beauty. After the fall, her name became "Eve," which means more than "mother of all living." It means "a brand-new person living." She became that because God killed an animal. Blood

was shed as God took the skins of an animal and clothed her nakedness, along with Adam's (Genesis 3:21), representing what Christ would do on the Cross for us.

God then addressed Satan and called him "the serpent." In Genesis 3:1 and 3:14 and 2 Corinthians 11:3, he is called "the serpent." In Revelation 12:9, he is called "that old serpent." Why? Because he is filled with poison.

In the Word of God, Satan is compared to both the cobra and the viper. The cobra's poison is a neurotoxin, which affects the central nervous system.* Spiritually, it speaks of Satan's attack on the emotions. The viper's bite carries a hemotoxin, which goes into the bloodstream and refers to the lifestyle that involves letting down standards and being deceitful. It is illustrated by the married man who secretly hangs out in barrooms until late at night.

As the cobra (affecting emotions) and as the viper (influencing lifestyles), Satan is a crafty, cunning serpent.

The Belly of Satanic Emotions

"And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the

field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:14).

It is very interesting that in Genesis 3:14, God uses the word "belly," and it means belly; but in spiritual terms, "belly" is used as a metonym, a way of describing that for which there are no specific words. For example, there was no Hebrew word for "emotions," so the Bible translators used "belly" and "reins" (kidneys). In the physical process of digestion, we eliminate what we receive into our bodies. What comes out of our emotions is only a result of what we have received.

According to Ezekiel 28:15, iniquity was found in Lucifer's heart. Iniquity is emotional rebellion against God. So what did God do with Lucifer? He said, "I curse you, and you will crawl with your emotions."

Lucifer was to crawl in the dust. In the New Testament, the Greek word *bathos* ("depth" in Romans 8:39) speaks of the dust. Regarding mankind, it speaks of living in Adam's lower nature, which has its roots in the kingdom of darkness. For Satan, it means his entire life will be experienced in his emotions. That is what Satan passed on to Eve. By nature, the woman responds to what she receives. Satan fell into

emotional rebellion (iniquity), which Eve received from him at the Tree of Knowledge (Genesis 3). Adam followed in a vain attempt to cover her; and as a result of original sin, we were all born with an old sin nature.

"My reins shall rejoice when thy lips speak right things" (Proverbs 23:16). "Reins" speak of emotions because they simply respond to what is taken in. Emotions cannot think. The word "belly," as with the word "reins" in the Bible refers to something that receives what we take in. What comes out of our kidneys or with our bellies is a result of what we take in. Therefore, our emotions are very happy when we speak properly, when our confession is faith (Romans 10:6).

Satan's emotions replaced his thinking when he found out that hell would be prepared for fallen angels (Matthew 25:41) and that they would have no opportunity for salvation. God foreknew that they would choose to live in rebellion forever, and that is why salvation was not available to them.

Satan, as Lucifer, received tremendous knowledge in his position in heaven. Besides being the worship leader of all the angels, he also taught them doctrine. In Revelation 4:6,

when the Bible describes angels as being "full of eyes," it means that they are full of spiritual perception with the Word of God; so Lucifer was a tremendous teacher.

Yet, when he was permitted to attend a meeting of the determinate counsel of the Trinity (Acts 2:23), he became indignant at what was said. By an eternal decree from the throne of God, Lucifer heard that fallen angels would be sentenced to hell. At that moment, he stopped thinking with God and began thinking with his emotions. That is iniquity (Ezekiel 28:15). Though he was the most brilliant of all the angels, Lucifer fell into emotional rebellion, and iniquity took the place of doctrinal thinking.

Activated Lust Patterns

That is exactly what emotional people do when they do not respond to God's love, God's nature, and God's truth. They stop thinking, and their emotions are aroused by one of six different lust patterns—approbation lust, power lust, monetary lust, sensual lust, pride, and preoccupation with the details of life. These lust patterns develop and manifest themselves in an individual's relationship with people and circumstances.

Now, get this picture: Satan is in the garden, cursed. He cannot think properly. So what does he do? He functions in supernatural emotions and transfers them to Eve. He couldn't get at Adam, because Adam was the thinker as well as the head. So he went after Eve. Eve quickly took care of Satan's desire to get at Adam. She was very beautiful, and Adam didn't want to live without her.

This is the iniquity of Satan. Each of us was conceived in sin and formed in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). So often, that is why precious babies cry when they have no urgent needs. They use their emotions and learn to manipulate ours with their tears. Later, they go astray, telling lies as soon as they are able (Psalm 58:3).

Satan's entire program—in political and social arenas, and in every area of marriage and family—is to cause people to function without objective thinking through worldly living. For example, think of all the commercials on television. Their purpose is to affect the emotions, not the thought life. And we are continually bombarded with this kind of stimulation daily.

In our emotions, we get angry, start missing church, and begin to represent Satan's kingdom. We know what the Word of God says, but we

don't care because we have iniquity—rebellion against the Word of God. We exalt self, honoring self-consciousness at the Tree of Knowledge instead of God-consciousness through the light of the Word.

**For more about this analogy, read* Table of Grace, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

SEEING SATAN IN HIS PROPER PLACE

"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, be-

cause they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:10-14).

"The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Psalm 25:9).

"My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad" (Psalm 34:2).

Walking on Satan's Head

Here is a beautiful secret of the Spirit-taught Christian: Every place the sole of your foot shall touch shall be yours (see Joshua 1:3).

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" (Romans 16:20). This passage is telling us that Satan will be crushed not only by God's feet—he will be crushed by *our* feet.

All of Satan's kingdom is emotional. There is nothing wrong with emotions as long as they respond to truth. In Joshua 1, Canaan typifies the head of the enemy, and the promise is that *every* place your feet shall touch will be yours. Why? Because we are stepping on a defeated foe.

Yet, how are we to take advantage of Satan's defeat? Second Corinthians 5:7 says this: We are to walk by faith. As we walk, who is under our

feet? Satan. Every step that we take manifests Satan's defeat in his emotions, causing the world to enter into emotional rebellion. For this reason, people need to use drugs for their emotions, liquor for their emotions, promiscuity for their emotions. Maybe your problem isn't in any of those areas. It may be just negative emotions.

Every place you walk by faith is yours. Your walk of faith pleases God, and He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Every place you step upon becomes yours.

So, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Galatians 5:16*a* says, "Walk in the Spirit." What are we to do? Walk. Go forward. Take advantage of Satan's defeat and frustrate him, as we are just sinners saved by grace. And when we walk in the Spirit, we do not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16*b*).

Overcoming Iniquity

"Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psalm 119:133).

Iniquity is the emotions of Lucifer influencing the emotions of the woman. Eve was deceived because she responded to Satan instead

of thinking with God. The serpent didn't tackle Adam; he deceived Eve, and Adam willfully sinned so he could be one with her.

The Word of God will guide our steps into victory over the emotional rebellion of Satan. Each step we take tells Satan, "You are defeated! Jesus Christ made a show of you openly in His Ascension and His Session when He took His place on the throne in heaven. He embarrassed you as your demons tried to stop Him from going up." (See Colossians 2:15.)

So now, all that God's people need is to be Spirit-taught. It is the Spirit that quickens us, for "the flesh profiteth nothing," His words are spirit and life (John 6:63).

Satan is the father of all lies (John 8:44), and he doesn't want you to know that you can defeat him in any area you desire. All you need is to see that you have crushed him—YOU did it! That will take care of his lies.

Yes, God finished the work. God is in you, and greater is He who is in you than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). Take another step with God in a problem area, over a detail of life, and he is crushed again. All of hell comes against you, but the gates of hell cannot prevail (Matthew 16:18). You take another step, and then he

says to his forces, "Let's get out of here! I am helpless because that one is walking by faith and in the Spirit." And there is something else: You are walking in the love of God (Ephesians 5:2).

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

When we walk in the Spirit, the same Spirit that quickens us spiritually is the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. The only way Satan can triumph over us is by lying to our emotions to keep us from thinking with Christ's mind.

For this reason, Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." We have the mind of Christ through the Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Chapter Three

WALKING, NOT WRESTLING

"And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)

"That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap….And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan" (Joshua 3:15-17).

In this passage, notice that the priests had to put their feet in the water *while* there was a flood going on! Furthermore, they had to stand there until every Israelite had "passed clean over" the Jordan into Canaan. It happened because of their walk. The priests stepped on the head of the devil and crushed his rebellion, which could

infect their emotions. Rebellious emotions rob Christians of godly thinking, causing us to enter into cycles of wrong feelings. Our feelings could all be in the flesh if they are not derived from the Word of God.

"Thou madest [man] to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (Psalm 8:6).

This is a great verse with a brand-new correlation: The Father gave all things to the Son, who is the head of the Church, and put all things under His feet. Who has His feet? The Body of Christ. Where is everything today? Everything is under our feet. So with every step we take with God, we crush Satan's purpose, frustrate his plan, and embarrass a supernatural being. So what does Satan do? He flees. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

We resist Satan by walking with God, not by wrestling against the flesh. God gives more grace to the humble, but He goes to war against the proud. James 4:10 says, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." "Humbling" ourselves means we submit to a spiritual walk that goes forward by the Word, by the Spirit, and by faith, in love. We serve one an-

other with a faith that serves by love. We walk—we do not stand still.

Fear Not, Go Forward

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever.

"The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Exodus 14:13-15).

God said to Israel, "Don't worry about the Red Sea—stand still, and I will fight for you." The battle is God's, and He will fight for us. He tells us to move forward by walking. Oh, I will tell you this: Satan does *not* like this message.

What did Satan do to Jesus? His kingdom pierced Jesus' hands and His feet (Psalm 22:16). The devil went after the Lord's feet because he did not want Jesus (who, at that time, was both God and man) to win the victory by crushing him and dealing with the devil's emotions once and for all.

If we could really grasp this truth, we would

be revolutionized and renewed in our minds. Ephesians 4:23 exhorts us to "be renewed in the spirit of your mind."

Light for Our Feet

When the Word of God is given entrance, it brings light and understanding to those who do not have proper doctrine. Then, God will not allow our feet to be moved (Psalm 66:9). He will keep our feet from being moved as we continue walking in faith, in the Spirit, in love, and in wisdom (Colossians 4:5).

Walking in wisdom means we apply what we know to crush Satan's attack against us. Instead of receiving counsel from the natural mind, which profits us nothing, we can have strategic understanding and tactical know-how through the Word and through being Spirit-taught.

Psalm 119:105 says that the Word of God is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Proverbs 20:27 says the human spirit is a lamp. The Word and the Holy Spirit light our lamps. Where does the light shine? Beneath. It is for our feet so that we can walk without stumbling.

In Luke 11:5-11, Jesus spoke about the value of "importunity." If someone knocks at your

door all the time and you never let him in, he might get awfully tired of bothering you. But what is the Christian to do? If we will just keep walking, the joy of the Lord is our strength. Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking. When we are tempted by Satan, we just keep walking.

The Word is a light unto our feet just as it was for Jesus, in Matthew 4, when he was tested by Satan in the wilderness. "It is written…." That is what the Lord kept answering to every one of Satan's challenges. At last He said to the devil, "Get thee hence!"—and we can too, because it is written.

Throughout that encounter, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13, 6:16, and 8:3. Deuteronomy was the book Moses wrote during the last nine months of his life, a time when he wasn't allowed to go into Canaan because of sin. He recovered, magnificently trained Joshua to take his place, and wrote this masterful, amazing book. Early on, Moses' temper caused him to murder a man (Exodus 2:12). But his weakness became his strength, and he became the meekest man on the earth (Numbers 12:3). Then, in a relapse of anger because of Israel's stubbornness, Moses struck the stone when God told him to speak to it.

Regarding Moses' relapse, God told him, "I understand why you did it Moses, though it wasn't right. You misrepresented My heart. But you have put up with Israel's rebellion for forty years. Get up now. Once you have rebounded, you will write one more book: Deuteronomy. Then, you are coming up to heaven—a far better place than Canaan. There you would still have had to drive out your enemies. Where I am taking you, there will be no enemies."

Chapter Four

CLEANSED IN THE WAY

The Word of God says that Jesus Christ washed the apostles' feet (John 13:3-5). That spoke of rebound. They didn't need to be washed all over, but because their feet became dirty from walking in the earth, they continually needed to be cleansed. Likewise, we have to be cleansed through rebound every day of our lives.

Who washed the apostles' feet? Jesus did. And He said, "Happy are ye if you do the same thing." If someone fails, we don't wash their feet literally, but we use the water—the Word of God—to edify. For instance, if you were to do something against me, I would completely forgive you and forget it. When you do the same for me, we wash each other's feet through "the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26).

Satan hates this principle.

How beautiful are the feet of those who

preach the Gospel (see Isaiah 52:7). This should have meaning to us now more than ever. We have beautiful feet to preach the good news, but there is far more to its connotation than that. By knocking on doors and preaching the gospel, as we go into cities where sin abounds, we have the potential to crush what Satan has been doing there for years.

Our feet are not beautiful just because we preach the gospel; they are beautiful because we crush the head of the god of this world in the process. The prince of the power of the air is what Satan is in the angelic contest. But we have been seated far above Christ (see Ephesians 1:21 and 2:6), and that puts Satan under our feet.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. I am covered by the Blood. Adam has been put out, and God has come in to dwell. I don't have to give a place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27).

Satan crushes his prisoners under his feet (Lamentations 3:34). They become prisoners through receiving a lie and the wisdom from below. The prayer of Psalm 142:7 is "Bring my soul out of prison." We don't want to be under Satan's feet, because he is defeated. Yet, we will be imprisoned by a lie when we do not walk in

wisdom, in the application of the knowledge of truth.

Choosing Sufficient Grace

According to James 3:15, wisdom from below begins in the world system. Satan's world system is sensual (*psuchikos*), and it is transferred to the soul of the Christian. Then it is devilish (*daimoniodes*), speaking of demonization. This is not "possession." A Christian cannot be possessed by demons, but he can be hypnotized, which is what commentator Kenneth Wuest says "bewitched" means, in Galatians 3:1. The Christian becomes hypnotized with what the world would do, regarding human solutions, human fears, and human worries. These things are transferred to the soul, into the memory center, and the person lives in human solutions rather than divine solutions.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient

for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

Paul received grace to deal with his thorn. The human solution for Paul was prayer to have the thorn removed. That was one time when God said, "Pray all day, you are not going to get an answer. The thorn stays, but I will give you my grace." Paul then accepted the divine solution.

It is beautiful to read Isaiah 60:13: "I will make the place of my feet glorious." His righteousness was fulfilled in me, not by me (see Romans 8:4). I don't have to add to it, I just have to live in it.

When the prodigal son came home, he didn't have any shoes for his feet. Shoes speak of protection for our feet, so we don't have to walk on serpents with our flesh.

Jesus' Feet of Brass

"And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters" (Revelation 1:15).

Jesus' feet were as polished brass. Correlate that to the brazen serpent of Numbers 21:9. The

children of Israel looked to the brazen serpent to be healed from the serpents' bites. Brass stands for judgment. Polished brass stands for no condemnation. Jesus Christ was judged for our sins, and now we go free. His feet are like polished brass, meaning Christians do not face condemnation because we have passed from death unto life (see John 5:24; Romans 8:1).

Glory be to God, when we get to heaven we will see our Savior's hands and His feet. There will be no blood, but we will see the wounds in His hands that served, and we will worship Him. We will see the wounds in His feet that walked on the earth and crushed the devil forever.

He will show us His hands and His feet not only to show us that He is our Savior, but also to remind us of where Satan is: in the bottom of the pit—because of those precious feet and those precious hands and the precious wounds in His side. Oh, what a Savior!

Chapter Five

ASCENDED LIFE, ULTIMATE VICTORY

"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31).

At the Second Advent Jesus Christ will come back, and this will all be literally true, though it is spiritually true today. In His Ascension and His Session, with the presentation of the Blood, Jesus Christ totally defeated Satan. According to Colossians 2:15, He "spoiled principalities and powers" and made a show of them openly in the angelic conflict. When Jesus ascended, all the demons of hell tried to stop Him, but He publicly ridiculed them. He passed through millions of demons and just went right up in the Ascension, representing us in the Finished Work as the God-man who perfected our faith with His perfect humanity that never sinned. Jesus made a show of the demons and triumphed over them.

Genesis 3 says that Satan would bruise His heel. Satan bruised Jesus' heel by having the enemies put nails in His hands and feet and pierce His side with a sword. But now, Jesus is in heaven glorified. He has crushed Satan's head. As far as we go, all things were put under Jesus' feet. He is our head, and we are His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:22-23).

As our head, Christ has put all things under our feet, so all we have to do is walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), which comes from the Word of God. We walk in the Spirit so that we do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). We walk in love (Ephesians 5:2), and we walk in wisdom (Colossians 4:5). God orders our steps by the Word so iniquity (emotional rebellion) will not have dominion over us (Psalm 119:133).

The Psalmist said, "We took sweet counsel together and walked unto the house of God in company" (Psalm 55:14). That speaks of going to church.

Why is everything under our feet? At Calvary, Satan's head was crushed. The Hebrew word *patsa* (Isaiah 1:6) means "wounded" and *shabar* (Jeremiah 30:12) means "smashed to pieces." Satan has been wounded; he has been

smashed to pieces (see Isaiah 13:18; Leviticus 11:33). Satan's only authority and power today is to send lies and projections, appealing to the emotions with human needs.

Even Death Has No Sting

Nothing from Satan's kingdom should have dominion over the Christian because all things are under Jesus' feet and, therefore, under our feet. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psalm 23:4). Even death has no dominion when we walk in Jesus Christ before God (Genesis 17:1).

A Chinese missionary was visiting a Christian lady who lay dying, just three weeks after her daughter had died. "Oh my God, there is my daughter! There is Lily," she told him. "The Lord is allowing me to see Jesus. He is standing for me just as He did for Stephen (Acts 7:55)—and my daughter is standing with Him."

Then the woman cried and said, "Take me home, Jesus!" Even death is a beautiful thing when we understand that every single thing is under our feet.

We are His creation, created in Christ Jesus unto divine good. He has ordained that we should walk in His steps. As we have received

Jesus, we are to walk in Him. Why? Because the devil has not a single thing to do with the Lord.

The devil has been judged (John 16:11), and this world and its system have been judged. This is why we don't love the world, and this is why the Cross separates us from it. This is the reason we walk with the Word of God (Psalm 37:23), in the Spirit, love, wisdom, grace, and nature of God. As we do, Satan cannot touch us.

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7*b*).To resist, here, doesn't mean what we usually think of, as in taking a firm stance in a defensive mode. It means that we just keep walking. We are under tremendous pressure, and we just walk by faith. Someone hates us? Walk in love. The flesh comes against us? Walk in the Spirit. Satan tries to attack our feelings? Walk in the application of the Word (Colossians 4:5). As we walk, we take sweet counsel with other believers and go to church faithfully. We walk in the land of the living, fellowshipping with others who reveal the goodness of the Lord (Psalm 27:13).

Satan has taken the world and turned it into a wilderness. He has destroyed the cities, and has kept shut the doors of the prisoners (see Isaiah 14:17). He imprisons people through im-

morality, drugs, negative moods, weird emotions, and causes people to live in the flesh. Then he makes sure that the doors are not open, that they can see no way out, and that they remain his prisoners.

We Are Seated Above

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

"Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:19-23).

"Even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ

Jesus" (Ephesians 2:5-6).

God is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all we could ask or think, according to His divine ability that works in us. The prince of the power of the air was over us, but now we are far above, with Christ. Seated together with Him in heavenly places, we are above the devil.

Now the demons have to submit to us. God has assigned angels to serve us, but we have authority over demons if we understand positional truth. We are far above them. It is no contest. They have been openly defeated. All they have going for them are their lies and projections and an ability to affect the imaginations and the subconscious and unconscious mind of man.

Demons will attack our emotions so we can "feel" something that distracts us or so we won't "feel" in love with our spouse. We don't "feel" happy because the weather is bad or because the business isn't prospering. We don't "feel" friendly because we don't "feel" good. They attack our emotions and bring in iniquity—spiritual negativity against the light, life, and love of God.

But we have a divine solution: the Word and the Spirit, unchanging promises from a personal God who loves us unconditionally with unend-

ing love.

More Than Conquerors

"Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name" (Psalm 142:7).

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place" (2 Corinthians 2:14).

A real Christian delights in his victory. God always causes us to triumph and manifest the savor of His knowledge always and in every place. For some we are the savor of death, to others the savor of life (2 Corinthians 2:16), but we are always a sweetsmelling savor to God.

We are more than conquerors through Him who loves us (Romans 8:37). If I can communicate this truth so you can receive it in your heart and mind, you will walk in love, walk in faith, walk in grace. Walk in mercy, forgiveness, power, and peace. Walk in joy. Walk in intercession. Walk courageously in the midst of the battle, knowing that the battle is the Lord's. If you will let God control your emotions, your emotions will be very happy when your lips speak the right things (Proverbs 23:16).

Thanks be unto God who gives us not victo-

ries but the victory—because it has been won. We have an overwhelming victory (see Romans 8:37).

"But thanks to be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:57-58).

Satan is wounded, and do you know what wounds him? Our feet.

God said, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you…thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

"Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

This is what we have going for us. Every victory I have in my family life wounds Satan because he tries to separate, to divide, and to corrupt the home. For example, a couple came for counseling and the woman said, "I have been going out on my husband for five months. I am sick of it. I've been playing games, and I

want to get right." When her husband found out the truth, he forgave her instantly. Truth came in, he forgave her, and she totally repented. He reflected the nature of God who forgave us.

Every time we bring our thoughts into subjection to the Word and let the joy of the Lord be our strength, regardless of how our partner feels, we walk in Calvary's love, and we are triumphant. We put another wound in the one who wounded the Savior's feet and hands and side. Yet, Christ's fresh wounds are glorified in heaven. Representing us forever and ever, He is our High Priest and the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The most beautiful thing is that He defeated Satan.

By the way, *we* are not only conquerors. A mere conqueror is someone like Alexander the Great who lost his joy for living after he conquered the world at age 28.

We are not only conquerors. Everything has been conquered for us. Sins have been paid for; they are conquered. Death has been paid for; and he that dieth once dieth no more. We have been given peace, for He is our peace (Ephesians 2:14). He is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption forever (1

Corinthians 1:30).

We are not only conquerors. According to Romans 8:37, we are *more* than conquerors! He doesn't cause us to triumph "sometimes." He causes us to triumph *all* the time. We are the savor of His knowledge in every place we go when we understand that we have a victory that cannot be revoked.

CONCLUSION

Satan flees when we confess this message. This is the Glorious Gospel. This is the full Gospel. Glory to God, we have His power and more than seven thousand promises. Jesus Christ is in us. Every debt has been paid. He doesn't impute sin. Even if He must discipline us, He does it in love (Hebrews 12:6, 11) to bring forth peace.

No matter what happens, the Lord is our friend. He is on our side, and He is just waiting to be gracious to us, to exalt His mercy (Isaiah 30:18). We are the apple of His eye. To Him, we are His children, and kings and priests forever. He is for us. There is not a thing we can do to make Him turn against us. We can break fellowship, but He still stays inside us, waiting for us to return to Him.

Satan gets so wounded by us. He was already under God's feet. Now when we walk, the devil is under our feet, too. How would you feel if

you knew you were defeated? Hell knows it has been beaten. The demons actually started to whine when they met Jesus. "Ohhh, don't send us to hell before our time! Please let us go into the pigs" (see Luke 8:26-35). The demons knew where they were going. Wouldn't you feel wounded if you knew you were going to hell forever?

We are sinners saved by grace. When we live in our victory and walk in faith, Satan feels wounded. "Oh, I can't even get to them like I used to," he complains. He hates overcomers who use rebound until they finally become mature.

Glory to God, the mature Christian is more than a conqueror. He is relaxed because he has perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3; Philippians 4:7), the mind of Christ, and God's eternal plan for his life.

Every believer can have a ball in the plan of God. Praise Jesus, the enemy is under our feet.

Abide with God

in the Secret Place

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

Certainly, there have been times when you have just wanted to get away from everything. The world seemed too busy, the challenges too great, the details of life too many. You wanted to hide.

Christians are not beyond such feelings. I know this Christian is not. I can remember times during my first wife's battle with cancer when we would just take a ride along a country road. We wanted to lose ourselves somewhere.

We can find instances of hiding away in the Bible. Elijah spent time away at the brook Chereth just before he went to Mount Carmel to confront the false prophets of Baal.

As believers, we have a secret place—a place where God will meet us at any time. It is the throne of grace. We can come boldly before this throne because of the perfect love of God, which demonstrated itself tremendously in Christ's death at the Cross. There, on Calvary's hill, Jesus

died for all of our sins and opened the way for us to be hid with Christ in God.

As this booklet will reveal, Satan flees from the believer who abides in the secret place and who chooses to be quickened constantly through the Word of God.

Chapter One
LOVE PERFECTED

"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:12-17).

Revival is in discovering a spiritual law of life that overcomes and overtakes every other law. Moral law is important, but it is not spiritual law. Through moral law, privacy rights are maintained, families are honored, and national entities are established and preserved. Morality is precious because it sustains a society's rights and privileges. These things set up the functions of God's divine institutions. Moral law is a tremendous preserver of human dignity and national entity.

There is just one problem. Moral law can save no one.

God, therefore, brought forth something that excelled the precious moral law. This is spiritual law. Spiritual law can only be experienced and understood in a personal and corporate Word of God revival. This spiritual law comes into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. It is given to us because the righteousness of God has been fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ.

He Sets His Love Upon Us

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

"He shall call upon me, and I will answer

him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him" (Psalm 91:14).

"As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks" (Song of Solomon 6:7).

The believer who understands revival has had the law of righteousness fulfilled in him and has the love of Jesus Christ perfected in him. In his experience, this believer allows the Holy Spirit to fill him and allows the grace of God to be his provision. Then, perfect love casts out all fear.

Revival is simply a process where a believer has fellowship with God in the Holy of Holies beyond the veil. Song of Solomon 6:7 speaks of something very beautiful pertaining to the people of God. Pomegranates hide their beautiful interior and their insides are only seen when they are cut open. God's people are truly His own, and they are seated above in heavenly places. They are hid with Christ in God. Only when God's people suffer, only when they are laid open, can the beauty of their interior be seen.

The host of darkness cannot accept the ministry of people who understand revival. They run from those who make a special effort to let God revive them through the pure grace of God.

When a person really understands revival he recognizes the presence of God. He recognizes the spoken Word of God, senses the power of the Spirit of God, enjoys the people of God, and receives the constant provision of God.

Chapter Two

GOD'S RESTING PLACE

"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

"Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.

"My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.

"Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.

"Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.

"Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go

up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.

"As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks" (Song of Solomon 6:1-7).

The goats of Mount Gilead could go into places where no other animal could climb to eat their food and to hide. They could go places because of their sure footing. God's people who are revived and who live in the spirit of revival get fed by the Word of God in risky places, in places where few can go. These are secret places.

God desires that we enter into His resting place. In the midst of difficulties, all that I do is flee to His place of refuge—His hiding place, His fortress. God gives me a secret place away from the host of darkness, away from Satan's government, away from accusations, away from slander, and away from suspicion. He gives me a secret place away from human love, natural love, relative love, and conditional love.

We have a Finished Work hiding place where we can be conformed to Christ's image. When a Christian lives in the secret place, God sets His love upon him. Enemies flee from a Christian who is abiding in the secret place.

In Song of Solomon 6, the bride became an awesome spectacle of grace. She reflected the

glory of the bridegroom so much! She sought him so diligently that he was overwhelmed with her reflected glory and her response.

God just loves it when people come together at the secret place. It is the secret place of the Most High. It is under the shadow of the Almighty, and there God is our refuge. That means He is the provision for our details of life. Then, He becomes our fortress. When all the forces of hell come against us, our refuge is enlarged into a fortress. A fortress protects us from the worst kinds of attacks. We need refuge for those little details that come every morning, noon, and night. When those tremendous satanic attacks come, we need God to bring us into His fortress.

Your Servant Heareth

"And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.

"And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;

"And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was,

and Samuel was laid down to sleep;

"That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.

"And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

"And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

"Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.

"And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

"Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

"And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:1-10).

"And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with

us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:19).

Many Christians never experience revival because they don't recognize when God is speaking to them. In 1 Samuel 3, God was talking to Samuel, who was a young lad sleeping in the temple. At first, the boy thought it was the voice of Eli, the high priest. Eventually, Samuel responded to the Lord and said, "Speak, for your servant heareth."

Too many people never get to that point. They want to hear from people, but not from God. So many believers will listen to their consciences because they tell them things that they prefer to hear, but they do not want to hear the Bible speak to them.

The Bible talks of the geographic will of God; some just do not want to hear that. The Bible reveals a particular ministry. The Bible speaks under the amazing power and grace of God's plan. Sadly, many would rather live in the abstract world of moral goodness, even though they are spiritually saved. These people don't want to hear God speak in the secret places where He will meet them.

We need to hear the Word of God come forth through the power of the Holy Spirit in the full canon of the Scriptures. The Spirit will lead us

into all truth. The righteousness of the Law has been fulfilled in us through Christ; we don't have to fulfill that righteousness with our religious experience. God teaches us how to walk in wisdom and understanding.

Chapter Three

LOVE THAT PASSES KNOWLEDGE

"Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God" (Psalm 50:7).

Oh, that God would teach us and guide us to really recognize the truth about our hearts in this very serious hour. All of us need to understand our capacity for wickedness, deceitfulness, passivity, lethargy, indifference, and corruption. The Lord can teach us the true meaning of what it means to walk in the Spirit, to be filled by the Spirit, and to evidence the fruit of the Spirit. Let's pick up this truth and clear out the obstacles and obstructions of religion so that we can walk in the amazing receptivity of the grace of God.

The manifestation of God's life, power, and truth goes way beyond sentimentality. It goes beyond getting your feelings hurt. It goes be-

yond the magnification of details. It goes way beyond all the frustration and evidence of the old sin nature. There are no limitations to God's grace. Nothing can obstruct God's mercy. Nothing hinders God's love. God's truth is mobilized when we have contrite hearts and humble spirits that are quickened by Him. Let's walk in fervency and humility.

Yes, we respect the precious moral code. Civil law and the royal law of love do much for us, but the spiritual law is what has made us to be saints. God preserves His saints. He delivers the righteous (2 Peter 2:7-9). God intervenes with His provision of mercy, love, and truth. He so desires that we be revived in our fellowship with Him.

In the secret places, in our times of prayer and study, God teaches important things. We learn how to respond to Him there. We don't get dragged down by personality relationships. Trite sayings don't dominate our conversations.

We must constantly develop our ability to hear from God Himself. In humility and brokenness, we will have no problem discerning the Lord's voice. He addresses our responses of faith and enlarges our capacity for faith. He teaches us that life is going from faith to faith.

Then, with His Spirit, He takes us from glory to glory. His quickening power severs that yoke that ties us to the dust.

Only God, in the secret place, can teach us how to be truthful and faithful. Only there can He teach us how to be consistent and steadfast and immovable.

Christ Dwells in Our Hearts

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:16-20).

God gives us a love that passes knowledge. It is not natural. It hardly seems practical. We receive the love of the truth and it refreshes our faith in God. The windows of our soul become illuminated through our perception of divine

revelation. Truth becomes very sacred to us when we have learned to abide in the secret place with Him.

I am so thankful for all of the dear friends who have labored with me in my walk with God. In these days when God is speaking to us and moving, I pray that we would love the truth more than ever. Fall in love with the Bible. On Sunday mornings, be so in love with the truth that you cannot wait to get to church. The presence of God is so very special to us.

Revival comes as we live in that secret place with God—the place where our self-life is so crucified and so buried and so detached that we refuse to live in the substitutes of abstract thinking. In the secret place, we don't live in shadows of truth, we live in the substance of the Word of God.

Let's become people who are constantly constrained by the love of God. Let's let love motivate us to present Jesus Christ to the lost world in all of His glory and beauty.

CONCLUSION

My prayer today is that God would quicken me according to the truth that He speaks to me in the secret place. I want the Spirit of the Lord to take His Word and bring life into my heart. I don't want God's truth to fall into the street. I don't want my life to prostitute grace.

I am alive in Christ tonight because two thousand years ago the Savior took the nails in His hands and His feet. He bled and died. He took my sins upon Himself and was separated from His Father. There was such darkness and loneliness on Calvary. But at that very dark point, He committed His spirit to the Father's hand and the veil that hung before the Holy Place was rent in two, from top to bottom. The secret place, the Holy of Holies with the Mercy Seat, was now open to whosover would come unto Him.

We know the rest of the story. He went into the grave and conquered death. Now we have

the victory of resurrection life for ourselves. That death—the moment of great loneliness on the Cross—made a way for us to come boldly to the Throne of Grace.

There in the secret place we hear from God. In the secret place, we are established in our vision with Him. In His secret place, He calls us, equips us, and comforts us for everything that we will face in this world.

Alive for a Purpose

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Every single person in the universe today is alive for a purpose. Getting up every morning with a purpose—with God, in God, and for God—is the key to my personal walk with God.

Many people, on certain days and at certain hours, live without a purpose. Getting up and fulfilling a duty is not a purpose. Being motivated by God's love to glorify Him is the purpose for any job or task.

My hope is that after you have finished reading this booklet, you will understand that whatsoever we do, we are to do it with all our might to glorify God (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Whatever you do, do it from the heart unto God, with all your might, and with thanksgiving, because you are alive today with a purpose. That purpose is from God, in God, and for God (Colossians 3:17, 23).

Chapter One

HIS PURPOSE FOR HIS PLEASURE

Studying, pastoring, singing in the choir, everything must be done with a purpose. Many of us have schedules that could become overwhelming if we were to stop and think about it. But when we are in the perfect will of God, we don't need to be weary, because we live in our heavenly purpose. No one else can give us a purpose or even complement our purpose. Our purpose is in the Word of God and through the Holy Spirit. Still, only a small percentage of Christians really grasp this.

If I am a businessman, glorifying God on the job, taking care of my family, and being faithful to my pastor and the local church, then at the Bema Seat evaluation, I will receive all the rewards the others receive—just as if I had gone out as a missionary to Africa. Someone has to stay and keep the local church strong, and that is what many people forget. That is why I be-

lieve in working for Christian companies, or starting one, because they have a great purpose in God's kingdom. Ephesians 3:11 says our purpose is according to His eternal purpose.

I did not get up this morning just to fulfill an obligation. I didn't get up to do my job for people. The moment the Holy Spirit brought this message, I was tremendously motivated to have a great day. So many people go from one job to another with no purpose beyond themselves. Even if this were my last day, I am fulfilling His purpose with every breath. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not partake of the king's meat or wine (Daniel 1:8).

God will fulfill His purpose, according to Jeremiah 51:29. Ephesians 1:9 says that God's purpose is for His good pleasure. God could have raised up people to support Paul so he wouldn't have had to work making tents. God also could have delivered Paul from prison just before Paul was martyred, but He did not because of His purpose.

Setting Your Heart and Mind Above

No one can have a purpose in reality unless his heart is fixed with confidence toward God. The psalmist cried, "My heart is fixed, O God,

my heart is fixed…." (Psalm 57:7).

Now, if you understand the importance of God's purpose and the great principles involved, then you know what it means to have your mind fixed on things above (Colossians 3:1-2). Though we need to be occupied with the job, our life is not derived from a job. Instead, it comes from the things above that dwell in me.

If we set our minds on things above, then no one can offend us. No one can make us insecure. We don't need to react. Our flesh doesn't have to be supported. People without Christ may need to do these things, but we do not because we are in God's purpose, operating by God's purpose, and working for God's purpose.

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

When the heart is fixed and the mind is set, then our conversation will complement the thoughts derived from God and His Word. Our communication is motivated by the imputed righteousness of God with the word of faith ruling what we say in difficult situations (see Romans 10:6-8).

People who get sidetracked from their purpose in God will become troubled in their own

purpose. Eventually a dear friend or family member will irritate and trouble them also, adding trouble upon trouble.

Chapter Two

CLOTHED WITH THE NEW MAN

In John 21, Peter was backslidden. He went back on the boat and was fishing with six others. Peter was naked. He girded himself with a fisherman's coat when he found out that Jesus was on the shore. What was he doing on that boat naked in the first place?

In Genesis 2:25, Adam and Eve were naked, but they didn't know it; they had no old sin nature, so they were totally God-conscious. After their fall in Genesis 3:7, they knew they were naked. To cover themselves, they sewed fig leaves together.

In Isaiah 30:1, God says the children of Israel covered themselves "with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin." People take on a false covering to hide spiritual nakedness. Another sin covers the last sin, and that usually involves lying. Then, like Israel, they go to the world system for help.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai in Exodus 32:19, he saw that the children of Israel were dancing naked. In Isaiah 58:7, God says, "when thou seest the naked…cover him."

If we do not have God's purpose with our hearts fixed on God, if we have not settled the issue of serving Him with our minds set on things above, then spiritually speaking, we are naked. If we do not have healthy emotions that respond to the truth in faith obedience, if our conversation is not filled with words of faith from heaven, then before the Holy Spirit, we are spiritually naked. Spiritual nakedness is far more serious than physical nakedness because it reveals that you are not experiencing the purpose for which you were created.

Living in the Wrong Purpose

The world of satanic influence with its supernatural penetration can so easily control people's desires and lust pattern. When allowed, those desires become so powerful that people will make agreements to accept certain lifestyles that will put them in bondage. Every day that they live this way, they are naked. Because they do not have an eternal purpose, their covenant with hell and their agreement with the world system

goes on. Sooner or later, they will find that their bed is too short and their covering too narrow (Isaiah 28:20).

Satan wants people to make decisions he can use to accuse them in their nakedness.

Isaiah 28:18 speaks of a covenant that is disannulled, or cancelled. The original Hebrew text says that God's people actually made an agreement with hell, which God said would be cancelled at the Cross.

So often we wake up and do not deliberately put on the new man for that day. We are troubled about the family, troubled about work, troubled about our health, and we do not put on the new man. Instead, we wake up and sincerely try to figure out the old man, but don't recognize him as the old man. We think he is the new man; however, the new man is not troubled. He is renewed in his mind (Ephesians 4:23) and renewed in the spirit (Romans 6:4-5); he is not led by the old man (Romans 6:6).

Christ at Work in Us

The new man always lives in quietness and he always experiences peace. Why? Because he is living in Christ and Christ is lives in the new man, filling his humanity to reveal His purpose,

provision, power, person, and peace.

David said, "I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress" (Psalm 17:3). Solomon, in 1 Kings 5:5, purposed in his heart to build God a house. In Nehemiah 8:4, a pulpit of wood was built for a purpose. The pulpit has only one purpose: to be used to preach the Word of God. It has no other purpose.

The Word of God says clearly that Paul sent messengers to Ephesus and Colosse on purpose, to know their estate and to comfort their hearts (Ephesians 6:22; Colossians 4:8).

This means we are to go to work in the morning on purpose to do what we are going to do with all of our might, loving what we do and fulfilling God's purpose, whatever it is. Whatsoever we do, we do it with all of our might (Ecclesiastes 9:10). "Whatsoever" takes everything into account.

Paul said, "Timothy, you have fully known my purpose to communicate truth and to impart life." (see 2 Timothy 3:10). In Acts 11:23, Paul said that our purpose is to cleave to the Lord. The purpose of God shall stand (Romans 9:11). Jeremiah 51:29 says the purpose of God shall be fulfilled and performed.

Chapter Three

ABIDING IN THE CALL AS A MEMBER IN PARTICULAR

"This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations.

"For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isaiah 14:27).

"I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it" (Jeremiah 4:28*b*).

Nearly fifty years ago, I purposed to follow Christ and preach His Word, no matter what. Many others have purposed the same thing and they are co-laboring in Christ. Many have purposed in their hearts to follow Christ and there is not a single thing that can take away their purpose.

They study the Bible like they have never studied before. They meditate on the Scriptures.

They learn the whole Bible. They claim the promises and then go out and let the Word flow out of them with an anointing. They go out soul-winning every opportunity they get. Their walk with God is through preparation from a divine provision.

Hebrews 3:1 calls it a heavenly call. Second Timothy 1:9 calls it a holy calling. Philippians 3:14 says there is a prize for answering the high calling. Abide in your call.

Your call includes attending a Finished Work, grace-oriented church where you can best get prepared for meeting God at the Bema Seat. Your call is not just in sitting under the preaching, but also in operating in obedience to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

A Need is Not the Call

A man who was touched by God in our church, but then he left for another place where he served God and drew closer to Him. He was gone for about two years.

Finally, he said to me, "I think I am being led to come down to Bible college."

"Wow!" I said. "Come on down."

In other words, if this man had not been en-

couraged in the call for his purpose, which was to go to Bible college, he might not have come. People have to be very careful not to discourage someone's call to follow God.

On the other hand, a need does not constitute the call. There has to be a call from God. Witnessing is a call wherever you can witness. A need in a place is not a call.

Jonathan was called to be David's friend. That was his call, and he initiated friendship to David. His call was to just be David's friend.

Listen prayerfully to people when they speak and represent certain fields and ministries. Listen, please, because they are precious and they have to share their needs. Is that clear? Listen to them and always pray. But, remember, all of them have needs. Their needs do not promote your call. Otherwise, you would be obligated to go everywhere.

The only One who determines your call—whatever you may be doing—is Jesus Christ. Why? He is the Author and Finisher of your faith. Knowing the end from the beginning; He has a place just for you (Ephesians 2:10,11).

We need to understand the difference between a vocation and an occupation. The word "vocation" has the root *vocare* which means to call with a voice. Therefore, a vocation is that to which we are called by the voice of God. Being conformed to Christ's image is a vocation, whereas working to make money to supply temporal needs and wants is an occupation. Most parents only train their children for an occupation, considering that the vocation will just happen and they will go to some church. Those parents will regret that at the Bema Seat.

Be sure you train your children to hear God's call on their lives. I don't mean that you harp on them and try to legislate to them. But make sure they are trained in the Word, in the love, in the power, and in the convictions of God so that when He speaks, they can hear His Word and receive His call. By the way, children are called. Their calling is also heavenly, holy, and high.

Never train your children that social drinking is acceptable. If you let them think it is okay, it will have a negative affect on them. Guaranteed, some of them will become secret alcoholics

because they were trained against what the Bible teaches.*

I know this is true, and nobody will ever change my stand on what I have taught from the Bible for over forty years. Nobody! I will preach what the Bible says, and teach what I believe without compromise. Even when someone becomes angry because he is convicted by the truth, eventually he will have to deal with the Bible, get right, and repent.

Hearing Specifically from God

It is so important to draw near to Christ with a true heart and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22). Wouldn't you rather meet God, face to face, at the Bema Seat, having fulfilled His specific call and purpose for your life?

In fact, there is no such thing as a general call. We have a specific call "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29), through the preaching of the Word (Romans 10:17).

It is possible to have an occupation that is also your vocation. Any company or ministry that glorifies God will abide in God's call. We are going to be evaluated at the Bema Seat based

on how much of our lives were involved in the eternal purpose of God and its high, heavenly, and holy calling, and how much was just existing without a purpose, going along in a general call, fulfilling duties and obligations in a human life.

**For more on this subject, read* Social Drinking: Opinion or Conviction? *by Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

CONCLUSION

The reason I haven't quit through all these years is because I am called by God to live in His purpose. There are many others with me who can say the very same thing.

Remember, it isn't what you do that matters. It is how you bless and obey God in your call. Then, you get the preacher's reward, the missionary's reward, and your own reward for serving and obeying God and His Word. Not a bad deal, is it?

Be confident as a member in particular in God's call for your life. May God bless you as you hunger and thirst after His purpose.

All That Is Within Me

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Emptiness is a real problem in the world today. People are searching for answers, for something to fill the void, and they do not realize where they can find what is really missing within their hearts. Never have there been so many ways to discover information about things that claim to be a solution, to fill the emptiness and make a person whole. There are hundreds of TV channels and millions of internet sites that offer so-called help.

King David, however, knew exactly where his help came from. He knew that it came from the Lord. He was a man whose heart was after God. That was the thing that distinguished him from all the other men who were considered for the throne.

God looks upon our hearts. He knows what is there and what is not there. If He is not there, then we really have nothing to offer Him. The Lord is looking for people who will let their conversation be centered in what is above and

beyond them. So many suck in wisdom from below—wisdom that is earthly and devilish. God longs to fill us with His wisdom, with His great thoughts that come from *His* mind, which is above all.

As these pages will show, God longs to fill us with Himself so that we can praise Him with real praise. He wants to hide His Word deep in us so that all that is within us can sing to Him and glorify Him in Spirit and in truth.

Chapter One

THE SOUL IN HARMONY

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

"I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

"Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

"He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

"Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

"A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

"Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

"Because thou hast made the LORD, which is

my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

"There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

"For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

"They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

"Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

"With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation" (Psalm 91:1-16).

"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

"Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

"Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

"The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed" (Psalm 103:1-6).

All of the psalms are so precious to me. Inspired by God, they are great expressions of real people with real hearts who were going through real things. In reading through Psalms, I get some insight into the heart of David. He was a man who left himself wide open to God. This great king let God lead him and correct him. He danced before the Lord with all of his might when the ark of the Lord was brought back to Jerusalem, in 2 Samuel 6:10-15. Oh, what liberty David sensed in his walk with God and in his leadership over Israel. David worshipped the Lord with all that was within him.

The soul of every man is equipped with such a capacity to worry, to become anxious, to live in fear. Personally, I have a capacity to become sad. Wounds and hurts sting me and stun me, sometimes for very legitimate reasons. Forgiving myself becomes a great issue at times. That is why reading the Psalms and meditating on the words that David would sing unto the Lord breaks my heart in the best way.

Blessing His Holy Name

In Psalm 103, David declared that *everything* within us needs to be set aside to praise and bless the holy name of the Lord. This goes beyond

normal praise, which is very precious. I enjoy singing and worshipping the Lord at the beginning of a church service. Those are very wonderful moments before the Lord. In this psalm, however, the Scriptures refer to something more. The five parts of my soul are in harmony when all that is within me is blessing God. My mind, my emotions, my conscience, my self-consciousness, and my will are together. They are on the same page of the Book, and my focus is on things above.

In times such as this, I have a conscience ruled by grace. I have allowed Christ to take over my self-consciousness; it is no longer I but Christ who lives in me. My emotions are filled with wonder at the love and presence of the Lord. My will makes good choices in response to what God is initiating to me. In this state of mind and heart, I am very connected to what God is doing in my life. These are the times when I come to appreciate His benefits so much. I am thankful for all that He has given.

The problem comes when Christians become disconnected to what God has done for them. In the workplace, many people go for jobs that carry good benefits. Those benefits can even become the motivating factor for some people to stay in a job even if they don't like it. But believers often let their hearts get weighed down with

cares and lusts and deceptions, and they forget all of His benefits.

In the book of Numbers, we see a sad tale of how mixed motives and mixed multitudes created problems for the people of Israel. After witnessing a tremendous series of miracles from the hand of God in His dealing with Egypt and her gods, these children allowed poor thinking and wrong perceptions to inhibit their progression to the promised land. Doubts clouded Israel's vision, creating an atmosphere for evil speaking and open rebellion against God and the men He raised up as leaders.

The whole tale presents an object lesson for believers. We should have fixed hearts and focused minds. *All* that is within us should worship and praise the Lord.

Let us not forget His benefits—the benefits of life, the benefits of new beginnings, and the benefits of great relationships that are growing around exchanges of truth. Let us rejoice in remembrance of the benefits of knowing that God loves us and guides our every step.

Chapter Two

WHOLE HEARTS OF PRAISE

"I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.

"I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

"I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.

"Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

"Hear my voice according unto thy loving-kindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

"They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

"Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth.

"Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever" (Psalm 119:145-152).

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:14-16).

From Psalm 119, a very clear message can be drawn out. God leads us every step of the way. He carries us and guides us with His Word and His Spirit. The Word and the Spirit fill our hearts and keep us out from under iniquity.

I develop intimacy with God through the establishment of a Finished Work attitude. Not only do I forget not His benefits, but I also remember that He forgives all my iniquities.

Iniquity has everything to do with going against God's authority. It originated with Satan, who served before the throne of the Trinity as Lucifer, the anointed cherub (Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:14). The devil alienated himself from God—His Creator—and from his design in the plan and purpose of the Lord. His choice to try to raise himself to another level of authority was a direct challenge to the great I AM, whose will is done on earth and in heaven.

We have a will in our souls, too, and that will has a measure of great power. It chooses what we hear and believe and act upon. Sadly, each of us has discovered how easy it is to go against God's authority. Sometimes we do it out of igno-

rance. At other times, we know very well what we should do, and we simply choose not to do it.

Kept Safe from Destruction and Defeat

It is so obvious to me that I am in a body of death and sin. Still, I do not have to submit to the things that affect my emotions. I can choose to think about the resurrection life I have because I am in Christ. We have the fulfillment of all of His promises because we are in Him. What's more, we can never be taken out of Him. I am living in His Finished Work. He has redeemed my life from destruction.

I am sure that God has kept me from so many things that could have destroyed me. We cannot even vaguely imagine what God has delivered us from. He corrects us, perhaps interrupting a series of wrong decisions. When enemies attack us, He protects us, delivers us, and promotes us in spite of what they say and do.

The demons of hell are orchestrating things to destroy our values, our faith, and our hope, but Christ redeems us from destruction. We have been made kings and priests for God. A crown sits upon a king's head, and He crowns us with lovingkindness and tender mercies. This speaks of what He has done for our minds and for our thinking.

A Good Mouth

This is a great picture of how we are to live and to operate with God. When we think with God, Psalm 103:5 tells us that He satisfies our mouth with good things. This means we speak things that are edifying to ourselves and to others. God inhabits the praises of His people. He lives there! He occupies what we say when our words are according to His Word and His Spirit.

God has a special place, a dwelling place in His people because of the praises that we bring before Him. God loves the praises of His people. He really enjoys it.

Have you ever noticed how praise can bring great feelings of energy and joy? That is our youth being renewed. We find the freshness of God and the quickening of the Holy Spirit. It makes me feel so young. My heart is filled with joy and I feel like a kid coming downstairs on Christmas morning. This good day is a gift from the Lord to me. My mind is renewed moment by moment. I am waiting on the Lord, so I run and I do not get weary. I walk and I do not faint. I soar with the eagles on God's wings of love and mercy (see Isaiah 40:31).

That was the story of Caleb. He possessed great faith. When he looked at any challenge, he always saw God. When he spied out the Prom-

ised Land, he came back encouraged and ready for war. Joshua, however, was the only one who stood with him in that grim moment in Numbers 13. Ten other spies confessed doubt, and that doubt confused them and the people they spoke to.

Fast forward to the promised land. Caleb was still standing and still warring. He declared that his strength was the same at age 85 as it was at age 40. He wanted more, so he went after the mountain property of Canaan—the highest spot with the toughest opposition. He knew what God had done for him and for Israel. All that was within Caleb spoke of faith and victory. So this "young" man went off to conquer in the power of the Lord.

Chapter Three

CLOTHED WITH GARMENTS OF PRAISE

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

"But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

"The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

"That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy [Spirit] and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

"And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:

"Him God raised up the third day, and

shewed him openly;

"Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

"And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:34-43).

"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

"And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

"And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel

of the LORD stood by" (Zechariah 3:1-5).

Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit, and He went about doing good and healing all of those who were oppressed of the devil. That was His ministry on earth. He was always executing Finished Work judgment, and it is so precious that He is still doing the same thing today.

Satan remains our accuser. I am very certain that the devil really works at exposing our frailties and failures before the angels that fill the air and before the Lord. The good thing for us is that God has taken our sins and buried them in the deepest, deepest sea (Micah 7:19).

See how Satan makes his accusation against Joshua the high priest, in the book of Zechariah. God saw this man as a "brand plucked out of the fire." As for this one, the Lord would not hear about his sins. The filthy garments were removed from him. He would have new clothes and a new mitre—a crown of long suffering and tender mercies.

The Lord was executing His righteousness and judgment toward this high priest. The issue for God was Christ's Finished Work by the blood that He shed. Like Joshua, we have a long list of sins that could be presented to show how unworthy and unrighteous we are.

God, however, executes this beautiful gift of righteousness.

Our Merciful and Gracious Lord

"And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with [Moses] there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:5-6).

"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

"He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

"For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:8-12).

What loaded verses these are from the Bible! The first thing God is to us is merciful. He does not give us the fire, which is what we deserve as willful, sinning people. Mercy means that God does not give believers what we really deserve. Then comes grace, which means that God does give us all things that pertain to life and godliness. That is, He gives us all the things that we do not deserve and can never deserve.

There is an inexhaustible supply for God's people. There is no limit to what God can do. One of the great things about Redemption is that God does not deal with us after our sins. Neither does He deal with us after our iniquities. Rather, the sacrifice of Christ has removed our sins far from us—as far as the east is from the west. And, if you think about it, it is impossible for east to ever meet west. God's mercy toward us is as high as the heavens are above the earth.

This is the God who loves us. Oh, may I always praise Him with all that is within me.

CONCLUSION

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:13-14).

What a great way to bring these thoughts to a close. God knows me. He knows what I am made of. He understands my tendencies and my challenges. He recognizes my frailties and my feelings and my emotional reactions and responses. He takes care of me.

Jesus Christ came and entered into my sphere of existence. He lived as a man walking among men. He always did what pleased the Father. He had a connection, and He had the Spirit without measure. Still, Jesus faced the trials and frustrations and temptations that are a part of human existence. He faced them all and He defeated them all by living by every word that proceeded from the mouth of God.

What filled Jesus Christ? It was the Holy Spirit. What was His ultimate resource? The Word of God. What did He do daily? He prayed to His

Father to get the Father's mind for decisions He would make during the day. God walked *among* men in the Person of Jesus Christ. Now God lives *within* us. The Holy Spirit dwells in us, and we are filled.

What is it that is within us? It is God Himself. And with all that He is and all that He always has been, we worship Him and serve Him. May His praise be continually in our mouths.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith, trusting His character and love for you and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)*.

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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Amen!

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

Amen. It is a word that is often used by believers and non-believers alike. We tend to use it as a way of showing our agreement with the subject being discussed. Often it is transliterated in pulpits as "So be it": in other words, "That's the way it is, *period*."

The definition for "amen" goes way beyond "so be it." When I say "Amen" in the benediction, I want to weep, because it reveals the depth of God's commitment to us throughout the Scriptures. And as we will see in this booklet, the authority commanded by this small word establishes the foundation for our faith as believers in Jesus Christ, the Son of God—the God of Amen.

Chapter One

AMEN: THE GOD WHO IS ALL IN ALL

"He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of *truth*; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of *truth*; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes" (Isaiah 65:16).

Here, the word used for "truth" is the same word that is translated "amen." What an unusual rendering: We swear by the God of Amen.

In the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible, this word is used 182 times. Seventy-eight times it is translated as "amen." In many passages it is translated as "verily," which Jesus uses throughout the Gospels. Twenty-five times in the Gospel of John alone, Jesus began a sentence with "Verily, verily," adding emphasis to the statement He was about to make.

The meaning of amen is so amazing, in the

Old Testament as well as the New Testament. It means, "The fulfillment of everything in life is in Me and by Me," says Jesus. That is one aspect of the actual meaning found in that little word "Amen." All fulfillment of every detail of life is in Christ and by Him. Think of it.

Furthermore, when the Lord says "Amen" or "Verily," He is saying, "I demand your faith in and obedience to My nature, My essence."

When Jesus began a sentence with "Amen, amen," (literally, "Verily, verily") He was saying, "Your life will depend upon hearing this." And as we mentioned, He said it twenty-five times in the Gospel of John.

For example, Jesus said "Verily, verily (Amen, amen; your life and your future will depend upon hearing this:) I say unto you, you must be born again." (see John 3:3).

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). What was He saying? "Amen, amen. Your life depends upon being born again, being saved by the blood of Christ."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (in John 5:19). Jesus heard from the Father—

and what the Father did, the Son did also. Therefore, He could say, "This is very important. It is crucial that you have faith in My nature, that you know that all fulfillment is in Me and by Me. The Son couldn't do a single thing in His humanity apart from God the Father, and neither can you except you abide in Me" (see John 15:4).

Clothed in Conviction

Furthermore, "Amen" means "clothed in absolute conviction" of the truth about Jesus Christ. "Verily, verily…." "Amen, amen. Have faith in My nature. Have faith in My essence. My words are clothed in conviction."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but [has already] passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). What preceded this promise by the Lord Jesus Christ? "Amen, amen."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John 8:51). Here, the Lord is saying, "Believe absolutely in My Word; believe in My nature; believe that I am the fulfillment of everything that I say—it is in me and by me; believe that my words are

clothed in absolute conviction: Not a single Christian in the history of the world will ever, even for one moment, taste death."

Amen, amen.

We Are Commanded to Receive Whom God Sends

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (John 13:20).

God is saying: "Amen, Amen! My words are clothed with conviction, therefore have absolute faith in Me, in My nature, knowing that everything is fulfilled by Me and in Me. This is the truth. I cannot lie: If you receive whomever I send, you receive Me. But, if you do not completely receive whom I send to you, you do not receive me.

"And because every word that proceeds from My mouth is absolutely pure and true, I *demand* that you have faith in what I say, in who I am, and in what I have done. I don't request it. I demand it."

Do you see how powerful this little word is? It is a very serious matter.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14).

"Church of Laodicea, you are lukewarm," saith the Amen, the final and absolute truth in the earth, the God of the Amens who blessed Himself on the earth (see Isaiah 65:16).

He that blesses himself is the God of the Amen. He that swears by himself swears by Amen. He has forgotten the troubles of the former things, because He has made everything new.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall in the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

He is saying, "Clothed with conviction, with absolute faith in My Word and in My nature, I demand that you obey this: Except you die with Christ at the Cross, you will never produce fruit as a Christian." Amen, amen—double emphasis.

"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

That means that all of the promises of God are clothed with conviction, with absolute authority in His essence, and they are fulfilled *in* Him and *by* Him. God cannot lie. All of the promises in him are yea and Amen, to the glory of God." *Amen*.

Chapter Two

TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD

Two girls and their brother were attending a great Bible Baptist church, a godly church. The brother, who was seventeen, led his sisters as they prayed together for their mom and dad. After one year and three months, they said, "Amen, amen. God will answer our prayer!"

In Florida last year, the entire family went to a Billy Graham Crusade, and the mom and dad received Christ as their Savior. The three children decided to take God at His Word and made a dogmatic decision to trust His character. They rejoiced and said, "Amen!"

"My Son Who Was Lost Is Found. Amen!"

Recently, I heard the following true story. A very bright young man who was planning to become a teacher was drafted by the military. After a short time, he was sent into the war in Vietnam. After being wounded, he began to show

symptoms of schizophrenia. Because he couldn't think properly, the military discharged him and sent him home, but he could find no peace. Anxious and disoriented to reality, he boarded a bus and took off. No one knew where he went. His mother, his brother, his sister-in-law, and his nephew (who were all Christians) began to pray.

One year later, the brother said, "Mom, I'm taking my wife and son to Los Angeles. Would you like to go?"

It was almost Christmas, and that mom did something that normally she never would have done. Even though it was Christmas, she left her husband alone and went with them to California.

While they were there, the mom and her son took a bus ride. They ended up in a slum area and didn't know where they were. Then the driver said, "This is as far as it goes."

Here they were in a dangerous part of the city when, suddenly, they noticed a bearded man, homeless and hungry, sitting in a doorway, and the mother cried out, "It's my son!" She had prayed for more than a year.

He didn't recognize them, and he would not go home with them. But, she went back and managed to convince him that he was her son and that he had a home where people loved

him. Eventually he returned home, and now he is functioning quite well.

That mom prayed for thirteen months, and do you know what God said? "Amen, amen!"

The Great I Am Is Also the Amen

God's Word is full of Amens—with so many amens and verilys recorded in the Scriptures.

A fifty-nine-year-old woman, her face wrinkled and white, was in the fourth stage of cancer. She prayed, "God, I'm not ready to die. I don't want to die now. And I don't believe you are giving me grace to die now."

She began a regimen of eating cancer-fighting foods, taking medicinal organic supplements, and drinking eight to ten glasses of water every day. In three months, her cancer was gone. Today, she is completely healed.

Do you know what she and her husband are saying all the time now? "Amen, Amen! We have faith in His nature. Everything is fulfilled in Him and by Him. Every promise is clothed with conviction of truth. All the promises are yea, and in Him, Amen!"

A couple separated, and the woman was living in adultery. She would come home in the morning and go out at night. Still, she continued

to listen to our radio broadcast every day.

People would say to her husband, "Why don't you divorce her? You know what she is."

He said, "God's promises are true. All of His promises are Yea and, in Him, Amen. Therefore, God is going to turn her around, and a miracle is going to happen. That is my conviction."

Before long, she went into an evangelistic revival meeting alone, and she was gloriously saved. That night, she went home and fell on her face to ask her husband's forgiveness. Do you know what he said? "Amen."

Trust His Nature

The most beautiful thing in the world is when you believe on Jesus Christ in your heart, and believe that He died, was buried, and rose again. When you believe that He shed His blood on your behalf, and you accept Him as your Savior, all the angels say, "Amen!"

The people in each of these testimonies believed in His nature. They said yea to His promises. Their sins were paid for on the Cross and will never be brought up again. The former troubles will never be remembered. The former things are gone forever, because the grace of God and the love of God has said, "Amen."

A young man was extremely ill. His family didn't go to church, but on his own, he read the Bible. Late one night, he read the words that we all love in Mark 11:22*b*-24:

"Have faith in God….Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall *believe* that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith….What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, *believe* that ye receive them, and *ye shall have them*."

After he read that, he got up in the middle of the night and knocked on his mother and father's door. Sick as he could be, he said, "I'm going to be healed."

They said, "Good, son."

He said, "No, you don't understand. I am going to be healed."

They said, "Good, son. Now go back to bed."

He said, "You didn't hear what I said! God said it: I am going to be healed!" And he was miraculously healed within a short period of time.

Do you know what that young man said to God's promises (Mark 11:22, 23)? He said, "Amen! I believe that God's promises are

clothed with conviction. I believe in the nature of the Person of Christ. I believe my provision is in the essence of what He says in His Word. I believe He will fulfill all my need according to His integrity."

And God said, "Amen."

The Amen Commands Attention

A famous talk-show host who does not profess to be a believer was asked, "If you could choose anyone in all of history, who in the whole world would you prefer to interview?" He said, "If I could, it would be Jesus Christ."

Many years ago, West German Chancellor Adenauer (the founder of the Christian Democratic Union in West Germany who had also been a prisoner under Hitler's government) requested to speak with Billy Graham, the famous evangelist. He said, "Mr. Graham, what do you believe about the Resurrection?"

Billy Graham said, "I would not preach the Word of God if I could not believe all of it. I believe every single word about the death, and burial, and resurrection of my Savior."

Adenauer replied, "I couldn't even live if I didn't believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our future life that is based in the promises

of God."

In adversity and prosperity, truly great men have trusted every detail of their lives to the God who is the Amen.

Chapter Three

THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

The apostle Paul ended every one of his epistles with "Amen"—every one. Also, he interjected "Amen" several times, revealing the high value of what he was communicating to the hearers.

In Romans 15:33, "Now the God of peace be with you all. *Amen*." We are commanded to let the peace of God control our lives.

In Romans 16:20*b*, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. *Amen*."

In Romans 16:24, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. *Amen*." We are commanded to live by His grace moment by moment.

In Romans 16:27, the Word of God says, "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ," the original says, "forever be with you all. Amen."

Paul was saying, "Everything God says is

true. He cannot lie. His nature, His essence, is absolutely dogmatically true."

Every single thing that comes from the mouth of Jesus Christ is Yea and Amen. For emphasis, Jesus often said it twice: "Verily, verily...." Amen, amen.

Blessings in the Benediction

When the pastor gives the benediction, some people can't wait to get out, and they don't even realize what they are doing. We need to hear the precise words as they come from the pulpit. When he says "Amen," we can glorify God and say, "Hallelujah! His nature is true. His promises are true. His Word is true."

In 1 Chronicles 16, David was praising God—the "great" God, in verse 25. Then, in verse 36, he said, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD."

They all answered "Amen." Notice that after they said "Amen," everyone shouted in praise. In Nehemiah 8:6, the Bible says that as the Word of God was preached, "all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground."

In other words, the people of Israel were saying, "We have been bought back, redeemed. We have been delivered. We can trust the nature of God. In Him and by Him is fulfillment. We can trust His character. He is clothed with truth. He is clothed with conviction. It is impossible for Him to lie" (Hebrews 6:18).

His Words Are Pure

Every Word of God is pure. God wants to heal people. God wants to save, to deliver, to restore. He wants to give victory over adultery. Amen! He will give victory over homosexuality. Amen! Victory over drinking: Amen! Victory over drugs: Amen! Victory over lying: Amen! Victory over betrayal: Amen!

God wants to give His people power to be faithful to church services. God wants us to be consistent. When the pastor says something in love that convicts, God wants us to say, "Amen!" —not because of him but because of God.

The last word that Jesus Christ ever spoke on earth to His disciples was "Amen":

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: Teaching them

to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I go with you alway, even unto the end of the world. *Amen*." (Matthew 28:20).

CONCLUSION

God desires that in every area of our lives, our confession would be "Amen." Get to every church service you possibly can. Make Christ your priority. Be available to rejoice with the congregation as we see a revival of souls being saved, a revival of healings, a revival of the Word of God as all the people of God respond with, "Amen!"

"Unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all the ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).

An Eternal Destiny

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Why are there so many casualties among believers, even in Spirit-filled ministries? Why do men who have been called to be pastors become fearful, insecure, or refuse to study to be effective in their call? Why do so many Christians defeat true spirituality by substituting morality and self-righteousness? Morality, which is necessary to preserve individual freedom and national entity, can be experienced without the Holy Spirit and without Bible doctrine. The unsaved person can be the most moral person in the world, but for all of his goodness he *cannot* be spiritual.

In Hosea 7:8, God speaks of Israel as "a cake not turned"—half-baked and mixed with unbelievers. God's own, whom He taught in the way, had strayed far from their eternal purpose as a nation. Today God calls out to the Church with the same exhortation. We are a people called with an eternal purpose to an eternal destiny. If

there is a heaven, if hell is real, and if the Bible is the infallible, inspired canon of Scripture (not to be added to nor taken away from) that will judge every man, then *who would do anything else but get to know the One who wrote the Bible?*

Chapter One

PREDESTINED IN CHRIST

The Bible says in Psalm 138:8 that God perfects that which concerns us. The next line says that His mercy endures forever. Then the Psalmist pleads with his Creator, "Forsake not the works of thine own hands"!

Every believer is in a process, and I believe that what motivates us to continue in the love of God is a personal sense of destiny. Each believer is heading toward God's ultimate purpose, eternal perfection. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

Through this personal sense of destiny, we guard against developing negative attitudes such as familiarity or withdrawing though we are tired. People are quietly able to withstand unimaginable adversity because they are motivated by a personal sense of destiny and an eternal purpose.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:28-29).

Think of it: We were predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son! This sense of destiny with an eternal purpose goes way beyond the pleasures of this life, far beyond natural success and materialistic gain (even though that can glorify God). We must never lose this sense of our personal destiny. Always allow the breath of your eternal purpose to give life to your soul.

Living in the Work of God

"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:30).

With all the problems on the earth, we were called to live here. Not only were we called, but we were justified and glorified. If God be for us, who can be against us? We live in the work of God with a personal sense of destiny.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

Regarding this personal destiny, God guarantees that we will be like Him, and with no old sin nature. This is a promise from the One who cannot lie! No wonder Satan tries to stop us from hearing the Word of God properly (Luke 8:5-18). He will organize his demons to defeat our advances—especially when we are in the valley of decisions considering God's call.

We have been called according to an eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:7-11). Therefore, we don't look at the things that are seen but at the things which are not seen (2 Corinthians 4:18). We are a people destined to be perfected.

The most precious reality next to our sense of personal destiny and our eternal purpose is to have a personal understanding of 1 John 4:17*b*, "As he is, so are we in this world." Right now. As He is, so are we now, because of positional truth and because we are part of His Body, flesh, and bones—one spirit with Him.

As you dwell upon this truth, the personal

sense of destiny rises in your heart, His eternal purpose consumes you in grace, and you have great value for your life, *no matter what state you are in*. Paul, in prisoner's shackles, confessed that he was content because he knew his eternal value before God. Through redemption, he was a part of Christ. With this tremendous value placed on us by God, we take on the "new creation image"—a new self-image derived from our new value *in Christ*.

Yet, there are people who go to church and get their feelings hurt instead of realizing their personal sense of an eternal destiny. God has ordained us to be conformed to Christ's image through *all* things that happen in our lives.

A People of Privilege

The Bible teaches that born-again believers are the most privileged people in all the world. No other people in world history have ever had the spiritual options that we have. Old Testament believers were "endued" or visited by the Holy Spirit. He would rest *upon* people at specific times for a purpose, but only a selected few would actually experience the power of the Holy Spirit *within*.

Today, every born-again believer has been

purchased by the precious blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. The moment a person is saved, he is filled with the Holy Spirit. When we sin, we grieve and can even quench the Holy Spirit; therefore we must judge our sin on Calvary to experience the filling of the Spirit again. We must repent and use recovery in purity. But the Holy Spirit will never be taken away from us. He indwells us forever.

God has given us a mandate to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to be set apart by categorical doctrine, and to study to show ourselves approved, "workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." Colossians 3:16 tells us to let the Word of God dwell richly in our hearts, and that the Word will produce a melody of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; we sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord.

If I honor the mandate to be filled with the Spirit and allow the Word to dwell richly in me, I will be victorious in every detail of life. Instead of having to wonder what to do in a situation, what is wrong with just being Spirit-filled and recognizing my spiritual purpose?

Chapter Two

CLARITY OF PURPOSE

Here is the situation I see in the lives of so many Christians. People get disoriented in the fog of Satan. One person may become anxious and discontent if God doesn't bring her a partner. Or another may get involved in a relationship when he is not mature enough to handle one—all because neither one has a clear purpose and a *personal* sense of destiny. They may make a decision to follow God in a call but end up wandering around in a fog because they do not have a *spiritual* sense of destiny.

If Christian families honored the instruction of Deuteronomy 6, every child by the age of eight would have an eternal sense of destiny. Couples should pray before they have children and not be sentimentally attached to a dream. Parents should be equipped and ready to lay down their lives with a commitment to begin teaching their children morning, noon, and

night, starting in infancy.

Everything in our lives relates to our eternal purpose and our individual destiny. Each thing that happens in my life has an eternal purpose. Every breath, each thought, each word I speak, even when I get in my car or go into my office, my life must be conformed to the eternal purpose of Ephesians 3:11: "According to the eternal purpose which he *purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*."

Placed by God with a Purpose

I must understand my eternal purpose in relationship to my own life, my marriage, my family, and the Body of Christ. I have a destiny to know God, to be like Christ, to live for eternity. I have a destiny to serve God, to communicate the Bible, and to hate the world's system. I have a destiny to think differently, to dress differently—to *be* different from the world. My whole purpose for being on this earth is to be transformed by the Word of God and to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. I am here to represent heaven, the Trinity, and the plan of God; and that will happen only in the measure that I have a sense of personal destiny.

The issues of death are from God (Psalm

68:20); we have no assurance what day, what hour, or what the cause of our death will be. Therefore, we should live each day through an eternal purpose and in an individual, personal destiny.

We are children of destiny. We were chosen *because* we accepted Christ! We have been called with a high and holy calling (Philippians 3:14; 2 Timothy 1:9). God has placed us where we are today, and He has a provision for everything in our lives—with no exceptions.

"But my God shall supply *all* your need [(*every* need!)] according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). As a child of destiny, my God shall supply every need I will ever have. I *know* it is true. I also know that without one exception, I can do all things—I can meet every confrontation, and I am equal to any detail I face. I can do all things well because I am a child of destiny. "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

There is never a time we need to be homesick. We can be content in whatsoever state we are in, and godliness with contentment is great gain (Philippians 4:11, 1 Timothy 6:6). The Christian isn't anxious for the marriage problems to be resolved. The Christian isn't anxious for any-

thing! We are children of destiny; therefore, not only do we have godliness with contentment, but we are content with such things as we have (Hebrews 13:5). Even the thought of an anxiety attack should be foreign to us.

Personal Provisions

The first thing to recognize is that every believer has an eternal purpose that was purposed in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, and that everything in time has a purpose with God. Next, every believer has a personal destiny to be a member of the royal family of God and to be the future bride of Christ, which is the ultimate eternal state of our destiny. This is why when God doesn't heal a person of a terminal disease, a believer can enter into "Operation Faith, Hope, and Happiness" because he knows he is nearing his destination of being free from the sins of the soul.

God has an absolute provision through doctrine and the mandate to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Why would we ever want to tackle life's problems without the Holy Spirit's filling? We don't need to know *what* to do, we just need to know *doctrine*. We worship God in spirit and in truth. This brings us into an

eternal provision for every situation at hand.

I have personal provisions for my personal destiny: personal power for problems, personal wisdom for understanding, personal peace for personal storms, and a personal volition that makes me (and not someone else) responsible for my decisions. These tremendous provisions are available through God's promises and power. So if I choose to be filled with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, I will be untouchable (1 John 5:18), and every single thought will bring me into my personal destiny.

Why Tests?

After I receive truth into my soul, God will test me. God must test my integrity toward the truth I have received. If I say I love God, then I must pass the test. If I say that I believe, then I must pass the test of life. But what is the basis for the tests we go through?

The angels were created with souls which included volition. Lucifer, God's highest ranking angel, went negative in his volition toward the plan of God. As a result, he was tried for treason in the supreme courtroom of heaven. Though the devil (as Lucifer is now known) was able to rally one-third of the angelic host to stand with

him against God, they were convicted and sentenced to spend eternity in hell. God allowed them to appeal the sentence, and Satan was given an extension. *At that moment*, *God created the human race*, which would reveal God's glory for all of eternity.

Cast out of heaven, some of the fallen angels took on physical form and became part of a plan to corrupt the human seed and prevent Jesus Christ from being born of a woman from the line of David. They married women and produced half-human, half-angelic creatures that were populating the earth until God destroyed them in the Flood. These fallen angels were sent to hell (*tartarus*) where they remain chained to this day (Genesis 6:1-7; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

The remainder of the fallen angels roam the earth as disembodied spirits, "messengers of Satan," while the devil seeks whom he may devour (2 Peter 5:8).

Just as the angels were created with a perfect environment and a free volition, so were Adam and Eve created in a perfect environment with volition in their souls. The only thing forbidden to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This speaks of their *conscience*, and the prohibition

was meant to test man's volition: he would choose to become either positive or negative in his response toward the Word of God. Because they chose to listen to the serpent's words *about* God (Genesis 3:5), they went against the Word *of* God. Through that decision, Adam and Eve became self-conscious, and now fallen men can control the norms and standards for the soul outside of the mind of God.

Satan's argument in anger was, "Why would a loving God send angels to hell?" And God will prove His great grace and mercy toward the human race by granting an eternal destiny in heaven to anyone who will receive Christ's perfect blood as the provision for sin. We receive redemption in His Son Jesus Christ—the only man absolutely predestined for heaven. *We are predestinated in Christ*.

Chapter Three

ADVANCING TOWARD THE PRIZE

In His perfect plan, God imputed sin to all men before any of us personally sinned. Because of that provision, He imputes perfect righteousness to us the moment we are saved. Today, Spirit-filled believers have a destiny of eternal purpose as witnesses for the prosecution with Jesus Christ, heaven's attorney. Satan uses carnal believers—murmurers, backbiters, and anyone who continues in sin—to testify in his defense against the character of God. Ultimately, God may remove those witnesses for the defense if they refuse to get right.

In the Mount of Temptation, Jesus was tested in three areas: His relationship to the Holy Spirit, His relationship to the Word of God, and His relationship to the Father's purpose for His life. Matthew 4:1-11 reveals that He was more than a conqueror in each test.

Each of us will face a diversity of tests in our lives. As we succeed in these impetus tests in the plan of God, we will be promoted in the grace of God. But that will only happen to those who humble themselves before God. Humility through doctrine and the filling of the Spirit, is the only means of promotion in this great operation of God's grace. Therefore, everyone who is humble will be esteemed with a high value in the race we are running (Proverbs 15:33). Everyone who is humble will be rewarded with spiritual wisdom from God (Proverbs 11:2). Every meek person will be taught by the Spirit of God (Psalm 25:9). Humility always comes before the promotion (Proverbs 29:23).

Did you know that spiritually speaking, every Christian has equal rights and equal opportunities? This is not true in the natural realm of life. For instance, the mentality of a person's soul is largely governed by genetics. We did not have a choice in the matter. Opportunities for success have never been equal. We could not choose our parents or where we were born, therefore opportunities for advancement in the natural realm have never been equal.

But God created the human spirit and brings in the Gospel of grace under the government of grace. From the moment that human spirit is quickened by the Holy Spirit of God through the new birth—the moment a soul receives the glorious Gospel—he is created equal in God's plan. Now, as a predestined, blood-bought believer, he can receive as much doctrine as he wants to—more than the most intellectual person in the universe. Even if he has a limited vocabulary or mental capacity, he can understand eternal truth. In this way, there is equality in life.

We are members of the royal priesthood, ambassadors of Christ. This position was nonexistent in the Old Testament. We have the filling of the Holy Spirit! We are under the Finished Work grace of God. Everything about our lives becomes equal opportunity in the purpose of God. There is equal opportunity for promotion through humility and through doctrine. By the grace of Almighty God, we enter into our eternal purpose with an individual sense of eternal destiny.

The Filling of the Word and the Spirit

In order to understand this destiny, we must be filled with the Word of God and the Holy

Spirit. We have a provision for every detail of every day: morning, noon, and night. There is not one problem that doesn't have a solution from eternity past. We need only to be humble and have fun exercising faith under grace to discover the solution.

There is no excuse for ignorance. There is no excuse for backsliding, depression, boredom, or sadness—unless you make up excuses and wallow in your own mire and become a fool because of ignorance. But that is not necessary. You can determine not to let that happen.

Morality is achieved through self-determination at the good side of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; it doesn't require God living in a man. But *spirituality* is experienced through the filling of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection power of God. Though I have an old sin nature and Christ did not, *the same power that was resident in the humanity of Jesus Christ is also in me.*

Jesus never took advantage of His Deity to prevent facing temptation or suffering. Everything He did was with the Father. Every thought He received was from the Father. Every word He spoke was from the Father. And though He was perfect, His humanity was completely dependent on the Father. Everything He did was

with total reliance upon the Father. He never got up in the morning and had an off day, or even an off moment, and He gives us that same power.

If I am filled with the Holy Spirit and filled with His Word, though I will never be like He was, I can experience the power provision of God's promises for every detail of my life. Whatever happens, I will rely upon Christ and enter into an eternal purpose.

When Joseph's brothers failed, the eternal purpose brought Joseph grace. Not only was he promoted, but he was used to bless the ones who sold him into captivity in the first place. *The eternal purpose led to an eternal destiny for both sides:* the guilty brothers received a new understanding of grace, and Joseph, a strong and mature believer, was able to return good for evil. All things worked together for good (Romans 8:28).

A New Creation and a New Self-Image

God has promised to give us a brand-new godly self-image. First, we will begin to live in the newness of the mind. Next, we will begin to be led by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Entering into stability and maturity, we will become conquerors, victorious, living in the Faith

Rest of love.

Think of it!—a new creation and a new self-image every day. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, *he is a new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, *all* things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6). "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are *new every morning*: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

We will have a peace that passes understanding (Philippians 4:7). We will receive wisdom and knowledge for the time we are living in (Isaiah 33:6). We will know that our times are in God's hands, therefore we will not fear what men can do (Psalm 31:15). Finally, we will be used to restrain God's judgment upon nations, just like the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, because we have an individual eternal destiny with an eternal purpose.

CONCLUSION

No matter how tired we get through literal, bona fide physical exhaustion, every moment of our lives is part of an eternal purpose. That includes every child of God. We are all going to be conformed to His very image. When we see Him face to face, we will be carbon copies! That is so hard to believe, but it is true.

Even though Abraham's nephew Lot didn't live in his personal sense of destiny, 2 Peter 2:7 says that he was righteous.

Dear Father, We are so thankful that we have a personal sense of our eternal destiny, and it is based upon an eternal purpose, eternal provisions, eternal portions on this earth, an eternal plan, and an eternal Cross. We are so deeply grateful and we desire to redeem the time because our times are in your hands.

So many believers do not know what their purpose is. They have a church but they have no vision and they do not go into the fields for the harvest. There is no personal sense of an eternal destiny, but

they are confined to a temporal value system. We pray for them and that we will continue to be quickened in this high and holy calling. It is so good to know that you justified us while we were ungodly, perfected us the moment we believed, and put us in a plan to teach us so we will grow in grace and be conformed to your image. Amen.

An Eternal State of Forgiveness

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INTRODUCTION

People do not need our criticism. They need our kindness. They need our courtesy, and they need our love. That is one thing we can do as born-again believers in the corporate body of Christ. First, we must be kind to one another. Let us be extremely kind; let us go out of our way to be kind to one another. It is so beautiful to be kind. Kindness is a godly characteristic.

There was a preacher at a camp meeting in Maine who was backing out of a parking space and ran into another car. The preacher was nervous and frustrated when he got out of his vehicle, but the man who owned the damaged car just smiled. "It's just a car," he said. "So it has a few dents in it now. It doesn't mean a thing. Are you all right?"

That is kindness. Furthermore, that is forgiveness. The preacher and some of the others who witnessed it were amazed after seeing this man's calm and kind attitude.

It didn't cost him a thing to be kind at that moment. He lived in the privilege of letting Jesus Christ be his portion. His portion from Christ for that situation was to be kind and to forgive. How beautiful that is.

My prayer is that this booklet will inspire you as we examine Ephesians 4:32 in depth. I hope that the words will prompt us to choose continually to live in Christ's kindness and to express His tender heart as we live in the eternal state of forgiveness that is our portion from the Lord.

Chapter One

CHOOSE TO BE KIND EVERY DAY

"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

I have been thinking a lot recently about some things I would like to see. More than anything right now I would like to see more of the Lord's portion that is kindness. Christianity begins in the home, and the kindness of sharing God's portion should start there every morning. When we wake up, even when we feel like we need more sleep, we can show kindness instead of being mean and quick-tempered. If we start out our mornings with the Lord's portion, then God will help us to be kind in every place we go throughout the day.

The Word says, "Be ye kind one to another." Just be gentle and courteous and kind. It is something that is needed all across America. It is needed in every segment of society. The Lord's

kindness would change so many things.

Begin Your Day with Kindness

I know what it feels like to wake up in the morning and still feel exhausted and weary. On those days, a kind word really does something for me. Isn't it the same for you? Perhaps you are a bit uneasy about the day ahead, and though you are not exactly living in the flesh, you spend a few minutes "adjusting" and trying to get in the Spirit. You know what I am talking about. Sometimes we need a little time of transition to enter into Christ's portion so we can be enabled to share that portion with others. At these times, it is just so beautiful to encounter someone who is gentle and kind toward us.

Indeed, one of the most beautiful things in the whole world is when we are kind to one another. That is the Lord's portion. One thing we can do is purpose to be kind.

Purpose to be Kind

One of the things people have said over the years about our ministry is the kindness and the love that is revealed to them. Let us never lose that. It is a unique quality. Let us never lose our kindness. Whatever we are going through, when

we walk into the church building, let us be kind to everyone we see. Be kind on purpose. Predetermine to be kind to everyone.

I like to operate with this attitude: Every person I meet has a particular need, and he could use my kindness. Someone, somewhere, is going through a trial. Some of those things are hidden from us, and some that we know about are much more intense than we realize. The one thing you or I can do is to be kind to everyone.

Be kind one to another. Oh, what a beautiful verse!

Chapter Two

THE SENSITIVITY OF A TENDER HEART

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

The original Greek text reveals that the word "tenderhearted" describes a soft and sensitive attitude to other people because the heart is so tender.

I remember being in a meeting with Dr. Lewis, one of my dear friends. During the meeting, I took a phone call from a woman in the hospital. As I was talking with her, I became completely broken and started to weep. Dr. Lewis did not know who was on the line with me, but he saw my tears and became broken himself. Here are two men in a little office, weeping together because God had given us tender hearts. This woman shared things about what she was going through and all of her fears

about it. The Spirit of God touched our hearts, and immediately the room was filled with brokenness. We were able to minister to her in her time of need with hearts that were tender.

Once, on hospital visitation, I met an 86-year-old man who looked desperate. It appeared that he just needed friendship and needed to be loved, so two of us stayed right by his bedside. Why? We were sensitive to his heart's need. And though we had never met this man before, we soon were weeping. He cried out to us with his eyes and his expressions. He needed kindness, and he needed to know that eternal state of forgiveness we experience by becoming a child of God.

"Be ye kind to kind one to another and tenderhearted." May God make our hearts sensitive to the needs of the hearts of others. It thrills the heart of Jesus Christ to see His people have tender hearts toward one another.

Share God's Portion from Your Life

At the end of a church service, try not to rush right out those doors to go home. Even if you have somewhere to go, take a moment and look at people. Go out of your way to show kindness; go out of your way to be tenderhearted.

If you notice that someone seems a little discouraged, shake his hand and share the love of God. Share the Lord's portion of life. Share love. Share the Lord's kindness. Share the Lord's compassion. Share the Lord's burden. Share the Lord's concern. Represent Jesus Christ and His eternal state of forgiveness. Tell that person, "You are so loved by God and I love you." You will never know how much that means to a person.

One of the great things about visiting people in hospitals or nursing homes is that it gives us an opportunity to enter into the needs of their hearts. We share with them the Lord's portion and completely forget ourselves.

When I minister the Lord's portion, I forget all about myself. The Lord ministers His portion to me, then I share the Lord's portion, and I completely forget about myself. As I begin to share God's kindness, God's tenderness, and God's forgiveness, the seeds that have been sown in my life come up bearing the fruit of Christ.

We visited a woman living at a rundown hotel and she said, "No one ever comes to see me. Why is it that no one from the church comes to see me?" She had listened to our radio show

and had asked to be visited. All she wanted was kindness. She just needed for someone to share God's love with her. She was not well, and she wasn't living in a nice place. It was a privilege and a blessing to go out and minister the Lord's portion to her. The Lord ministered Christ's portion to us through the Holy Spirit, and we ministered to this woman.

The Tears of a Tender Heart

"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31).

Paul was a tenderhearted preacher. He would think of the churches at Ephesus, at Colosse, and at Corinth, and he would weep. He would pray for the needs of the people in these congregations and begin to cry. Day and night the tears would come—tears that longed for people's lives to be changed by Christ's eternal state of forgiveness.

"Oh, Lord, the people at Corinth are so confused. They are living in a state of confusion instead of the eternal state of forgiveness," Paul would pray. "Would you bless them and send Your love to help them?" Paul was so tenderhearted.

Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. He wept over the city of Jerusalem. He wept because He longed for people to receive God's forgiveness. His sacrifice at the Cross means that He will never charge us for what we have done. He will not make us pay for our guilt. His tender heart of forgiveness caused Him to take upon Himself everything that we had ever done wrong so that we could go free. He is so tenderhearted toward us that even if we should fail, He is quick to forgive us and restore us back to life and fellowship in an instant.

God never embarrasses us. I was thinking of mistakes I have made that the Lord helped me out of without embarrassment. I was thinking of how the Lord has always protected me with His eternal state of forgiveness through my little mistakes—just because He loves me. He has never embarrassed me, unlike the way we sometimes embarrass each other with little caustic remarks and careless comments. God never embarrasses us because He is kind and tenderhearted toward us.

I can remember times when I was in such need and I thought my heart would break, then, all of a sudden waves of love would surround me. I remember the times at two or three in the

morning when I had exhausted every means of natural power and human strength. Then, God, seemingly out of nowhere, would bring in waves of strength. God would give me a brand-new filling of His Holy Spirit, and I would just raise my hands in love to Jesus. Just like that, He would come through to shed abroad His love in my heart.

Chapter Three

FORGIVE AS CHRIST HAS FORGIVEN YOU

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Again, the Greek text of Ephesians 4:32 reveals something very important. The original text uses a word and construction that exhorts us to "live in a state of forgiving everyone for everything that they do."

Consider the entire verse carefully: "Be ye kind…." In other words, initiate the love of God to others. "Be tenderhearted"—reveal the sensitivity of the Holy Spirit toward others' needs. And, "forgiving one another"—always live in a state that forgives everyone for everything they have done and may yet do to you.

Paul's instruction here is this: Live in an experiential state where you have so much kindness and so much love from God that you are

always forgiving others the very moment they do something against you, and even before they do. You live this way because you have a state of forgiveness already established through the forgiveness of God's tenderhearted kindness.

Do you realize that Jesus has already forgiven you for the sins you will commit tomorrow? He rests in His eternal state of forgiveness toward you. He is tenderhearted toward you, and He senses your need. He never wants to embarrass you. He never wants to frustrate you. He will never hurt or harm you.

Jesus Christ wants to build us up and edify us (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Corinthians 14:19). He wants to love us personally, and He wants to shed His love abroad in our hearts (1 Corinthians 13; Romans 5:5). Through that, He wants us to experience the perfect peace of Isaiah 26:3.

No Surprises for Christ

Jesus has an attitude of forgiveness toward us *all* the time—He must, or else He could not have fellowship with us since we still have an old sin nature. He knows we will sin so He continues in a state of forgiveness to keep fellowship with us.

Not a single thing we do takes Him by sur-

prise. Nothing we can do will alter Christ's character of forgiveness. There is not a single thing that Christ does not forgive the born-again Christian. We are saved, and He has expressed an eternal state of forgiveness toward us. He forgives and forgets all the time.

Certainly, our sin interrupts our fellowship with God if we refuse to repent. It grieves His Spirit and wounds His love so that He cannot fellowship with us until we deal with our willful sins. Nevertheless, He has already forgiven us, and He still lives in that eternal state toward us.

On Calvary, Christ said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Jesus interceded for all of us at that moment, and the Father said, "I will forgive them." In that prayer, Christ asked God to forgive us for everything that we are ever going to do. The Father responded by allowing His only begotten Son to die on Calvary. "Through You, my Son, and according to the shedding of Your blood, I will do that. I will eternally forgive them."

From Forgiveness to Revival

God's character of forgiveness will stand in our behalf for the rest of our lives. Today, Jesus Christ has forgiven me. Tomorrow, He has al-

ready forgiven me. Next week, He has already forgiven me. This is why I can love Him. This is why I can trust Him. This is why I can praise Him. Christ has expressed an "eternal is" state of forgiveness that includes forgetfulness toward my sin. If I sin—and I will sin—it will grieve Him and wound Him. But once I rebound, my fellowship with Him is instantly restored. The state of forgiveness in my relationship with Him is eternal and precious.

This eternal state of forgiveness is the mark of revival. Arevival reveals the Lord's mind, the Lord's kindness, the Lord's tenderheartedness, and the Lord's forgiveness. No one carries any grudges. No one bears resentment. No one harbors bitterness. No one worries about what the other one is doing. There is an eternal state of forgiveness and forgetfulness.

This is what God has toward us. And that is what He desires us to have toward one another.

CONCLUSION

Oh, if we could grasp the truth that God has an eternal provision of forgiveness! Before anyone does anything against me, I stand in God's eternal state of forgiveness toward him, so that when he does it, I have already forgiven him. And if he does it again, I can honestly and instantly forget it.

That is the Lord's attitude toward us, and we can do nothing more to others but what the Lord has done for us. It is the Lord's portion, and it was given to us so we can give it to others. This is a deep revelation.

If you are reading this and you have never been saved, then you must receive Christ in order to enter into this eternal state of forgiveness. Come as you are and receive Jesus into your heart. Invite Him to come into your life and He will do it. Then, you will experience His forgiveness forever.

If you are a Christian, enter into the Lord's

portion for you. Never take a single revelation of God for granted. Cherish everything you hear from His Word.

We can live in kindness. Pick out someone—a little child, an older person, a needy person—and express God's kindness toward him. Be tenderhearted and live in the eternal state of forgiveness. There, nothing anyone does will surprise you, because you are ready to forgive, to love, and to share God's tenderness and kindness.

Answers for Adversity

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

My father died when I was only three years old. Several difficult years later I heard the story of how he had signed a life insurance policy but had not submitted it for application. It stayed on his dresser for a number of weeks and then he died suddenly. There was our family of seven with no daddy and no insurance.

Now, that was some kind of adversity that our family had to face at that moment and for many years afterward. Those circumstances were not my fault. My father died and I had nothing to do with it. The struggles my family endured were not something we enjoyed, but they did teach us some things about character and hard work and how those things relate to getting ahead in life.

It wasn't until I came to know Jesus Christ nearly twenty years later that I really understood how to address that adversity. God showed me a new and living way. With cords of love, I

was drawn to His throne of grace, where I can find help in my times of need.

This booklet is about adversity and the answers we have for it. These answers come from the Word of God. When we receive that truth in the power of the Holy Spirit, it floods our souls with peace and life. My hope is that after reading this, you will be able to "be of good cheer" no matter what may come your way.

Chapter One
BE OF GOOD CHEER

"And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

"And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

"And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

"And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

"And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

"For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy

bed, and go unto thine house.

"And he arose, and departed to his house.

"But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men" (Matthew 9:1-8).

I have found it very interesting that the phrase "be of good cheer" appears seven times in the Bible. On every occasion, it is said when the adversity surrounding the situation is very, very bad. God did not say "be of good cheer" when times were good. No, He said it when times were not so good.

In Matthew 9, a man stricken with the palsy was brought to Jesus. The Lord recognized their faith and said to the man, "Son, be of good cheer." He had a terrible disease. He wasn't sure how his visit with Jesus would turn out, but the first words he got were these: "Son, be of good cheer."

In Matthew 14:24, a storm was raging on the Sea of Galilee, and the disciples who went with Jesus were in a panic. Then they saw Him walking toward them on the water. At first they thought that they were seeing a ghost. But then He spoke, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

Like the disciples in the boat, too many people allow adverse circumstances to control their

hearts. God has an answer for us in those situations, and it is "be of good cheer."

In John 16, Jesus explained to His disciples just how many things they would face as they went on in the call of God. "You will be scattered, and I will stand alone," He told them. "Expect tribulation, for you are not of this world." But then Jesus added this: "Be of good cheer; for I have overcome the world." Here, on the evening before He went to Calvary, Jesus proclaimed the ramifications of His crucifixion: the Finished Work victory! He knew what the Cross would accomplish despite the devil's plan to annihilate Him.

It Shall Be As It Was Told Me

"And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

"But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

"And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among

you, but of the ship.

"For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

"Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:20-25).

Paul's conviction was that everything would turn out just as God told him it would. Raging storms or raging demons were not going to deter the purpose of God, which was for Paul to get to Rome and share his faith.

There were problems for Paul in Jerusalem. He was wrongly accused, arrested, scourged, and targeted for death. It was a terrible time for him, but Christ stood by Paul and said, "Be of good cheer."

God never tells us that things are going to be "good." Never once does He say there will always be blessings. He does, however, tell us to be of good cheer. God has never commanded someone to do something that he cannot do. Behind everything that God tells us to do, there is His omnipotence. Divine power gives unto us all things that "pertain unto life and godliness"

(2 Peter 1:3). We have God's nature dwelling within us in the Person of the Holy Spirit. We have His knowledge. We have His presence.

Are you not sure how you are going to pay the rent? Be of good cheer and allow God to help your unbelief as you receive His Word. You may be in one of the lousiest marriages that ever existed. Be of good cheer and allow God to teach you His way in your wilderness.

Chapter Two
CONTENT IN ANY STATE

Paul's life reveals to us that behind every command of God is His provision and His peace. The joy God gives us, no man can take away, neither can any woman take it away. Elijah apparently didn't understand this truth too well. After being used by God to embarrass and destroy the prophets of the idol Baal (1 Kings 18), news came that Queen Jezebel was after him. Elijah took off and didn't stop running for a day (1 Kings 19).

Conditions can never control my mind. They can try. They can clamor for my attention. They can make a lot of noise in an effort to influence my decisions. But my will is my will, and I can exercise it to think with God. I can say to myself, "God has told me, 'Be of good cheer.'" As I think with God so am I. My decisions reveal the level of trust I have in God's integrity. The things I go through are allowed to reveal my heart toward

God's commandments.

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:11-13).

God has told me to be content in whatsoever state I am in. If I cannot be content, then either I am lying or God is lying. Numbers 23:19 says that God cannot lie, so the problem lies with me and with the content of my heart. I cannot be content without having content from the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Draw Near When in Need

When we are in need, that is when we most need church fellowship. In drawing near to the Body of Christ, I draw near to Christ Himself. Circumstances should not dictate my decision to participate in the local assembly. Instead, conviction and conversion should lead me to be more and more active as the day of the Lord

approaches. Time is short, the days are evil, and we must redeem the time God has given us.

Remember this: No man can take our joy from us. The peace we have is not like the world's peace. Projections may come at us from the world's atmosphere, but we do not have to give them a voice in our lives. We choose to hear the Voice that speaks to us from the pages of Scripture. We choose to allow the Holy Spirit to affect our decisions with His still, small voice in our hearts. That voice says to us, "Take the narrow way. Walk in it, and you will not fall into destruction."

Tribulation, sickness, storms. What is God's answer to us for these? "Be of good cheer." How can I be of good cheer when these things are happening? Accept God's Truth and refuse to be controlled by circumstances. I cannot enjoy the faith of divine providence when I am living in circumstances or feelings. I need to believe God's promises.

Chapter Three
CONFESS VICTORY

I can remember a time during a prayer meeting when pain just kept trying to get the best of me. I refused to confess that pain. The devil was not going to stop me from entering into prayer and worship with God.

Satan tries to bully believers with circumstances. It is just like the killer who roamed around our area a couple of years ago. He enjoyed terrorizing the people in and around Washington, D.C. But once he was caught and did not have his gun anymore, he was begging for people to understand why he was doing what he was doing. He was a bully until he lost his advantage.

When bullies face a challenge, they back down. When we stand up and resist Satan, he flees from us. He is desperate to avoid being caught in his lies. We simply need to make sure that our minds remain focused and objective to-

ward God.

That will give us God's peace.

Beat Back the Bully

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor-

inthians 15:51-58).

Death is the great tool that Satan tries to use against us. So many troubles and frustrations are directly related to the fear of death—but that fear has been conquered. That very real enemy has been defeated. The Cross did that for us. Resurrection revealed and validated the completeness and totality of Jesus' victory over death.

There has never been a time when the believer has lost a battle. Our victories may be delayed, but we don't lose battles because God always causes us to triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14). That is His promise to us.

Physics studies have shown that every word that is spoken creates an impression that affects the universe. It is sort of like dropping a pebble in a pond. The rock goes splash and the ripples go out. We speak, and we create ripples—vibrations that radiate out from our words, and these vibrations continue on and on through space and time.

As believers, we should cultivate positive vibrations, positive waves of faith that promote, produce, and magnify God's wisdom. The more I amplify the promises of God, the more life will come as a result of my faith.

This is the fruit of righteousness (Philippians 1:11; Hebrews 12:11). We are experiencing the bottom line of God's character. We possess a positive and absolute certainty that all the battles—even the battle against death itself—have been won for us.

CONCLUSION

"At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

"Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.

"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

"Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry" (Jeremiah 31:1-4).

God addresses our problems in four ways:

First, He says be of good cheer.

Second, He tells us to be content in whatsoever state we are in.

Third, He gives us joy that can never be taken away from us.

And, fourth, He gives us peace that surpasses all understanding to establish our hearts.

This is how we find grace in the wilderness.

What are you looking for in your wilderness? Do you only see more pain, or do you see abundant grace? God will supply grace that is more than sufficient to meet every one of your needs.

What will it be—God's provision, or your problem? You have the answers. They are in your Bible. Choose the provisions from the promises of His Word.

Great attacks and suffocating circumstances may come at you. But through those things, expect God to bring in a new understanding of Himself. Answer adversity by choosing to live by faith in the Son of God. Rest in His victory and let Him joy over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

Are You Married

to Your Wounds?

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

People leave churches for a variety of reasons, many of which they are willing to openly express. Often, people go away simply because they received the grace of God in vain—and they don't even discern what they are doing.

They hear the Scriptures, but instead of growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, they leave. They refuse to stand in grace. As a result, they cannot cultivate an access to God and rejoice in the hope of His glory. So, they marry the wounds that reside in their unconscious minds. Those wounds begin to control their experiences, because Satan has damaged their capacity for God.

This booklet presents fresh thoughts in an eternal context on the subject of wounds. Where one bad experience or bad decision will cause a bruise, repeated acts will cause a wound. Here, we will show that these wounds can be mollified—but only with the oil of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter One

FIGHTING FAMILIARITY

"Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isaiah 1:5-6).

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

As Christians, we can experience spiritual joy in our emotions, which causes our present experience to equal our eternal position. How is that possible? It comes as we are Spirit-taught. When we hear the Word of God with sanctified ears (ears that are accountable to heaven), using opportunities of grace, we will be Spirit-taught.

A Spirit-taught person doesn't have "bad" spiritual days. He confesses his failure in an instant, so the moment does not become a minute, an hour, and then a day. The negative effects of failure don't carry over, accumulating sores that become wounds. Instead, the Spirit-taught believer keeps growing in grace.

The Progression of the Opposition

Though we always need to grow, we grow in grace. Even failure becomes an opportunity for grace to meet us as we progress in our Christian walk. But standing against our progression to such joy is Satan, the thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy.

The Greek word for "steal" is *klepto*, and it speaks of embezzlement, which in this case is the misappropriation of truth to the conscience, where the norms and standards of the soul are weighed. The devil seeks to cheat us out of our capacity by getting us to live in self-consciousness and not God-consciousness.

The Greek word for "kill" is *thuo*. Satan wants more than just to steal. In fact, he aims to kill our capacities by rendering them lifeless. We end up sacrificing spiritual privileges to fulfill our flesh by entering into pleasure apart from God.

Satan, however, is not satisfied with murdering our capacity. He knows that God has a way of resurrecting things that have died. Therefore, he seeks to "destroy" (*appolumi* in the Greek), to annihilate the thing he killed so it can never be restored—to completely destroy the believer's walk with God.

Familiarity: The Key to Destruction

As a thief, the devil comes to cheat your capacity. You may even attend services but you fail to receive a blessing because you are fellowshipping with a thief. He is trying to get your flesh to kill the things of God as you live in Adam on the broad road to destruction.

A person on the road to destruction seeks to save his life in order to have the unlimited privileges of the broad road, though those privileges come with a great price. The key that Satan uses to gain entrance to his capacity is familiarity.

Satan can only deceive minds that have become familiar with what God sees as rare, holy, and set apart for His use alone. Familiarity enters in where holiness has been stolen and eternal purpose has been destroyed, because the Cross (which represents the devil's defeat once and for all) has been nullified in our experience.

Capacities Attacked in the Nervous System

Satan attacks capacities through the natural process of the human psyche as it is attached to the central nervous system of the body. This system controls the mind (conscious and subconscious) and the body, as millions of nerve cells (ganglia) respond to the billions of vibrations we encounter every moment of our lives.

Satan attempts to regulate these vibrations in an effort to see that we become attached or "married" to the old sin nature and to the wounds festering in our unconscious mind. Spirit-taught believers may be broken yet they live in amazing revival. But people who are married to their wounds from the past do not hear the Word that was sent to heal them (Psalm 107:20; Matthew 4:23).

By responding to Satan's lies, people have been supernaturally damaged, yet they blame someone on earth for their wounds. Try as they might, they cannot find release. But Scripture says that we wrestle *not* against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers in the satanic atmosphere (Ephesians 6:12).

Spiritual Sleepwalkers

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is

high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Romans 13:11-12).

Believers who are married to their wounds are living in "somnambulism" or spiritual sleep-walking. The wounds of the unconscious mind have worked their way into the conscious mind, causing them to be numb to God and to the Word. The result is confusion and projections of guilt and insecurity that come from living in Satan's lies. When this happens to a woman, she may easily start to cry or to become jealous. A man may fall into depression, anger, and jealousy. The sad thing is that it all began with allowing the sacred to become familiar.

When it is allowed to enter the scene, familiarity hurts children and destroys families. One of the great sins today is with those who say, "I will not submit to a man's authority," even if that authority comes from God. Some parents don't honor God and speak against other believers, and then they wonder why the children start rebelling against Him.

But in spite of his attacks, the subtlety of the

devil, who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy, is defeated by humble men and women who also believe that Jesus came to give life more abundantly (John 10:10*b*). They choose to be filled with the Spirit as they walk by faith, moment to moment.

Chapter Two

CHOICES THAT LEAD TO THE ENEMY'S DEFEAT

"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12).

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

"And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

"*Looking diligently* lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

"For ye know how that afterward, when he

would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Hebrews 12:12-17).

"Looking diligently" in Hebrews 12:15 is *episkopeo* in the Greek text. This speaks of guarding our hearts on purpose, and making choices so that a root of bitterness does not spring up.

Who Is the Issue?

Esau made certain choices and ended up forfeiting what belonged to him by birthright. He was rejected because he was familiar with God, with Isaac his father, with Rebecca his mother, and with Jacob his brother. The thief came in and stole his purpose from him. His capacity for God was robbed, then killed, and ultimately destroyed. He never did get saved but tried to lie his way through, spiritually speaking. Esau was rejected because he lived for himself and made his own life the issue.

Likewise, when challenged with the truth of the Gospel, many people make their own lives the issue. Not wanting to let go of temporal pleasures, they choose to live for themselves instead of getting to know Jesus Christ personally.

Occasionally we hear of Christians who just

get up and decide to leave their local church. Their church preaches the Gospel, but Satan starts a conspiracy in their hearts that begins with whispers, then voices. Even though God is blessing that church, they leave and stop the experiential blessings of grace for themselves and their families. They are still under God's grace, but the blessings of that grace they cannot receive. Too often, ministries get the blame when the reality is that those people personally failed the grace of God and received it in vain.

Psalm 55:19 says that affliction comes to those who do not change. There is never a change in their lives pertaining to grace. They do not receive a provision of grace for their need. They have no reverence for God's grace, so they are afflicted. They reap what they have sown in their lives.

More churches have been destroyed through familiarity than through any other means. Familiar people have been robbed and cheated by the great thief, Satan. Their capacities for God have been destroyed.

Some say, "I don't feel the same about God."

Many of us would agree that if we lived by our feelings, we would have quit long ago. That is why I have developed a plan to deal with my

feelings when they try to counsel me. I have names for my feelings—Frustration, Resentment, Depression, and so on. I identify negative feelings and I speak out against them with the Word of God. That way, they can never control me.

By having faith in the living God, I can feel truly blessed.

God Consciousness: Everything Is New

The Spirit-taught Christian hears messages and is conscious only of what God is doing and not of what is going on around him. When he hears his pastor preach about the grace and mercy that paid all his debt and the Blood that wipes out every trace of a mark, it is as if he had never heard a Finished Work message before. This is true in the sense that every day is new. When we get up in the morning and must face a world filled with its problems and satanic attacks, we must make brand-new decisions as we are hid in Christ and His Word. Unless we allow God to bring renewal in the mind, unless we continue to see everything as new, then we will just become proud knowledge-seekers.

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of

man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).

Chapter Three

SPIRIT-TAUGHT IN THE FINISHED WORK

"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

"(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

"Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

"But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

"In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

"By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy [Spirit], by love unfeigned,

"By the word of truth, by the power of God,

by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

"By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

"As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

"As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

"O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

"Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels" (2 Corinthians 6:1-12).

Every word of Scripture is brand-new. What I hear in Christ today is something I never knew before today. I hear the Word and I am enraptured—caught up—and I become conscious only of what God is doing, not of what is going on around me.

The Spirit-taught believer is not self-conscious as he is being taught. He is only God-conscious, being transformed and conformed to Christ's image moment by moment.

When Paul says, "I beseech you that you receive not the grace of God in vain," in 2 Corinthians 6:1, he is saying that we must go from

theology to reality. We must take what we have heard and experience it. We must let what we hear cross over into our lifestyle.

Some will judge others who have sinned, though they are covered in the process by the New Covenant, in the plan of restoration (1 Corinthians 2:15). But a Finished Work Christian cannot be judged. He has passed from death unto life. Yes, he is accountable and he is to be restored through true repentance—but never judged. Judgment was passed on him once and for all at the Cross. By faith, he and we now stand as co-laborers together with God.

Obedience Brings Blessings

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:36-38).

"And the LORD passed by before him, and

proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

"Judge not and you shall not be judged." What is God talking about? He is talking about grace and mercy. Grace is God giving us blessings that we don't deserve, and mercy is God withholding penalties that we do deserve. God shakes together all of our obedience, then He brings men and women to us who will bless us the way we bless others. This is a mystical act of sowing and reaping love.

That is the sad thing about Esau: He sowed the wrong things. He never really turned to God, who loved him when he couldn't find a place for repentance (Hebrews 12:17), though he cried and cried. God had paid for everything Esau had done, yet Esau never got to know that place of love. Still, Esau was responsible because his father Isaac had taught these principles to him. Rebekah made mistakes, but she also taught Esau about the love of God. He didn't pay attention to what he heard, so it wasn't real for him when he needed it.

Esau's familiarity with what he was taught was what destroyed him. He was married to his wants and wounds and would not let love release

him. Love takes care of sin and even takes away the desire for sin so quickly, making us hungry for more righteousness.

Humble Hearts Find Forgiveness

"And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

"I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).

The publican was everything that the Pharisee said he was—a fornicator and a crook—however, he wanted a change. He would not

even look up to heaven. He didn't dare to come near the altar. He felt too guilty to even look up toward heaven. All he could say was, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

The Pharisee, on the other hand, was a man married to his religious unconscious mind. He ran down the list of what he had done for God. He fasted twice a week, and probably more than made up for it the rest of the week. But this man could only congratulate himself. He was not free; he was married to his wounds of legalism.

Now, picture what God did in the publican's heart. The Lord totally set him free. The Holy Spirit let this man know that he was completely forgiven. The thief, the murderer, the destroyer no longer had a hold on him. The Life Giver, Jesus Christ, filled him to overflowing eternal love that removed every trace of old wounds.

CONCLUSION

If you have captured this message with an understanding heart, you realize that no matter how intense the battle, you don't have to faint. You are receiving the grace of God and growing in the Person of Grace. You cannot fail it even when you fail. Failure is not failing grace; failure is making wrong decisions about something that has already been paid for.

In 1 Chronicles 28:9, God declared to Solomon that He searches the heart to find what causes people to live in their wounds and marry their unconscious problems. God knows why people act the way they do. He searches all the understandings of the heart, and He recognizes every imagination of every thought of every man.

God knows the wounds we are clinging to, and He is trying to show us how we can be free from them. We have to recognize our need for His grace. Grace does not force itself or its pro-

vision into our experience. It is something we must receive by faith. Then, no matter what kind of assault comes against us to rob, kill, and destroy our joy, abundant life will be our reality day after day.

Are You

Spirit-Taught?

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INTRODUCTION

"Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28).

One of the greatest needs of our day is to learn how to be taught by the Holy Spirit. In John 8:28, Jesus said He spoke only what the Father taught Him. In His humanity, He would not communicate outside of the Father's doctrine. In my years as a pastor, I have watched people stumble at this simple truth. Jesus taught only what He was taught by the Father through the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit can only bring to our remembrance what we have been taught by Him.

There is a way to go and it's very clear. The disciple who is being taught is not above his Master, Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:24-25). The ser-

vant is not above his Lord. In God's plan, the disciple will be treated the same way that his Lord was treated. If Jesus, who was perfect, was called Beelzebub, the prince of demons, how much more will be said against us? If we are not Spirit-taught, we won't be led in the way we are to go. As a result, the challenges we face will cause us to be distracted from Him.

God wants to teach us by the Spirit so that we can be more than conquerors, overcomers in this life. Spirit-taught people will have a greater impact upon this nation than any other group of people. They can, by their obedience to the Word of God, literally help to restrain judgment upon America. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10). For our nation, our churches, and our families, it is more important than ever that Christians learn how to listen and to be taught by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter One

NOT AS THE HORSE, OR AS THE MULE

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee" (Psalm 32:8-9).

I want you to notice the crucial principle contained in these verses. It is very important that a believer listen every time the Word of God is spoken and do exactly as it says; he should not let his mind wander. "I will guide thee with mine eye," the Bible tells us. This is the Holy Spirit saying that He will guide the believer with His divine perception.

"Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding."

The Hebrew text speaks of a horse that has

been trained over and over again but cannot be controlled by its owner. The mule speaks of stubbornness and a lack of experience with its owner. Similarly, many believers have no understanding because of rebellion, stubbornness, and a lack of personal appropriation of their training in the Word of God.

"Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle…." The rebellious horse will not do anything unless it is forced to by its master. "… Lest they come near unto thee." Some Christians will always be in a state where God is using situations and circumstances to bridle them. It doesn't have to be this way! God has promised to teach His people in the way which they should go, guiding them with divine perception, divine awareness, divine knowledge, and divine information by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Distraction and Blasphemy

"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy [Spirit] shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven

him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy [Spirit], it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matthew 12:30-32).

Take everything that comes from the Word of God as it really is. The Bible says it's all inspired, in 2 Timothy 3:16. Those who speak from the Scriptures and about them aren't necessarily inspired, but the Word of God in itself is totally inspired.

In the particular context of Matthew 12:30-32, *blasphemy* implies distraction. Sooner or later, those who have been distracted (pertaining to Christ and His Body), will scatter with their words of analysis about a church. Those who speak against the Body are distracted from doctrine and distracted from Jesus Christ, and they are blaspheming Christ. They can be forgiven at any instant, but, for the moment, they are against Him. Thousands of Christians do not understand that they are living in blasphemy against the Word of God because they have never been thoroughly Holy Spirit-taught with doctrine.

During Jesus Christ's time on earth, there were multitudes of people who said they were not against Him. They said, "We're not fighting Him! We're not repudiating Him in any way."

As Jesus illustrated, this wasn't enough: "He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." In other words, a Christian who is not constantly gathering with Jesus Christ is not *for* Jesus Christ. He may not do anything by word or deed that seems to go against Jesus Christ. He may even be saved and going to heaven, but he is against Jesus Christ.

In verses 31 and 32 of this passage, Jesus speaks of the two categories of people who do the scattering: one is outside the church, and the other is inside the church. The one who commits blasphemy against the Spirit is the unsaved person who rejects Christ. Then, in verse 32, "whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man" is someone inside a church who goes against His Body.

The Bible teaches that, as Christians, each of us is a member of His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). We have been joined together with Him in one spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17) and, therefore, all believers throughout the world make up the one new man of Ephesians 2:15. To speak against any one of God's people, whatever weaknesses he may display, is to blaspheme Jesus Christ's wisdom and Jesus Christ's understanding. It is a violation of Romans 14:1—"Him

that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

Avoid Ungodly Counsel

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psalm 1:1).

The believer who avoids ungodly counsel and scornful words will be blessed. The Holy Spirit will instruct him in the way that he should go. This person will be guided by God's divine understanding. He is not like the rebellious horse, unable to be trained, nor as the stubborn mule. Multitudes of Christians go to churches for years, but when pressures and trials arise, as God said they would (John 15:18; Luke 6:22, 26), they still do not know how to be Spirit-taught.

Chapter Two

THREE WAYS THE SPIRIT TEACHES US

"… Hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom" (Job 33:33).

I would like to bring out the three meanings of the word *teach*. First, it means *academic concentration* under the instruction of a pastor-teacher in a local church. In Proverbs 1:4, in the original Hebrew, *discretion* implies keen perception through concentration. Academic concentration means a believer is to have a single eye in human perception.

The pastor should offer more than just good messages. He must teach the whole counsel of God, based on the Finished Work of Christ. He teaches not only categorical doctrine but also governmental doctrine, meaning the believer is taught how to live in the Father's plan, in the character of the Son's execution, and in the attributes of the Holy Spirit's revelation and illu-

mination of the Word of God. This practice helps the mind of Christ to be formed in the believer.

The second meaning of *teach* is *academic discipline* toward the pulpit's communication. Whenever humanly possible, the believer comes to hear doctrine when it is being taught. He does everything in his power to take advantage of the classroom of opportunity, "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21).

"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Hebrews 12:4-7).

Thirdly, as the above passage shows, God teaches through *chastisement*. This is not something to be considered hard and ugly. Chastisement is to be thought of as something that produces peaceable fruit of righteousness after it's been experienced (Hebrews 12:11). I don't think a parent considers the discipline he places

upon his child as an unkind thing. No, this kind of chastisement is necessary to bring brokenness and meekness into a child's life.

The Fear of God

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD" (Psalm 34:11).

"And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things" (Psalm 45:4).

God wants to teach us terrible things! These aren't bad things. *Terrible* speaks of the awesome power of Christ. These are the things that lead to the reverential fear of the Lord. The world has seen nations crumble, but many still refuse to see Christ as the King of the nations (Jeremiah 10:7). History comes and goes, but He is not honored as the controller of history. Why? People refuse to be taught. There is no way to find God's way unless He is allowed to teach us with knowledge in concentration and academic discipline.

Lessons of Faith

"Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.… Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way" (Psalm 25:4, 8).

Many people refuse to be taught lessons of faith when they don't understand God's plan beyond what they can see. Psalm 25:8 tells us that when we did not know Him, He taught us and led us in the way. It was a lesson of faith taking us beyond sight. Jesus said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," and many disciples went back and followed Him no more (John 6:53-66). Those who went back would not go beyond what they perceived with their senses. They trusted only what they saw and felt in their emotions and minds.

"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God" (Isaiah 50:10). When we walk in darkness and have no light, we are to keep our minds stayed upon Him. Very few Christians have allowed themselves to be taught how to do this. If the average church today went through a trial, the majority of its members would leave almost instantly. They don't know how to walk in darkness and still trust in the name of the Lord. After they have departed, they will tell others, "Watch that church over there." Words of unbelief and

evil will come out of their mouths. There will be murmuring and complaining.

People get alone in dark corners because they have never been Spirit-taught. They do not know how to apply knowledge through faith in the midst of darkness, and they don't have the power to walk in a faith that works by love (Galatians 5:6).

Chapter Three

THE FRUIT OF BEING SPIRIT-TAUGHT

When I step outside of God's teaching, I am living in the knowledge of the flesh and the experience of my emotions. It is then that God treats me as a rebellious horse or a stubborn mule. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6a). I may have an intellectual understanding of Truth, but I lack the Spirit-taught doctrine that goes beyond sight.

Colossians 2:7 says that as we have been taught, we are to abound in thanksgiving. The praise and thanks we give to God must be according to teaching, not according to our emotions. Everything comes down to teaching.

Notice this, in 1 Thessalonians 4:9: "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." Only God can teach us how to love. No one else can do this.

The Spirit-taught Christian is the Christian who is always comforted. Amy Carmichael, lifelong missionary to India, wrote that to be comforted means to be strengthened by God's indwelling illuminations at all times. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3). God has given His written Word "that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

Meekness: A Necessity

"The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Psalm 25:9).

No one is Spirit-taught unless he is meek, living the words of 1 Corinthians 13, the great 'love' chapter. A person may be knowledge-taught, yet not Spirit-taught. The meek believer thinks no evil. He believes all things. He rejoices not in iniquity, but in Truth. He bears all things and hopes all things. He edifies with every word he speaks. This is a meek person, one who has been taught by God.

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

God's way is to bring every believer to Calvary so that we might learn meekness. Do you know why we get offended? Because we are not meek. Do you know why we get our feelings hurt? Because they are not crucified. Do you know why we worry? Because we live in natural faith. We worry when this type of faith doesn't fulfill us by sight. Each of us needs to be taken the way of the Cross to be broken with God's meekness.

Spirit-Taught to Teach Others

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works" (Psalm 71:17).

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

God is always ready to teach us. We need to be taught to number our days. He wants to teach us how to follow the way to the Cross in order to find meekness. He wants to teach us how to deliver our own soul and be equipped to

teach others. Teaching comes with concentration, with academic discipline, and with chastisement through love and grace.

There are multitudes of Christians who leave a ministry when it goes through a difficult trial. They have never been Spirit-taught. They don't understand Calvary, nor the way they should go.

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts" (Isaiah 28:9). God will teach us knowledge if He can wean us from depending upon the "mother's breast."

"Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes" (Psalm 119:65-68). Verse 66 of Psalm 119 says "teach me good judgment and knowledge," but the original Hebrew reads "teach me lovingkindness," meaning He wants to give us the contract of grace and the covenant of mercy. Through afflictions, the Psalmist writes that he was taught that God will always treat him according to His word of love. This all comes through teaching.

It's more than just listening. These things must be taught to us by the Spirit of God.

Ceasing Not to Teach

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42).

"Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets" (Luke 13:26).

The Apostles ceased not to teach 'Jesus'. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "I am determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." These verses are considered outdated by some Christians today. We must not cease to teach, even in the streets. Street preaching may not be popular, but neither was Jesus—and He was a street preacher. He taught people in the streets.

If people are going to hell, if people are wounded and hurt and sick, we have to try to help them no matter where we have to go. The way has been established, the mandate is clear. Let's continually be taught by the Holy Spirit so we can go forward, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching with confidence the way of the Lord (Acts 28:31).

CONCLUSION

The meek will He teach, the humble will hear Him. As you have been taught in the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in Him (Ephesians 4:21, Colossians 2:6-7). There has never been a time when it has been more necessary for Christians to really be taught by the Spirit of God. We cannot afford to sit in the counsel of any ungodliness.

My prayer to the Father is this: Teach me, teach me, teach me! in grace and in love. Only the Spirit-taught Christian will go in God's way, the narrow way of Calvary, which means often walking in darkness, many times without *any* light. That Christian will make right decisions according to the Word, even when things are beyond his understanding, and he will go forward because he is after God with all of his heart.

Arrested by Love

Pastor Steven Scibelli is a graduate of Stevens School of the Bible. In 1988, he led a team that included his wife, Linda; their two children, Lysa and Peter; and twelve others to Ghana, West Africa. Today, Greater Grace World Outreach in Africa has expanded to 107 churches in North, South, East and West Africa.

Staying true to the vision to spread the Gospel and to make disciples of men in the uttermost parts of the world, Pastor Scibelli has ministered in more than 20 African countries and 50 other countries over the last 20 years.

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INTRODUCTION

Can you imagine the things that King Solomon was a prisoner to? If you read Ecclesiastes chapters 1 and chapter 2, seven times Solomon says something about the great things he had. He had great possessions. He had great authority and power. He had so many great things.

In chapter 2, verse 9, he said, "I was great. I was great." And there were seven "greats." Great knowledge, great wisdom, great, great, great, great, great. But then, in chapter 2 verse 17, he says, "I hated life." Imagine that! This man who was so great said, "I hate life."

There is nothing more you can want than what Solomon had, and he wound up saying, "I hate life." You know why? He became a prisoner to the thing he desired. He realized that those very things could not fulfill him, and he came to the complete end of himself.

Of all the men on the face of the earth, no one had more than he had—possessions, power,

authority, kingship, wisdom, knowledge, and a heritage. He had everything any person could ever desire, yet he said, "I hate life," because those things were apart from Jesus Christ. Eventually, he realized that the simplest individual who is a prisoner of the Lord will be absolutely free. In Song of Solomon 8:6, Solomon said to God, "I want to be a seal on Your heart and on Your arm—Your nature and Your work. I want my relationship with You to be so unique that I'm set as a "seal," as a permanent setting, an eternal seal on the heart and on the arm of God.

Solomon knew that no matter what he had done in his life God loved him, and was still able to place him under arrest, placing him in the love of God. After he discovered that everything this world had to offer was altogether vanity, Solomon was ready to be captured. He was absolutely ready to be arrested by the love of God. Before he came to that place, Solomon was a prisoner to his possessions, to his lifestyle, and to his position. But, as you will see in this booklet, once he was arrested by real love, by the love of God, Solomon was finally, totally, and forever free.

Chapter One

WHAT'S YOUR PRISON?

"So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in the bitterness, in the heat of my spirit, but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

"Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished [(or, in the Hebrew, overwhelmed)] among them seven days" (Ezekiel 3:14-15).

Something extraordinary happened to Ezekiel the prophet here. He wasn't really so keen about the call of God. He wasn't really happy or encouraged. He was not in the place at all where he even wanted to see this happen. But, at a point in time, something changed him.

He was angry, and he was thinking, "I have to go speak to a people who, I happen to know, are stiffnecked, rebellious, stubborn, and don't even want to listen. I'm thinking about the re-

sults, and that maybe there's something else I could be doing at this particular point in my life."

But as he sat where they sat, he became overwhelmed. And I believe that is when he received from God, God's heart for these people. That is so vitally important.

I was reading a story today about a man in a Communist prison. He wasn't sure whether he would be getting life imprisonment or a death sentence. So he went to court and came back, and all the prisoners were there, and he came back beaming, smiling as if he saw a judge who said, "You're going to go free."

And they said, "What's the good news? What's the good news?"

He said, "Today, I go to see Jesus. I'm going to meet Jesus!" He was so enraptured with the thought of going to see Jesus Christ. He had been given the sentence of death, but that did not control his emotions or his thinking or his decisions. He was a prisoner arrested by God's love.

Prison Did Not Define Paul

So many epistles were written from prison. And you could think of Paul being in situations

in prison (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 2 Timothy). You can see time and time again that the man never stopped speaking about *agape* love. Literally, it was not the prison cell that controlled him. The prison cell was not his domain. The prison cell did not define his existence or his future. He had been arrested by the love of God and controlled by God's love.

I worked in a prison for ten years. (I didn't say I lived in one! although I've been in jail about seven or eight times.) I worked with murderers, and whenever we had to take them out of their cells to eat or to use the bathroom, they were chained ankle to ankle, and they do what they call the "duck walk." In that condition, there is really very little they can do, as far as freedom of walking. You could look at that and say, "Wow, what an existence!" Yes, they're getting what they deserve, as far as their sentence for their crime. But you know, we have such freedom in our walk with God! And we have been so arrested by the love of God.

Agape Love Opens a Heart

How is the life of an individual changed? I was thinking about the woman in Luke 7. In that scene, Jesus said to the Pharisee, "I came into

your house, Simon. You didn't give Me any water to wash my feet. You didn't anoint Me. You didn't kiss Me with any kisses at all. But this woman—this woman has used her tears to wash My feet and she wiped them with the hair upon her head. She has anointed My feet with oil. And do you know why she's done this? Because the one who has been forgiven much loveth much."

In other words, she was so overwhelmed by *agape* love—the pure, unconditional, love of God—that it controlled the decisions she would make, even with regards to whoever was in the room. Who knows what kind of murmuring was going on there. "Well, does He know what kind of a woman this is? We know her reputation." Nobody was giving her a chance at all, but this woman was completely controlled by *agape* love. That is what makes the difference.

How many times are we controlled by situations? I can literally let situations dominate me, and—whether they be my past or present circumstances, my desire and thoughts about the future, my anxieties and fears, a trial or a test, a family situation, a marriage, a financial situation, a medical problem—those situations become a controlling factor and dominating

influence of my life and my will. I become a prisoner to situation rather than being a prisoner to *agape* love.

When we are prisoners to *agape* love, we are absolutely free.

Chapter Two

THE BOLDNESS OF LOVE

In Ghana, I once preached at the funeral of man who was a Jehovah's Witness, and I talked about "the issues of death belong to God" (Psalm 68:20). I got a report later that the mother of that man came to church and said she will never go back to the Jehovah's Witness's again.

She said, "Fifty years—and it's over." You know what happened? She heard a message on *agape* love. Pastor John and Pastor Ben in Ghana ministered to her, and the love of God penetrated her soul and set her free from fifty years of deception. She is on the right watchtower right now, watching God love her.

The love of Christ constrains us, holds us in on every side, and prohibits us from considering any other purpose in life. So many things pop into my brain about what I'd "like" to do. I think about them for a second and then cast them out, because I am totally controlled by *agape* love. I

have been arrested by the love of God.

How could Amy Carmichael spend twenty years in bed because of a debilitating disease, and yet she could write books on God, God's nature, God's character, and God's love? Rather than being a prisoner to that bed, she was a prisoner to *agape* love. She was arrested by the love of God.

One time we were taken into custody and brought up to the Jordanian secret intelligence headquarters in the mountains. It was fun, actually! This guy was interrogating me, and I said, "Does Allah really love you?" At that point you get up and take a shot, right? You could be trembling in fear, sweating under your armpits, wondering whether you were going to see your precious wife and kids and the church ever again. Instead, I just thought, "I'm going for this one."

"Does Allah really love you, sir?"

He said, "I'm asking you what your mother's name is and what your father's name is. I'm doing this whole long documentation on you. Be quiet."

I said, "Can I just say one thing?"

He said, "What is it?"

I said, "Does Allah really love you?"

He said, "You asked that again, and I'm not interested in explaining anything about that!"

I said, "I would just like to know, number one, Who is Allah? And number two, Does he love you? You! Does Allah love you right now?"

He said, "You're a very interesting person."

I said, "At my point in life it doesn't really matter what's going on. I know that Jesus loves me. And, by the way, I'm going to tell you that Jesus is Allah anyway. Jesus is God, in the Arabic, and He really cares about you."

He says, "I've heard that message once before from somebody else like you."

I said, "You think that you have me as a prisoner, but you are mine. You are my prisoner. And this initiation of God's love can make a difference in your life."

This man had to let me go because he thought I was insane. I was not insane. I was constrained by God's love. How many people are in prison to their emotions, to their physical inabilities? "I wish I could do that. I wish I could go here. I'm thinking about all the obstacles." We can begin to be dictated to by our natural abilities instead of being arrested by God's love.

Do you know what you and I can do? Do you know what this church can do in all the world? Have you any idea? It is amazing, the potential impact of our lives. We have people who have brought the message of grace and the Finished Work and unconditional love into all the world. This one's preaching on it in India. That one's preaching on it in Brazil. Others are preaching on it in the United States in different cities and different churches. That happens because people have literally been confined, controlled, and held in by *agape* love.

That is what a church is all about. That's what a Bible college is all about. Can you imagine a Bible school where people learn only knowledge and academics but never hear the height, the depth, the length, and the breadth of God's love? They may have the Greek inside out, the Hebrew inside out. Well, they need to be turned inside out by *agape* love. They may have all the academics. There's nothing wrong with that. We need to learn. But I think the Bible says in Ephesians 3:19, "Love passes knowledge." We could all know a lot more.

How many of you sense that the devil

knows a lot? He does. He probably can tell you a lot about the Bible. He quoted the Bible to Jesus. He couldn't quote love, because it is not in his nature and character.

We want a Bible college where students come up with knowledge of the character and nature of God. They know categorical doctrine. They think with God. Yet, there is so much love and *agape* love in their hearts. By the way, it is never a love disconnected from truth. It is not one of these wishy-washy, "I love you! I love you! I love you!" deals. First Peter 1:22 tells us that we ought to have "unfeigned and fervent love." The Greek word is *anupkritos*, and it means "genuine, sure, and sincere love"—love connected to truth. Love that is disconnected from truth is just an emotional response to another kingdom or the flesh. You know what "fervent" means? It means "hot." Unfeigned love is not lukewarm, laid-back and passive. It is hot, active, ready to go.

The Passion of Agape

Agape love is aggressive. It goes after souls. It goes after relationships, to mend them and restore them. It is initiating all the time. Peter said, "This is the kind of love Jesus had towards me.

I'm going to cut a man's ear off. I'm going to have six full denials of the Lord. But you know what? Jesus Christ loved me with unfeigned and fervent love. He initiated that towards me, and it changed my life. It took me from being a denier, a person who would run away—a prisoner to 'Simon' (my old identity)—to being Peter. I was a prisoner to my past, a prisoner to my Galilean inability, a prisoner to my lack of education, a prisoner to my insecurity, a prisoner to my prejudice. But *agape* love took me way beyond that, because it controlled me. I was arrested by the love of God."

What about heroin addiction? People just need to become arrested by God's love. Alcoholism? Is that your problem? Just get arrested by God's love.

There is no lust pattern that can control any person's life—I don't care who you are—because the opposite of lust is *agape* love. Are you with me? Lust is *epithumia*—that which is on my mind. What is on my mind? Anxious? Anxiety-lust. Afraid? Fear-lust. Insecure? Insecurity-lust. Lust is that which is upon the mind, controlling the mind. But when *agape* love and truth is on the mind, it delivers a person like me or you from any lust that would try to control our lives.

Chapter Three

A MESSAGE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

I've been arrested by God's love. This is awesome. That's the message that has made a big difference around the world. That's the message we preach in Africa. That's the message we penetrate villages with. We go into villages where people worship trees, rocks, snakes, dogs, cats. It's like an animal farm. We go into those places and bring them this message, and, all of a sudden, love comes in and begins to control people. We have a church in a place where they worship the trees, and now there's a Greater Grace Church, a Bible college, and a Christian school in that village where the Gospel had never before been preached. Hallelujah! It was because of you—because of Jesus Christ in you.

We want to have Christian schools where young people are controlled by *agape* love and not controlled by desires to be like the world.

Like the world? Why would anyone want to be like the devil?

I can just hear someone saying, "You shouldn't say that."

Well, I just did.

I want to have Jesus Christ in my life. We have Christian schools around the world where young people are taught the character and nature of God. Someone can give them all the academic brains. I went to five universities and have three or four university degrees, and I became the cause of the devil. Sorry. It's just me. I'm not saying you shouldn't go to school. Don't take me out of context.

I'm talking about Bible schools, Christian schools, Christian education programs that bring kids off the buses and from the neighborhood, and they are baptized into God's love. People get to drink of the cup of God's love. Love goes into them by the Holy Spirit, and then they are placed in the love of God and the Body of Christ. Before you know it, they have been arrested by God's love.

Love Changes Men

How did Joseph make it for ninety-five years in Egypt? You want to know how? He was loved

specially by his father (Genesis 37:1-3). He received the love of God and was able to forgive his brothers, even when they sold him. "God sent me to save many people alive."

What about Moses? What do you think God does with a man who murders somebody and then digs the hole and hides the body in the sand? How do you change his life? He's been under the control of thinking he's a deliverer, but without God, and all of a sudden God comes in and loves him unconditionally and arrests Moses.

"You're under arrest, Moses. I'm placing you under arrest. You have a right to remain silent, and anything you say will be used against you."

I've heard that too many times. I've got that thing memorized. That's sad, isn't it? "You have a right to remain silent and whatever you say can and may be used against you in a court of law." I was arrested in my pajamas one time. I was about ten years old. My mother was in shock. I started early.

Arrested!

Moses, you have been controlled by the thought that you are the deliverer, but you are trying to do it in the energy of your flesh. Let God's love take control of you, and then go back

to Egypt and say to Pharoah, "Let my people go."

Think about people throughout the Bible. Look at Jacob (Genesis 32). Think about Samson in Judges 16. Go to Judges 6 and 7 and read of these men who had no real desire to follow God or to do the things of God, who became totally arrested by God's love.

You think about James and John, the sons of thunder, with ambition and a desire to bring fire down from heaven on people. They needed to become the sons of Jesus' love and become people who were arrested by the love of God.

You think of Onesimus who stole from Philemon and was on his way out when he went to Rome, and he found Paul in prison. Seven times in the epistle of Philemon, it talks about doing things for love's sake. Love for love's sake. Paul was writing to his friend, saying, "For love's sake, love him. I love him and I want to put the two of you, Philemon and Onesimus, back together. Now that Onesimus has been arrested by God, he's going to make a great brother in the Lord, a great servant in your house, and a great church member. He's been arrested by the love of God."

"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

"Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 12-13).

In the book of Jude, it talks about three trends in the Last Days. It talks about Cain and his commitment to works, Korah and the rebellion against authority, and Balaam and his desire for money.

You know what it says in verse 12? "These things are spots on your love feasts."

Jude offered a solution for those things, however. Do you know what it was? Get arrested by love.

"I've got something to tell you," Jude wrote. "You are loved of God. Build yourself up on your most holy faith. Keep yourself in the love of God."

The only thing that can make the difference, the only thing that's going to make a difference is love that will do the work, love that has a provision from God that will satisfy anybody, and love that will really bring out the true authority of God.

Be arrested by God's love.

Picture John on the island of Patmos. He was under arrest, surrounded by lunatic and maniacs. Still, in Revelation 1:5, he writes, "God loves me. I've been arrested by the love of God. I am controlled by the love of God."

First Corinthians 13:8, love does what? Love never fails.

Do you want to know something else? Romans 8:34 says that love never condemns you.

Here's something else. In Romans 8:39, you can never be separated from the love of God.

Romans 8:37 says that love is never defeated.

Want to know something else? Jeremiah 31:1-4 says love never changes.

You want to know something else? Love is never discouraged. Love never thinks about what it needs when it is self-sacrificing.

God, may I be under arrest to Your love. (I'm talking to myself.) May I declare as Paul did in

Ephesians 3:1 and 4:1, "I, Paul…." Put your name in there and say, "I, the prisoner of the Lord, I desire to be in the prison of God's love. For when I'm in the prison of God's love, I am absolutely free."

CONCLUSION

Because I am arrested by God's love, I am free from the opinions of other people about me. I'm free from having to project an image to make you happy. I'm free from having to please man, the world, or anything from the past. I'm free of that!

In Hosea 14:4, it says that God wants to love us freely, that it doesn't matter what happens or what I do. Zephaniah 3:17 says that He will rest in His love. Why not let God rest in His love?

Oh God, I want to go into that cell for the rest of my life. I want to be arrested by God's love in me and made a prisoner to *agape* love.

Thank Him for *agape* love—unconditional, unending, unlimited, unfathomable love that could change our hearts and make us people who go with this message into a lost and dying world, where people are prisoners to themselves, to the past, to religion.

Father, we thank You that when we are arrested by God, there are no charges, no accusations. We need no lawyer, no judge, no jury, no evidence, no record. For some of us, we are not in any human prison only because we have been arrested by God's love.

Arrested by God's love! Thank You, Jesus! Thank You for what You said in such a loving way: "You are under arrest. You've been arrested by agape *love." This love takes me out of the prison that I may be in, a prison of who I think I am. A prison of insecurity. A prison of fear. A prison of judgmental analysis of what I think is going on. A prisoner of a trial, a test, my health, my finances. I am no more a prisoner because I've been arrested by God's love, and I'm a prisoner of the Lord who loves me. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Atmospheric Cycles

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INTRODUCTION

Bringing mankind into the realm of truth is the most difficult task for God to perform in our midst. Often when God is moving in an amazing way, people become familiar with the supernatural because they have become familiar with the natural. For example, I notice that no matter how the Spirit of God moves in a service, people react very naturally at the rap session that follows. I'm not condemning anyone—this is natural. But within eight to ten minutes, the room is filled with so many voices that I can't hear myself think.

If I were to go to a session with a lot of women, I doubt very much that I could hear one person speak. I don't mean this to be offensive to women, but I doubt you could hear a person speak unless you were right next to her. If someone were to say, "Let's pray," no one would pray, and there would be no Spirit-filled prayer.

After I have preached a good message, some

people come up immediately and say, "Pray for me; I'm in trouble"—even after a deliverance service! What is wrong in the hearts of individuals? It is natural to be natural; but, it is unnatural to have a supernatural intervention from God quietly.

The average person in every congregation is a forgetful hearer. Within ten to thirty minutes after going out the door, most people become forgetful listeners. Do you know why? It is because we're dealing with the natural disposition as it is affected by Satan's atmospheric cycles.

Chapter One

THE GREAT ADVERSARY

"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

When God says "let thy words be few," He means it.

"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and a shame unto him" (Proverbs 18:13). People are often so anxious to talk that they will interrupt before you're finished speaking. They can't wait to tell you how *they* feel and never hear your thoughts. They have an insatiable desire just to talk for the sake of talking. Matthew 12:36 calls it "idle" conversation.

If I am going on a long trip, I like to bring people (when God allows me to) who are not afraid of silence. We may talk for hours; we may not. But I prefer to be with people who do not

become insecure in the midst of silence. Let your words on earth be few. We don't always have to talk, sounding like animals in a zoo.

An educated Christian will study to be quiet, but will speak words of wisdom in season. He will study to be quiet, only expressing words of wisdom to those whom God directs him to.

Satan's Rank and Organization

Satan is second only to God. This is why in Jude 9, Michael, one of the highest ranking angels in the heavenly host, would not deal with Satan but said, "The Lord rebuke thee." Michael deferred to the order of God's authority.

Satan takes advantage of your natural life, your natural feelings, and your natural preferences. Too many people make evaluations when they know nothing about what they are evaluating; others express opinions through ignorance. Satan is quick to take advantage because he is highly skilled and, in the universe at this hour, second only to God.

A very intelligent, skillful, confederated host form Satan's government, his kingdom, and his army. He has specialists in every department of human endeavor and skilled operators in every field of human exchange. The Bible calls him the

god of this world's system (2 Corinthians 4:4) and the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). He is referred to as Beelzebub, Belial (the evil one), Satan, the devil, the great red dragon (Revelation 12:3). He is the attorney for the world system and the accuser of the brethren—the one who separates through discord. He is the roaring lion, likened to the king of the jungles, because he is constantly seeking whom he may devour.

Satan is our great adversary, yet the average Christian does not know him. People will fight with each other this week because they don't know their enemy. People will be paranoid this week because they don't know their enemy. They will say things before they go to bed or think certain things, not knowing the source of what they're thinking. It is a mystery of the mind.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord…"—stand in His kingdom, under His dominion; "…and in the power of his might"—in His ability manifested to you (Ephesians 6:10).

Chapter Two

BONDAGE TO THE OLD NATURE

Every Christian should know that Satan is his personal adversary. Satan likes to use our old sin nature to spread his spirit into high places against leaders in the church. The devil attacks prominent places, where there is a Word of God revival. He wants as many people as possible to be in bondage to the old sin nature so he won't have to work; he'll just let them reap the problems that come from their old nature.

Satan deals with us through the old sin nature to take advantage of us in five areas: our needs, wants, relationships, circumstances, and environment. He uses the old sin nature with regard to natural affections within a family and with people who are proud, stubborn, and impatient. The devil uses the old nature against Christians in relationship to the *world system*, which includes the liberal government, the liberal media, religion, and people who would cheat and de-

ceive you.

Marrying the World

Beyond confronting people with their old sin nature, Satan tries to get people to function in his system of evil by drawing from each other. For instance, an inadequate person will draw from the proud person to promote himself above someone who is weak but following God. These people join together in a conspiracy, combining their efforts to fight against true spiritual authority that is delegated and given by God.

Satan uses the atmosphere for the purpose of having the Christian's old sin nature "marry" the world—in situations where you work, going to cocktail parties, having illicit sex. You can mark this down: Those who practice immorality will go to hell and burn forever. No one who practices immorality will go to heaven unless he repents and forsakes his sin. I can't make it clearer than that.

You say, "But, I thought I was saved by grace." *If you are practicing immorality, you never received grace*. The Bible says in Galatians 5:19-21, Revelation 21:8, Mark 9:42, 44, 46, and Matthew 5:28-32 that if you are living in immorality, you *will* go to hell and stay there forever. That's a

promise. The best thing to do with that sin is to repent and never go near it again. I gave you the verses—look them up.

You say, "But I thought I was eternally saved!" Sure, you're eternally saved if your life is revealing God's Finished Work. But the question is, were you ever saved to begin with? People who have been truly saved are eternally saved, but if they fall into sin, they will be so chastised that they are persuaded to repent. Chastisement has a way of persuading people to repent.

Are You Saved?

Anyone who practices drinking is a drunkard, and the Bible says he will go to hell. The pathological liar will go to hell. A person who lives in fear all the time will go to hell. That's what the Book says:

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

There won't be one lesbian in heaven, not one. There won't be one homosexual in heaven,

not one. If I live in the characteristics of these sins, obviously I am not saved. It's one thing to fall and rebound, but if these sins are my *life*, then I am not saved.

Galatians 5:19-21 catalogs a number of sins and teaches clearly that those who practice these things "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The original Greek text plainly reveals that two of the sins listed deal with fornication and perversion.

If you know some people who are practicing these sins, I want to tell you that *they are not saved!* I cannot make it any more clear. I hope this doesn't take away your joy, but I do hope it makes you a realistic, honest person.

Because of chastisement, a person who is saved and lives in one of these sins will be so miserable that they'll say, "I don't even enjoy thinking about this sin. I don't want it. I repent, God. Now, let up with the chastisement." This is what will happen if a person is eternally saved. No Christian will live in the characteristics of sin when he is truly saved, filled with the Holy Spirit, and living in the light of God's Word.

Chapter Three

LETTING THE WORD HAVE DOMINION

Satan takes advantage of people to make them poor and to make them feel insecure. He takes advantage of them to put diseases upon them and make them sick.

After hearing revival messages, I can guarantee that some people get negative because they are forgetful hearers. The Word of God was not received because the soil of their hearts was not prepared in meekness.

Listen, what I am after is some God-loving, God-fearing, Bible-loving, Holy Spirit-following Christians who will let the Word have dominion in their lives—Christians who will listen with care, tenderness, and compassion; Christians who will listen in faith, hope, simplicity, and humility; Christians who will respond in faith and follow Christ in love, led by the spiritual power of God's principle of divine guidance. We need

people who can *stand* in the Lord.

Worn Out by Negativity

In Revelation 13:7, Satan was against the saints, trying to wear them out (Daniel 7:25). If I understand this, I won't make negative confessions after God's Spirit has come in and moved in a service.

When water came into the boat, the disciples said, "Lord, save us: we perish" (Matthew 8:25). That's negativity. How can you perish when Jesus Christ, the One who made the oceans, is on your boat?

When Jesus said He was going to the Cross to die, Peter rebuked the Lord, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matthew 16:22). Peter didn't want to hear a Cross message, just like a lot of Christians today. When it comes to the Cross, many Christians say, "Pastor, where's the grace message?" That statement reveals negativity.

Jesus Christ met with the disciples before He died. There, Mary broke an alabaster box of ointment and poured it on His head, filling the room with fragrance. But in Matthew 26:8, the disciples were indignant and said, "To what purpose is this waste?" That's negativity.

After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples gathered in the upper room behind locked doors because they feared the Jews. They were filled with fear and negativity. By the grace of God, I will not be that kind of Christian.

God wants us to be whole, free from the dominion of sin and delivered from the power of sin—living in the power of grace, loving in the power of righteousness, following Christ in the power of the Spirit, listening to the Word of God with concentration, and following Jesus Christ in the application of truth.

Victory is Normal

God wants us to understand that victory is continual for a child of God; a life of victory is the normal way to live. Confessing the truth about Christ is normal. Building people up in Christ is normal. Believing God is normal. But Satan takes away the *normal* (which is really supernatural) and tries to stop the application of truth, so he deals with people in the *natural* realm.

Living clean is normal, now that I have the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. For me, to be healthy and well is normal. For me, to have power over sin is normal. For me, victory in prayer is normal. I am the child of a supernat-

ural God who is Number One in my life.

Know Your Enemy

We must know our enemy. In Luke 14:28, what person would build a building without first sitting down and counting the cost to see if he has what is needed to finish the job?

What leader going to war would not first sit down and consult to see whether his army of ten thousand can beat the enemy who has twenty thousand (Luke 14:31)?

In the same context, Jesus said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 14:33-35).

Do you know what this passage is saying? The area that I am not crucified in is the area that I am not *normal* in my victory. The area where I haven't forsaken the flesh is the area I have given Satan a place, so I can live in the natural realm.

What does it mean to *forsake all?* Forsaking all has nothing to do with selling your property—you need a house. Forsaking all has nothing to do with giving everything away. It means

to have an attitude that agrees that *all* things belong to Jesus Christ, and you are a custodian with a purpose to glorify the Master.

Chapter Four

EXPOSING THE LIAR'S DEFEAT

Let's look at the amazing principles of Satan's cycles. He does not want people to have relationships through the Cross. Satan wants people to have relationships through the air that do not include the Cross.

Satan cannot stand it when God's people really believe who they are. When we believe that Jesus Christ is in us, we go forward making amazing progress in the process of grace. We go forward in humility, meekness, and power. We go forward into Satan's territory, exposing his lies.

Satan always lies. He lies about your health and your future. He lies about your needs and wants. He lies about your self-esteem and about what has happened in your past. He is always lying, trying to keep you from realizing that Jesus Christ has come to give you an abundant life. The devil tries to take advantage of insecurity to make people fear what is going to happen

tomorrow. He's the father of all lies. He's a liar!

Why the Obedient Suffer

My God will meet all my needs. My God will give me health as my soul prospers, unless His purpose is for me to fellowship with His sufferings and to glorify Him in the angelic conflict. It is possible that I may need to fellowship with Christ in a trial in order to have a capacity to help others in the future. I may need to suffer with Him so He can build a stronger capacity for my future call. These are reasons why I might have to suffer willingly.

If I'm not to suffer for those reasons, however, then God will give me good health, help me to prosper, and give me a life of victory—provided I know my enemy *and* know my God, who is over the devil and has defeated him. Satan wants to keep God's people from implementing the fact of his defeat, and he does everything in his power to stop Christians from making his defeat publicly known.

I'm not going to be a whiner and say, "Oh, I've had two bad days." I'm a saint of God, and I am a victor. *I am living on the ascension side of Satan's defeat! I'm living on the resurrection side of his defeat!* I'm living on the forgiveness side of

his defeat. I'm living in the power of victory over his demons. My victory as one individual will expose what Jesus Christ did to them because I'm just a sinner who needed all of His grace. I will need that grace forever in order to reveal God's victory over Satan.

Decisions For Victory

Our relationship with God involves personal decisions. No one else can make these decisions for us. We have to take God's Word and make personal decisions to implement Christ's victory, or we will implement Satan's lie.

I can picture Satan saying to his demons, "If we don't watch out, that Christian is going to reveal our defeat to a whole group of people. Until someone reveals our defeat, let's make believe that we're *not* defeated! We can spread lies about situations and circumstances. If we can get Christians to be negative and whine, to live in yesterday (which is gone forever), or to worry about tomorrow (which may never come)—if we can just get them to live in *other* dimensions, apart from resurrection victory, then they will implement our lies, and no one will know we've been defeated!"

What night this week are you going to

whine about something that happened? Will you go to your bedroom and cry again? Why not jump up and down and shout about your victory? Try praising God by living on the side of the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Blood, with the great High Priest and the great Advocate. Live on God's side and expose the devil. Tell the devil, "You're a liar! a *liar!* I will operate in *the* Truth."

Beware of Counterfeit Wisdom

Satan has a program to counterfeit God's wisdom. Wisdom is unusual. Wisdom is knowing God's Word *and* applying it—practical understanding with practical application.

Satan, however, has a wisdom that is from below. His wisdom is filled with envying and bitterness. It's filled with memories of everything anyone has ever done to you. James 3:15 says that the wisdom from below is "earthly, sensual, devilish."

This counterfeit wisdom is first earthly (*epigeios* in the Greek text) but it is wisdom. Regarding its orderly nature, it is an intelligent, objective presentation according to earthly standards.

If a person isn't delivered from earthly wis-

dom, that wisdom is transferred to the soul and becomes *psuckikos*—soulish, or, sensual wisdom having objective understanding and intelligent reasoning.

Finally, this wisdom becomes *daimoniodes*, devilish, which means the soul's capacity for life is demonized. This person is still a Christian, born again, but he functions in wisdom from below. He has a strong ability to speak objectively about his "differences" in the power of his wisdom, but it comes from mental attitude sins—envying, bitterness, and comparison.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). Wisdom from above is filled with meekness.

Satan has counterfeited wisdom, the individualization process, doctrine, relationships, services, and preaching. He has even counterfeited grace and prayer. Satan is the great counterfeit, but remember: In the order of authority he is second only to God.

He counterfeits your needs by communicating impulses to your central nervous system, making you confess to the atmosphere what you "think" is true about your need. The "need," as

well as the confession, has a supernatural source. Like an infectious disease, Satan uses the air to spread these vibrations among people.

Do you know why people are affected by what others say? It is because what we consider "natural" has supernatural meaning that is from the earth, the soul, and the devil. This is why we must let our words on earth be few. This is why we must study to be quiet and humble ourselves before God.

Chapter Five

PROVING WHAT IS GOOD, ACCEPTABLE, AND PERFECT

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

Outside of Romans 12:1-2, there isn't a single area of our lives we can adequately approach if we are to win a victory over Satan. It is our "reasonable service" to present our bodies as living sacrifices unto Him. We are not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. And what else does God want us to do? "Prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." We are to *prove* it.

If certain things happen by the intervention of God—if, for example, He tries to stop a relationship you're in—don't trust your feelings. Don't trust your needs or your walk. Don't trust your plan. Instead, operate in Romans 12:1-2. Present your body as a living sacrifice, just as though you have no will in the matter. What is a living sacrifice? It's not a dead one. It is a sacrifice that just went through death. Sixteen times in the book of Revelation, reference is made to the fresh wounds in Jesus' glorified body. He is a living sacrifice.

As a living sacrifice, we have nothing to lose in any situation because we have already died to it. The trouble with many Christians is that they are *dead* sacrifices, God bless them! They believe in the theology of the sacrifice, but they have not become a living sacrifice.

Someone who is a living sacrifice has been through death, and now is alive in every detail of life. He can lay down his life through resurrection life. He is on the Resurrection side of death, the Ascension side of death. A living sacrifice is on the "will of God" side of living.

Waiting upon God

Every time I have to do something important,

I wait upon the Lord, as a living sacrifice. After my first wife died, I waited seven years to get married again. Seven years! I didn't say to God, "I have a need! I have a need! God is going to meet my need." Sure, He's going to meet my need—by having me *die* to it. Death is a great way to have a need met when we know we are crucified with Christ.

I can't understand how people can come to Bible college, just get started, and within two months they become involved in a relationship. Didn't they come here to get to know *God*? If you are a teacher, your fervency for teaching subsides when you enter a relationship that doesn't produce meekness and humility. Your work ethic is just not the same.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." Notice this verse says "bodies," because the body is the thing that is always wanting. We want to satisfy our taste buds with foods we shouldn't eat. We want to satisfy our egos with words we shouldn't say or listen to. The mind doesn't have to have something it doesn't need, but the body wants it *now*! So, the mind cooperates with the body.

What is it that we present to God? Our bod-

ies "...as a living sacrifice." In essence, God is saying, "I want your bodily senses to go through death, because those senses always tend to implement natural, human wisdom; but I want you to live on the resurrection side of life, not in empiricism through bodily senses."

Present Your Bodies

The word "present" is an aorist active infinitive of *paristemi*. It's a very beautiful word, the same word used when Jesus, as a child, was presented by Mary and Joseph in the temple (Luke 2:22). The phrase "your body a living" is a present active participle, which means that we are to continually produce the action of presenting ourselves as *living* sacrifices, as opposed to being "dead."

There are Christians who keep saying, "I'm dead to this, I'm dead to that." "Okay," they will drone on, "I know I'm supposed to be dead!" "I'm dead. I'm dead." But, they are not presenting their bodies as living sacrifices. They're making psychological confessions without presenting themselves. When we present our bodies, we are dead to self, and we move to the resurrection side of the Cross.

When I present my body, I recognize that

Christ crucified it. I don't have to die; *Christ* crucified my body. I just experience His death. I don't have to wonder, "How did I do last night?" or, "How will I do today?" I don't need to be counseled into victory; I just need to experience the victory through His counsel.

"Well, Pastor, I'm *trying* to die," I have heard people say. Have fun!—I haven't met anyone yet who has made it.

I read in the Bible, "I *am* crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20).

I read in the Bible, "Nevertheless I live."

I present my body to Jesus Christ as a living sacrifice through the resurrection power of God. That's how I present it—*through* Him. I don't present my body, trying to die; I present it as one who has already died.

As I present my body to Him, I make sure there's no place for the devil to take over on any subject, with any need or want. "The Lord is [shepherding me], I shall not want," wrote the Psalmist (Psalm 23:1).

We are delivered through death, not unto death. Let me repeat that: We're delivered *through* death, not *unto* death. Until I understand this as experiential truth, all I can do is to keep confessing positional truth without experiencing the

victory.

Satan's Defeat is a Fact

When I present my body by a living faith through the mercies of God in the application of grace, then I experience—in my body, mind, emotions, and circumstances; in my needs and wants; in my past and present—Satan's defeat at Calvary!

There are so many people who are bitter about the past. The first thing you've got to do is to make sure you are saved. God says in Mark 11:25-26: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which in heaven forgive your trespasses."

And, in Luke 6:36-38*a*, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you."

If you have a bad attitude when you stand praying, your prayers will never get through to heaven—until that attitude is crucified. If you remember and are negative about anything any-

one has done to you, you are doing something worse than any sin that was committed against you.

"I don't like that kind of Christianity," you may be saying. I know you don't like it, because it takes a supernatural God, using a supernatural resurrection through a supernatural Cross to make you supernaturally think His way in your attitude. You can't face it, and you don't like it because your sins find you out.

But when you're a living sacrifice, you just feel like singing (something like this):

"There are no more yesterdays,
But 'today' is here with God.
All of my tomorrows
will be with my Lord.
The past is gone forever,
and now just passed by.
I don't know what they've done to me,
I'm getting ready to fly!"

Come on, women, get right with God! Don't confess "I feel terrible now!" but say, "I feel *good* now!"—we are *more* than conquerors.

Husbands, pray with your wives! They're so busy talking that they don't know how to enjoy five minutes of prayer. Pray with your wives. Teach them how to pray. Teach them how to be

quiet. Pray, and have power with God!

Thinking about getting engaged? Think Romans 12:1-2.

Thinking about getting married? Think Romans 12:1-2.

Thinking about getting negative? Think Romans 12:1-2.

Worrying about tomorrow? Romans 12:1-2.

Feeling blue about how someone has treated you? Romans 12:1-2.

Tempted to go against bona fide spiritual authority? Romans 12:1-2.

Remembering the past? Romans 12:1-2.

Are you letting your sophisticated culture take over in the natural realm so you don't have supernatural grace? Think Romans 12:1-2.

Renewing the Mind

Present your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. How is it done? *"By the renewing of your mind."* Allow your new mind with Christ to take over your bodily senses and you will find that the problems you had yesterday don't exist today.

In presenting my body, I prove what is the

perfect will of God. If I don't present my body, then I will never prove it. Instead of having His perfect will, it may just be something that *I* want.

If we don't prove His perfect will, God will send trials to make it happen. The Lord will deliver us through death if we haven't already been delivered from death. He will bring a crisis into our lives so that He can start the process of victory.

If you present your body by faith and by mercy, and do it because of the Finished Work, then anything God does will result in you revealing what has been done. When trials come to those who refuse to present their bodies as living sacrifices, they reveal what *hasn't* been done and what they are like. All we can do is patiently sit back and hope the day comes when there will be a conversion. But, when trials come to a Spirit-filled Christian, the trials reveal what Christ has done and Who God is.

CONCLUSION

Atmospheric cycles do not have to control my life. Whether I work seventy or eighty hours a week, I can still be victorious. I can still be a conqueror because I have been through death. I may get weary; I may be a tired saint, but I am still victorious.

What are you looking at right now? Your husband's temperament? Your bills? Your bad right leg that isn't what it used to be? Present your body and God will deliver you.

Perhaps, you have professed to be saved, but you have been living like the devil and now you realize that you may not be saved. Scripturally speaking, you can't be sure if you are going to heaven. Pray to receive Christ now. Bow your head right where you are. Mean business with God. God won't put up with your sin forever. God forbid that you think that you can continue in sin that grace may abound (Romans 6:1).

I pray for deliverance for those who need it,

once and for all. I pray for victory and power in their lives. I pray that lust and perverted thoughts will leave those who are plagued by them. I pray for victory over drugs. Let victory come in and triumph over secret sin in every area.

I preach the way I do because Satan is trying to make people operate based on his lies. Very few Christians detect or discern this. The devil's atmospheric cycles must be defined if we are to see hundreds saved and healed. We must have a *clean* local assembly. We need people who are real, who are not forgetful hearers. God wants a revival in our midst, and every revival must go to Calvary and come out in resurrection power.

As a rule, preachers do not preach the old-fashioned way today because of church-goers who can only take twenty-minute devotionals presented with a lot of music, especially on Sunday nights. That's never going to happen with *this* pastor and *this* church. I don't give up my pulpit for concerts. I love music, but no choir will ever take the place of preaching. I preach the Bible—Sunday mornings, Sunday nights, Wednesday nights. It's been this way with me for over forty years and it's not going to change.

Authority Begins

at the Cross

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest problems for Christians today is their failure to recognize the need to come under bona fide spiritual authority. Encounters with the illegitimate authority of someone who was abusive and cruel have left some people with deep-rooted problems, which, in many cases, are never resolved.

In this booklet, you will see that behind the authority of God is a love that sent His only Son to die for the sins of the world, a love that came to save the world and not to condemn it. Before God ever *commanded* us to love (John 13:34-35), He first *commended* His love toward us, while we were sinners (Romans 5:8). Authority that is not backed by the love of the Cross is not bona fide authority; it will only drive people away from God. But true authority always draws people to the God who is love.

Chapter One

THE AUTHORITY OF PERFECT LOVE

God is love. God the Father manifested that love by giving His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (see 1 John 4:8-10).

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment...." Because we now have confidence in God's love, we can have *boldness* at the Bema Seat.

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

"We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:17-19).

In the light of these Scriptures, "herein is love" takes on a new meaning. We have confidence in God's love, and we will have boldness on the day of judgment.*

The passage in 1 John is relevant to the subject of authority because divine love is the authority that God exercises over the human race and over His Church. Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). This means that Divine Love died for the sins of everyone. But even though Christ died for every soul He created, no one can be saved without believing and coming to God by grace through faith in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Still, Jesus died for us.

God was in Christ, and Christ was in the world, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us (2 Corinthians 5:19). Before love ever exercises authority, it does everything to lay down its life for those who will *submit* to bona fide authority.

The authority over the Church is love—it is love that provides and protects; it does not usurp authority or invade privacy. It does not interfere with a person's believer-priesthood. Love protects the right of every person to stand or fall before God (Romans 14:4).

People who are afraid of authority simply don't know what it is. They equate God's authority with how they have been mistreated by illegitimate authority. But bona fide authority is

based on Calvary's love. Remember, God is love (1 John 4:8), and He manifested love by giving His life.

Authority in the Government of the Church

"As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses" (Joshua 11:15).

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul wrote "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ [in His humanity] is God."

These verses are a picture of God's table of organization. Notice how it works. The Lord commanded Moses, and Moses commanded Joshua. Then Joshua came under the authority of God and left nothing undone that the Lord had commanded Moses. As a pastor, if God says to me, "I want you to preach on the Great Commission," I'm not going to leave it undone. Why? Because God's love provides the incentive to obey. We serve one another with a faith that works by love (Galatians 5:6).

The Premise for Authority: Unconditional Love

Delegated authority in the table of organiza-

tion is abused when people misunderstand the premise for authority: unconditional love. The watchmen in Song of Solomon 5:7 wounded the maiden who was seeking her Bridegroom. Because the maiden was failing, the watchmen hurt her, thinking she was not right with God. Then the keepers of the wall tore her veil, which means they made her failure public. Likewise, people may sometimes unintentionally wound a person who is really seeking the Lord because he does not *appear* to be right with God.

That is not love, because love covers the multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). Furthermore, because it separates close friends (Proverbs 17:9*b*), love never repeats a matter—except when it is between a counselor and the people involved, in the ministry of reconciliation, having the proper covering. That is perfectly in order under God's table of organization.

"I have trouble with authority," you say. But the real question is, what *kind* of authority do you have trouble with? Do you have trouble with the fact that God the Father *is* all and rules all and gave His Son to die for every sin ever committed—past, present, and future? Do you have a problem with that kind of love being your spiritual authority? When you come under

the authority of perfect love, you will find it is not grievous at all.

**Read* The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief? *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

HIDING IN ADAM, OR HID WITH CHRIST?

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). Only when a husband loves as Christ loves can He exercise God's authority in the home. Men, do you want authority? Then do it God's way instead of harping on your wife to obey you. Any man who tells his wife, "You have to obey me. I'm the head!" has already been discredited in her eyes. Instead, when a man simply continues to love his wife in everything, she will find protection, provision, and power in obeying the divine authority of love.

Why don't more people experience and express the authority of unconditional love? It is because they are hiding in Adam. To hide in Adam means to hide in all kinds of problems that have their origin in the Fall. Then, to get out of trouble, a man will try to counsel himself.

"How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?" (Psalm 13:2). The Psalmist finally got sick of his soul counseling him. Try counseling yourself when you are hiding in Adam and see how you come out. You'll probably come up with something like this: "I think the root of my trouble comes from what happened when I was eight. No, it was when I was twelve, too. Then it was something that happened at school when I was fourteen. And oh yes, my uncle did something to me when I was sixteen—" and on it goes. You can dig and dig, and all kinds of things will come out. But all you're trying to do is unlock the depths of Adam—something you can never do. Instead, in identification with Christ, lock up Adam at Calvary! Put him in the grave, and don't let him out.

A man who is hiding in Adam will never have any time for his wife. He will always be busy doing something. If a woman hiding in Adam has a husband who wants to serve God, she will try to prevent him from obeying God. "You can't go there. You can't do that. I have needs that *you* have to meet."

Peter rebuked Jesus for His willingness to go to the cross. But Jesus addressed Satan who was

speaking through the disciple and then dealt with the real issue: Peter was hiding in Adam.

The Characteristics of Hiding in Adam

There are four characteristics of a person who hides in Adam. First, he lives in *self-preservation*. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"—a verse that has been so widely misrepresented. Jesus was not teaching self-denial. There is nothing in the Bible that teaches self-denial, because it can't be done. Neither can we crucify ourselves. Try it sometime! You can't do it.

To "deny yourself" means you don't *preserve* yourself. It means that you accept daily what the cross has *already accomplished*. It is to receive resurrection power to take up a cross that no one is on.

Secondly, a person who is hiding in Adam lives in *self-defense mechanisms*. This goes back to the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3:8-13). Notice how they hid behind self-defense mechanisms when God came to question them:

"Adam, why did you eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?" God asked.

"The woman *You* gave me, gave to me of the tree and I ate." Adam defended himself by blaming God! Of course, Eve blamed the serpent.

"Why did you do it, Eve?"

"The serpent beguiled me, and I ate."

Adam and Eve appeared to have good self-defense mechanisms. Most people who are caught in a sin will find a defense by placing blame on the devil or on how people have treated them. Instead of saying, "The devil made me do it," just admit, "My old sin nature did it. I'm guilty. But Jesus Christ has redeemed me, and there is *no* condemnation." (See Romans 7:20-8:1.) Then, humbly go to the Cross and recover.

The third characteristic of a person hiding in Adam is *self-absorption*. These men and women become totally absorbed with their own circumstances and with people. They become distracted and blinded to God's viewpoint and they can't hear the counsel that would set them free. Fourth, *self-occupation* is a characteristic that reveals a subjective disposition where I measure myself and how I am doing by my own understanding, rather than being occupied with Christ, who is the only standard to properly measure my life.

How can we be free from self-preservation, self-defense mechanisms, self-absorption, and self-occupation? By abiding in our hiding place in Christ (Colossians 3:3).

When we receive resurrection life, we automatically take up our cross. We are not *on* the cross, and neither is Christ. He took us to the grave to get rid of us! Crucified and now buried with Him, we receive resurrection power for a brand-new life (Acts 1:8).

God gives greater grace to the humble (James 4:6), and as we keep on receiving He imparts to us good things, blessings from God that are sanctified by the Word and prayer (1 Timothy 4:3-5). The key is to keep receiving life, love, and grace. We don't merit any of it—*we just keep receiving*! In our worst and best estate, we keep on receiving. Then, by grace, God works in us with His provision, and His life is worked out of us by our consent (see Philippians 2:12, 13).

Chapter Three

THE CHARACTER OF DISCIPLESHIP

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34, 35).

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know *the* [system of] truth, and *the* [system of] truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32).

"Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42).

Operating in the name of a disciple means to operate in the nature of precise categories of truth. Hebrews 6:10 says it another way: "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour

of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

Let me illustrate what being a disciple is all about. It is to see something that needs to be done and to do it, not grudgingly but with a spirit of joy and thanksgiving. It is being faithful in the small things and not despising them. Whether it is making phone calls to follow up on new believers, writing letters to encourage missionaries and others who may be weary from battle, or pulling weeds around the church property! Being a disciple is being about the Father's business. It is hearing from God and having an anointing for everything we do, no matter what the endeavor.

They may be small things, but those who skillfully do these tasks with all of their heart are servants and disciples in the Body of Christ. Anything done in the name of a disciple will never, ever be forgotten. Think of what can be done in the name of a disciple. God never forgets your labor of love. Each thing you do in the name of a disciple is written down forever; and in heaven, a billion years from now, God will show you the day you made that decision to help out *in the name of a disciple*.

"As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all the LORD commanded Moses" (Joshua 11:15).

If we love God, we will keep His commandments. His authority is love. Mercy means God doesn't give us what we do deserve. By His grace, He gives us what we do not deserve. We are motivated by love (2 Corinthians 5:14) and we are always under mercy and grace.

It is a beautiful thing when a Christian does not leave anything undone. He does everything that the table of organization teaches in submission to delegated authority, using rebound if he fails. Of course he recognizes his spiritual autonomy and is free in his believer-priesthood before God, but he doesn't leave a single thing undone. Remember, Joshua didn't leave anything undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses.

God says we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, in Hebrews 10:25. Not leaving things undone means that we're in church when we're supposed to be, bringing others with us when we can. We don't leave

church attendance undone. We don't leave *soul winning* undone. When it comes to *tithing*, we don't leave it undone.

Don't leave the great commandment to *love* undone. This means that we cover, forgive, edify, build up, nourish, and cherish one another through the words of grace that build up our souls and give us an inheritance (Acts 20:32). "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church; they are not to leave it undone.

Don't leave *prayer* and *meditation* undone. This is God's Word, and all Scripture is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16). We have been commanded to *live by every word of God* (Matthew 4:4), and that includes practicing rebound when we fail; that is part of living by every word—don't leave it undone.

Chapter Four

REVEALING THE IMAGE OF LOVE

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you," Jesus said in John 15:9.

God's nature always reveals redemption and a ministry of reconciliation. People who cannot forgive and forget have forgotten to receive the resurrection power of love. Imagine it. Jesus died for the one they are accusing while that one was in sin. Thank God, Jesus didn't quit while we were still unredeemed sinners. He died for us, and He has made us perfect and unblameable in His sight!

How good it is to know that the Holy Spirit seals us forever (Ephesians 1:13,14; 4:30) and will never leave us—nor will Jesus (Hebrews 13:5*b*). But, in order to be Christ like, we must understand the principle in 2 Corinthians 4:10-12: We always bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may

be manifested through us. We which are alive are always delivered unto the death of the Cross for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested through our mortal body. Death works in us that life may work in others.

If I have a problem with the way things are being done, then I need to let death work in me *even if I am right*. I can't afford to get moody and then to withdraw into self-preservation and self-absorption.

"I'm going home to stay in my room today because things just aren't going right." That kind of statement reveals self-absorption, self-defense, self-preservation, and self-occupation. And I don't think anyone *really* wants be that way.

Don't excuse your flesh by saying, "I'm only human." That's just an excuse. Face the fact that you are a wicked sinner saved by grace like the rest of us. Then repent before God, isolate the sin, and go on.

Expressing the Heavenly

"And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was *not* first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and

afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:45-49).

We bear an image, and we manifest that image in everything we do, whether we are practicing a song, or going on outreach, we are manifesting an image—whether good or bad—to the angels and to the world. But more than that, we are manifesting an image to one another in the Body of Christ.

God wants me to know that I am hid with Christ in God. He wants me to know that it is "no longer I, but Christ who lives in me." Then He wants me to manifest the life of Christ in my mortal body. And finally, He wants me to glorify Christ in everything I think, say, and do. That's what it means to bear a heavenly image.

Second Corinthians 3:17-18 tells us how we begin to bear this heavenly image: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same *image* from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

When we walk in the Spirit, our conversation is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Therefore, if someone attacks your flesh, know that it was for your sake so you could die in that area (2 Corinthians 4:15). Having that mind-set is much better than getting upset and struggling to preserve something about yourself.

As we reveal the image of love, then love becomes a spiritual authority in our lives—without us even having to usurp it. It becomes a spiritual authority on the basis of who Christ is and what He has done. It's an authority based on His mercy, grace, and love. No wonder that 1 Corinthians 13:7 says, "Charity [the greatest authority in the world] beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This kind of love may see people stumble, but it never fails. It will always be there to help us get up.

I have seen what happens to people who do not draw near to God; but eventually, when they do draw near, they become great Christians. How is that possible? They were loved unconditionally. They may have received a letter or a call from time to time just to love them up, even while they were out in the world. It may have been something as simple as, "Thinking of you,

love you, and God bless you with grace." And, it is grace that draws people back, not the law.

Who can resist the authority of God's grace? Sooner or later they come back, and eventually they are out soul-winning—all on their own initiative. They no longer want to leave things undone, because they are motivated by the love that died for them at Calvary.

CONCLUSION

The authority of Christ does not impute sin. It does not condemn. He doesn't use His authority to hurt us, wound us, make us react, or live in guilt. The authority of love has paid for our sins, and comes in to cleanse and purify us. Even if we fail seven times in a day, His love purifies us every time we rebound and get up again. God's authority teaches us how to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus' love.

Friends, this is what spiritual authority is all about. We can truly understand why 1 John 4:18 says that "there is no *fear* in love." That is how authority must operate in our lives—through the love, mercy, and grace of the New Covenant. It is a covenant sealed with the blood of Christ on Calvary.

Baked in the Loaf

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

In Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." It is all under Jesus Christ. In Philippians 2:10-11, God declared that every knee would bow and every tongue would confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.

Jesus Christ, who holds all things together by the Word of His power (Hebrews 1:3), is so sweet and so unique in the spirit of gentleness that He doesn't even break a bruised reed, nor does He quench a smoking flax. Do you understand what that means? It is hard to interpret this unless the Holy Spirit reveals it to your heart: Jesus Christ, God Almighty, will not break the bruised reed.

Peter was an enthusiastic disciple with a very course exterior who was often devastated by his own behavior. Yet, the Lord corrected him with gentleness. Knowing what Peter was like, Jesus said to him, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan

hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). Then, the Lord took Peter's broken life and made him a vital part of His Body. Peter was baked in the loaf and was used to feed God's sheep (John 21:16-17).

Is it any wonder that King David wrote, "thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psalm 18:35)? What made David great? The gentleness of Jesus Christ. Not judgment. Not negativity. Not God standing over him with a club ready to let him have it. The thing that made David great was the gentleness of Jesus. And that same gentleness hides us, shapes us, and allows us to go into the fire, where we are baked in the loaf, to become a portion of God's life on earth.

Chapter One

WHAT IS GENTLENESS?

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust" (Matthew 12:20-21).

This is one of the most unique passages in the Bible because it speaks of something that made Jesus Christ great—His gentleness.

Think with me. He created the universe. In Genesis 17:1, "…the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God." In Isaiah 45:5, He said, "I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God else beside me." And in Isaiah 45:21, "…there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me."

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

The wisdom that comes from God applies what it knows. This wisdom is very gentle, very pure, and very peaceable. Second Timothy 2:24-25*a* helps us understand what gentleness means, as it speaks of the behavior of an officer of the church: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves."

The servant of the Lord must not strive, as that is the opposite of gentleness. He must not strive; but, with meekness and gentleness, he should teach those who oppose themselves.

One of the greatest characteristics of Jesus Christ is, was, and always will be His gentleness. A gentle father will do more for his children than any other type of father. Gentleness does not compromise with sin and neither did Jesus. There is a literal hell, and people who are not saved will go there because gentleness does not compromise with sin. But gentleness knows how to take the worst sinner and minister love and grace in the unusual, divine methods of God until His life takes over a terrible, hardened heart.

Is it any wonder that Paul said that he nourished and cherished Christians with gentleness

even as a "nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thessalonians 2:7)?

Gentleness Works Today

Even today, it is gentleness that makes people great. The gentle husband, the gentle wife, makes the other partner great. This means that you don't ever have to be anxious to express your self-image. You don't have to be anxious to show your own temperament.

You don't have to pitch in there and force self-expression. There is no need to do that. You can trust God with the Lord's life. You don't have to get excited. You don't have to get crude in your dealings with people. You can be gentle and yet allow gentleness to be the power of love, the power of joy, the power of peace, and the power of longsuffering in your life.

Gentleness, an expression of the character of love, moves and motivates us with meekness. Meekness is a willingness to transfer my rights because I can trust the life of God expressed through gentleness. A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoking flax He will not quench. Why? Because Jesus Christ is gentle.

Galatians 5:22 tells us "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness…."

David, who will be the prince in the Millennial Reign, said that the one thing that made him great was God's gentleness.

Gentleness is never critical. Gentleness does not judge. Gentleness doesn't have to blow its stack. A bruised reed that is ready to break needs gentleness. Through patience and meekness, the one who is gentle transfers his own design and his own temperament to Jesus. He doesn't step back and say, "This is the way I am." No, this one goes to the Cross and says, "This is the way God is." He says, "You can accept Jesus as He is through me."

Gentleness is a ministry of purity, a ministry of peace, a ministry of meekness, and a ministry of power that can control everything, just as man rules over a city (Proverbs 16:32). Gentleness is the very life and love of God acting out His divinity in your humanity.

When Gentleness Takes Over

What happens when gentleness takes over your life? First, God begins to nourish you. His life begins to take care of all the foreign elements in your life. He could point out everything that is wrong, but instead He ministers His life. And His life begins to get into your spiritual blood-

stream, and that life begins to bring so much of God in you that whatever is foreign leaves you restless and without peace. But ultimately, the gentleness of God takes you to the Cross so that you can make things right. One step after another, God's gentleness begins to minister patience and love; and, because it is so wonderful, so consistent, and so steadfast, you become restless until that precious life comes in to change your life.

Next, God's gentleness cherishes. It is one thing to nourish, but it is quite another thing to cherish. Gentleness cherishes every degree of potential you have. It cherishes your eternal soul; it cherishes any possibility you have to be used by God. God *cherishes* you today. Why? Because in you is His eternal life. God cherishes you because you have an opportunity to express a portion of His life on earth. God cherishes you because you have the privilege of expressing the characteristics of the Lord's divinity.

God cherishes you because He has chosen you and ordained you to bring forth fruit (John 15:16). He desires that you become a part of His Body, that you begin to minister His mind. Every one of us has the privilege to minister a portion of the living God, "effectually working

in the measure of every part" of His Body (Ephesians 4:16).

He is going to nurse you along. He will nourish and cherish and love you, and then He will nurse you some more and cherish you some more and love you some more. You may want to say, "God, I don't deserve it." But the love continues, the nourishing continues, the cherishing continues, the patience continues, and the peace continues.

You say, "I am a failure," but God comes back and cherishes you and nourishes you some more. And He loves you and ministers patience to you again. Maybe a few weeks later you fail again, and still He nourishes you and cherishes you. The love continues, the gentleness continues, the peace continues. Why? Because He is gentle.

The Purpose of Gentleness

The purpose of His gentleness is to place you in the Corporate Body as a grain of wheat that is baked in the loaf. What does Jesus Christ do? What does His gentleness want to do? He wants us to be baked in the loaf. Every one of us represents a grain of wheat, and we are to be baked inside the loaf.

What happens if I am a grain of wheat, and God doesn't bake me in the loaf? Then I am outside of the loaf, and Satan sifts me. In Luke 22:31, Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." He will sift you. But 1 Corinthians 10:17 says "we being many are one bread, and one body." We are one Body, and we are in one loaf.

Chapter Two

BRING FORTH MUCH FRUIT

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

Do you get the picture? Jesus sees every born-again Christian as a grain of wheat, but that grain must be baked inside of the loaf of the Corporate Body. If you are not, you will be sifted as wheat by the devil. Probably only 25 to 30 percent of all Christians consider what that means. That would leave at least 50 percent available to be sifted. Anyone not baked in the loaf of the Corporate Body will be sifted by Satan.

When you are baked inside the loaf, the god of this world cannot find you because you are hid inside the Lord's Body. You are a portion of the whole loaf; you contribute your measure as a part of the loaf, and Satan cannot find you. You cannot even be detected because you are just a

grain of wheat hid in the loaf.

Recognizing Jesus As Head

What happened to John the Baptist? There wasn't a greater man born among women, according to Matthew 11:11. Yet, Jesus said He was the least, compared to the Bride of Christ, which is His Body. Why did John get his head cut off? Was it just because he challenged Herod? That was certainly one reason. John the Baptist was a beautiful Christian. He was a moral man. He fulfilled his role just as Isaiah prophesied.

There is, however, a vital principle to be learned from John the Baptist. His disciples were always criticizing Jesus' disciples. They didn't understand oneness. They criticized for one reason or another. They were not one with the others. Why? Because John's disciples still had John as their head instead of Jesus, even though John the Baptist told them to "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

So Jesus said, "If they are going to have John as their head, I will have to let the enemy cut off their head." Jesus allowed the enemy to cut off John's head so John's disciples would have no other head but Jesus. There was no more divi-

sion after that.

What we are saying is that if there is any other head beside Jesus in your life, you can be sure God will cut it off. It may take him a year, three years, or a day, but Jesus Christ will cut off any other head beside His own because, in Ephesians 1:22-23, He is the Head and we are "his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." There is no other head but Jesus. John the Baptist's followers asked Jesus many things about His disciples. "What's the story on that?" They had another head. John was a good forerunner and a wonderful man of God. But he wasn't hid in the Body, even though he played a role outside the Body in introducing the Messiah. He wasn't in the Body, and his head had to be cut off.

If you don't get into the Body of Jesus Christ, spiritually speaking, God is going to have to do some cutting—and it isn't going to be your arm that's cut. It will be whatever you have established as your head. What do I mean by that? I mean that the thing your mind trusts in, adores, and focuses upon must be Jesus. We must have no other head but Jesus.

When Jesus is your Lord and Master, you are just a portion or a grain of wheat baked in the loaf. You don't try to be seen. You have never

heard a grain of wheat say, “Wait a minute! I want to get out and announce that I am here before you eat me.” You have never heard a grain of wheat say, “Hold it! Before you bake me, let everyone know I am in the loaf and tell them what I look like.” A grain of wheat would never say that. We, as spiritual grains of wheat, are put into the loaf, stirred up, baked, and nobody knows who is who because we are all baked in the loaf.

Chapter Three

BECOMING ONE

God wants to take His Body members and make them one. He will bake us in the oven of trials so we can nourish and cherish people with the gentleness of Christ, which will make them great. Jesus prayed five times in John 17 that His people would be one as He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Why? "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23).

What God wants is oneness inside the loaf. He wants the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit to be revealed. He wants that loaf to be the same as the Trinity. He wants it to cook the same, to taste the same, to look the same. He wants that loaf to be one.

Jesus Christ is building His Body, and He wants His Body to be one—one with His plan, one with His purpose, one with His power, one with His goals, one with His unity, and one with

His love. He wants His Body to be so one that it will have no other personality but His, no other priorities but His. He wants it to be so one that from one member to another, with all the diversity of individual expressions of His person, it is Jesus. One speaks, it is Christ. Another works, it is Christ. It is all Christ.

Made One with Him

Jesus is trying to bake you into one loaf and make you one so you will stand as one. You pray with the Lord's burden as one. You share the Lord's portion as one. You sing the Lord's song as one. You give as unto the Lord as one. You sacrifice with the Lord's Cross as one. You share as one. You testify as one. You love as one. You are together on earth in the oneness of the Trinity, and the kingdom of God is manifested through the Body, and that Body becomes experientially one new man (Ephesians 2:15).

So many people don't want to be baked inside the loaf. To be baked inside the loaf, you must lay down your life to become one with God's life. This whole thing is just to share the Lord's life, to be the Lord's portion, to have the Lord's burden, and to enter into the Lord's edification. The whole thing is just sharing the Lord.

That's all it is.

When anything foreign gets into a healthy human body, the body begins to deal with it. The circulatory system and the cells go to work to reveal the foreign element. Fever comes so you will know something is wrong. The body detects the infection and then the individual parts of the body begin working together to resist the infection. If you obey the laws of your body, your body will, for the most part, take care of itself. That is, until it's time for you to go home with God.

When Christ's Body is one with the life and love of God, it will take care of foreign elements. You don't have to push the panic button. Gentleness will do the job. Meekness will do it. Joy will do it. Grace will do it because it will reveal the foreign element. Life will penetrate death, the light will take over the darkness, and the foreign element will be defeated through the life of the Lord in the Body.

The Lord's life will heal in a situation where you would rebuke. It will recover what you see as lost. The Lord's life will build up. The Lord's life will edify. The Lord's life will be an ointment. It will be oil to a wound. It will be something beautiful.

The bruised reed Jesus will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench. He will just let His life flow. That is what He wants from His Body—to get His life flowing. And as it does, His gentleness make others great.

The Fruit

What will God's gentleness do to you? I will show you what it will do. David arranged a murder, he was married several times, and he lived a wicked life in many instances. Still, Jesus Christ's gentleness made him great (Psalm 18:35). Why and how? Acts 13:34 speaks of "the sure mercies of David." According to Romans 4:6-8, David was blessed, God did not charge David with iniquity, and God did not impute sin to him.

What changed David? God's love and patience forgave, restored, healed, and brought him into repentance (Psalm 51). He was divinely corrected in the healing ointment of gentleness so that he could once again live in oneness with God through the Holy Spirit. God's gentleness brought David to repentance. Love and gentleness healed him and made him great, and David will be great throughout eternity.

CONCLUSION

God wants to approach us through one portion of His character—His gentleness. He wants to nourish, cherish, edify, and build up His Body. He wants us to get to know Him as a gentle God.

The bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench. He wants to put you inside the loaf and bake you so that you are hid in the Body. As a measure of God's life, you can share your portion inside the loaf. In this way, we all can minister a portion of the Lord's life, which results in His fullness—a manifestation of all that God is. When we meet as a Body, we get built up. You share your portion, I share mine, and we get built up in the measure of every part contributing. We minister Jesus Christ and nothing else, and we manifest the message of the glorious Gospel.

Be Anxious for Nothing

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INTRODUCTION

The atmosphere in the satanic world system is organized to create confusion and frustration in our lives. The last thing Satan wants any Christian to experience is joy and peace, therefore he is hard at work, projecting the idea that everything is out of control.

No Christian deliberately lives in unbelief. We say that we trust God, and we think that we really do. Yet, when we allow anxiety and restlessness to reign, we reveal a lack of trust toward God and His Word.

This booklet contains simple truths that, when applied, will cause us to live consistently as overcomers. We serve the God who is in control of the universe. With our confidence in Him, details of life will not drag us down. Instead, we will develop minds that are stayed on the things of heaven.

Chapter One

JOY STOLEN AWAY

The church at Philippi seems to have been one of the apostle Paul's favorite churches. There is a deep sense of affection included in all of his epistles. But in the letter to the Philippians, Paul expresses a desire to fellowship with them—beyond that mentioned in the others. When writing to the Philippians, Paul does not refer to himself with the customary title of "apostle," as he does in the letters to the Thessalonians and to Philemon. He introduces himself simply as Paul, revealing a greater level of friendship and intimacy.

The city of Philippi is first mentioned in Acts 16:12. In 42 B.C., Philippi was a Roman colony. Paul suffered many trials in this city (1 Thessalonians 2:2). Still, after his third missionary journey, Paul settled in Philippi for a time to minister to the believers.

Each chapter of Philippians carries a theme.

Chapter one speaks of Christ as the life of the believer. Chapter two refers to Christ as the mind of the believer. Chapter three describes Christ as the prize of the believer. And, chapter four deals with Christ as the joy of the believer.

As with every church, certain weaknesses existed among those in the body at Philippi. Paul was particularly concerned over a group who were struggling with anxiety.

A Tool of Satan

Anxiety is a problem that many believers experience. Most of us have experienced it at one time or another. Anxiety is a painful or apprehensive uneasiness of mind, usually over an impending event. It is a concern that disturbs the mind and keeps it in a state of being anxious. Very often, anxiety is a manifestation of fear that springs from our not being in control of the unknown. This feeling of a lack of control affects our emotions. Associating itself with fear, anxiety can paralyze our capacity for faith and enjoyment of the Christian life. In short, anxiety is the opposite of faith-rest.

Satan consistently comes as a thief, trying to steal peace and joy from the believer. Anxiety is one of the tricks he uses to steal away our joy

(John 10:10). The devil will plant a stronghold (of fear, for example) in the unconscious mind (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Anxiety then develops and usually leads to stress when a person doesn't realize that unbelief characterizes the problem.

Out of Control

No real Christian deliberately lives in unbelief. But we often make choices that reveal what we really believe: that God cannot take care of what is unknown to us. We are not in control, and that breeds feelings of anxiety.

At times, we desperately react and try to push ourselves back into control, attempting to act as God but with human solutions and carnal reasoning. Still, we find that we are not in control, and that unsettled feeling does not go away.

Multitudes of parents live in fear, characterized by restlessness, over the future of their children—especially their teenagers. The parents cannot control a child's behavior or spiritual decisions. Therefore, when a child strays into areas that are unknown and uncertain, something in a parent's heart becomes unsettled.

These unsettled feelings promote weariness and stir a restlessness that is dominated by fear. Fear produces feelings of insecurity. There may

be a desire to trust God, but the emotions find it very difficult to respond in confirmation to that faith. While the mind will do its best to use the knowledge of God for deliverance, the emotions fight that knowledge. Often, the result is that parents in this situation overreact to their children and try to control them. The knowledge of God, however, must become wisdom and life, or the believer will continue to be anxious.

Chapter Two

REJOICE BY CHOICE

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:4-7).

Clinical reports show that anxiety plays a major role in many strange diseases. These are diseases that begin in the psyche, things on the outside bothering people on the inside. Circumstances are coupled with an overwhelming sense of despair, which causes friction in our lives.

Anything that moves creates friction—a condition that can be very productive for the Chris-

tian. People who go forward with God will experience friction as they encounter obstacles. According to Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." God will deliver us unto people who will rub us the wrong way, fine-tuning us as we become more like Him. Friction is not necessarily bad. It just depends on how the believer deals with it.

In the face of obstacles thrown at him by Satan, a person who feels that he does not have things under control is a person who does not trust God's adequacy. God is more than adequate if we will allow Him to be preeminent and to control all of our anxieties and fears. *He* tells us how to operate; *He* will direct our paths! (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Simple Supplication: A Choice to Rejoice

It is very important that we do not allow our problems to become rooted in anxiety. If we do, we will always think about the problem. We will always be crying out; hearing message after message from the pulpit, but feeling that they do not benefit us. We may feel as if God has no answer for our situation.

We need to make a choice to rejoice. Anxiety

takes away our joy. Anxiety robs us of faith. Anxiety robs us of praise and thanksgiving. The choice we must make is to be anxious for nothing and to make our requests known to God, trusting that He will answer and provide for us.

Sounds very simple, doesn't it?

This simple choice takes away negative vibrations, negative energy, and the stress signals that try to unsettle us. Our faith in God pulverizes the subjective enemies sent by Satan, who is a thief.

The Power of Thanksgiving

In our prayers and supplications, we can begin to hear what God says through the Holy Spirit: "I will be your life. I will be your joy. Be anxious for nothing. Whatever the need is, pray. Ask Me for what you need—and do it with an attitude of thanksgiving" (see Philippians 4:6-7).

Having an attitude of thanksgiving reveals that we trust God. But when we live in anxiety over things that cause us paralyzing, energy-sapping negativity, we reveal that we do not trust God for the victory. We become distant and begin to cut off our communication with Him. As the pressure mounts, our anxiety reveals that we have refused to choose divine positives for

the vibrations in the electrical system of our nerves and souls.

We all go through difficulties. Still, though we do not enjoy those times, we do not have to live in the negative effects. We need to pray for each other and honor one another through the royal law of love. We can help each other to get through and to overcome anxiety.

Chapter Three

MAKE THE MOST OF MEDITATION

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

"Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

"For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

"Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

"But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

"Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Philippians 4:13-20).

Meditating on the nature and promises of God is one of the most beautiful things we can do as believers. Godly meditation is reiteration and reflection on the Scriptures in the quietness of fellowship with the Spirit. It reveals a silent submission to the Promiser. Meditation helps me to realize my true need for God's provisions and to take my daily needs to God, who will meet them all. Meditation also helps me to share in meeting the needs of others when I choose to live in a quiet state of submission, in humility, to God's love for them.

When I practice meditation on the Word of God, His promises begin to counter anxiety, stress, and restlessness. Unsettled issues of fear are answered. Meditation comes against them all with the quickness of the Word of God.

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

It isn't what I can do that matters. It is what Christ has done. It isn't what I can say, but what

Christ has said. Lingering stress and restlessness are answered because the Word of God is quick and powerful. That is how I get out of those self-destructive patterns. When I start believing in God's divine adequacy and I begin to think on the things that are true and lovely and of good report (Philippians 4:8): that is what makes all the difference.

Faithful Remembrances

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

"Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

"For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

"Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace" (Philippians 1:2-7).

It is quite a thing when I can say to you and

you can say to me: "I thank God for every remembrance of you." That is what I call a Finished Work outburst of love and of trust. It is the expression of fellowship in the church. In this passage, it is a term of endearment from Paul to the people at Philippi.

Paul had been thinking on the good things he remembered about those at Philippi. His meditations were sweet. He came to the place where he could thank God for every single thing that was going on in this church.

In this strange age of criticism in America, it would be hard for anyone to say of any church, "I thank God for every remembrance of you." Instead, "Well, I have seen some things I like and some things that I don't like. I do remember some good times, so I will try to dwell on those good things…." That is not a godly frame of mind at all.

Paul said, "I thank God for *every* remembrance of you." Why? Paul meditated on the Word of God and became released from his anxieties and fears. Restlessness and insecurity were overcome by the inspiration of faith in the God of love, the God Who cares—the God who will do it all when we allow Him to be God in our lives.

CONCLUSION

Anxiety is a feeling of uneasiness and agitation brought on by a fear that things are out of our control. When we are in a situation and we don't know what will happen, we feel frustrated. When a person is not in control of his life, he may love God, but he does not trust God.

Unintentionally, many of us attempt to play God, trying to solve our own problems in the energy of the flesh and ending up in frustration, in clouds of anxiety. We don't need to stay there. We just need to learn how to make a choice to rejoice and to think on the things that we have in Christ.

Whenever we start to feel anxious, consider these truths:

God always watches over us (Psalm 34:15). He always hears our prayers (1 Peter 3:12). He speaks to us through His precious Word (Deuteronomy 33:3). He supports us with His strong hands (John 10:28-29). He leads us by His

Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14).

Keep these things in mind, and not only will you defeat the one who wants to steal your joy, but also you will be filled to overflowing with joy unspeakable, full of glory (1 Peter 1:8).

Be Still and Know

That I Am God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

As Christians, it is guaranteed that we will face many challenges as we walk with Christ. This is a turbulent era for the human race at large. Changes in governments, natural disasters, age-old conflicts, and debilitating diseases are bringing heartache to so many. Our natural response to such difficulties is to scramble human resources—money, effort, and time—in a frantic search for answers.

This, however, is not God's way. He has said that in quietness and confidence we shall find our strength (Isaiah 30:15). Simply put, the Lord's desire is that we learn to be still and know that He is God in every situation. We can only do this if we come to fully understand who God is and recognize what we are not, as He allows certain things to bring us to the end of ourselves. By receiving the truth contained in this booklet, we will learn how to quiet ourselves before Him and be still, realizing that God knows

every way that we take and that He will bring us to His expected end.

Receive the Word of God very carefully as you read these pages. Practice academic discipline and spiritual concentration with God-consciousness. A soul that is not distracted will receive what God has to give in the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ.

Chapter One

HE GIVES QUIETNESS

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

"The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

"Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;

he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

"*Be still, and know that I am God*: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah" (Psalm 46).

Job 34:29*a* says, "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" If God gives quietness—undisturbed rest, undisturbed faith, and undisturbed refreshment for your situation right now—who can make trouble? Satan can't. The demons can't. Neither can the enemies of your soul make trouble for you.

"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalm 131:2). The Psalmist is saying, "I have made myself quiet by being weaned from that which would disturb me." He is weaned from anything that would bring problems and inward pressures to his life. His soul is a weaned soul because he has discovered divine quietness.

"…Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (Proverbs 1:33).

The tenth verse of Psalm 46 says, "Be still, and know that I am God." What a tremendous

passage! No matter what happens on earth—"Be still." Be still even in the midst of the earthquakes, the tornadoes, and the devastating things that come through the permission of God to ultimately bring about His perfect will for individuals who make their own choices. The Word of God says, "Be still, and know that I am God." His plan is perfect—be still.

The Strength of Standing Still

I received a letter recently from a seven-year-old boy. It told me that his mom was out shopping and his dad got a call from the doctor. The boy wasn't where he was supposed to be, and he overheard his dad say, "You mean I have cancer?" The father had not had a physical exam in four years and discovered that at age thirty-seven, cancer had spread throughout his body.

The boy came and told his dad what he had heard. The father just held him and wept. As he was holding the boy, the father wondered how he would tell his wife. After a time, the dad said to the son that the Lord's still, small voice was telling him to "Be still, and know that I am God." The Lord became their strength.

According to Isaiah 30:7, "[Our] strength is to sit still." Be still. Stand still, and know that

Someone loves you; remember that Someone died for you at Calvary. And if Jesus Christ did that while you were still a sinner, will He not do much more for you now that you are a child of God? Be still, and study to be quiet.

A young woman wrote to me of how her father died when she was young, and her mother married an alcoholic who screamed, cursed, and beat on the walls. When she grew up, she left home, wounded and hurt. She didn't think she could ever get married, but eventually she did marry a man from her home church.

After being married for two and a half years and having one child, this woman found out that her husband was bisexual. He finally left her to go live with a man.

She ended her letter with these words: "After the wounds, pains, sorrow, and heartache of living with my stepfather and then living in a bad marriage, I could still hear God's still small voice saying, 'Be still, and know that I am God,' because I had gone to church faithfully and I knew God."

Quietness Eases Pain

Medical studies have shown that when a person is quiet, even physical pain is greatly re-

duced. In other words, we can become so quiet and so relaxed that our soul will be undisturbed in the tranquillity of the manifestation of God's presence. Because we are in communion with God, we are able to be still.

After a recent string of tornadoes struck central Florida, a young mother said, "I lost my husband and my son. I still have my daughter because we were not at home when the tornado hit. We lost everything. But I love God. I love Jesus. Somehow, we know there is a reason for what happened. It will be all right, because God is on the Throne."

Be still, and know that He is God. Job 37:14 says so beautifully, "Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God."

Years ago in Maine, we had just built a new church for our assembly of one thousand people. Several of us had gone to the TV station for a live broadcast and then we got word that the church had been set on fire. We gathered there and wept together. Many stayed until three o'clock in the morning. I stayed up that night and just went walking. I saw that the stars were so beautiful, and then I watched the sun come up. At that moment, I sensed God saying to me, "Stand still, and see My wondrous works. Be still, and know

that I am God."

"Stand in awe and sin not, commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still" (Psalm 4:4). I remember the many nights of praying for my first wife as she lay dying from cancer. I would ask, "Why, God? Please work." He would answer me, "Stand in awe. Don't sin in your soul. Commune in your own heart with Me and stand still. Everything will be all right. Be still. Be still, and know that I am God." God has a beautiful way of teaching us how to be still, how to be quiet.

Chapter Two

LOVE IS GREATER THAN TROUBLE

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places; when it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters." (Isaiah 32:17-20*a*).

In the third chapter of the book of Ruth, Naomi told Ruth, "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall" (Ruth 3:18). In other words, sit still until the matter is dealt with.

It's beautiful to read through the Word of God and understand that God is saying, "My love for you is greater than your trouble. My provision for you is greater than your problems. My purpose for you is greater than your

heartache." Psalm 62:8 tells us to, "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us."

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still" (Psalm 107:29). God will calm the worst storms of your life; and the waves—the outside forces that come against you—shall be still.

It is precious to understand that the Lord allows the sun and the rain to come upon the just and the unjust. But to His own people, God says, "I will give you resting places, sweet habitations. Be still."

Finding Rivers of Peace

I spoke to a pastor who recently lost his church. Apparently there was a battle among some of the deacons. There was no immorality involved. Someone suggested that he call me. When I heard his voice on the phone, he sounded so troubled.

"People have attacked my wife, they've attacked me, and I don't know why," he said. "We had a growing church of three-hundred people. Over one hundred and fifty people had been added in two years. But now at least a hundred have left. They've voted me out and I don't

know why."

Here is what God had to say to him: "Be still. Just be still—it will work together for good. Be still and know that I am God. Stand still, and watch Me fight your battles. I want you to learn that when you're quiet, when you're resting, and when you cease from your labors (Hebrews 4:10), rivers of peace will flood your soul; fellowship with God will flood your heart. The Word will be a treasure in your earthen vessel. Walk by faith, not by sight. Do not look at the circumstances. Stand still and know that I am God."

Purged and Made Clean

A man came to me and said, "I am a Christian, but I fell into sin and started using drugs. I got AIDS from using an infected needle. I am tired and weary from it. I hate what I did and I am repenting. I felt that your church was a place where I could come to be loved and forgiven."

I prayed, "God, what do I give this man?"

The Lord answered, "Give him this, 'I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross,' (Isaiah 1:25). I will take away his sin."

I also told him, "From this point on, God's

hand will be on you. Ask God to give you a *rhema*—a specific word for you from the Bible. As you work out what God works within you through reverence, just be still. Be still, and know that God is God."

God so desires for us to learn to study to be quiet and to be still. Are your children going through things? Perhaps one or two of them are going through periods of rebellion and you don't understand why, even though you love them dearly. Maybe they are in deep, deep trouble.

Be still.

Have you failed? You are miserable over it because you really do love God deeply.

Be still, and know that He is God.

No matter what happens, the Word of God tells us to *be still*.

Chapter Three

HEARING HIS STILL, SMALL VOICE

Elijah enjoyed a tremendous victory, calling down fire from heaven for the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). Then he heard the news about Jezebel, a murderous woman with an evil heart who vowed that she would kill Elijah.

When Elijah heard the news, he ran a day's journey—about forty miles—into the wilderness. Weary from his journey, Elijah became very depressed, and lying down under a juniper tree, he fell asleep. God sent an angel to wake him up. The angel had baked a cake on hot coals. That was *real* angel's food cake—a meal that sustained Elijah for forty days and nights on his journey to Horeb, the mount of God. Finally, Elijah came to a cave and lodged there.

God asked him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9). Eight hundred prophets of

Baal had been destroyed through a thirty second prayer by this great prophet. The power of God had come down and fire consumed the sacrifice, even though it had been soaked with four barrels of water (see 1 Kings 18:31-40).

Then, God told Elijah to stand upon the mount before the Lord. A great wind came, breaking rocks into pieces, but God wasn't in the wind. Then there was an earthquake, but God wasn't in the earthquake. Next came a great fire, but God was not in the fire. After the fire came a still, small voice—and *God was in the voice*. Eventually, the Lord told Elijah that he wasn't alone, that there were seven thousand in Israel who had refused to bow to Baal (1 Kings 19:18).

God deals with circumstances and situations of adversity in quietness, not in condemnation. He speaks with a still, small voice through the Holy Spirit.

Beside Still Waters

"*He leadeth me beside the still waters*" (Psalm 23:2). David wrote Psalm 23 as he was hiding in the Judean Hills on a beautiful starlit night. It looked as though Absalom, David's son, was going to successfully defeat him and take over the throne and the kingdom. Despite the con-

spiracy Absalom had caused, David loved his son and wished he hadn't made the mistake of keeping him out of the palace for two years. But that night under the stars, David thought, "God is leading me beside still waters."

Perhaps David thought, "I'm not going to be depressed. I'm not going to be anxious. I'm not going to be discontented. I'm not going to give in to a driving spirit to know what's going on. He leads me beside still waters. It is a wonderful place of quietness, confidence, and assurance. I have undisturbed peace, and I will be still and quiet because I know God."

The greatest thing we can do is to let Jesus Christ fill up our souls with quietness and with the peace that passes understanding. Only as we understand this premise will it be possible for us to rest in Him, cease from our own labors, trust in His Word, fellowship with His Spirit, and begin to really believe Him, free at last from distractions.

Chapter Four

LIVING IN THE RESTING PLACE

"…Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you" (Numbers 9:8).

"Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers" (1 Samuel 12:7).

When we come to church, we have to be still before God so that the speaker can receive something from the Lord for the congregation. God does this, in Psalm 108:6, so that His "beloved may be delivered." He delivers the ones He loves.

Be quiet and let your silence reveal your faith. Let your trust reveal your belief in God. Let your heart ponder and meditate upon the awesomeness of God Almighty. Even as the waves of adversity are roaring and so many things are going on around you, *be still*.

In Matthew 8:23-27, Jesus is asleep in a boat with His disciples. A storm caused by demons is brewing and the waves begin to batter the boat. He is still sleeping as they cry out to Him, "Save us, lest we perish!" Jesus stands up and says to the storm, "Peace, be still." The wind ceases and there is a great calm (Mark 4:39).

This is the lesson: Even in the worst possible storm, Jesus could be quiet; He could be still. Therefore, we can be still. In Mark 4:35, Jesus had said to His disciples, "Let us pass over unto the other side." In essence He was saying, "We are going to the other side, no matter what kind of storm the demons produce. It won't matter how bad the waves are or how much water is coming into the boat."

Why was Jesus able to rise, speak to the storm, and produce a great calm? Because He was still. His humanity was sleeping, confident that His Father would get them to the other side.

God will always get us to the other side. He will always do what He has promised to do. Look to Jesus Christ and receive His calmness, His undisturbed peace and rest. Put away pre-occupation with situations and circumstances. Forsake the details, needs, and wants of life and come to God. Hear God say, "Be still. Just be

still, and know that I am God."

His Yoke Is Easy

"My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace" (Jeremiah 50:6).

I received a letter from a pastor who is now in a nursing home and listens to our radio program. He wrote, "It hurts to be here in this nursing home with no family. I preached for thirty-five years, but here I am alone, suffering with a deteriorating condition."

I wrote back, "You are a precious man of God, but you have forgotten your resting place." Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Don't forget your resting place when the storms come and when the waves toss you to and fro. Jesus Christ will calm the storm. If you hear negative news, be still. Don't be distressed. Don't think negatively toward the promises of

God. No matter what you may encounter, be still and find that quiet resting place. Enjoy the security of your sure dwelling place in Christ.

God's plan is not for defeat, but for abundant life. Even if you have lost everything, He will lead you by the still waters.

CONCLUSION

"Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding" (Proverbs 14:33*a*). "Wisdom" here implies quietness and peace. Wisdom rests in the heart of those who implement and apply the Word with understanding. It doesn't take much to disturb some Christians. When bad news comes, they are unable to say "He leads me beside still waters," because wisdom only works in the heart when categorical doctrine is appropriated with understanding.

Study to be quiet; learn God's truth so thoroughly that it becomes an immediate response to any difficulty. Learn to resist the devil and he will flee. This is a promise from the Lord.

Above all else, be still, and know that He is God. Let quietness and confidence be your strength as you stand. God will fight for you and then He will say, "Go forward." Learn to stand still, and He will fight for you so that you can move on in the perfect plan He has for you.

Be Still

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:17-18).

"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10).

Thousands of Christians hold the truth in unrighteousness. To "hold" here speaks of suppressing and stifling. It means that the truth is being hindered. These people, the majority in some churches, do it by talking and talking day-in and day-out. They hinder the flow of God's life by focusing their conversations on people and situations rather than exalting the Word and all that God has done.

But the Word of God says, "I will be exalted

among the heathen, and I will be exalted on earth. And because My Word is true, I want you to be still." The Hebrew grammar of Psalm 46:10 indicates that this action is continued progressively with a spiritual application.

As you will see in this booklet, God gave doctrine simply so that every mouth would be closed. As you read these pages, my hope is that you will come to understand and know the great importance of being still before Him.

Chapter One

BE SENSITIVE TO THE STILL, SMALL VOICE

"And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

"And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

"And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

"And after the earthquake a fire; but the

LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

"And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

"And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

"And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria:

"And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

"And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.

"Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal,

and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1Kings 19:9-18).

Elijah came down from Mount Carmel and walked some twenty-eight miles. After he went to sleep, the angels awoke him. The wind came, then the earthquake, then the fire. But God was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire. Elijah saw the fire as he approached the caves, and there God revealed Himself to Elijah in a still small voice: "Be still and know that I am God."

Keep Your Opinions to Yourself

There are certain things God does not want said. Yet, some still talk matters over with their best friends, as ninety percent of us do. But here God is telling us to be still. Do not offer your opinion. God, who is in you, is not interested in what you think about these things.

Some people go on and on about an organization's finances, and these people have never run a business, yet they talk about how to manage someone else's accounts. God has one thing to say those people: Be still. Study to be quiet (1 Thessalonians 4:11). Learn to work industriously, and mind your own business.

This is what I do when I trust God with all

my heart. I refuse to lean on my own understanding, I acknowledge Him in all my ways, and He directs my path (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Be still, God is saying to us. He did not communicate with Elijah in the wind, in the earthquake, or in the fire. He revealed Himself in the still, small voice.

Chapter Two

FIND THE RESTING PLACE

Many Christians, even pastors and missionaries here and overseas, can serve God in the flesh. It is revealed by the way they refuse to humble themselves in a local assembly. Some even have gifts from God, but they walk in the flesh instead of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).

These people are not quiet resting places (Isaiah 32:18). They are not still before God. Human nature becomes cultural and not spiritual. They carry on with what they call "the boldness and frankness of human opinion" and use the Scriptures all the time. But they are not still, and they don't realize that God does not speak in the fire. With Elijah, He spoke *after*, outside of the fire, with a still, small voice.

I have had amazing times recently, riding for miles and being quiet, being still. I have learned some good things from people who use good words, but I am just still, because the Word of

God says, "Be still, and if you are still, I will be exalted among the heathen, and I'll be exalted upon the earth. So be still."

The Potter Forms the Clay

"The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

"Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

"Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

"And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it" (Jeremiah 18:1-3).

The Word of God says that He told the prophet to go down to the potter's place to cause him to hear the Word of God. So He led Jeremiah down to the potter's place. There, he saw the potter hold the clay, and the vessel that he made was marred, so he decided to make a new vessel.

Now that does not mean what some people say it does about Israel, even though it can be applied. That is not even talking about being remade. This is referring to people living the Christian life who are not quiet before God,

doing things in religious obedience to Jesus Christ, but they are not still in their soul.

In quietness and confidence is our strength (Isaiah 30:15). Faithfulness must be the believer's substance. Loyalty should be his premise and love his correlation. When grace is revealed in his dynamics, Jesus Christ is the One he glorifies. This operation works from the inside out (Colossians 3). It is not based on opinions and observations. It is not stimulated by sight on the outward appearance. That would be holding the truth in unrighteousness.

"Did you know?" this one says.

"Yes, but did you know…" comes the answer.

"Did you *know*…?"

"Yes, but did *you* know…?"

"And did you know…?"

What a conversation! They have to transgress all over the nature of God just to keep that garbage bin going with the fires of hell.

But God says, "Be still."

Eventually, those whose hearts are not one with God's heart will be revealed. Circumstances change and people's hearts are revealed. In the meantime, God wants us to just be still.

Chapter Three

THE VALUE OF QUIETNESS AND LONGSUFFERING

"And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire….

"…As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake" (Ezekiel 1:4-28).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

"Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:21).

In Ezekiel 1:4-5, there is a fire and there is brightness. Out of that fire came four living

creatures, and they were looking in four different directions—east, west, north, and south—representing a heart of compassion toward the lost in the world. If we compare spiritual with spiritual, we can see these four living creatures were coming out of the spirit of burning (Isaiah 4:4). The Holy Spirit is the spirit of burning. It is the Holy Spirit's ministry to burn away the dross and to take away the gross products of the flesh.

Then there is a wheel inside the wheel. The appearance of it (Ezekiel 1:16) is like the color of beryl. This points to Lucifer in his perfection in the Garden of Eden. Lucifer had sardius, topaz, diamond, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle all set in gold. In Ezekiel 28:13, God says that Lucifer was covered with all these precious stones.

Yes, before he fell, Lucifer wore these stones as a covering in the Garden of Eden, and each stone correlated with a fruit of the Spirit. One part of that covering was beryl. Beryl is also referred to in the wheel inside the wheel, and it represents longsuffering that is the fruit of the Spirit. Love is represented by sardius. Joy, by topaz. Peace, by diamonds. Beryl is longsuffering. Martin Luther once said that the most

amazing thing he received from God was His patience. Without God's patience, we would die and be in hell. So you can see that longsuffering is very important.

Longsuffering is so important in considering what we say. Our words should be as beryl. They should be as choice gems that reflect God's attitude of longsuffering.

I would love to have a wheel inside the wheel that gives the appearance of beryl. Beryl is the patience and longsuffering of Christ. Satan had it (Ezekiel 28:13), and in Galatians 5:22, longsuffering is the fourth fruit of Spirit. Satan had every one of those precious stones as his covering before he fell (Ezekiel 28:13-14)—every single precious stone.

Just as the precious gems covering the priest were rooted in gold, the fruit of the Spirit is rooted in the deity of Jesus Christ and the fire of the Holy Spirit.

If there is anything I want, it is to know when to be quiet and to learn to operate only when I am filled with the Spirit. This is the way to be on top of every subject that I need to know. Be still.

"Elijah, you think I'm going to come in the fire or earthquake or wind? No. When you get

at the end of the cave, I will come by a still small voice." Why a still, small voice? God wants every soul to study to be quiet and to be filled inwardly with the Holy Spirit.

Lot lived by externals of projection, stimulations, and superficial subjectivity. That is interesting to note because he and his family found it very comfortable to live in Sodom and Gomorrah. He did not discern what was going on around him, and he had to be dragged out of the midst of that sinful city. His wife never did overcome her attachment. She turned back as the city was being destroyed, and she was turned into a pillar of salt.

Just as Lot and his family grew attached to their environment, so many Christians grow attached to wordiness, never realizing what it means to be still.

Think of These Things

"Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, if they have any kindness, any virtue, any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

These words of Paul are very important for our subject. To "think," in the Greek text, means to go right on—even in your sleep—thinking of

those truths in the objectivity of God, in the subjectivity of the Holy Spirit, in the work of Jesus Christ inside of your soul. Think progressively on those things.

I have got to test everything I think and what I plan to say according to all of God's standards. You can have truth and not grace (John 1:16). My thoughts and my words have to be pure. They need to be just. They need to be kind. They need to be lovely.

"Lovely" means that Jesus Christ makes the Body of Christ His object of love. Every Christian alive is the object of Jesus Christ's love, and we don't have to go far for that. According to 1 John 4:17-19, we are the perfection of God in Christ. It is interesting to me that God can fellowship with the people who are the object of His perfect love.

I can test according to truth. I can test people and commitment. I can test a vision. I can test God's people on the basis of things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely. Does what they are saying to me have virtue? Virtue means that what is being said excels in everything from God's Holy Spirit and love.

Be still.

Be still.

Be still. Make up your mind right now that you are going to be still, as far as the words that should never be said—words that do not come out of the quietness of divine dynamics, in the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit, in the filling of God-likeness. Whatever you do, do not hold the truth in unrighteousness. That is the most dangerous thing in the world.

Find Rest in the Body

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

"If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents" (Song of Solomon 1:7-8).

God gives the flock a place to rest, a place where we can be still. We will be judged by how we responded to the opportunity the grace of God and all that He has given us. He has given us His love. He has given us fantastic teachers, and He has given us godly leaders. He has given us the Word of God, which is the premise of creation. As we learn, we will be evaluated at the Bema Seat for how much we used what God

sent to us.

The shepherds feed those who are by the kid's tent, and the people bring the young sheep by the tents of the shepherds. They believe in Christian training and Christian education, even if it means sacrifice. The Body of Christ is the love of God perfected when we realize Who is inside of us.

These verses, in Song of Solomon 1:7-8, refer to the Body of Christ. This is not just about Christianity in general, but it is about the Body of Christ coming together to have fellowship around the Word of God. It is about resting in your footsteps as you join in that fellowship. It speaks of being hid. People don't see "you" because you are hid; but they watch your footsteps and the impression you make with what comes out of you, because what goes in has to come out. They recognize and respond to your stillness in God.

Be still. That is the only way to live before God and before people.

CONCLUSION

If there is anything I hate, it is all this talk , talk, talk—too many words with no redeeming substance. Let's learn to be still.

It would be interesting to see two or three people go out and say anything they want to say but have fantastic quietness in their exchange. "Quietness and confidence is your strength," the prophet Isaiah said in the thirtieth chapter.

I believe with all my heart that this is true about every Christian who hears the whispers of God, who reveals the nature of God, who obeys the grace of God, who reflects the love of God, and whose heart rejoices against judgment with mercy (James 2:13). It is my conviction that *these* believers know how to be still.

Be still.

Be still.

Be still.

Be still.

Be absolutely still, and know that He is God.

If we do this, He will be exalted among the heathen, He will be exalted upon the earth.

Beautiful for Situations

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

So often in the Christian church, believers think they know something. Yet, the Word of God says we know nothing (1 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 8:2). The Word of God makes it clear that when you *think* you know something, you know nothing. The person who really knows something doesn't think he knows anything, yet, because he experiences the life of faith, he reveals the mystical humanity of Jesus Christ through the grace of God and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

People who really know God never think they know much. The more I learn the Bible, the less I feel that I know. The more our ministry is used, the less I feel we are being used. We are getting to know the holiness of God, the terrific scope of God in comparison to self. That knowledge doesn't make me condemn myself, but it does make me acknowledge the reality of my nothingness so that I can live in the reality of His

fullness and His oneness with me, by grace through faith in Him.

It is in this faith walk that we will all get to know the beauty of His holiness—that He is, indeed, beautiful for our situations.

Chapter One

THE MOUNTAIN OF HIS HOLINESS

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness.

"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" (Psalm 48:1-2).

The only place that we can praise God in our lives experientially is in the mountain of His holiness. I can praise God there, but I cannot really praise God anywhere else.

What does it mean to be in the mountain of His holiness? It simply means we accept the fact that we are crucified, buried, resurrected, and ascended in retroactive positional truth. In other words, we are seated above, with Christ, even when we don't feel that we are, because, according to Ephesians 2:5-6, it is a fact.

To accept these truths is to live in the moun-

tain of God's holiness on the basis of His Word. Therefore, we can praise Him in that heavenly position, regardless of what we are going through on earth. If I understand my position with Christ and in Christ, then I will understand what I can do from that position in my experience on the earth.

"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" (Psalm 48:2).

Beautiful for situations—this is what I want to concentrate on in these pages. I want to mention several things as God gave them to me.

God Needs You Where You Are

God needs you in your situation.

Weeping and crying, a mother came to me and said, "Pastor, I cannot stand the things I am going through any longer. My husband cannot get a job. We cannot get state aid. We do not have any money. We don't have groceries. I have loved Jesus for a long time, but I just can't take it any longer."

I wept with her because she touched me with her need. But I just said, "God needs you in your situation." She didn't understand that, and she wept. She must have been with me for over an

hour, yet she didn't understand what I said.

At the end, I prayed with her some more, and on her knees God revealed to her what I had said in the first two minutes of our counseling session: "God needs you in your situation." She started to get up and went right up against the wall in the office and said, "I guess God needs me right where I am, and I'm not to leave my husband though he is a drunk. God needs me." And I said, "That's right. God needs you in your situation."

Why did God need her in that situation? Without her being in that situation God would not be there, because she was the only representative of God in that particular situation. Those children would not have had Jesus Christ in that house without this woman. That drunken husband would not have had Jesus Christ to look at and to challenge his drunkenness if this woman were not there.

God needs you in your situation, because without you God wouldn't be in that situation. And when you think of that, the situation will become wonderful. He is beautiful for situations.

Our Need for the Situation

Not only does God need you in that situa-

tion, but you need that situation, because without that situation you wouldn't be pressed out of measure.

Paul said when he was getting ready to die (at least he thought he was going to die) that he was "pressed out of measure" and that we have "the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:8-9).

What did Paul do? He went to the Cross (2 Corinthians 4:8-12). Yes, you need that situation you are in, because that situation takes out of you everything your adamic nature wants.

There may be a lot of good things in your life from Adam—a lot of very good things that are clean and neat, but they are Adam's life and they pertain to Adam's nature, which is rejected by God. All of that must come to the surface. You see, situations bring things that are deeply rooted to the surface. Now, there is a lot of good in your life and there is a lot of evil in your life, but you need that situation in your life to bring both the good and evil to the surface. Then you can look at it and realize what it is, take it to the Cross, get rid of it, and enter into the life of Resurrection. I am not interested in who did wrong. I know this: For the believer in Jesus Christ, all

things are of God (2 Corinthians 5:18). I also know this: All things are for your sake (2 Corinthians 4:15).

God allows the building materials to be late. He allows someone to do a poor job. He allows someone not to live up to his agreement. He allows someone else to forget about you. It was important for God to have it happen so you can see that you really are not resting in Christ. You are really not in love with God alone. You are really not trusting in the sovereignty of God.

God allows situations to reveal what is rooted deep within your heart. He wants to bring the deep root of your old nature up to the surface so that you can take a look at it and realize what you are made of on the inside of your mind. Had He not brought the situation to your mind, then you would have never witnessed the revelation of your self.

God Ordains Situations

So many people think they are spiritual when there is so much stuff inside of them that has never been dealt with, crucified, or judged by God, experientially, through the Cross. So many people blame their situations, yet God—before the foundation of the world—ordained

that they needed those situations.

You will never become like Jesus Christ unless you go through situations. A lot of good inside of you is rejected by God. This is a "forbidden" truth, rejected by many. Still, it must be revealed—not just the evil, but the good. All of it must be brought to the surface. All the poison inside of you must be brought out and expressed through your wicked temper in the midst of pressures so you can see that before God, you are sick—mentally ill.

The situation that God brought into your life was to show you what you are like: You do not believe in God. You don't trust in Jesus. You are not a person of faith. You do not have the love of God, as it is described in 1 Corinthians 13. You are not operating in the grace of God that reigns through every single thing (Romans 5:21). You don't have perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3). You don't know what it is to have the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Instead of trusting God without leaning on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5), you reveal your impatience, your anxiety, your perplexities. You reveal what you are *really* like. And if these pressures didn't come upon you, you could fake it. But God makes sure situations come really to

find you out.

The Situation Will Find You Out

Your situations will find you out. I could come to the pulpit and bluff it if I wanted to. I could put on my Sunday face. But when the pressure gets rough, there is no bluffing. I am going to be what I am. The situation finds me out and reveals who I am.

If I am filled with God, a love that thinks no evil will come out of me. A love that will cover someone else's sins will come out of me. A love that will go down to the lowest depths to help someone who has done me wrong will come out of me. If I am filled with God, I will have divine quietness (Isaiah 32:17). If I am filled with God, I will know that everything will work out perfectly, and I will have the serenity of God's sovereignty operating in the humanity of my being.

But if you are not filled with God, you will go to the Tree of Knowledge and say, "He should have done this and he should have done that. I am sick and fed up, and I can't stand it any longer." You will show exactly what you are like in what your heredity has made you, in your environment, and through your own free volition. Your situation will find you out.

The things that happen to you are not accidental. Someone didn't make a mistake. You were not cheated. God ordained that He would send the person He knew would do something wrong to you. God used that person, sending him to you to reveal what you are like.

The Situation Needs You

God needs you in the situation. You need the situation. The situation will find you out; and, the situation needs you.

Let me illustrate it. Here is a community that totally rejects Jesus Christ. God's people have gone through a lot of persecution. For years and years, that area has been nothing but a completely dead area for God. There is no life. There is very little light. Yet, several folks have gone up there and stayed there preaching God's Word. I don't know how many people they have, but they have a full-time ministry. They are going door to door and winning souls. And they have gone through many nights of tears. Many times they wonder if they should stay. "What is it all about? Is it worth it? Can we do anything here?" they ask God. "We have knocked on doors and so very little seems to happen."

The situation needs them, because someone must reveal God in that area. God is in them, and if they left the area, the life and manifestation of God would leave. God Himself can't leave, but the expression of God would leave along with those dedicated, spiritual people.

The meaner the situation, the more it needs you. The meaner the person, the more you are needed. The worse people treat you, the more they need you. Stop and think of that. Isn't that true? The uglier the situation, the greater the need is for me to minister life to it. Patience first, then His love and His life. The more difficult the situation is, the more necessary it is for you and I to stay in it. The situation needs us.

So, if you think things are getting really bad, then remember that the worse things get, the greater the opportunity you have to be used by God to reveal the fruit of the Holy Spirit, through patience, love, and grace. You see, the more difficult the situation gets, the greater the opportunity to just minister God. It will be a true test of whether you are really ministering God if you can stick it out and let God give you faith-rest through prayer, peace, love, fellowship, and the operational Word of God in your life. If you can do that, you can see where God

will continue to be revealed.

Consider 1 Corinthians 13:8, which says, "Charity never faileth." You have a promise from God that if you stay in that situation—and it may take a number of years in some cases—love will never fail the situation. Jesus is beautiful for situations because you cannot exhaust His love! That is why He is beautiful. When we are at our worst, He reveals more grace. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20*b*). The worse the situation gets, the more grace abounds, and that makes Him beautiful for the situation.

No matter how bad the situation is, God has ordained something good out of it (Romans 8:28). By the way, when you read an often quoted verse such as Romans 8:28, do not think that you already know it. Think of it as though you never heard it before.

Every time we open the Word of God, we must listen to it as if we have never heard it before. After hearing the same information thirty times, we only retain approximately 10 percent of what we hear. After a time, that figure is reduced to three percent. We are able to recall many principles, but as far as specific knowledge, we remain ignorant. That is why it is so

important to keep reiterating things until the amplification of great principles becomes so supreme in our minds that we enter into the essence of those thoughts.

We know nothing unless we are able to experience what we need at the moment we need it. Let's say that you could quote 1 Corinthians 13 verbatim and you have recited it thousands of times. If you went through the morning without experiencing that chapter, then you don't *know* 1 Corinthians 13, as far as God goes. Now, take a verse like 1 John 5:12, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life," and John 10:10*b*, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." If I experience the abundant life of the indwelling Christ today, then I *know* those verses. You see, my quoting the words means nothing, but the fresh experience of those words in my life reveals the wisdom of knowing that God is beautiful for my situations.

Chapter Two

SOMETHING GOOD IS GOING TO HAPPEN

I can think of absolutely amazing things that God has done to make something good out some something terrible. He will strip us through circumstances and situations and then bring us forth as meek and Spirit-filled giants. He will strip us of our external supports. He strips away the outward. He strips from us everything we hold dear, but only to get close to us. I am telling you that God will make something good out of any bad situation. We can trust Him to do that. He has promised to do that. He is beautiful for our situations.

Jesus will not quit a bad situation. Let me illustrate it. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus said, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." In Hebrews 13:5, He says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The worst we can do is grieve Him, according to Ephesians 4:30.

Think of it! In a lifetime, think of how many times we have treated Jesus badly. Yet, He never leaves us, and He never forsakes us. He will not leave a bad situation.

Realize that if Jesus remains in bad situations, eventually He is going to win. He will bring something good out of it. He will do whatever He can do without violating human volition. He will do something good with that bad situation. The situation is in God's hands (Psalm 31:15).

Everything Is in His Hands

If the spikes are going into your hands, if they are burning your body with fire, the situation is in God's hands. It is not in Satan's hands. It is not in the world's hands. They may hold the hammer that puts in the spikes, but God holds eternity that reveals the truth.

There is no possible way to equate His power with any power in the world. Those of the world are powerless over us and our situation is in God's hands. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." In Psalm 31:5, my times are in God's hands.

Regardless of what is going on, the situation

is in God's hands. I don't have to worry or fret. According to Psalm 37:1, I can have absolute perfect trust because the situation and my times are in God's hands (Psalm 48:1-2).

Whatsoever I do, I can do all to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31). With every temptation, He will provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). Therefore, by the grace of God, my situation is in God's hands.

Someone may have a gun pointed at me and say, "I'm going to kill you!" Nevertheless, my situation is not in their hands, it is in God's hands. His perfect sovereign will provides for me. Why? Because all things are for my sake.

I am being conformed to Jesus Christ in His appointed situations. Situations do not control situations, because God has ordained the situations. The situations do not control God. God needs you in your situation. The situation needs you. And the situation will reveal that God is beautiful in the situation.

God with Us

If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior and you are born again, then Christ is in you. There is no greater thing on the earth today than to have Jesus Christ living inside of you.

That means God is in you. So, if you are in a situation, and God is in you, then God is in the situation.

If all power is given to Him on earth (Matthew 28:18), if all things are of God (2 Corinthians 5:18), if all things are for your sake (2 Corinthians 4:15), and if all things work together for good to them that love God so they can be conformed to His image (Romans 8:28-29)—if all this is true and you understand that God placed you in that situation, you can be sure that God, who is in you in your situation, will give you the most beautiful, precious presence of His love.

The amazing thing is that people seem to think that the devil puts them in situations or that the world places them in situations. But God, knowing how your free volition will choose, ordains circumstances to reveal who you are and who He is. He does it to let you know what He will do for you as you trust Him in the situation. So, God is in you in every situation. He will never leave you, He will never forsake you, and He will go with you until the end of the world (Hebrews 13:5 and Matthew 28:20).

In the Furnace

When the three Hebrew boys were placed in the fiery furnace, the Fourth Man was seen walking with them (Daniel 3). God was in them and with them in that situation. The fire did not hurt them, and they did not come out of the furnace with the smell of fire on them. That means that you and I will not come out with the smell of the trial, with the murmuring of the trial.

There was no smell of smoke on their clothes. Not a single hair was singed! Not a single thing happened to them. They did not express the pressure of the situation, because the situation had no control over them. The furnace was turned up seven times hotter than normal, and yet it had no power or dominion to affect their minds, their emotions, their speech, their smell, the odor of their clothes, or the look on their faces. Not a single thing could touch them. Why? Because God was in them in their situation.

Oh, it would have been so difficult for the three to face the fiery furnace without Jesus Christ. In Daniel 3:17, they said, "O, king, no matter what you do to us, it is all right with us. If God wants to deliver us, He can. But if He

doesn't deliver us, that's okay too. So, do to us as you will."

The three Hebrew boys walked by pure faith in that furnace. They never expressed any negative reaction, they just went right in. As they went inside, the king looked, his men looked, and they were amazed.

"Oh, my! The fire isn't burning them!" they must have said. "It isn't hurting them. They are just walking around in there—and there is a Fourth Man! We bound them in the furnace before we turned it on, but now they are loose." The king looked and he was amazed. He said, "Oh, surely, their God is God!" The king got a revelation of God because these boys came out of the situation without murmuring (1 Corinthians 10:10), by living in faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), with love shed abroad in their hearts (Romans 5:5), with perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3), with grace (Romans 5:21), with knowledge and wisdom (Colossians 1:9), with Jesus Christ being ministered and manifested to others (2 Corinthians 4:10).

When you come out of difficult situations with no complaining, resentment, bitterness, frustration, or mental attitude sin, but with a good countenance, people will say, "Truly, God

is their God, and their God is the true God." When you come out of situations untouched by the circumstances, unhindered by the paralytic forces of the enemy, then people will have to say that truly, Jesus Christ is the God.

God All Around

Realize that God is in you in every situation. When Paul and Silas were bound in jail at midnight, Paul knew that God was inside of Him. He knew that he could sing and praise God (Acts 16:25). He knew that God was closer to him than anyone he could see and touch. He knew that God was closer to him than anyone physical. He knew that God's breath made him alive. He knew that God's life protected him. He knew that God's providence was all around him and that Jesus was inside him, to the right, to the left, behind him, in front of him, and above him (Psalm 139).

Paul knew that God was all around him, and he had no fear. He didn't have to complain. Why should he? He was completely involved in God. He was secure in the sovereignty of an omnipresent God. He had been redeemed within by God, so he started to sing. Paul had the security of knowing that God was inside of him.

Why should I be afraid? I shouldn't be, because I have a God who will never leave me nor forsake me. In Hebrews 13:5, there are two things He said He will not do. First He said, "I will never leave thee." Can you grasp what that means? Can you comprehend it? "I will never leave thee." Never, never, *never*! This means that no matter what I say or do, He will never leave me. It is an unconditional promise.

In the meaning of the original Greek text, "never" is repeated three times for emphasis. "I will never, never, *never* leave thee." The next part of that promise is so beautiful, too. It is a revelation of the first part of the promise: "I will never forsake thee." "I will never leave thee" is a promise that He is always going to be with us. But, "I will never forsake thee" means that if you utterly go against God to forsake Him, still He would never forsake you with His life.

Can you see Paul in the situation? He is bound in jail, yet he is thinking, "Oh, God will never, never, never forsake me!" That is sovereign grace. That is sovereign love, sovereign mercy, and sovereign peace.

He will go with us always (Matthew 28:20). "No matter what happens," He said, "I will go with you always, even to the end of the world."

Knowing this, we know that every situation will reveal that God is beautiful.

Chapter Three

LIFE COMES OUT OF DEATH

I remember the funeral service for Pastor Sherm Stevens' four beautiful girls who died in a fire. I knew they were in heaven. But when I spoke at that funeral, I looked down at the four little white caskets and I was very weak because of the compassion I had for the family. I didn't think I could start the funeral that day, not because we were mourning the loss, but just because of love.

Love does not get offended, but love does get hurt and wounded. You can grieve love, but you cannot offend love. Seeing those four caskets wounded the precious love I had for those girls because it stopped our fellowship on earth.

That is, I think, the reason Jesus wept at Lazarus' grave. Though Lazarus had gone to be with the Father, Jesus realized what it meant to be separated during the interim. Love was wounded because it was separated.

Love had been wounded the day of the funeral because four precious children weren't here anymore. I was so deeply blessed when I looked down at the family because God was beautiful for that situation. Pastor Sherm had said to me, "If I put up my hand that means that God wants me to say something." So I looked, and his hand went up. I called him to the pulpit, and he gave a testimony to all the unsaved people there. Everyone there knew that God was beautiful for that situation. So that situation revealed how beautiful God is.

Can you understand this? I hope that you let God reveal how beautiful He is for situations, because that is exactly what the Lord wants to do.

I was thinking of the apostle Peter when he was being martyred, hung upside down on a cross, according to historic accounts. Peter had failed God so many times, but the last few years of his life he went into a tremendous growth and spiritual maturity. When the mob tried to crucify Peter, he said, "Don't do it with my head up, but put my head down. I am not worthy to be crucified as my Lord was."

When Peter had just a little bit of life left in him, he glorified God with a calmness and a

sweetness that only supernatural power could work inside of him. With his last words he could have said, "Oh, thank God that as many times as I failed Him, I can die for Him like this." Peter revealed in his death that God was beautiful for his situation.

God Stands with Us

In Acts 7:54-60, as Stephen was being stoned by the angry mob, he looked up and saw heaven opened to him. His prayer for his persecutors was, "Lay not this sin to their charge." Stephen saw Jesus in that situation, and Jesus was beautiful as He stood up in heaven. God stood up in heaven because one person on earth was suffering.

Think of the millions of people on earth, yet while one deacon was suffering, God was personally beautiful for that situation. Stephen did not feel the stones. He did not sense the pain. He was not fearful or afraid. He knew why he was there. Seeing Jesus, he looked up and said, "There He is! He is standing at the right hand of God" (see Acts 7:56).

When you can see that Jesus Christ is beautiful for situations, you will not blame anyone for the situation, but you will want them to be for-

given in it. When you see that Jesus is beautiful for situations, you will not blame anyone, but you will say, "Lay not this sin to their charge." You will just count it a privilege that you can see how beautiful God is for your situation.

Green with Mercy

Don't trust in the flesh, circumstances, or people. If you do, you will be like a scrub in the desert, a person who cannot see good when it comes. That person just complains, and he sees everything else but God.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

Oh, glory to God for the man who trusts Jesus to be beautiful for situations. This man knows the Man who is in him in that situation; and he knows that God placed him in that situation. This man will reveal that Jesus is beautiful, and he will not see the heat when it comes. Why? He knows God!

The man who trusts in God will only see God's divine ability to never change. This man's leaves shall not wither, but they will continue to be green because he is planted by the waters, and his roots are spread out by the rivers. To me this means that everything I do today has a root. If my roots are spread out by the Holy Spirit, the rivers of living water keep the production of my life "green," which speaks of mercy.

Take advantage of who God is and all that the Word is and produce green, fresh living fruit. Then, even in times of drought, your life will go on producing and your fruit shall not cease. The greenness continues when there is no rain, and the sun cannot wither the fruit away.

After Stephen's death, Saul started on the road to Damascus, totally convicted by what he saw in the situation. Seeing how beautiful Stephen's God was in that situation brought Saul to the place of conviction, where God could reveal Himself. As He did so, Saul was saved.

Instead of fighting the causes, fall in love with the real cause of life. Instead of fighting the adversaries, fall in love with the One who has power over them. We must learn this lesson and get to know Jesus in the way we are supposed to know Him in our situation and reveal to peo-

ple that God is beautiful for that situation. God needs us to trust Him in every situation, proving that He is trustworthy in situations.

Gene, a member of my church, was once rushed to the hospital. He didn't have any question about why God sent him in there. He got to the hospital and he hadn't been there very long when a man he knew came in. This other man was living in fear and worry, and he needed God. Gene led him to Christ. God needed Gene to trust Him in that situation to prove that God is worthy.

God Is Equal to Every Situation

Finally, God is equal to every situation. When the woman was taken in adultery, the Pharisees were going to stone her. They had the law on their side, but she had grace on her side. They had the letter of the Scriptures on their side, but she had grace on her side. And that grace said to her, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). Yes, she was guilty, but God's grace was equal to her guilt. He was equal to that terrible situation. Can you imagine being caught in adultery and then being brought before a group of men? Can you imagine the shame? Can you imagine her there be-

fore the Messiah? They had stones ready to kill her because that is what the Law says to do.

Jesus said, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." The eldest down to the youngest got up and walked out.

"No one has condemned you, have they?" Jesus asked her.

She wept and said, "No man, Lord."

Jesus did not condemn her. Instead, He said, "I not only forgive you, but I will forget it as of right now." God's grace was equal to her sin and her guilt.

He is equal to meet all pains and wounds. He is equal to meet the need of sin and death, and He is equal to meet the need of fear. God is equal to meet the need of every situation.

When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, all the demons were there and pressed Him on every side. The Son almost bled to death. Jesus feared He could not die for the sins of the world. He feared He would die prematurely, before Calvary, and Jesus cried out to the Father, "Save me."

In terrible weakness, Jesus was being attacked by millions of demons. He knew He had to make it to the Cross, and the Father heard His cry. The Father had to answer Him lest He

would die.

At Calvary, the Father would not hear the Son. Because our sins were upon Jesus, the Father would have to turn His back on Him. But, in the Garden of Gethsemane, because the Son was so fearful that He would die before He got to the Cross, the Father heard Him. God was equal to that situation. And when they put the nails in His hands and in His feet, He could say, "Father, forgive them." His grace was equal to His suffering. His mercy was equal to His pain. His faith equaled the circumstances without the Father's presence manifested there.

Even with the Father turning His back on Him, the Son's faith was equal to the pain and rejection caused by bearing our sins upon His body. The Son's faith was equal because He loved us so much. His love for the world was so strong that even with all the pain—the nails in His hands and feet, the crown of thorns pressed into His brow, His back torn up by lashes from the cat-o'-nine tails—His love for us equaled the terrible, terrible pain of the situation.

Not only was there physical punishment in the extreme sense, but also there were millions of demons attacking His mind. Satan tried to kill Jesus mentally and physically. Satan tried to end

it before He could die and voluntarily give up His life for us. Yet Jesus' love for us was real, even without God's presence or His fellowship or the Holy Spirit interceding. In His humanity, His love was real, and God was equal to that situation.

CONCLUSION

If God was equal to the situation on Calvary, how can I ever have another problem, when the resurrected, ascended God is here living His life through me and through you? He came forth from the grave after He died, proving that He was equal to the situation of death.

Jesus Christ was equal to the situation when the disciples watched Him as He ascended (Acts 1:9). In a moment He left them. He went through the air in His glorified body. He was equal to ascension and He is equal to taking us up there, positionally, where we are seated with Him right now in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). What's more, Jesus Christ will be equal to the situation when He comes back again in the clouds of the air and gathers us together to be with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

God is equal to everything. He is beautiful for situations.

Beauty for Ashes

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

When we heard about the Cross, we discovered the place where all the sins we will ever commit were transferred to Jesus Christ two thousand years ago. Still, as a result of sin, we have accumulated guilt, shame, and fear in our consciousness. To deal with the anxiety that comes with those conflicts, we develop defense mechanisms. Arrogance, anger, passivity, depression, and even human goodness may be our means of manipulating people and circumstances just to get by in this life.

This booklet will show that God has provided a way to deal with all the baggage we have brought with us. His solution? Get rid of it. He has provided an altar, the Holy Spirit of burning, and a sentence of death.

Since our new life in Christ is supernatural, we can go through death, and what remains is pure. The ashes are taken to a clean place by our great High Priest, Jesus Christ. Now, as often as

it takes, we need to bring everything that does not glorify God to that altar. There He will give us beauty for ashes.

Chapter One

DON'T FEED ON ASHES

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

"Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering: It is the burnt offering, because of the burning upon the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be burning in it.

"And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen breeches shall he put upon his flesh, and take up the ashes which the fire hath consumed with the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar.

"And he shall put off his garments, and put on other garments, and carry forth the ashes without the camp unto a clean place" (Leviticus 6:8-11).

"And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water

of separation: it is a purification for sin" (Numbers 19:9).

Ashes represent loss, humiliation, shame, and failure because of sin. In Job 2:8, Job is sitting in the ash heap. One reason for his going there was that the ashes contained a healing substance called potash, which cured his disease. Yes, they were a symbol of a low position (Job 13:12), and they also related to suffering losses (Job 42:6). Still, the ashes were healing his disease (Job 2:8).

What Are You Eating?

But there is something else that happens with ashes.

Recently I heard a message from a preacher who said, "I want you to remember your sins!"

A man had come to him filled with guilt because of sin. Even though he had repented and was living clean, he said to his pastor, "I just can't forget my sin."

And the pastor said, "I don't want you to forget it! God does, but I don't want you to forget. If you remember your sin, it will help you not to do it again."

Friends, that is *not* the way it works. Remembering your sin is like feeding on ashes. It causes guilt, shame, insecurity, and discouragement.

Isaiah 44:20 says, "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" *Feeding on ashes.*

So many people feed on their ashes.

A policeman stopped someone just the other day. The man was extremely relaxed when the officer walked over to his window and said, "You were speeding."

This individual, who happens to be a tremendous, doctrinal Christian, just looked at him and smiled said, "Okay."

The officer said, "Give me your license and registration." Then he paused and said, "No, I just want your license." He went to the patrol car to see if there were any other points on the man's record, and there were none. So he came back with a warning, "Just be careful for a year."

The man said, "Okay."

He said two okays. Now, he wasn't speeding on purpose, because he wasn't in a hurry, and he drives very carefully. But you know how it is sometimes, when you are thinking of something, and you have no reason to go over the limit, but you just do it—by a mistake.

Of course we should obey every ordinance of man (1 Peter 2:13), and this individual was

wrong, though it was totally unintentional. But if this person were to get all upset in that situation, even if he had been given a ticket, he would have been feeding on ashes.

Where Did You Get That Counsel?

When you suffer losses, and you go through your Job experience (as you have been taught that you *will* go through at some time), why do you feed on ashes? Why do you become so downcast? "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God" (Psalm 42:5).

Feeding on ashes means that we feed on the result of sin, defeat, and guilt. Why do you let your own soul counsel you to be negative when you suffer loss? Don't feed on the ashes. That is what the Word of God says! Not only that, but also it says, "A deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his own soul."

When a man feeds on ashes, he cannot deliver his own soul. Furthermore, he doesn't recognize that there is a lie in his right hand. That means there is a lie in what he is approving and believing. For the spiritual Christian, the right hand speaks of God's approval—the Finished Work of God for us. But if we approve of a lie,

we are being deceived because of feeding on the ashes.

It doesn't matter what you mix in with ashes—garlic, spaghetti, tomatoes. Regardless of what you try to mix in with them, they do not taste good! In all the world, I've never seen any nationality say, "We have a wonderful dish made up with ashes." They are *not* good to eat!

The ashes came from a burnt offering. They represent our failure, shame, and guilt, which were paid for by Christ. Think of your ashes as coming from Jesus Christ. He not only paid for your sins, but He also *became* your sin. Jesus Christ who knew no sin, who was absolutely spotless, took our sins to a clean place. There they were separated from us and from Him forever. They are in a clean place, because His blood cleanses them all away. It is so important that we understand this.

The only thing left of the offering is the ashes. So God says, "Take those ashes from the burnt offering, and as you clean off the altar, place them beside it. Then once the altar has been cleaned, take the ashes outside the camp and put them in a clean place" (Leviticus 6).

All of our ashes should be put in a clean place called "the water of separation, a purifica-

tion for sins" (Numbers 19:9). Though this is ceremonial, it represents what has happened to our sins.

That pastor was wrong. You are not to remember your sins. How can you agree with God if you remember your sins? Amos 3:3 says that two cannot walk together, except they be agreed. You cannot walk with God and remember your sins. Don't feed upon the ashes of your sins.

Chapter Two

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

"…To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified" (Isaiah 61:1-3).

So, here is the great exchange: Beauty for ashes. Where are the ashes? They are in a clean place, separated—according to the principle of purification for sin. And what does God give us? *Beauty for ashes*. But that is not all. Because we don't feed on ashes, He gives us the oil of joy for mourning.

Imagine it! The Christian who has had an exchange has the oil of joy instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of heaviness, and beauty for ashes. When a believer who has this kind of doctrine in his soul goes home to be with the Lord, we have a victory service—we don't call it a funeral. Thank God.

Is That a Lie in Your Right Hand?

Some people will hear a message like this and fight with their spouse the next day. Then they will rationalize and say, "The pastor said that some of us will choose to feed on the ashes—so that must be you!" Sure! There is a lie in your right hand, too, and you can't deliver your own soul.

Leave the ashes in a clean place, and don't feed upon them! In John 6:53, Jesus said, "Eat my flesh and drink my blood." And they ate the Lamb and drank the blood of the New Covenant.

Feast on the Lamb of God. Partake of the love of God, the joy of God, the peace of God, the purity of God, the power of God. Just eat the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ and stop feeding on the ashes.

Remember, all that man said to the policeman was "okay." What else was there to say?

But he wasn't upset, and he wasn't worried.

The Holy Spirit said, "You were wrong."

He said, "Okay."

Every Word of God Is True

Some feed on the riches of this world instead of the Lamb of God. Thank God that when you feast on the Lord Jesus Christ, your portion is not in this life. There is nothing wrong with having a great portion, in terms of wealth. I hope you have more, and get more, and can help further the work of God with it. But your portion is not in this life, thank God. He wants to give you far more.

Can you imagine how one well-known entertainer was feeling when he was interviewed on television just a few days before he died with cancer? The talk show host said, "Is there anything that worries you about dying?"

He said, "Yes. I keep wondering, what if there *is* a hell?"

This man had hired three people to disprove the reality of hell, because he was so afraid of it—but they couldn't do it! In fact, at least one of the researchers became more convinced that the Bible is absolutely true.

Can you imagine having so much in this life and then dying and waking up in hell tormented? Your soul is in hell, your body is in the grave, and the facts of the matter are crystal clear and cannot be changed.

In Luke 16:19-31, the rich man died and lifted up his eyes in the flames of hell. He saw Abraham and Lazarus the beggar, but they were afar off. "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Can you imagine knowing that your portion is gone forever and ever and ever?

Then Abraham said, "I can't do that. Between us is a great gulf fixed. We can't come to you, and you can't come to us. Not only that, Lazarus is comforted, and you are tormented because you rejected the greatest gift in the world, Jesus Christ."

The rich man's portion was in this life. In the end, he went to hell. We need to recognize Ecclesiastes 5:19 to 6:2-3 and what these verses say about accumulating wealth and riches. There is nothing wrong with that in itself, but this speaks

of unsaved people who accumulate all these things. Because they are full, they do not desire to have God in their lives. When they die, it is a vexation of spirit and vanity, because they lose everything they had forever.

According to Ecclesiastes 9:9, unsaved people can have fantastic marriages and live joyfully in this life. They may even have better marriages than some Christians have. But then they die and go to hell. Their portion was in this life.

Chapter Three

DESIRE THE RIGHT PORTION

David prayed, "Deliver us from infected people who have their portion in this life" (see Psalm 17:13*b* -14). This is a warning for us all. We need to purpose to be around people who don't desire a portion in this life only, who do not mock soul winning, and who do not mock Spirit-filled people.

Psalm 73:24 says God will guide us with His counsel, then He will take us up to heaven. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalm 73:25-26).

The psalmist's portion was God, for ever and ever, and not anything else.

That is how we get victory over mourning. That is how we can have victory over the fear of death. That is how we receive victory over any-

thing—it is to let God be our portion.

"There's no one in heaven that I desire but thee. There is no one on earth, none else that I desire but thee. My flesh fails, and I get weak: but You, God, are my strength, and my portion for ever."

Here is the question: Is Jesus Christ your only portion?

When you die, you will lose everything you have. Even if you are saved, you will lose your own body until the resurrection, though your soul will immediately go to heaven. But no one will take their worldly accumulations or accomplishments with them. The only thing a man will have forever is the doctrine he has accumulated and applied in his soul.

Let Jesus Christ be your portion. Seek the Kingdom of God first and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added unto you. And thank God for when He adds things unto your life. He said He will, and He does (Matthew 6:33).

Your Past Is in a Clean Place

If the ashes are for a purification of sin, and since they are not in a bad place but a clean place, then *everything* about your past life is in a

clean place.

Your past is in a clean place! How can that be? Because, Jesus Christ was the offering for your sin (1 Peter 3:18, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Therefore, if your past is in a clean place, how can a man counsel you about your past? The Word of God will counsel you. And after He guides you with His counsel, He will take you up to heaven (Psalm 73:24).

So, if anybody ever tries to discover your past, remember Leviticus 6:10-11, Numbers 19:9: They took the ashes outside the camp. So now, the Bible says, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp" (Hebrews 13:13*a*).

Who is out there with those clean ashes? Jesus is, and He is outside the camp.

Inside the camp, people want you to talk about your sins. They want to make you do penance: to sit in ashes and eat the shame, to feast on the losses and the suffering of everything that has ever happened in your life. Stop feasting on your ashes because of your circumstances! God isn't dead.

When you are being tested by the trial of your faith to glorify God, there is nothing wrong with saying, "He has given me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise

for heaviness. During this trial, I will be called 'a tree of righteousness', the planting of the Lord, that I may glorify Him."

A Safe Haven

When the storms come, it is vital that we know where we are. Song of Solomon 4:12 says we are a garden that is enclosed, a spring that is shut up, and a fountain that is sealed." What a great place to be! The next verse says, "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits" (Song of Solomon 4:13*a*).

This is the picture: Every seed in a pomegranate reproduces another pomegranate. Each fruit is filled with many seeds, and if one has a hundred seeds, it will produce a hundred pomegranates. So, the believer who is hid with Christ in God will bring forth much fruit. Therefore, we must not sow the Word of God in thorns. "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns" (Jeremiah 4:3).

The Word of God says that if we sow in God's righteousness, we shall reap in mercy. It is time to break up the fallow ground. Just keep doing it until the Lord rains His righteousness upon you (Hosea 10:12).

My life is sealed, my spring is shut up, and

my garden is enclosed (Song of Solomon 4:12); it is the *Lord's* garden, the *Lord's* spring, and the *Lord's* fountain. When He died, He paid for every sin, every wrong thing, so there cannot be any charge to God's elect (Romans 8:33).

We have been given beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning. Now, there is no condemnation, no separation, and there is only one place for us to grow. We are like "trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD" (Isaiah 61:3). A tree just grows straight up. There is not a single thing between the tree and God but the air and the sky. As trees of righteousness, we stand upright toward God, and we walk tall to glorify God.

CONCLUSION

Make a decision to get through an entire week without feeding on the ashes. Furthermore, don't let your friends feed on the ashes. Recognize that they have been carried to a clean place, and they bear no resemblance to their former identity.

People who curse are feeding on the ashes of demons. They are told not to take God's name in vain, and that if they do, they are guilty (Exodus 20:7). Why? Because Jesus made them, Jesus died for them, Jesus loved them, and He will save them by grace. So, to take His name and curse it is more than vanity. It is evil.

Did you ever wonder why people don't curse in Mohammed's name, or Buddha's name? They don't because the devil hates Jesus Christ. Satan wants to use the Lord's people to curse the name and character of God by taking His name in vain.

Get rid of your ashes on the altar of God. Let

the Holy Spirit fill you, and let His fire refine you. When everything else is removed, you will stand, having God as your portion forever.

Believe!

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The woman in Matthew 9:20-22 was desperate. Ostracized from the community because of her disease, she had never met Jesus. Yet, she believed that if she could just get to Him, He would heal her. With just a touch of His garment, in the midst of the crowd, healing virtue went out of Him. Jesus turned, looked at her, and said, "Daughter, take comfort. Your faith has made you whole."

Few believers really understand healing. They pray, and they are sincere, but so much more is involved. Consider it. If that woman had not touched the hem of His garment, would she have been healed? If Peter had not honored Jesus Christ when He bid him to come (Matthew 14:28-29), would Peter have walked on the water?

I believe that God wants to move and work to show us how deeply He loves us. He is responsible for His children. You are His daugh-

ter. You are His son. He loves you dearly, and He wants His grace to bless you freely.

I believe that as we place our faith in that kind of God, virtue will go out of Him as it did toward that woman with the issue of blood. A blessing will come into our souls as we touch Him with our trust and absolute faith.

This booklet reveals that believing in God is far more than mental assent. It means that we stand firm, depending wholly on Him, trusting Him implicitly, and remaining absolutely certain concerning Him and His plan for our lives.

Chapter One

BELIEVE GOD, THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith" (Romans 3:27).

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

It is possible for everyone to be healed instantly in a meeting where the presence of God is so real. Still, it is not that people should look at their faith, but that they begin to understand the law of faith.

This is how healing works. In church, during the song service, we listen and respond by faith to the words we sing. This starts to build up our response in faith, and that faith continues to build. Then the pastor speaks, bringing a specific message that God appoints for that hour. We enter in to prayer for the sick, and by

that time, without striving, the faith fields of individual believers are established. Healing is promoted through meekness of the soul, humility of the heart, and concentration of the mind as we worship God in our human spirit.

In the healing process, just as there are physical laws in place when God uses doctors, there are spiritual laws to be exercised when it is supernatural. First, we are to think on the healing we desire. Without striving, we must dwell on that faith vision, no matter what it is. If it is physical, emotional, marital, or financial, we must learn to build up our faith response, which in turn will erect fields of faith around our soul.

Tuning In with the Law of Faith

Like fine-tuning radio frequencies to get a better signal, the more we enter into faith fields, the more accurate the frequency is, and as a result, the signal with God becomes clearer and more precise.

The law of faith is recorded in Romans 3:27. With the law of faith, we have the spiritual law of life, in Romans 8:2. These laws are just as real as the law of gravity, from the physical aspect of scientific reality.

Some people teach, "Where is your faith?"

They emphasize personal faith as the deciding factor in God's act of healing. We teach the importance of having a response system by the law of faith, and there is a big difference. You see, if my faith is the issue, then that would mean that healing is not by grace. But in fact, healing *is* a gift of grace.

My faith is not the issue; the issue is my focus on the Object of my belief—that is, Jesus Christ. My faith does not depend upon me believing. My faith depends upon the One on whom I am focused. He promotes my faith. My faith cannot heal me. It is He who heals me.

For the Body's Sake

Amazing frequencies are happening all around us. Air traffic controllers are continually monitoring certain frequencies on radar screens, constantly checking for anything out of the ordinary that could disrupt the flow of air traffic. Split-second decisions must be made when incompatible signals come into the picture.

Likewise, the Holy Spirit indwelling the Christian is responsible to quicken us to truth and alert us to anything that goes against the law of faith and the law of life. As much as these are spiritual laws, objective reality is involved.

So when the Spirit of God begins to move, as in a healing service, it is vital that we do not become distracted from the Object of our attention and affection. Start right in believing God, because even if you do not need a healing, you are going to express something to others who do need to be healed. You can promote the frequencies that will bring health to another believer. So let us believe God.

When a singing group is anointed and sensitive to the Holy Spirit and to the laws of faith and life, they will sing to the glory of God with all their heart. Pure and godly, they will sing the songs that can release and neutralize a negative capacity. They help us to worship in joy and praise, which is so important at the beginning of a service.

We depend upon Jesus Christ, the Object of our faith, as we seek to understand the law of faith. Ask Him to bless the frequencies of our response patterns, because God designed every person to respond to faith frequencies. May there be an abundance of faith-field frequencies to see cancer and every type of disease healed through the grace of God, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can believe God for divine reversals in fi-

nances. We can believe God for marital revival. We can believe God for revival in local churches.

If proper nutrition can heal certain diseases, so can God. By obeying practical physical laws (which include proper rest, exercise, and a healthy diet) plus practical spiritual laws (which include praying without ceasing and letting the Word of God dwell richly in your soul), you might live to be very old—unless God wants you to go home as Enoch did (Genesis 5:24).

Chapter Two

HOLD ON TO WHAT YOU BELIEVE

"But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

"And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

"For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

"Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:21-25).

Chapter 27 of the Book of Acts describes a harrowing high seas adventure from the view-

point of Paul, who survived it. To put it simply, the apostle Paul was in trouble for preaching the Gospel. Julius was a centurion, a member of the cohort responsible to King Agrippa, whose courts heard Paul's plea to be tried by Caesar. Apparently, the centurian had been at the trial with Paul. He liked Paul, and he was assigned to be in charge of the ship that would carry Paul to Rome.

They began to travel in three different ships on their way to Rome. They went up the coast of Asia Minor and arrived in the port of Sidon. The winds were increasing, and there was no light of the sun in the day and no moon or stars at night. According to Acts 27:4, "The winds were contrary." They were in trouble.

Winter was coming, and as they continued to travel, the winds increased. When they came to Crete, the winds were fearful, taking them everywhere, until they found relief. When they reached Myra, a city in Lycia, Paul and the other prisoners were transferred to a ship bound for Italy.

At that point, Paul warned the sailors (Acts 27:9-10), "Do not go. The ship, the cargo, and even lives may be lost if we set sail at this time. Do not go." But the men listened to the pilot and

to the captains of the boat, instead of taking heed to Paul, and they set sail anyway.

At first, there was a gentle wind, but soon it became so intense, they could not navigate the ship. The Mediterranean Sea was a tempest. They were all in a panic, and the Bible makes it very clear that no one expected to survive (Acts 27:20).

Nevertheless, God had a plan, and Paul believed God.

Change of Plans? Believe the Planner

Paul stood in their midst, determined to encourage the crew. He said, "Though the ship will be destroyed, there will be no life lost on this ship." He said, "This very night, an angel of the Lord stood by me, whose I am, and whom I serve. He said that I will indeed appear before Caesar. And not only that, but all that are with me shall arrive safely."

Paul faced the group and said, "Sirs, be of good cheer. I believe God, and it shall be even as He has told me."

Still the storms threatened the ship. The crew continued to travel until they finally came to a place where, by sight, there was absolutely no hope. Pretending to deal with the anchors,

several of the sailors tried to abandon ship. But Paul stopped them, saying, "We need you." So they hearkened to Paul.

Later on, he comforted them by telling them to break the fast. "It's been fourteen days and you have eaten nothing. This food is for your health. And by the way, not only will your lives be saved; you will not lose one hair of your head!" Then Paul prayed and gave thanks to God, and they all were of good cheer—all two hundred and seventy-six of them!

At daybreak, the ship ran aground. Not knowing where they were, the centurion gave orders that everyone who could swim should swim. Those who could not swim took hold of the ruins of the ship, grabbing boards and planks. The ship was demolished.

Through turbulent, tempestuous, raging winds, rain, cold, and darkness, there they were. They all believed that death was certain—except for Paul who believed God when He said, "You will *all* survive."

No loss of life—just the ship. Contrary winds, tempestuous, turbulent, raging winds. Rain. No sunlight. No stars. Fourteen consecutive nights of traveling way off course. No means of navigation. The boat completely de-

stroyed.

"But sirs, be of good cheer. I believe God, it will be even as God has told me." And all 276 souls finally arrived on the island of Malita, safe and sound.

I Believe God

What I love about this story are those three words: *I believe God.* It was not an obscure belief. It was a belief based on the Word and the promises of God. Furthermore, Paul declared, "I believe it will be even as God has told me."

When the Bible says in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life," I believe that with God it has been that way all these years, and so it shall remain.

The Lord Jesus Christ said that if we continue in sin and do not find the will of God, we will be chastised. And I believe God it will be as God has spoken. But God says, "If you rebound, and repent, and use recovery (1 John 1:9), you will be forgiven and restored."

The Word of God says that we are to bring our tithes into the storehouse, and He will rebuke the devourer (Malachi 3:8-10). That word is for us today and for every age.

God never changes. He is the same yester-

day, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Speaking of giving tithes, Jesus said in Matthew 23:23, "Do not leave it undone." You do not have to tithe, but if you do not, you may suffer. You may think it doesn't matter. But I believe God, and I believe it will be as He has said. When we tithe, God takes care of our needs. When we don't tithe, the devourer seems to take even what we do have.

Proclaim What You Believe

In Psalm 126:5-6, the Word of God says that he who goes out sowing the seed of God—the Gospel—weeping as he sows, he "shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

So many precious people have been faithful soul winners. Through ice storms, and snow storms, and rain, you keep going. I commend you, and I am so thankful for you. You have sown beside all waters, and you did not observe the wind nor regard the clouds (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

We sow the seeds of the Gospel when it is so cold, you think you might freeze out there, and when it is so hot, you think you will faint. But we go, and we sow the precious seed, many times weeping as we go.

Pertaining to the Great Commission of soul winning, I believe God. I believe that if we just sow, and water, and invest while it is today, the souls will come in. I believe God.

We were called to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth, to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Before He went to heaven, Jesus said, "Go" (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:20-28; Acts 1:8). Therefore, we must go. God sent the Holy Spirit, and now we must go into all the world, into every country we can possibly reach.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:24, Paul said, "Faithful is he who calleth you, who also will do it." We must preach the Gospel, disciple people, and let them reproduce the life of Christ. Let them reproduce in Iran, in Turkey. Go into Africa, Europe, Asia, and South America. "Go!" He commands us. "Please go, and I will go with you, even to the end of the world. I will give you power, and peace, and joy, and wisdom. I will protect you (Mark 16:15), but go."

Every missionary, every servant, and every believer-priest can say of the Great Commission, "It works." We see the fruit of it all the time, and we can say, "I believe God. It works."

God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). It is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18). He is not a man, that He can lie (Numbers 23:19). Whatsoever He says, He will do (Ezekiel 12:25). Not one of His promises will fall to the ground (1 Kings 8:56). All of His promises are yea, and none of them are nay (2 Corinthians 1:19). I want to tell you something, and here it is: I believe God.

Chapter Three

BELIEVE WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT ETERNITY

Jesus Christ said, "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this, the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27), and I have not seen anyone beat death yet (except for Enoch). But for the believer, we can say as Paul did, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

When a Christian dies, the angels take him to heaven. When that day comes, we will enter into the portals of glory, never to be confronted with sin, with death, with disease, with failure or with any type of evil again. And glory to God, "we believe it will be as God has said."

I thank God for the golden streets of heaven. I can hardly wait to see the New Jerusalem, above the mountains of Zion (Isaiah 2:2 and Revelation 21). The Lamb of God will be there, and we will rejoice, because we have made ourselves ready for the Bridegroom through His

own righteousness. His bride forever, we will be honored at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-10).

We will come back to the earth with Him on white horses, and we will land on Mount Olivet as He ends the great battle of Armageddon in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. He will end it by speaking words and without weapons. Then, we will enter into the Millennial Reign: one thousand years with Christ, the King of kings, reigning over the earth.

Believe What God Says about Heaven

May I say this about heaven? Thank God that we will not spend a moment in the grave. The beggar died in Luke 16, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. His physical body went into the grave, but his soul-body went up to be with God instantly (Ecclesiastes 3:21). Up through time, up through space, and still today, there he is, present with the Lord. No sickness, no disease, no hospitals, no sin, no failure, no aging, no end. Just love, happiness, joy, worship, serving God with the angels.

Heaven! Oh, I believe, God. Heaven is so precious. With all my heart, I believe it will be just as He said. We believe God.

We believe what the Word of God says about the Bema Seat evaluation, which will happen while the Tribulation is happening on earth. We believe that every saved person must appear alone before the Father (2 Corinthians 5:9 and 10, and Romans 14:10 and 11). He will test our works by the fire of the Holy Spirit, and then we will receive rewards.

Maybe we will receive the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), or the crown of life (James 2:10). Or perhaps it will be the incorruptible crown because we overcame sensual lust (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27). It could be a crown of rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:18,2:19) because we were soul winners.

Perhaps your reward will be the Morning Star Order (Numbers 24:17; Matthew 2:2; 2 Peter 1:19-21). You may have suffered because you proclaimed the Word of God and identified with the Body of Christ, but you overcame victoriously. This is the reward of the Morning Star Order, which means, "You suffered with Me, therefore you will reign with Me."

In Romans 8:18, degrees of glory are added to your soul-body to shine throughout eternity because you chose to stay in the will of God, in the ways of God, in the provision of God, and in

the power of God. Even when you suffered greatly for it, you believed God.

A Solemn Truth

"I believe God." Declare it! We believe that it will be as God has said. But there is one more thing, and I say this with a solemn fear and trembling:

I believe God that there is a literal hell. Moreover, I believe God that in hell, the conscience never dies and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:43-47). I believe that whoever rejects the grace of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whoever is not truly saved, that soul will go into hell. What's more, the unsaved will face the White Throne Judgment of God in a body prepared for hell, and they will be in hell forever and ever and ever.

I believe that hell is a bottomless pit (Revelation 9:2), a place of unending torment, even as the Bible says. Revelation 19:20 says that the beast and the false prophet will be cast alive into hell, and in Revelation 20, they will have been tormented day and night for a thousand years before Satan himself is bound and cast into hell. They will continue to be tormented day and night, forever. Imagine it—*day and night, forever!*

I believe that hell is more terrible than anyone can imagine. There will be memories of what could have been, memories of opportunities missed, memories of time that was given to people to know the glorious Gospel of grace, memories of privileges rejected. And I believe that hell is just as Jesus said it is. I believe God that it will be even as He has told us—and as He has warned those who reject Him.

Believe in His Goodness

I believe that God loves you and me with an eternal love, just as He loves Israel (Jeremiah 31:3). I believe that His love is precious and unconditional, and that His grace is based upon His character. The prophet Jeremiah believed in God's goodness: "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise" (Jeremiah 17:14).

Jesus wept when He said to Israel, "How many times I would have gathered you together under my wings, but you would not come" (see Luke 13:34). The Bible says that He sent His Word to heal them and to deliver them from their destructions (Psalm 107:20). What more could God do? He loved them perfectly. He sent warnings and He gave them provisions to be

saved. Yet, Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. It happened just as God said in Luke 19:41-44.

I believe that God wants not only to heal the mind, the emotions, and the body, but also to bless marriages, businesses, and our health. I believe this with all my heart, and soul, and mind.

I believe that God wants to heal cancer, liver disease, kidneys, eyes, and ears. I believe that Jesus Christ not only wants to bless the soul and edify it, but to take away secret drinking among believers and to remove impure fantasies that can cause so many problems in relationships.

Practice Believing

Set apart times when you just quietly close your eyes, and say, "I believe God." Just say it. "I believe God." You do not have to strive. Anything He has said, claim it.

Every place the sole of your foot shall touch shall be yours. That is a promise God has already given to us (see Deuteronomy 11:24). He has already promised it to us; it is not just for Canaan. It was all for us, for today (Romans 15:4), and it is for our profit (2 Timothy 3:17). All that is left for us to do is to believe God.

Whatever you need is between you and your God. You do not have to reveal the problem to a

soul. Remember that woman with the issue of blood, in Matthew 9: 21: "For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." She did not even speak aloud.

In Hosea 11:3, Ephraim was healed and did not know it. Can you imagine being healed and not knowing it because you did not think to believe it? This society is conditioned not to believe in real biblical miracles. We want to do it God's way. We want to glorify God and His work. We want to believe Him.

Believe God, for it will be even as He has said.

CONCLUSION

Draw near to the Lord as if this is the first time you have ever asked Him for anything. Sense His presence. Yesterday is gone forever. Now just passed by. Tomorrow doesn't exist. This is how we must approach the Lord: in the freshness of the moment, in the Eternal Is of God.

Heavenly Father, we come to you with specific requests—for ourselves, for loved ones, and for people we only know because they have a need. May this time be a beginning of divine healing through the wisdom of Your love and compassion.

May Your power deal with every ailment, whatever kind it is. Heal any cancer—whatever kind and whatever the cause. Heal people from the soles of their feet through their entire bodies.

And Father, we pray for marriages, that they would do more than just survive. May they be glorious, and may they enter into harmony, and unity, and compatibility, filled with divine oneness.

We pray for pastors. We thank You for them. Bless each one of them, and bless their ministries. Bless every servant here and abroad, and send forth reapers into the harvest field, into those 220 countries we have a vision to reach. Bless each one, in the precious name of Jesus Christ.

We are asking You to meet the needs of every believer with resources that come from the wisdom of heaven. Protect us from accidents; bless us with health. May we keep our healing and receive it instantly. May we expect to be blessed spiritually, physically, and financially. Protect precious people from demonic activity that tries to remove them from the call of God through rationalization. Make us ready for the onslaught, if it comes.

Heavenly Father, We believe You, and we believe You have heard us. We trust Your Word. You delight in us (Proverbs 8:30), and it will be even as You have said. Jesus, thank You. Praise You, dear God. Amen.

Beyond Knowledge,

Into Wisdom

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever read the Bible or listened to a message from the pulpit and noticed that it did not seem to touch you? Maybe you were sincere and you liked it, but it did not seem personal. Whenever your response to God's Word becomes dull, you can stir up your heart by applying the Word to your personal situations and to problems that cannot be solved by human effort. Meditate on how God's Word can meet the needs of family and friends. It will solve any problem in the world when applied in wisdom.

With all of the knowledge available to people, wisdom is lacking. Too often, knowledge is used to manipulate and control people and situations, but this is not what God intended. In heaven's economy, knowledge must submit to wisdom and is expressed in divine love.

This booklet will show that wisdom is the Word of God expressed through the heart of God. By wisdom, we can walk circumspectly in

the love of God, manifesting his grace and mercy in every situation.

Chapter One

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMANDMENTS

"And hereby do we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3).

Commandments, mandates, laws, and rules are very important.

The Word of God says that we know that we know Him, and go right on knowing Him, if we keep His commandments. "Do we know him" is a tendential present indicating action that is commencing but not completed. When commandments are mentioned, many people think of legalism and the letter of the law—everything negative. But Jesus said, "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you." Then He said that all the law is summed in one word—"love" (Galatians 5:13, 14), and He explained by saying, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

The Law Is Fulfilled

When you think of commandments think of this: Jesus fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17). He was the end of the law of righteousness (Romans 10:4). What do these things mean? They mean that the law of the spirit of life has overcome the law of sin and death. It is not just a law. The principle is the spirit of life. The Holy Spirit sheds love abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5), and we walk in love as His dear children (Ephesians 5:2).

The commandment Jesus is talking about is a Finished Work commandment. He is saying to us, "I finished making a way for you; I am available to you. I am faithful to call you, and I will do what you desire according to my word as you execute your faculties to make choices to believe and obey the truth in your own soul (1 Thessalonians 5:24)."

He is saying, "If you will let Me, I will perform what I asked you to do" (Job 23:14).

His commandment is that we would walk in divine love, and that commandment is not grievous (1 John 5:3). That means it does not cause sorrow. It is not difficult because God does it.

Now imagine if we didn't have any rules, or laws, or so-called commandments in our cities, in our schools. What if we didn't have any rules about school starting at a certain time? Perhaps we don't call them commandments, but that is what they are.

Thank God that even the Ten Commandments are a document of protection. The Commandments are the basis for the divine establishment and protection of personal freedom, marriage, family, the Church, and national entity. Thank God that the Bible says, "Do not bear false witness; do not steal; do not commit adultery" and so on. The Commandments of God protect our person, our property, and our rights. The Commandments do not save us, but they are beautiful in the plan of God.

Chapter Two

LOVE IS THE ISSUE

In this beautiful principle of commandments, Jesus is telling us, "If you really, truly, objectively love Me, not only will you have subjective love toward everyone, but you will have objective love. Because My character is revealed through you, I can exchange My love with you and through you.'' Objective love means that when two or more people are filled with the Holy Spirit, they have fellowship with each other in the light (1 John 1:7).

God has both objective love and subjective love for believers. However, only God can have subjective love for the unsaved people of the world. Based upon Himself as the subject, His love goes toward people who are not saved, but He cannot have fellowship with them, even though He died for their sins.

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another" (Romans 13:8*a*). That is a commandment.

Be kind, tenderhearted, and forgive one another as God has forgiven you, supernaturally through the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:32). That is a commandment.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). That is a commandment—the Great Commission.

Draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having your conscience delivered from evil, and your bodies washed with pure water, holding fast to your profession of faith. Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as is the manner of some (Hebrews 10:22, 23, 25). Be a good steward of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). Be a faithful steward (1 Corinthians 4:2). All these are commandments, but they are not difficult.

"Keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:23). That is a mandate. And all mandates are given under the New Covenant in the New Testament Age, where we have the privilege of being part of the royal family of God. All these commandments are given to bless us, to protect us, to provide for us, and to reveal God through us.

Now, because of this, we can begin to understand that God's commandments, which are not grievous, are all based upon the motivation of

God's love. And, when our motive is divine love, we are filled with the Holy Spirit of the living God.

The Importance of Repentance

"[God] commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by [Jesus Christ]" (Acts 17:30b-31*a*).

Repentance is a commandment, yet few Christians understand what it is. As a result, few ever truly repent. Many believers know they need to change their ways, and they vow to do it, but their mind and their will are never changed.

Repentance is a gift from God for the believer. David said, "Turn me, O God" (Psalm 85:4). Jeremiah said, "Turn me, and I will be turned…and then I will be instructed.…Surely after that I was turned, I repented" (see Jeremiah 31:18-19). They realized that it is not by the will of man nor the will of the flesh, but repentance is of God. Those who are lost must first believe and receive Christ as their Savior so they can be born again. Once a person is saved, he can repent and let God change his mind about what he is doing (Acts 2:38).

Repentance is a very precious thing. When things are not right in our lives, one of the greatest privileges in the world is to hear the Word, agree with God quickly, and repent.

Judas never repented. He said he was sorry that he made bad decisions, but he didn't truly repent for betraying Jesus Christ. In the end, he killed himself, and he went "to his own place," apart from God (see Acts 1:25).

Chapter Three

THE SUPERIORITY OF WISDOM

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 2:4-5).

What does it really mean to know God and to keep His commandments through His love and through the New Covenant? The motive, the source, the origin of keeping His Word is the love of God perfected in us. We know we are in Him because we have the fruit of keeping His commandments.

There is one thing that I am seeking at my age, and that is wisdom. All of us need it. The one thing that is so crucial in knowing God is wisdom.

I can't begin to tell you about how many men I have met who are very gifted. They are

very bright, and very smart—people love to hear them talk, love their sharpness, but their wisdom is lagging way behind their gift. They are applauded because of their gift, but they lack sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. This lack of wisdom can cause much heartache.

In brokenness, earnestness, and with fervent conviction, after nearly fifty years of preaching, the thing that I see lacking more than anything else is wisdom.

What Leaders Really Need

When I pray for a Bible college student, a young pastor, or anyone showing leadership qualities, I pray for God to lead them to wisdom. More than testing potential pastors on theology, doctrine, hermeneutics, or apologetics—things that are certainly very important—what we need to do before ordaining anyone is to study their lives to see if they are ready to pastor with wisdom.

As a young pastor, I learned the value of prayer and asking for wisdom. I would go to God and pray every day. I said, "Whatever You give me, I will preach. I study hard; I am obedient to your mandates; but I don't have wisdom. Please give me wisdom."

True Stability

"And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure" (Isaiah 33:6).

In an exegesis of the Hebrew text of this verse, we find the word *chokmah* for "wisdom," then a conjunctive particle followed by a feminine noun. "Knowledge" is *daath* and comes after the conjunction, making knowledge subordinate to wisdom. When the conjunction attaches a fresh subject to an already complete clause, the idea thus attached is subordinate to the principle subject. Knowledge must be subordinate to wisdom. Otherwise, "knowledge puffeth up" (1 Corinthians 8:1) and "the letter killeth" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

I have seen young men who would go around quoting Scripture, yet, they did not demonstrate wisdom. They had knowledge, but no wisdom. Sadly, they are no longer following God.

Please remember this: Knowledge is subordinate to wisdom because wisdom is the living Word, Jesus Christ who is manifested by the written Word of God with the Holy Spirit ap-

plying the knowledge of the letter. Knowledge must submit to wisdom. When this is understood, then wisdom shall be the stability of our times, bringing a godly fear or reverence for the Lord.

Knowledge submits to wisdom when it comes to studying and rightly dividing the Word of God. Wisdom is loving your congregation, investing in people. It is praying behind the scenes for those who are going through very difficult times. This is wisdom because it is applying the truth of what you know from God's Word and doing it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Four

WISDOM IN APPLICATION

"That no flesh should glory in his presence.

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,

"That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:29-31).

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and will all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7).

A family came to my office about a disagreement with a teacher. Their conversation became heated, and I thought, "What would wisdom do?" Wisdom would be very gentle, very kind, and listen. Especially, knowing that not one of them had a capacity for truth because each one wanted me to take their side, I said, "Can we get on our knees and pray? I will get back with you in a few days, and I will do whatever I can do."

We got on our knees. I made them feel very loved.

Another time, a man came into my office and I let him attack me for fifty-eight minutes. I never opened my mouth during those fifty-eight minutes. When he was through, I said, quietly, "Sir, I have to be honest with you. If you were right, I would weep and ask for forgiveness. But can I be honest? I have listened to you—I haven't interrupted you one time in one hour. What you are saying is not true."

I embraced him, and he put his head on my shoulder. I told him, "I will consider everything you have said, and I love you deeply."

That man had quit the church, but he was back the next Wednesday night. I knew that this man had gone out on his wife. I knew many things about him, but during our meeting I did not bring up any of them because he was so angry.

Two years later, I heard this man say something beautiful about that session. "I have got to say this: Pastor surprised me, he was so kind," he said. By using wisdom, God was able to turn away the man's wrath.

"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isaiah 50:4).

Jesus Christ did not speak out of season to the weary. If there is one thing we need, it is wisdom so that we do not try to control people. If you are a leader and someone comes to you who is wrong, don't react. Remember, a soft answer turns away wrath.

Within three days, I called that family who had the problem with the teacher. After investigating the matter, I told them, "I have to stand with our teacher. I can't agree with you. I hope you will understand."

They did understand, and everything is fine between us.

If a pastor tries to control his congregation, he will be doing damage control all the time. Always remember that people stand or fall before God alone. We cannot dictate to them. We must not run them down. You can preach what you will from the pulpit in love, but you cannot and you must not try to control people. Control is

nothing more than manipulation. We must not use the precious Word of God to manipulate others.

Get Past Manipulation

When I first started out as a Christian, I was manipulated. A pastor preached for forty minutes that we weren't supposed to have television, and everyone knew that I was the only one there who had one. After a forty-minute message against TV, how do you think I felt? At the time, I was a new believer. I had only been saved for three months.

As I was going out the door of the church, the pastor said to me, "You know, you can still repent." Now I felt even worse! What he didn't know was that a man I worked for went bankrupt and owed me money. He felt bad about it, so he gave me his Spartan console-TV, radio, and phonograph, all in one. I came home one night and he had installed it and put up an antenna.

That preacher didn't use wisdom. He didn't know that I never bought that TV. He should have come to me alone and asked me about it.

We must understand that wisdom is more than using knowledge. Wisdom is being filled

with love; it is walking in love but not compromising the truth about love. Wisdom is applying knowledge. This beautiful principal means exactly this: To know God is to be filled with wisdom.

CONCLUSION

Jeremiah 4:21 says that many die without wisdom. Psalm 90:12 encourages us to apply our hearts unto wisdom. Another good one is Isaiah 47:10, "Wisdom plus knowledge is perverted." This verse refers to those who have gifts, real gifts from God. They are sharp, tremendous in the use of their gifts, and available to use them, but their wisdom is way behind their gifts. Their gifts may cause people to be drawn to their natural abilities instead of benefiting others in the Kingdom. Sooner or later, their knowledge becomes perverted because the Holy Spirit is not operating in it.

Ecclesiastes 7:12 tells us that wisdom is a defense. Proverbs 8:33 tells us that wisdom calls us to hear instruction. It says, "Don't refuse these instructions." A man speaks out of his mouth wisdom (Psalm 37:30). If a person is to be wise, Proverbs 19:20 says he must receive counsel from the Word of God. That is very important.

The Bible says that God established the world by wisdom (Jeremiah 10:12). Only God gives wisdom (1 Chronicles 22:12), and the commandment of God makes us wise (Psalm 119:98).

Father, thank You for giving us your wisdom to operate in. Keep us tenderhearted and kind, not puffed up with knowledge but growing every day to be more like You. We love You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)* .

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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Beyond Morals

into Divine Light

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Any light detached from the eternal life of God is, at best, moral light. The best moral light can produce is moral integrity, which has not gone through the Cross to be resurrected in eternal life. This is evident in the problems that have surfaced within the Church over the last ten years. The public exposure of failure has revealed the inability of Christians to handle such problems.

Many Christians have a superficial understanding of forgiveness, but never reflect the divine light of God's nature that forgives and forgets. Meanwhile, hundreds of evangelical pastors continue to run each other down. They're born again. They study the Scriptures and preach the Gospel, but they have never understood what it means to go beyond morals into divine light.

God's nature reflects Divine light, but moral light is merely a reflection of the best human

nature has to offer—*created* light, which has its beginning in human integrity. On the other hand, divine light expresses the totality of God's grace. It radiates God's nature and it is the only means by which Jesus Christ's grace can transform a human soul. God's light is *uncreated*—it has no beginning. It's source is the Creator who *is* "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 90:2), and it is the only light that can drive away the darkness from our lives.

Chapter One

THE SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

We can only experience the sufficiency of God's grace through the transformation of our minds—regardless of how much we understand the doctrine of grace. Often, we allow messages from the Word of God to stimulate our intellect, but fail to allow uncreated light to transform our human nature. Created light can never trans-

form human nature. We may memorize Scriptures and go to five Bible studies a week only to be stimulated but never transformed. Scripture that is detached from Jesus Christ's eternal life will never produce divine light in the soul; it is merely knowledge.

God declared, in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." To the natural mind, this may not seem to make sense. Yet, the Spirit-filled believer understands that grace and strength *are* made perfect in our weakness because in our weakness, we depend upon the Lord. My weakness cannot hinder His immutable grace and strength, but it will reveal the nature of His divine light in me.

God's grace is *sufficient* to ward off danger and to bring in contentment, confidence, and overwhelming satisfaction. Satan cannot stand to hear grace expressed, let alone *see* it revealed in someone's life.

"In weakness" is *asthenia*, a feminine noun in the dative case of advantage. This word refers to incapacity, poverty, failure, inability, and deficiency. It is used to describe someone who is physically weak or someone who lacks understanding. Yet, God's strength is made perfect in human weakness, because, in Christ *is* life, and

His life is the light of men; In God's light, there is no darkness—at all.

When I receive His light, there is no darkness to cause emotional problems. There is no darkness to make me react when I'm the innocent party in a difficult marriage. There is no fear, no insecurity, no apprehension, and no anxiety. God's strength is made perfect and His grace is sufficient. It goes beyond my sin, it wards off danger, bringing in light that reaches far beyond any of my problems, love that goes beyond knowledge, mercy that rejoices against judgment, and peace that passes understanding.

From Everlasting to Everlasting

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:2). God has eternal, "uncreated" life in Himself (John 5:26); therefore, He has no beginning.

Many Christians have become stabilized by moral light. They use moral integrity as a standard of righteousness to evaluate themselves, their relationships, their churches, and their families. They remain limited by their natural capacity to "do good." For their good works to

be acceptable before God, however, they must go through Calvary to have the nature of their morality transformed.

Morality is vital to our society. It preserves national identity and protects individual freedom, personal rights, and property. But when moral light is allowed to replace divine light, it becomes a hindrance to spiritual transformation.

Christians must be challenged to live in spiritual light—going beyond inspiring messages, stimulating thoughts, and scriptural beatitudes. When a crisis arises, too many people are quick to make evaluations through moral light, while they call it integrity. Weeks later, they are still discussing the situation because they were not transformed by God's viewpoint, God's mind, and God's will.

Unless we live in God's uncreated light, which issues from His uncreated life, it is impossible for us to experience His unconditional love. Uncreated light reveals that God, who has no beginning and no ending, saw us as spotless and blameless before the foundation of the world.

Chapter Two

CONFRONTING THE DARKNESS

"For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the land of the living?" (Psalm 56:13).

"For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness" (Psalm 18:28).

"When his candle shined upon my head, and…by his light I walked through darkness" (Job 29:3).

By God's light, we walk through depression, insecurity, fear, guilt, and condemnation. God's uncreated life helps me walk through every moment that I am challenged by the reflection of my old sin nature.

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians

11:14-15).

As the 20th century draws to a close, Satan is hard at work in the art of deception. He uses demonic smoke screens to obscure and even blind the minds of many believers so they will live in constant defeat. Satan's darkness does not *appear* as darkness. It is another form of spiritual light that is not from God—an energy that works through the old sin nature. People in churches that promote this satanic light live in distortion and ignorance of divine light; therefore, they cannot be quickened and renewed according to the Word of God.

A woman testified that she had lived with the *knowledge* of how to be delivered for nearly fifteen years, but had never experienced deliverance. Because she suffered from emotional problems, she went to a Christian psychologist who diagnosed her with "situational anxiety." Now, even though her problem had a name, she still could not find deliverance. She felt defeated in everything she tried to do. Then one day, while listening to our radio broadcast, she received victory.

"I heard a statement about the danger of putting precedence on moral light over spiritual light, and the whole thing just broke," she said.

"For fifteen years, I had been interpreting moral light as spiritual light, and I lived in total defeat. There was so much guilt and condemnation. But now, hallelujah, I have never felt so free in all my life! I am a transformed woman."

Discerning the Devil's Light

No one can discern Satan's work as an angel of light without the light of God's Word and the Holy Spirit. Many Christians continually fail in the details of life and never define their problem; they're being outmatched by the angel of light.

Peter was no match for the angel of light when he tried to talk Jesus out of going to the cross. Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan." He knew the source of Peter's counsel and would not entertain it.

Just like Peter, we are no match for the angel of light. We try to save ourselves and others from suffering and from the Cross. Through acts of self-preservation, we manipulate and scheme, determined to rationalize our way through these things with moral light.

The Confounded Accuser

Satan despises the fact that Jesus will not listen to one accusation against the Christian. In

Zechariah 3:1-5, Satan had the goods on Joshua the high priest, who was clothed with the dirty, filthy garments of sin. As the devil brought the evidence of Joshua's sins before the throne, the Lord rebuked the accuser and kicked him out. The Lord wouldn't listen to a single word against Joshua.

I don't read anything about Joshua repenting *before* he received his new garments. Oh, how that must upset some right-wing fundamentalists who live in moral light! God covered Joshua with uncreated light. He saw the high priest as faultless. Spiritual light took supremacy over moral light.

God is not giving us a license to sin, but He is showing us how to be rightly related to Him in divine light. With this kind of provision available, only a fool would want to live in sin.

Chapter Three

LIVING BY LIGHT, NOT BY THE LETTER

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

Among all the trees in the garden of Eden, God created two distinct trees: the Tree of Life, reflecting divine light, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, reflecting moral light.

The Tree of Knowledge represented divine information about good and evil. God never intended for us to eat from this tree—not even the "good" part—because He knew we would use it to measure and compare ourselves with one another.

The good side of the Tree of Knowledge represents scriptural knowledge expressed in the

letter that kills. The first thing the letter produces is pride, a satanic spirit that causes a person to exalt himself above others.

The second thing the letter without the Spirit produces in a person is human good—the demonstration of moral light (or moral integrity). The person living in moral light is self-righteous, always conscious of how he—and others—are doing, in relation to the letter of the law. He goes about establishing his own righteousness because he is ignorant of divine righteousness (Romans 10:3).

Who did this? Who didn't do that? Who failed? These are questions asked by people who live in moral light at the Tree of Knowledge. In its production of relevant righteousness, moral light always measures human personalities, attributes, and works. Detached from God's uncreated light, it repudiates unconditional love.

Putting Away the Past

Someone once said, "My problem is that my past is between me and God." Don't get God into it. He can't remember your past. The problem of your past is between you and yourself.

When a person goes to a social worker or a counselor and begins to relate to the past, he's

dealing with something that God refuses to get involved with. He is living in moral light, which had its origin in the Fall of Adam and is constantly revived through various complexes in the soul, and through the reflection of the memory.

A Christian who is confessed up-to-date, reflecting God's nature in uncreated light, has no consciousness of sin (Hebrews 10:2). Without the consciousness of sin, there can be no condemnation (Romans 8:1). And without condemnation, there can be no guilt, because the conscience has been purged by the blood of Jesus Christ through the eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14). Absent from guilt, the conscience is free to function in the reflection of God's nature instead of being occupied with human nature.

Divine light cannot remember one sin I've committed, once I have repented, because the power of eternal life produces uncreated light and reveals unconditional love. God's unconditional love goes beyond knowledge, revealing mercy that rejoices against judgment and peace that passes understanding. When I accept Christ's Finished Work as a recipient of God's grace, God establishes me in a new position with Jesus. In this position, I am a new creation in Christ, complete in Him and seated in heav-

enly places with my past gone forever.

If a Christian has divine light illuminating his capacity for human life, he will never feel guilty. Even something that happened ten minutes ago is gone from God's sight the moment I rebound. It's forgiven and forgotten.

I must agree with God about my sin—He's cast it behind His back, out of His sight forever (Isaiah 38:17). In the eternal "is," God sees me in the light of His uncreated life, blameless before Him in love. Now, I can't remember the failures of yesterday or last week. There is nothing left to be counseled for. The only way I can recall my past is through the reflection of my human nature—detached from God's divine nature—under the dominion of moral light.

Living as New Creatures

Many Christians refuse to live in what God says they are—new creatures. 2 Corinthians 5:17 *doesn't* say, "…old things will *some day* pass away, after I've been counseled about how bad my mother and father were and about what my uncle did to me secretly when I was nine years old." No. It says, "old things *are* passed away"—now.

Ungodly counsel will never deliver you. A

counselor can only help you understand the circumstances you're living in. Discovering all those things may make you feel good, but it will not make you a new creature in your experience. You will still be an old dishrag, going through the same old problems with the same old Adam controlling you. You will end up playing the same old games, feeling guilty in your moral light and moral integrity as you continue living in the effects of things that you have already confessed. God took care of those things. Though you're free, you still refuse to accept your freedom. This, dear friends, is unbelief.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." This may sound like elementary preaching to some, but not one in 15,000 Christians experience this reality twenty-four hours a day.

Old things are passed away. They are gone; they're dead and buried, removed from God's omniscience and omnipresence. Omnipotence—God's 'all power'—overruled His knowledge of sin, removing the very thought of it. The 'all power' of God crucified our sins in the flesh of Jesus Christ, removed every sin we would ever commit, and buried them forever.

We are hid with Christ in God. We are seated above with Him. Every moment, everything

about us is brand new. When we fail, we instantly confess our sin and accept absolute forgiveness. God immediately forgets it. As we agree with Him, we can't remember it either, because uncreated life, uncreated light, and unconditional love indwell us.

Wouldn't it be better to live this way, rather than to go on for years, striving in partial victory?

Chapter Four

THE WORD GIVES LIGHT

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130).

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23).

Through God's uncreated light, His grace shines in my heart. I am able to understand God in me and experience Christ's words. But if my eye isn't single, then my whole body will be filled with darkness—even if I'm a pastor. My eye must receive only God's light. Any other light is darkness and "how great is that darkness!" It may produce morality, but not spirituality. Many people who are morally good are spiritually carnal. All of their righteousnesses

are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), but no one ever discovers it. They go to church and live their lives thinking they are really "somebody" because of the things that they *don't* do.

It's very easy for a moral person to use Scriptures to argue about how right he is and how wrong everyone else is. But he's talking out of a light that's turned into darkness—detached from grace, love, mercy, and forgiveness. If I refuse to extend the grace I have received to others, then I am not a good steward of that grace and I'm living in darkness. I must allow mercy to rejoice against judgment. If I know anyone after the flesh, then I am living in the pride of life. This stimulates the lust of my eyes, where demon influence persuades me to live in the lust of my flesh in an educated, religious, evangelized Adam.

Can you remember what someone has done to you in the past week? If you can, then you're living in darkness, just as the pagans and the heathen do. It's not Finished Work. It's not grace. It's not mercy. It's not love. And it's not divine light.

Jesus Christ fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17); He is the end of the law to everyone who believes (Romans 10:4). Therefore, I am no longer

obligated to live under a moral law. I come under a higher law—the law of righteousness, which has been fulfilled in me (Romans 8:4). Because Christ paid for my sins, sin is no longer an issue. Though I still have an old sin nature, I can accept the law of perfect righteousness. Then, when I experience fellowship with God through the entrance of His Word, the Word becomes a light unto my path and lamp unto my feet. Now, by light, I can walk through darkness, because the 'letter' is not detached from God's light in me.

From Conviction to Conversion

When I live in brokenness and humility, I give Jesus Christ an opportunity to begin an eternal work in me through uncreated life. God always brings in tremendous conviction before there's a transforming conversion.

Job displayed striking maturity and integrity in his first two trials, but in his third trial, he was overwhelmed by his three self-righteous friends. When he reacted, Job was righteous according to the 'letter,' but detached from God's life. At the good side of the Tree of Knowledge he became self-conscious of his innocence. But one day, Job came to the light and said, "I abhor my-

self, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). He realized that God *in* him was light.

Isaiah had been a preacher for fifty-two years, but he never understood spiritual light until God gave him a vision of Jesus Christ high and lifted up, on the throne (Isaiah 6:1). The seraphim were singing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3). Then, in the light of conviction, Isaiah said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). He wept. He had been morally good, practicing patriotism for 52 years. But God's light didn't leave Isaiah there—condemned, guilty, and unqualified because of his past. No, Isaiah's sin was purged away.

"Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said [Isaiah], Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:6-8).

Without any reservations or any probationary period, the Lord commissioned Isaiah. It was a transforming experience with uncreated light,

a light that brings in God's life so God's love can be experienced. When I receive light from God, I never judge or compare myself with others, because divine light humbles *me* before God. Then I instantly become a candidate to do His work.

When we draw near to the light, we, too, can see Jesus Christ high and lifted up. We see His perfect holiness and righteousness. At first, we may be conscious of our sinfulness and confess, as Habakkuk did, "my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble" (Habakkuk 3:16).

But the next three verses reveal Habakkuk's faith in the uncreated light of God:

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places" (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

After witnessing a miracle catch of fish in Luke 5:6, Peter fell down in awe at Jesus' feet. In the presence of the "light of the world" and the

Holy Spirit's conviction, Peter said to Jesus, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). After Peter denied Christ, in Matthew 26:69-75, Jesus recommissioned him to preach the Word, never once making an issue of Peter's sin. With Jesus, love was the issue, because uncreated light always ushers in God's unconditional love. It wasn't what Peter had done, but what he had failed to receive—unconditional love.

Paul cried out, in Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am!" He had lived according to the law in moral light after he was saved, only to come to the conclusion that he was wretched. But later, when Paul's heart was rooted in divine light, he had a revelation of truth and proclaimed, "No condemnation" (Romans 8:1).

The great 18th century preacher Jonathan Edwards cried out to God often in the last two years of his life, "I see my sin when I preach and even when I pray." But rather than live in defeat, he drew near the light and constantly received God's uncreated life.

Hudson Taylor said that "Even when I do my best, I'm just living in refined sin." Then, he proclaimed, "Thank God for the grace that doesn't remember!"

These great men of God experienced awesome conviction as they drew closer to the light. But they also experienced the tremendous work of God's mercy and grace. The Spirit liberated their souls and they realized that God's grace is sufficient in every detail.

Chapter Five

ORIENTATION TO LIFE

God will not measure us by anything but His own gift, His own mercy, and His own grace. He will not deal with anything according to moral light. We are measured only according to how we respond to His life and light.

When knowledge possesses us *without* God's light, we end up living in the Christian paradise of salvation without the grace of God transforming our minds. But, when Jesus Christ possesses us and takes over our hearts, then we learn proper orientation to life.

Jesus wants to teach each of us to orient to His life. God sees us in His Son, who is the Light of the world. "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain" (Psalm 104:1-2). God sends forth His light and His truth

to lead us (Psalm 43:3). Ecclesiastes 11:7 says, "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold."

Our eyes must behold His light. Many Christians try to "borrow" light and life through the influence of people they are attracted to. But it doesn't work that way. If you need exercise, you don't send someone to the gym in your place and expect to receive the benefits of a workout. Likewise, if you want to benefit from God's life, you have to draw near to His light, personally.

Truth can't be borrowed. We must buy it through the Cross, through faith, and through submission to Jesus Christ's words by grace through faith (Proverbs 23:23). His strength will meet you in your weakness where God reveals His quality of light, His energy of life, and His nature of love.

Stay at the Tree of Life

Even in the midst of our weakness, we can live in God's presence without the consciousness of sin. His light sets us free. We have been made clean through the Word of God and delivered into the Kingdom of His dear Son. We now have God's power, nature, and character work-

ing inside of us.

Never allow yourself to become detached from the God who is in you. Stay at the Tree of Life; don't go back to the Tree of Knowledge. Forget information that doesn't have Finished Work life. Don't discuss knowledge that is detached from Finished Work grace. Problems should always be met with Finished Work power. Whatever you express, let it be totally released in Jesus Christ's Spirit and the inner working of His grace.

There's no need for a believer to feel inferior or insecure. Human support programs will never meet our needs. As the living God reveals His light in you, any weakness or frailty can be overcome. In the presence of His light and love, darkness cannot hinder you at all.

When the sun comes up in the morning, it doesn't create anything new. It simply reveals what was always there during the night. When God's light shines into circumstances and trials, we think something new is being revealed, but the light is just revealing what was already there in our lives. The troubled marriage, the friendship that's dissolving, the problems in church—none of these things are almighty. God is Almighty, and He will not spare the existence of

any hint of darkness, even that which clothes itself in moral light.

"If God is all-powerful, then why am I feeling so bad?" you may be tempted to ask. The answer is that you aren't allowing the light of God's power to free you from your darkness. You prohibit His light from doing its work through self-occupation at the Tree of Knowledge that draws you away from the Tree of Life.

The Word of God had an entrance in your soul. You have received His light and His love. Let them flow richly, and don't allow circumstances or people to alter the single eye of life that is in you.

The more we receive life, power, and peace through divine light, the more God's strength is being made perfect in us. As we grow in godliness, we can have fun reflecting His divine nature. Every trial gives us an opportunity to reflect Him. In our weakest state, we find His strength, for only then do we allow divine light to truly reveal God's character and nature in our lives.

CONCLUSION

Some people will refuse to receive this message, because it removes the option of worldly counsel, it exposes adamic support systems, and challenges people to get into the Book and depend upon God.

All power in heaven and in earth belongs to Jesus Christ. He's living in us, so we don't need demoralized humanists telling us how to get rid of guilt, insecurity, and fear. God's almighty power is inside of us. His wisdom is from above, producing peace, gentleness, meekness, and purity in us. We don't need human help to find victory. We are overcomers through Christ who strengthens us. Praise Him, for His grace is all-sufficient.

Christ is the end of the law, and we are under the government of grace (Romans 6:14). We are hid with Christ in God, so the wicked one cannot touch us (1 John 5:18). We are seated above principalities, powers, and demons (Eph-

esians 2:6), so we can enjoy the blessings of eternal life that produce divine light, enabling us to live in His love at all times.

Blessings through Obedience

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Consider the importance of living by the Word of God. As believers in the God of truth, we ought to have a reverential fear for God. Yet, even though we have a deep desire to obey, there are times when we do not live according to every word of God.

Living by every word of God (Matthew 4:4) means being sanctified by the Word (John 17:17). First, we have to hear the Word preached. Secondly, we have to choose to obey what we hear by faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

For example, a husband who is not single-eyed toward his wife and looks at other women is not living by God's Word. He is violating the divine institution of the family. Awife who does not submit to her husband in the Lord is not living by every word of God. She is to submit to God first and then to her husband's spiritual leadership under Christ and His Word. A Christian who does not love people as God loves him

is not living by every word of God (Matthew 19:19). Christians who do not consistently go soul winning are not living by every word of God.

The Holy Spirit must teach us the theme of this booklet. We must not enter into private interpretation and act upon it according to our own understanding. If we will allow these thoughts to be established in our soul, we will experience the joy of living in obedience to every word of God through the Holy Spirit's power.

Chapter One

LETTING GOD LOVE YOU

"But [Jesus] answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3).

Man must live by every word of God; however, a Christian who is not tender-hearted toward others, forgiving as he has been forgiven, is not living by every Word of God. A Christian who reacts to a matter before he hears the whole story is not living by every Word of God. As a result, he returns evil for good (see Proverbs 17:13, 18:13). A Christian who does not comfort the feebleminded (speaking of those whose souls are small, who lack capacity to receive from God fully) is not living by every word of God (1 Thessalonians 5:14). A believer who releases negative vibrations by saying words that are not edifying is not living by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

So, What Is the Problem?

Loving God is not a problem for most Christians. The great problem in the Church is letting God love us. The most important thing we can do is to let God love us. Having that kind of love means that we can live in the fruit of the Holy Spirit and not in the desires of the flesh.

No one can solve a problem or straighten out a situation if he doesn't have what it takes inside of him. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). You cannot manufacture spirituality for someone else. You can only reveal Christ. You cannot talk anyone else into being spiritual. You can only express the truth of the Word of God in life.

The evidence that the Cross is working in our lives is seen in how, through Calvary's love, it restrains us from sin, from emotional disorders, from mental disturbances, from moodiness, from loquacious reactions, and from inward fear that robs our capacity to know God.

Love is not a spiritual option. It is a spiritual provision. We fully experience it through the blessings of our obedience to God's voice (Deuteronomy 4:14-15; Joshua 24:24). Israel obeyed the voice of the Lord (Jeremiah 42:6;

Deuteronomy 11:27). The people were deeply blessed because they obeyed God.

Obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). Obedience produced by faith (Romans 1:5) carries the Gospel into all the world (Romans 16:25-26). The Bible says that those who obey the Lord eat the good of the land (Isaiah 1:19).

Hear God's Voice

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thessalonians 3:14)

As we come to the place where we have the substance of God's Word inside of us, we become overtaken by God's inner glory, amazed by God's presence, astonished by God's life, and overwhelmed by His resurrection power. That is when we can move mountains by faith, having the nature of love that never fails.

As we come to understand this principle, we will realize that many do not obey the Gospel.

There are many who never obey the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and many who do not obey the Great Commandment to love (Matthew 22:37-39). It is all because they do not hear God's voice.

Speaking about the truth without obedience is professing Christianity while living in hypocrisy. Knowledge without the life of the Spirit is religion without Christianity. Emotionalism without victory is spiritual fraud against faith. Living in the past means that you have no Cross in your life and that you don't believe in taking up the Cross daily. Talking about the past is worthless, causing damage to the soul (Matthew 12:34-36). We are to have spiritual communication that gives life, edifying the hearer (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6).

Aperson who habitually lives in sadness has refused the Holy Spirit's joy. A person who has no peace has refused Christ's Cross. Jesus Christ made peace for us through the Cross—a peace that the world cannot give (Colossians 1:20; John 14:27). A person who is always relating to problems in the flesh reveals that he does not know that his provision is in Christ.

To live in fear means you do not have love that casts out fear (1 John 4:18). To live in bitter-

ness reveals self-conceit and self-occupation that refuses to come to Christ and yoke up with Him by faith (Matthew 11:28-30).

Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Without love, it is impossible to serve God. A faith that serves by love pleases God, serves God, reproduces His life, and reveals Him to the world. This is the kind of obedience that brings blessings to the weakest believer who simply trusts and obeys.

Chapter Two

VESSELS OF TRUTH

A Christian who hears the truth and does not obey it is a Christian who is like a vessel with a broken bottom. He cannot retain the water of the Word (Jeremiah 2:13), and he is a vessel of dishonor.

A person who condemns himself when he hears the truth will never be set free from condemnation because he rejects the truth. Truth always declares, "If you obey Me, there is no condemnation." Truth, however, also says, "If you disobey Me, you will go from sin to sin and have a covering that is not from God. At best, you will be a sentimental human being who needs soul-power relationships, trying to fulfill a void apart from having a relationship with God.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Romans 6:16-17).

This is extremely interesting to me. The Bible says that when we obey from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to us, we are free from sin. Repeatedly I come face to face with dear people who will not obey the doctrine God delivers through their pastor-teacher. They will not receive the messages from the pulpit as the Word of God, even though they love and respect the pastor. The result is that they do not have a victorious Christian life.

The Condition for Right Fellowship

A Christian becomes very lonely when he doesn't walk in the light, because walking in the light in the only basis for real fellowship. Some will blame other Christians in the church for not recognizing and ministering to their needs. But the truth is that those who blame others for their misery are not walking in the light that brings fellowship.

Young people as well as adults should be taught to go soul winning on purpose. They should be instructed in how to reach the lost and

to disciple new believers.* People who make excuses for not making a practice of soul winning have wrong priorities. Everyone has responsibilities; still, a Christian who does not seek the lost is not obeying from the heart what the Word of God teaches (Matthew 28:19-20). If he doesn't have a plan to be consistent in winning souls, he is disobedient.

A pastor must speak the truth in love. Then he will be an acceptable pastor before God when he introduces his people to Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat, where believers' works are evaluated.**

This is so important to understand, because when a godly pastor gives an account to God concerning the members of his congregation, he will be able to say, "I preached the Great Commission, Lord, and I led the people by example." But those who didn't go soul winning will have to explain to God why, according to Romans 14:12.

Our obedience is such a vital issue. We must never take lightly the precious Word of God and the words that come from the pulpit. A great price has been paid to preserve the Scriptures.*** Every word is for our benefit, so we can receive blessings now and for all of eternity.

**For more about the importance of soul winning and disci - pling, read* Leading People into Discipleship*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

***This subject is thoroughly discussed in* The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

****Be sure to read* The Price of the Gospel*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Three

GOD'S GUARANTEE OF BLESSING

"As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me" the Psalmist wrote of God's people (Psalm 18:44). They didn't get discouraged; they didn't get depressed; they were obedient.

The only Christian who can properly represent God is the one who obeys Him. No one has a reason to live in past problems unless he is disobedient to faith in God's finished work that took care of the past. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). And the reason people cannot get over problems of the past is that they live in doubt, outside of faith. They do not know the *living* God. They only know God through knowledge and not through a relationship with His life through the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, the demons know God this way, too (James 2:19). Even the Pharisees believed that there was one God. So did Demas,

who forsook Paul to live in the world (see 2 Timothy 4:10), and Diotrephes who stirred up rebellion against John (see 3 John 9).

Obedience is a guarantee to being blessed spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. God expects us to be obedient to His Word. For instance, a corporate executive or a woman with children is still responsible to the truth of the Great Commission. There is nothing in the Bible that says that either one is exempt from the Great Commission.

Follow the Example of Godly Men

The apostle Paul said to the people in his church in Corinth, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (1 Corinthians 4:15-16). Following a pastor's faith means you follow what he does himself in accordance with what he preaches (Hebrews 13:7). In other words, you follow what he preaches and follow his practical obedience.

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

"That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

An inward love that surpasses knowledge is excellent and produces fruits of righteousness. The standards for this love are the Holy Spirit, the Cross, and the knowledge of the Word of God that comes to life through resurrection power in the intimacy of a personal faith.

No church has been spiritually blessed without spiritual obedience. If the pastor does not preach the importance of discipleship and living through the Cross, it would not be a spiritual church.

People who forsake churches that bear the fruit of obedience forfeit the rewards they were to receive from blessing by association with that church (Matthew 10:41; 2 John 8). They will suffer loss as the production of their carnal lives—wood, hay, and stubble—will be burned.

Faith that Works by Love

It is so crucial to read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and understand the courageous things

that the heroes of faith did because of love. A faith that can move mountains profits nothing if it does not have love (1 Corinthians 13). "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6).

I consistently ask in tears for the members of my church to pray that I will always be obedient to every word of God. And, likewise, I ask them to be obedient to all that the Bible teaches.

A wife does not determine her husband's spirituality, and she never will. Likewise, a man can never determine his wife's spirituality. God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ the living Word determine our spirituality. Some people withdraw when their spouses are off. They are spiritual cowards who don't know how to have and stand in a vertical relationship with God that is established in truth.

We don't have to pay the price for someone else's sin. We are blessed and rewarded when we maintain a right relationship in the face of temptation and adversity.

Obedience to the Call to Rebound

Love reveals my relationship to Calvary and the resurrection. Faith reveals my relationship to

the Word of God. The fruit of the Holy Spirit reveals my relationship with Him. My ability to rebound when I fail determines my capacity for integrity.

Rebound is a magnificent provision of God, so that even if I fail and go through a process of weakness, I can still live in victory, according to 1 John 1:9, Psalm 32:5, and Psalm 51:1-13.

It is vital that we practice rebound every time we fall into sin. That is how we are cleansed and then filled with the Holy Spirit. That is how we can know the will of God. As the light of the Word shines in our hearts, we will no more desire to live in sin because we were obedient to God's call to rebound.

Obedience: It is right. It maintains peace. It brings a blessing. It is God's way to prosper His children as we learn to grow in steps of faith.

CONCLUSION

These thoughts are from God and were given for this hour to help us live by every single word of God. Pray for one another. We are sinners saved by grace, and we all have areas of strength and weakness. But we are all equal in the area of obedience, because obedience is a choice.

May God impress upon each of us the urgency and reality of this message regarding the power of obedience to the truth. We are to pray for one another that we might be healed (see James 5:16). If we do not pray for others, then we are sinning, revealing that we don't understand the value of prayer (1 Samuel 12:23).

Let's be established in our relationship to the Cross, ready to receive the revelation of the Word of God as it comes to us personally from the throne of God, correlated in categorical doctrine, as we build up storehouses of truth in our souls. Be renewed in the provision of His presence, as Christ manifests Himself through us.

Then, we will gladly obey the Word, knowing that we will only receive blessings because of it.

Breaking Carnal

Connections

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INTRODUCTION

Within the nervous system of the human body are ganglions—bundles of specialized nerve cells that extend throughout the fibers of the entire body. The central nervous system, consisting of the brain and the spinal cord, is designed to coordinate the activity of the entire nervous system. As we receive and respond to stimuli that produce emotions and sensory experiences, chemicals are produced and transmitted as part of the "ganglionic process." Within these complex functions, carnal connections are established and reinforced.

Skillful observers that they are, Satan and his demons are aware of the human nervous system. Therefore, hell has developed a plan of attack involving specialized armies of demons —some that attack the unconscious mind while others attack the physical body. Combined, these forces work to rob, destroy, and kill a Christian's capacity to be complete in his spirit, soul, and

body (John 10:10*a*).

The overall attack is accomplished by effectively stimulating "cognitive dissonance" in the believer's mind. When a Christian does not appropriate knowledge of divine truth in his life, conflicts arise in his thought processes. The result is dissonance, which brings conflict and confusion into the mind, because he does not live by what he knows to be right.*

This booklet will examine how believers infected by this demonic strategy can have carnal connections broken by understanding the principle of God's imparted righteousness. When we come to the end of our self-righteousness, we can finally take hold of God's righteousness. As Christians, we have a new life, which includes a new mind (1 Corinthians 2:14-16) with brand-new, heavenly connections.

**For more about the ganglionic process and cognitive dissonance as it relates to demonic strategy, read* Defining the Warfare against Relationships, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2001.*

Chapter One

OVERCOMING WITH SPIRITUAL WEAPONS

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:5-6).

Everyone has two histories operating in his mind. We have our genetic history in Adam, which includes all the sinful traits passed down from Adam in our cells. Psalm 51:5 and Psalm 58:3 reveal that we were "shapen in iniquity" and born with the natural tendency to go astray telling lies. Then we have our personal history in Adam, which includes all the sins we have committed since the day we were born (see Romans 5:12), ruling our unconscious mind, which is 90 percent of our mind.

So we have Adam's genetic history through

the Fall, and also our personal history in Adam. Unless God does a specific work of deliverance, these histories will control us until we die.

Some of the thoughts we have entertained this week, even some of the things we have said to our close friends, came from Adam's history or our history in Adam. This means that these things were done in the carnal mind—and to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Our human characteristics, the essence of our humanity, were designed by God to reflect and reveal His essence. Creating Adam from the dust of the earth, God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul operating through his human spirit (Genesis 2:7). According to God's design, the human spirit should totally control a man's unconscious mind (Proverbs 20:27).

Yet, when the human spirit of a man, illuminated by the Holy Spirit (Psalm 18:28), does not rule his own soul, the subconscious can receive demonic projections. This causes indecision, confusion, negative reactions to the Word of God, inconsistency in church attendance, and pride that develops into arrogance.

Pride is a personal sin, and arrogance is the

mental complex that brings in self-preservation, self-defense mechanisms, and self-absorption. The person who is caught up in an arrogant complex is always reacting to protect who he is in the genetic and personal history of Adam.

The Unconscious in Control

Somnambulism is defined by Webster as an abnormal condition in which motor activities, such as walking, are performed while asleep. During sleep, the subconscious mind can becomes the channel for the unconscious mind to make believe it is the conscious mind. This is how a person sometimes gets up and does things in the middle of the night. The sleepwalker is operating as if he were conscious, though he isn't. The conscious mind is asleep, but the unconscious mind is not.

In the Bible, Jesus used a metaphor to describe this condition of the conscious mind being unaware of what is going on around it. In Matthew 13:24-25, in the parable of the sower, He said, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." In this context, the Greek word for sleep is

katheudo, "to yield to sloth and sin; to be indifferent to one's salvation." This definition speaks of the principle of the unconscious mind, in deception and ignorance, thinking that it is the conscious mind and therefore controlling certain behaviors. As a result, the men were consciously unaware of the destruction going on in their midst, so they did nothing to stop it.

When Satan deceives a Christian who refuses to grow in grace and knowledge, that person's unconscious mind, in self-preservation, overrules the conscious mind. The only defense we have is to hear, receive, and respond to the Word of God with objectivity in the purity of the Holy Spirit's revelation.

Heaven's Evaluation

The spiritual principle of somnambulism, or sleepwalking, is used mightily by certain demon armies to bind up the unconscious mind and to pervert the conscious mind—no matter what is heard from the Word of God through the pastor-teacher. The believer must learn to overcome Satan's carnal weapons. The "weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). The only way to acquire these spiritual

weapons is to be available to hear preaching—Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night—whenever the Word of God is presented. Church attendance is so important to God that Jesus notes who is in attendance at every church service. He writes down what is preached and how each one in the congregation listens and responds to that preaching (Revelation 1:13; Malachi 3:16).

At the Bema Seat, where Christ will evaluate the works of all believers, each of us will go before Him alone. He will get out the Bible and His book of remembrance, and evaluate us based upon every Word of God. Some will be ashamed at that moment (1 John 2:27-28), as He reveals how many times they ignored opportunities to hear the Word. He will also reveal the times we heard but failed to appropriate truth, due to the process of spiritual sleepwalking.

Jesus continually evaluates what the preaching accomplished in our memory centers. Unless we cultivate the soil of our hearts by being prepared through prayer and study in an attitude of humility and faith-rest, the Word does not take root. Satan's strategy is to knock out the words that entered into the perceptive area of the brain before the truth is transferred into the

heart to stay. What we hear must go through the Cross, being transferred into our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. This whole process is accomplished not by works, but by being broken.*

The principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness in this world, and the wickedness of spiritual infection in high places, which are a part of Satan's armies, have a program to remove the Word of God from our minds. This doesn't happen naturally. This is a supernatural work of Satan to bring in cognitive dissonance, which is the process of holding onto conflicting beliefs and of knowing the truth without applying it. As soon as the message is over—whether through unnecessary conversations that are meant to distract us or arguments in the car on the way home—they try to steal the seed of the Word from us to prevent us from applying the truth.

The Holy Spirit's function is to bring to memory what we have been taught, but He cannot bring to memory what has been lost through demonic activity. Often this activity goes unrecognized because we missed the pastor's teaching about it. What the Holy Spirit desires to do in us is to make Christ all in all (Colossians 3:11).

Christ is to have preeminence because He created us and because He holds all things together by the Word of His power (Hebrews 1:3).

**For more about the process of transferring knowledge that becomes spiritual life to the believer, read* The Hearing Heart*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS VS. THE FLESH'S RELIGION

There is something very pertinent to understand about the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that when the Spirit comes, He would convict and reprove of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-8). He convicts of sin because of those who believe not, of righteousness because Christ went to His Father in heaven, and of judgment because the prince of this world is judged.

The key for believers to understand is that the Holy Spirit will reprove or rebuke us of self-righteousness. In other words, He will reprove a person for being self-righteous as much as He will rebuke a person for living in overt sins.

All of us are unclean. All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. They fade away, and our iniquities are taken by the wind (Isaiah 64:6). Filthy rags were the rags used in leper colonies. These rags were used again and again on the

running sores that covered the lepers. Of course, the rags developed a terrible odor. That is what our righteousness is like before God.

Being ignorant of God's righteousness, the Jews set about to establish their own righteousness, refusing to submit themselves to the righteousness that is of God. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:3-4). Submission to God's righteousness produces a desire to hear from a pastor-teacher and to go from faith to faith whenever there is an opportunity. Hearing the Word of God becomes more necessary than daily food (Job 23:12). Why? Because all of eternity depends on what God said and how I listen to the teaching of His Word.

Hearing the Word preached must have priority in our lives. When a revelation from heaven could be coming down into our hearts, we must be available to receive it. The faithfulness of the New Testament believers is described in Acts 20:31-32 and Acts 2:41-47. These believers attended two doctrinal classes a day.

At the Bema Seat, none of us can get away with saying, "I was too busy to hear the Word of God." 1 Kings 20:40 refers to a servant who was busy here and there, and a prisoner escaped

from him. He had to pay for it with his life. Being too busy in business is not going to be an acceptable answer before the Lord. A man in his best state is vanity (Psalm 39:5). Every person—from the morally upright to the immoral—will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Comparison and Competition

"Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Corinthians 15:34).

If I go before God, having been very religious and thinking that I have been very good, He is going to reveal to me that the good that I have done in my own strength is just like the filthy rags of the lepers. For this reason, the Holy Spirit rebukes us of our self-righteousness.

We often try to make our self-righteousness relative to the righteousness of others. We say or think things such as, "What did you think about what that guy did?" We compare. "What do you think of her? What about him?" We evaluate. That is relative righteousness, and everyone who practices it will be judged. We should never say anything negative about another person.

When we believe in Jesus Christ as Abraham did (Romans 4:3), it is counted to us as right-

eousness. We receive God's righteousness—apart from works and apart from the Law by believing in Jesus Christ. God clothes us with Christ's robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). Therefore, that no flesh can glory in His presence, Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:29-31).

The Holy Spirit is *for* us (Romans 8:26), the Father is for us (Romans 8:31), and Jesus Christ is for us (Romans 8:34). The entire basis for Christians going to heaven will be God's righteousness. We have no righteousness in ourselves whatsoever. All that we will receive is because we have been given His righteousness.

The Word of God says the wounded are cast down and cry out (see Proverbs 7:26, Job 30:24). When people measure and compare themselves with others, they wound those who fail. The wounded enter into a progression of four emotional reactions: guilt, shame, rejection, and fear—all because of someone's standard of self-righteousness that has nothing to do with a faith that works by love (Galatians 5:6; Philemon 1:5).

There is not a single sin as bad as self-righteousness. Many Christians in every church have measures of self-righteousness. Self-righteous-

ness elevates itself ahead of the Cross and results in uncrucified relationships, uncrucified fellowship with God, and uncrucified responses to the teaching and preaching of the Word of God.

Everything about our lives must go through the Cross. A self-righteous person might outwardly appear to listen, respect, and honor the Word. If, however, his mind-set toward Scripture has not been through the Cross, where he dies to the accumulation of knowledge and personal opinions, his rebellion will eventually lead to an uncrucified relationship in his marriage.

Healing the Wounds

Several months ago, a distraught mother from another church sent her daughter to me for counseling. The girl was pregnant and unmarried, and she came to my office sobbing and crying because she had failed to meet the standard of pure living.

First, I said to her: "You have a lot of guilt. You're ashamed—you're filled with shame. You feel rejected. You have fear. You don't even dare to tell your father."

Then, I said, "It's over now, so we are going to stay here for as long as it takes for you to be-

lieve that God loves you."

Next, I read Isaiah 44:22: "I [God] have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."

I had her repeat the verse back to me, and then we read 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

After this, I asked her some questions.

"Do you have any right to be guilty right now?"

"No," she said.

"Do you have to feel ashamed?"

"No."

"Does God reject you?"

"No."

"Should you have to fear when perfect love casts out fear?"

"No."

Finally, I told her, "Look at me. You are just as righteous as I am. The Holy Spirit is cleansing that unconscious mind of yours, and your human spirit will take over as you learn to receive from God's Holy Spirit."

We would not allow the process of spiritual sleepwalking to control her through the wounds

in her unconscious mind, making her think it was her conscious mind. God completely heals the wounded who have failed completely (Psalm 147:3). He comes and binds up the transgression—called the "breach," in Isaiah 30:26—and He heals the stroke of the wound. The stroke refers to the paralysis brought in by the demon armies in the unconscious mind and in the body. The demonic influence exerted in this process is to control the responses of the central nervous system.

Take the example of a man who committed adultery four years ago. He was sobbing, overwhelmed with sorrow, resenting and rejecting himself completely. But a great thing happened in our counseling sessions. The guilt went, the shame went, the rejection went, the fear went, and the past went. Why? Because the moment he confessed his sin and forsook it, he took on the imparted righteousness of grace, the motivation of love, the power of a multitude of mercies (Nehemiah 9:19).

These things were imparted to him because he believed that Christ bore every one of those sins and iniquities. Can his sins ever be brought up again? Not by God. Will they ever be brought up again by people? They will only be brought

up by those who are self-righteous, by those who measure themselves by themselves, by those who compare themselves with themselves. These people, however, don't measure themselves by the doctrine of the Finished Work (2 Corinthians 10:13).

Not only does the Lord Jesus Christ heal the wounds, but He also transforms our capacity to prevent us from falling (Jude 24) and to help us stand (Romans 14:4).

Chapter Three

THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE FINISHED WORK

God told me years ago the more I heard and received the Word of God, the more I would be used. He told me the more I went to church, the more I would be promoted. He told me to put Jesus Christ and His Kingdom first and to be faithful to the truth by faith.

God is faithful to the end to everyone who has failed (Psalm 89:33). He is faithful to provide for us above what we are being tempted by (1 Corinthians 10:13). He is faithful to cleanse us from every sin we confess (1 John 1:9). He is faithful to uphold us. He is faithful never to leave us. He is faithful to perfect us. God's faithfulness is great, and He always covers us.

In Exodus 36:37, the linen covering of the door to the tabernacle was colored purple and blue. That refers to the character of Christ in His hypostatic union as God and Man. The cheru-

bim in the tabernacle were covered with gold, meaning they were filled with justice to protect what the Finished Work has done through the deity of Christ living in us.

Not only does love cover a multitude of sins, according to 1 Peter 4:8, but also the love of God never, ever, ever uncovers a sin (Proverbs 25:2). Someone who uncovers will suffer the penalty of paying for the sin done by the one he uncovered and refused to forgive (Matthew 18:23-35).

Many people develop false coverings by trying to hide their iniquity (Job 31:33). But it is beautiful to know that Calvary has covered everything. If something does happen that must be dealt with in the table of organization, it must be handled in privacy (see Matthew 18:15-17). The most beautiful thing about God's covering is that no one can ever make God mention a word about what He has covered (Zechariah 3:3-4). He will only reveal what the Finished Work has accomplished for us.

Living in Perspicacity

When a person is motivated by the righteousness that comes by the Word of faith (Romans 10:6), he doesn't scream in reaction at someone on the phone. He doesn't react because

God's righteousness supernaturally controls his inner man. To his faith is added virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity. These things are in him and they abound (2 Peter 1:5-8). They are on the inside, having great value in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:4).

No more can Satan confuse this person's memory through the natural man—through his history in Adam and Adam's history in him—to preserve his present life in the comfortability and convenience of self-gratification and self-satisfaction.

A Christian who operates with God's righteousness by faith enters into perspicacity, which is acute mental discernment. Spiritually, it means he is able to think through a thought from the Word of God until Jesus Christ controls his pattern of thinking. Also, he is fastidious, thinking in precise light about a precise doctrine until it becomes his personal experience and personal history.

When the Word of God comes to the believer who is perspicacious, he has a relaxed mind-set that can focus on the details of life through grace, as he responds to the divine presence of the living God. Thereby, his soul is revived to re-

ceive God's thoughts through His Word. That is perspicacity.

Preserving Our Purpose

When we enter in the co-crucifixion of His death, burial, and resurrection, we enter into a resurrected partnership, a resurrected fellowship, a resurrected purpose, and a resurrected goal.

The prodigal son was in the far county and came to the end of himself. He was still a son, but he had lost his purpose in sonship. Christians who backslide remain children of God, but they lose their purpose in their sonship. They feel very lonely because it takes co-crucifixion, co-burial, and co-resurrection to eliminate the effects of demons in the unconscious mind and in the conscious mind. The ganglionic process and the central nervous system respond to the atmosphere and the stimulation of the demonic vibrations and projections.

When this happens, cognitive dissonance—conflicting beliefs and the process of knowing something without applying it—can take over, giving place for a person to add sin to sin (Isaiah 30:1), living in a world where he fellowships only with superficial pleasure.

The provision of God's divine pleasure, however, is Finished Work peace and joy in His presence, where we can break the carnal connections and really say, "I am just as righteous as Jesus Christ is, and I am confessed up-to-date. The only reason I am spiritual is because of God's righteousness in me."

CONCLUSION

If we are saved and have confessed our sins up-to-date, we have no record in heaven except God's righteousness—no record of sin, no record of failure, no record of iniquity (which is emotional rebellion against the truth) because I am confessed up-to-date. Though we are sinners who could fail at any moment, our precious Savior has made us righteous.

Why will believers go to heaven? Because of His righteousness.

How can we be sure that we are accepted in the beloved through the redemption of His blood? By His righteousness.

First God imputes righteousness to us, simply because we have believed unto salvation. Then, the more we exercise our faith in Him, the more He imparts to us, giving us the blessings of relative divine righteousness. This means that the character of God will bless us in many ways; because He is righteous, He must bless His

righteousness in us. That is how His divine blessing comes our way in business, in marriage, and in every realm of our lives.

Without reservation, Jesus Christ gives us everything He is, and He will never leave us. Not a single gift from God can be taken from us, because all of it was given by grace.

Bringing Purpose to

Temptation

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The Cross: It is what that Satan hates most, because it represents his ultimate defeat. It stands for the Finished Work, which Christ Himself completed at Calvary. Therefore, more than anything, Satan tries to make Christians avoid the Cross through his tool—temptation.

The devil tried to tempt Jesus repeatedly, working to get the Son of God to venture outside the will of the Father in His humanity. Jesus had to get to the Cross in order to win the victory. Satan, knowing that, did everything in his power to keep Jesus from it.

The Cross is the door to resurrection life. It is where Jesus conquered death and removed its sting. The grave can no longer claim victory, and we no longer have to live in fear, even of death.

Man was not created with an old sin nature. The sin nature began with Satan. When he seduced Eve into temptation, his purpose was to make man reveal the Fall. The purpose of resur-

rection, however, is so that men would reveal its redemptive power. In every situation, we are either revealing the Fall or we are revealing the resurrection power of redemption. We need to remember that in the details of life.

As this booklet will reveal, temptation was designed by the devil to keep us from seeing the victory of the Cross. Yet, when we respond to temptation with the Word of God as Jesus did in His humanity, we triumph, and Satan is forced to flee.

Chapter One

OUT OF THE CROSS COMES LIFE

Peter was with the other disciples in Caesarea Philippi when Jesus asked them this question:

"Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

"And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:13-18).

The "rock" refers to Jesus Christ. Peter was the movable yet living stone, but Jesus was the immovable stone—the spiritual Rock spoken of in 1 Corinthians 10:4. The Greek text reveals the difference between the two.

Next, Jesus said, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

"Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

"Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

"But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

"For what is a man profited; if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:19-26).

Why People Hate to Suffer

What was it that Peter did not want? Suffering. What is it that many Christians try to avoid? Suffering. Suffering is always related to Christ's Cross and then to our Cross in identification with Christ whom the world hates (John 7:7; John 15:18). Peter did not want to have anything to do with suffering: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."

When Peter identified Him as *the* Christ, Jesus said He would have to suffer many things at the hands of the scribes, the chief priests, and the elders. At that moment, Peter took hold of Jesus, who was not facing him. The original text reveals that he literally took hold of Christ by the shoulder and rebuked Him for saying that He would suffer many things.

My experience in ministering is that most people hate suffering. We do not want to suffer.

A Christian author has said that America wants a God without wrath; man without sin. He said that most Americans want the administration of Christ without the Cross.

We must understand that the central theme of Christianity is the Cross. Out of the Cross comes life—eternal life, where we never die and where we will never face death, spiritually, in our souls. But it requires going *through* the Cross, where we must first suffer many things.

The Cross Brings Identification

Joseph de Veuster, a Belgian missionary priest, had a brother who was called to be a missionary in Hawaii. When his brother became ill, Joseph, known in his church as Father Damien, went instead to minister to a colony of lepers.

Preaching to them each morning and every afternoon, he would begin every message by saying, "My fellow brethren…."

One day, as he was preparing to preach, boiling water spilled on his feet, and he noticed that he couldn't feel any pain. When it happened again, he knew in his heart that now he, too, had leprosy.

The next morning, this priest began his message by saying, "My fellow lepers…."

In losing our lives, we find Christ's life. Second Timothy 2:12 says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Notice, however, that the Bible also says that all who live godly shall suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).

Chapter Two

SATAN'S GOAL: TO CANCEL CALVARY

Using Peter, Satan tried to cause Christ in His humanity to fall. He did everything in his power against Jesus. In Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:2, the Word of God clearly reveals that every day for forty days, Satan tempted Jesus. The temptation did not come just at the end of His fast. For forty days and forty nights the devil tempted Jesus. It is vital that we realize this.

In Deuteronomy 9:9, Moses fasted forty days. In 1 Kings 19:8, Elijah fasted forty days. Now we have a picture of the Savior, His body weak from hunger, and Satan said, "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (Luke 4:3).

Satan was trying to tempt Christ in His humanity to go outside of God's will for a provision—to become materialistic and to live outside of His relationship with the Holy Spirit.

But Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3: "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4).

Oh, if each of us would realize what temptation is all about! It is Satan's attempt to turn us toward natural provisions outside of the will of God in faith, to live outside of a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

No Time for Presumption

Next, Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. The Word of God says that He was placed at the very edge where He could have easily fallen off. Then, the devil misquoted Psalm 91:11-12: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Matthew 4:6).

Jesus responded with a quote from Deuteronomy 6:16: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." In other words, Christ in His humanity would not falsely presume against the will of God. This time, Satan tried to tempt Jesus Christ in terms of His volition. Again, Jesus simply used the Word of God.

Then, in Matthew 4:8-9, Satan took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. The devil said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

The Word of God says that then the devil left, and the angels came and ministered unto Him (Matthew 4:11).

Tempted to Leave out the Cross

Through Peter, Satan tried to tempt the Son of God to make a decision to bypass the Cross. Many of us make choices where we are tempted to leave out Calvary.

When he rebuked the Lord, in Matthew 16:22, Peter was saying, "Avoid the Cross!"

In Genesis 6, fallen angels married women in an attempt to defile the purity of the seed of the woman and thereby do away with the pure humanity of Christ. In Matthew 8:23-28, demons tried to kill Jesus on the boat, again trying to get rid of the Cross.

Even while He hung on the Cross, those in

the crowd shouted, "If You are the Messiah, then save Yourself!" The chief priest, elders, and scribes mocked Him, saying, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross" (see Matthew 27:40-44). The whole point for Satan was to do away with the Cross.

The temptations of Christ were to cause Him to avoid the Cross, to take Him outside the Father's plan, and to get Him to miss His calling. The first temptation was to become materialistic outside of the provision of the Holy Spirit. The second temptation was to cause a wrong relationship with God's Word. The third was designed to take Him outside of the Father's plan regarding His calling.

Those were the devil's temptations, and there is nothing new about them—he has always been doing this. In these last days, we need to recognize one another as members of God's family. We must learn to appreciate our call to be members of the Body of Christ, fitly framed, every joint supplying the whole (Ephesians 2:21; 4:16). We need to count it a privilege to take up our Cross daily, having our flesh and affections crucified (Galatians 5:24). We need to begin to see that whatever suffering we go through, Jesus

Christ is present with us in it.

Truth governs our emotions and blesses our souls through the Cross. Resurrection life is revealed in the character of God by taking up the Cross. Every single day, everything that gives us life depends upon the Cross (Luke 9:23).

Chapter Three

THE CROSS LEADS TO RESURRECTION

Out of the Cross comes the supernatural resurrection of Christ. Out of the Cross comes the supernatural spiritual resurrection of the Christian (Romans 6:5). Out of the Cross come identification with His resurrection and fellowship with His suffering. Out of the Cross come all of these things. The Cross guarantees that a man who takes it up, believing in what it stands for, will never die.

A conservative Bible-believing doctor in Pennsylvania has told the story of how a little girl knocked on his door on a cold, blustery winter day. "My mother is dying. Can you come?" said the girl, who was dressed in an old coat and boots.

The doctor put on his coat and followed the girl. "Mommy is upstairs," she said when they got to the house.

He went up and ministered to the mother and said to her "If it wasn't for your daughter, you wouldn't have lived. But thanks to her coming to get me, we will be able to save your life."

"Daughter?" the woman said. "My daughter died three years ago. Her coat and boats are in the closet there."

The doctor looked, and there was the same old coat and same boots that the girl had been wearing. He saw a picture of the girl, and it was the same child who came to get him. How do you explain this? You can't. It is amazing. The little girl took the doctor to her mother's house and then disappeared.

Death is Merely a Shadow

The wife of a famous minister in Philadelphia died when she was very young. She was a beautiful lady, and after she went home to be with the Lord, their daughter asked her daddy, "If Jesus Christ died for our sins, then why do we have to die?"

"Honey, I am not ready to answer that," the minister said. "I am going to have to pray about it."

Three days later, they were riding in a car and came to a red light. A big tractor trailer

came past, blocked the sun, and cast a very large shadow.

"Honey, do you see that shadow?" the minister asked his daughter. "Would you rather have the tractor trailer or the shadow run over you?"

"The shadow," she said.

Then he said, "Death is no more than a shadow. You are never going to die, and neither did your mommy die. She went to heaven to live with Jesus."

Walking through without Fear

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psalm 23:4*a*).

"If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John 8:51).

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:26).

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

"Teach us to number our days" the Psalmist prayed (Psalm 90:12). For believers, death just means that we are "absent from the body, and … present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). What a wonderful thing! We are on earth for such a short time. Therefore, we are to number our days. We are on earth to get saved, to know God, to reveal resurrection life, and to be conformed to His image. When it's all over, we will spend eternity with God in a very beautiful position. We will be with Him in heaven forever—a gift we receive through the Cross of Calvary.

Hitler's army was murdering people throughout Europe and Russia, and millions of Jewish people and Christians were killed, including a seven-year-old boy. As the boy lay dying, a German lieutenant screamed, "Where is your God now?"

An old bishop gave the answer: "He is right there beside him, waiting to take him to heaven this very moment to be with the angels. That is where!" And just as the angels came and carried away the born-again beggar (Luke 16:22), that is what happened to the boy. I am certain that the angels came for Stephen as he was being stoned,

and Jesus stood up at the throne of God to receive him (Acts 7:54-60).

"O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The thing that we fear most—death—will be the greatest event of our lives as Christians in the will of God. Death makes us absent from the body and present with Jesus Christ and the angels. What an experience it will be to travel up through time and space and to be able to look down on the earth! And yet, with all that we go through down here, who would want to look back?

CONCLUSION

The temptations raged all around Christ, but Jesus always responded with "It is written." Satan had to leave because he could not resist Jesus' defense, which was the Word of God. Temptation, when answered properly, can help build spiritual muscles. It enables us to use the Word of God more skillfully.

As we glorify God and edify one another in the Body of Christ, we are part of a solution not part of the problem in this world's system. If you are part of the problem, come to Christ, become involved with a Bible-believing church, and you will find the solution and become a part of it.

Satan is defeated on the death issue; he brings temptation after temptation, ultimately trying to make us fear death (see Hebrews 2:15). Now he can no longer hold it over our heads. The issues of death belong to God. The Scriptures clearly state that believers will not taste

death. And once we go through the shadows of death, Satan can no longer tempt us. Not that we should be reckless with our lives, but when we go up, he is through. Isn't that Good News? Don't misunderstand: I do not want to die. I want to live for as long as I can. But it is a great comfort to know that death has lost its sting.

Rejoice in that fact! Praise Him, and let all the angels and all of our loved ones in heavens see it.

Father, we thank You for Your divine covering and protection as we face temptations. And, as we exercise our faith fervently, may we grow in grace and knowledge and let the Cross release Your resurrection life. Let us live in divine decisions made through the wisdom of the Word of God. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Brokenness

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:6-10).

God commanded light to shine out of darkness. He commanded it, and that light has shined in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God "in the face of Jesus Christ." God wants us to reveal the face of

Jesus Christ, so when people see us, they see the character of God.

Knowledge of God's Word brings in light (Psalm 119:130). If God has His way, we will reflect the face of Jesus Christ at work, in the home, and wherever God has called us.

In this booklet, we will see that there is only one kind of Christian God can use—the broken Christian. Whosoever believes on and receives Jesus Christ is saved and will go to heaven. But God cannot use many who are born again. Before anyone can be effective in the Kingdom of God, the treasure of God within must be released. For that to happen, He allows circumstances that will break us and let His light shine forth.

Chapter One

PLACES OF THE LORD'S BREAKING

"So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

"And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

"And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto to his place" (Judges 7:5-7).

"And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into

the host of Israel, and said: Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

"And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

"And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do.

"When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

"So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came to the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands.

"And the three companies blew the trumpets and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

"And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and

cried, and fled" (Judges 7:15-21).

"And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote [the Philistines] there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim" (2 Samuel 5:20).

Going God's Way

Gideon originally had 32,000 in his army. The Midianites, his enemies, had 135,000. When God called, Gideon responded and brought his army with him. The Lord tested the army and immediately rejected 22,000. Then, God told Gideon to bring the remaining 10,000 down to the water.

"Those who lap from their hand after bringing the water up to their mouths so that they can look and see where the enemy is, they will be accepted," God told Gideon. "Those who kneel down and put their faces in the water will be rejected."

Only three hundred did it God's way.

Gideon now had just three hundred to fight against 135,000 Midianites. The three hundred were separated into battalions of one hundred each. In their left hands, they carried torches hidden inside of earthen pitchers. In their right

hands, the men held trumpets.

While the Midianites slept, Gideon's army advanced to the edge of the enemy's camp. At the signal, they sounded the trumpets then broke the pitchers that were in their hands, making a great noise. Confused and frightened because of the noise, the Midianites thought a huge army was coming after them. Hearing the battle cry and seeing the lights carried by each member of the battalions surrounding them, the enemy fled. Three hundred overwhelmed the 135,000.

A Broken Heart Draws God Near

God wants to teach us something in the principle and application of this story. In 2 Samuel 5:20, the place where David defeated the Philistines was called Baal-perazim, which means "the place of the Lord's breaking." One of the greatest things a Christian can consider is this: "How much have I let God break me?" The Lord is nigh unto those who have a broken heart (Psalm 34:18). He gathers together the broken, those who have a reproach because of their burden. In Isaiah 57:15, the Lord is the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity. He whose name is holy inhabits the holy place, and He also in-

habits any who have a contrite and humble spirit. These are the ones God revives.

At first, no light was shining through the pitchers carried by Gideon's men. But the torches within those pitchers were prepared with oil to fuel the fire—a type of the oil of the Holy Spirit. The earthen pitcher is a type of the Christian who is self-preserving, insecure, paranoid, and immature because God has never broken him.

There may be times when the light is very dim because of weakness, but God knows the heart. He will not quench a smoldering flax (Isaiah 42:3). Therefore, let the weak say, "I am strong!" (Joel 3:10 *b*). We are strong in the Lord.

Chapter Two

SHATTERING THE EARTHEN VESSEL

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you,

and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:3-12).

To those who have failed and know it, God says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Then He says, "Blessed are they that mourn (because of their failures), for they shall be comforted."

First, I am poor in spirit. This means I hate my sin—I despise it and it makes me weep. Then, I mourn, and God comforts me. This makes me meek, meaning I become humble and God-conscious. All of it causes me to hunger and thirst after righteousness. I hate my sin. Oh, God, I hate it! But now, on the inside, I am meek. Instead of remaining conscious of my self and my failure, I am hungry and thirsty after righteousness.

Do you see the progression in Matthew 5? Because of this life in us, we are merciful to others. Next is "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." God sees this process of turning from sin and failure to Him as purity and faith purified. God's mercy and purity make us peacemakers toward others.

The real reason a person becomes pure and

meek (God-conscious instead of self-conscious) is because of what God has done in his life. His spouse, his friends, and his co-workers don't have to change. What has happened is that God started the breaking process. I pray to God that you won't have to go through the painful breaking process, but I would be shocked if most of us didn't have to be severely broken.

Troubles Trigger Revival

In a church in a small town, a number of the teenagers were in rebellion. Nothing could be done about it. Five teens began meeting seven days a week with their pastor's guidance. They prayed fervently that God would work in those teenagers' lives. Soon after the prayer meetings began, a doctor in town was backing his car out of the driveway when he ran over and killed his young child. He didn't know the child was there. That same day, two teenagers died when their car struck a pole. From those terrible tragedies, people turned to God and revival came to that church where the young people were praying.

The teen ministry grew from twenty-five to one hundred. The church went from less than eighty into the hundreds. God began to work

because people's vessels were broken. Now the light of Christ could be seen. The light was inside of them, but no one could see it until they were broken.

Light Shines from Darkness

God's light is inside of every Christian. The question is, who can see it? A lot of people do, because many Christians have let God break them. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

God breaks the vessel. And when the vessel is broken, the light shines. God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, and this light He shined in our hearts to "give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

What does God use to break the vessel? He uses trouble. We are troubled on every side, yet not in distress. We are perplexed, but not in despair. We are persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:7-10). Why? So that the life of Jesus may be made manifest.

God wants our lights to shine. He says, "I

must get the light of the glorious gospel out there. It is the light of My knowledge, the light of My doctrine, the light of the Spirit, the light of love, the light of grace, the light of mercy, the light of forgiveness. They need to be seen" (Philippians 2:15-16).

For that light to be manifest through the vessel, the outer man must be broken.

Chapter Three

MADE STRONG IN WEAKNESS

A young couple graduated from one of the finest Bible colleges around. Just three years later, he was promoted into a job as principal of a school of five thousand. They were very young when the wife, a lovely lady, came down with a crippling disease that has left her in a wheelchair to this day. That happened thirty years ago.

That man became such a broken vessel. He would do everything for his wife. He would wheel her everywhere. He kissed her cheek, loved her, and was very anointed in dealing with her around all the students. Then, as the result of an accident, he injured his leg and was left with a terrible limp.

Here was this young, handsome couple, and God broke them—repeatedly. Those things did not happen because they were not good Christians. It was so God could use them more. And

likewise, every anointed pastor in the world who preaches the gospel has been broken.

I was reading about several of the top preachers in Bible-believing churches in America. One of them had two daughters who became pregnant outside of marriage. He and his wife were great parents, and it broke their hearts. But more than that, their vessels were being broken, and God allowed it.

The wife of another pastor couldn't get out of bed for six years because of an unknown disease. Their vessels were being broken. Billy Graham has been so faithful to bring the gospel message to millions. But at age sixty-seven, the physical afflictions began one after another—hospitals, doctors. He is a very broken vessel.

Don't think that these men have been broken because they are not right with God. They are beautiful Christians. Yet, one reason that God breaks people is so that we can understand Isaiah 53:5: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed."

Jesus never sinned, but oh, He was broken. He was a broken vessel.

"I am like a broken vessel," David wrote in

Psalm 31:12. "Reproach hath broken my heart," he added in Psalm 69:20. Hebrews 11:34 tells us that "out of weakness" we are made strong. "When I am weak, then am I strong," Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:10.

He Heals the Strokes of Wounds

What God wants is that we would weep with people when things are being broken in their lives. Often we can understand and identify because we have been through it. When you are already broken, and yet things continue to break you, don't think that it is God hurting you. Yes, it hurts; but God allows you to be broken so the light can shine through you.

God gathers broken vessels together (see Zephaniah 3:18-20). He binds up the broken-hearted and heals them (Isaiah 61:1; Psalm 147:3). The Lord heals "the stroke of their wound" (Isaiah 30:26, referring to severe, indescribable emotional pain). God heals it.

Gideon's three hundred defeated 135,000. "There is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6). "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him"

(2 Chronicles 16:9*a*).

Uzziah was a wonderful king for fifty-two years; he was Isaiah's hero. But in 2 Chronicles 26:16, it is written that when Uzziah was strong, "his heart was lifted up to his destruction." In pride, Uzziah "went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar," which only the priests were allowed to do. The priests withstood the king; Uzziah became angry, and God made him a "leper unto the day of his death" (see 2 Chronicles 26:17-21).

Broken unto Death

Have you been broken? If you haven't been, you will be. What's more, you will be surprised at the things God will use to break you—and they can happen so quickly. Thank God, we do not need to offer blood sacrifices to obtain mercy. That was taken care of once and for all at the Cross. Rather, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). To become a sacrifice means to be broken unto death. When that happens, rebellion is gone. I don't de-

mand anything from God because everything He gives me is grace and I don't deserve it. I am broken. A Christian who experiences resurrection life in Christ is alive because he has been broken unto death (see Romans 6:13; Romans 12:2).

Every broken vessel releases God's light—the light of the Word, the light of love, the light of grace, the light of mercy, the light of compassion, the light of conviction, the light of respect, and the light of honor. But when the vessel is not broken, no one can see the light. So, God chips away at the vessel to reveal the light.

I know of a wonderful missionary pastor in Austria. Behind the scenes, he lives as such a broken vessel. If he were given five hundred dollars, he would find a way to give it away, even without knowing where the next meal is coming from. He does that all the time. He lives for others.

There are so many others we could mention who live that way before God. The man or woman of God who is broken is able to comfort others because of "the sufferings wherein we have suffered" (2 Corinthians 1:3). Each one has discovered the great blessings of brokenness. God revives the broken. He quickens the broken. He uses broken vessels.

CONCLUSION

Brokenness makes the difference in a marriage. What makes a difference among pastors who preach the gospel is brokenness. The pastor who isn't broken is independent of God's heart. That kind of pastor withdraws into himself. The pastor who isn't broken doesn't have geniune tears of brokenness.

"All my cords are broken," Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 10:20. This means he didn't have any sentimental relationships. The cords of sentimental relationships must be broken. We cannot follow people. We are to follow God, though we love people and fellowship with those who are of the same mind. But, the fleshly cords must be broken.

In Jeremiah 23:9, the prophet said that his heart was broken within him. In Jeremiah 9:1, the tears were running down his cheeks like rivers. And the tears ran down Jesus' cheeks, too (John 11:33, 35, 38; Luke 19:41).

Wherever the Word of God is preached with power, the man of God was broken before he could preach it. A pastor's wife who shares her husband with the world and never complains is a woman who has been broken. When a congregation is broken, no one reacts or becomes negative or arrogant, because there is unity that only God gives when people are broken.

Many people preserve themselves in their marriages. They refuse to let God break them and to let the light shine to their partner. They try to justify their hardness, which may have been caused by old wounds. But one has to show the light—the light of forgiveness, the light of compassion. The treasure in the earthen vessel can't be hidden on the inside. The vessel has to be broken. Please allow God to keep on breaking you so His treasures can be shown forth through you. We are the vessels He uses to show forth His glorious light.

Building Walls of Doctrine

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INTRODUCTION

Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise" (Isaiah 60:18).

For some people, walls mean confinement, a sense of being hemmed in with no way out. They fight to tear down every wall that surrounds them, not considering its possible value. In Bible times, however, walls were very important to the preservation of cities against attacks from the outside. When Nehemiah set out to rebuild Jerusalem, it was the wall around the city that was restored first.

God has established doctrine to be the substance of our "walls" today. These walls are not designed to separate or hinder but to preserve and protect. Within the Christian community, we are to have fellowship around the mystery of Christ in us. That fellowship is sweet and, as a result, it is something Satan desires to invade

and frustrate.

As this booklet will show, it is only by building walls of truth in our souls that we can maintain this fellowship and defeat the poison of the enemy.

Chapter One

FELLOWSHIP AROUND THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST IN YOU

"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:7-11)

This is the Holy Spirit's inspired Word,

given to Paul. We are to receive it without self-consciousness or the intimidation of the old sin nature. By these words we receive instruction and edification, "according to the gift of the grace of God." The standard for Paul's ministry, and for the ministry of every believer, is the gift of grace that has been given to us. He received his ministry by the effectual working (*energeia*) of God's power (*dunamis*). The "effectual working of His power" speaks of the sequence of power transferred by the Holy Spirit in the human spirit and soul. It makes the written Word a Living Word, which renews us continually and protects us invisibly. Paul was saying, "I minister according to the Word of God being transferred into God-consciousness in my human spirit so that my self-consciousness will be occupied with God."

Unsearchable Riches

This grace was given to Paul that he "should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." "Unsearchable" is *anexichniastos*, which means untraceable, inexhaustible, unfathomable, incomprehensible. These riches are given to "make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery."

From the beginning, that mystery was hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:7-9). The fellowship of the mystery of Jesus Christ in us is there so we will operate through the power of the Word of God, making His promises ours. By this divine transfer, we become living epistles (2 Corinthians 3:2).

In 2 Corinthians 8:6, Paul was saying, "I want you to finish in grace!" The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust and to live quietly through Jesus Christ with our souls filled with doctrine. We will take to heaven whatever grace has done in our souls through doctrine. Walls of doctrine are being built with the Word we receive by grace through faith. The Holy Spirit transfers knowledge from the natural, perceptive area of the brain (channel A), taking it through the Cross in the God-conscious human spirit (channel B) and into the soul (channel C).

When we have a decision to make, we hear the Word of God, and we don't have to labor over it: The Holy Spirit transfers what we hear to channels B and C through *energeia*. Then *ischus* does the supernatural work of the Spirit that locks the Word in the memory for recall when we need it (John 14:26; 16:13-14).

By the power of God's ability in us (*dunamis*), the Word goes into our frame of reference and becomes a part of our vocabulary. It becomes part of our norms and standards for thinking, confessing, and deciding. Then, the Word becomes a part of our production, application, and manifestation of what we have received. Finally, doctrine becomes our divine viewpoint, and we are able to manifest Christ (*kratos*) in the fellowship of this mystery, making all men see it (Ephesians 1:19).

Every day of our lives, we can purpose to make others see Christ. Instead of being angry or reactionary or bringing up problems, purpose to edify others. This can only be accomplished by building walls of doctrine in our souls.

Differences Defeated

Inside of us is a fellowship. We fellowship around a mystery—"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). We have one purpose as a local assembly, and that is to have unsaved people or untaught Christians see something that is impossible to have outside of this mystery. Take the mystery out of our fellowship, and we would operate in the flesh. What is the mystery? It is Christ inside of you and me. Our fel-

lowship is around the mystery.

Yet, while we are still in this body of death, it is amazing that even now the fellowship of the mystery is being revealed to *principalities* (the head commissioned officers of Satan who give the orders) and to *powers* (the non-commissioned officers who carry out the orders) (Ephesians 6:12). That is God's intention as He further humiliates Satan by revealing Himself through sinners who are saved by grace.

God wants us to see that our fellowship in the Body of Christ is intended to frustrate Satan, his commanding officers, and all the demons of hell. They will be confounded because they can see the mystery operate in our lives as we relate to each other through God's love and truth.

Chapter Two

THE PROBLEM OF PREDISPOSITION

Satan always tries to hinder, prohibit, and block the fellowship of the mystery. The first thing he attacks is our volition. Next, he puts every effort he can into disrupting the fellowship between a married couple. Then, he attacks families and governments. Then, of course, come the attacks on the local assembly.

For instance, Satan says to his forces, "Go into that city and prohibit couples from fellowshipping around that mystery."

"Well, how do we do that?" they ask.

"The first thing to attack is their emotions," Satan says. "You can manipulate their emotions so they try to go through circumstances by sight, preoccupied with finances and the details of life. After you have effectively done that, the next thing is to draw out their predisposition in Adam."

Satan's Jealousy at Work

What is the predisposition of Adam? It is what you are like as determined by your genetic inheritance; it is what comes naturally through the old sin nature. This is backed by the predisposition of Satan that was revealed at his fall.

Satan's predisposition was jealousy, then envy that is energized by pride and culminates in arrogance. He said, "I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14).

Satan has a program to get Christians to pastor, lead, manage, and teach in their adamic predisposition. That doesn't mean it is always something bad. Predisposition can be educated to seem quite normal at times, even pleasant. But the root determines the nature of the fruit, and in this case, it is the old sin nature.

Withdrawing into Self

In Adam's predisposition, feelings and emotions can, in a moment, take the place of thinking with God. When this happens, a believer withdraws into himself. The Bible tells us to draw

near (Hebrews 10:19-22), but instead of doing what God says, in his predisposition he withdraws from fellowship with God and the Body of Christ. Eventually, he will withdraw into his negative emotions, and then into some form of sublimation.

By living in his adamic predisposition, he is being set up to take on Satan's predisposition, which is "I will!" against God's will. Then, if his pain becomes greater and more intense, he will begin to blame others for how he feels.

Where does that come from? The accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10) makes people feel guilty. If we set the Lord before our face, even on our worst days, the devil and people cannot touch us. But, if we blame others for what's happening to us, we have not set the Lord before our face for that day. We will not be troubled by circumstances or people when the God of the universe and the God of all power is operating freely in our self-essence.

We have to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). This is how it works: First, define the issue. Then, use "practical deliverance." By getting to know God, we also get to know the demons that are at work against us (Ephesians 6:12). Alone, get on your knees and pray, "I am

choosing to exercise faith, Lord, through You. You rebuke these demons and deal with them." The battle is the Lord's; He will fight for us (Exodus 14:13; 1 Samuel 17:47). Our part is to hear the Word, let God hide it in our hearts, and obey, rebounding as we go.

Chapter Three

RECOGNIZING THE SERPENT'S POISON

"For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perverseness.

"None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

"They hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper" (Isaiah 59:3-5).

Exorcism concerns demonic possession. But those who belong to Christ cannot be possessed by Satan (John 4:4). Instead, some Christians need to be delivered of demonic obsession in order to effectively withstand the devil's influence.

We know Satan's program. In Christ, we are

wiser and smarter than he is, and we are in a position that he can never have. Seated far above him (Ephesians 1:20, 21; 2:6), we have authority and definition over any strategic or tactical move Satan would use to take us out of the will of God.

Knowing the authority we have, Satan purposes to accuse the brethren from morning to night. Imagine it, from morning throughout the evening, Satan's entire program is to accuse Christians so that the fellowship of the mystery in God's Kingdom will not be revealed—not to Satan's government or to lost souls.

The cleverest thing Satan can do is to infect a child of God with poison. The moment we confess our emotions instead of faith, he hatches serpent's eggs. These are seeds of negativity that have been deposited in the unconscious and subconscious mind by accusations from Satan, through projections or people. If we do not cast down those negative impulses, we assist him in releasing the poison of Satan's predisposition against truth. The eggs become vipers when our lives are crushed in a trial. Just as the bite of a viper releases a hematoxin into the bloodstream, Satan's projections cause infections in the life of a believer.

Notice, the eggs remain hidden until we are crushed. When they hatch, every Christian goes through the same thing: withdrawal. Usually, a person will begin by saying he is no good, which isn't true. In God's eyes, he is still as good and as precious as ever. But he thinks he is no good.

A person who thinks he is no good will eventually accuse others that it is their fault: "You made me this way!" After condemning himself, he has to condemn others. This is all part of the program to hinder, block, and stifle the fellowship of the mystery, which is to have Christ's love and grace fellowshipping with us. It is Christ's mercy flowing from you to me; Christ's gentleness coming from me to a lost soul; flowing through us, to each other. It is Christ's kindness, patience, and wisdom flowing from His throne, to us, to others, and back to Him. We are together in perfect unity, operating as one organism—the Body of Christ. And Satan is out to prevent that unity.

Compulsive Decisions

Living in adamic predisposition can lead to making compulsive decisions. Never make a decision regarding your geographical location

while you are in a trial; never let a famine in Canaan drive you to Egypt the way it drove away Abraham (see Genesis 12:10-20). I would say, "If I perish, I perish." (Esther 4:16). "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15*a*). Never allow circumstances to drive you out of an area. God must do the leading.

Never make a decision based upon sight, finances, experience, feelings, or satanic illumination. Remember, Lucifer is an illuminator into brightness. He can give light, and it seems to be God's light. But this light turns into darkness. When your light turns into darkness, your whole body is filled with darkness. You would swear to a pastor that it is light, and you will contend, "I know you are going to say that it does not line up with the Word. But I know God told me!"

No, it is light that has turned into darkness, and how great is that darkness. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23).

There are some devastating illustrations of

the principle of compulsive decisions. A rapist may appear to be the best person in the world for a month, but then a terrible compulsion comes over him. In the case of the Boston Strangler, hatred for his father began to take over this man who appeared to be rather ordinary.

A psychiatrist discovered this during an interview with him. He found out that this man had a father who was a mean, hateful, authoritarian figure who drove him with demands and who never said a kind word to him. His subjective mind went into a rage about his father and he would go out and kill. Every woman he strangled was his father, in this man's mind. He didn't even enjoy the sex when he attacked. He just wanted to kill his father.

The man who did these things seemed normal, with a wife and three children. But he would be driving home from work and suddenly be taken over by a rage. Through a satanic compulsion, he would kill his father again and again by killing women. He didn't dare go after a man because he was so intimidated by his father.

Compulsion often drives acts of child molestation. There is this raging compulsion and the person doesn't know how to handle his sex drive. He doesn't have God's provision, which

is having walls of doctrine to protect his soul, so he takes on a distorted and perverted disposition. Through a compulsion, he does terrible, unbelievable acts of molestation.

In these last days, with the increase of domestic violence and "hate" crimes, and with public disregard for bona fide authority and godly standards of living, it is vital for Christians to build their defenses. We do it not with the arm of the flesh, but by putting on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-18) and by building strong walls of doctrine on our firm foundation—which is Christ, the Living Word of God.

Chapter Four

DOCTRINE THAT CELEBRATES IN THE SOUL

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:7-8).

Satan's predisposition is revealed in the characteristics of "I will," with his accusing the brethren from morning to night, hatching serpent's eggs, weaving spider's webs in castles where no one can see what he is doing (Isaiah 59:5; Proverbs 30:28). This predisposition cannot be seen but is still very poisonous.

Unbelievable guilt may come in as Satan makes his subjects feel guilty while they blame

others and withdraw. Every one of us has been through it. We have withdrawn into our emotions and our sublimation. Don't be hyperspiritual and claim: "Oh, I have never had these times." Yes, you have had those times. Perhaps you just withdrew into pride instead, which is worse than many other forms of sublimation.

Contrast that behavior with the fellowship of the mystery in Christ. When we bring a truth that we know into a new setting and apply it, that makes the body of the truth new and real. That is why the Word of God is always fresh. When we hear a verse, we can never say that we already know it. Just as every moment is new, the application of His Word is always brand new.

With the Word of God circulating in us, and walls of doctrine protecting us, we have fantastic fellowship with people. But after every blessing comes temptation. Remember: Temptations come from Satan, while testings come from God. Though we have been deeply touched and greatly blessed, along comes the temptation. But if we are Spirit-taught, we can operate in *agalliao* (rejoice). That means we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter 1:8).

When we are being viciously attacked, the doctrines in the soul begin to celebrate. When

that is going on, we can feel strangely wonderful in spite of the pressures against us. Joy fellowships with love. Love fellowships with peace. Peace fellowships with kindness. Kindness fellowships with our personal destiny. Our personal destiny fellowships with our eternal purpose. All of these doctrines are joined together and literally have a party in the soul.

People may accuse us, verbally attacking us, and we don't feel a single thing. Why? Because there is a concert and melody of grace going on inside in the form of a doctrinal celebration. My soul has a party. That is exactly what the scholars say about the meaning of *agalliao*.

"For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zechariah 2:5).

Faith and the Wall of Fire

Around every believer is a wall of fire. What is this wall? It is not just the positional truth in a man who lives in his positional authority because he knows the wicked one cannot touch him (1 John 5:18). It is more than that. The Holy Spirit is referred to as a "fire" in Isaiah 4:4 and Matthew 3:11. The Word of God is a fire, according to Jeremiah 23:29.

To have a wall of fire around us is to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, surrounded and protected by a wall of doctrine—line upon line, line upon line, each one connecting with new applications of the old landmarks. We are kept by the irrevocable, absolute truth of God that has always been with God. It is an awesome thing to consider.

What we believe and what we are celebrating on the inside is producing the manifestation of the Word and the Spirit on the outside. Satan cannot break through that wall—it is the Living Word, the Written Word, and the Holy Spirit's power with the Word in us. Because we have internalized God's words, doctrine becomes our wall. Satan cannot break through it.

Instead of people causing us to raise up a wall of excuses and our own understanding, forcing us to withdraw, we have a wall built by God. We can walk into the arena of conflict with a smile and frustrate the devil.

Hell's Mode of Operation

Satan's commanding officers report to him and, because he is not omnipresent, he has to ask, "How did you do today?"

"Very good," the officer reports.

"What was the first thing that you looked for in the attack?"

"Their countenances."

"Good, you did what I told you to do. So, their countenances appeared very sad, didn't they? Remember, always go after the people whose countenances are sad (Isaiah 3:9)."

"That's what we did," the officer says. "Then, we projected millions of electronic vibrations to their emotions and their central nervous systems."

"How did they react?" Satan wants to know.

"They withdrew right into what we planned."

"Then what happened?"

"We tried to get them to sublimate, but they fought that, so we made them feel guilty and think they are no good."

"Good, good. What happened next?"

"They blamed other Christians—friends and family—and then they even started to accuse members of the church, including the pastor."

"You did all of this in half a day?" Satan says. "How many did you infect?"

"Many."

These conversations actually go on between the forces of darkness. Satan has a temporal purpose to make us self-destruct; but thanks be to

God, we have an eternal purpose which destroys the works of the devil. We are surrounded with doctrine. It is the Word of God, and He exalts it above His name. It can never be destroyed.

CONCLUSION

How do we overcome the devil? Through faith. Here's a little rhyme to help you remember it:

"Fact, faith, and feelings walked on the wall;
Feelings and faith had a great fall.
Fact looked down and picked up faith;
Feelings just said, "I'll go along for the take."

Paul wrote, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Imagine it. We can be set free from any negative influence in our lives. When we have walls of doctrine surrounding us and God's love and power in us, there isn't a detail that can affect us. We don't just conquer occasionally; we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us (Ro-

mans 8:37). We are more than conquerors because the battle is over, and it will never have to be fought again. Satan's city is destroyed.

Called into a Raging Storm

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Many times, the Lord Jesus brings us into storms. Sometimes we can see them coming. But often they come in the night seasons, when we least expect them.

This booklet highlights two particular storms that God used to expand the capacities of men who were willing to follow Him. They learned that their own efforts were disruptive at best.

But through their weakness, these men became personally acquainted with the Savior, whose name reveals His nature: compassion, longsuffering, lovingkindness, and truth.

Chapter One

LAUNCH OUT

"And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

"But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

"And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

"And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me to come unto thee on the water.

"And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

"And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased" (Matthew 14:22-32).

It was the fourth watch of the night (between four and five o'clock in the morning), when Jesus went to the disciples, walking on the sea. But when they saw Him, they were troubled.

There was a storm. It was a serious storm. And Jesus bid Peter to come into the midst of it.

The wind was boisterous. The waves were very high. It was dark. And Jesus said, "Come."

Dear friends, everyone who walks with God will be asked to come into a storm. Everyone. When we think of so many loved ones in our church family who are going through raging storms of cancer, serious injury, and broken homes, we can begin to get the picture of what a storm is like.

Now Is the Time to Obey

The waves were raging. The wind was fierce. The storm was devastating. And Jesus said, "Come *now*."

"But can't you wait, Jesus, until the sun is shining, and the storm stops?"

"No."

"But is that reasonable, Jesus? Why would You tell me to come when by sight there is no possibility of walking on that water? It would be one thing if I could walk on the water when it is calm, but to try to walk on it when it's like this? Let's be practical!"

Every effective servant, sooner or later, will be told to come into the storm. Really, it doesn't matter what your age is. For one, it is twenty-six. For somebody else, it's forty-one. Jesus said to each one of them, "Come."

Here is the great principle:

When Jesus says, "Come," everything will be all right. Everything will be okay as long as He is the One who says, "Come."

Obey, No Matter What the Circumstances

For Peter to step out of the boat and go toward Jesus was a risk for the natural man—a risk of faith.

Circumstances must not determine our obedience. Jesus Christ said to Peter, "I want you to come. The circumstances are bad, but do you trust My word 'Come'? Come unto Me. I know it's still dark; the sun has not yet risen. The storm is raging. But do you know what? I am walking in the raging storm Myself. And as long as I am walking with you in the raging storm, then please trust Me and come."

There is no storm so great that Jesus will not help us to walk on the water. That means He may invite us to walk on circumstances that are disastrous. Therefore, our obedience must be based upon the Word of God. Every pastor who preaches the Gospel has stood in the pulpit and acted just as if everything is okay while he was going through a storm. We put up our chin. We may even be a little firm on that specific day because we are trying to keep from breaking down and weeping. But Jesus has called us and said "Come." Therefore, our obedience is based upon the Word of God and never upon circumstances.

Circumstances must never change our obedience. Jesus led us into the storm. He led Peter into a storm. God's eyes run to and fro upon the earth "to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chroni-

cles 16:9), and we can do *anything* God tells us to do (Philippians 1:6).

Chapter Two

REACH OUT

Christians are called to change the world, but many can't even get to church on time. We have been called to be godly examples to men and women throughout the world, but many do not study the Word to show themselves approved (2 Timothy 2:15).

Recently a pastor came for advice on how to deal with problems with his staff. He said, "The people are going against me."

Every Christian is called to take up the Cross. Why? What the flesh resists and what Satan hates is the Cross, because it is the place of personal victory for the believer.

Do you know that it is possible to preach "You must be born again" and not preach the Cross? That way, the message could be evangelical and still be popular. A church could have good contemporary music and yet never bring up discipleship or teach people to go out and be

witnesses of the Gospel.

The Importance of Touch

It is so important that a pastor shakes the hands of those in his congregation. Shaking hands, to me, is a way to say, "I can't spend time with you all, but this handshake is to communicate that I really love you, and I appreciate your friendship. And, by the way, I need this handshake as much as you do." God is always very personal with us, loving us and addressing areas of personal need.

Jesus let Mary kiss His feet and His forehead (Luke 7:45). When Paul left Ephesus, men and women kissed his neck over and over again (Acts 20:37). That was an expression common to the culture at that time.

Gary Smalley, a Christian counselor and author, wrote a book on the importance of touch. In it he said that a touch is an expression in a moment in time of how we feel toward certain others all the time. So, when you only have a minute, you may just touch people, perhaps with a simple handshake. But, he said, it means everything because you are going beyond your heart.

It would be difficult to be in deep waters and have to row the boat all the time. We would get so tired. How much better it is to have a boat with a motor! We have Jesus Christ as our power source; He moves the boat. And all we have to do, basically, is to switch our faith in our own ability into faith in Him.

Many have been in a place where they have asked God why He allowed certain painful situations in their lives. They would say, "Why are they hurting me? I have never done anything to them, as far as I know. Why is this happening?"

And Jesus would say, "I want you to be like Me. And you can be like Me if, in this storm, you will come to Me, yoke up with Me, learn of Me, and get to know Me." We can hear that still, small voice say "Come," as He calls us, inaudibly, by name.

No man would ever be broken if Jesus did not ask him to come into the storm. The tears I shed so easily are not because I am an emotional person. But I have found that the thing that breaks a godly man or woman is when Jesus calls us into a storm.

During another time in a boat on the sea, the disciples pleaded with Jesus, who was with them, to wake up, saying, "Lord, save us: we perish" (see Matthew 8:23-26). The storm was raging, but the Lord was sleeping through it all.

According to Mark 4:39, the demons caused the storm. The Lord calmed the wind and the waves by addressing the demons. One Bible scholar said that when Jesus used the words "Peace, be still" a better translation is, "Hush, be muzzled!" speaking to the demons, who were blowing the wind with their atmospheric power, which generated the storm.

We have been called to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). No matter what the circumstances appear to be, remember Who called you. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Chapter Three

STEP OUT

The demons caused the storm. And Jesus said, "Peter."

And Peter said, "If that is You, Lord, would You bid me to come?"

And Jesus said "Come."

And Peter walked in the storm caused by the demons, with its raging wind and the waves.

Just think of it. The demons were trying to destroy Peter and the others because they were Jesus' disciples. In the first storm, He was with them on the boat. But in the second storm, Jesus sent them out alone while He went up into a mountain to pray (Matthew 14:22-23). Jesus had been praying all night, and in the fourth watch He came walking on the raging seas in a storm that the demons caused.

I would like to have seen the invisible kingdoms, with the demons and God's angels looking on, when Peter actually walked on the water.

The demons probably said, "Oh no! We are defeated again."

That Sinking Feeling

So, the wind was raging, and the waves were terrible. And once Peter took his eyes off Jesus, he began to sink. He must have said very quickly, "Save me." Of course, Jesus did—and that was a miracle.

Then Jesus said to Peter, "O you of little faith. Why did you doubt?" (see Matthew 14:31).

The wind caused him to feel the storm, and the water caused him to see it, so though he stepped out by faith, he began to walk by feelings and by sight. But give him credit—he did come!

To receive blessings from God is more than survival. It's revival. God pours out more blessings than we can contain.

Rather than just getting by in a maintenance program, we are in a process of progress in God's revival program.

We face pain, and Jesus did too. Sometimes we face shame because of what the devil does in our lives. But thank God, we always end up reigning. We reign through pain, and we reign through shame (Micah 7:7-8).

And remember, to experience shame doesn't necessarily mean you are guilty of something. It may be what the world projects at us and what Satan uses to try to intimidate us (Revelation 12:10).

I have always wondered what the disciples were doing when they saw Peter walk on the water. Remember, they were a jealous group. I'll bet that John said, "I wish that were me. Now Peter is going to be Jesus' favorite, because he went when Jesus said Come."

Let's Go to the Other Side

Before both of those storms, Jesus told the disciples that they were going over to the other side (Mark 4:35; Matthew 14:22).

Some of you were with us when we toured Israel and saw the Sea of Galilee. It was very calm at the time.

But imagine that you were in the boat, crossing the Sea of Galilee, and a raging storm came up. This is humorous to me, because there was Jesus Christ—the Creator—sleeping on board.

It is not normal for people to fall asleep when they are within an inch or two of perishing. Can you imagine being in a storm like that and you just sleep through it? Their little boat

was being battered, yet the Lord was sleeping.

But just imagine the disciples furiously bailing the water out of the boat. They couldn't keep up with it. Several of them were fishermen and well-acquainted with the sea. But there they were, putting the pails in, then bailing and bailing. "We're losing ground! Lord, we can't keep up with the water we're taking on. The storm is horrible." And Jesus was still sleeping. "Don't You care that we're perishing?!" Finally, He woke up.

I wonder if the Lord will show us this in heaven, because some of those scenes were so beautiful.

In the midst of the water rushing into the boat, in the midst of waves that almost caused the boat to turn over, the Lord Jesus stood up and spoke: "Be muzzled!" In other words, "Demons, stop causing this storm." Just like that, the storm ceased. Then, just as He did so often, He addressed the disciples' faith.

Every time in the Gospels when Jesus addressed faith, He was saying, "I am involved in this. Trust Me. Believe Me. I will not let you sink. I will not."

"But this storm is more than a human can stand."

"I will not let you sink."

"Well, why the storm?"

"It is a trial to develop your faith. And as you go on in the future, you will remember that this storm almost took your life, and I came through. So you can trust Me in the next storm, can't you?"

The end of this account is one of my favorite verses in all the Bible: "And they came over unto the other side of the sea...." (Mark 5:1).

They reached the other side, and so will we.

CONCLUSION

Every believer will be called into raging storms, no matter what their age or position. But remember this. If Jesus says "Come," believe me, you will be okay. You will reach the other side. You will be rescued, because of the Word of God.

Dear heavenly Father, we are so glad that You not only show us the way: You are the way. We desire to be beacons, candles in darkness to people who are going through storms today.

Keep filling us with your Holy Spirit as we purpose to take on more and more of the water of Your Word—to be filled with waves of love in unbounded seas of forgiveness and oceans of grace. Amen!

Called to Reign

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Christians need to understand the call of God. It is crucial because ability and power and eternal blessing will depend upon a thorough understanding of the call of God.

Hebrews chapter three addresses the brethren as "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling." Your calling is extremely serious, and I pray that the Holy Spirit of God will speak to you through this booklet.

According to 2 Timothy 1:9, when He saved us, He called us with a holy calling, "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Before the world began, God had a plan for your life that was in Christ Jesus, and it was according to His own purpose and grace. It was more than just to get up every morning and go to a job, as necessary as that is. You have a very holy calling.

It isn't just any old thing. It is a heavenly calling, planned for your life before the foundation of the world, according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus. To understand it you must listen to the Word of God. You have been called—not just to live, but to reign!

Chapter One

HOW GOD MOVED MEN INTO ALL THE WORLD

Philippians 3:14, Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." First Corinthians 1:26-27 also talks about your calling. Not many mighty, not many noble, not many wise men, are called. Instead, God has chosen the foolish and the weak things to confound the wise and the mighty.

But Ephesians chapter one in verse 17 says, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." Why? That the eyes of your understanding may be open to understand what His calling is (verse 18). It is His calling—His calling that is my calling. It was planned in eternity past, and it has precise steps (Psalm 37:23).

For Paul, in Acts 16:9, it was a vision that led

him to Macedonia. His geographical location in the call was utterly important. Had Paul not gone to Macedonia, Europe would not have had the Gospel. That is the importance of geographical location.

First Corinthians 7:20 says that we should be very careful to abide in the calling wherein we were called. He repeats it again in verse 24. Verse 22 explains it: "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant."

Everything in my life and your life is ordained—my calling, my marriage. A single person's life has a special call that is called in the law of love. It is a special high calling, a holy calling. In the Scriptures it is called a sacrifice of love for your engaged Husband, Christ, when He comes.

Very few people understand the calling. Many people have been saved for months and they don't even know who their pastor-teacher is. They don't even know their calling.

God Leads with His Call

It is very interesting to see how God has built His Church. For the first fifty years, the

Gospel was in Jerusalem, but because they would not honor the Great Commission or the Great Commandment, God had to force them out. They gathered every day for fellowship (Acts 2:41-47), but in Acts 8, after just fifty years, God had to force them out because they would not go.

In Acts 15, the church sent men to Antioch and Syria with Paul and Silas. Then the soul winning vision chilled. The missionary vision died. The love for each other became irrelevant.

God removed His blessing out of Antioch and Syria, and He raised up men to go into Istanbul and Constantinople, from A.D. 330 to 600.

After a time, commercialization, tradition, and compromise crept in, and God said, "I'm going to move it into Rome." So the Word of God moved into Rome. At first the church was on fire for God, but then the love of God began to wane and the Holy Spirit was grieved in that place. Tradition came in. Compromise came in. Adding to the Bible came in.

And then the Word of God moved to France in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. But again, the Spirit was grieved. The love of God ceased, the soul winning fervor

stopped, and the missionary obedience stopped. France became amoral, and the blessing of God on that nation departed for many hundreds of years.

The Word of God moved into Switzerland with John Calvin, and into Germany with Martin Luther. Martin Luther wrote on the church door his ninety-five page thesis, "The Just Shall Live By Faith." Calvin was used mightily in Switzerland, but then it happened. Men of God were pitted against each other with accusations, and then the love of God ceased. The soul winning fervor left. The missionary vision left. Body life? There was none. So God moved once again, this time into the Iberian Peninsula, into Spain and Portugal.

One of the greatest missionary works that ever took place was in the Iberian Peninsula. From there, the Word of God went into places like Australia, New Zealand, South America, and many, many other places. Then materialism took over, and money and security became the issue. An emphasis on temporal materialism was overdone, and people started to withdraw. The church became dead, and the love of God ceased, and the soul winning stopped. One of the greatest groups of people in the world, but

the soul winning stopped. Missionary vision was gone. There went the move of God from the Iberian Peninsula.

It moved into England, and for awhile we had men like William Carey at Northhampton. At first, it was going good until liberalism, ecclesiasticism, and compromise came in. They began to let the Bible become less than the total authenticity and authority of life, and the love of God left England. The power of God was no longer there. The center for missionary life, which was so fervent, was no longer of value whatsoever in England.

Lest We Forget

Then God moved into New England. There He used men like Luther Rice and A.J. Gordon who had a fantastic vision in the middle of the night, where an angel met Jesus after He had gone back to heaven, and the angel asked Him, "What did You tell them?"

Jesus said, "I told them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, make disciples out of believers, and go everywhere, and I'll go with them."

Then the angel said to Jesus, "Lord Jesus, what if they don't go?"

And in the dream God said, "I have no other plan. If they don't do it, I have no second plan."

So the Gospel moved to the south, east, and west in what today we call America, the client nation—the nation that represents God more than any other nation, all over the world. It is a nation that has 496,000 ordained ministers right now, one for every four hundred people. But despite this, it is a nation where the soul winning fervor is chilled, the missionary vision is barely there, and Body life is virtually unknown in most of the churches. Most Christians would not know what is meant by Body life. Pastors and their people bring reproach to Jesus Christ by getting into immorality everywhere, all over this nation, not sanctifying the Lord before people.

Apparently, the ways of the world have never changed—and neither has God's call. He will continue to hear the cry of souls who need to know the Savior. Moved with compassion, He will continue to use the foolish and the weak things who will respond to His call to set the captives free with the Gospel.

Chapter Two

CALLED OUT FOR A PURPOSE

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

"And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1:5-10).

Make sure of your election and calling.

Number one: You have a heavenly calling.

Number two: It is a holy calling.

Number three: It is a high calling.

Number four: It is your calling.

Number five (and first of all): It is His call.

When you get married, consider your calling. That is why it is important to understand the value of being equally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14). Many people who love their church and love their spouse with all their heart have never been completely happy because they did not consider being equally yoked in the call of God.

With every step you make, consider your calling. Psalm 37:23 says He guides your steps. According to Psalm 119:133, iniquity will not have dominion over you because He guides your steps by His Word. God wants your steps guided into your calling. Don't fight it. Don't wrestle it. Find it out if you don't know it already.

Called into Royalty

When you get your call down pat, you need to understand that the Body of Jesus Christ is God's fullness on the earth (Ephesians 1:23). Also, understand that God gives every single believer a reigning position. I cannot emphasize this enough. In Revelation 1:5-6, we read,

"…Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father…."

God said, "I'm giving you a life that's eternal. I'm giving you a timeless call." God creates something fantastic out of just a little. He takes a little person who is not noble, not mighty, not intellectual, so He can receive the glory. He calls every single Christian and makes him a king. God makes people special and gives them royal authority and a royal position. He gives us a royal place in His Kingdom today, spiritually. Of course in Revelation 5:10, in the Millenial kingdom, we will reign with Him on the earth. But 1:5-6 is a different passage. It means that God's people are not to be the tail, but they are to be the head (Deuteronomy 28:13). God has given us royal rights in a royal family with a royal position.

You may take it lightly because of familiarity, and maybe you will not, but the Word of God says that He quickened us together with Christ and seated us together in Christ, in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).

Colossians 3:1-3 says that if you are risen with Christ (and you are if you are born-again), then seek those things which are above. Do not

set your mind on things below, for your life is hid with Christ in God. The first part of that verse says, "For ye are dead."

We have been given this position. You see, a king receives the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness to reign in life by Jesus Christ. A king reigns. A king has a separate territory, and he is a very important person. He has subjects. And God says, "I have given you royal favor, so I have given you a reigning position."

I received a letter from a man who said, "For years I lived in negativity. I was negative to my wife and my kids. I would scream, throw things at the wall. I started drinking heavily. Then a friend at work asked me to go to church and I heard you speak a message about the Glorious Gospel of love and mercy and grace and forgiveness and what God could do." And he said, "I came forward and accepted Christ."

He said, "I'll never be able to understand it. I went home and I didn't have a desire to drink. Week after week went by, and my wife could not believe it. Then she went with me and got saved, and then our two daughters and a son got saved. I'm a brand-new Christian."

He received the power to reign.

We have a royal position, far above principalities, far above powers, and far above the rulers of this world (Ephesians 1:21).

Then we have this royal power. We have the ability to think with God, and we have the manifestation of God. We have the operation of the Holy Spirit of God, and the power of God.

We also have a royal provision. He has made you a king and He has made you priests. That means you have sacred rights. You can go to God and say, "I'm a believer-priest, God, and I can go directly to You. I don't need a man to go through. I can go directly to you in my priesthood." You can go directly to God, and you have the power and authority to pray for people and to have your own sins forgiven directly through Christ. You are a believer-priest, and that means you can execute sacred rights in the holy oracles of God's provision.

But there's something else. You are called to a royal place, or a special place. The Bible says you are called into a special Body. You are called unto one pastor-teacher, wherever you are and whoever that is. Whether it is a pastor in Maine or somewhere else, but that's where your call is.

And the Bible says, "Abide in the calling wherein you are called" (see 1 Corinthians 7:20).

In Isaiah 57:15, we read, "For thus sayeth the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." The word for "contrite" in the original Hebrew goes into the principle of somebody who has fallen again and again, and they are crushed.

The humble spirit isn't somebody who has fallen into deep iniquity, but somebody who has been constantly hurt by circumstances and people—wounded, bruised, and raped, so to speak. They have been hit hard, and they are at the mercy of the living God. So God said, "I'm not only the high and exalted One who is above every single thing on earth, but I am with a poor broken sinner, and My habitation is inside his soul."

He Who Inhabits Eternity Lives In Me

And He said, "I will revive this person. I inhabit eternity. I inhabit a divine plan. I AM THAT I AM (see Exodus 3:14). I do it all, but I share My exaltation inside of the woman at the

well and inside of any single person who will let Me in. I'll give them the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness to reign in life by One, Jesus Christ" (see Romans 5:17).

Once a year, the high priest put his hand on an animal representing the people of Israel, who brought their sacrifices. On his hand was this beautiful, fantastic incense, but the moment he touched the animal, God supernaturally took the fragrance away. That is a picture of when Jesus Christ bore our sins on His body and the Father turned His back. That precious, holy, perfect, incense was gone because He was taking on all the sins of the whole world.

The next day they would have to go back, and the scapegoat would be sent into the wilderness—into a valley where no one could go. No one could see anything in that valley. If you went in looking for it, you could never get out. That was where the sins of the nation of Israel went, into a place where nobody could get in and nothing could get out, representing the wiping and washing away of all their sins. So no one had access to their failures. Thank God for that! Instead, we have a reigning place.

The Word of God says, in 1 Corinthians 12:27, that you are members in particular. That

means you have been designated to be a portion in a living organism, designated to be placed in the Body as a particular portion, as a particular member, as a particular part of Christ. Just as your fingers are part of your hands, and your arm is a part of your body, and your feet are a part of your legs, you are a living organ. You are living in the fantastic, organic, wonderful Body of Jesus Christ.

It is not simply a "universal Body." You are a member in particular of a living Body in which He is the head and you have a heavenly calling, a holy calling, a high calling, a royal position, a royal provision, and a royal assignment. It is to function in that Body as a king, blessing the other Body members, ruling with them, reaching the lost with them, building up other Body members as a member in particular with your particular gift or gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11). You are here as God has placed you (verse 18), and here you are.

Life is not dull. Life is the most exciting thing. And if it's not that way where you are, you are missing the whole point. That is why our people fill up the church on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights. They did that long before we had college, long before we had a radio

program. It was always this way. Why? Because we are members in particular. That's why.

Chapter Three
IT CAN BE DONE

Hattie Wyatt was seven years old. She went to a little church just outside of Philadelphia. It was all broken down in a very dirty looking building. But the preacher was good.

She came home early one day, and her mother said, "Why are you home? Why aren't you in Sunday School?"

She said, "Because the place is small and it's full and there's no room for me."

So Hattie got on her knees, and she said, "Mom, I'm going to sign a contract with God today that He will bring in a great, big, beautiful church because the way that preacher preaches, he's going to need it."

Within just a month, Hattie came down with consumption and died, and the small assembly gathered at her funeral. Her mother showed them the contents of her little pocketbook: fifty-seven pennies and a prayer that read, "God can

do it."

The pastor began to get overwhelmed, and this man, Dr. Russell Conwell, wrote *Acres of Diamonds*. Motivated by Hattie's life to write that book, he made six million dollars. Then from Temple Baptist Church they built Temple University and Temple Hospital.

You see, a seven-year-old girl believed that she had authority with heaven. She was just seven, and God took her home. She left fifty-seven pennies and a prayer, "God can do it."

Living Proof

May I say it today? It can be done! Abraham, though you failed with Hagar, it can be done. You waited until you were ninety-nine and a hundred years of age before God gave you Isaac, but you received the promise.

It can be done, Jacob, despite your ups and downs and failures. It can be done, Jacob. You will represent the twelve tribes of Israel with four different wives. It can be done.

It can be done, Moses. You murdered a man and you had to go away for forty years. You lived in fear, and you got away from God, and God waited and waited, and He brought you back. He let you lead your people out of Egypt

with a stammering tongue and an impediment in your speech. It can be done, Moses.

It can be done, David, despite Bathsheba and despite Uriah and despite the fact that you had several major weaknesses in your life. You fulfilled the entire will of God (Acts 13:22). You never turned aside (1 Kings 15:5). David, you will reign with Christ in the Millennial Reign as the prince. It can be done, David.

Solomon, after you prostituted your life, it can be done. You were wealthy, and you went after women and money. When you finally repented in the book of Ecclesiastes, God said, "Son, write Me two inspired books. Your life isn't over. You're going resume now and you are going to reign through the gift of grace, through the abundance of the gift of righteousness. You're going to reign with One, Jesus Christ. Go back reigning, King Solomon, and write two inspired books." Solomon did that in his middle eighties. It can be done.

It can be done, Samson. You have done wrong, and you have been chastised. Believe God, Samson. You didn't know your hair was growing again and that your strength was being restored (Judges 16). In your death, you will kill more Philistines than you ever did in your life.

You will come out triumphant, Samson, because God let you reign. It can be done.

And it can be done, Peter. You denied Christ three times, but God said, "I want to you to go with the Gospel, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. You will go to Samaria and present the Gospel. You'll be the first one. Peter, despite what you've done, you are going to do it. You will reign with Christ and die as a martyr.

It can be done, Saul of Tarsus, though you have gone out murdering Christians. God will make you a tremendous apostle to the Gentiles, and you will suffer for the divine cause of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:15, 16). But you will receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness to reign in life. It can be done, Paul.

John the apostle, it can be done on the Isle of Patmos. God will come in and bless you and give you a tremendous vision of His heart.

Going Forward with the Gospel

As we continue in the call of God and go on into places like Turkey and Peru, as we go on into all these countries, we are definitely going by the grace of Almighty God. It can be done.

Abide in your call and accept your royal position. Act in your royal provision and accept

your reigning power. Accept the words of faith, then accept the victory. It can be done!

Many people live in the effects of a life that is not from God. They are never free from stress and they suffer greatly. One article said that 30 to 40 percent of the flu is related to stress, which is often because the soul isn't right. Now don't get condemned if you are sick. We all have to deal with it. I'm talking about a principle.

But when the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the power of Christ control the human spirit, and that transforming power goes into the five parts of your soul and into your body, you have the royal reigning power of grace. You will begin to realize that you have been made to be someone special for God, and that you are a king right now.

Yes, you will reign in the future, but right now you are a king, and a king has territory. A king has subjects. A king has a spirit of authority. As a king, you will reign with the Prince of the kings of the earth. Because you are a king, you can reign over projections, over temptations, and over sin.

God gives you the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness to reign. You can know God precisely and live in God's operational

power through His Word operating in you. When you begin to realize that, you will be the most outstanding Christian here.

Don't be indifferent. Soul winning must never be chilled off here. Young people should go soul winning. The missionary vision must never stop! The whole counsel of God must never cease! The conviction of every Word of God must continue!

Jesus said, "I am, I was, and I always will be" (see Hebrews 13:8). In John 8:58, Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am." This wonderful eternal One who inhabits three dimensions of time is inside our bodies reigning.

You don't have to let sorrow take over. You don't have to let frustration and depression take over. We are more than conquerors through Him that loves us. We are hupernikao, super victors, through Him that loved us (Romans 8:37). And the Bible says in Luke 1:37 that with God, everything is possible. Then the Word of God says that He always causes us to triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14).

I'm going to take the Bible literally. I'm going to take the promises literally. In Hebrews 4:1, the Bible says to be very careful that you don't leave a promise unclaimed. Don't even

leave one. God says, "I've got your life, and I'm available with a promise for this situation." Don't leave it in the Bible. Internalize it. Pick it up. Run with it. Love with it. Let it work patience in your situation, and run with that promise.

We have a place to reign. Our subjects are people who have fallen into sin. We don't reign by ruling over them. They had to fall before God. But we reign through our prayers and our testimonies, and we see the power of God as we intercede.

We have something to reign over, and that is our old sin nature, sickness and disease, emotional problems. We can reign over these things. What's more, God has given you at least one gift. He has placed you in the Body, and you are a member in particular.

Don't be a wandering person. Don't be proud and arrogant. Realize that you have a particular place—not just any old place but a geographical call to some location. It can change under the Great Commission certainly, but you have a call to a geographical location. The operational will of God depends upon the geographical will of God. God will bless anybody who lives clean anywhere, but how much more will

He bless when you are in the perfect will of God? Find your particular place to share and be God's living hand, living eye, living tongue, living arms. Be part of God's organism in the place He has called you. Be a royal member of His family and reign with Him with royal authority.

CONCLUSION

Mix faith with the Word of God, and the promise brings in the power. Get spontaneous in believing about healing and don't get passive. So many people hear a phenomenal message on resurrection power, then they get so passive, waiting for heaven to come, when they could be reigning with health right now.

Come on! The Bible says we are more than conquerors through Him, and with Christ nothing is impossible. Don't be passive! Be active! If you don't mix faith with the promises of God, you will not profit. So, mix faith!

Get excited in faith. Say to yourself, "Hallelujah, He did it tonight. There is substance in my soul. And even if there is no evidence, there is substance. I'm not waiting for it to happen. My confession is that I'm mixing what I have heard with faith, and there's substance for my business, substance for my marriage, substance for my needs. I've got substance in me. I have

the promises of God."

Stop thinking that you're the tail. You're the head! Don't look at your life as one that will just accomplish a little. Look at your life as one that will accomplish more than you'll ever know. Take your royal position, provision, power, and place, and begin to reign with Christ today!

Father, I'm not going to do much praying. I preached it. You will cause us to triumph. You deliver. You heal. You bless. You have a purpose. You have a plan. We are royalty. Bless us, protect us, empower us, enable us, and keep us quickened. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Called to the King's Table

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Mephibosheth was a man who could not walk because of a childhood accident that crippled both of his feet (2 Samuel 9). King David sought to show kindness to the family of Saul and Jonathan, so his servants found Mephibosheth, whom they brought to the king's table.

King Jesus is preparing a feast for His bride, which is His Church. All are invited to the feast, yet many are crippled—whether physically, mentally, or spiritually—by carelessness and unfortunate circumstances. Therefore, they cannot bring themselves to respond to the call of Christ. They need God's servants to draw them, and sometimes to carry them, to the place of grace where they can be healed.

It is my prayer that these words will prompt each reader to recognize that the King of kings wants to bring us into His banqueting house, where His banner over us is love (Song of Solomon 2:4).

Chapter One

OVERCOMING THE LAMENESS OF THE FALL

"And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?

"And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he.

"And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.

"And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.

"Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.

"Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

"And David said unto him, *Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.*

"And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

"Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house.

"Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

"Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, *he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.*

"And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth.

"So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet" (2 Samuel 9:1-13).

An Unconditional Covenant of Love

When Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son and King Saul's grandson, was five years old, he was dropped by his nurse as the family tried to flee an enemy invasion. As a result of the fall, Mephibosheth was left lame in both feet.

Before Jonathan's death, he made a covenant with David: "Thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever; no, not, when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth" (1 Samuel 20:15). That covenant was unconditional, and it speaks of the unconditional covenant God has made with every believer through Jesus Christ—One who was born in the line of David.

"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath

mercy on thee" (Isaiah 54:10). Though God's people sin, His lovingkindness shall not depart from them, and His mercy will not depart from them. This is the essence of God's unconditional covenant. The Holy Spirit expresses this covenant by shedding God's unconditional love abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). Very few understand the covenant of the New Testament. For Christians, it is a law written upon their hearts as a basis for marriages, friendships, and fellowship.

Mephibosheth was crippled because of a fall; likewise, each of us was crippled spiritually by the Fall of Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3). We were each conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5). Satan, inventor of the Old Sin Nature, made lame the human race with personal sin. But God, because of His foreknowledge and in His eternal wisdom, imputed sin to each of us before we were born and before we would personally sin. Then He paid for our sins at Calvary. Yet, we were crippled because of the Fall.

So many people have felt the pain of being deceived and the limitations of being crippled. As a result of not putting God first, they don't feel right; they can't think right; and they don't do right. This doesn't change unless they get right with God and begin to grow in the grace

and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Sought by the King

King David asked Ziba, a servant in the house of Saul, if there was anyone left from Saul's family to whom he might "show kindness." The servant told David of Mephibosheth, who was living in Lo-debar, a terrible place that would rival some of the worst areas in our cities.

"Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar" (2 Samuel 9:5). Picture the king's chariot going through this very poor neighborhood and stopping in front of a run-down house.

"Here comes the king's chariot! What have we done wrong?" must have been one the first thoughts running through Machir's mind. "Have they come to arrest us? Maybe David wants to get even with Saul's house by taking Mephibosheth?" After the chariot pulled up, Mephibosheth was called. "The king is seeking you," he was told.

There is a King seeking for every person today, and His name is King Jesus. He wants to show kindness and He wants to bless His people.

A certain fellow took a trip on an airplane

and was seated next to a chemist. “I know a little bit about chemistry,” the fellow told the chemist, and he proceeded to rattle off a couple of formulas. After some discussion, the chemist was obviously impressed with his knowledge.

“Say, you do know a little bit about chemistry,” the chemist said. “What do you do?”

“I am an ambassador,” the fellow said. “I represent the King.”

“I have never met an ambassador before. So you were sent here from another country?”

“Yes, I was.”

“So, you are only here temporarily?”

The traveler said, “Yes, that’s right.”

“What king do you serve?” the chemist asked.

“I represent King Jesus,” was the man’s answer. “He sent me, and He is seeking for you. He wanted to bring you a message, to show you kindness and mercy, and to pour out His love to you.”

The chemist prayed to receive Christ and was saved.

Chapter Two

CARRIED TO A RICH INHERITANCE

When King David sent for Mephibosheth, he only wanted to show his love. The young man was probably disturbed and frightened, but the King's servant comforted him, saying, "Don't be afraid. The king wants to bring you to his table, to treat you as a son."

When they arrived at the King's palace, Mephibosheth was carried out of the chariot. He honored David, bowing before him, saying, "Behold thy servant."

David said, "Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan, thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually" (2 Samuel 9:7). The king brought Mephibosheth to his table, adopted him, and treated him as one of his sons.

Imagine the chariot there. Only those of

exalted position rode in chariots. Then, Mephibosheth is carried out, riding away while the poor folks of Lo-debar watch in wonder. "What's Mephibosheth doing in the king's chariot?"

At times, we may wonder, "Who are we to live as children of the King and to ride in His chariot (as it were)?" The answer is, King Jesus came and died on the cross for us. He was crucified and buried for our sins. Now, we are His children, and it doesn't appear yet what we shall be (1 John 3:1). We can say anything we want about ourselves, but we are still the King's children. What is even more beautiful is that day in and day out we eat at the King's table. We partake of food from heaven that nourishes our souls.

All of the inheritance that was Saul's was given to Mephibosheth, who gladly accepted the king's invitation and kindness. If you are not a Christian, I pray that you will gladly accept Jesus' invitation to be saved. Won't you please accept the invitation to be loved?

Escaping from the Ash Heap

The servants carrying Mephibosheth to the chariot is a picture of how Christians, after they die, are carried to heaven by the angels. Those

who should tarry on earth will be lifted up to the clouds in the Rapture to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). For everyone who is born again, the Rapture will be a glorious event, followed by the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The Father will present the Church as a spotless bride to His Son, the King of kings.

Mephibosheth was told that he would eat at the king's table continually. His response? "What is thy servant that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" Broken, Mephibosheth took on the heart of a servant. What a beautiful thing it is to serve the King.

We have been invited to eat at the King's table. However, there are Christians who choose another type of feast. "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isaiah 44:20). In Israel, there used to be large ash heaps, and some would wear ashes upon them, focusing on their sin and their process of "repentance." A lot of people "feed on ashes." They are constantly consumed by their sins and their past. They feed off of their weaknesses. We don't have to eat of those things. We can feast on the life of Christ (John 6:53).

Have you ever had ashes for dinner? Thank God, we can eat from the New Covenant and drink the covenant of forgiveness, the covenant of unconditional love. We can eat the bread from heaven and be nourished from God's table. Jesus Christ, the King, sent for us. Let's not feed on yesterday's confusion and last year's problems. Let's feed on the Lamb.

Chapter Three

BUT GOD

"*But God* commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

We were miserable and on our way to hell. *But God* commended His love toward us. *But God* was for us and redeemed our souls from the grave (Psalm 49:15).

Mephibosheth was once living in a place that had nothing. *But God* came to him, and he understood that the King was seeking for him. The king had a place for Mephibosheth at His table.

There are those who were desperately lost in drug addiction, *but God* sent for them and they were saved. He forgave them, loved them, and invited them to His table. Someone sowed the seed of the Word in their lives. Others planted and watered those seeds. *But God* gave the increase and changed their lives forever (1 Corin-

thians 3:7).

Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers and later wrongly jailed for something he didn't do. *But God* kept him and brought him to a high place in the kingdom of Egypt. Years later, his brothers came before him, seeking food in the midst of an intense famine. Did Joseph take vengeance? No, he invited his brothers to his table and brought his family to safety. "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but God* meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them" (Genesis 50:19-21).

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: *but God* is faithful…" (1 Corinthians 10:13). He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. With every temptation, He will provide a way of escape. God forgives. He will make us brand-new. Thank God that Christ is the One who sent for us. He called us and we will live with Him forever as members of the Church, His Bride. *But God*.

"My flesh and my heart faileth: *but God* is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalm 73:26).

No matter what we face, we can always say, "But God."

His Lovingkindness is Forever

A believer may die because of a painful battle with cancer, but God is there in the hospital room. The angels carry him to heaven because the King sent for him. He was gloriously saved and forgiven. His body will go to the grave, but his soul is present with the Lord. I hope this is a comfort to all those who have lost loved ones. They died. Cancer took them, a heart attack took them, physical disease took them. But God sent for them. The King said to each of them, "I love you, I died for you, I shed my blood for you. Now, I want you to come to My table in heaven."

Glory to God, the King has sent for us. If you are not saved, you have an invitation from Him to come to His table. If you are backslidden, the King offers this promise: "Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my

faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" (Psalm 89:32-34). He is saying, "I may have to chastise, but My lovingkindness and faithfulness to you will never fail."

Once, we were crippled by the Fall. We were lame, from the soles of our feet to the tops of our heads. But the King came and said, "I love you, and if you will receive me, I will do something no one else will ever do. I will never leave you; I will never fail you; and I will take care of you forever."

Now we are sons and daughters of the King. He "hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:6).

After we were saved, we came into an assembly where the truth was spoken, and we started eating from God's table. Day after day, we can grow in the knowledge of this truth. Now, we serve the King. There isn't anything more precious than serving King Jesus.

CONCLUSION

As we can see from the story of Mephibosheth, there isn't a single thing that can separate us from the love of God. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save all who are lost and crippled from the lameness of sin. As we feast with Him at His table, we will receive His strength and His life.

If you are backslidden today, return to fellowship with the King. Come and eat at His table again. Your place is still there. He will receive you gladly, love you special, and restore to you the peace you once enjoyed.

If you have never come to the King, please come to Him right now. Crippled as you are by the Fall, God still wants you to come and eat at His table. Come and be one of His children forever. Let Him clothe you with His robe of righteousness. He will cover you with His love, just as Mephibosheth was covered by David's love. No one looked at his damaged feet. It wasn't an

issue. Your lameness is not an issue with God. Come to Jesus and give Him your life today. Come feast at the table that was set for you.

Father, I pray that You would stir our hearts now with Your providential mercy, love, and grace. Let the Holy Spirit operate inside our souls to make us living epistles, surrounded by the sheltering arms of the New Covenant, which cannot be changed. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Calvary Covers It All

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

So many people these days are constantly "evolving"—always seeking to improve their lives. Now, I am all for growth. Believers should grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. But certain things need to be settled, and settled forever.

At Calvary, Christ paid for my sins—every last one of them—once and for all. That issue, the sin issue, is settled forever as it regards me. Now I can enjoy a life of response. He first loved me and came to die for me on the Cross. I respond to His love day by day.

This is really the life of living according to God's Great Commandment to love the Lord with all my heart, all my mind, all my soul, and all my strength.

Read these thoughts carefully. Respond to them prayerfully. I think that if you can get this principle down in your heart, you will be changed forever.

Chapter One
FAITH IN FLUX

"Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1).

This is a fearful thing to consider. People will depart from "the faith," which speaks of a faith that is based upon doctrine. Many shall depart from faith that is based on categorical thinking with God and begin receiving doctrines of demons.

One of the reasons some Christians are so viciously attacked in the media is because they still believe in the Bible. I still believe the Bible. I still believe that man should live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). I still believe that all Scripture is inspired. The Bible itself carries many, many warnings to us. There are some sentences that tell us not to take away from the Bible and others that tell us

not to add to the Bible (see Deuteronomy 4:2; Deuteronomy 11:17; Deuteronomy 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Revelation 22:17-18).

I still believe, as the apostle Paul did, that it will be as God has said it will be (Acts 27:25). I believe that every word of God is true (Ezekiel 12:25; John 14:28). Many, however, are departing from the faith that is based upon doctrine. Such people are entering into a humanistic faith, a religious faith, a secular faith, a denominational faith, and a self-centered faith that springs up in perilous times. Demons are seducing people across this country to depart from the faith that is based doctrine.

I have made up my mind about certain things. I have made up my mind that if I fail God, I will repent and get right and go on and use recovery. Still, I will not depart from the Word of God. I won't add to it. No one can make me do that. I will not take away from it. I will not privately interpret it (2 Peter 1:19-20). I will not change the Scriptures. To the best of my God-given ability through grace, I will cling to the Truth, because I believe that every word of God is pure.

If I add to the Word, I will be discovered be-

fore God. God will never be shown to be a liar.

Clear Convictions

I want to make this clear. I believe that anyone who lives in adultery and continues to live that way and will not repent, will not be seen in heaven. What about the doctrine of eternal security for the believer? The Bible says that no fornicators shall inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). I believe a Christian can fail, repent, forsake his sin, and recover. That is the Holy Spirit's work in the heart of a person who has received Christ. That's the way eternal security works. For my part, I want to keep the pulpit pure and help those who sit under it stay pure. So I just take that statement from the Word of God and put it right out there for you: "No fornicators shall inherit the Kingdom of God."

In perilous times, multitudes shall depart from the faith. Think about that. What will they do? Depart, perhaps ever so slowly. First, comes a departure from the faith. Then, it's departure from the Body and their pastor-teacher. Next, there's departure from their friends. It may take years, but sooner or later these people begin to operate as enemies of God in categorical faith. Ultimately, that is the result of self-centered liv-

ing in perilous times. Some people live so much like the world that if they went to heaven they would ask Jesus to send them back to earth. You laugh, but I really think it's true. Beyond revival, some believers almost need brain operations. They have strayed so, so far from thinking with God.

When momentum tests come to test our maturity after a time of spiritual blessings, some people are so quick to take the easy road instead standing on truth and living by every word of God. Years ago, Dr. Bob Jones Sr. would say, "Water that travels the path of least resistance has to go crooked." The real problem is that these people don't know they are sick and that they need to come to church and get healed.

Let me ask you a question: If you are sick and in real need of help, you go to the hospital, right? If it's a real emergency, you call the ambulance and get there even faster. People who are spiritually sick need to be in church. That's the place where there is healing and mercy and grace. It is in church where a supernatural God can minister His Holy Spirit to you and me, in song and in word. It can work the same way as when Jesus was on the earth.

Chapter Two
THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

"And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31).

These are the great commandments, Jesus declared, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18. What is the greatest one? It is to love the Lord thy God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. The heart speaks of your frame of reference. The frame of reference represents the boundaries of what we let into our thoughts and lives.

My frame of reference doesn't include lounges and barrooms. My mind does not make reference to these things. My frame of reference shouldn't include hostility, resentment, bitterness, jealousy, envy, or passivity. My frame of reference is this: to love God with all of it. Whenever anything happens, I am not offended because my frame of reference, my heart, is to love God.

We are also to love God with our souls. The soul speaks here of our self-essence. It is our mentality, our emotions, our conscience, our self-consciousness, and our volition. Then, we love Him with our minds. Why did Jesus distinguish the mind? Because the mind refers to our capacity to think specifically through the faculties of our thought life.

Finally, we are to love God with all of our strength. Strength is our ability to serve God under pressure. This ability comes only through grace and the through the Spirit and the Word.

These are the great commandments, and to offend them in one point is to be guilty of breaking all the commandments of love (see James 2:10). If I gossip, I have broken the commandments. If I have been passive, I have broken the commandments. If I am negative, I have broken

the commandments. If I haven't been fervent, then I have broken the commandments—all of them. Why? I violated the greatest commandment.

To love God with all my heart and to love others as I love myself means that when I fail, I name my sin and forsake it. God forgives me and gives me grace and mercy, no matter how many times it happens. (God forbid that it happens too much.) This is how I treat others. I treat others the way God's love treats me. I treat others the way I want others to treat me. That is loving my neighbor as I love myself. I treat my neighbor exactly the way I want to be treated if I were in his shoes.

Respond in Revival

How can a person honor this commandment? He can respond in revival by recognizing that Calvary settles every issue. I respond because God first loved me.

The angels fell and God did nothing about it; however, man fell and God sent His Son to die on the Cross. It is not that we love God but that God first loved us.

God first loved me! He did not send the Savior for the angels; He sent the angels for me.

While I was yet a sinner, Christ died for me. The greatest sin a Christian can commit is to stop responding to God's first love.

What does first love include? When we were enemies to God, God sent His Son. He commended His love toward us. His love is unfailing and everlasting (Jeremiah 31:3). We cannot afford to get overly occupied with details of life. Keep on responding to God who is loving us in the midst of our troubles.

Insulting Silence

One of the worst things that people can do to one another is to exercise insulting silence. Have you ever tried to minister to someone, and his only response is silence? You know the person is going through something. You love. You are patient. You don't react. Still, all you get is silence.

A man in a church in upstate New York divorced his wife. There was no adultery. No immorality at all. He simply said that he could no longer stand the woman's insulting silence. She would not respond to him. He sent flowers and cards. He tried everything he could think of to reach her. All she would do was display an insulting silence toward him.

So many do this with God. They murmur instead of responding. They react rather than respond. They talk about their troubles instead of responding to God.

Oh, we have a great, great privilege. It does not matter if you have failed. That is not an issue. I don't care if you are the worst sinner in the building. You have an opportunity to be a great saint if you will just respond to God's love toward you.

God loves you. That's the message. Calvary settled all of the issues related to you sin. He loved you when you were lost. He loved you when you were His enemy. He loves you right where you are, right now.

Chapter Three

SOLVING THE IDENTITY CRISIS

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

"Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:1).

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21).

God loves you and the greatest privilege we have is to respond to that love. It does not matter how you feel; respond to His love. The greatest Christian in all the world is the Christian who will respond to God's great love toward him. The greatest transgression I can commit is to leave God and go out into the world. It is to go out and sin in my mind and sin with my emotions. It is a great transgression to get wor-

ried and fearful and fretful. Why is this a great transgression? It is simply that I am refusing to respond to God's love.

God commended His love toward us while we were yet sinners. Christ died for me because of that love. It is so clear from the Bible that God's mind for us is to abide in His love. We are to follow after love. It is not that we love God but that He loved us. I am not to worry about my love toward God, but I am simply to respond to God loving me. I am to guard my heart and keep myself in the love of God.

Oh, the Spirit of God has manifested His power in our pulpit. The presence of God is here week after week. The spiritually sensitive person sees this and recognizes this. That's the person who is tuned in to God instead of being tuned in to self. He is tuned in to faith instead of being tuned in to sight. He is tuned in to grace, instead of being tuned in to law, he is tuned in to hope instead of being tuned in to hopelessness.

I was thinking recently of how beautiful it is that the power of God loves weakness. Deity loves the sinner. Perfection loves the imperfect. God loves the sinner. The Faithful One loves the faithless one.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

When you respond to God's love, that love will motivate you. You just need to keep yourself in the love of God and stop trying to love God and stop trying to help God. Just respond to God's love, then God's love stirs you up. The love of God constrains you.

The Bible says that if one died, then we are all dead. We don't live to ourselves anymore; we live unto God.

Go to the Cross

At Calvary, Jesus settled the issue of love. At the Cross, all my identity crises are solved. If you have an identity problem, you don't need a psychiatrist. You need the love of God. You need the love that was settled at the Cross. In this issue, you don't need the social worker. You may need him in other areas, but in this situation you need to see that Calvary settles the matter. Respond to the love of God.

Settle the issue of yourself at Calvary. Settle the sin issue at Calvary. Settle your relationship issues at Calvary. Settle all your problems and troubles at Calvary.

Jesus Christ was crucified, and we were crucified with Him at Calvary. He bore all of our sins at Calvary. When I take up Calvary, I take up a new identification. I take up His new creation. I take up a new love, a new eternal forgiveness. A new mercy follows me and that mercy rejoices against all judgment.

Calvary settles the issue. I take up all the positives of heaven, all the positives of unconditional love, all the positives of God's mercy, all the positives of God's fellowship, and all the positives of God's provision.

When I take up my cross, then God daily loads me with benefits (Luke 9:23). I just have to keep responding to His love. When I fail, I name my sin and I forsake it. I don't quit and give up. I don't worry about my failure. I respond and love builds me up. Love edifies me. Love purifies me through faith. Love gives me courage and strength and acceptance with God. His love gives me an experience of communion through the Word. Love will just bless us.

Just believe God. Respond and fellowship with Him. Don't react with insulting silence. Keep on responding to love. Honor the great commandment because Calvary settled the issue.

CONCLUSION

A man should tell his wife every day that he loves her. It's just a nice thing to do. With his words, he builds an appreciation in her. She becomes a better woman because of it. She has more confidence because of it. She trusts his love because he tells her so. It's nice to do and it's a simple thing.

It's nice to tell God you love Him, too. You are responding to His love toward you, and He enjoys hearing you say it.

One of the great theologians of our day was dying, and several people were gathered at his bed. Someone asked if he had anything to say. "Yes," he responded. "God loves you." That is the message that heals. That's the message that straightens out our problems. That's the message that settles the problem of human personality.

Let's go to Calvary. At the Cross, we settle our identity. At the Cross, we take up the new

creation.

Remember this truth and respond to the Finished Work life of Christ. Enjoy the presence of God who is now your life.

Can Anyone Overpower

the Power of Demons?

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INTRODUCTION

Though the war has been won in eternity, there is a battle being waged on the earth. The Lord Jesus Christ inspired Paul to write that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). *God's strategic plan is to reveal the Finished Work victory over the satanic world.*

Satan has unique classifications of demons that are revealed in the Bible through the study of the original Hebrew and Greek texts and the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). Though these things are never communicated to produce fear, we need to be informed about demonic warfare just as we do about cancer or other crippling diseases. This is why:

Satan's ranks of demonic forces are coordinating with each other as they operate in different places. They engage in tactical warfare,

using militaristic strategies to approach the human race. Their target? The mind of man.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4*a*, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." Notice that Satan has blinded the minds. His whole strategy is to get at the mind so he can affect our emotions. That is why Jesus said, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Satan blinds their minds, "lest the *light of the glorious gospel* of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:4*b*).

This booklet has been written to show that as Christians, we can indeed overpower the power of demons. Through the Word and the Holy Spirit on the inside and God's ministering angels working to protect us on the outside, we have the authority and provision to overcome Satan's demonic host.

Chapter One

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF LIGHT

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:1-5).

We depend upon light for our physical and spiritual existence. In Genesis 1:3, God said, "Let there be light: and there was light."

When we are saved, God translates us from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son—a kingdom of light and love (Colossians 1:13). The first thing God does for us, positionally, is to take us out of the government of darkness and place us into the government of light.

Remember, God is light, and in Him there is

no darkness (1 John 1:5).

Jesus said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Today, our cities are being overcome with violence, crime, and drug addiction, and so little is being done about it. Though the number of murders annually in a major city may go down, still, so little is being done to deal with the root of the problem. There are many spiritual things and many practical things that need to be addressed. It's devastating to think that *all* of these problems occur daily in our cities. 1 John 5:19 reveals the reason: "The whole [cosmic world system] lies in wickedness." This is Satan's government of darkness.

Called Out of Darkness

Every born-again, blood-bought Christian in the world is a part of God's "chosen generation" (1 Peter 2:9). We are a "royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." "Peculiar" means we are different from the world, but not ignorant. This verse concludes by saying, "That ye should show forth the praises of him *who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*." Thank the Lord for that!

Think of Psalm 43:3, "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me." The original Hebrew says, "Send us life and truth that you may lead us by light." "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the *simple* [those who cannot think]" (Psalm 119:130). The light of the Word of God is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our pathway (Psalm 119:105). God is saying, "My Word is pure light in the midst of satanic darkness."

Children of Precise Light

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8).

God created the soul of man in five parts: mind, emotions, volition (which can be either positive or negative toward God), conscience (the norms and standards for thinking), and self-consciousness (being aware each moment of God, self, people, or circumstances). After the Fall, the old sin nature became part of the soul. Because of His nature, God desires that our souls would be filled with *precise light* through the entrance of His Word so that our thoughts and feelings will be precise. God wants us to have precise power, precise joy, precise love, pre-

cise forgiveness, precise kindness, precise patience, and precise attitudes of grace toward one another. He wants our values of family, education, economics, and government to be realistic and precise. God wants *precise* light to shine in the darkness that has accumulated in the old sin nature through the Fall of Adam.

The moment a person is saved, God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit all come to indwell him—*literally*, not theoretically. Then God gives precise thinking through categorical doctrine, which is received from the right pastor-teacher in the right local assembly.

As the Word of God enters the believer's soul, light is fighting the darkness; and the darkness *cannot* comprehend light. Jesus said, "Men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19). The reason? "Because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John 3:19*b*-20). But, in God's light we receive more light (Psalm 36:9).

Redeemed Creatures of Light

When the Word of God enters into our souls in preciseness, we begin to have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5; 1 Corinthians 2:16). Chil-

dren, teenagers, young adults, and older people can think the way God thinks through the grace of God. This is *divine viewpoint*. Divine viewpoint provides us with divine power; divine power gives us divine provision; and divine provision gives us divine guidance (Romans 8:14-16; Psalm 48:14).

The Word of God comes tenderly and sweetly with its forgiving spirit, with mercy and loving kindness, to give us a new self-image. Through our new self-image, we realize our eternal purpose and our everlasting destiny. We are not creatures of chance; we are God's redeemed creatures of light!

I feel sad for people who think the mountains just "happened" one day. I suppose the Great Lakes, the thousands of lakes in Minnesota, and all the beautiful trees just "happened." Do you think that *you* just "happened"? Do you think you didn't have to be conceived in your mother's womb? It would be absurd to think that a little wheel spun around until it turned into a rim, then a tire, until it finally became a car! No one believes that. Yet, some people refuse to believe that God is the first cause of creation. They would rather think that it all just "happened."

Why would anyone want to continue to live in ignorance of the truth? There is a story of an atheist who was mocking God before an audience of five thousand people. He declared, "There is no God!" when suddenly, five teenage girls in the balcony started singing a song about Jesus. The crowd began to rally as they began to sing, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus!" and everybody joined in. Unable to break through the singing, the atheist finally had to leave. Think of it. Five teenage girls brought *light* into that man's lecture.

Chapter Two

CLASSIFICATIONS OF DEMONS

Though we are flesh and blood, we do not *wrestle* with flesh and blood. We wrestle against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12).

It is crucial that we learn the names and functions of the specific kinds of demons that are against us, as well as the names and functions of angelic beings that are on our side. Without this information, we will never be inspired to operate in the truth about spiritual warfare. It is impossible to learn these classifications of demons through casually hearing or reading about them once. Only through consistent reinforcement of these truths will we be able to live in them experientially.

First we will consider the classifications of demons as they are revealed in the Septuagint (the Old Testament as it was translated into

Greek), followed by the classifications in the Greek New Testament.

Prosphatoi, found in Deuteronomy 32:17, is a classification of demons that bring in new attractions to take our attention off God. Their entire duty is to bring in new things that we will be drawn to—whether good or bad—so we will not seek God and His righteousness first.

Hupselon is a word found in the Septuagint translation of 2 Chronicles 11:15, "And he ordained him priests for the *high* places, and for the devils…." It is the same word used in Matthew 4:8 when Satan took Jesus up on an "exceeding *high* mountain" to show Him all the kingdoms of the world. Intellectual demons of supernatural origin execute the tactical application of Satan's strategy for warfare. Their entire job is to keep Christians from going to church or to get them into a church where they live in the permissive will of God because of sentimentality and convenience and a lack of categorical teaching.

Agalmata (Isaiah 19:3) are gentle demons called "charmers." They have personalities that counterfeit Jesus Christ's meekness; they are sweet, tender, and very gentle in dealing with people.

Another classification of demons known as *epaoiden* is found in Deuteronomy 18:11. These are demons who interfere with us through supernatural consultation to get us to make wrong decisions. They are in the consultation business. This is how they work: You may pray about something, but because you don't follow through with praise and worship, these demons intervene to consult you incorrectly about the decision you should make.

2 Kings 21:6 speaks of a classification of demons known as *gnostas*. These demons are located just above the earth in the lower part of the second heaven, but they are also able to come down to roam the earth. As part of Satan's tactical force, they are intellectually brilliant. Their job is to cause you to become familiar with God and His Word by making you passive, reactionary, or angry.

Gnostas demons bring in critical spirits to cause Christians to live in a negative emotional cycle and to speak with a critical tongue, finding fault in the name of objectivity.

Think of this: In the midst of this warfare and its very personal attacks on individuals, Jesus Christ is always ready to come in and build up our souls into an edification complex.

He desires every room of the soul to be filled with His light, life, and love. He wants us to be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19).

Kenologeo is a classification of demons that send messages to the intellect through vibrations from the air so we will think it's light from God. In Hosea 12:1, Ephraim was feeding on the wind. And who is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2)? Satan. Furthermore, in Romans 8:39, *hupsoma* (height) refers to the head demon of the air.

The mind receives billions of vibrations per second from the atmosphere. These vibrations come into the brain and are filtered through the pituitary gland which acts as an antenna. If these vibrations are allowed to be controlled by Satan, he can empower a person's speech. Though the words may sound like normal communication, they are actually spoken through demonic vibrations. That was the case with Peter in Matthew 16:23. Therefore, the mind must actively choose proper thoughts (Philippians 4:8).

Satan's strategy behind *kenologeo* is to feed the empty minds of believers with his thoughts. Sometimes he may bring in dirty or evil thoughts to destroy a family. Or, he may project thoughts

that go against God's righteousness, God's plan, God's values, God's virtues, and God's purpose for a child of God.

Teratoskopos (Deuteronomy 18:11) is the name of a head demon who has an army of demons under him for the purpose of performing "miracles." These demons cause physical disease as well as mental and emotional problems to be manifested in an individual. Then, through the soulish prayer of a cosmic evangelist, the demons actually remove the disease so that it appears as though there was a mass healing (Matthew 7:22). The purpose for this deception is to disorient and distract a person from the pure grace of God for healing. Jesus Christ revealed God's purpose as He healed *all* that were oppressed of the devil (Luke 13:11-16; Acts 10:38).

Ekledonizeto (2 Kings 21:6) refers to a group of overpowering spirits that can be around, yet they are particularly difficult to detect. Morning, noon, and night, their job is to overpower libido waves, bringing people into pornography, homosexuality, and lesbianism. Through the old sin nature and an individual's negative volition toward purity, these demons can cause people to drink and do drugs with an "I don't care" attitude. Then, either by hypnosis at an earlier time

(called "bewitching" in Galatians 3:1), which set up a pattern of behavior, or by direct and immediate contact, these demons take over the sex drives of men and women, producing sexual perversion. The purpose is to destroy the value system of single people and to destroy the purity and virtue of the values of married couples.

New Testament Classifications of Demons

There are also a number of Greek words in the New Testament which also reveal the names of demons.

Demons known as *diamoniou akathartou* have the job of breaking up a Christian's personal relationship with God by bringing in habits, bondage, or uncleanness so that this person cannot properly relate to God (See Luke 4:33; 9:42 and Revelation 18:2).

Diabolos paradidomi is a classification of demons who set people up by "loving" them with counterfeit affections followed by betrayal (See John 13:2).

In Acts 10:38, Jesus went out, anointed of the Holy Spirit, to deliver all those Satan had oppressed. The classification of demons known as *katadunasteuo diabolos* bring oppression to the mind and depression to the soul. This is their

full-time job, and they go largely unrecognized in the lives of Christians.

Demons known as *rhadiourgia* (Acts 13:10) cause people to be undisciplined. The job of these demons is to affect the mind so that a person will be spiritually undisciplined in their thought processes and in their habits. These demons try to get church members to live at ease and in passivity—to be spiritually lazy and inconsistent, lacking discernment.

Another classification of demons has the unique job of causing people to speak evil of those they love and speak behind their backs. This is all done through *diabolos,* the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:9-10).

Oruomai, in 1 Peter 5:8, are demons who try to make people angry by penetrating their emotions. They are called the roaring lion demons.

Acts 13:8 speaks of a group of demons known as *anthistemi* whose job it is to get Christians to live in the realm of their natural human psyche so they will not operate with the mind of Christ.

Magos diogmos involves demons who have a systematic plan to wear people out through circumstances and then wait to finish them off (See Ephesians 4:14). They have a systematic, orga-

nized, perpetuating plan to destroy local assemblies.

Darkness is Past

Though we live in a physical, materialistic world, we also live in the midst of a *spirit* world. These spirits, as we have seen, are all around us. Therefore, it is imperative that we have knowledge of the Light—the knowledge of Christ—revealed to us through His Word and His Holy Spirit. As we are filled with the Word and the Spirit, we allow it to dwell in us richly, speaking to ourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord (Colossians 3:16).

It's so beautiful to walk in light as dear children, rebounding quickly when we fail. God wants us to be children of light, to love the light, to walk in light, and to grow in the light of His grace. As we do this, the light of truth exposes Satan's demonic forces, and we begin to have precise knowledge of our enemy. We gain insight into how he works—how he begins, carries on and attempts to complete his attacks on our lives.

But 1 John 2:8 assures us of our victory over darkness: "Again, a new commandment I write

unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because *the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.*" (The original text includes, "to dwell forever as a part of you.")

Darkness is past! Colossians 1:13 tells us that the moment we were saved, we were delivered from the power of darkness and translated, positionally, into the light of the kingdom of His dear Son. Of course we are still human, and we all need to grow. We face natural temptations as well as the onslaughts of Satan's classified demons. But God provides for us, not only with the Word and the Holy Spirit, but by sending ministering spirits to us.

Chapter Three

GOD'S MINISTERING ANGELS

There are scores of invisible powers around us, and often we act as if they don't exist. Think about it. You can't figure out how conception takes place in a woman, and how the precious child is formed in her womb. But you know it happens, and you accept it as fact. (You can't figure out which came first, the chicken or the egg; yet, you never question the fact that chickens lay eggs.) There are valid scientific explanations of oogenesis and mitosis in the cellular formation of the embryo in the miracle of reproduction. Still, so many functions regarding the creation itself—a unique human being with a distinct personality, abilities, and possibilities—remain a mystery to the most brilliant minds. There are so many invisible things that go on around us every day that no one can figure out!

God's elect angels (*aggeloi*, Psalm 103:20) represent an outward force in the believer's life

given for both offensive and defensive purposes. With this outward force, along with theantric action (the government of God indwelling a man's soul through the Word and the Spirit), we can break through any host of demons that come against us.

The names of the angels God sends have precise names and precise purposes in ministering to us. In fact, when you know their names, you can ask God to send a particular type of angel. God's angels protect us from accidents and diseases that have their source in demonic activity. These angels become a shield for us just as the Word of God is a shield.

"Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word" (Psalms 103:20).

In this verse, there are three classifications of angels. First we have *aggeloi dunatoi ischui*, a group of angels who excel in strength for those they are to help. When Satan sends his invisible, inaudible demons to attack us, God goes to work and sends these angels who are stronger than Satan's demons.

Next we have a*ggeloi poiountes ton logon*. They have the unique job of encouraging their subjects by supernatural external maneuvers to

enable us to keep God's commandments.

Next are the *aggeloi akousai ton logon* whose job it is to hearken to the voice of God and bring holy concentration to those in a church service who are objectively open to worship Jesus Christ. They work as ministers unto the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14), and they encamp around those who fear God (Psalm 34:7). They work in conjunction with the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and the Word of God to diffuse external distractions so the Word will be received without fragmentation.

Think of the angels who hearken unto God's Word. You may be easily distracted as you try to concentrate on the preaching of God's Word, so you pray for God to bless you. And what does God do? He sends a classification of angels to overpower the attack and to help you listen to the Word without distractions (Psalm 103:20*c*).

If a person is aware of and overwhelmed by a demonic attack, but knows how to operate in Christ, the Lord will send an angel to smite the enemies that intended to do harm. Remember who encamps around us (Psalm 34:7). With God, nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37)!

God also has angels that He sends before us. As Abraham's servant was preparing to go on a

journey to take a wife for Isaac, Abraham said, "[The Lord God] shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence" (Genesis 24:7*b*).

The Angel of Special Presence

Isaiah 63:9 speaks of "the angel of his presence" (*aggelos all' autos kurios*). It means, "the angel of special presence," or "the very special presence of an angel." Do you know who this angel is? It is the *Lord Jesus Christ*. During a church service, the worship, the choir, and the special songs all have a part in ushering in God's special presence, preparing hearts to receive the Word.

Jesus Christ is also known as a*ggelos ho rhuomenos,* the Angel who redeems us from all evil (Genesis 48:16). He is the Supreme One, referred to in the Old Testament as "the angel of the Lord."

We find Jesus Christ as an "Angel" in Exodus 23:20, "Behold, I send an *Angel* before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared" (Exodus 23:20).

Do you know that you would probably never make it to work from riding on the highway in the morning if you didn't have God's angels

around you? Also, according to Matthew 18:10, angels protect "little ones" (babies and young children). A mother may be so busy that she doesn't notice that her toddler is about to fall while trying to climb out of his crib, but God has appointed an angel to keep that child from harm. Certainly we must take care of our children. But what a comfort to know that the angels also watch them and keep them from accidents so they will grow up. Think it over. Our God is such a provider.

Angels Who Minister Dying Grace

When God is ready to take a person home to be with Him, the angel of His presence comes into the room to bring comfort. I often tell the story of a Nazarene pastor from Maine who was dying of cancer. He was in the final stages when his pain was at its worst. At the time, I was preaching in a Baptist church and he would call me and say, "I want you to come in and pray for me, you old Baptist."

So I went to visit him every day in the hospital. When he saw me coming he would say, "Here's the Baptist. When are you going to change your doctrine and become a Nazarene?"

"Well, I don't think you were ever as sin-

lessly perfect as you thought!" I said jokingly. He was a wonderful Christian and a great pastor too.

The night he died, I was right there with his loved ones by his bedside. He had been unconscious for several days. All of a sudden, in front of everyone in that hospital room, he sat up and said, "She was beautiful and she went up." Then he laid back down and died. Within a short time, a member of the family knocked on the door and informed the relatives that his daughter-in-law had just given birth to a baby girl, yet due to complications, the baby died. This Nazarene pastor had actually seen the angels taking his baby granddaughter to heaven just before he died. The angel of God's presence gave him dying grace.

When you are in financial straits, or your nerves are being attacked, you have Jesus Christ, and the angel of His presence ministers to you.

We need Christians who are filled with the faith of the precise truth that has been spoken to them. We need people who are able to speak truth against the air, against their adversity, and against their circumstances.

As we receive the *logos* (the written Word) in preciseness, the *logos* becomes a *rhema* (God

speaking personally to us through His Word). We will be able to release power into the air by speaking the *rhema* we received from God. Instead of being general, the *logos* now becomes precise!

Chapter Four

VICTORY OVER DEMONS

You may wonder, with all of the classifications of demons mentioned in this booklet, how you can have victory. There are many adult Christians who are little children in their thinking. They do not know how to think in child-like faith. Because they do not give definition to warfare, they are troubled by these classifications of demons. But Jesus Christ promises to deliver us and redeem us from our enemies. He promises to go before us, and fight for us (Genesis 48:16; Exodus 23:20; 2 Chronicles 20:15, 17).

The first thing to realize is that God has already given every believer a new heart and a new spirit. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). But verse 27 says that God will "*cause you* to walk" in His statutes, and keep His judgments

and do them. Isaiah 30:28*a* says, "And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck…." The "neck" speaks of the volition.

The key to victory in any realm is to have an overflowing life. "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Psalm 127:1). The Lord must build the house. Many young pastors in pioneer ministries—who are very sincere—try diligently to build a church. They are good men, but they labor in vain because they are trying to implement programs in a natural temperament.

To build a house with the Lord's headship, leadership, and guidance, the spiritual process must be placed ahead of programs. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Psalms 23:5-6). The psalmist said that his "cup"—his capacity for living—was running over! That is how a marriage is saved and a church is built. It's not by trying, legislating righteousness, or making demands on people, but it's by having

a cup that is running over. And people drink from your cup, though they may not even be conscious of it.

I know of a marriage that was attacked by three different classifications of demons. This couple came through beautifully and they are in church consistently, praising God and fellowshipping with the Body. Satan tried to get them to stay home and have a fight. He tried to get one party to stay home so the other one would stay home too. But now they're in the services, loving the Word of God and worshipping Jesus Christ. This confuses the devil. He doesn't know what the next move will be, so he has to withdraw from this couple until they change their minds about confessing Christ as they overpower the enemy's attack.

A River Flowing Out

Jesus said to the woman at the well in John 4:14, "The water that I shall give [you] shall be [in you] a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The Christian has a well springing up inside of him. Not only that, but he has a river flowing out of him. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me,

and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy [Spirit] was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)" (John 7:37-39).

Think of it. A spring springing up inside, and a river flowing out. The Word dwells richly in us and we begin to speak to ourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts. This is how a church is built. And that is what it means to have the Lord build the house. It's more than information; it's an inspired life. It's not just programs but a spiritual process. It's a ministry that acts in grace, loves through mercy, forgives through the Cross, and ministers life in the power of the Spirit.

Victory through an Organized Mind

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). The word for "sound" in the original language means "an organized mind." God wants to give us an organized mind, organized emotions, and an organized volition. We can go against Satan's organized kingdom through information that becomes inspiration.

Jesus said in Matthew 21:13, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." In our church, we have a vision to be in 220 countries by the year 2000. Our vision begins right here in Baltimore, our Jerusalem. Many are called to work with us here. But all of us here also have a tremendous ministry of prayer for the detailed needs of those 220 countries. We must stand in the gap for countries like Iran and Turkey. We must discern and pray precisely for specific classifications of demons that are over these countries as well as Africa, China, India, England, America, and so many other areas. We must become a prayer army of intercessors to come against these demons.*

Because God's house is a house of prayer, every child of God must know how to behave in the local assembly (See 1 Timothy 3:15). The sanctuary is not a place to bring food and drinks; it is not just a place for socialization. We must plan to be on time for the worship and praise service. It is vital to get into a mind-set of worship, a mind-set of prayer, and a mind-set for receiving truth. It is so easy to allow ourselves to enter into *rhadiourgia*, having a slothful

mind-set toward the assembly meeting and a lazy mind-set toward worship. This is the network of demons who try to keep us from reverencing God and His people and the local assembly meetings.

Jesus Christ didn't say, "My house is a house for whatever you want." He said, "My house is a house of prayer." This means we come in to God's house having prayed up-to-date. We sit down as members in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27). The Holy Spirit goes to work laying certain burdens on our hearts, and we begin to fellowship with the Lord.

A Royal Priesthood

"But ye are a chosen generation, *a royal priesthood*, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, *an holy priesthood*, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath

made us kings and *priests* unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:5-6).

As a royal priesthood before God, we have the privilege of exercising our priesthood on behalf of the people in our city, for the leaders of our land, and for the leaders of other nations.

Ephesians 3:12 tells us that we "have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." The Word of God also says, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Every man and woman of God is a priest. We go before God as priests to pray for people. Then we go to people as ambassadors on behalf of God (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). This fulfills our eternal purpose on the earth. And as we go, we pray without ceasing so we do not faint (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

We must realize that our words can be more than just aimless talking and foolish jesting. Our words can be words of faith and power. We can have an eternal purpose in our speech and in

our initiations.

As we realize the power of our priesthood through access to God and we pray for one another and for our cities, then crime will go down—all because we took the time to knock on heaven's door with serious intercession and absolute supplication. The Holy Spirit will do what would be impossible to accomplish outside of God's life and apart from His grace.

Prayer from an Overflowing Cup

When our cup runs over, God prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies. He anoints our head with the oil of the Holy Spirit. The spring springs up, the river flows out and we are so occupied with God that we are no longer defeated in our lower nature with the same old problems of preoccupation with self.

With our focus on God, we become a prayer army. We enter into a prayer scope, a prayer way, prayer thoughts, prayer with supplication and intercession. Then the Spirit takes over our spirit and begins to move within us in a supernatural way because we are fellowshipping with Jesus Christ and His life.

**For more about effective prayer strategy, read* Do I Really Know How to Pray?, *Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

Every believer must be *inspired* to operate in truth. Let me illustrate. There are few people in the world who have any idea what the Twenty-Third Psalm is all about. But when they hear someone quote it, they move their lips as if to say to those around them, "I *know* that psalm."

Knowing scriptures does not bring deliverance. Knowing scriptures is simply acquiring information of how you can have deliverance. What brings deliverance is the *inspiration* of the Scriptures, and that knowledge becomes the power to defeat the forces of darkness.

This week, speak the word of faith so that it can become power. Speak it in your bedroom, in your car, wherever you are. Speak into the air—the domain of Satan's kingdom (Ephesians 2:2). Enjoy being an individual in God's kingdom who is causing confusion in the devil's camp.

We must not ascend into heaven to try and bring Christ down; and we must not descend

into the deep to bring Him up again from the dead (Romans 10:6-7). But the Word is nigh in our mouth and in our heart. It's the Word of faith that we speak (Romans 10:8). Confess that Jesus Christ is risen and we are risen; confess that Jesus Christ is ascended and we are ascended; confess that Jesus Christ is seated above and we are seated with Him!

God has given us armor to protect us from the attacks of demons (Ephesians 6:10-18), but He has only given us one offensive weapon—the sword of the Spirit, which is the *rhema* Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). God takes the *logos* (the embodiment of His deity) and speaks specific *rhemas* to us through His Holy Spirit. This is the sword of the Spirit, the "standard" that the Spirit raises up against the enemy that comes in like a flood to destroy us (Isaiah 59:19*b*). Thank God for His government of light!

Can I Really Stop Sinning?

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

When God asks us to do something, He will give us the power to do it. For instance, in 1 John 2:1 the apostle said, "I write unto you little children that you sin not." That tells me that it is possible to live in this world without being in bondage to sin. But how?

Do not misunderstand it. We have an old sin nature, and we will sin from time to time. And if we do sin, 1 John 2:1 also says that we have an advocate with the Father to plead our case. But if we establish spiritual fortresses in our hearts that are founded upon the Word of God, we can practice a life that does not sin.

The Holy Spirit resides in every born-again believer. He is ready to empower us in situations where temptation and weakness would try to overtake us. This booklet is written to reveal how Christians can develop a lifestyle that defeats the number one enemy against faith—which is doubt—and how we can keep from

sinning by grasping the unseen realities of God's kingdom through the faith of Jesus Christ.

Chapter One

LIVE ACCORDING TO UNSEEN REALITIES

"…For whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23*b*).

As sinners who have been saved by the Blood of the Lamb, we have a relationship with the Savior that is continually developing over time. Our growing relationship with Christ, His Word, and the Holy Spirit helps us to live godly lives as it helps us to overcome the many sins that do so easily beset us (Hebrews 12:1).

God has given believers all the tools that we need in our walk with Him, including grace, mercy, forgiveness, love, and truth. The problem is that too often we do not live in the reality of faith concerning God's truths for our lives.

According to Hebrews 11:1, faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And in Hebrews 11:6, God says that to live by faith—by unseen realities—is the

only way we can please Him. At any given time, every Christian is operating either in self-centered productivity (the old sin nature) or in eternal productivity (God's nature), depending on the individual's value system. Living according to unseen realities represents a faith that pleases God. We are called to reveal a living testimony—not a dead one. God's unseen realities have been hidden in our hearts and in the innermost parts of our souls, bringing in the favor, pleasure, and joy of God to our lives.

I know Christians who act as if God were dead, as far as their obedience to God and adventures in faith go. It seems as if not a single thing could motivate or energize them because they have not allowed God's wisdom to overrule their experiences in Adam. They become spiritually exhausted and grow weary in the race, because they are not receiving their strength from Christ and His Word (Psalm 27:1).

Understanding Spiritual Autonomy

Every believer needs to develop a measure of "spiritual autonomy." This does not mean that we become independent of the local assembly. We are members in particular in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), knit together in

love. Yet it does mean that if, God forbid, you were in prison for several years, deprived of fellowship and even deprived of necessities, you would make it with God because of what you have learned in the assembly of believers. The grace of God would be your sufficiency (2 Corinthians 12:9). *

As a modern day example, we could look at the lives of those two young women missionaries who were imprisoned in Afghanistan for several months, at the time of the terrorist attacks on American soil. Their testimonies resound with the faithfulness of God in circumstances more desperate than we could imagine.

Beyond a superficial life that gives mental assent (and agrees with the knowledge of the truth without a commitment to the truth), true spiritual autonomy is manifested in a life that understands warfare in the cosmic system—God's kingdom of light versus Satan's kingdom of darkness. A believer living in spiritual autonomy is full of wisdom from God's Word. Wisdom is the application of knowledge of the truth in the application and experience of life, motivated by love and the light of God's life that illuminates a willing heart. When wisdom takes precedence over our subjective experience, we

begin to understand warfare. Wisdom rules over what we think we need. It rules over wounds of the past that cause us to dwell upon the pain that others may have inflicted in our lives.

Only Faith Will Set Us Free

Faith is not a "living" faith until we apply the Word of God in our lives by faith-obedience to the truth. Faith becomes real when we apply God's unseen realities to the details of our lives. An example would be for you to accept the fact that you are a brand-new creation in Christ. Now, in the mirror you may look the same, and the people around you may say that you still act the same. But 2 Corinthians 5:17 declares that in Christ *all* things are new. So instead of the old standards, even if they seem good, God wants you to live by the highest standard, as a new creation in Christ. Therefore, you trust Him to reveal the reality of your life that is hid in Him.

The things in your life that are not spiritual priorities will never bring benefits from God. Never allow the disheartening, discouraging, and painful negativity of the past to have a moment of your time. Remember that hope looks forward, toward unseen realities in the future. But faith, which looks upward, operates in

unseen realities that could happen this very moment, this very day, or this very week. Once you have agreed with God about your sin and you have repented, forget about the failures of the past. Now is the time to begin a new life of faith.

Mental Consent versus a Living Faith

It is so crucial that we understand the difference between faith and mental assent or consent. To give mental consent means to thoroughly understand and agree with the truth about something that concerns you. Faith, however, is based upon something that is *in* you. It is something rooted in you in the reality of God's essence. It is the Holy Spirit, who empowers the truth of God into a personal reality of faith, even if the outcome is not yet evident. It is faith that gives us victory over sin.

Though mental consent may appear to be oneness, unless a person derives his faith from the One who died for him on the Cross, he will not have any lasting victories. In fact, outside of a derived life from the Savior, a person can only experience psychological living, which is derived from spiritual death. It may look good, and it may be kind, but it is not the life of Christ being manifested.

Thousands of pastors no longer preach because of the negative or sinful thoughts that they have allowed to dwell in their souls. They now live in unbelief. God says, "I will supply all your needs." But they respond, "No. You didn't, and You can't."

"My grace is sufficient for thee," the Lord declares in 2 Corinthians 12:9. "No, it isn't," they think in their hearts. "With Me, all things are possible," God says. "No, I don't believe it," they argue.

This is the essence of unbelief: It knows the truth, but it allows circumstances and needs to overrule spiritual realities. Instead of letting God's wisdom take precedence, circumstances too often take over the natural man's psyche with negativity and psychological living. The natural man is convinced that he must fulfill his needs with natural provisions. As a result, the natural man lives in bondage to sin instead of being free in the perfect liberty of God.

Sadly, according to Ecclesiastes 9:9, many of the kindest people you know are facing eternity without God. In order to spend eternity in heaven, a person must receive Jesus Christ as his Savior. Good works will not save a person. A pleasant disposition, unless it is derived from a

life in Christ, will not get anyone into heaven. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Therefore, when you pray for souls and when you meet people in your walk with God, do not go by sight. Be led by the Holy Spirit and ask Him for specific wisdom to reach the lost.

** For more about the faithfulness of God in times of trials and tests, be sure to read* Welcome the Thorn, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2002.*

Chapter Two

DEFEATING DOUBTS

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24).

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11, 12).

The way to overcome the lusts of the flesh is to be crucified with Christ, to walk in the Spirit, and to let grace teach us to deny ungodliness. True grace has a standard, and that standard is Calvary. True grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. It teaches us to go to the Cross and come out in Resurrection. True grace brings us out with courage, humility, meekness,

honor, and submission.

Suppose, after all these decades of being a pastor, I were to allow myself to become a casualty. Time goes on as I refuse to repent. I refuse to let God change me. This means that though I used my gifts to serve Jesus Christ, I was operating only in mental consent. I did not live a life rooted and grounded in Him and in His faith (Habakkuk 2:4; Acts 3:16).

I have explained things to this point in order to help you understand the greatest enemy of a victorious Christian life: doubt. Doubt questions God's integrity because of negative experiences in the reality of our obedience as Christians. Doubt questions God's provision when we linger over the times that it appears He has not provided for us.

Doubt often plagues people who have suffered extreme physical or mental abuse. They do not believe because they are wounded, hurting, and bleeding, spiritually speaking.

The Maturity Factor

Doubt refuses to recognize the reality of the Bema Seat evaluation of our lives, when every Word of God will judge the believer as he stands alone before God (see John 12:47-48; Romans

14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

In doubt, a Christian will say, "I have done everything God says, and I have been true to my ministry. But life is just too hard and complicated, and I need to take a few years off from serving God." What appeared to be a life-time commitment to a life of faith is now revealed as mental consent—a mere tip of the hat—to the fact that he was called to serve God by faith. What began as a faith vision began to fade in the darkroom of his soul. *

An image exposed to a piece of film will not produce a clear picture if it is not allowed to go through certain processes of development. God sees every believer according to the Finished Work. He gives us promises in His Word and He has placed us in a body of believers who help us to see who we are in Christ. He allows many different circumstances in our lives that He can use to refine us, as we become who He has made us to be, yielding to Him by faith.

We have to personally deal with the difference between faith and mental consent, the difference between hearing and doing, and the difference between doubting and confidence. Confidence develops when we refuse to doubt the God who has made us. The Holy Spirit bears

witness that He is working inside us, making us into His image. No matter what happens, we need to realize that He who calls us will be faithful to us, to make His truth a reality inside of us (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Then, we will run in self-discipline to receive the prize (Philippians 3:14), and we will bring glory to God.

Defining the Laws of Love and Liberty

The royal law of love and the perfect law of liberty have very precise definitions (James 2:8; James 1:25).** Every time I love God, love my spouse, love my family, and love those who sin against me, I make myself the instrument of perfect love. When I live in faith, according to the perfect law of liberty, I hear the Word of God, I believe it, and I do it. It is very easy because I know I have heard the Word and the Holy Spirit is here to do it through me. I practice what I hear in practical obedience.

Just as doubt is the enemy of victorious Christian living, perfect faith abolishes doubt and fear. Remember what we said in the beginning: Only faith pleases God, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Therefore, the only way we can stop sinning is to live by faith, moment to moment.

Every time a Christian obeys God in his circumstances and situations, he reveals perfect faith to the angels. When we put what we hear into practice, our faith is made perfect.

Faith is made perfect as I walk in obedience. Love is made perfect when I let the Holy Spirit do the loving. The highest value a Christian can possess is to be able to say at the end of a day, "I haven't lusted. I have had no desire to violate purity today. I had no desire to live in dishonesty. When I was tempted to sin, I prayed instead. I did not have to control people and force them to fit into my frame of reference."

There is no greater feeling than being able to put my head on the pillow at the end of a long day, knowing that, to the best of my God-given ability, as an instrument of righteousness, I have exhibited and executed God's perfect love. The Holy Spirit has shed that love abroad in my heart, and that love does not fail.

** For more about the unconscious, subconscious, and conscious levels of processing in the human mind and how God works His vision into our hearts, be sure to read* Imaginations of the Heart, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

*** Be sure to read* The Perfect Law of Liberty, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2002, for a more thorough discussion on this subject.*

Chapter Three

WE CAN STOP SINNING

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we

have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 1:4-2:5).

A Principle and a Paradox

I have the privilege to "sin not." It is my choice not to sin, but it has to be done through the power of the Holy Spirit to bear fruit that remains. God would never instruct me to do something I cannot do. I have the privilege and potential not to sin—today, tonight, and tomorrow. Yes, I am a sinner. But I have the potential to "sin not".

If I walk in the light, in the fellowship and the purity of God, then the Word and the Spirit protect my soul. I will make positive decisions as I live through the Cross, in the Cross, and by

the Cross, controlled by Resurrection life. When Resurrection life controls my life through the Cross, then I derive everything from His ascension. In this state, a person can walk with God without sinning.

Aman who says he has no sin is a liar (1 John 1:8). But I also know that 1 John 2:1*a* says, "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not." A believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit and controlled by God's Word does not live in bondage to sin (1 John 3:6). Some Christians have this idea that you are putting yourself into the gears of legalism, pride, and self-righteousness if you enter into this approach to the Glorious Gospel. So let me say it again: It is possible for any Blood-bought believer to not sin—even mentally—this morning, this noon, or tonight. We don't even have to think of sin; we can just walk in the Holy Spirit and the light of the Word as God leads us each step of the way.

Walking in the Spirit

Walking in the Spirit is the way God protects us from sin and the way He prevents us from sinning. If we walk in the Spirit, then we do not fulfill the lust of the flesh. All we have to do is make sure we stay confessed up-to-date. We put

on the Lord Jesus, and we make no provision for the flesh.

The flesh is nothing to worry about if we concern ourselves with putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. If we walk in the Spirit, put on the Lord Jesus, and walk in love, we are protected from sin because we do not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

I am no longer a victim of fear. I am no longer discontented. This is neither arrogance nor pride, because I know where God has brought me from, and I am in awe of His abundant grace and excellent mercy for even allowing me to breathe.

Occupied with Christ

God called Job a mature and perfect man (see Job 8:20). The Lord wasn't calling Job sinless, but He was saying this: "Job, you know how to go through a day and a night and glorify Me completely."

We can have conversations from heaven and live without terrible dispositions, irritating reactions, and strange wandering thoughts of human evaluations. We can live without insecurity and anxiety. We can live very happy lives as we are occupied with Christ.

"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Philippians 3:15).

My faith becomes perfect when I am obedient in every area that I know of, to the best of my ability with God. My love becomes perfect when I literally love everyone and refuse to allow any negative energy to flow out of me.

The Secret of a Life of Joy

"And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

"Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

"So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

"And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make

great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them" (Nehemiah 8:10-11).

The men and women of Israel were comforted and filled with joy when they heard the words of the Lord. The issue was no longer their sins that led them into captivity. They could go forward as a nation redeemed with unmerited favor because of God's love for them. No longer did they have to live in self-effort, trying to please God. The joy of the Lord became their strength.

Those Christians who *do* sin do not have to sin. Everyone has an old sin nature, but that nature does not have to be active. It has been crucified. There isn't a single thing we cannot do in Christ when the old sin nature is dead and the Kingdom of God is alive in us. God is for us! Believe it, receive it, and let His faith become alive in you.

CONCLUSION

What do you think of the possibilities God sees for our lives? Can you comprehend that God's words are Throne Words? They are not "pie in the sky" hopes without practical possibilities. He who has called you will also do it! Every word that has proceeded out of God's mouth is true, and not one of His promises has ever failed.

We are not teaching a false doctrine of sinless perfection, but we are being instructed in levels of maturity in Christ as believers. There is a process involved with spiritual development, but some Christians won't even face the possibilities of what would happen if they were to apply these truths to their lives. Instead, they choose to live in the devil's lie that no one can live purely before God without a system of works. Sadly, they continue to make excuses and never even see the potential of their lives.

We do not have to sin! I have given you a

heart-to-heart, Scripture-for-Scripture presentation. I have just declared what our potential can be according to the Holy Word of God.

Stay focused on the veracity of God's Word, concentrate on God's promises, and make a declaration of who you are in Christ by letting your conversation and affections be set above (Colossians 3:2).

Father, bless these thoughts to our hearts. They are important thoughts that could be misunderstood by those who are living in partial rebellion. They can be privately interpreted by those who don't want to grow in sanctification. But they can also make a broken heart absolutely joyful in the light of Your glory and grace. Thank You for always drawing us nearer to You. In Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen.

Captured by the Finished Work

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"Two men looked out from prison bars;
One saw mud, the other saw stars."

Paul and Silas didn't have windows in their prison chamber at Philippi. According to Acts 16:24-25, they were thrown into the inner prison, with their feet in stocks. That meant they were on their backs with open wounds against the filthy floor. Still, at midnight they sang praises to God.

Those men were already prisoners, having been captured by the Finished Work of their Savior, Jesus Christ. They, like many others, were constrained to spread the Gospel as far as they could—at whatever the price.

The apostle Paul declared himself "a prisoner of the Lord" in Ephesians 4:1. He spent much of his Christian life in prisons and bound with heavy chains, but his vision went far beyond the stars.

While many of us have never been in a prison for any reason, many of us do have a sense of other kinds of bondage—to sin, sickness, financial difficulties. God's desire is that whatever our situation, we would be captured by the Finished Work and have a vision from heaven's perspective. With that, earthly shackles will fall off, hell's foundations will be shaken, and many will be saved.

Chapter One

PRISONERS OF THE LORD

"I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

"This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

"The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God.

"For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners" (Psalm 69:30-33).

In Psalm 69:33, God hears the *poor* in spirit—those who know they need Christ. He does not *despise* (He doesn't regard with contempt) those who are His *prisoners*—those who are risen with Christ. God listens to and regards with great pleasure believers who are seeking the things that are above, where Jesus sits at God's right hand; who set their mind on things above and not below; who reckon that they are dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3).

To be a prisoner of the Lord means that I cannot get out of Christ.

Second, it means that I cannot leave my position in heavenly places—*ever* (Ephesians 2:6).

Third, it means that even if grace disciplines me, I can never come out from under grace.

Fourth, I cannot increase or decrease unconditional love. God's character is love (1 John 4:8); He changes not (Malachi 3:6). Jesus Christ, who became the expression of the Father's love to the world, is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Don't Forget

The reason that many of God's people are not consistent—though they are beautiful Christians in terms of integrity and desire—is this: They become forgetful hearers and lose what they hear in sermons.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). This is not about people who do not fail but about those who love Him. Those who have sinned much, love much (Luke 7:47). Furthermore, we don't even begin to know how much God loves us and how much He has

prepared for those who love Him.

The Holy Spirit Himself "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." How shall a man know what is in him, except by his human spirit? Even so, no one knows God except by the Holy Spirit. We have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit of God, that we may know the things freely given to us by Christ (see 1 Corinthians 2:10-12).

The natural or "soulish" man, the *psuchikos* man, does not receive the things of God: neither can he know them, for those things are only spiritually discerned (see 1 Corinthians 2:14). The Holy Spirit compares spiritual with spiritual. He does not speak according to man's wisdom, but instead He teaches us everything about the spiritual world.

"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged by no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:15-16).

When we do not let the Holy Spirit teach us, we fall back into ourselves and the bondage of our old ways. If, however, we become prisoners of Jesus Christ (Philemon 1:9), we are prisoners captured by the Finished Work.

Blessed with Healthy Emotions

God desires to bless us, and in all things make us rich. He doesn't want to add sorrow to our lives (see Proverbs 10:22).

To be "blessed" means to be empowered by the living Word and the Holy Spirit in God's grace. When God blesses us, we are on the receiving end of blessings. Empowered and prospering, we become blessing givers.

Our hearts will prosper. Our minds, including the memory and the conscience (with its norms and standards), our self-consciousness (what we're occupied with), our volition, and most of all, our emotions will prosper.

Projections to the unconscious mind cannot interfere with Christ's emotions in us. We will come out of ourselves, not in Adam's emotions in the sincerity of a good effort and striving to be right, but with the healthy emotions of the mind of Christ.

Showers of Blessings

God says that he who hears the Word of God shall prosper (Proverbs 8:34-35). In Deuteronomy 28:2, He said, "all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God."

Hearken to His voice: Hearken to the Word of God. Lay aside "all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to [deliver] your souls" (James 1:21).

If anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he deceives himself. He is like a man who goes to the mirror and beholds his natural face, and then goes away, forgetting what he is like. "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work," this one who practices the Word shall prosper and be blessed in every deed (see James 1:24-25).

When we listen to the Word of God preached, we must let the Holy Spirit teach us. When the Spirit teaches us, divine energy enters into every part of our soul and body. When by grace through faith we retain what He teaches, then we prosper (3 John 2). He teaches us how to prosper.

Prospering with Eternal Riches

The blessings promised by God extend to all areas of our lives. According to Deuteronomy 28:3, whether we go into the city or work in the field, we will be blessed.

In verse 6, whether we are preparing food and doing work in our home, or if we go out of the house, we will be blessed.

In verse 9, we are called God's people, separated unto Himself.

In verse 12, God will bless businesses by sending the rain in the right season.

And in verse 13, He will make us the head—more than conquerors—and we will no longer be the tail—the downtrodden. Our God loves to bless His children.

Chapter Two

THE POWER IN GOD'S LOVE

It is so crucial for us to understand the divine energy in love. The term we call "energy" and often read as "power" comes from several different roots. *Dunamis* is the divine power by which we were saved and translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. *Energeia* is the power that transfers the Word to the memory. *Ischus* is the power to retain and recall categorical doctrine in the memory. *Kratos* is the manifestation of divine truth to the rest of our soul and body (Ephesians 1:19).

What amazing power is in God's love. That is why we are here attending church, and that is why so many churches are worshipping God—it is the power of God's love.

How about the energy that comes when we get to know the pure grace of God? How about the joy that becomes our strength, in Nehemiah 8:10? How about the gratitude when we grasp

the truth about mercy—that we will never get the punishment we deserve? Oh, the energy that goes into every part of us. That is why we worship and sing.

The Power of a New Name

Jabez made an interesting statement in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. Not only did he refuse to submit to the name his mother gave him, which meant "sorrow." Jabez prayed to the Lord and said, "Enlarge my coast." He said, "Bless me *indeed*. Keep Your hand upon me. Don't let me grieve You." And the Lord granted all of his requests.

Jabez said, "I am not going to be a sorrow bringer. I am going to be a blessing bringer."

The Power in Forgiveness

The energy of forgiveness is magnificent. We must learn to forgive those who have wounded us—and to *truly* forgive them in our unconscious mind.

A singer committed a crime and went to prison for many years. While he was there, among the few people to contact him were some members of a well-known Gospel singing group.

When he finally was released from prison,

he prayed that he would have an opportunity to sing again. For a long time, nobody called. But in God's perfect time, the leader of that group called him and said, "We're going to have an old-time gathering. Would you come and sing up a storm?" That man cried like a baby for two days. He had been forgiven—not only by God, but by faithful, forgiven Christians.

There is such power in forgiveness. On the video recording of that session, while he was singing so beautifully, I watched the eyes of those who knew the power of perfect love. Tears were running down their faces. That man was so thankful—and God was well pleased.

Never Give Up

When uncomfortable situations come up, we can so readily withdraw into Adam. It may be unintentional, yet we can withdraw into our emotions. We can withdraw into our problems. We can withdraw into our past. We withdraw because we keep failing in an area. May I say this?

We may withdraw into guilt and into negative energy. Perhaps we accept condemnation instead of exposing our failure to the light of grace. As many times as it happens, until victory

comes, keep drawing near to the throne of grace and don't quit. *Don't quit!* We cannot hide in a problem or a circumstance forever. It will find us out eventually.

Perhaps you have sensed the negative energy that comes from rejection, or from conviction without conversion. You can turn that into positive energy by allowing the flow of God's love, the teaching of God's grace, the miracle of rebound, and the consistency of His patience to fill you. God is waiting for you to receive mercy.

Chapter Three

PRISONERS OF THE FINISHED WORK

We are prisoners of the Finished Work. No matter where you are tonight, no matter what has happened in your life, if Jesus Christ is your Savior, you are a prisoner of the Finished Work.

Remember what Paul said in Ephesians 4:1: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk [honorably] of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

Through all these years, and growing all the time, I know that I am a prisoner of Love forever. God is love. He will never let us go. He will never change, and His perfect love is always available.

The Lord said to Moses in Exodus 33:21, "Moses, stand on the rock." And we know, according to 1 Corinthians 10:4, that rock is Jesus Christ.

Then He said, "When I pass by, I'll hide you

in the cleft of the rock. When I pass by, and my hand will cover you."

He said, "Moses, you will not see My face. You will only see My back parts."

We don't walk by sight. We walk by faith. We don't see His face, because the Word comes behind us saying, "This is the way; walk in it." We walk by faith in categorical doctrine of Isaiah 30:21.

Hid in Christ—Not in the Past

The Bible says, in Colossians 3:3, that "your life is hid with Christ in God." The word "hid" meant that it was placed where no intruders could find it. When the pharaohs died, all of their treasures would go into a sepulcher, at the end of a special maze or tunnel. That way, anyone searching for the treasures could not find them.

Satan cannot find us because we are God's treasure, hid with Christ in God. What's more, *our* treasures are not on this earth, but they are laid up for us in heaven (Matthew 6:20). We are prisoner's of Christ, captured by the Finished Work.

When a certain woman who had lived in deep sin became gloriously saved, she said, "I

always wanted to know that even I could be forgiven and have a new opportunity." As a missionary today, she is not hiding in her past, but she is living in her new creation. She is a great treasure, hid with Christ in God.

The unsearchable riches of God's grace are inexhaustible, incomprehensible, unfathomable, and past finding out (Romans 11:33).

A New Identity, a Brand-New Name

In Psalm 118:26*a*, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD"—and His name reveals the nature of Christ (Exodus 34:5-7*a*).

Psalm 34:1*a* says "I will bless the LORD at all times." But Jesus, in Matthew 5:44, takes us further by asking us to pray for and bless our enemies.

God is a God who blesses, a God who adds unto us, a God who provides what we need to overcome the natural inclination toward what people have named us and our predisposition in Adam.

Oh, the grace of Almighty God. I think of this testimony, not in remembering the sin, but in proclaiming the practical reality of Redemption. A certain man had been with a hundred men, sexually. He has now been saved for thirty

years. As a pastor and a missionary, he is hid with Christ, washed in the Blood of the Lamb. He is as pure as gold and a fantastic servant.

As co-laborers together with God, I beseech you that you do not receive the grace of God in vain. Now is the accepted time. Now is the given day. Now is the day of deliverance (2 Corinthians 6:1-2). *Now*.

Having received God's Word on this subject, by grace through faith, go forward and *know* that you know that you know! We have been delivered out of the bondage of darkness, and are now captives of the Living God and the work that was finished on Calvary.

"Wherewithal shall a young man [or woman] cleanse his way? by taking heed [to the Word of God]" (Psalm 119:9).

The Blood shed on the Cross goes into our unconscious, cleansing and purging it, leaving no short-circuits to hinder our walk. Captured, we desire to live with a single-eye toward the One who leads captivity captive.

CONCLUSION

We have been delivered from destruction through His redemption and "crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercies." (see Psalm 103:4).

Imagine it! You have been crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercies—crowned as a king (Revelation 1:6). God has given you a crown, and it is lovingkindness and tender mercies—which is the very character of God.

How could we ever comprehend the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort? (2 Corinthians 1:3.) He can never act outside of the Finished Work. He is always true to His attributes, because that glorifies Him.

The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "by the grace of God I am what I am." And 1 Peter 5:10, our God is the God of all grace—*all*.

In Psalm 132:13-15, God has chosen Zion, the city of God's people, as His dwelling place: "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I

have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision…." And when He blesses, God will never take back the blessing (Numbers 23:20).

Categorical Convictions

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

"Of sin, because they believe not on me;

"Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

"All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

"A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father" (John 16:8-16).

One of the things that is so crucial to the stability, steadfastness, durability, and longevity of a Christian, of a leader, or of a ministry is a life lived by divinely inspired convictions. Convictions imparted to us by God come to us based upon His righteousness and His integrity. In those convictions there is no iniquity.

Divine convictions rest upon the Lord's justice, His immutability, and His omniscience. Convictions such as these are based upon the quality of His essence, the perfection of His character, and the nature of His divine provisions to us.

So many believers become statistics—just numbers on a church roll—because they never develop categorical convictions. They may have some ideals. They may even have decent lifestyles and what some would call convictions, but they are not solid, definitive convictions. Rather, they are inclinations that are based upon routine and preference.

As this booklet will show, categorical convictions come from the Holy Spirit's promptings and His guidance through the Word of God.

Convictions such as these become immovable foundations for a believer's life. These convictions become literal food for thought, resources for thinking with God in any situation—resources that stand strong in storms and trials and tests.

Chapter One

THE POWER OF PRECISE LIGHT

"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:13-14).

Someone recently wrote me a tragic letter. I call it tragic because of the heart that it reveals. Also, the writer used Bible passages to justify his attitude. "Would God bless me if I divorced and got remarried?" said the letter. "Unconditional love would forgive me, right? Wouldn't God, in His permissive will, allow me to be happy? He wants me to be happy, doesn't He? I am not happy in my present situation."

The writer of the letter then went on to quote several Scriptures and described other situations

where people have divorced and remarried, and who now seem so much happier.

There are, of course, situations where God brings in resurrection and restoration when the reality unfolds; however, there is a reason that presumption is called the great transgression. In this situation, the writer of the letter was allowing himself to become a victim of depravity. He thought he had a conviction, but he was living in the instability of his opinions because he lacked categorical convictions concerning marriage. God's inspired Word was not governing his thoughts in this area.

God's people need to have strong convictions concerning the sanctity of marriage. I am not timid about discussing sex. I am here because my mother and my father had sex, and so are you. Sexual relations outside of wedlock are spiritually dangerous. Our bodies were created to glorify God, and when the sex act is used in the wrong context, it is a violation of God's design.

Illuminated by the Truth

"Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

"How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

"For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:6-9).

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130).

Our hearts were designed to be God's habitation. My physical body is not for fornication. My body is God's temple—it is for the Lord, and the Lord is for my body. So when there is a physical exchange outside of the boundaries defined in Scripture, it is like an invasion of the Holy of Holies.

This attitude should also prevail in a marriage. The husband should approach his wife with great sensitivity in his initiations. When the wife properly responds, there is a most intimate form of communion designed by God. This communion should be engaged in without fantasy, without mental pornography, and without suggestiveness. Such a rich physical expression of a spiritual union reveals a godly communion

that affects the spirit, the soul, and the body. It is the blessing of God to bring pleasure into two lives who are one soul and one flesh.

Any person would have a much better self-image if he saw himself as God's Holy of Holies. That needs to be my conviction. I need to see myself as who I am in Christ. A conviction goes beyond mere opinion. It is something established, a fact that is revealed and imparted to my soul. When I have godly convictions, God's thinking then becomes my thinking. His immutable righteousness, His divine integrity, and His perfect provision govern my life as one who has been raised from the dead.

We should grow in convictions as we receive precise light from God's Word. The entrance of God's Word brings light. "Light" in the Hebrew speaks of accurate, precise information that cannot be invaded by any shadow. The life of God is light, and no darkness can overtake Him.

Chapter Two

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

Self-preservation and ignorance can cause a person to fall into self-deception. He has areas of blindness—places where God's light and life are not permitted to shine. Convictions must create a room of truth in the details of my life. The purpose of God's plan reveals His provisions for my life.

Convictions, convictions, convictions! They must grow in my life—always through mercy, always by grace, always with love, and always with forgiveness. A believer who does not grow in his convictions is bound to become indifferent to the plan of God. Particular things that happen in the realm of ministering will become distasteful to him.

It is imperative that we have godly convictions. We need convictions of loyalty to God—

convictions to love, to edify, and to build people up. Negative talk and discrediting people behind their backs reveals great ignorance of the Word of God.

Convictions that are ordered, that are categorized and cataloged for the Spirit to recall and reinforce—these convictions are what Christians need to live by. It is beautiful to possess convictions that spring from a Finished Work premise. That premise forms the basis of divine mobilization and spiritual motivation. With this categorical understanding, a believer can practically apply the reality of His union with Christ in resurrection life.

Just as a lamp is designed to release invisible electric power, our bodies are designed to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ. Our mind is designed to reveal divine thinking. We were created with a capacity for a proper conscience, positive volition, right mental attitude, and godly emotional response. The only reason I am on earth is to reveal the very essence and nature of God.

When I enter into depression, oppression, negative volition, or negative capacity toward the details of life, I am defiling my soul by interacting with Adam in the human experience of the Fall. I must choose a consciousness of grace

and a mental attitude of the Word of God. Then my emotions will respond to God's presence in me. This is what it means to live by convictions.

Hearts at Home

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10).

The light of God's Word enters into my human spirit and then it falls into categories. Isaiah 28 speaks of learning truth line upon line, here a little and there a little. When I concentrate upon the Word, either by hearing a message, by reading the Bible, or by reading an edifying book about the Scriptures, some of the information goes "here" in my memory center and some of it goes "there." Our minds are very adept at dividing and sorting the bits of information we receive. This categorization is an amazing function. A small thing—a sound, a smell, a sight, a taste—can prompt us to reconnect with information stored in our memories. Some of this information may have been stored there long, long ago.

When light is reigning in our hearts and our memory centers, then we are living in mercy and truth, and righteousness and peace. We are

living in the design of God's initiation. He is the communicator of His own life. He manifests His own means. He reveals through us His own work of sanctification. Yes, we are human and we do fail. But when that happens, we rebound, and we refuse to live in any form of condemnation.

Men and women who live in godly convictions know how to live purely, through the power of God's love. There is mercy for every day and a practical holiness that presents itself because of the unity of spirit, soul, and body that comes with our communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit. We now manifest one heart, one mind, and one spirit of love.

In the home, this brings right order to the sexual relationship between husband and wife. The promotion of God's power produces great consequences; it produces godly families with godly children. These are families for God, families who participate in the great family of eternity—the Body of Christ. These are families who really enjoy the sacredness of communion based upon the work of Jesus that was finished at the Cross.

Chapter Three

CONVERSIONS AND CAPACITY

"Rejoice evermore.

"Pray without ceasing.

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

"Quench not the Spirit.

"Despise not prophesyings.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

"Abstain from all appearance of evil.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-24).

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed

adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).

We need convictions, not preferences or opinions. If I attempt to imitate Christ without living in Christ's life, then I will manifest knowledge without the resurrection power of the indwelling Trinity. I will try to be a Christian without knowing Christ. I will try to be spiritual apart from the Holy Spirit. I will try to be godly without God's resources.

Our minds can become so easily defiled. This is what Jesus is speaking about in Matthew 5:28. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he, according to Proverbs 23:7. For this very reason, we need convictions that are based on categorical reception of Bible preaching and teaching.

If a husband for a moment considers committing an act of adultery, he has sinned. It is a vain imagination, and he needs to cast it down. How does he do it? Vain imaginations are cast down by allowing the Holy Spirit to bring to our recollection the truth we have heard on the subject. That man can simply confess his failure to God and allow the Spirit and the Word to cleanse his thought process.

Brain activity is constant. Most people are so dangerously unaware of all of the things that are

going into our heads. The barrage of information and the images that the world throws at people today bombard the conscious and subconscious parts of our minds. Without the leading the Holy Spirit, it is so easy for us to fall into patterns of wrong thinking. This is what is happening when we see someone express anger in an almost violent outburst. The mind in such a case is not thinking in redemption, therefore no redemptive words come out. There is only frustration.

Proverbs 10:20 speaks of believers as having a silver tongue. Silver speaks of redemption, and everything we say should have a redeeming quality. We should speak from a category of truth, a collection of scriptures that the Spirit has gathered in our minds for our edification and for the edification of those we encounter every day. Our hearts should be filled with a love that thinks no evil. There should be grace that prevails in us through the invisible imagination of our communion with Christ.

Accountability to the Cross

I have a conviction to think purely, to love purely, to forgive, and to extend mercy. My convictions have taught me to hate sin and to love

righteousness. My conviction is to finish my course and to fight the good fight of faith.

I have a conviction to get into the Word of God daily. I have convictions to pray, to win souls, to be faithful to church. I have a conviction to edify with my tongue and to communicate the entire counsel of God.

Many people today want to have a Christianity that requires no personal accountability and no obligation to live at the Cross. For this reason, they easily become condemned. They are relying upon their own power instead of resting in the love of God. Convictions bring conversions. That is, there is an outgrowth of what is happening in my inner man. God is doing something in the Holy of Holies of my heart. This is the place only He occupies. As I fellowship there with Him, a transformation is manifested and revealed through me.

At the Cross, I can recognize my positional death with Christ every day. In personal identification, I reckon myself dead indeed unto sin. I understand that this is absolutely true, and I now see my burial with Christ, my resurrection with Him, and my ascended life that is wrapped in His ascended life. It is so rich and so free. I live in the privileges, provisions, and posses-

sions that Truth gives me to live by. I walk a straight way, led by the realities and recollections that are formed in categorical convictions.

Let me finish by quoting Matthew 7:13-14:

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

CONCLUSION

It is so crucial that our spirits remain alive in Christ. In light, we gain more light. The light that I receive from God today will make me available to receive more light. This means more precise convictions will be formed in my heart and mind today. There will be more divine thoughts based upon divine integrity today. My life will manifest itself in divine righteousness, which springs from divine resources that are rooted in the immutability of the Finished Work. I express things that redeem and restore people through the resurrection life that imparts God's Word and God's Spirit.

There are many areas of my life where I have left myself no options. I have made decisions and established categorical convictions. Any challenge that comes my way in those areas I meet with Truth. I have made right decisions so many times in these areas that I do not sense any temptation.

Temptations are real trouble for people who are without total, categorical convictions. General convictions can only get a person so far. The devil is extremely and supernaturally deceptive. He has a way of finding the soft spots in our lives. He tempts us and tempts us, and he watches our responses. Satan becomes very skillful at pushing our buttons if we let him.

It is a beautiful place, however, to be a believer whose convictions are so firm and so sure that Satan's attacks do not bend us. We stand and face the winds of the world. We have a power and a position in Christ that does not move. We understand this conviction: our enemy has been defeated and his plans will be destroyed.

This is not a legalistic message, This is very realistic. It is God's declaration of truth to protect us, provide for us, and keep us from the consequences of sin. Categorical convictions are the things that keep us healthy and prospering in the riches of God's grace.

Categorical Meditation:

The One Answer to

All Problems

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INTRODUCTION

It would be safe to say that the one thing people seek for today is happiness. We live in a world that is filled with violence. According to Romans 6:6 and 7:24, we live in bodies of sin and death that have established lust patterns (see Ephesians 2:3; 4:22). How is it possible to find happiness?

With everything that is going on in the world, there is something that can make us happy. God reveals it to us in Psalm 1:2, "[The blessed man's] delight is in the law of the LORD; and *in his law doth he meditate day and night*."

One of the meanings of the word "law" is categorical doctrine—how to think with God in preciseness. As we hide categorical doctrine in our hearts, the Holy Spirit will be faithful to give us counsel for every single problem we have. The key, though, is to meditate on His Word day and night. This is the one answer for every problem we face.

Meditation is the secret behind every effective pulpit. It's the key to every man's anointing, the key to every ministry's success. Meditation will keep us from stress, fear, worry, lust, insecurity, and a poor self-image.

Let the Holy Spirit minister the life of this message to your soul. In faith, respond to the call to godly categorical meditation, which will produce the highest degree of happiness, regardless of what happens in the world around you.

Chapter One

TRUE HAPPINESS

"*Blessed* is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1:1-6).

The word "blessed," in Psalm 1:1, is equivalent to a plural noun form in the Hebrew, meaning "happinesses."

A couple owned a store. They worked hard—

hadn't taken a vacation for sixteen years. Then one night, the store was robbed and the husband was killed. In tears his wife said to the reporters on the scene, "All we ever wanted was to finally have a vacation and find some happiness. That's all!"

A young girl visited our church recently and accepted Jesus as her Savior. She convinced her boyfriend to come with her, but a few days after his second visit, he fell back into his addiction and overdosed. Only thirty years old, he sought happiness through drugs—*and he died*.

Many professional athletes lead shipwrecked lives behind the scenes. They seek happiness through their wealth, popularity, and relationships, but these things can never bring lasting happiness.

How can people in bodies of sin and death truly find the inner peace and happiness they seek?

Several years ago, a precious lady in our church was diagnosed with cancer in her jaw. Surgeons successfully removed the tumor; but since then, she has undergone numerous reconstructive operations. Not long ago, doctors found a spot on her lung and scheduled a biopsy; but during preoperative tests, X rays re-

vealed that the spot was gone. *God had healed her!* This woman is doing very well. She is very relaxed, always edifies others, and is extremely happy. She knows the secret of true happiness, having learned how to meditate according to Psalm 1: on God's Word with the Holy Spirit.

The Benefits of Meditation

In an international scientific study conducted over the last twenty-four years, researchers from several major universities and institutions verified that "Meditation brings tremendous benefits to the mind, body, behavior, and environment. The research demonstrates that meditation is the most effective method for dissolving stress and promoting health, mental potential, personal growth, and social harmony. The physiological effects of meditation include reduced blood pressure, lower pulse rate, and a decreased metabolic rate.

"High levels of stress cause many problems, including ill health, family breakdown, disciplinary problems in juveniles, substance abuse, and a life span of sixteen years less than the general population. These high levels of stress have led to criminal violence and dysfunctional behavior. Some prison systems throughout the

world have integrated meditation into their rehabilitation programs. The documented evidence proves a decrease in prison rule infractions, a decrease in violence, a reduction in negative character traits, decreased anxiety, increased participation in positive activities, improved health, and development of personality."

Though they may not have been motivated by God, the people in this study discovered the value of meditation.

It is important to note at this point that over the centuries, Satan has offered a counterfeit of true, godly meditation through many religious practices. But Psalm 119:11, 15 says, "*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee….I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.*" So much activity in the New Age movement applies *principles* of the knowledge of God, but denies the authority of His Word. Although people may reap the benefits of applying godly principles, the effects are only temporal. Their end is destruction unless they receive the free gift of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ's atonement.

Delight in Doctrine

Psalm 1:1 says, "Happinesses" belong to the

man who *walks not* in the counsel of the ungodly, who *stands not* in the way of sinners, who *sits not* in the seat of the scornful. Notice the digression in this verse.

First, when the wrong counsel comes into a believer's heart, it is because he is not filled with the Word of God. Then, because he is not right with God, he stands in the way of others who could be saved and go to heaven. He stands in their way because of spiritual lethargy. Finally, he sits in the seat of the scornful, mocking God's provision and the Word of God for his life.

God is saying that if you *don't* do these things, then you'll be happy.

Psalm 1:2-3, however, reveals what the blessed man *does* do: "His *delight* is in the law of the LORD; and in God's law does he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. He shall bring forth his fruit in his season; his leaf shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Through meditation on the Word of God, we find true happiness.

In verse 2, "delight," *chephetes* in the Hebrew, means that the blessed man's will is bent toward God's will and provision. This man's delight is in doctrine. Do we really *delight* in doctrine? We know we're supposed to live by it and judge by

it. We know we will give account for every Word of God at the Bema Seat, but how many can truly say, “I’m hungry and thirsty after the mind of God, after the Word of God, after the law of God, after the character of God, after the grace of God”? How many can confess, “I delight in every opportunity I have to hear the Word of God”?

Chapter Two

THE FRUIT OF MEDITATION

The devil has counterfeited biblical meditation through religious and spiritual practices that are not influenced by the holy Word of God. *Siyach*, the Hebrew word for meditation, refers to silent reflection, focusing on a particular subject with no inner or outer distractions. As believers, we "turn over" (reflect or ponder) categories in the Word of God one at a time until they produce personal convictions. We turn them over until we have communion with God in fellowship. We turn them over until the theme of the subject breaks our hearts and we are quickened by the words of meditation. Then, as prepared vessels with prepared hearts, we have a prepared message for communication.

A pastor must do more than study for a message before he preaches. People sometimes ask me how it is possible that I know as many verses as I do. I tell them it doesn't come from just

studying and memorization, but through meditation.

The Word of God says in Psalm 143:5*c*, "I *muse* on the work of thy hands." That means to ponder, reflect, concentrate, focus, reiterate, rehearse, and respond. "While I was musing the fire burned" (Psalm 39:3). "I will meditate in thy precepts" (Psalm 119:15). "Precepts" means categories of doctrine. "I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches" (Psalm 63:6).

My life is filled with meditation. As I study, I meditate on the Word of God until it turns into musing. Then as a prepared vessel, I have a prepared heart that is able to communicate God's message to my congregation.

Prosperity

The Word of God says in Joshua 1:8, "This book of the law [(doctrine)] shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: *for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*"

We have found a formula for prosperity, success, and happiness in the soul through God's

provision of meditation. The research cited at the beginning of this message concluded that meditation is the answer to many of life's problems. And though the subjects of this study may have a concept of meditation that differs from that of a born-again believer, they understand the basic principles and agree that meditation does away with stress, pressures, bad health, and poor mental capacity.

When you have worked hard and you're tired, enter into silent reflection on a theme from God's Word and focus on the Person of Christ in meditation.

When Psalm 1:3 says the believer who meditates day and night will be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water," it is speaking of the river of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). Psalm 1:3 continues, "…he shall bring forth his fruit in his season..." meaning there are different kinds of fruit for different seasons in our lives.

"…His leaf also shall not wither…." On earth, God created evergreen trees that produce and maintain their "leaves" throughout the cold dark winter. And in heaven, God has trees that are *forevergreen*! Yet, there is a difference.

"…Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." In heaven, the ever green Tree of Life will produce

fruit continually (Revelation 22:2). God is saying you will bring forth fruit, and the freshness of mercy shall never wither. He will make your way prosperous, and you *will* have good success!

Our Example

Jesus was always meditating. Often, He went alone to meditate. In Mark 3:7, we find Him by the sea with His disciples, meditating. Often, the Lord would seek solitude up on a mountain where He could spend time with His Father, praying and meditating (Matthew 14:23; 15:29).

The writer of Psalm 119 specifically mentions meditation seven times: "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (verse 97). (See also verses 15, 23, 48, 78, 99, and 148.)

When Psalm 107:20 says that God sends the Word of God to heal us, it refers to meditation. Healing comes through meditation. Deliverance comes through meditation. Happiness comes from meditation. And meditation also produces a positive volition.

Chapter Three

BREAKING THE MATURITY BARRIER

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 teaches how believers can be the happiest people in the world. It is God's divine blueprint for happiness. The beatitudes are not just a collection of nice sayings. Every verse is a crucial part of a relevant sequence from the mind of God, bringing the believer to a point of maturity.

The first thing Jesus said in this sermon is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

"Poor in spirit" means that God is so close that you become broken because of personal sin. Brokenness produces humility, and the measure of my humility will equal the measure of my deliverance. That humility will become the measure of my capacity to receive the Word of God as well as the measure of my spiritual blessings. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for *theirs* is the

kingdom of God."

Then Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

To "mourn" means that you are so close to God, the least little thing you do wrong makes you broken. A little thing that wouldn't even be sin to some people makes you broken, not because you're condemned, but because you want so much to be like Jesus. A person who mourns will have a godly sorrow that works repentance—not as the sorrow of the world which works death, but a godly sorrow that works a change of mind, a change of attitude, a change of confession, and a change of behavior. When this happens, the Holy Spirit is able to bring comfort so you don't have to feel depressed or rejected.

An Appetite for Divine Realities

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

Notice the sequence so far: First, you're broken. Then, you mourn because of personal sin. And that makes you *meek*. The meek Christian says, "Oh God, if You can forgive *me*, then I want to have Your Spirit toward others that are like me. I don't want to run them down or con-

demn them. I want to understand them."

Brokenness and mourning make us meek, which makes us completely open for God to love us, to love others through us, and to have His plan established in us.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

You have been convicted of sin. You have mourned and hated the things you have done, and the Holy Spirit comforted you. Then, as the Spirit filled you, He produced meekness. Now you have a hunger and thirst for righteousness. You want to seek after it (Matthew 6:33). When righteousness is imparted through the Word, it makes you happy and you realize you can't live without it.

Matthew 5:6*b* says that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. God never leaves us hanging. If we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we *will* be filled." The Lord promised in Jeremiah 29:13-14*a*, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD."

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

Now you have a river of mercy flowing through you when you hear about people you don't even know and all the trials they go through. You think of that thirty-year-old man who killed himself with an overdose of drugs and you cry out, "Oh, what a waste!" And then you think of the couple who worked so hard in their store for sixteen years only to have it end in a tragic death. Because God is filling you, considering the sorrow and suffering in the world makes you merciful toward others in their situations.

"Happinesses" belong to those who are merciful. Why? Because a merciful person never holds a grudge, never brings up the past, and never mentions what people have done to him. He doesn't live with a negative attitude and he doesn't have a negative confession. He's broken. He's sorry for his sin. God comforts him and brings in a spirit of meekness so he can inherit the good things of the earth. By God's grace, he becomes hungry and thirsty for righteousness, and God keeps filling him, and that makes him

merciful.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

When you get into the Scriptures and you meditate and muse on the Word of God, suddenly, your heart begins to be purified. You have already been cleansed and purged positionally by the blood of Jesus Christ, but now you experience a purity in your life you've never had before.

Being pure in heart means that when you think of hell, you weep for the people going there. When you think of heaven, you want everyone to go to heaven. When you think of marriage, you want godly couples to have the best marriages in this hell-bound world that we live in. You want families to be sacred and have eternal values, and you want your church to be the best it possibly can be.

A man told me the story of his life. For twenty-six years he was addicted to drugs, but God has supernaturally healed him. For months he hasn't had a single relapse or even a desire to go back on drugs. What's happening to him? He's in the Matthew 5 process.

The Pinnacle of Maturity

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall

be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

When you've gone from being broken because of sin to being pure in heart, all you want to do is be a peacemaker. You know God has forgiven and forgotten your sins. He has cleansed and purged you. Now you don't want to have bad feelings toward anyone. You just want to be a peacemaker.

Finally, Jesus closes this part of His Sermon on the Mount with the words, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men,

that they may see your good works [(the fruit of your Father's works)], and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:10-16).

The believer who can rejoice and be happy when he is persecuted and spoken evil of has broken the greater grace maturity barrier. Nothing moves him. He doesn't count his life dear unto himself. In the purest form, he has become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Through categorical meditation on the Word of God, he has manifold wisdom for every problem he could ever face. He is truly the "blessed man."

CONCLUSION

The Word of God…

Think of it carefully, Study it prayerfully,
Deep in thine heart Let its oracles dwell.
Ponder its mysteries, Slight not its histories.
None can e'er love it Too fondly or well.

—Author unknown

Meditate on the Word. Do not stand in the way of sinners. Do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. Do not sit in the seat of the scornful, but delight as you meditate in the Word of God day and night.

I don't know how many times I get up in the middle of the night from a sound sleep and write Scriptures down because my subconscious mind is meditating while my conscious mind sleeps.

Meditation is the way to prosperity. It is the

only way to be blessed by God, the only way to be happy. We may start out poor in spirit, mourning because of our sin; but soon, we become meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful, and pure in heart. At last we become peacemakers. And, yes, we are persecuted because we're making an impact on Satan's world system. Still, we rejoice in persecution because our reward in heaven is great.

May we have a happiness that doesn't come from worldly pleasures or from soulish stimulation of a false peace produced by the devil's counterfeit. Rather, we desire happiness that is derived from the power and love of God in communion with our souls through meditation. May God help us learn how to muse in the Holy Spirit until the Word becomes conviction, communion, fellowship, and brokenness, making us prepared vessels with a prepared message for prepared hearts.

Champions of God's Grace

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Have you ever considered just how much you are worth to God? In His eyes, one sinner is worth more than all the world. He so loved the world, God sent His only Son to Calvary to pay the sin debt for the world. Considering all that has been done, it is such a shame to see so many people trying so hard to overcome things by their own devices.

The greatest battle ever fought was on Calvary. God won the victory. And now, as we walk in that victory, He declares us champions. Satan's plan was defeated, and ultimately he will be exposed for the loser that he is. But by

Jesus Christ who lives in us, we can do anything. We are champions of grace—more than conquerors, with a victory that can never be taken from us.

Chapter One

GOD NEEDS YOU

Any good cook works very hard to prepare a meal for dinner guests. How do you think that cook feels after working diligently only to find that the guests do not show up? A diligent pastor-teacher feels the same way when members of his congregation miss church services. I thank God for every member in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27). I thank Him for all those who do not forsake the assembling of themselves together, but do it much more as they see the day of Jesus Christ approaching (Hebrews 10:25).

It has been said, "If you go to church Sunday morning, you love your church, and if you go to church Sunday night, you love your pastor. But if you also go to church on Wednesday night, you love God." That statement is true. God writes in His book of remembrance every time a believer attends church, and He knows every time a believer does not come.

I weep over the people in my church who seldom come to services. For them, it's hit or miss. I am not rebuking them; I am pleading with them because as a pastor I need their portions. Just as a construction engineering crew needs workers to get a job done, in the same way, I need every member in particular to be in church.

I thank God for every co-laborer wherever they are. The businessman needs his employees. Parents need the love and contributions of their children to help keep up the home. Teachers need their students to study and be faithful in attendance. And I need you.

Fill Up the House of God

I need folks to say to their neighbors, "We're having the greatest services in the history of our ministry. We're in the midst of revival. Would you come to church with me just once?" I need people to bring guests on Wednesday nights. I can promise that I will study and prepare diligently. Won't you please pray and bring a person with you?

By God's grace, we are having one of the greatest revivals I've ever seen. So when some of my dearest friends have a hit or miss attitude

toward church, I weep for them. I'm not upset. I am not even rebuking them, I just don't understand it. The days are too precious and too few to ignore our call to the local church.

Jesus Christ is in the midst of every church service, taking note of who is there and who isn't. "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16).

I am not talking about those who are ill, who are working, or who are on vacation—everyone needs vacations. I'm talking about people who could be at church, but do not show up. They will be made accountable at the Bema Seat of Jesus Christ for what was preached at that service. Some people say, "He expects me to come to *all* the services?" But this has nothing to do with me; this is what the Bible says. All I am doing is quoting from the Bible.

I am in the pulpit when I'm sick. I am in the pulpit when I'm brokenhearted. I am in the pulpit when I feel pain that I can't even tell my wife about. I don't know how many days I have to serve God on this earth. I thank Him that I'm

healthy now and by God's grace, I will live a lot longer. All I am saying is that I need you. There are many in my church who I believe have kept me alive with their prayers. They have loved me and prayed for me. They were faithful. In heaven, they will find out that their pastor did not die from a broken heart because their prayers kept me—I am sure of it. They kept me going because they needed me, they loved me, and they co-labored with me in serving God.

Please don't be hit or miss Christians. If I have said anything offensive, I repent. My prayer is that these instructions—not rebukes—will be helpful to all of us for all eternity.

Chapter Two

'WHEN I FALL, I SHALL ARISE'

"Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because *I have sinned against him*, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: *he will bring me forth to the light*, *and I shall behold his righteousness*.

"Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets" (Micah 7:7-10).

"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. *They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him*, being abominable, and disobedient,

and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:15-16).

There is never a question in the Word of God about who is sinful and who is not. *All* have sinned (Romans 3:23). The question not so easily discerned by human perception is this: "Who is godly and who is not?" Jude 4 says that "certain men crept in unawares,…ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." Galatians 5:4 says that Christ is of no effect to those who are justified by the law: they have fallen from grace.

With that in mind, I want you to know that we believe in old-fashioned, practical holiness. Men ought always do what is right in the eyes of God. Nevertheless, we fail as much as anyone else does, but we are broken before God. We repent and rebound and go right after God immediately because we hate sin, and we love His righteousness.

As we read in the opening verses, Micah has fallen. He was living in sin and his enemies were judging him and mocking him publicly, calling him a hypocrite. But he was not a hypocrite. Micah was a man of God.

"For the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psalm 12:1*b*). Everyone fails, but there is a tremendous difference between failing and never getting up from failure. A person may have just an isolated failure in his daily walk with God, or it may possibly end up being an entire season of failure. In either case, this person is not a failure, though perhaps he has failed many times. But he needs to rebound every time he sins by confessing it, then getting up and moving on.

Be careful never to judge another person who fails. The Bible says, "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law" (James 2:11). Also, Romans 2:1 says, "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another; thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the *same things*."

Are you getting this? If you commit one sin and I commit another sin, we've both offended the law. I can't judge you and you can't judge me. Though you may not be committing the

same sin as someone else, you are doing the *same thing*—offending the law.

The Principle of Restoration

We can go alone and try to restore someone if we know for certain of his sin. We must go with an attitude of meekness, always considering ourselves lest we also fail. We are to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and sometimes the burdens they carry are because they have fallen.

Grace is not given so we can continue in sin, but grace is given because we do sin. *Jesus Christ was with Micah while Micah was sinning*. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," God says in Hebrews 13:5*b*. If you receive that truth alone from this booklet, you will love God, worship God, and thank Him. You will know that Jesus Christ stays with you all the time, even in the midst of your failure. Certainly the Spirit is grieved, but He never leaves you. Beyond your failure, He is waiting to be gracious to you. He is a God of doctrine. Blessed are those who wait upon Him (see Isaiah 30:18).

God is just waiting for us to confess what is written in Psalm 22:4, "Our fathers trusted in [God], they trusted, and thou didst deliver

them." This is *the* work of God: to believe on Him (see John 6:28-29).

"I am so weak, I'm so frail," you say. Still, "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25). Even at your weakest, you are still stronger than any non-Christian because of Who is in you (Colossians 1:27).

Chapter Three

HIS GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

According to 2 Corinthians 12:9, God's grace is made sufficient in our weakness. It doesn't refer to something else besides grace. God says, "My grace alone is sufficient for your weakness." I'm so glad He didn't say, "My *holiness* is sufficient," although His holiness is precious and absolutely necessary. But I am so glad God said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, and My strength is made perfect in your weakness."

When we understand this, we will glorify God. We will thank Him and praise His holy name. We will praise Him, for His grace is sufficient for us and His strength is made perfect in our weakness. I am so happy about that right now. I'm so happy to know that Jesus Christ never leaves me.

No Matter Where You Make Your Bed

Psalm 139:8 says that if I ascend up to

heaven, God is there. Even if I make my bed in hell, He is there. Our enemies don't think so, but God is there with us. Micah's enemies didn't think God was with him, but He was. God forbid that we make our bed in hell, but if we do, God is there. Every one of us has made his bed in hell at one time or another. Some very "*good*" people make their bed in hell through self-righteousness, which is the worst sin in the Bible. Isaiah 64:6 says our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in God's sight.

When we make our bed in hell, the God of all grace is there, waiting to bless us, waiting for us to say, "I did it, I acknowledge my sin, and I rebound."

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25). "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: *return unto me; for I have redeemed thee*" (Isaiah 44:22).

Think of it. When we confess our sin, it is *gone*. Just as a storm cloud dissolves into a mist when it is penetrated by the intensity of sunlight burning through, so our sins lose their power and are gathered back to God's sea of forgetfulness. *Praise Him for that*. God Almighty says,

"The Son took all of your sins on His precious body, and I remember your sins no more." His desire is that we would really believe it. Jeremiah 50:20 says that when the accusers tried to search for the sins of Judah and the iniquities of Israel, they could not be found.

Glorify God for His grace. He means what He says from the bottom of His heart. He cannot find *any* of the sins committed by Judah and Israel. Consider what those nations did: They worshipped idols—trees and everything under the sun. Like an adulterous woman, they wandered far from the Beloved. But God can't find their sins and iniquities because each one was placed upon Jesus Christ the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world. He was judged for every sin—past, present, and future. And as the sins of the world were put on His body at Calvary, God the Father could not look upon the Son. The precious Saviour was separated from His Father for three hours because of His identification with us.

You Can't Run from God

"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand

shall hold me" (Psalm 139:9-10). Even if I run because of my iniquity, and I run because of my sin, God meets me where I am and His hand leads me. His right hand holds me. "For thou hast possessed my [emotions]: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13), because in His foreknowledge He knew I would be saved.

Micah said, "Yes, I'm down. Yes, I failed." I may be down, just as Micah was. I may fail. But my failure doesn't mean I have to see myself as inferior. Failure is an opportunity to respond to grace—to isolate my sin, rebound, and go on.

When the prodigal son failed, he eventually came to the end of himself (Luke 15:17). When he came home, his father ran to meet him, kissed his neck, and never mentioned his son's sin one time. The son said, "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15:21). Verse 19 reveals that the prodigal had planned to say to his father, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." But his father would not let him finish his confession. Instead he just kept kissing his son's neck. Why? Because failure wasn't the issue. Coming home was the issue. The lesson wasn't, "You will pay for your sins." The lesson

the son learned was this: The Father is always waiting to give grace.

Why wouldn't the father let his son get through his confession? Because the son had *already* rebounded in his heart. In essence, the father said, "It doesn't matter to me what you have done. You're back home, and that's what matters." Then he told the servants, "Bring him a robe. Give him the ring. Bring him new shoes. Kill the fatted calf. We're going to have a welcome home party for my son. He was lost, but now he's found. He was blind, but now he sees."

Chapter Four

FOLLOWED BY GOODNESS AND MERCY

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Psalm 23:6).

What is goodness? It is God's mercy that endures forever. When sin abounds, God's grace does much more abound. Goodness is a love that goes beyond knowledge; it is forgiveness that forgets. Goodness is the power of God that will never give up on you until He perfects you (see Philippians 1:6; Psalm 138:8).

I want to keep getting to know this kind of God. He takes the worst cases in the world and makes those people champions of grace and faith. God doesn't know Abraham after any of the sins he committed. God only knows him as a hero of faith and the father of children of faith. Jacob cheated and lied and stole his brother's birthright. But God only knew Jacob as a Spirit-

filled man because he kept rebounding and getting up again. Of David, God says, "I only know that you followed me. You failed, but you kept following me. In My eyes, you never turned aside. You fulfilled My perfect will" (see 1 Kings 15:5; Acts 13:22).

That's how God sees each of us. He saw the blood on the doorposts in the land of Goshen and passed over the children of Israel (Exodus 12). That's the way it has always been with God; when He sees the blood, He passes over the sins and iniquities of His people. The blood of Christ is upon us. When we fail and confess our sins, He uses that same blood to cleanse us from all evil infections and works, through His eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14).

Held in His Right Hand

Moses, the meekest man on the face of the earth, murdered a man one day; yet, he became a champion of grace and a champion of forgiveness.

I am broken when I consider that God's goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life, whether I ascend into heaven with my thoughts, or whether I make my bed in hell. When I try to escape and run to the uttermost

parts of the earth, surely goodness and mercy follow me. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. David appreciated these words in Psalms 23 and 139, and so do I.

How will we escape if we neglect so great a deliverance? (See Hebrews 2:3.) Psalm 139:10 says that "[God's] right hand shall hold me." Three times in the book of Hebrews, Jesus is described as being seated at God's right hand, having finished the work on Calvary. Forty days after He died for our sins and was resurrected from the grave, Jesus, as the glorified man, ascended to heaven and was seated at God's right hand. The Father accepted the Son's final payment for our sins. Therefore, the right hand speaks of God's approval of us forever—*even* when we make our bed in hell, thank God.

Though God must sometimes lovingly chastise His children, His right hand holds us up so that He can bring us back to the peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). This is eternal life, that we know Him, the only true God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

The reality of Calvary overwhelms me. Psalm 26:12 says we stand at an "even place." You are there, just as much as I am. The carnal believer is there as well as the spiritual believer. We stand in an even place to receive forgiveness as a part of our inheritance (Acts 26:18). We stand there to receive our provision from God for whatever our need is.

If you are backslidden, these words were not meant as a rebuke. Please, won't you make this a time for rebound and renouncing your old ways? Establish a brand-new commitment to Jesus Christ even now as you are reading this booklet.

God desires to heal you from sin and sickness because of His great compassion. Set the Lord before your face. Enjoy the pure presence of God and receive His healing.

Be quickened and advance into Satan's territory and begin to recover what he has stolen

from you. Advance in God's kingdom as a champion of His grace. By faith, put your foot down and claim some promises for your life.

Precious Father, we come to You in love. You see into every heart. I pray that You see Your people loving You right now. We don't come in hypocrisy, we come in love. We don't pretend to be anything but saints saved by Your grace. Give us a champion's mentality for our spiritual, physical, financial, and domestic needs. We are servants of your special favor. Give us your abundant blessing. By the grace of Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit, we say, "Amen."

Children of Promise

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

It is the soldier, not the newspaper, who allows Americans to have freedom of the press. It is the soldier, not the reporter, who gives Americans freedom of speech. It is the soldier, not the campus organization, who gives Americans freedom of demonstration. It is the soldier—the one who salutes the flag, marches under the flag, and sees the flags lowered because of the death of those who died defending their country. The soldier preserves even the rights of those who choose to defile all that the flag represents.

And today, in nearly every nation around the world, there are spiritual soldiers: men and women who march under the banner of the love of Jesus Christ. His army is made up of those who have believed on Jesus Christ and have become the children of God's promises. We who have believed and received His great grace are now hid with Christ in God and have become heirs of every one of His promises.

Sadly, many Christians do not view themselves in this light. They suffer from identity crises, measuring themselves according to a standard of legalism, or live in bondage to sin. This booklet is written to reveal the truth about who we are in Christ. We have been born of God's promise, not the Law. We are a majestic force who have strength, peace, and joy from the Spirit of God.

Chapter One

TWO NATURES AT WAR

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17).

According to Galatians 5:17, there is a struggle for dominance between the Holy Spirit (through the spiritual man) and the natural man. This struggle of natures is a problem that has plagued believers since sin came into the world.

Isaac and Rebekah named one of their sons "Jacob," which meant "double-minded" or "prone to cheating"—and he was! Jacob manipulated his brother Esau out of his birthright (Genesis 25:29-34) and tricked his father into giving him the blessing that belonged to the oldest son (Genesis 27:1-29). In Genesis 32:28, however, God gave Jacob a new name: Israel, meaning "prince with God and power with men."

We see in the Bible that throughout his life,

Jacob went back and forth between two natures. In Genesis 45:26, he is referred to as Jacob, because he refused to believe his sons when they told him that Joseph was alive. For years, Jacob was depressed, convinced that his son had been killed. Then, in Genesis 45:27-28, after he saw the wagons of food and provisions sent to them by Joseph, Jacob believed that his son was alive. When he believed, he was again called "Israel."

As Jacob's death drew near, his sons gathered around to receive their blessings. Finally, in Genesis 50:2, after he died, he was called Israel —prince with God, power with men.

The Mountain of Legalism

"For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman.

"But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

"Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

"For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in

bondage with her children" (Galatians 4:22-25).

When Moses went up to speak to God, Mount Sinai was a place where not even a beast was allowed to set foot (Exodus 19). Not a single thing could live on that mountain. It represented the holiness of God and that to be holy, men would have to keep the law perfectly. No one could do it. When Moses came back down from the mountain with God's commandments, the Israelites said that they would keep all of them (Exodus 19:8; 24:3). As history has proved, they were never able to do so.

From human viewpoint, Mount Sinai stands for religion: man's efforts to serve God. The greatest weapon Satan has is religion. Any religion that does not believe in the saving power of the name of Jesus Christ is not Christian (Acts 4:12). No one can be saved by simply practicing a religion. Some think that believing in God is enough to get a person into heaven. That is far from the truth. Only one name was given by which men might be saved. There is only one mediator between God and men—it is Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift of grace by faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:7-10) and not of works (Romans 4:3; 11:6).

"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah" (Psalm 60:4).

"We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions" (Psalm 20:5).

Many are waving the American flag these days; it is the banner of our country. The flag brings to mind the character of our nation; and by displaying it we reveal our oneness with what it stands for. According to the Scriptures, Christians have a banner too. It is the Cross, where Jesus Christ died because of His love for mankind. Spiritually, at salvation, every believer dies with Jesus, is buried with Him, and is also resurrected with Christ, who came out of the grave. Every believer also ascends with Christ, who is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

The Christians' banner is a display of categorical truth around the Person of Christ. God has given that banner to all those who fear Him, and it is displayed by those who are filled with categories of truth.

But notice that Psalm 20:5 refers to "banners" in the plural, speaking of the many sides

of the nature and character of God and His Finished Work for us. According to this Psalm, we set up our banners in the name of God. His name reveals His nature. The nature of God is merciful, compassionate, longsuffering, forgiving, and full of truth (Exodus 34:6).

We rejoice in our deliverance, which comes because of who He is, which is seen in His characteristics. These are the banners we set up for all people to see. They are the standards that bring victory, grand expressions that reveal that we are more than conquerors. God displays these banners; they are Finished Work revelations of Jesus Christ for believers.

**Be sure to read* What Happened When You Received Christ?*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Two

BEAUTIFUL AND MAJESTIC ARE GOD'S CHILDREN

"Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee" (Song of Solomon 1:4).

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:4).

"Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners" (Song of Solomon 6:4).

The bride was brought into the inner chamber. Over her in the banqueting house was the banner of love, which refers to Calvary, the banner over every Christian.

"Thou art beautiful as Tirzah" is a wonderful statement. "Tirzah" means God's greatest delight. When we understand that we are seated

above, hid with Christ in God, we realize that we are beautiful within (Psalm 45:13) and that there is no spot in us (Song of Solomon 4:7). We are especially beautiful because we have Christ's life. Jesus said it Himself: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you" (John 15:9).

Manifesting Glory and Majesty

"Comely as Jerusalem" is another great phrase. Jerusalem is the place that was and will again be used to manifest the glory of God. It is where Jesus Christ will reign one thousand years in peace. When we manifest the glory and peace of God, we are "comely as Jerusalem."

The next phrase used to describe believers is "terrible as an army with banners." The word "terrible" speaks of majesty. We are as majestic as an army going out to war.

"O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God" (Psalm 68:35).

We are God's people, seated together with Christ as ones hidden inside the veil of the Finished Work. Even in this life, we are powerful and majestic. We receive power and strength from God because of our position in Christ,

which is above everything else. Because of *the* Truth, we have the banner of victory.

Therefore, we are made free from a life of sin and its consequences (see Romans 6:18-20). We are free from the Law (Romans 8:2). When love abounds in our hearts, we have no fear (1 John 4:18). We have no guilt and no condemnation (Romans 8:1). We are free from oppression (Exodus 3:9-10). We are free indeed (John 8:36).

The Majestic Heavenly Armies

"O God, thou art terrible [(or majestic)] out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people" (Psalm 68:35). Beyond words, beyond knowledge, and beyond sight, try to comprehend what it means to be in the Holy Place. We are as majestic as armies that have won the war through Christ. We are individuals who have overcome and are seated in heavenly places with God. We are individuals to whom God does not impute iniquity or sins (Romans 4:7-8). We are those who have been justified by faith because of grace, as expressed in the Word of God (Romans 5:1-2). We have the majesty that belongs to members of a royal family. We are children and heirs of the King of kings.

"Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the LORD'S servant?" (Isaiah 42:19).

This verse reveals that God's people must walk by faith, not by sight. We are to walk as children of the promise, seeing ourselves and each other in Christ. The Father sees us as complete in Him who is the head of all principalities and powers (Colossians 2:10). Jesus Christ sees us as members of His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). Jesus Christ sees us as one spirit, being joined to Him (1 Corinthians 6:17). He sees us as absolutely perfect—without spot or wrinkle—and our beauty overwhelms Him. He says it in Song of Solomon 6:5. "Turn your eyes away from Me! I have a Bride just as beautiful as I am, and her beauty has overcome Me."

The fact is that we are as He is in this world (1 John 4:17), and His love is made perfect in us when we believe in every verse that proclaims who we are in the Finished Work.

Chapter Three

THE STRENGTH OF THOSE WHO REIGN ABOVE

"Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead" (Song of Solomon 6:5).

According to Judges 16, hair represents unusual power and strength such as Samson had. For women, hair speaks of beauty, according to 1 Corinthians 11. The goats from Gilead are animals that climb the steepest peaks and never slip, even in the most dangerous places. Of course, we do slip; but God still sees us as strong and beautiful. The flock that appears in Gilead is a type of believers who are seated above, reigning even in the most precarious places.

Breaking from Bondage

"But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

"For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that

bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

"But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

"Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (Galatians 4:26-31).

Before she bore Isaac, Sarah was barren. Yet God kept His promise to Abraham and at 90 years old, Sarah conceived (Genesis 21:1-3). Today, every born-again believer is a child of promise, just as Isaac was.

Most religious systems today have their origins in bondage, not freedom. But we are children of promise, made free of bondage, and we are citizens of the New Jerusalem, which will one day descend from above. There we will reign over the earth with Christ for one thousand years.

Every Foe is Defeated

Throughout history, God's people have been persecuted. Cain killed Abel because of jealousy. Ishmael, who was born after the flesh, persecuted Isaac, who was born after the Spirit. God will remember all that they do because they know the truth, yet deny it, and go against it.

In Exodus 17:8, Amalek attacked the weakest of the people of Israel as they journeyed through the desert. He killed the old and the feeble who lagged behind, "…and he feared not God" (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Amalek's nature was so troubling, God declared that his remembrance would be blotted out from under heaven.

There will always be people and even nations who will persecute the people of the promise, the people of the truth (see Genesis 21:9). They lust after power, desiring to have more, and war rages outwardly and in their own members (James 4:1-2). What they don't realize is that all who receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior have amazing freedom and power that comes from being hid with Christ in God. Those who attack God's people have already been defeated. They have already been conquered, yet they don't even realize it.

Thanks be to God for the peace, joy, and freedom from fear and oppression that come because we understand the absolute principle of life, which we have in Christ.

CONCLUSION

The Word of God describes in detail the inner chamber and the banqueting house mentioned in Song of Solomon. The banner of love above us is Calvary. Christ sees us as "beautiful as Tirzah"—we are the delight of God's Son. Not only that, we are as "comely as Jerusalem" because we manifest the glory of God.

We have overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, the Word of our testimony, and that we love not our lives unto the death (Revelation 12:11). We have strength and beauty, therefore we walk in places that no one else can walk, because we walk in the Spirit of the living God.

These are the things that God has given us. He pictures each of us as being in Christ, hidden within the veil of the Holy of Holies. We are His children forever—children of His promise—and all of His promises are for us.

Heavenly Father, thank You for this inheritance. In our position as kings and priests before You, keep

us humble yet bold before men, ready to serve and to lead them to the Promised Land through the saving grace of Jesus Christ. In His precious name, Amen.

Choices and Consequences

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

It is so pleasant to be around an optimist and so draining to be around a pessimist. A pessimistic person will usually blame his attitude and situation on his genes, his upbringing, or his circumstances. What his mother or father did to him still governs his life, and negativity is his point of reference. He chooses to stay in his selfish predicament instead of applying the Word of God to think his way out of negative cycles.

Really, it all comes down to choices. We are the product of our decisions. No one in the Bible illustrates this more fully than Solomon. Born a son of King David and gifted with wisdom that the world has not seen or heard since, this king of Israel grew into an old pessimist. Wrong choices left him seeking things outside of the will of God. The consequences were war and the forfeiture of much of his kingdom.

In this booklet, we look at the devastation caused by wrong choices. However, we will also

see how the momentum of right decisions can bring us to understand that everything God does is beautiful and stands forever in our hearts. What's more, we will find that He will take the wasted places of our lives and make them beautiful.

Chapter One

THE PROPERTY OF OUR VOLITION

"I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

"That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

"I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

"And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

"For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Ecclesiastes 1:14-18).

The book of Ecclesiastes expresses the dis-

satisfaction of a life that has strayed from God. At this stage of his life, Solomon, the author, was extremely pessimistic. This was so because of the wrong choices he had made. Pessimism develops because of wrong decisions. Yet, I believe that when we hear the Word of God frequently and are consistent in fellowshipping with God's people, the inclination toward pessimism disappears.

It is crucial for us to recognize that Solomon's pessimistic inclination grew out of his boredom, frustration, familiarity, and arrogance. He lived a life of academic lust and power lust, and he could find no thrill or happiness in his faith because of his own spiritual complacency. Any man who searches out the answers to life's meaning through human resources, no matter how intellectual he is, can never go beyond the limitations of human understanding. He can never rise above the level of a man.

Christ's Worldview

As a Christian starts to grow, he should become a spiritual optimist. He may not be a positive thinker, naturally speaking, but he can develop positive-thinking faith. A real positive thinker bases his thoughts on faith in the Word

of God.

Each of us must learn that we are the property of our volition. When we start following God, we enter into a new worldview. We begin an adventure of faith that will continue as we carry on with Christ. We do not live in the property of our environment or the consequences of our circumstances. Rather, we live in the consequences of our choices. Even people who live in nations where wicked governments deprive them of freedom, they too are responsible for their choices.

So many individuals search for happiness that they can never find apart from God and the Cross. They are deceived by the offer of empty promises. A deceived person doesn't know he is being deceived because he enjoys the benefits he gets when temporal pleasure takes the place of integrity. For example, a married woman becomes secretly flirtatious with no fear of God. Though she has a decent husband, she falls in love with a single man. She has been deceived.

Any situation such as this represents total deception. It is never right, under any circumstance. Any woman or man who enters into this kind of situation has been deceived by Satan.

Forsaking the Source

When a person leaves the Source and starts playing games with what he has heard from the precise Word of God, he slowly declines in receiving the truth of the Word. He becomes familiar with it and does not purpose to hear with an attitude of meekness. This person has exalted himself above the Cross, and he will make statements such as, "It is not easy for me to be around other Christians" and "I don't have any friends at church."

This person is thoroughly deceived. The reason he has no friends is because he has not shown himself friendly (Proverbs 18:24). He puts conditions on potential friendships. He does not lay down his life, because he does not love with Christ's love. He does not make himself available from the viewpoint of the Cross.

The problem is all with that person—it is not the fault of the church.

We have an amazing church family, filled with disciples who live with eternal purpose and develop scriptural frames of reference. Calvary is our point of reference. Anyone who enjoys the privilege of this kind of fellowship knows how to prosper with Resurrection life.

Solomon entered into so many areas of searching, and he became pessimistic, going from negative cycles into a negative syndrome. In the Book of Ecclesiastes he complained, "There is no profit in anything I try." He could find no meaning in his academic adventures. He found no meaning in the many wives and servants he possessed. His silver and gold gave him no satisfaction. The ivory palaces, the sixteen thousand horses and chariots—all that he had acquired failed to supply any meaning.

More than a king, Solomon was a brilliant entrepreneur who made multimillion-dollar transactions habitually. He began a shipping business with Hiram of Tyre, and its success lasted six hundred years.

Yet, none of those accomplishments helped Solomon to have peace. With all of his searching, he failed to choose God's life.

Chapter Two

WASTED MOMENTS, SCARRED LIVES

Men I know have given up happy marriages, wonderful families, and successful businesses for other women, for drinking, and for carnal pleasures. Their marriages died, their businesses failed, and their relationships with God suffered severe damage.

Some of them have repented and God has restored them by grace. Still, many lives were scarred as a result of their sin and the wasted moments.

We really have no idea what living through our impulses and making wrong decisions can do to our lives and the lives of those around us. A gambling addiction left one man $40,000 in debt. He had been an effective pastor for several years, but his losses cost him his marriage and his relationship with his children. He lied and was able to borrow money for a period of time,

but every cent went into searching for fulfillment through a demonic addiction to gambling.

It is such a sad thing to see young men and women go off to college and get caught up in parties, sex, and drugs. They go on to lose their values in an effort to find happiness.

Solomon made decisions out of weakness, said things without love, explored things without purity, and did things without relating them to God. He established himself in a worldly philosophy apart from God. But any search for happiness without God will never result in success.

Empty Pursuits

"I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

"So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

"And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

"Then I looked on all the works that my

hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:8-11).

Solomon had wisdom. Even when he was on top of the world, vain flattery did not bring him down. He still prospered. Then, he sought knowledge from the world, and soon he went after the pleasures of the world.

Our search should be after the Lord Jesus Christ and His mindset. We should pursue His nature with all of our hearts. We must guard our hearts carefully (see Proverbs 4:23). It is necessary that we learn to think properly and establish ourselves in a purpose before our God. Pleasure will not do this for us. Barroom encounters do not make people happy. Entering relationships that are not established in God may gratify the flesh, but they will never bring real happiness.

Solomon sought after riches and security. But when it was over, there was nothing left inside of him. Of all that he gathered as a result of his pursuits, there was nothing he wanted.

We should thank God that Solomon was inspired to write Ecclesiastes. By it, we can learn and know what is right.

Individuals live and die. They get old, sick, and suffer diseases. They also prosper and live in abundance. But apart from God, all of it is meaningless.

Sensual Attachments

Solomon also played games of political expediency. In 1 Kings 11:1-2, he chose daughters of heathen kings to be his wives. He wanted to know what it was like to have sex with the heathens, as if that would bring him happiness. As a consequence of these relationships, he left God. He would not allow Bible doctrine to have a part of his life. He thought that somehow sensuality would fulfill him.

Sensual attachments can happen in very subtle ways. I remember a couple that was so involved in serving God at one time. Then, they joined an exercise club, and it grew into an obsession. We all need to be physically fit, but isolated people immerse themselves to the point that they leave the will of God. Soon, that husband and wife were missing church services. Today, they are divorced. The woman ended up marrying an ex-convict and the husband married an unbeliever. Their children are caught in the midst of a broken family. It's a shame, be-

cause it didn't have to be that way.

I have seen this happen too many times. First, people withdraw from hearing the Word of God. Then, they blame the pastor and the church. Accusations are made and they draw nearer and nearer to the world. Fulfilling the lusts of the flesh brings enjoyment—but only for a season. Eventually, resentment enters in and the result is almost always divorce.

Wrong choices bring devastating consequences. In marriages, often it is the children who pay the highest price.

"And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,

"And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded.

"Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

"Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son" (1 Kings 11:9-12).

Solomon's son Rehoboam also entered a life of power lust. He determined to raise taxes and he oppressed the people of his kingdom. That choice cost him tremendously. The people hated him and they rebelled. He did not take care of the inheritance his father had left him, and in a matter of months, ten of the twelve tribes of Israel had forsaken Rehoboam. He was left with only Judah and Benjamin.

In every generation, each person is faced with choices that will determine his outcome. Though we may be predisposed to certain outcomes, the choices are still ours. Rehoboam could have chosen a different path, but he did not. He reaped the consequences that God, in His foreknowledge, had declared to Solomon.

The choices are ours, but the consequences are God's: therefore, choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Chapter Three

RESTORED BY RIGHT CHOICES

"For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

"For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

"And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father.

"Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon" (1 Kings 11:4-7).

As a consequence of his foray into sensuality with the heathen, Solomon sanctioned idolatry. His many wives influenced him to introduce

their idols to Jerusalem. Solomon learned the hard way, and when he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, he knew what he was talking about.

It is important for us to recognize the dangers of idolatry. Putting something—*anything*—ahead of God is idolatry. Choosing subjectivity over the objective truth of the Word of God is idolatry. I once counseled a person who said God told him to stay away from church. God *never* told him such a thing. That would be contrary to Hebrews 10:25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Some people let one small thing keep them from hearing the Word of God. I heard of a case where a church member canceled an appointment with a businessman, so the businessman said he didn't want to come back to the church. He had been coming to church faithfully for more than ten years. Yet now, he lives in idolatry to his business. He has no comprehension of categorical doctrine and thus no spiritual perception or divine capacity.

Solomon had been led astray. He went the entire route with the religions of his wives. He tried religions from every kind of viewpoint.

"What is that religion like? What is this religious philosophy? Which religion is best? That one might be exciting. Perhaps it would be better to take in a little bit of all of them."

These are the thoughts that may have been running through Solomon's head.

This man, Solomon, was King David's son. His father was one of greatest teachers who ever lived. The book of Proverbs, also written by Solomon, illustrates the great things he had been taught. He was raised by Bathsheba, one of the greatest mothers of all time. But now he had entered into worldly religions.

Solomon's choices led him down the road of vanity and emptiness. He tried it all and was left to say, "It is all empty. It is all meaningless. None of it has any purpose. Maybe I should never have been born."

Turning Back to the Lord

Solomon had reached the end of himself. This amazing man was old now. He had been handsome, but he had lost his good looks. His drinking, his womanizing, and his life of sin left him bored with life. He became so familiar, so proud, and so arrogant. He even began to doubt the value of wisdom. The wise man and the fool

end up in the same place, Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 3:20. "All go unto one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."

There he was. His choices brought bitter consequences.

In Ecclesiastes 3, however, we also see how Solomon's heart began to turn. The Holy Spirit went to work on a broken man. Soon, he began to express things from a viewpoint that revealed how God gives us the things of the world to enjoy. The work of repentance began as he realized, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Slowly, God's viewpoint began to take over Solomon's thinking again. He recognized the chastisement God brought upon him, and finally he could comprehend its value. Great things and great wisdom were entrusted to Solomon, and he now saw what had become of it all. His choices proved costly.

God Makes All Things Beautiful

Now, Solomon started down a new road; he was choosing to think with God. The final ten chapters of Ecclesiastes represent important instructions to us. He is at last looking at how God makes all things beautiful in His plan.

"He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

The word "world" is not the correct translation from the Hebrew text of this verse. It should read, "He hath set *eternity* in their heart." Solomon realized what God had done for him, and he was so grateful. Even with all the sins he had committed, God still placed eternity in his heart.

Solomon returned to being a great instrument of the Holy Spirit. Ecclesiastes became part of God's canon of Scriptures because it reveals what man's choices will do to him.

At the end, Solomon related his experience to the fact that no man can search out the work of God, which He ordained from the beginning. Self-assertion and self-centeredness left him empty. He finally understood that nothing amounts to anything unless it is done through God.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

CONCLUSION

Solomon was never content with his wealth, riches, and fame. The women, the music, the servants—none of these fulfilled him. Fulfillment only came when he let God put eternity inside of him. Nothing could compare to the work of God in his heart.

The problems Solomon endured were products of his volition. He chose to pursue what was not of God. It all left him with a distorted value system. When he returned to the Lord, Solomon understood that a man should simply eat and drink and enjoy the good of all of his labor. He meant this in a good way. So damaged was Solomon's life, he could never even enjoy a meal with his family.

His message to us is this: Choose God and enjoy what He gives you, but do not abuse it. All that we have to enjoy are gifts from Him. Choose to let His Word supply you with a capacity for joy.

What God does is forever. When He saves, it is forever. When He loves, it is forever. When He forgives, it is forever. Choose what God has for you, and the consequences will last forever.

Choices

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INTRODUCTION

There's so much going on today in Christianity. Problems continue to arise throughout the Church. I have received many, many letters—not just from people in our assembly and affiliated ministries, but also from folks in other denominations.

I have observed closely what's been happening in our church. It's a very precious ministry. But I've observed what Satan is doing in the lives of those who love Jesus with all of their hearts. Scores are giving a place to the devil through the choices they are making.

It is possible that if you will take heed to this message, your prayers will be answered and you can help put a stop to all the foolishness that Satan is bringing into the lives of godly people. Please concentrate. Think it through. Take these thoughts to heart, because those who hear the Word of God are *of* God. You will not benefit from the Word unless the soil of your heart is

prepared in meekness. Without condemning yourself, mix absolute trust in your reception of this message. Let the Holy Spirit administer God's operation of grace, and you will develop a capacity to make godly choices.

Chapter One

THE FIRST GIFT: VOLITION

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).

Adam and Eve were told *not* to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They were given a prohibition. And, they had a choice. According to Genesis 3, their choice was to eat from that tree. The result of that choice was critical—for them and for the entire human race.

The first gift given to God's created human race was volition, the power to choose. That's a big gift, and with it comes the responsibility for our choices. It astonishes me to see Christians floundering over how to use their volition, and yet, it is most understandable. Does God force anyone's will? No. You make the choice, but

God determines the consequences of your choice. You go to church because of a choice. You go to bed because of a choice. You get out of bed by choice. You eat what you eat because of a choice. You make a choice to pray or not to pray. Every single thing in our lives is determined by choices.

Life and Death Set Before Us

"But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, wither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore

choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:14-19).

God has been faithful to give us His Word. Is it far off? No. It is inside of us. We have the privilege of always doing what the Word says if we choose to, because it is in our mouths and in our hearts. This is why we must never quench the Spirit from our heart, or grieve the Spirit, with our mouth.

Notice the order of deception, presented in Deuteronomy 30:17. First, a person's heart is turned away, then he can't hear. After that, he is drawn away; he begins to worship other gods, and finally, he serves them.

Life, or death? Blessing, or cursing? If we choose life, Deuteronomy 30:19 says we will prolong our days against sickness and disease. It all centers on choices.

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve," Joshua said, "but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). Joshua made a choice. He and his family served God because of a choice.

Chapter Two

THE POWER OF THE VOLITION

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:14-18).

The cemetery is full of people who made wrong choices. God gave them free volition. The Bible teaches me to control every thought with my free will through God. Free volition is choosing what I'm going to think, choosing how I'm going to feel, choosing what I'm going to say, and choosing how I'm going to respond. I

choose whether or not I want to be effective for God. My choices determine whether or not I will make an impact and be successful. I must *choose* to think clean thoughts, live a clean life, and serve God. I must *choose* to be a good father, a good husband, or a good friend. Everything is a choice.

Every emotional problem I have is caused by my choices. According to James 3, if there is envying, jealousy, and strife in my heart, then the basis for my human reasoning will be *earthly—epigeios* in the Greek text, speaking of the influence of demonic activity in the world system. Next, my human reasoning becomes *sensual—psuchikos*, meaning, the constructs of the cosmic system have been transferred into my soul. *Devilish*, in James 3:15, is *daimoniodes*—implying that I'm now being controlled by demons. The verbal form of this word (*daimonizomai*) signifies demon possession, but can also refer to demon obsession or demon activity controlling Christians. This word is used frequently in the Gospels (e.g., Matthew 9:32; 15:22; Mark 5:15). These demonic spirits desire to control believers for the entirety of their Christian life.

Places of Influence

Demons look for places where they can gain

influence. Ephesians 4:27 warns believers to "Neither give place to the devil." *Topos*, the Greek word for *place*, refers to a marked off area. It means, don't mark off an area where the devil can keep coming back to make you become what you are in your weakness. That's demonic activity.

An irresponsible Christian makes wrong choices. Needs govern his decisions. In his volition, he makes choices according to his feelings, and he always wants to share his feelings with someone else who is feeling the same way. Using his volition, he decides that he's not going to be responsible to what God says in His Word. By his choices, this person is saying, "I *refuse* God; I refuse my responsibility to use the Word of God, which is nigh, even in my mouth and in my heart. I refuse to use it. I feel so terrible! Yet, I refuse to exercise my will, and I choose to be passive."

The moment I make one choice to respond in passivity, Satan deceives me and controls me until I renounce that decision. Once I have made several wrong decisions, I have already given a place for the cosmic system to transfer Satan's attitude to my soul. As I continue to make wrong choices, demon obsession takes over.

Though I'm still a Christian and I am going to heaven, even the church and the sermons I hear will not protect me from my wrong choices.

In Luke 13, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue. There was a woman who "had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself" (Luke 13:11). Who had caused this woman to be bent over for so long? Jesus said, "Satan hath bound [her], lo, these eighteen years" (Luke 13:16).

That woman was morally upright and went to church all the time, but eighteen years before coming to Jesus, a demon found a place in her and gave her a disease. No one ever thought to blame the devil for her infirmity because she was such a wonderful lady! But a wrong choice was made, a place was given, then deception took over. The result: Satan controlled the woman's back, and she lost control over one part of her body. Jesus, recognizing the root cause of this woman's infirmity, "laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God" (Luke 13:13).

The purpose of demon activity is to get believers to lose control in the midst of satanic darkness. This loss of control is always the result of bad decisions in thinking, using the volition

passively toward truth, rather than objectively. These passive decisions affect children in the home because they aren't old enough to be responsible for all of their thoughts. Passive choices produce a passive environment in the home and a demonic atmospheric charge exists to separate and divide; to rob, destroy, and kill.

Who's on the Lord's Side?

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he discovered that the children of Israel had cast all their gold in the fire and Aaron had made a golden calf for them (Exodus 32). Moses declared: "Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me" (Exodus 32:26). "If you want to live, get on this side," Moses said. "If you *don't* want to live, stay over there. I want to know who is for the Lord." The Levites chose to side with God and with Moses, and they lived. Those who remained with the golden calf, died. They made the wrong choice.

It is my responsibility to obey the Word of God that is in my mouth and in my heart. Right decisions to study are mine to make. I must decide to make the right decision concerning the geographic location God has called me to. Right decisions must be made about whom I will marry,

about how I will behave, and about being meek through the Holy Spirit.

How have you been using *your* volition lately?

Chapter Three

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES

Every anxious person is anxious because of his choices. Every seed of suicide has come through choices. An alcoholic becomes an alcoholic through a series of choices. A promiscuous person makes choices to be promiscuous. A homosexual is a homosexual because of choices, not because of any genetic tendency. A woman who isn't willing to be accountable to her husband and flirts with other men is doing so because of choices. Every man who is deceitful, is deceitful because of choices. Everything centers on choices.

You may say, "This happened to me when I was younger…." Yes, but you had to cooperate with what happened in order for it to make you what you are today—a nervous wreck, if you happen to be that way. And you're a nervous wreck because you have chosen death! You have

chosen to withdraw from mercy, grace, love, and truth. Somehow, something entered into your life and it wasn't identified and renounced. Perhaps you envy what you used to have or what you don't have today. This envying combines with the wickedness of the flesh in a diabolical conspiracy to control you through demonic pleasure. Like the children of Israel, you want to return to Egypt. If this is what you choose, then go ahead and wallow in it, eat it up, and lose precious days of life on earth. This is the effect of wrong choices.

Wrong choices can have tragic consequences. There was a story in the news about a pastor who let two people into his home to use the phone. He and his wife were murdered, their daughter was raped and their son was beaten. The intruders got away with forty-eight dollars. We cannot let just *anyone* into our homes, and we cannot let just *any* thought into our minds. Choose to think with God. Remember, the devil comes to rob, kill, and destroy.

I received a letter from a pastor's wife recently. "My husband just took off and left me for another woman. He's been a pastor for eighteen years. We have six children, and now I'm left alone."

Pastors, never allow yourselves to be alone with another woman. Don't even give it one thought. You are godly men with beautiful and precious calls on your lives. Purpose in your hearts that you will always choose to think purely and live clean. Don't ever give place to demonic lust. It will bring reproach to God, to your families, and to the people who love and trust you.

This is not a little thing; it's not just an influence. We're speaking of a kingdom of power at work. Once Satan transmits this power to a person's soul, then demons can either hypnotize their victim, or just come and go as they please to do their thing.

Wisdom from Above

The person living by wisdom from below can rationalize anything he does, but the one with wisdom from above is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated.... And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:17-18).

God wants me to challenge any satanic attempt to gain a place of influence in my life, even if it comes through someone close to me. Didn't Jesus say to Peter, "Get thee behind me,

Satan," when Peter tried to keep Jesus from going to the cross (Matthew 16:21-23)? Did Jesus take it lightly and say, "Tell me you didn't mean to say that, Pete"? No. The Lord said, "Get thee behind me, *Satan*!" I must say the same thing to those who allow their mouths to be used by the devil.

Everything in the course of a Christian's life depends upon his choices. The boy and girl whose parents were brutally murdered made decisions to overcome what happened to them. The boy went on to a career in politics and took up the cause for victims of crime. The girl chose to become an effective woman of God, serving Christ and her family.

More people go into their rooms and cry—over nothing—when they could be dancing all over the place, praising God and singing with all of their hearts to Jesus. But instead, they withdraw. The Word is nigh, in their heart, but they confess, "I don't want the Word; it isn't helping me. I just feel *soooo* blue. It's nearly Christmas. I feel so awful. Everyone is celebrating Jesus coming into the world, but I feel so sad."

When you start making choices to feel this way, knock it off! Repent! Sing unto Him. Shout His praises and glorify the Lord. Get right with

God and choose to live for someone besides yourself. Live for someone outside of your own emotions, outside of your own soul. Live for someone outside of your pride. Live for God! Renounce your wrong decisions; repent the old-fashioned way; and stop being "you" for a change. Shut off your negative emotions and stop living by your feelings. Tell them to shut up, and stop confessing how bad life is in your little old emotions. Get right with God and start confessing truth.

Chapter Four

RESIST THE DEVIL

The Bible tells us there was a veil before the Holy Place. Then there was another veil before the Holy of Holies. These beautiful curtains were made of linen and the colors were scarlet, purple, and blue—all heavenly colors. Of all the offerings made before the veil, only the sin offering had to include blood.

The veil speaks of Jesus Christ's sinless humanity (Hebrews 10:20). The moment He died on the cross, the veil to the Holy of Holies was *rent*, torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). This meant that believers could now enter into the Holy of Holies, into the reality of their kingdom priesthood. As members of His New Testament Church, we now reign as kings, through grace, and we have access to the Holy of Holies at any time, day or night. No matter what we've done, or ever will do, we can enter in through

the rent veil.

In 2 Corinthians 3:15, Paul wrote that the veil was still upon the hearts of some members of the church at Corinth. This veil is not speaking of the Law; it's a veil of unbelief.

People have so many different veils upon them—the veils of depression, withdrawal, pride, selfishness, envy, materialism, and deceit. Friends, wherever there is a veil, Satan controls that part of your life. If you're overly emotional, it means that Satan is controlling your emotions. It isn't that you have bad emotions; it's just that you choose to let the wrong force control them. Today, mental institutions are full because the devil has controlled people's minds and destroyed their emotional patterns.

Satan's Plan for Destruction

Satan wants to destroy pastors and missionaries; he wants to destroy marriages and families. He's intensifying his attack in every way. The devil wants to destroy trust. He doesn't want wisdom from above to control our lives and will do whatever he can to prevent us from having an everlasting attitude of faith. Satan does not want us to build ourselves up in the most holy faith, to keep ourselves in the love of

God, or to look for mercy.

There are marriages in my church that are separated but shouldn't be. What is wrong? Someone has made a choice to live his own way. He is saying, "I will not sacrifice for my partner or my family. Nope. I'm going my own way." It's a choice, and the choice is negative. There are exceptions to this, but, for the most part, marital separations are the result of negative choices toward grace, toward the Cross, and toward unconditional love; choices against peace and joy in the ministry of reconciliation. These choices are made with a volitional mindset that is passive toward God and active toward Satan's desires.

It doesn't have to be this way. I look around my church and see a number of couples who have made right choices to allow God to bring them back together. These couples are not just back together, barely getting along; their homes are thriving because of reconciliation that comes through positive choices toward love.

I love it when someone chooses not to receive what Satan tries to transmit through his cosmic system, his *epigeios*. The devil's transmissions can't reach this person's soul, and Satan can find no place to control.

It's a mystery to me how some Christians allow Satan to control them, and then live in denial of his control. They just won't accept deliverance because they are under the control of an influence that doesn't want them to be free.

Free Indeed!

In Psalm 51:12, David wrote, "Uphold me with thy free spirit." I have a free spirit; so does every Christian who's confessed up-to-date and filled with the Holy Spirit. We don't wrestle with yesterday's problems. We aren't dealing with last year's skeletons or with provocations from someone who hurt us. We have a *freeeeeee* spirit! —and it's God's free Spirit!

What does it mean to be upheld with God's Spirit? Well, God is pretty free! He's already whipped the devil. God is free to forgive us, free to cleanse us, free to purge us, and free to live in us forever. He is free to give us love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance. He's free to guide us into all truth and to quicken our minds. He's free to love us no matter what state we're in.

There is no reason for any Christian to mope around the rest of his life, calling the same people every other week for fifteen years because

he's trapped in the same depression. He is choosing to be depressed.

We're free to be contented. Contented! Contented! Contented!

We are free!—to love the Body of Christ.

Free!—to enjoy the love of friends.

Free!—to pray and fight diseases by faith.

Free!—to fight problems by God's provision.

We are free, free, FREE!

If, after I have said all of this, you want to choose to condemn yourself, go right ahead. Be depressed! and allow this message to add condemnation to your depression. Some people manufacture a problem and then go to the doctor to get a name for it. They can't wait to see what he will call the latest thing that's wrong with them.

The Bible says, "If ye continue in my word ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). It doesn't say *some* of you will be made free, but *all* of you will be made free.3 When a Christian has a free spirit, he confesses, "No condemnation!" He receives conviction without condemnation, gets converted, and goes away free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

You may say to yourself, "Of course, God probably doesn't mean *me*. I'm too bad." All God is waiting for is for us to *choose* to believe Him and stand fast in the liberty of the Son of God wherein He has made us free. Those who are led by the Spirit are grown up, adopted children of God. They refuse to go back into bondage again to be controlled by fear. Instead, they cry, "Abba, Father" and the Holy Spirit witnesses with their spirit and they are free indeed.

Making the Devil Flee

Satan is always looking for Christians who will quench the Spirit by making passive decisions toward God's provision. The devil, still having access to the Father, comes before Him and says, "See that woman. Your Spirit's dwelling in her; she's had years of doctrine, but I'm going to get her to deny it. I'll send some of my crowd to her and have her depressed within two to three minutes. Watch, God! Watch what happens to your daughter as we do our thing. We've done it many, many times before."

The devil finds a place of influence in this woman because she doesn't resist the demons to make them flee. James 4:7 tells us to resist the devil. We aren't told to resist our emotions or

our thoughts. We are told to resist the *devil*.

Resist the devil. Resist him! If you want him to flee, do what the Word of God says to do. If you don't want him to flee, why don't you just invite Satan in and have him sleep on the couch in your living room? He would like to do this with many of you, if you would give him a place.

Why don't you put your shoulders back, get some guts and say, "I'm a Christian. I am complete in Christ. I am seated above. I have God in me. My sins are paid for and I am going to choose life, choose obedience, choose faith, choose to think right, and choose to let my conversation be from heaven."

Every Christian should confess, "I am not going to be the devil's doormat anymore; I'm going to be the devil's tormentor! I don't need anything but God to make me happy. I am filled with the Spirit and that produces happiness."

CONCLUSION

More families have broken up because of wrong choices. More people have committed suicide because of wrong choices. More people live in immorality and never get out of it, all because of wrong choices—choices that give place to the devil.

The next time you're tempted to give a place to Satan, stand up, raise your hand and say, "Hallelujah, praise God, I resist you devil. I resist your feelings, your projections, and your accusations. I resist this atmosphere. Blood of Christ, cleanse it! Praise God, I resist you Satan."

Renounce the devil's control over any area of your life. Denounce his attacks. Rebuke Satan in the name of divine resistance. Don't let him make you choose to allow vain imaginations to take over. Choose to bring every thought into correspondence with the Word of God and into obedience to Jesus Christ. Say to the devil, "I am

going to revenge disobedience with my obedience, at this moment."

And do you know what Satan will say after all of this? "He really *means* it this time. Let's get out of here!"

Choose a Life of Faith

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

I heard a great story about a very old dog that was suffering from arthritis. A decision was made that this beloved family pet was to be put down, so the family allowed him one night to sleep in the parents' bedroom.

In the middle of the night this dog began to make much noise and was moving around as he hadn't for a long time. There was a fire in the home, right near one of the children's bedrooms. As a result of his commotion, the family made it out of the house safely. That dog responded instinctively to the danger it sensed.

God has given instinct to dogs to respond to abnormal situations. As human beings, made in God's image, we have even greater response patterns based on the life that is in us. Unlike animals, our responses are not dictated by instinct. We have to choose the life that we will live in. We can rest in God's eternal life—a life that eternally is; or, we can scramble through in temporal

life—a life affected by our feelings, failures, and frustrations in time.

This booklet shows that there really is only one way to live and experience peace, joy, and love. We can choose to live every moment in the provisions and power that are derived from eternal life—the life of God—reigning in us.

Chapter One

CHRIST: THE END OF THE LAW

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"(Romans 3:19-24).

"For when we were in the flesh, the motions

of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." (Romans 7:5-7).

The qualifications for being blessed are meekness and humility. As a result, when we listen carefully, without striving about what we hear, we have concentration and a spiritual capacity, which are God's divine solution for understanding the truth.

There are people I know who live in habits of depression. This is not to scold anyone struggling with the problem of depression. There are many physical and chemical causes that when diagnosed properly are treatable. But there is a reason that it happens. It is contained in three words: *in the flesh*.

Being in the flesh sets forth the motions of sins, which operate by the law of sin and death. Given the right circumstances, these things work in our members and bring forth fruit unto death

(Romans 7:5). Every time someone begins to operate in the flesh, the law of sin and death is reigning, making him more depressed and discouraged or causing him to withdraw into emotionalism. It happens for this simple reason: There is no grace in the law, and there is no law in grace.

A grace person can respect the law and yet have absolutely nothing to do with the law. He lets the law do everything it was meant to do. It can shut his mouth or reveal his guilt, but that is where the law ends for him.

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

"For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)

"Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth

the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

"For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Romans 10:4-11).

Live in Liberty

I am going to make a statement that you possibly have never considered: A person who has liberty is exempt from mortal and moral mistakes. "That doesn't sound right!" you say. But it is right, because liberty means that you are persuaded that all things are clean in themselves (see Romans 14:14).

Now, if I were a slave and someone came and paid a huge price to set me free, do you think that I would want to transgress against that person? Not at all. But liberty means being exempt from the law. Why? Because true liberty brings us to a Person, to the righteousness of God, and we then enter into a spiritual law that controls our morality.

So many people have problems with the law

because they have no idea how to live by faith. They do not know how to live in the righteousness of God, which is revealed from faith to faith. Therefore, they do not understand how to receive God's fullness, from grace to grace (John 1:16).

Paul said in Romans 7:21, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." It is not that the law was evil, but the law projected to Paul that *he* was evil, because he was living outside of grace, in human good and self-righteousness.

The moment we step outside of grace and the righteousness of faith, we come under the law and then slip into depression and withdrawal. Some people will choose to sublimate by going out into the world for fulfillment rather than giving in to depression. They may not do anything that is necessarily bad, but they do not experience the peace that passes understanding.

According to Philippians 4:7, God wants to give us peace that passes understanding and love that goes beyond knowledge. When we begin to experience grace and the faith-to-faith process, we enter into the pure righteousness of God, where the law is not manifested. There is no deed of the flesh. We are complete, and we are under the control of grace, love, and mercy.

Being filled with the Spirit means there is an overflow going forth from our lives. No one can keep being filled with the Spirit without the overflow and the spring of life that springs up from within. Every time we are filled, there is an overflow to bless others.

Chapter Two

THE PATH TO PEACE

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1-4).

At face value, this verse seems to indicate that walking in the flesh speaks of overt sins in the flesh. Yet, careful study reveals that it has nothing to with that. This verse refers back to Romans 7:5, where the motions of sin are stirred up by the law. If I walk in the flesh without

knowing, then I am back under the law, because I have come out from under the covering of grace.

As Christians, we cannot live ninety-eight percent by grace and two percent by law. Remember that whoever offends the law in one point offends it all. Those who walk in the flesh have experientially stepped away from God's pronouncement of "no condemnation." Their position in Christ is secure, but they are no longer covered by the operation of grace, and they are no longer growing in the Person of Jesus Christ.

For this reason, there is no peace for those who choose to walk after the flesh. We can only be peaceful when we are filled with the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), the love of God, and the grace of God. When we don't have peace, the tendency is to go find someone to talk to in the human realm. There is nothing wrong with getting counsel, but God's counsel goes far beyond human support.

Step into Grace

Whenever anyone steps out of the experience of Romans 8:1 ("no condemnation"), he steps back under the law, and things begin to

happen. He is apt to withdraw, thinking that the world is going to come to an end. According to Scripture, that is not a reality.

But what can he do? He can go to the Cross, die to himself, and wake up in the Spirit. It is a choice of receiving eternal life in a moment and seeing the promises of God fulfilled in a moment without having his circumstances change.

Jesus, when speaking to the scribes, addressed certain traditions that had worked their way into the law. They were living by the letter of the law, and that meant they were stepping out of the peace of God. "Acquaint yourself intimately with Me, and be at peace within yourself." That is what God tells us in the literal translation of Job 22:21. The Lord wants His peace to control our hearts, because His peace passes our understanding.

The grandson of General Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, once spoke of his grandmother and how the greatest revelation she received before she went home to heaven concerned justification by grace through faith. He told of how thousands attended her funeral in England. People lined up a great distance to get in and pay their respects. One man spoke of how he came off skid row and went on to be-

come a doctor because of Mrs. Booth's ministry to him when he was a homeless alcoholic. A woman talked of being a homeless teenager who became a beautiful wife and mother of four because Mrs. Booth had ministered the grace of God to her.

England had never seen anything like it. What a way to be remembered for serving God. She was a woman filled with such life and she was used by God to change many lives.

Chapter Three

THE RIGHT KIND OF LIFE

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (Mark 9:43-47).

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting,

thou art God" (Psalm 90:2).

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

"I and my Father are one" (John 10:27-30).

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25).

Two terms for the word "life" are used here. First, there is life that has a beginning and no ending (everlasting life of the soul, *psuche*), and life that has no beginning and no ending (eternal life, *zoe*). The latter is the life of Christ, the life that is in Himself and stretches from eternity to eternity.

Each Christian has two types of life within him—a temporal life, which had a beginning while it has no ending, and eternal life, which

has no beginning and no ending.

The Christian does not have a past because his new life has no past. Eternal life has no beginning, so how can it have a past? Furthermore, eternal life has no ending. That is the essence of eternal security. Jesus never would have said, "I will never, no never, leave you or forsake you" if our salvation could be lost. He never would have said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

The Provision of Eternal Life

As Christians, we have a choice to live in a temporal life with nervous tension and stress, or in eternal life with peace that passes understanding. When we choose eternal life, we don't want to do the things that offend that life.

When we are living in eternal life, we are living apart from the Law. Everything about our lives is grace and love. We have no obligation to morality. Instead, we possess a tremendous, powerful provision of spirituality. In this kind of life, everything is from God. Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24). God does it all. He puts in us the will to do of His good pleasure. We are His sons, His saints, His kings, and His priests.

Why wouldn't we want to please Him, after all He has done for us?

God's eternal life—which has no beginning and no ending—always causes us to triumph. It is love that never fails, and not a single thing can stop it. It is a life that makes us steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:57-58).

CONCLUSION

Every Christian who has received God's life knows a life that has no beginning and no ending. He knows that he has been forgiven forever. He understands that his life is not based in the temporal, even though he must function in temporal affairs. This understanding brings him overwhelming, supernatural peace.

In your marriage, do not live in the temporal—always striving to figure who's right and who's wrong. "She did it!" "No, it's his fault." What kind of life is that? Make a decision to step right into the gift of eternal life, where the past is gone and all is forgiven because of the Blood of Christ.

Glory to God, we have eternal life that can abundantly bless our spirits, our souls, our bodies, our circumstances, our needs, our thoughts, and our words. We are covered with the protection and covering of God's grace and peace. The best part about it is this: We have the life that

will go on and on and on and on—real life, with no beginning and no ending.

Heavenly Father, we are so thankful for the pro - vision and power of eternal life. We pray for the lost, who also have a life that has no ending. Their life has a beginning in time, based on a fallen sin nature, and they are facing a godless eternity. We want to be lights in a dark world, that men will be drawn to You and make a choice for eternal life. We ask this in Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Choose to Be Spirit-Filled

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Most of the situations we go through and the counseling we receive relate to choices we make day by day and moment by moment. The problems that push people into negative soul-power cycles and internal conspiracies have to do with the fact that God puts the truth in front of us, and we have to make a choice, even if it is unconscious, for or against the truth.

So much of human response is unconscious or involuntary. For example, breathing: We don't think about it, we just do it. It is a function of the autonomic nervous system, and without that function, we would not be able to survive. Most of what we do, however, is the result of conscious, voluntary decision making. We choose to open our eyes, sit up, and put our feet on the floor each morning. Though there doesn't appear to be much thought involved, from the moment we wake up, we make thousands of choices before we actually begin the work day.

Proper choices that appear to be automatic are usually preceded by a series of consistent deliberate choices. Those decisions, such as getting up every morning, should not be based on what "feels" right but according to what *is* right. When God made man, He designed us to have healthy emotions. He gave us common sense and an ability to think clearly, even in tense situations. God has not "given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

For those with a "sound mind," the filling of the Holy Spirit is simply a matter of choice—a decision to honor God. In ourselves, there is nothing that qualifies us to receive this great provision. But as children who have been purchased by the blood of Christ, we know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, and we can be "filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). In this booklet, we will see that this fullness enables us to love others with a love that goes beyond feelings—Calvary's love.

Chapter One

THE FRAILTY OF FEELINGS

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

It took common sense to choose to get up this morning; for most of us, it wasn't very difficult. Likewise, common sense prompts a spiritual Christian to obey God in other areas—to go soul-winning, for example—even if he doesn't feel like it.

It is spiritual common sense that our love is not based upon feelings. Yet, some people are troubled when we talk about what real love is, what true forgiveness is, and the importance of making deliberate decisions in those matters.

The fact that we have love is not always re-

flected in our experience nor in our expression. I have been in hospitals with men who have been the best husbands throughout their lives. But when they were suffering with a terrible illness, I have heard them curse their wives. Never had they cursed their precious wives before they became ill, yet on their deathbeds they began calling them all kinds of names. The feelings of confusion, fear, and stress dictated to them what to say. Yet, each one loved his spouse with all his heart.

Love may be felt on many occasions, but love cannot depend upon feelings. It is so hard for young people to understand that feelings, or the lack of them, do not reveal whether or not they are in love. We may have great feelings and an attraction toward someone we love. Among friends, we may have good feelings and mutual interests. Yet, many people seldom express feelings of love until they are separated or one of them becomes sick. If something bad happens in a relationship, negative feelings may be expressed and feelings may be hurt, even if real love is there. But God's heart comes through if His love is ruling.

When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, blood came through His pores as He agonized alone in prayer. On the Cross, the Lord Jesus was naked as He hung there, mocked and despised by the crowd who were watching. His face was disfigured, and His body was scarred from the beatings. Do you think He *felt* love for those people? No, He did not.

Do you think He *felt* love for anyone at that point? No, he did not.

Do you think He *felt* love toward God the Father? No, He did not feel love for God the Father.

Did He love the Father? Yes.

I fear for those who have only great feelings about their love affairs. I am not denying that feelings are involved. Of course they are. But feelings are changeable, depending on circumstances. True love, however, is a fact. It is the nature of God—it is who God is.

When Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), He wasn't saying it because He felt love for the people He was dying for; He died for the people because He loved them. It is so difficult for us to really grasp this: He died for the people because

He loved them, not because He had feelings of love toward them.

Years ago, I knew a couple who were madly "in love." After they were married, she came down with a terminal arthritic disease. She was a very beautiful woman, but within a year after the disease hit her, the husband who was so madly in love with her figure and her beauty divorced her. The disease hit at age 26, and before she turned 29, she died.

When he first met her, he said, "This girl's the greatest thing that was ever born." Her beauty and the way she responded to him produced feelings he called "love." But when she had to be in a wheelchair and gained weight because of her condition, those feelings were gone. Her illness revealed the fact that he did not love her.

Feelings Do Not Define Love

Though it can be expressed in feelings, love is not about feelings. Feelings do not define love; feelings define mutual interests.

There is never a place in the Bible where God mentions feelings in relationship to love. He wept over lost souls because He loved them while they were still lost (see Luke 19:41; John

11:33, 38). Yet, there was nothing in those people to stir up His feelings. People seldom responded to His love and often reacted violently. Yes, Jesus wept, but not because there was something going on in mutual response patterns through His feelings. It was because He loved the lost and knew they were going to hell.

Because God is love, God does not have to choose to love. God does have to choose to fellowship with us through His love; He does choose how to respond if I love Him; and He does choose how to respond to my prayers. But God is love, and He does not have to choose to love.

Chapter Two

THE SECRET OF LOVING

It is so vital to understand that the anointing breaks the yoke of bondage in relationships, and it is how we receive deliverance. I am not talking about having an experience; I am talking about receiving.

From the soles of our feet to the top of our head—this includes the mind—there is no soundness in us (Isaiah 1:6). That is a humbling thought. It means that we have to be Spirit-filled every day. We must choose to be filled with God every day—with God's viewpoint, God's attitude, and God's power—because there is absolutely no soundness in us.

Our old sin nature is not one bit better today than it was the day we were born. Salvation came and redeemed us, and now as the creatures, we honor the Creator as our Redeemer. But we must purpose to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

After having little sleep and with a full

schedule ahead of me, when I get out of bed in the morning, I don't always "feel" in love with God—and I don't feel out of love with God. Still, I love Him.

So, to wake up fully, I take a shower, *then* I get on my knees and say, "God, I purpose to be filled with Your Spirit today." I purpose in my heart to bless people, to receive and to honor them, no matter who they are or where they are, no matter what time it is. I choose to love my wife on purpose, by doing little things just to bless her.

I say to God, "I know that the answer for this day is that You would fill me with Your Holy Spirit right now, before I leave this room."

When I am filled with the Holy Spirit, I don't have to consciously choose to love, because the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in my heart (Romans 5:5). Then, the Spirit takes that love and manifests it through me. Psalm 46:4 describes a river, "the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." That river is love. And when we choose to put God first, He is in the midst, and we shall not be moved (Psalm 46:5).

Choose to Overcome Self-Consciousness

We have to choose to be filled with the Holy

Spirit. God is love; His Spirit is love; so when we are filled with the Spirit, even though we have to make constant voluntary choices to do it, we love. If we stay filled with the Spirit, we love. That is the secret to loving. It is the secret to loving God, the secret to loving yourself, and the secret to loving one another in the Body of Christ.

We do have to choose to be filled with the Spirit, and we do have to pray to express that love through God's nature. But the Spirit is love, and God is love. Therefore, love does not have to *choose* to express itself because it already is love.

So many problems between husbands and wives happen because one of them was deceived at the Tree of Knowledge concerning self-knowledge and emotional goodness. In practical application, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is the conscience. Prior to Adam and Eve eating from that tree, man did not have a conscience. As soon as they ate of its fruit (Genesis 3:6), the conscience began to function. Before that, Adam was only God-conscious. Now he was self-conscious, which fights God-consciousness. Self-consciousness makes us aware of our nakedness, of what we lack, and causes us to seek a covering of fig leaves. But a natural covering is inadequate.

Now, because of Adam, we have knowledge about ourselves and our needs. Our knowledge can produce good feelings if we choose to favor and fulfill ourselves. When that is the case, we try to take that knowledge and those emotions and harness them together. The result is a "good" life that is natural but not spiritual.

Demonized through Feelings

After thirty years of marriage and having several beautiful children, a woman left her husband to have an affair with a man who was young enough to be her son. After she got a divorce, her boyfriend took off, and she almost had a nervous breakdown. She had interpreted their sensual relationship as "newly found love." Instead, it was a newly found demonic relationship.

It is so sad when people considering marriage take what is pure and let it become demonized (through fornication, for example), even when they really do care for each other. They are saved, but Satan gets in with a demon to distort the original purity of their relationship.

Confessing that you are "in love" does not please God. Faith pleases God. I love my wife; I would do anything in the world for her. But my

love is not just based upon feelings. Our love is first based on the objective love of God for us because of the value He places on us, and then on a subjective love for each other that does not depend on a response in order to be fulfilled.* Therefore, we are secure about each other because we are secure in Christ.

**For more about subjective and objective love, read* The Love of God*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

LOVE RESTS ON THE PREMISE OF JESUS CHRIST

"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31*b*).

Whether you are serving God on the mission field or serving the Body of Christ in the local church, once you have been called by God, never relate to your feelings concerning the call.

In other words, when things are not going well, don't let your feelings drive you out of your call. Your call should never change because of the way you feel today about a situation. Don't let feelings take you away from a divine relationship and a divine purpose.

Feelings are a terrible way to guide a person into objectivity. Emotions without the Cross and without the Holy Spirit's affection are never objective. Emotions are always subjective, and if the Holy Spirit is not ruling in our minds, then our emotions will try to make decisions. We may

call it our mind, but it is not the mind operating at all: It is the emotions. Emotions were designed by God to respond to and appreciate truth. They were not designed to think, yet many people are caught in a vicious cycle of trying to reason through their feelings.

How many times have you heard someone say, "I don't *feel* good about this"? We should never confess how we feel regarding issues of spirituality and obedience to the Word of God.

"But I *have* feelings," you say. "I have emotions." We all do. But emotions have nothing to do with the premise of our spirituality. Never let anyone tell you that they do. Emotions are the center for appreciation in a well-balanced soul. They are the means of enjoying the premise of a thought. Our premise for spirituality is Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ and His words that become life through the Spirit.

If I heard that my wife had become very ill, I would immediately weep. The love that I have for her would be expressed through my tears. I would actually feel that love in my emotions. A similar godly expression is shared in a sexual relationship between a husband and his wife.

Christians need to have this premise rooted in our hearts: We do love, but we don't always

feel love. We love because Love is in us.

Who Is on the Lord's Side?

The children of Israel had been wandering for some time in the wilderness, and they didn't "feel" good about God's leader nor His provision. In fact, they felt that God had forsaken them, and they began to think with their emotions. They rebelled and began to worship idols while Moses was on the mountain (Exodus 32:1). When Moses came down and saw their wickedness, he said, "You that love the Lord, get on the right side" (Exodus 32:26). They had to make a choice, and the Levites chose God.

At the end of Joshua's life, he addressed the nation of Israel, saying, "…choose you this day whom ye will serve…" (Joshua 24:15). Again, God's people were required to make a choice. He didn't say, "Choose you this day whom ye will love"; he said, "Choose you this day whom you will *serve*."

Our choices reveal our love. If we love God, then we won't do things that hurt God and grieve the Holy Spirit. Our choices will reveal our obedience and our love for God. This is how it ought to be.

If I love my wife, I will never intentionally

hurt her, because my choice will be to honor her through the love that I have. That love is expressed and experienced through choices.

If children learn to love God and love their school, then they will make right choices to honor and respect it no matter how they feel when things aren't going so well for them. Occasionally we see young people, even from godly homes, make choices to represent the world in their fashions and lifestyles. They are choosing a love for the world, and they need to understand that though the choices are theirs, the consequences are up to God.

With God, it is not important how much I love but how much I have faith in God who gives me His love. In its eternal sense, in the sense of the Cross of Jesus Christ, my love is revealed through my faith that serves by love (see Galatians 5:6).

The Spirit Gives Unconditional Love

Think of that woman with the crippling disease that put her in a wheelchair. After two short years, she died. If her husband's faith served her by Calvary's love from the Word of God and through the power of the Spirit, then he would have been right there wheeling her around, lov-

ing her, building her up, telling her how much he loved her. He would have expressed his love with his emotions more than before she became ill—not out of pity, but out of unconditional love expressed through the senses by the source of love, Jesus Christ.

The Spirit gives us unconditional love. We don't have it in ourselves. When we are filled with the Spirit, we have love. The objects of our love—our spouse, our children, a brother in Christ, a lost soul—need to have that love expressed. We can express it with great feelings. But notice the difference: Our love is not a feeling, though it is expressed in great feelings, because it is there all the time. But objective love now has feelings, because we are responders to the truth of the divine Source.

We were saved when we received Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9). That was a choice. The choice was made with faith. Right choices, faith, and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us by love are the keys to maintaining our minds, our thoughts, and our feelings (which are genuine and real). We have the reality of a brand-new life.

Chapter Four

OBEY GOD, EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE IT

"How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

"How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

"Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death" (Psalm 13:1-3).

Many people make choices based upon feelings, and often without realizing it. We may get so busy that we are tempted to stop being faithful to church—we are tired, and we just don't "feel" like going. When the details of life take priority, it is a result of not having a personal relationship with God by faith.

There will be many times when we don't *feel* God, even though we are in His presence. That is when we must learn to exercise our faith to-

ward God, when we don't feel Him. How do we do it? By obedience. How do we obey? By making choices. And what are we to choose? Faith, and not the sight of personal experience.

We choose life. We choose love. We choose light—the Bible, the Word of God. We choose these things. Once we are filled with these things, we simply express them through the operation of God, or *energeia* (Ephesians 1:17-19). The power of the Holy Spirit transfers the Word into our hearts, and we are able to be ministers of His life. It almost becomes involuntary at times, an overflow of who we are through the filling of the Spirit and the Word of God.

Commit Others to God

The Psalmist wrote, "I am sorrowing, I am sick and tired, and I have the pain of my own soul counseling me" (see Psalm 13:2). How many people would be helped if they would believe this message instead of letting their own feelings counsel them!

A lot of people go through trials and fail. And if we know someone who fails or sins against us two or three times a year—or even seventy-times-seven times—we are not to put him on trial. Why should we? When a believer

in Christ fails, instead of putting him on trial we should let it be a trial of *our* faith. In God's eyes, the one who is weak is not on trial. Instead, God delivers *us* up to be "rubbed the wrong way" so that His life can flow out of us to those who need it (2 Corinthians 4:12).

God will test us through the trials of our faith, which will add degrees of glory to our soul bodies. That causes our light to shine, and people in the world see a difference. Those degrees of glory will be added to our glorified bodies in heaven, should we pass the trial.

Just agree with God and choose to let Him handle the situation. Communicate what is necessary and choose to trust God for that person's life. Then trust the person by trusting God for the consequences of your faith.

A Heavenly Trust

"But, I don't trust people," you say.

I trust people because I trust God for people. This is what Jesus meant when He said He didn't commit Himself to men (John 2:24). In John 17:6-26, Jesus committed all those who would believe on Him to the care of the Father. In so many words, He said to Peter, "I am still going to let you be an apostle and, when you are older, you

will be a good one" (see John 21:18).

The Lord made a commitment to Peter, and He didn't take away Peter's rank even in the midst of his failure. "I know you will not serve properly now," He said to Peter, "but when you are an older man, you will die for Me."

Some scholars teach that Jesus didn't trust people. But in fact, He did. He committed men to the Father's trust; and because He trusted the Father and what the Father would do, Jesus could trust the man. That is how He trusted Peter. Jesus looked beyond Peter's failure and saw his potential; He looked beyond his fault and saw his need. Furthermore, Jesus never seeks a divorce from a believer, nor does He put a believer on probation. He will never ever leave a believer (Hebrews 13:5).

If your love relies on feelings, it is not God's love, and it is not of faith. You do not have a faith that serves by love, which is the faith of Jesus Christ, not your own. You can rationalize it away, but you cannot go against the truth. These are absolutes from the Word of God.

Regardless of how much you "feel" or don't feel it, just choose to respond to God's love. Choose by faith to love God. Choose to obey Him by faith, and you will realize that you are

in Love.

We don't have to go to a seminar to learn how to love with God's love. We only need to choose to be filled with the Holy Spirit and we will have love. Come whenever the Word of God is preached and hear it with an open heart. Then go away saying, "Yes. I accept what God says." Choose to be Spirit-filled.

CONCLUSION

A woman once said to me, "I haven't loved my husband for thirteen years."

"You are not telling the truth," I responded gently.

"I am trying to be honest with you, and you call me a liar?"

"Listen to me," I said. "You have put up with him for all these years. You have held two jobs while he was drunk half of his life. No one else has shown him the kind of love you have shown. You didn't even leave him when you had every right to leave him."

"Oh," she said.

"Of course, maybe you don't 'feel' that you are in love with him. God loves him, but even God doesn't feel in love with him the way he is."

I explained that God is love, but we don't see Him expressing love to Satan or to the demons. They are out of His plan forever. The unsaved will go to hell, and hell is a horrible place filled

with terrifying emotions, "where their [conscience] dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44, 46, 48). But hell doesn't touch the emotions of God. Because of His perfect justice (which included a plan for every soul to be saved), He will laugh when He sends people to their final judgment—but only after they reject the Savior who loved them and died for them on the Cross.

She said, "I have condemned myself all these years for not loving him."

I started to weep as I said to her, "I have never seen the kind of love you have. You *have* loved him. You just couldn't feel anything for him. God also can't have an objective love relationship with him, because your husband hasn't wanted one. And that means God has no feelings to exchange with him."

God died for that man and was ready to forgive him in a moment. His wife was ready to forgive him, too. She hadn't forsaken him.

She went home and told her husband she was sorry for not ministering love to him. Filled with the Spirit, she expressed God's unconditional love. Today, that man is saved, and together they are serving God faithfully.

They each made a choice. That is all it takes.

Choose Whom You Will Serve

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INTRODUCTION

Every one of us has been given a free volition—the right to choose how we will behave when faced with a decision. Adam and Eve chose to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Their choice was plainly in violation of God's command (Genesis 2:16-17), and it has had far reaching effects. Today we walk in bodies of death as a result of their decision.

This right to choose extends to the plan of salvation. No one is forced to receive Jesus Christ as his or her Savior; whosoever will may come unto Him (John 3:16). Yet, failure to make a choice to receive His free gift of salvation has a consequence. By not choosing forgiveness, a person chooses to spend eternity in hell, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48).

Every moment, Christians make choices for or against the purpose of God. By God's Word and the Holy Spirit we learn to choose life in

every situation. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. The more we hear and receive truth, the better equipped we will be to make right choices. In these pages, we look at the importance of choosing life and blessing, and what this means for our eternal destiny.

Chapter One

"CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY"

"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

"In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land wither thou goest to possess it.

"But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

"I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.

"I call heaven and earth to record *this day* against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: *therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live*" (Deuteron-

omy 30:15-19).

In these last days, man must live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4). The Word is what will judge Christians at the Bema Seat. It will judge the unbelievers at the Great White Throne (John 12:48).

Moses said to Israel, "Behold, I set before you *this day* a blessing and a curse" (Deuteronomy 11:26). Joshua told Israel, "...Choose you *this day* whom ye will serve….but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). The psalmist said, "*This* is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). The apostle said, "…*Now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

With God, it is always, "this day," and "now." In an age that is so near to its end, I pray that we would begin to take in solemnly, fervently, and seriously what the Word of God is teaching. Ecclesiastes 5:1*a* says, "Keep thy foot when [you enter into] the house of God, and be more ready to hear." In Mark 4:24 we read, "Take heed what ye hear." Luke 8:18*a* declares, "Take heed therefore how ye hear." James 1:19 encourages us to be swift to hear. No one needs to make "uninformed" decisions. God is always speaking. The

question is, how are we listening?

Every one makes serious choices each day. Every choice affects our eternal standing. Unsaved people are choosing death and hell. Saved people are choosing their degrees of happiness in heaven. There will be no unhappiness in heaven, but there will be degrees of happiness. Some will receive the reward of the Morning Star Order, the highest rank given to believers, and they will have access to the Tree of Life.

During the one-thousand-year reign of Christ, everyone who is saved will have perfect, glorified bodies. Yet many will only observe certain activities, having suffered the loss of rewards; while mature believers, who received an abundance of grace and were willing to go all the way in obedience to God, enjoy opportunities to reign with Christ. That is why every time the Word of God is preached, we have some crucial decisions to make.

Imputed Sin, Imputed Righteousness

Before we ever committed sin, God imputed sin to each of us. Adam sinned, and because of God's foreknowledge, all-knowledge, and His brilliant plan, God graciously charged us with that sin. That imputation was an act of love sup-

ported by a godly reason.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," David wrote in Psalm 51:5. And "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death was passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). Understanding that, you can see why it was so important that we were charged with sin before it happened.

Because He knew that each of us would sin personally, God imputed sin to us. In His plan, Jesus died on the Cross for *all* people (2 Corinthians 5:15; Hebrews 9:28). Therefore, because of His justice, He could account our faith as righteousness when we believed—even while we were ungodly (Romans 4:5)! God said, "I imputed sin to them before they actually performed any sinful works. So now when they believe, I will impute My righteousness to their account, apart from works (see Romans 4:6). Though they don't yet know how to live godly, I will instruct them with My life" (Romans 5:10).

This is the brilliance of God's plan. If He had waited until we sinned to charge us with the offense, His own perfect justice would not allow Him to impute His righteousness. No matter how much we believed in His goodness, we

would all be in hell forever.

There is a difference between imputed sin and personal sins. In addition to being born with Adam's old sin nature, the Bible also says that as soon as we were born, we began to personally sin through conscious decisions (Psalm 58:3*b*). All have sinned, and there is none righteous (Romans 3:10, 23). But we are saved by believing that Jesus died, shed His blood, was buried, and rose again to pay for personal sins—past, present, and future. Our personal sins have all been wiped away; they were placed on Jesus at Calvary, and there is no record of them. Still we have bodies of death because of imputed sin. So now, because Christ also died for our imputed sin, the Father is free to impute His perfect righteousness apart from our works and the Law.

Point of Decision: The Cross

The Father meets us through the Blood of His Son shed for us on the Cross of Calvary. He became "sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). He bore our sins in His body upon a tree (1 Peter 2:24). The Lord Jesus, the God-man, took care of our sins and in-

iquities on Calvary, and paid for them. The Just died for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18).

If I call upon the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13), if I hear and receive the Word of God in meekness, and if I believe it, then I pass from death unto life (John 5:24), and I am saved.

Now, however, I have an option: Do I want to become a serious, meaningful disciple of Jesus Christ, or just be saved and go to heaven? Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Anyone who would follow Christ must take up the Cross daily and follow Him (see Luke 9:23).

As Christians, we have a choice. God will not force His will upon us. We can be candidates for His Crown of Righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), His Crown of Life (James 1:12), His Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:19), His Incorruptible Crown (1 Corinthians 9:25), and the Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:4). We can choose to become candidates for His Morning Star Order (see Revelation 2:26-28) and to partake of the marvelous Tree of Life (Revelation 2:7). Or, we can simply go to heaven and be happy, but without rank and without rewards. It is entirely up to us.

Chapter Two

OUR BODIES BELONG TO HIM

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10-12).

These verses make it clear that Christians will be judged at the Bema Seat.* Each of us will stand alone before God Almighty in the Supreme Court of Heaven and receive rewards (or suffer loss of rewards) for the things done in our bodies.

The Word of God says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

We have to present our *bodies* before God. This is why: "What? know ye not that *your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you*, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

The condition of my soul and spirit determines what I do in my body. I present my body through the mercies of God so that He will renew my mind. I will not be conformed to this world in my body, but instead I will be transformed by the renewing of my mind, with my measure of faith.

Some people should be somewhat troubled by the phrase "we will be judged by what is done in our bodies." Christians who smoke and drink are doing harmful things to their bodies—

even secular scientists would say this. Others are sensual and lascivious with bodies that are not their own, destroying their souls and risking many diseases. We have been bought with a price, therefore we are to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits. We are to present our bodies to God (Romans 12:1). He will evaluate everything on the basis of what we have done in our bodies.

Unsatisfied Desires

Job prayed, "That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more" (Job 34:32). The problem we have is that "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing" (Ecclesiastes 1:8). Proverbs 27:20 says, "Hell and destruction are never full: so the eyes of a man are never satisfied." I watch Christians who are confused. Many have good jobs, good marriages, but they are not satisfied.

"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people"

(Habakkuk 2:4-5).

Speaking of the unredeemed, Isaiah 5:14 says, "Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it." People drink alcohol because they are not satisfied without it. They start enlarging themselves, becoming ensnared by more things, because their souls are not fulfilled. People get involved in wrong relationships because their souls are not satisfied. They enlarge themselves just as hell enlarges itself. Just as hell is never full and death goes on forever, their desire is never satisfied.

"Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones from the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations" (Isaiah 14:9).

**We suggest reading these other booklets by Pastor Carl H. Stevens from Grace Publications*, The Morning Star Order, *1998*, The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?, *1996*.

Chapter Three

THE JUDGMENTS OF ETERNITY

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

The judgment at the Bema Seat is for the Christian. There, we will hear from the Master. He will either say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant" or He will pronounce us as losers, even though we are saved forever. For ex-

ample, if He must declare me a loser because of the wrong choices I made after I was saved, for that brief time I will be ashamed (1 John 2:28).

We are presenting the Scriptures to you accurately and categorically, giving chapter and verse so that you can check it out for yourself. It takes much study to provide detailed truth such as this.

At the Bema Seat, the only foundation we have is Christ. He is a *sure* foundation and that is why our salvation is secure. But how we have built on that foundation will be tested. If any build with gold (representing deity), silver (redemption), or precious stones (our life in the Body of Christ), what he has built will abide and he will receive great rewards. However, if our works were built of wood (human effort serving God), hay (emotionalism), or stubble (not properly hearing the Word of God and having it spiritually aborted because it is not received in faith and meekness, in James 1:21), they will be burned up when tested by fire. Though he is saved from hell, this Christian suffers loss. He won't receive any rewards, and all of his works will be burned up in front of him.

An Interview with Jesus

Imagine standing before Jesus Christ and

having Him ask some very specific things.

"How faithful were you to your church? In Hebrews 10:25, my Word says you are not to forsake the assembly, but to gather much more as you see the day approaching. But according to my records, you said you were too busy."

"Also," He will say, "the last words I spoke on earth concerned soulwinning (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Let's see how many times you actually went."

He won't stop there. "Remember I said that you should love others as I have loved you (John 13:34). Let's see what the record says."

Remember, Jesus is the faithful one. He promised never to leave us and never to forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). That includes the times when we may have wished He would leave us alone, or when we were so occupied with ourselves that we forgot He was there.

This day God gives us a choice between life and death. Right now, He gives us a choice between good and evil. Heaven will be called to record this day against us, and heaven *does* record it. God sets before us a choice: life and death, a blessing and a curse. Let us choose life so that we and our families may live.

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works…

"…And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:10-15).

The White Throne Judgment for the unsaved will come one thousand years after the Bema Seat judgment for the saved. Remember, those who are saved are resurrected unto life. The unsaved, however, are resurrected unto damnation in bodies that cannot die, that will spend eter-

nity in hell (John 5:29).

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm [(conscience)] dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-48).

This is what the Bible says. Do we really grasp the urgency of the message? If your foot offends you, cut it off. Of course it doesn't mean to do that literally, but it means to stop walking in the wrong behavior. We have a responsibility, because of God's provision, to take godly measures and keep ourselves from offensive behavior. It is better to enter into life with one foot

than to go to hell with two feet. It is better to enter into life with one eye than to go to hell with two eyes, where the worm dies not—where the conscience never stops—and the fire is not quenched.

That is what the *Bible* says.

Chapter Four

THE REALITIES OF HEAVEN AND HELL

Multitudes who go to church each week are not saved. At best, many have made pre-salvation confessions, but they have never been changed through the grace of God. They get weary when the truth is spoken; and because they come under so much conviction, they cannot wait to get out the door. If they remain as they are, they will face the White Throne Judgment for unsaved "believers"—those who only made a profession with their mouth but they never had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ nor regeneration through the Cross.

For believers, there is heaven, where there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain. The former things are passed away. All things become new (Revelation 21:4-5). In heaven, there will be a grand reunion of all God's people for ever and ever and ever. Heaven,

where we will see no sin or corruption (Revelation 21:27). Heaven, where there will never be a drugged soul, never a drink taken, never a robbery or any other crime committed. There will be no more immorality and never another sin.

In heaven, our bodies will be pain-free forever. There, we will have continual joy in rejoicing with God. We will enjoy a prepared place as a prepared people (John 14:2-3). Heaven is where we will live and flourish and be in fellowship with God. It is where Jesus the Lamb will fill the city of God with His light (Revelation 21:9-27). Several times light is mentioned in Revelation 21:23-24. Heaven is a place where there is no moon and no sun but perfect light. Yes, we will be in heaven!

Pulling Others from the Fire

When we go soul-winning, we go to help others get to heaven. Christ's forgiveness is by grace through faith and not of themselves. They must receive mercy, not condemnation: That is heaven! Christ died for one as much as He died for all. To go out and win one soul to Christ is worth more than all the world (Mark 8:36).

Our ministry has people going out soul winning seven days a week—mornings, afternoons,

evenings. We have made an impact in over 150 countries. This happened because we chose to believe the Bible. We believe what the Bible says about heaven and hell. We believe in judgment for the believers as well as for the unsaved. We believe that through grace we are made complete in time because we are seated above with Christ in God. We believe that when we fail, the principle of rebound restores us back to fellowship with God (1 John 1:9). We have a beautiful place called heaven that is prepared for us, and we are being prepared to live there forever.

In heaven, we will have glorified bodies that are unrestricted by the laws of the material universe. We won't have mansions with someone on the top floor and someone else on the bottom. If we could understand the dimensions of heaven, we would know that even with all the redeemed men and women of all time there, heaven will never be crowded. Jesus walked through walls and we will be as He is.

Heaven is waiting for every Christian. For us to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21). When we go through physical death, we are absent from the body and present with God (2 Corinthians 5:8). Thank God that in heaven, there will be no death. There will be no hospi-

tals, no graveyards, no funerals. There will be no heartaches and no sorrow (Revelation 21:4) because of God's precious place called heaven—a prepared place for a prepared people who have accepted the grace of God.

The Unquenchable Fire

Then, there is hell. The Beast and the false prophet will be cast into hell at the end of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 19:20), and one thousand years later they will still be alive when Satan is cast in there with them (Revelation 20:10). Hell is a bottomless pit, according to Revelation 9:2—a place where the conscience never dies.

"And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against [God]: for their worm [(conscience)] shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (Isaiah 66:24).

This speaks of one of the saddest things we as believers will ever experience in our lives. After the White Throne Judgment, God will destroy the earth with fire. There are some who say He will do it with the most powerful nuclear weapons, but that is wrong. The words that pro-

ceed from the Lord's mouth will do the burning—not any device of men. It will be the words that come from Jesus' mouth without a shot being fired (Revelation 19:13-16).

Now, in Revelation 21:4-5, every tear will be wiped away from our eyes, and all things will be made new. But before that happens, before God wipes away the tears, God is going to lift the veil and show us what hell is like (Revelation 20:10-15). He wants us to see what grace has saved us from. He wants us to see what His Son did for us. So although we will have glorified bodies, He will pull back the veil, and we will actually see hell.

For a terrible moment we will look into hell, where the fire is not quenched. We will see people who cannot do away with their memories from the earth. "Their worm dieth not"—their conscience will plague them forever. Isaiah 66:24 says we will see the carcasses of those whose consciences won't quit. If they were drinkers, they will constantly desire a drink. Lovers of pleasure who ignored going to church on Sundays and just played around will always want to do that, but they will never be fulfilled. Maybe that statement offends you, but that is what the Bible says. A pastor who fears God

doesn't fear men. As a pastor, I don't want to face God and have Him say to me, "You didn't dare to say it even though you knew it." I do know it, and I dare to say it.

The Destiny of Lovers of Pleasure

Second Timothy 3 tells us that in the last days, perilous times will come. Men will be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. They will have a form of godliness, but it will just be a form with no substance. They will go to church when they feel like it, but their hearts are just one beat away from the last beat that will send them into eternity, no matter what their age. Because they love pleasure more than they love God, they have made a choice for death and curses rather than life and blessings.

So many waste time on pleasures and take chances on eternity. It is better to obey God than to obey men (Acts 5:29). Don't set out on a "sentimental journey." Put God ahead of man, and take a journey to Calvary through the Cross, through the Word, through the power of the risen Christ, the ascended Lord. I am not on a sentimental journey to please men and women. I have chosen to take a journey where I take up my Cross to please my God.

CONCLUSION

Familiarity toward God, His Word, and His Body is the major temptation people face today. Don't be haphazard with decisions that affect your eternal destiny. To enjoy eternity, you need to have an eternal purpose through an eternal provision: eternal life with grace and love.

Every moment, choose to live with eternity in view. Someone will die today at age 18. Someone else will die today who is only 25 years old. Neither one thought he would die so soon. We would be shocked if we knew how old some people are according to God's timetable.

With this in mind, we realize the importance of making proper choices for God. Our choices reveal our value system. A person with the right value system will always want the truth and will follow that truth in making his decisions. If you have never asked the Lord Jesus to be your Savior, there is no other choice that is more important. To confirm your decision, simply pray

to God the Father:

Dear Lord, I know I am a sinner. I believe that You sent Your Son, Jesus, to die for my sins on the Cross two thousand years ago. Thank You that you washed away all of my sins with Your precious Blood so that I could have eternal life. Please guide me in all Your ways this day and every day. In Jesus' name I ask it, Amen.

Choosing a Local Assembly

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

This message was preached in our local assembly in the fall of 1984. Our church is a non-denominational Christian ministry that honors all local churches through the operation of grace and by the practice of unconditional love. We are committed to teaching the objective Word of God through the study of categorical doctrine and the continual filling of the Holy Spirit.

This booklet presents scriptural guidelines in choosing a local church—a study of scriptures pertaining to this practical topic. Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will lead you into "all truth" and that the contents of this booklet will prepare you for your choice of a local assembly. The Word of God promises, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psalm 32:8).

In all of our decisions, God Almighty is Sovereign. Daniel 4:35 reinforces that God is Master of His Master Plan: "And all the inhabitants of

the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

As you make your choice to become part of a local assembly, prepare yourself in prayer and with the Word of God—in total submission to God's sovereignty.

Chapter One

WHAT THE CHURCH BELIEVES

One of the questions we most often hear from believers is, "What are some of the factors I should consider when choosing a local church?" The decision to attend a particular church is just as important as choosing a partner to marry! Both decisions are relevant in their value for our destiny.

Four Initial Considerations

How does a person choose a local assembly? First, the Word of God must be the standard for decision-making. The decision must not be made by weighing convenience and comfortability.

Second, you should not choose a local church because of what it can give you. The Laodicean church can offer you many luxuries—cushioned pews, lavish decor. There is nothing wrong with any of these things, but if there are no godly convictions in the message, it lacks the most vital

thing: the presence of God. The pulpit may communicate ear-tickling messages or capture you by its natural eloquence and comfortable surroundings. But without God's presence, it may as well be a lecture hall.

Third, you should not choose a local church because your best friend goes there. In other words, personality appreciation should not be the reason for choosing a local church.

Fourth, you should not choose a local church because of tradition—because your family has attended that church for years. Have you ever heard someone say, "My granddaddy went there and we have been going there ever since." That church may be great, but that is not the standard by which we should choose a local assembly.

It is vitally important to test everything we believe by the Word of God. The Bible says that man must live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). The Word of God reveals the mind of Christ, and it teaches us how to choose a local church.

God has given us a free volition. We can choose a church based upon the Bible's viewpoint, or we can make our decision from natural viewpoint, motivated by sentimentality, com-

promise, and fleshly support. Let's study more deeply what God has to say on the subject.

The Right Emphasis: Christ and His Word

Carefully consider some crucial questions that must be answered before we can choose a local assembly. First of all, does this church stay true to all the cardinal doctrines of the faith? Does the church believe in the historical creed of the faith passed down by the apostles, given to us through our forefathers? Do they accept the inherent, infallible teaching of the Word of God? Do they believe that all Scripture is given as God-breathed?

The Bible says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Does the church believe that no prophecy of Scripture is to be privately interpreted? "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy [Spirit]" (2 Peter 1:21). Use discernment; be certain that the church does not add or subtract from Scripture:

"…If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18*b*-19).

Beware if the pastor insists on privately interpreting the Bible. Find out exactly where the church stands in its presentation of the nature and character of God's essence.

We believe in the gifts of the Spirit for the edification of the Body of Christ and the individual believer today. But we do not believe in their overemphasis. Christ and the objective Word of God should be our emphasis.

Once it was the blessing, Now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, Now it is His Word;
Once His gift I wanted, Now the Giver own;
*Once I sought for healing, Now Himself alone.**

The Principle of Ignorance: No Excuses

Ignorance cannot be used as an excuse when we face God. A church member is responsible for all that God has allowed him to hear. If he

does not make a choice toward categorical doctrine, he will never escape responsibility by claiming that he is ignorant.

When you say, "I didn't know that," the Lord is going to say, "You could have known it!" "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant…" (1 Corinthians 10:1). Also, in Job chapter 35 they were ignorant and did not understand the light. Still, ignorance is no excuse for born-again believers, because we have all been given the same Holy Spirit who convicts of truth. Thousands of people are going to lose their reward at the Bema Seat because they haven't chosen the right local church. Many people think it does not matter, but the objective truth from Scripture is very clear.

Many Christian singers are more involved with entertaining than imparting the word of life to the audience. Who wants to be entertained when souls are going to hell? Christians should love the Finished Work, and the Word of God. A worship service should center on teaching the Word.

The Whole Counsel of God

The local church you join should have categorical doctrine, but it should also believe dog-

matically that Christ has finished the work of redemption—*forever!* (John 19:30). The work of salvation is by grace alone: grace plus nothing! (Romans 11:6). We receive grace for salvation, in Ephesians 2:8-9. We receive grace for growing, in 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." This includes repentance, in 1 John 1:9.

A ministry that doesn't understand the nature of God and His grace cannot express unconditional love to its members. When a church adds works to grace, the people inevitably become involved in other systems that are not divine. Infiltration of legalism, taboos, status symbols, and religious works will characterize that ministry.

A ministry that takes grace as a license to sin and does not hold true to the whole counsel of God's Word is a ministry filled with lasciviousness. A ministry that does not stay true to the tenets of grace is guilty of antinomianism and lasciviousness. "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condem-

nation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

Eternal Security

The next consideration is whether or not the pastor-teacher and the congregation study and apply the whole counsel of God. Learn to detect false teaching by applying the Word of God to every aspect of life within the church. The most fundamental belief in Christianity is the unlimited atonement. Christ finished the work that was necessary for salvation on the Cross. Still, many churches deny the principle of eternal security, and by doing so directly attack the nature of God.

Make it a point to find out if the church believes in eternal security. If it does not, it cannot reveal God's character, limiting your capacity to think and live with God. If the pastor does not reveal the truth about who God is, then he will not reveal the truth about what Christ has done. If you don't know the truth about who God is and what He has done, how will you be able to function in God?

Anyone who does not believe in eternal security will inevitably put other people under

bondage with legalism. Those who listen to pastors who deny the Finished Work of Christ do not know the true nature of God. Consequently, they are not able to experience what they have not been taught. Many Christians do not know how important this issue is. Very little has been written on this topic because many pastors do not teach the truth concerning the principle of eternal security.

Do not become familiar with this issue through mental slothfulness. Millions and millions are defecting from God's perfect plan because they have committed themselves to the wrong local assembly and they have become discouraged. All churches, including ours, must be evaluated from a scriptural viewpoint.

A Worldwide Vision for the Lost

Next, consider the global vision of the ministry to preach the Gospel. "Where there is no vision, the people perish…" (Proverbs 29:18). Does the pastor-teacher motivate his congregation to take an active part in God's vision for that particular church? (Note the following verses: Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-47, John 20:21.) Do they really have a vision to reach the lost and those who are in need

of healing? (Luke 19:10, Matthew 14:14). Do church members practice meekness—forgiving one another as Christ has forgiven us? (Colossians 3:12-13). Do they have a vision in word only or in the power of practical application? "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power" (1 Corinthians 4:20).

Does that local ministry seek God's kingdom first (Matthew 6:33)? Are they after *people* or are they after God *for* people?

There are many wonderful local assemblies where the pastor-teacher and the members live by every Word of God, winning souls, building up the brethren, always seeking to edify others. Pray, as King David did in Psalm 25:5: "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day."

** Taken from A.B. Simpson's poem, "Himself"; used by permission of Christian Publications, Inc., Harrisburg, PA 17101*

Chapter Two

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Another area to consider when choosing a local assembly is the structure of the church government. From the pastor-teacher to the newest members of the church, we all need to understand the principle of delegated authority. Portions in the Body of Christ need to be utilized, mobilized and organized. Elders should be given delegated authority to minister in certain situations. This is wise leadership. Yet, this authority is to be delegated from one pastor-teacher.

One pastor-teacher is to be responsible to Jesus Christ for any particular assembly. (Ephesians 4:11-16, Titus 1:5, 7). The pastor-teacher is to be the chief administrator as well as the communicator of Bible doctrine—the head of the table of organization.

The Bible is filled with examples of the principle of one pastor-teacher. Apollos was the pastor-teacher in Corinth, (Acts 19:1, 1 Corinthians

3:6). At different times, Timothy and Titus were pastor-teachers in Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17, 2 Corinthians 12:18). In Philippi, Epaphroditus was the only pastor-teacher (Philippians 2:25). In Ephesus, John was the only pastor-teacher. He succeeded the great man of God, Paul, who taught there for three years.

These men definitely needed and humbly received the help of many portions in the Body of Christ. Nevertheless, they were each responsible for the spiritual progress of their assembly under the headship of Jesus Christ, the one and only Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). The seven churches of Revelation chapters 2 and 3 had one "*angelos*" or messenger each. Therefore, in light of the Word of God and church history, and in order to function according to Scripture, a church must have one pastor-teacher.

In addition to the pastor-teacher, the right church government is made up of deacons who function according to 1 Timothy 3, Titus 2 and Acts 6. The principle of delegated authority, beginning with Christ as the head of the Church, is one of the most important biblical premises to consider when joining a local church, and can be more thoroughly understood with additional study.

Many born-again pastors do not know the true nature of God. Consequently, it is very difficult for the congregation to know God in His divine essence. Unless the pastor-teacher has an intimate heart relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, he will be incapable of leading his congregation to the Cross. Unless he is willing to lose his life, he will not find it. Unless he is anointed by God to preach the Word, he cannot impart God's life to others. It is impossible for a pastor to derive his life from Jesus Christ unless he is in communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit.

In many churches around the world, the Word is preached in the guise of intellectual knowledge and earthly wisdom. Is it any wonder why individual lives don't change? Yet, a remnant of believers are genuinely on fire for God. Their lives testify by the abundance of fruit they produce. Spirit-filled pastor-teachers who lay down their lives for their "sheep" produce disciples who go into all the world to preach the Gospel!

Another important consideration is this: Does the pastor demonstrate personal fervency

toward the study of the Word of God? A love for the Word will be seen in his precision as he rightly divides Scripture in the messages. Furthermore, he will encourage every believer to study the Word for himself. (See the following verses: 2 Timothy 2:15, Colossians 1:10, Philippians 1:9-11 & 19-21, Ephesians 3:16-19.)

Does he preach the whole counsel of God? The pastor may be a good fellow, educated in seminary, but not prepared to communicate doctrine. Paul said, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Does he preach the Word in love, in season and out of season? (2 Timothy 4:2). Does he reprove, rebuke, exhort with all divine, delegated, legitimate authority? Does he communicate doctrine with authority? Does he let his yea be yea and nay be nay? (Matthew 5:37). Or, is he fearful of the congregation's reaction? Does his message lose its sting because he is not willing to declare the whole counsel of God?

Our capacity for details of life will not go beyond the measure of doctrine that is imparted to us categorically. Categorical doctrine is truth from the Bible on related individual subjects that can be put together in the same doctrinal category, such as the doctrine of forgiveness. This

enables believers to think with God in accurate light, as set forth in the Word of God. (Study the following verses: 2 Peter 1:4, Psalm 119:133, Psalm 37:24, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5). How will we ever reach maturity if we are not given mature instructions?

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy [Spirit], whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

The Holy Spirit only reveals what you have received from Christ. He brings into remembrance what Jesus has taught us.

We cannot live beyond the content of what we think; we cannot think beyond the content of what we have received; and we cannot receive if we are never in a position to hear the Word of God. (Romans 10:17).

Godly Convictions

The local church should have a balanced intercessory prayer emphasis based upon consistent commitment from the people in the church. A 24-hour prayer chain could be established to fulfill the prayer commission of Ephesians 6:18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplica-

tion in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." We are instructed in the Word of God to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), "with one accord" (Acts 1:14*a*) for "men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

The prayer emphasis in a local church will determine the degree of its spirituality. Praying does not make us spiritual but it reflects our commitment to derive our life from God. Individual members should be encouraged to develop a solid devotional life, as well as corporate prayer. Husbands are responsible for the spiritual leadership in the home; therefore they are held responsible before God to establish a devotional life for their wives and family.

Finally, does the church tolerate slander, maligning or gossip? Does either the pastor or church members tolerate evil speaking? If they do and you know about it, you are committing spiritual adultery if you go there (Matthew 7:1-2, Romans 2:1-2, James 4:11-12, Romans 14:4, and Romans 14:10-13).

We are all sinners, but we must learn to repent and recover when we fail. We must practice true repentance as set forth in 1 John 1:9 and Proverbs 29:3: "If we confess our sins, He is

faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance." (Proverbs 29:3). We don't cover our sin; we confess to God and find mercy.

In God's eyes, His church is perfect, but with imperfect members. We all fall short in certain areas. But God wants us to beware of the *continual practice* of sin, rather than an occasional transgression. If we fail, do we quickly turn to the right point of reference, the infallible Word of God, and confess our failures to God? People in a local assembly ought to know each other after Christ, not after the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16).

Every local church needs to grow in wisdom, but it is better to start out with the Finished Work message and keep on that road. That is how we should handle the imperfections: Teach people the Finished Work! If any single area in the ministry is not covered with the truth, it will result in wrong trends that develop in people's lives. These may not appear to be negative trends at first, but in time they will be!

Dealing with Sin

Do they practice divine order in church discipline? When members of the congregation practice sin, does the person who knows about it go alone to the person who sinned? (Matthew 18:16). Do they practice accepting an accusation only when there are at least two witnesses?

"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15).

Do they deal with sin Biblically? What happens if the person who sinned repents and forsakes his sin? (Matthew 18:21,22; Ephesians 4:32; and Colossians 3:13). Has the pastor taught the congregation to forgive and forget unconditionally? Divine forgiveness always forgets. Do they love one another or do they make a practice of repeating the matter to others? "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Proverbs 17:9). Are they born for adversity when it comes in? "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17). The Scripture is very clear on this point.

I thank God for those who love this teaching of grace orientation, the Finished Work, the two great commandments to love God and to love one another (Matthew 22:37-40), and the great commission to go into all the world preaching the gospel, teaching, and baptizing—making disciples in every nation (Matthew 28:19-20).

Chapter Three

THE REVELATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Another important question relevant to choosing a local church is this: Does the local church teach and practice corporate body truth? 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 teaches this principle: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Believers must understand the positional truth of the Body so that they will be in union with our head, Jesus Christ. (Note the following scriptures: Ephesians 5:30, 1 Corinthians 6:17, Ephesians 1:22-23.) Jesus Christ is the head and we are His body—"the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:23*b*). In other words, does

the church teach that when we are saved, we are placed into union with Christ as His body through the Holy Spirit? (See Titus 3:5). We are all made to drink from one spirit.

In practical application, the corporate body of Christ receives from the pastor-teacher (Ephesians 4:11) to accomplish the three-fold purpose of Ephesians 4:12, which results in Ephesians 4:13. Verse 11 says, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Verse 12 says, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:" And verse 13 concludes, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Negative volition toward God results in Ephesians 4:17-19: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

Positive volition toward what the pastor-teacher teaches from the Word of God results in Ephesians 4:14, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Believers who use positive volition toward the pastor-teacher's ministry will experience the benefits spoken of in Ephesians 4:15-16 as well as Ephesians 4:32:

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Do the believers in the church lay down their lives to bare one another's burden fulfilling the law of love? (Galatians 6:2, 1 John 3:14). When they meet, do they edify one another? Does their speech minister grace?: "Let no cor-

rupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

Does the church follow the instruction of Romans 12:19-21?: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Built into a Spiritual House

Concerning the principle of edification, do the church members build up one another into a spiritual house? "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

Have the believers been built up by categorical doctrine in their soul? "That he would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in

love, May be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19).

An Attitude of Love

Consider the attitude of love amongst church members. Does the church produce an atmosphere where people know that God loves them in adversity, tribulation, persecution, as well as when they sin? Does the church teach the Word of God in a loving atmosphere so that everyone experiences that God loves each individual with the same kind of love?

God loves every individual with unlimited divine capacity. His love never changes, for God *is* love! (1 John 4:8). (Note the following verses: Romans 5:6-8, Jeremiah 31:3, Ezekiel 16:8, Zephaniah 3:17, John 13:1.) The church has a powerful commission to love the brethren! If a man sins, and he is treated with the same love that he experienced before he sinned to restore him, he will know that he is in the right church. I am referring to the general attitude of the pastor of the ministry, rather than the members who follow

his example.

Do the church members love each other with unconditional love? "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). (See also: John 15:9, John 15:12, 1 John 3:14). Do the members reveal that they belong to God's royal family and love one another with God's unconditional love or are they petty, indifferent, judgmental, resentful and reactionary? While they do practice the love of God, does the ministry also take a stand against sin, and unrighteousness? Do they live by the conviction that Christians are ministers of grace and love? Does the ministry teach that faith is the only way to please God? Do members respond to the promises of grace?

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

(See also Romans 1:17, 2 Corinthians 5:7). Even as salvation is by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), so we must go from faith to faith as we grow (Romans 1:17). We know that faith is the act of believing God's Word which leads to receiving unmerited favor from God.

The Family

Every one of us who call ourselves Christians will have to give an answer to God at the Bema Seat, because we are personally responsible for our walk with God. Did we lead our families by the Holy Spirit's guidance, the divine guidance spoken of in Romans 8:14-15?:

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Did we allow the Word of Christ to dwell in us richly? (Colossians 3:16). Did we live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God? (Matthew 4:4). Did we allow God to lead us where the shepherd feeds the flock and causes them to rest at noon? (Song of Solomon 1:7).

The institution of the family is sacred in God's sight. Decisions made by both a husband and his wife must be based upon the objective Word of God in every situation. Children should be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). The pastor-teacher is responsible to invest in both the husband and the wife so that each member of the family, in-

cluding the children, will grow in their capacity to serve God and be filled with the Word. Developing the right spiritual balance in the family is vital.

Proverbs 11:1 says, "A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is His delight." Seek the proper balance. First, develop your own prayer life, then invest what you receive from the Lord in your family. Serve in the local church wholeheartedly in whatever God calls you to do. Build with gold, silver, and precious stones that will remain forever rather than wood, hay, and stubble that will be burned to ashes (1 Corinthians 3:9-17).

If a woman is saved and her husband is not, she should heed these instructions: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives" (1 Peter 3:1).

Brand-New Options

When you are in the right church with the right pastor-teacher and the right body of believers, you will begin to develop a capacity in your conscience. This is the principle: Our conscience can make either right decisions or wrong

decisions—that is up to us. If we make wrong decisions, Satan steals our capacity for right decisions. When we make right decisions, we have brand-new options.

For example, when you learn the doctrine of eternal security, you have a new option in knowing that you are saved forever, according to 1 John 5:13. Then, when you begin to understand the doctrine of rebound, you discover the option not to continue in sin that grace may abound (Romans 6:2, 15-16).

Because we do have an old sin nature, and we have sinned, we can now confess sin and name it, and have our conscience cleansed, even though the sin is not on the record against us. And even if it has to be seven times a day (in some cases) before victory finally establishes the conscience (Proverbs 24:16), we can rebound and really mean it!

The more of the Word of God you have, the more options you will have. That is why it is so important to be in the right local assembly with the right pastor-teacher, hearing the right words to make right decisions in an evil and corrupt world. The right pastor-teacher will invest in you, pray for you, and study diligently to teach you.

A Word in Closing

The last point we would like to emphasize concerns the congregation's relationship with the pastor-teacher. "Remember them which have rule over you who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Hebrews 13:7).

We must always put God first in our lives. Obey the *whole* counsel of God. Do not listen to those who teach contrary to the objective Word of God.

The congregation should never adulate the pastor-teacher, nor put him ahead of the Lord. At the same time, they should realize that he has been gifted by the Lord to help further that church in its spiritual growth. The Word of God that he preaches needs to be received and applied as the Word of God.

These points on how to choose a local church have been given so that you will be able to make a mature and informed decision before God. Just as the wrong choice for a partner produces an unhappy marriage, the wrong choice for a church may produce a limited or an unhappy Christian life.

There is, however, a far greater reason for

choosing the right church. You and I are responsible to God for our decisions. Ask God to lead you to the place where He feeds His flock (Song of Solomon 1:7).

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

CONCLUSION

How many churches would fit the scriptural definition of a right local church? How many churches would be outside the realm of a possible choice when we consider obeying God's Word as our sole premise for our choice? You will find that most decisions for church attendance are made based upon comfort and convenience. "My friend goes there." "My wife feels good in that church." "My boy…,"—all of these examples are the wrong reasons for choosing a church. In summary, if the church you go to does not point to the Cross daily because of godly convictions, it is the wrong church.

The Holy Spirit will lead you into *all* truth, and He will guide you into the right decision regarding a "church home." Thank Him today for leading you to the right local church where you can serve Him fervently with an undivided heart.

Christ Is My Identity

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

This is the most beautiful, glorious, magnificent verse. As Jesus Christ is in heaven, so are we on this earth. Why? We are hid with Christ in God. And, if that is our position, in the Father's eyes we cannot be anything less than who He is.

Through Christ, you can be anything God wants you to be. You can do every single thing you are supposed to do and you can have everything you are supposed to have when Christ is your identity.

God is looking for men and women whose love is made perfect because they have accepted His perfect love toward them. He will supply all our needs. Forever and ever, He will see us in our position, seated above, in Him (Ephesians 2:6).

As this booklet will show, we need to let

God's thoughts echo in our hearts. And by accepting His perfect love, we will be edified and built up in the Body of Christ as we discover our true identity.

Chapter One

PURE, HONEST, LOVELY, AND TRUE THOUGHTS

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

A church is only as effective as its obedience excels in grace. Christians who make stepping-stones out of stumbling-stones are operating with God. But if we really study it, behind every operation performed through grace is one man's obedience to the privilege of thinking with God.

We have a responsibility to bring every thought into subjection to the mind of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). As we do, we will begin to realize that our thought life controls our confession. In fact, our thought life could even affect

our physical bodies. So, having a divine premise for thinking, the Holy Spirit controlling our bodies, and the promises of God for our confession gives us a combination that produces the issues of life in our hearts (Proverbs 4:23).

Each man and woman who is born again can live a complete life with Jesus Christ. No one needs to be dependent on someone else's relationship with God. Ultimately, it is through our personal relationship with Christ that we find our source of help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Recognizing Virtues

Ned Bedford, one of John Rockefeller's closest business advisers, told the story of how Mr. Rockefeller dealt with a man whose wrong decision cost his oil company a huge sum of money. Mr. Bedford made an appointment to discuss how to deal with the man. Expecting Mr. Rockefeller to be angry, even though the loss was not his fault, Mr. Bedford was prepared for a difficult meeting. When he went into the office, he noticed a notepad in Mr. Rockefeller's hands. On that pad was a list of twenty-five virtues that characterized the man who had cost Standard Oil two million dollars.

"You know this man has saved me money

five or six times—saved me far more than two million," Mr. Rockefeller said. "I am going to give him a raise."

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure and honest and lovely—these are the things we should think on. We need to think about the good reports and virtues we hear about people. Mr. Rockefeller practiced this; and as Christians, every one of us should practice this, too.

We should practice this with ourselves. I want you to wake up every morning and I want your hearts to be so thankful to God. Realize every day that you are God's man or God's woman. We are God's people and He wants us to grow into ladies and gentlemen—people who have matured in Christ's character.

Scripture shows that in 1 Corinthians 11:11, for example, the Greek word for "woman" is used to refer to females in general; while in 2 John 1 and 5, the word for "lady" specifically refers to a refined woman with an excellent Christian character. In God's eyes, there is a difference—and it has nothing to do with outward appearances.

Caring for Souls

"I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul" (Psalm 142:4).

This verse reveals one of the saddest situations, because at this point in David's life, no one would care for his soul. Churches cannot afford to let this happen to their people. We need to have love for people at *all* times.

So many are going through heartaches and suffering and pain. We need to know and recognize those who have needs among us. When we are in tune with God, we can weep when one person weeps and rejoice when one person rejoices.

I can be praying for someone I have not talked to in a while and just begin to weep because we have a spiritual connection. I may even break into tears because of certain things that person is going through. When my identity is in Christ, I will identify and respond to the things that are on His heart.

Chapter Two

IT'S THE HEART THAT MATTERS

"And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none" (Ezekiel 22:30).

"But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee" (1 Samuel 13:14).

"And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will" (Acts 13:22).

God wants men and women who are after His own heart. That is how God saw David. A person doesn't have to be perfect to fulfill all of God's will. He sees us according to our potential

and our capacity. He knows our genetics; He knows how we were reared up and how we were trained. He knows the good and the bad that each of us has been through.

What does He do with all this information?

"All that matters is a heart that is after Me—that's all I care about," God says. "They love Me. And when they fail, they receive My love. And, because of what I have placed in their hearts, they are kept from falling."

Have an Excellent Self-Image

In Jeremiah 5:1 we read, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it."

God needs people who can think categorically through grace and through the power of God—people who know they can be victorious through living by every word of God. That includes rebound. Every word of God includes the beautiful things that God does for us, because *as He is, so are we* in this world (1 John 4:17). This is an excellent self-image to carry into each day.

Every morning I say to God, "I am going to

have the best day of my life. I am broken before You because I love You. You are so amazing to me!"

Wisdom in Action

"The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7).

"Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb" (1 Samuel 25:3).

God has such a plan for women of God. The tender heart of the Holy Spirit ministers through women who are creative, responsive, and appreciative. God's plan is so amazing.

Abigail had a husband, Nabal, who was evil. David just wanted to kill him for the evil he had done, but Abigail intervened. In so many words, she told David to let God handle things.

Sure enough, God handled it. Nabal died and Abigail became the wife of the king.

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of

wisdom" (James 3:13).

"But as for you all, do ye return, and come now: for I cannot find one wise man among you" (Job 17:10).

As a servant of God, this is why I continue to study the Word so fervently. I just want to be able to have the wisdom of God to apply knowledge through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

God is looking for people who understand His heart and who allow Him to do His work in them. Take what the Word of God says so beautifully about the centurion, in Matthew 8:10. This man revealed the greatest faith Jesus Christ had seen. He believed the word Jesus spoke, and his servant was healed. That word was enough for him. He identified with Christ's authority and put his faith in that authority.

The Lord is looking for men and women with this kind of heart to be His counselors (Isaiah 41:28).

Chapter Three

CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: OUR ONLY HOPE FOR GLORY

"And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art" (Genesis 41:38-39).

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Matthew 15:28).

Many people have led terrible lives in sin. And in this life, many suffer the consequences of their decisions. But that will be one beautiful thing about heaven. Except for what is done through Christ, none of what is going on here on earth will matter. People from all over the world and every walk of life will come and sit at the feet of Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God.

Every one of our saved family members will be in heaven with glorified bodies. No old sin natures will be there to deal with.

Some people think that they go through hell on earth.

"What could be worse than this?" they declare.

"Wait and see," I would tell them.

We don't even remotely understand how terrible hell will be. In fact, I cannot preach a message about hell without weeping for those who will spend eternity there.

But when those same people cry out, "Is there any hope for me?" I love to tell them, "There is as much hope for you as there was for me."

God's Transforming Love

God loves a weak man in spite of his alcohol and promiscuity. If he would come and let God give him the gift of repentance and the power to change, he would be a new creation in an instant. A transformation would bring him a renewed mind and a renewed soul.

This man is closer to God than he thinks. He may be in bondage, but he is just as precious to God as the saved man who lives in and reveals

Christ as his identity.

It is self-righteous people who have the real problem. Their righteousness, which is apart from Christ's righteousness, is as filthy rags in the sight of God. They may be good neighbors, and I thank God for those who are. But the most shocking thing will be the day they wake up in hell and find that their works did not matter to God. They never personally received Christ by grace through faith, because they thought that they were good enough on their own.

There is not a single thing I can do to get saved except to believe. Furthermore, there is not a thing I can do to get unsaved. There is not a sin I could commit that would separate me from Christ.

Does this prompt me to sin? Far from it! Rather, it moves me to obedience, because I don't want to hurt Him or grieve Him. He is so good to take me just as I am. Why would I want to hurt Him? I am in Him and He is in me. Christ is my identity, and in Him I am complete.

CONCLUSION

Just think about this: The moment we were saved, the Holy Spirit sealed us (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). That means that no matter what we go through in this life, we *will* arrive in heaven with our glorified bodies—without a doubt. In the history of the universe, God has never given up on one of His own. A man has to die and go to hell before God will ever stop trying to win him. He keeps going after people, right up until their last breath, just as He did with the thief on the Cross.

Once we find our identification in Christ, He will never leave us nor forsake us. He gives us the Holy Spirit who justifies us, sanctifies us, and inhabits us. We are saved, and we are members of the family of God.

Oh, what joy there will be when the family of God reunites in heaven. What a glorious thing it will be to see Jesus Christ there. The men and the women of the Bible will be there. And all of

our loved ones from around the world will gather with us. We will enjoy our identity in Christ forever and ever and ever.

Christ: Our Portion Forever

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever asked God why certain people seem to be so blessed in this life? I am talking about unbelievers, people who seem to live very successfully apart from God. Some just seem to succeed in everything they do. They have fame and fortune and even good families. The world is theirs.

Therein lies the secret—the world is *theirs*. Their portion is totally involved with what is going on down here. One day, however, their portion in this world will be gone from them, either through death or through God's judgment. Moreover, with their portion will go everything into which they poured their lives.

A portion that will last forever, one that will stand through all that is to come, is a portion that must be *in* Christ. He and His Word alone will remain forever. The grass will wither, the flowers will fade, but what God declares shall be forever and ever.

This booklet will reveal that as Christians, we must recognize Christ as our portion, and Him alone. It is the only way we can be certain that what we do in our days on earth will last for eternity.

Chapter One

THE LORD MAINTAINS OUR CAPACITY

"Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword:

"From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes" (Psalm 17:13-14).

"Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 9:9).

Unless he is being motivated by Christ and led by His Spirit, a preacher could have a church of 25,000 yet have his portion in this life. It is not

wrong to have a big church. It is not wrong to be wealthy—get all you can and give all you can. Just be certain that Christ and His Word are motivating all you do. Some unusual, magnificent non-Christian marriages seem stronger than some Christian marriages. Nevertheless, it is all vanity when their portion is in this life instead of the Lord.

God does allow people to enjoy portions in this life. It is all a part of His logistical grace. To a certain extent, some criminals benefit here on earth from a measure of logistical grace. Their evil manipulations bring them some success and wealth. Some businessmen have become rich because of logistical grace, which allowed them to enjoy the fruit of smart marketing decisions.

Logistical grace is simply this: God allows the rain to fall on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5:45).

Lost Portions, Lost Lives

Eventually, the source of a person's portion is revealed. And, if his portion is in this life, it becomes obvious when he starts to lose it. During the great stock market crash of 1929—an event that led to the Great Depression of the 1930s—the number of suicides was overwhelm-

ing. For those people, their portions were in this life, and without their portions, there was nothing for them to live for.

Christians can have worldly portions in this life. In fact, that is exactly where Satan wants them to live. His demonic forces stimulate lust patterns, trying to get believers to connect their free volition to their old sin nature and then to live outside of God's will and provision for their lives.

Foolish jesting is one thing that makes evident a portion that is rooted in this world and not in eternity. Humor is wonderful; I love a good laugh. And really, we all need to laugh just to remain healthy. But some people are suggestive with their humor. The god of this world, the god of worldly senses, promotes that kind of talk among Christians.

Another problem I notice in Christianity is the influence of driving spirits. People with this kind of spirit interrupt conversations and always try to get their words in. They lack a capacity to rest in quietness and serenity through abiding in Christ.

Kept in the Midst of Captivity

"Great peace have they which love thy law:

and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165).

The significance of our portion reveals itself when we face difficulties. Consider Ezra, who was carried into captivity to Babylon with the rest of the nation. He had to endure vicious treatment by the soldiers. He saw his father murdered. He witnessed the brutal treatment of his brothers, and he himself endured the brutality of the soldiers. Still, in Psalm 119:57, Ezra could say, "The LORD is the portion of my life."

There is great peace for those who love doctrine. Nothing offends them. The Hebrew word for "offend" means "wound." Nothing can wound those who love the Word of God.

Ezra could say every morning, "I love the Word of God. I hate the abuse. But I must shake it off. They have hurt my body, but they cannot touch my soul. My portion is not in this life; neither do I have friends whose portions are in this world. God has delivered me from that."

This is such a godly way to live.

"The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot" (Psalm 16:5).

It was quite a journey that Ezra and the captives of Israel had to endure. They were chained together and forced to walk for miles every day.

They were fed spoiled meat and moldy bread.

All the while, though, Ezra taught doctrine. As they walked, as they labored, as they ate, Ezra tried to provide a portion that the children of Israel could hold onto—a portion that would last even when they had no food to eat.

Chapter Two

WE ARE THE FULLNESS OF GOD AND HIS INHERITANCE

"For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance" (Deuteronomy 32:9).

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that

which is to come:

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

"Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:17-23).

These are some of the greatest verses a Christian could consider. God created the angels. He created a chandelier of stars. He put the sun and the moon in the sky above. He made the beautiful mountains and the foliage. All of the beautiful valleys and streams and rivers and lakes are His.

Still, none of those things is as precious to Him as His people are.

"My people are My portion," the Lord said in Deuteronomy. "*They* are My inheritance."

The way Paul prayed for the Ephesians should come as no surprise. His desire for the disciples in the city of Ephesus was that they would gain a rich understanding and revelation of the knowledge of God. The apostle wanted their eyes to be opened so that they could enjoy the hope of their calling and God's fullness.

We are God's fullness. His inheritance is in us. We are the Lord's portion. The God who has all power and all knowledge, the God who is

everywhere present, the God who redeemed us and justified us while we were ungodly, this God says to us, "You are My portion forever."

Worldly Ideas and Familiar Spirits

Worldly wisdom cannot be our means. Money cannot be our portion. Furthermore, we must understand that we cannot afford to be intimately involved with those who have their portion in this life. This includes churches that may be evangelical and yet are into the numbers game, the money game, and the personality game but who are not glorifying Christ.

For those people, Christ is not their portion. They are caught up in familiarity with the things of God.

Thousands of demons exist simply to promote familiar attitudes among believers. Worldly Christians become very weary for no apparent reason, as they are open to the influences of demonic spirits. Prayer and soul winning are not important to them. They seem to be hypnotized supernaturally by what this world has to offer. Therefore, they become passive.

The tremendous powers of hell line up organized efforts to make people passive, and their ultimate job is to get Christians to live outside of

God's will.

This can happen so easily when people forget that they are God's portion and His inheritance. When your heart understands that you are His, and His forever, it becomes a joy to follow Him and to live in His provisions for your life.

Chapter Three

A PORTION THAT STANDS THE TEST OF FIRE

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

"My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalm 73:24-26).

The key to Christianity is receiving and believing the Bible, the precious Book of God. It lives in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. We know it has power because it kept young teenagers even while they were being abused on the way to Babylon.

Ezra became so filled with doctrine, he could pray, "God, quicken me according to Your Word. I have to overcome what the soldiers are doing so I can be ready to teach doctrine to my people this morning."

It is so important to hear the precious Word of God. We cannot function in the operational will of God if we are not receiving the Word with all of its power toward us on a regular basis, esteeming it as more than our necessary food (Job 23:12). Without the substance of faith, I cannot discover the perfect will of God for my life. During these Last Days, I am in constant need of the reality of the love of Jesus Christ pouring into my soul from the pulpit.

"The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.

"This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God" (Job 20:28-29).

Those who have their portion in this life will see those portions vanish. Their goods are gone. There is nothing left for them in eternity.

This fact became painfully obvious to a popular comedian and actor during the 1960s. He hired three men to research the Bible and disprove the existence of hell.

The comedian got cancer, and two weeks before he died, he was interviewed on nationwide TV.

The interviewer asked him, "Do you have

any fears?"

His answer: "I have this fear that there could be a hell."

This man's conscience was testifying to the reality of what is written in God's Word, despite his own disdain for godly authority. Now he was anxious over what would become of his portion. Within a short period, he died; and in eternity, we will find out whether this man got saved and understood the need to discover his portion in Christ.

As an unsaved but moral person, I was given Christian tracts to read about hell. Though I had been taught that there was no hell, something in me said otherwise. I started to believe that if there is a heaven, there has to be a hell, and that is how I found Christ as Savior.

Christ Must Be Our Only Desire

We have to decide, dear friends, what our portion is. We must ask ourselves this: Is there anything on earth I desire but Christ? This is so crucial because we never know when we will die.

I do not want any of us to be ashamed when we stand before the Bema Seat. There Jesus Christ will determine the rewards we will re-

ceive for the way we practiced our faith in this life. I know I do not want my works to be reckoned as wood, hay, or stubble.

Wood refers to things done in the flesh of human effort and not in the power of the Holy Spirit. Hay speaks of things accomplished through emotionalism—this is where the driving spirit lives. Stubble is doctrine aborted, meaning that people hear it but they never receive it and transfer it into operation in their life. The fire of eternity will burn those things up in an instant. They will count as nothing in eternity.

If, however, God counts my works as gold, silver, and precious stones, then I will receive rewards to enjoy forever and ever.

Gold represents the things done in a life that reflect the very nature of God. This Christian loves the same way God loves: through Christ (see John 15:12)—forbearing one another, forgiving one another, with Christ literally reflecting Himself through us as a vessel. Silver indicates the things redeemed in time because we exalted the Blood of the Cross. Precious stones refer to what we did as faithful members of the local assembly. We purposed to function and operate in a way to make the Body of Christ special (see 1 Peter 2:5, Ephesians 2:19-22).

Lucifer himself was covered with precious stones—sardius, topaz, diamonds, beryl, jasper, onyx, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle. Physically and intellectually, he was a bright and shining angel. He had the covering of God's character until he desired to be as the most High. When he rebelled against God, he was stripped of all of these things because Christ was not his portion.

Finding Our Strength in Him

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Psalm 84:5-7).

God does these things for us when He is our portion.

When he wrote Psalm 23, David, who had lost nearly everything that was dear to him, understood the preciousness of God's portion for him. His son Absalom had usurped the throne of Israel, and David was now hiding out in the Judean hills. Still, David could say, "Yahweh is shepherding me. I have lost everything by sight.

However, I still have my Source for life. Christ is my portion—I shall not want."

CONCLUSION

We face unusual powers that want to influence us into finding our portion in this world's system. Thank God, we can know that He is the portion of our inheritance. He establishes our lot, our capacities, forever. As we present our bodies to Him, our minds are renewed in the freshness of forgiveness through His mercy. We are no longer conforming to this world; instead, we are transformed and renewed, proving what is good and acceptable. We prove the perfect will of God.

Do not fall into a nervous breakdown if you should lose your favorite job. That would indicate that the job was your portion.

Christ is our only portion.

As a ministry, we have a vision to reach 220 countries with the Gospel. This goal, however, is not our portion. It is a precious vision, a vision given by God. It will only happen through our obedience to His will. Our portion must be Him.

Christ must be our portion on earth.

Church Leadership

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INTRODUCTION

In times of hardship and crisis, people look for and respond to real leadership. Honest men—men who stand fast and serve faithfully in the capacity to which they were called—bring comfort and peace to those who need them. Unfortunately, there are people who are always seeking out leaders who will take them where they want to go, without regard to God's call, His plan, or His purpose. Their leaders may go forward and even help others to follow them, but the end of that road is very rough.

Nowhere is this truer than in the Church of Jesus Christ. In many congregations, the models of leadership have become muddled as the years have gone by. What God intended to be handled as a family matter has become, in too many cases, competitive striving. Instead of the intricate working of the corporate Body of Christ, we sometimes see churches that are led by committees and regulated by business principles that do

not permit faith obedience for the individual.

The Bible is very clear about leadership in the Body of Christ. This booklet shows that Jesus Christ is the Head over all, and as we submit to His headship, He will lead us in the paths that produce peace—straight paths that will cause us to be hidden, protected as members in particular. There, He will teach us His ways through the gifts He has ordained, so we will be prepared to serve His purpose on earth. By hearing from God now and by receiving one another according to the gift of God, we will be ready to receive all the blessings of eternal life as one Body—His bride—forever and ever.

Chapter One

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE ASCENSION

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

"Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching" (Romans 12:3 -7).

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

"With all lowliness and meekness, with

longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:1-7).

Are You Hindered from Taking Your Place in the Body?

Many people are hindered in their walk with God because of a soulish predisposition, and they are inclined to respond in situations based on previous experiences. In many cases, their predisposition combines with genetic tendencies in areas of weakness and natural strength. Ultimately, though they desire to be one with God and the Body of Christ, their over-thinking will get them in trouble.

An impulsive person may respond impulsively to a drive or compelling power. Peter impulsively declared that he would never deny Christ, but that impulse would not carry him

through the period after Christ was arrested and tried. Peter denied Jesus three times and was beside himself with grief. But in the end, he recognized that he was *in* Christ, hidden and protected. From that time, Peter allowed God to lead him into places he never would have gone (John 21:18). In the measure that Peter was occupied with Christ, he was used as a leader in the Church, bringing many into eternal life through the glorious Gospel.

God desires that His people would be occupied with Christ. In Ephesians 4, Paul describes how we are to walk, regarding ourselves and others. He declared that we are "called out" ones, and then he described the unity of the Trinity. According to Paul, the unity of the Godhead is the abiding principle for unity in the Body of Christ. The Son yielded to the Father, the Holy Spirit always glorified Christ, and the Father delegated authority to the Son, who was sent to lead "captivity captive." "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22).

The Gifts God Gives to His People

The gifts Jesus gives unto men are the result of the glorious victory He won before He de-

scended into the lower parts of the earth. In 1 Peter 3:18-19, after He was crucified and died, Jesus' body was quickened by the power of the Holy Spirit, and He descended in order to preach to those whose souls were in prison.

Some of the people there were not in captivity in the truest sense of the word. There were two parts to that place, and not everyone there was considered to be in prison (1 Peter 3:19). Paradise was described in the Old Testament as a place of beautiful walled gardens, enclosed parks—a place of pleasure that was accessible only to special people. It was separated from the place of torment by a great gulf that was fixed between them (see Luke 16:26).

Those people who were in paradise were comforted, and they did enjoy their state, yet those souls were not able to go directly to heaven when they died. But now, having conquered death, Christ was ready to lead captivity captive and bring release for those in paradise. Still, that could not happen until, as the glorified Man, He ascended to heaven and was seated in His perfect humanity at the right hand of the Father. Up until then, the Finished Work victory was a faith issue but not a completed issue. This is why, in addition to His resurrection, Christ's

ascension is so important.

The Hypostatic Union: The Invisible Made Visible

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

"Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

"Who being the brightness of his glory, and *the express image of his person,* and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:1-3).

In verse 3 of Hebrews 1, "the express image" in the Greek is *charakter tes hupostaseos,* which denotes that Christ is the exact representation of God, meaning He *is* God. *Hupostasis* speaks of something that already exists but is not visible, which now becomes a visible reality. In what is called the hypostatic union, Christ is the wholly valid revelation of the invisible transcendent reality of God. God has become visible on earth as a man. Occasionally, Jesus Christ is said to be the 'essence' of God. In fact, Christ is God, but He is

more.

Christ was God in His pre-human state. When He took on human flesh, He was the manifestation and realization in human form of what He already was: He was God, having two natures: human and divine. This is vital in relationship to our salvation, because in one Person, He was a perfect man. Therefore, He was the perfect sacrifice for sin.

Furthermore, in this hypostatic union, just as Christ was able to manifest God to man, He now represents man to God (Hebrews 2:16-17). We who are born-again are in Christ. And because Christ is the exact representation and image of a perfect man, we can now go freely to the throne of God, be heard, and receive grace and mercy for our need (Hebrews 4:16).

The Ultimate Triumph for the Royal Family

Jesus' royal family—God the Father and the Holy Spirit—was established in heaven in eternity past. As prophesied, the Son of Man was born of the seed of David. The result was the hypostatic union, when God became a man in the Incarnation.

This principle of the hypostatic union seems to be related to the Greek verb *huphistemi*, which

means, "to place oneself under" or "to stand under."

As a perfect man, Christ surrendered the position, the power, and the knowledge He possessed in His deity. In His humanity, He had to go through the suffering described in Psalm 22. He had to experience terrible persecution and ultimately the Cross. After He was crucified, the risen Lord Jesus spent forty days on earth, and then He ascended into heaven. Ten days later came the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), when the apostles and many more were filled with the Holy Spirit and three thousand were saved. Today, the same Holy Spirit is available to constantly fill every believer's life.

Satan and his demons fought Christ's ascension like nothing else. They understood that Jesus' entrance into heaven would mean their defeat. They hated Him, rejected Him, and they all came out on the day of His ascension to keep Him on earth and to limit God's glory. Jesus, however, brushed them all off as if they were fleas.

Picture it! Satan's armies were defeated because the risen Lord just brushed them off (Colossians 2:15), and in the blink of an eye, He traveled billions of light years right up to the

throne room in heaven. By the time the two angels announced to the apostles that this same Jesus they saw going up would return again (Acts 1:11), He was already in heaven, billions of light years away.

After His ascension came His "session"—when Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, was seated on the throne (Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 12:1-2; Acts 5:31).

Finally, a man was accepted in heaven.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is now seated at the right hand of the Father. He is the glorified Man—fully accepted in heaven. With His glorious ascension came a new opportunity to reveal His victory and to express His triumph through the revelation of the Body of Christ on earth. Jesus went up and the Father received Him, making Him the head over each member of His Body—the Church—which now operates through the Holy Spirit in His stead.

Chapter Two

PASTOR-TEACHERS: GOD'S GIFTS TO HIS PEOPLE

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

"(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:8-11).

Ephesians 4:8 says that God gave gifts unto men. Here, "gave" is the aorist active indicative of the Greek verb *didomi*, which means that the present reality was expressed in the certainty of a past event. Christ performed the action to make it possible for Him to give gifts. First He

descended and then He ascended, far above principalities and powers. Then He entered into a new privilege of being the head of His Church. According to Ephesians 4:11, these gifts are a direct outcome of Jesus' glorious victory in taking captivity captive when He went to the lower parts of the earth. The "gifts" are men whom He conquered, and they are God's "gifts" for the Church.

The first gift Jesus mentioned was the gift of apostles. These were church leaders who actually saw Christ on earth, given as specific gifts for this time period in Church history. After the last apostle died, those gifts ceased. There are no apostles in that sense today. Some beautiful Christians have done and still do missionary work. They operate in an apostolic fashion, but they are not apostles.

Jesus also gave "prophets," and this word speaks of preachers or *forth*tellers—those who spread forth the Word of God. Forthtellers are not foretellers who could predict the future. There is a big difference.

Also given were evangelists—men with specific gifts in the area of winning souls. All believers are to be evangelists and share the message of salvation, but some operate as evan-

gelists who are given as specific gifts to the Church.

The Gift of Pastor-Teacher

The next gift referred to is "pastors and teachers"—*poimon kai didaskalous* in the Greek text. The connecting word *kai*, according to the Granville-Sharp Rule of Greek Grammar, indicates that the phrase refers to one individual who carries out the duties of two offices. The pastor-teacher is given to a church as a gifted and called man of God—an under-shepherd who serves at the direction of Jesus Christ, who is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), and the Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20).

The pastor-teacher is prepared and equipped by God with administrative powers and delegated authority, and to undertake the work of teaching the Word of God. Clearly, the one who leads must also be able to teach and to preach the Word.

One of the most difficult things is for a man to take on the office of pastor-teacher without having the gift of being a pastor-teacher. We offer three kinds of ordination to men who qualify: administrative pastor, helper or assisting

pastor, and pastor-teacher. Some men are gifted to be pastor-teachers; others are gifted as assistants or as administrators. But each one is set apart because of his dedication to studying the Word.

The gift of pastor-teacher is not something a man ought to seek. When he is being filled with the Holy Spirit, he will know his gifts. As those gifts are discovered through the Holy Spirit's filling, they will be revealed without striving and struggling. The job will seem to come easy because he loves it. And instead of feeling weighed down and burned out, he can relax in the filling of the Spirit.

Some pastors struggle so much that they develop a driving spirit. These men show up for a time of outreach and feel compelled to preach for fifty minutes. They never seem to mind that the people they are speaking to have heard messages all week and are ready to go out and share the Word. When someone is asked to speak at an outreach meeting, he should go eight minutes tops. The outreach meeting is not the time for preaching. He could speak about God's motivation to win the lost, ask the Lord to motivate him and the others, and then go.

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17).

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

"And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

"In meekness instructing those that oppose

themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

The pastor-teacher is to study until his eyes are red from tiredness. He uses all Scripture because God gave every word for doctrine and instruction. It is important for every pastor to preach the whole counsel of God, using categorical doctrine and the historical, literal frame of reference (isagogics), having studied the original languages of the Bible texts.

A pastor-teacher should always be well prepared and qualified to speak the truth, even when that truth will be inconvenient for some of the hearers. Beyond that, the pastor-teacher must have meekness toward people in the very unique situations when they oppose themselves. He must never lord over people by taking advantage of his position.

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2-3).

Chapter Three

THE RESPONSIVE CONGREGATION

"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle" (Revelation 1:13).

"And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:15).

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Hebrews 13:7).

Jesus walks among the candlesticks. The candlesticks typify every believer, and Revelation 1:13 relates a beautiful picture of the Lord's presence when the members of a godly congregation come together.

As a congregation, we never follow a man. We are led by the man who follows Christ. That

man is never to be exalted above measure. Respect is given to his office, his gifts, and his messages. Due honor should be accorded as we follow the pastor's office and messages that are given to us as gifts. The principle is that we are not to put one personality ahead of another. We receive our gift from God.

Every pastor-teacher needs a godly congregation that responds to God and obeys the Word. This kind of congregation recognizes, loves, and discerns a pastor's heart. The members delight in the law of the Lord, and they avoid the seat of the scornful and the ways of those who are prone to gossip and slander (Psalm 1:1; Romans 7:22; Proverbs 10:18).

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Corinthians 12:27).

"As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me" (Psalm 18:44).

Those in a congregation should be faithful to attend all the services and to be there at the appointed times as often as physically possible. They should understand that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. They are members in particular; they are part of the pastor-teacher's team. By coming to church,

those in a congregation discover the position God has for them on the team.

As members in particular, those in a congregation who recognize that they were made one in Christ will love one another (John 15:12). They give double honor to the pastor for his work and his labor (1 Thessalonians 5:11-12). They obey when they hear the Word of God, mixing faith with what they hear and growing to be steadfast and immovable in the work of God (1 Corinthians 15:58). They pray, they obey, and they worship.

Every pastor and congregation should love and practice the Great Commission (Acts 1:8), serving as witnesses to their Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. In so doing, they come to love the fact that they can disciple the people they win to Christ.

The Way to Victory

I have noticed that people who participate in this kind of congregation overcome certain preoccupations. Of course, every individual stands or falls before God. In other words, a pastor cannot force anyone to make right decisions. He can only lead them by presenting the whole counsel of God and by loving them as he prays for them.

Most people, however, have problems because of one or two habits that they will not give up. I know of a person who will not quit smoking. Smoking is not the real issue; the issue is that this person enjoys no victory. His health is being tremendously affected. The whole issue behind his predicament is a besetting sin that he will not let go. As a result, he is limited in his blessings, in his process, and in his progress in the Kingdom of God. He has admitted that he doesn't feel right when he smokes, but he will not receive victory above his preoccupation.

Work and Edification

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

What is the purpose of the pastor-teacher? In Ephesians 4, the first time the Greek preposition *pros* is used (translated as "for"), it expresses the purpose of an action. The pastor-teacher is given to help to perfect—to make complete, to fully equip, to make adequate, and to completely furnish—the saints under his care. "Saints" are simply those who have received Christ, those who have been made holy and set apart in the Finished Work.

Every precious pastor should set out to disciple leaders under him. Those who are being discipled should get to know the Book and be able to come up with fresh truths every time they get up to speak. These pastors will then be able to lead and to equip those who hear them.

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6).

"Edification" is a word that pictures a church that is constantly growing, with new members constantly being incorporated into the Body as it extends and increases. Each member learns to function with his call, increasing inwardly as he obeys outwardly.

The "work" done by anyone in the congregation ought always to be a function performed with energy from Jesus Christ. All things in the Church must come under divine appointment so that the ministry can run efficiently, accurately, and powerfully in oneness.

God has given gifts to men, severally as He will. Let us go forward with one purpose: to

draw near to Christ as we lead men to Him. As He is, so are we in this world. He has ascended and is seated at the Father's right hand. Therefore, let us recognize our position in Christ, seated above every enemy and every hindrance. Let us begin to operate in the measure of the gift of grace He has given to us.

CONCLUSION

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

The way to experience maturity and the fullness of Christ is to receive the Word as taught through the gift of a pastor-teacher and revealed in the Body of Christ. The head of the Church is Jesus Christ, and He has ordained us to be here in His stead, participating as necessary members of His body on the earth. Therefore, it is crucial that each of us knows the geographical will of God—which is to know who God has called to lead us and to know where we belong.

Through years of being a pastor to several churches and preaching in many others, I have always placed an emphasis on prayer, on soul winning, and on building the Body of Christ through the local assembly. It is so vital that people are trained to become leaders. In turn, the

church sends out those leaders to equip others with the glorious Gospel. This has been the key to the success of our ministry. We have equipped people by God's grace.

We believe that it is vital to provide our congregation with Christian day schools for their children as well as facilities for adult Christian education, such as our Bible college. We offer these provisions for men and women to become fully equipped in the work of the ministry and to give them a desire to win souls and make disciples through the Holy Spirit's compelling love for the lost.

Is there anything more precious than abiding in the unity of faith where a church's vision, love, truth, prayers, and obedience are unlimited? This oneness in the unity of faith is what true, godly church leadership produces in the midst of this world system.

Cleansing of the Conscience

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

What is the conscience? Every person has a conscience, which is developed by training, culture, information, education, experience, and choices. The conscience includes the norms and standards that we have decided to live by, based upon our opinions toward truth.

The Christian's conscience is controlled by the Holy Spirit. But the state of the conscience of many Americans, sadly, is exhibited in many areas, such as acts of abortion, promiscuity, homosexuality, rebellion, and drug and alcohol abuse. All of these things violate the godly conscience.

In this booklet, we will look at how we can operate with a cleansed conscience, one that is purged by the blood of Christ and governed by the Word of God. This kind of conscience is insulated from the attacks of the devil and his world system, allowing the Christian to operate in the world from a heavenly position of victory.

Chapter One

A CONSCIENCE FORMED FOR VICTORY

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts:

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy [Spirit]" (2 Peter 1:19-21).

"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (1 Timothy 1:5).

"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1).

Christians who are Spirit-filled (Romans

8:11)—those who have the Word of God in their hearts (Romans 2:14-15)—have consciences based on the mind of God. This means they have norms and standards that reveal the character and characteristics of God. The Scriptures and the Holy Spirit are the basis for what they think and what they do in the practical issues and responsibilities of life.

This is a "good conscience" (Acts 23:1, 1 Timothy 1:5). It is a conscience that operates in love and with a special kind of faith. It is a pure conscience. This kind of conscience puts away the filth of the flesh (1 Peter 3:21). When people reject us and speak wrongfully of us, this conscience remains godly because of the truth that sets it apart through the Word of God.

Godly Consciences Put Away

Paul wrote of Hymenaeus and Alexander as examples of some who "put away" the godly conscience. Some people take Christianity as a matter of convenience. In their estimation, it is not a serious matter. They do not make commitments. They live in it when they feel like living in it. Christians who do this are in serious trouble, says God Almighty. Hymenaeus and Alexander were "delivered unto Satan, that they may

learn not to blaspheme" (1 Timothy 1:20).

God has told us to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to Him. This is our reasonable service. We are to have consciences that are void of offense toward God and void of offense toward men.

The human conscience is formed by what we have received in our upbringing in terms of information, education, and cultural training. Added to that are our experiences, which are the result of the choices we make with the opportunities we have. From that, we adopt norms and standards for our choices in life.

The Christian conscience, however, has a different basis because of the Finished Work. In Romans 9:1, it is the Holy Spirit: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy [Spirit]." In Romans 2:14-15, it is the Word of God. In John 6:63, it is the Word *and* the Spirit. Therefore, godly norms and standards are established by God's grace, love, purity, holiness, and righteousness, which become the basis for making decisions.

Chapter Two

A CONSCIENCE THAT OBEYS THE CALL

A father read many stories of missionaries to his young son. As the boy heard them, he told his dad, "When I grow up, I want to go on the mission field too." He prayed for missionaries, and when he grew up he went to Africa.

The sun scorched his skin. He was injured by a lion and lost sight in one of his eyes. Circumstances became so bad that he sent his wife home to England for a time. When he went home after his father died, his wife hardly recognized him.

Still, he kept saying, "I have to go back, I must go back. I love the people in Africa."

He and his wife returned to Africa. Eventually, he buried his wife on the foreign field, and then he became sick. When someone stole his medication, he became even more ill. That missionary prayed, "God, I told You that I would go

anywhere if You would go with me. Now I do not have the medication that will keep me alive. Please help!"

A journalist named Henry Stanley set out to find this man for an interview and offered to bring his medication. After a very long and difficult journey, when he found the missionary, Mr. Stanley confessed that he was an atheist and had no personal interest other than to write his story and to deliver the much-needed medicine.

God had answered the missionary's prayer, and the atheist journalist later said that this man's life was so true to the Word of God and the Bible that he became gloriously saved.

In spite of the medicine, however, the missionary grew weaker and weaker. Still, he continued to pray for the people he was sent to. He was on his knees in the position of prayer as he took his last breath.

Motivated by the Great Commandment

This man was David Livingstone, and he had a conscience that told him unsaved people were lost. He had a conscience that said it takes salvation by Christ to be saved. He had a conscience that said we are motivated by God's love, under any circumstance and condition, to obey

His great commission. He had a conscience that told him that spreading the love of God was a great commandment through the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit and the Word flooded this man's conscience. He was void of offense toward God and void of offense toward men.

The apostle Paul said he served God with a pure heart and a godly conscience (1 Timothy 1:5). It is a beautiful thing to have a conscience free from lust, greed, materialism, lying, and self-exaltation. It is great to have a conscience free from the worldliness, the lawlessness, and the carelessness of wrong choices. This conscience has in it the most beautiful love and faith in the world toward God, and it then expresses love to people as it serves them by faith (Galatians 5:6).

Chapter Three

THE CONSCIENCE CANNOT BE ESCAPED

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-48).

This passage isn't speaking of literally cutting off hands and plucking out eyes. It means we are to isolate and forsake areas in which we fail and sin. But this passage is also speaking about the torments of hell as they relate to the conscience. In hell, a man's conscience cannot die. According to the most reliable Bible scholars, the "worm" refers to the conscience. Jesus kept repeating, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" because He wants men everywhere to be saved by grace. He wants people to get their marriages straightened out, to get their families straight, and to make commitments that are eternal to God.

This is such an important lesson. When the rich man died without Christ in Luke 16, he was in hell and, being in torment, lifted up his eyes. He said, "Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (verses 23-24). His conscience was tormented. He finally realized that he had just lived by a conscience of convenience without godly convictions, but now it was too late. For all of eternity he will be tormented by the truth of rejecting Christ as Savior.

We can develop a conscience of convenience by relying on material provisions. We can have a conscience of compromise in which we know the truth but do not walk in it—and that is sin (James 4:17).

On the other hand, we can have a conscience that is filled with loving conviction. That is what the Word of God does in us.

Jesus was born into the world at a terrible time, a time when the world was in upheaval in every realm. He came with tidings of great joy (Luke 2:10). He was *Emmanuel,* "God with man," coming to save us from our sins (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). Thank God that as Christians, we do not have to go into hell. The false prophets and the beast will be cast into hell (Revelation 19:20). One thousand years later, Satan will be cast into hell where the beast and the false prophets are still alive (Revelation 20:10). Those cast in one thousand years before were still alive—their consciences tormenting them with guilt and shame and unfulfilled desires for all of eternity.

Thank God, as we go to heaven, and as we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:29-30), we develop a perfect conscience. Revelation 22:11 explains that in eternity the unjust will remain unjust, the filthy will remain filthy, but the righteous will be righteous for all eternity. The pure will still be pure. We will go to heaven by grace because God cannot impute sin to us: Jesus Christ paid for all of our sins.

For all eternity, we will have absolutely pure consciences. We will have the conscience of perfection, the conscience of God's glory, the conscience of loving each other in God, the conscience of serving and worshipping God, and the conscience that will never be defiled. Now, however, in 1 Corinthians 8:12, another person's weak conscience can be easily defiled by our wrong choices. And if I defile a person with a weak conscience, I defile Christ. Therefore, we are to renounce dishonesty and deceitfulness in our own lives as we manifest the truth, Paul said, "commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

Everything is determined by the conscience. We can have a compromised conscience by only partially living by God's truth and deceive ourselves because we talk ourselves into the wrong information. We can believe something that isn't true and have a defiled conscience conditioned by our own interpretations.

God wants us to be set apart in His Word, because His Word is truth. He is saying to us, "Have a pure, godly conscience as the determination for your norms and standards for thinking, for deciding, for communicating, and for behaving through My precious love that is freely given to you through the Holy Spirit."

I have never sensed such a crucial hour in the history of the world. We have an opportunity to enter into a life of being Spirit-filled and to have the Word of God flowing in us as we obey from our hearts. We have the privilege of praying as we have never prayed, loving as we have never loved, giving Christ to others as never before. We have this great privilege of going forward as witnesses as we have never gone before—with joy as our strength (Nehemiah 8:10) and with amazing peace (Isaiah 26:3).

We have the privilege to have a life without condemnation, without guilt complexes, and

without shame. We have the privilege to be Christians who are Spirit-filled, walking in the grace of God, and loving every moment in the abundant life of John 10:10.

Chapter Four

THE POWER OF THE BLOOD

Every single word of God is pure (Proverbs 30:5). Anyone who adds a single thing to the Scriptures will be found to be a liar. This is why Deuteronomy 4:2, 11:16-22, and 12:32, and Matthew 5:18-19 warn us: Don't add to God's words, and don't diminish them, whatever you do. Don't add, don't diminish, and don't privately interpret. The Word is to be received with meekness as we put away all superfluity of naughtiness. Then the Word becomes "engrafted" and is able to deliver our souls (see James 1:21).

Remember, the conscience is what makes us unique, and it is based on the way we process information. In Acts 23:1 and 1 Timothy 3:9, the Greek word for conscience is *suneidesis,* formed from the verb *oida*, or "frozen in"—to perceive and examine with the eyes of our mind and based on our experiences. It refers to knowledge

and information received during early childhood training, the effects of the culture where we were raised, and the education we received. It influences our ability to make choices based on personal experiences, which lead the conscience.

In Romans 9:1, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our conscience. Doctrine is written on our hearts and in our consciences by the work of the Holy Spirit (Romans 2:15). This is the personal provision God has given us to have a Spirit-filled heart. We then rejoice and we bear witness to the Gospel with godly simplicity and godly sincerity—not with fleshly wisdom, but through the grace of God (see 2 Corinthians 1:12).

The grace of God is the reason we are able to function freely in this world. The more we receive grace, the more abundantly we will express it toward others in our "conversation," which is our manner of living. What is it that supremely dominates and motivates our norms and standards? It is the grace of God.

The Answer for Sin Questions

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience

from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14).

Through the eternal Spirit, Jesus offered Himself to God without spot. "Purge"—*katharizo* in the Greek—means to free and cleanse from any defilement of sin and from any impurity, put it out of the way, and get rid of it. The Spirit takes the conscience, purges it, and makes it a conscience filled with divine conviction so that we can walk in divine integrity: "Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide" (Psalm 26:1).

Hebrews 10:2 speaks of true worshippers who "once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." This is the most beautiful thing about a purged conscience. It means if you have been abused, you are no longer conscious of it. Why? You have been purged from the conscience of abuse. If you have committed adultery and repented and forsaken it through rebound, isolation, and restoration (see Philippians 3:13-14), your conscience has literally been purged so that you no longer have to see yourself as guilty in any way of committing that sin. Once we have been purged, we have no more consciousness of our sin.

In John 8, the Pharisees became convicted in their consciences after they had accused the woman taken in adultery. Jesus forgave her and said, "Hath no man condemned thee?"

"No man, Lord," she said.

"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:1-11).

We must understand that the purging of the conscience only comes through the blood of Christ. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

Applying the Blood to the Conscience

The Blood of Christ literally had to be shed for the remission of our sins—this is made clear fifty-five times in the Bible. But there are also more than three hundred and fifty references to the spiritual application of the Blood. God takes the spiritual application of His precious Blood, goes in and purges our consciences in the eyes of the Lord Jesus and in the eyes of the Holy Spirit. He takes away the defilement, takes away sin's shame, takes away its guilt and condemnation.

For this reason, Hebrews 10:22 says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of

faith, having hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." This speaks of the application of the Word and the Holy Spirit through the renewal of our minds and the concentration and consecration of the body (Romans 12:1-2).

We have such a privilege to enter into a godly conscience in every area of our lives. Oh, that we would just receive godly information! Oh, that we would just receive godly knowledge. And, oh, that we would make godly choices and have godly experiences. A cleansed conscience produces all of that. Purged and cleansed, a child of God names his sin as soon as he falls, gets back up in repentance, and immediately walks in the Spirit so that he does not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

Consider the Word of God and its infallibility concerning the conscience. When my conscience is purged, then my self-consciousness is occupied with God's norms and standards. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. It is wonderful to be self-conscious when it is a consciousness of God's provision.

When God says "I can," it is through His power; when He says, "I will" it is through His love. God can because He is all-powerful; God

will because He loves us.

Let us go forward with a Christian conscience, occupied with God-consciousness. Let us get on our knees before God, exercising our faith in the promises that come alive. Let us get up, obey God, and trust Him for the things that are so available to us through the integrity of His compassion. Just go forward and believe God for a special touch, whether it involves sickness, healing, marital reconciliation—whatever it might be between you and God in your heart.

Trust the living God, for it is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18). He cannot lie (Titus 1:2), because He is not a man that He can lie (Numbers 23:19). By faith we can trust Him completely—spirit, soul, and body.

CONCLUSION

When the word "tenth" (or "tithe") is used in the Bible, it refers to first-fruits. Give God the first and the best, not your leftovers. Don't fall into a careless, subtle deception. Let's do away with sublimation and foolishness. God is able to make all grace abound toward us so that we will have all sufficiency for all things (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Jesus Christ deserves that we put Him first. You can trust God to live up to His promise in Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Pray and believe God for wonderful emotional, physical, and spiritual healings. Once the conscience is cleansed, people can be released from habits that have plagued them for years. Jesus Christ, the Conqueror, the One who conquered death, is living inside of us. The One who came forth from the grave is in us. The One

who defeated the devil once and for all is right inside of us. Let's not ignore Him. He must not be seen as just a familiar guest.

Let's believe the God who cannot lie. Allow Him to release His resurrection power in us—the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:11). Then, let the power of our ascended Lord bring cleansing and forgiveness to our consciences as we simply receive His promises and believe.

Come to the Father

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation" (Psalm 68:5).

"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up" (Psalm 27:10).

So many dear folks may have lost or may not have had a good relationship with their fathers. Some lost their fathers at a very young age. My dad died when I was three years old. I can barely remember him. And though I did have a beautiful mother and family, I know what it means to grow up without a father.

God, however, is the Father of the fatherless. Many have claimed Psalm 27:10. They know what it means to have God lift them up and take over as a loving Father.

The purpose of this booklet is to move us to think of God, our Father who planned every event in the universe and who billions of years ago planned to send His only begotten Son to

die for the sins of the world because of His love for us. Our hope is that these words will cause us to meditate on that truth and to help us understand that we can now address Him as our Father, or, our "Daddy."

Chapter One

THE FATHER OF ALL MERCY AND ALL GRACE

As you consider God as your Father, your Daddy, think of His love. His love for you was so deep that He called you by name. He made a decision to pay for every sin you would ever commit by shedding His blood and dying in your place. Yet, we must be very careful when we describe God. Sometimes, we think that God deals with His own the same way He deals with those who rebel against Him. But God's attitude toward His people is described consistently throughout the Scriptures. In 2 Corinthians 1:3, God is the Father of mercies.

A man who had been shuttled through ten foster homes became a Christian through our bus ministry. He accepted Jesus Christ and went on to graduate from Bible college.

He once told me, "I began to know God so well because I never knew my parents. I was

taken from them and lived in foster homes since I was a baby. But after I was saved, I got to know God very personally as my Father without anyone explaining that to me. I would just pray, 'Father, help me, in Jesus' name. I am so wounded, so scared, and so bruised."

God did love him. This man told me that Christian after Christian loved him beyond what he deserved. "Then all of a sudden, the Spirit of God and the Word of God filled me," he said. "Even to this day, I always address God as, 'My Daddy, in Jesus' name.'"

The Giver of Mercy, Comfort, and Grace

He is the Father of all mercies. Can you comprehend this as you look at the world as we know it today? Remember, mercy is God not giving us what we rightly deserve—judgment.

God is also the God of all comfort. Anyone who needs comfort will receive it from the Father who calls us by name, just as Jesus does (John 10:3). We will never be able to figure out how God gives us grace that goes beyond measure (see Ephesians 3:8, Romans 5:20-21). But the work is finished, and His grace is eternal, so there is no way to measure His grace.

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us

unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

Grace That Lifts Us Up

I have tried so hard to comprehend "the God of all grace" through the Holy Spirit's presence. I understand that grace is God giving us what we don't deserve—but this is the God of all grace. When sin abounds unto death, grace reigns through the righteousness of Jesus Christ unto eternal life (Romans 5:21).

Every time we feel alienated, frustrated, defeated, we say, "Father, reveal to me all of Your grace through Your Son at this moment." When a person fails—even if he fails seven times in a day—the God of all grace lifts him up (Proverbs 24:16). The Father prevents him from falling as he keeps getting up in rebound (Jude 24). He begins to grow in the strength of the grace that was given to him. This grace is now in him to teach him. The mercy that is for him is now enduring through him.

A precious father asked his five-year-old son who was dying, "Son, do you fear death?" The boy said, "Not if God is like you, Daddy."

This is just a simple heart-to-heart message

to establish your capacity to know God as you consider Someone who forgives all you have ever done and will not impute a single sin to you. When we encounter a question about a doctrinal difference, we should always race to the nature of God first. When we run to the refuge of God's nature, God's essence, then we can answer the question based on what God thinks and says in His Word.

Chapter Two

HEARTS AFTER THE FATHER

God has cast all of our sins into the deepest, deepest sea. Now, he who has the Son has life (1 John 5:12). God remembers our sins no more (Hebrews 10:17). Even the sins of Israel and of Judah will never be found (Jeremiah 50:20). This should give us such an entrance into the Throne of Grace and Mercy to find God's help in times of need. If God did all of this for us when we were lost sinners, imagine what He will do for us now that we are His sons and daughters according to Romans 8:32.

Consider Jacob, who was far from a perfect man. But one thing we know, Jacob's life blessed his uncle Laban (Genesis 30:27). Laban said, "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me." Jacob was conniving and cheating, and he always tried to outwit others for his own advantage. But at the end of his life Jacob laid his hands on his grandsons, Ephraim and Man-

assah, the sons of Joseph, and blessed them as his own sons. Jacob's sons became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, representing God's mercy, God's grace, and God's forgiveness.

In John 15:9, Jesus said, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Then in John 16:27*a*, He said, "The Father himself loveth you." Can you comprehend this? What did God the Father do with Jacob? He blessed him again and again. Did Jacob earn these blessings? No. Was there something about Jacob that deserved these blessings? No. Did he backslide for twenty years? Yes. Did God touch his heart and transform him into the father of a nation, Israel? Yes, the Father did all of that.

A Father Who Loves at All Times

Jacob represents a transformed father, and Abraham is called the father of our faith. But another person who represents a lot of fathers is King David. When he heard that his son Absalom was killed, David became a weeping father.

"O Absalom, my son, O Absalom, my son, O I would to God that I could have died for you!" That is how David responded to the news of Absalom's death. This is why, in Acts 13:22, David is said to have had a heart after God. David

didn't consider that his son tried to take away his kingdom. He didn't consider that his son had spoken out against him. David only considered his son and the love he had for him. Therefore, David had a heart after God—a heart after mercy, grace, love, and forgiveness. That is what was in David's heart.

When David died, God didn't emphasize his sins or his iniquity. God looked beyond his faults and saw David's heart. He saw his desires beyond his weaknesses. He saw David's hunger beyond what he accomplished.

May I tell you that God does the same for us, too. "I know my thoughts toward you," God says. "They are thoughts of peace and not of evil, that I may give you an expected end" (see Jeremiah 29:11). Please get to know the Father's heart, the Son's love, and the Holy Spirit's compassion.

Joseph is one of the great men of God in the Bible (Genesis 39:7-13). He was so unique because he resisted temptation. Prosperity didn't change Joseph's attitude of humility. When the brothers, who had sold him into slavery, came before him in a time of great need, Joseph said, "I am Joseph your brother. Do not be sorrowful or blame yourselves for what happened. God

sent me before you to preserve life, to give food, and to salvage my own people. So do not condemn yourselves" (see Genesis 45:4-7).

Joseph represented the Father's heart of forgiveness, the sovereign plan of God's purpose, the sovereign provision of weakness. Joseph represented so deeply and so richly the heart of God the Father.

Chapter Three

COME JUST AS YOU ARE

One of the great opportunities I had as a young pastor was in knowing a shipyard worker whose wife left him and their four children. She took off with another man and no one knew where she went.

We visited this man at home one day, and he told me his story. After we led him to Jesus Christ as his Savior, he started bringing his children to church. Soon they all got saved, and they were in church three times a week.

Three years after they started coming, the kids asked if they could say something about their father on Father's Day. They got up on stage and said, "You are our daddy, the greatest daddy in the world. We don't know where mommy is, but you have been everything to us." Everyone in that place was weeping.

Some otherwise godly people are quick to judge others when things go wrong. Often the

people who appear to be guilty are innocent, but they may be covering a friend or loved one. The heart of Jesus identifies with both—the victim as well as the guilty. He took every sin on His body and paid for all sins with His blood. That is the heart we are to have—the heart of God the Father, our "Daddy."

Christianity is Christ; the Word of God is light. The nature of God is to save. The heart of God is to redeem. The purpose of God is to heal. The joy of the Lord is to forgive. This is our God.

More than that, we need to understand that through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we can say privately to God, "You are my Father. I thank You for my physical father on earth, but You are my Daddy. You are my Father."

As a pastor, I have worked with so many great fathers over the years. One daughter wrote me a letter describing her love for her father: "All of us adore him. Why? Because he serves everyone from the bottom of his heart day or night. He loved us so deeply that we just couldn't fail. When we were tempted, his love just kept us from failing as he revealed Christ."

Receiving the Lost

Picture the prodigal son after he came to the

end of himself (Luke 15:17). He went home, planning to say to his father, "I have sinned against heaven and against you, my father. I am no longer worthy to be called a son." I am sure he rehearsed what he wanted to say. I can picture him limping, almost naked with scraggly clothes. Picture how he came from this affluent farm. Then, taking all of his possessions and going to a far country, he ended up in a place where he would gladly have eaten the husks that were being fed to pigs.

As this son was on his way back home, he thought, "Father, just let me be one of your servants. I don't expect sonship ever again because I am not worthy."

Now, picture the Holy Spirit's revelation of the Father through Jesus Christ. The prodigal's father ran to meet his son and began kissing him over and over on the neck. While this was going on, the son said, "I have sinned." He had rehearsed it all and memorized his statements. "I have sinned against heaven. I have sinned against you. I am no longer worthy to be your son. I want to be treated as a hired servant."

But the father paid no attention to this. He just kissed the son. Then, to his servants, the father said, "Bring the best robe. Bring the ring.

Bring the shoes. Kill the fatted calf. My son was lost, and now he is found. He was dead, but he now has life."

Oh, what a picture of God the Father this is! Never forget His loving compassion for every one who is called by His name.

CONCLUSION

If God marked iniquity, who could stand (Psalm 130:3)? There is forgiveness in God—He can be trusted. Who could trust a God who would not forgive? We could not trust a God who would not forget. We couldn't trust Him because we would always be in doubt. Everything we did would be measured by something we could not attain. Our souls would be seriously damaged because we could never know when His justice would be satisfied. But of our Father, the Word says, "Trust in him at all times" (Psalm 62:8). God our Father will never, never leave us or forsake us.

"Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD" (Psalm 112:6-7).

These are the words of a man who knew his Father, his Daddy. And when we know Jesus Christ and his deep love for us, our hearts will

be fixed toward mercy, grace, love, and forgiveness. When our hearts are fixed toward God's capacity to keep us, we know what it means to come to the Father. Therefore, we will not be afraid of the future or of the evil that is in this world.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)* .

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

When we consider the creation—the trees like spires, the mountains like great pyramids, the midnight chandelier of God's handiwork in the heavens, the lakes, the streams, the teardrops that come from heaven in the form of rain, the fresh dew on the grass, the lilies and the roses and all the varieties of flowers, and the fields—our thoughts are endless. In everything that God has made, we see His *nature*.

God's nature is revealed in His creation. The powerful nature of God created the magnificent mountains and the oceans on an earth that is 8,000 miles in diameter, 198,980,000 square miles, and 264,000,000,000 cubic miles. Yet with the vastness of the Earth itself and all that we know it contains, the planet Saturn is 995 times larger and Jupiter is 1,281 times larger. And the sun, only a medium size star, could contain 1,384,462 planets the size of Earth. Still, with all the delicate balances and the sheer magnitude of

His creation, God maintains perfect control of the universe (while men are still trying to figure it out!).

In everything we see God's nature—the nature that is all powerful. God's nature established the planets in their orbits, the "rising" of the sun, the phases of the moon, and the rainbow after a storm. But even more magnificent is how the voice of God's nature speaks to us through His living Word.

Chapter One

RIGHTLY RELATED BY HEARING GOD'S VOICE

Consider the *voice* of God's nature. In Isaiah 6:8, God said to the prophet Isaiah, "Who will go for us?" And Isaiah said, "Here am I; send me." The voice of God's nature was speaking to a man and was ultimately committed to men through Christ.

Jesus Christ, God Almighty clothed in human flesh, came to seek and to save men and women and to teach them. After His ascension, the Lord sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in those who would receive Him. Everything He has done has been for mankind. He created the resources of oil, coal, electric power, and atomic energy that have provided us with so many conveniences. Everything has been so beautifully designed and created for us; in everything we hear and see, we can visualize the nature of God.

"Oh LORD, how manifold are thy works! In

wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Psalm 104:24). From solar systems to nervous systems—with all of the diversity in God's creation, there is an order to every facet of life in the universe. That order is revealed in terms of relationships. For example, protons, neutrons, and electrons are arranged so that if one particle moves out of place, the integrity of a structure is compromised. Not only does a shift in order change the nature of a substance, but a chain reaction can occur, which is often catastrophic. This was the principle used to develop the atomic bomb.

Clearly, the physical universe is dependent on right relationships. And it is so important yet quite unusual to find people who really understand how to have right relationships. We establish tremendous needs for people when we have never been rightly related to God's nature. Certainly, we need people, and we are to love people, but that must never be our first concern.

Our first concern is our relationship to God. We must have a right relationship with Him so that we can hear the voice of His nature—the voice of His might in creation, the voice of His written Word, the Holy Spirit's voice in the living Word. Oh, to hear the voice of God's nature!

This thought brings me to my knees in brokenness: God said, "Not only did I come to produce salvation through an efficacious and vicarious atonement; not only did I come to die for men, but also I came to *provide for* men, to *live in* men, to use men, to *help* men, to *bless* men—and I came with a plan." The Word of God says in Acts 26:16-17: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness," *to bear His name before the Gentiles*.

Every breath we take and every thought we think can relate to the voice and words of God's nature. Over and over again, men try to fight their battles, but God has *never* told us to fight for Him. We are to enter into the privilege of His battle because it is *His* battle! He fights for us (Exodus 14:14). "The battle is the LORD's" (1 Samuel 17:47).

When I listen to the voice of God's nature, I begin to realize that behind my experience, whatever I'm going through today, I have a relationship with God that is personal, intimate, and greater than any relationship with any other human being. I am not speaking of strange, subjective experiences, independent from oneness in the Body. The Body of Christ is the fullness of God. We are members in particular, and in

God's plan, He wants us to share our lives together.

Often, a husband and wife will battle in their relationship; yet even the one who is the "better" of the two may not be properly related to God. Because they have never worked out their own salvation with reverence and trembling, they do not work out what God is working within, to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

Poured Out as a Drink Offering

Paul was poured out as an offering—as a drink offering—for others. In 2 Timothy 4:6 he said, "For I am now ready to be offered…." The literal translation from the Greek text says, "For I am already being poured out…." In Galatians 1:15-16, the apostle said "it *pleased* God…to reveal his Son in me." And because he was rightly related to God, he was ready to be poured out for men and women for the sake of the Gospel.

In 2 Samuel 23:15-16, three brave men, mighty men, went into enemy territory to get a drink of water for their king, David. They were in the heat of battle when David became thirsty for the water from the wells of Bethlehem, remembering the days when he drank of it freely.

He simply made the statement, "Oh, I would love a drink today!" just like you would say, "Boy, I'd like a steak!" Without hesitation, those three mighty men risked their lives in the face of the Philistines and brought the water back to David.

In spontaneous, unconditional, sacrificial love, with no thought of preserving their own lives, with no consideration of their sacrifice, the mighty men immediately went to get that water. *And David poured it out on the ground,* unto the Lord. He was overwhelmed. Out of a beautiful attitude of thanksgiving, David said, "I cannot drink this water. These men were willing to die to get it for me—just because I said I desired it."

To be a poured-out drink offering, then, means to pour out your entire life, with no thought of self-preservation, in spontaneous and sacrificial love that simply pours out for love's sake and for no other reason.

That was Paul's attitude when he said, "I am ready to be poured out."

The Voice that Says "Rise Up"

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

In this verse, the Lord Jesus Christ did not say "…the words that I *have spoken* unto you…." Rather, He said "…the words that I [*am speaking*] unto you…." He wants His words in us to be *current*, in the present, and He wants us to reverence and honor the voice of His nature.

In 1 Kings 19:4-5, Elijah, depressed because he had withdrawn in fear of Jezebel, sat under a juniper tree and asked God to take his life. But the Holy Spirit came to him and said, "Rise up and eat"—the voice of God's nature. Isaiah 60:1 says, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come." The voice of God's nature spoke to a rebellious but chosen people. Romans 8:14-17 reveals our position as adopted children, chosen by God to be relatives in His royal family. Though we may suffer temporarily as a result of wrong decisions, God speaks to us: "Eat, and go forth in the nourishment of the food I have given you." It is the same way God spoke when He instructed Israel to eat the lamb on the night they were heading out of captivity in Egypt to the Red Sea.

A man should have Jesus Christ so close to him that he would not have problems relating to people, regardless of the circumstances. A woman should have such a relationship with Jesus Christ that if she never was married, she

would be totally fulfilled. Every teenager should get to know Jesus Christ, because *God wants to establish a relationship that comes ahead of all other relationships*. Then, we will have proper relationships with others.

May I Be Excused?

In the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:15-24), a man prepared a feast and sent out his servants to invite people in. But one by one, the invited guests gave their excuses. The first excuse was, "I bought a piece of land and I need to go and see it. Have me excused." The second one said, "I bought five yoke of oxen, and I need to go and prove them. Please have me excused." The third one said, "I've just married a wife. Please excuse me." In each case, the relationship with Jesus Christ (pictured as the master of the house) was secondary.

Verse 21 records that the master of the house became angry. Many people choose not to reckon on the voice of God's anger. "I created men. I created everything *for* them. I sent my Word for man. I sent the Holy Spirit for man, and I sent My light *toward* them. But they will not come and eat!

That is why Matthew 22:14 says, "many are

called, but few are chosen." Very few are chosen because Jesus Christ is not first in most people's lives.

In Genesis 17:1-3, God said, "Abraham, walk before Me. I want your relationship to be with *Me*."

Amos 3:3 says, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" We have been yoked with the world, rationalization, and details of life. But when our unequal yokes with the old sin nature begin to be broken, as described in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, then we can hear God say, "I will be a Father unto you. We will have a right relationship, and you will be My sons and My daughters" (see Psalm 68:5, Jeremiah 31:9, John 8:41).

Chapter Two

HUMBLED IN GOD'S PRESENCE TO HEAR HIS VOICE

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Let us perfect ourselves in the holiness of God. This is not said to project some kind of hyperspirituality. Yet, Jesus said in John 15:7 "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

As you develop an intimate, personal relationship with Christ, there will be times when He will lead you to be alone with Him. There, you may become so overwhelmed with the presence of God abiding in you, that you will fall down on your face before Him. Prostrate before the Lord, you will experience deep reverence for God's presence, all because you refuse to have a

casual relationship with Him.

Whenever Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob prayed, they were always flat on their faces with their hands out before them, crying out to the God of their fathers.

We need to be able to hear God's voice when He says, "Who will go for us?"—whether it's to go into Jerusalem, or Judea, or Samaria, or to sit at the table with somebody who is in pain or in need. We need to be so open to the nature of God's voice that compelling love and indwelling compassion reveal the wisdom of His nature as He communicates. *This is the nature of His voice!*

When the invited guests excused themselves from the banquet God had prepared, Jesus Christ said, "I am angry!" Then He said, "Go into the highways and the byways. Get the blind, the deaf, the lame, and those who have nothing. Invite them to my supper. These others are not interested. Oh, they go to church, but they use Me like a pawn shop. No, you servants must go to those who are without—gather whosoever will. Bid them to come to my table, because I want my house to be full!"

God wants His house to be full, yet very few Christians have convictions about this. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves to-

gether, but rather we are to do it much more (Hebrews 10:25). It isn't bondage to a rule. It is a love for God, for His Word, and for His people!

Don't Put Relationships ahead of God's Plan

Jesus said "Compel them to come in." *Compel* them.

No one wants to be compelled to do *anything*, and yet Jesus Christ mandates us to compel people in love, telling them to come in. It is the voice of God's nature.

Just as He died on a tree, shedding His precious blood, and was buried and rose again; and just as He forgives, forgets, redeems, restores, and rehabilitates—God wants to be complete in our lives. He wants to have preeminence in our lives, so we would relate to *Him*, the Supreme One, instead of problems, people, or secret sins.

Some people neglect the house of God because of their hobbies and pleasures—and God does not like being neglected or being treated as second, third, or fourth place in our lives. Even these words are communicated in the force of His Spirit, in the power of His nature, in the words of His revelation, in the *rhema* of His communication.

That is why He said in Luke 14:26, "If any

man come unto me and *hate* not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, *he cannot be my disciple*," meaning, "he cannot be a learner of Me."

By "hate," He didn't mean to have hostility or vindictiveness, or to hate in the sense that we think of it. Of course not! God wants us to love, and honor our loved ones, and to have respect and great esteem for them. But "hate" in this context means that we are not to make people equal with Him. *He is first!*

The family is a precious institution of God, and to love them properly we need to love God first. He comes ahead of the family, ahead of the pastor, ahead of the congregation. He comes ahead of everybody.

He is the Head of the Church, and on this basis God could see right through people's excuses. "I can't come because I just bought this piece of land, and it's my only day to go see it." Or, "I bought five yoke of oxen—I have to prove them yet. I—I bought them before I proved them. Sorry!"

One would think that Jesus would have understood about the ones who just got married, but He didn't! He was angry at that excuse too.

It wasn't the fact that they got married, but that they wouldn't come to His supper. They put their relationship ahead of His plan.

Being Served by the Savior

Every time we have a service, whenever the Word of God is preached, it is a meal that God has prepared for His people. Each meal served by the Lord is spiritual nourishment, vital for life. God sent manna every morning, six days a week, to feed his people on their journey through the wilderness to the promised land. On the sixth day, they were to gather twice as much so they could have it on the Sabbath while they rested. Likewise, we are to partake of the manna of God's Word *every* day, in one form or another.

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" When we consider what Psalm 8:4-8 says about the One who created the sun, the moon, the stars, the trees, the lakes, the mountains, and the flowers, and all of these fantastic sights of creation—*what is man*? Everything that God created was prepared for man.

God has given us the privilege of praying so that we can hear and have a right relationship with Him, to go to Him and hear from heaven. Prayer is for us so that we can breathe out to

heaven the breath of our needs and the breath of our praise. It is for us!

No Other Name

Think of this carefully. When God says to "be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10a), then be still. He is saying, "Be persistent with your relationship to My quietness. *Hold on to quietness with tenacity.*"

Jesus Christ does not want any competition in our relationship to Him. Speaking of the faithfulness of the saints in the churches of Macedonia, Paul wrote that they "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (2 Corinthians 8:5). The Lord is saying, "If you come to Me, do not love any relationship the way you love Me! Of course you can love and honor them and be responsible. But don't let another relationship equal the one you have with Me."

God's love always takes away lust. And God's strength will always take away our human weaknesses (or reveal His strength through them). "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). The Word of God doesn't want any competition with our

loyalty to Christ.

The Bible says clearly in 1 Corinthians 4:10-13 that though we are as the filth of the world, the one thing we desire is God's satisfaction with our lives. With a humble and broken heart, the weakest among us can go to God and say, "I want you to be satisfied. I want you to be pleased. I don't like a lot of things about myself, but in every way that I can, I want to please you." Like Paul, we can say that it pleased God to reveal Christ inside of us (Galatians 1:15-16), because we have been comforted by the voice of God's nature.

Chapter Three

THE VOICE OF URGENCY

"Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

"*But before all these*, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

"Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist….*In your patience possess ye your souls*" (Luke 21:10-15, 19).

Before the Tribulation period and prior to the Rapture, the Bible says that the Church of

Jesus Christ will be persecuted. Believers will be hated by all men because of the name of Christ; children will betray their parents and turn them over to be placed in prison. That worldwide persecution will come before God's judgment comes upon the earth (notice the key word "before"). Matthew 24:8 refers to that time as the beginning of sorrows. Then, after the Rapture and prior to the Great Tribulation, the Body of Christ will become the Bride of Christ in the air.*

We are living in a day that is extremely serious. Romans 13:12 says that the "night is far spent, the day is at hand." In John 15:4, the voice of God calls out, "Abide in Me…." But here is the question: What would it take to stop you from abiding? What kind of circumstances? What kind of adversity? What kind of relationships? What kind of turmoil could stop any one of us from abiding?

Repeatedly in John 15, the key to a fruitful Spirit-filled life is *abiding*: resting in faith, resting in the promises, resting in the Promiser. We rest in the Provider and in His provision. We rest in the power of the Spirit and the integrity of divine righteousness—the faithfulness of the Faithful One who has never made a promise that He did not keep.

Peter was told to come and to walk on the water (Matthew 14). And as he was told to come, Peter obeyed because he recognized the Voice, the One who told him to come. Peter recognized Jesus Christ.

"If that be you, bid me to come." And Jesus simply said, "Come." Stepping out against the boisterous winds, the tempest, and the storm in the darkness of the morning hour, Peter walked by faith in obedience to God's invitation. Circumstances did not stop him. He recognized Jesus Christ—and Who Jesus Christ was—beyond recognizing the storm, and the wind, and the waves. When Jesus said to come, *Peter didn't debate the invitation*.

As we prepare for an hour that is coming toward the Church at large, we must realize that God is faithful who has called us unto the fellowship of His dear Son. In 1 Corinthians 1:9, He has called us into a special fellowship with Him where we are to recognize Jesus Christ in everything. We are to let self-interests go to sleep and spiritual interests come alive. We are to hear His voice and obey. We are to come.

God said to Jeremiah, My words will be in

your mouth as fire, consuming any other thing that would be in your tongue (Jeremiah 1:9; 5:14). This is the message: "Your mouth will have in it the actual substance of what I would say if I, the Lord, were in your place on earth. Your voice, if you will abide, will be My voice. You will have the resident reality of my Words with the resilience and spontaneity of faith through the divine dynamics of spiritual truth. Self-interest will go and spiritual interest will arise within the realm of your heart."

The Heart that Hears God

Being very serious about God's business, Jesus Christ said so beautifully in Luke 2:49, "I must be about my Father's business. *I must*. My life is completely derived from His life. I speak as I hear Him speak. I work as I see Him work (John 5:19, 30). I always do those things that please Him (John 8:29), and *I do not please myself* (Romans 15:3).

This is the heart that hears God. This is the voice that in the Church Age, during the last days, is available to the royal family of God in their royal priesthood. We are living in the age of grace and the dispensation when "whosoever will may come" to make up His living organism

on earth—"the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:23).

And Jesus said, "You shall receive power…" (Acts 1:8, speaking of the beginning of the Church Age in Acts 2:4) "…and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." By the way, every place He mentioned is equally important. But when the will of God, and the work of God, and the power of God are flowing as a river through the hearts of men and women, a proportionate delegation of servants will respond to the call to go into all the world, while others will be called to make up a strong 'Jerusalem', or home base.

The Word tells us that we will receive ability and wisdom through the living Word of God, which is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" as it separates the spirit from the soul (see Hebrews 4:12).

When God speaks, we want to speak. We want to recognize Jesus Christ and not be overcome by any storms in the fourth watch as darkness remains before the dawn of day (Matthew 14:25).

Jesus said, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). He was always intent

on hearing His Father's voice. And several times the Father said, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." "*Well* pleased" means "as pleased as one could ever be."

In faith-rest drills, those who refuse to be taken out of the place of abiding have a faith that pleases God, according to Hebrews 11:6. With every breath—inhaling the Word of God and exhaling the life of God from out of their souls, through their bodies, to others—these believers please God who rewards them that diligently seek Him.

**Read,* The Pre-Tribulational Rapture *by Dr. Daniel E. Lewis, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Four

"IF ANY MAN WILL HEAR MY VOICE..."

Almost every person I have met knows his own birthday, and most Christians know their spiritual birthday. Most people can tell you the day they had surgery, and some can tell you the day and the hour when they were told they have cancer. Those people can describe to you in detail what they did when they heard the news.

But bring these things over into the realm of spiritual reality—the realm of emotions, and circumstances, and adversity. Even as cancer surgery by God's grace brings a new opportunity to live, spiritual surgery through the Word of God, which is so quick and so powerful, brings into the human soul and spirit a new opportunity for life. As we come out of the spiritual hospital of failure, wounds, and bruises, or whatever it may be, we receive power. But here is one of the saddest things: In Hosea 11:3, God

said concerning Ephraim, "They knew not that I healed them." God says to many Christians, "I have healed you, *and you do not know it*."

When people keep going back on drugs, they only bring guilt, self-destruction, and heartache. The drugs make them incapable of experiencing God's righteousness through integrity. God has healed them through the Blood and through the Cross, but they keep going back. Away from it for a few weeks, back they go—enticed by Satan and seduced by the spirit world. They go from walking in the light of God's Word back to being entertained by devils. But drug addiction isn't all.

People can be addicted to gossip, lust, and power. Some people refuse to be broken through the Cross in their situations. They have predetermined to hold back and not surrender their will to Christ.

Don't Hold Back

So often, people have never given their body, their soul, and their mind to Jesus Christ. They come with what they are willing to give Him; yet, something is kept back in self-interest and self-preservation in a secret place of the heart through the lust of the subconscious and uncon-

scious needs that have never been purged by the Spirit in the Blood of Christ.

God Almighty calls us by our name. And though it is inaudible, His voice is just as real as the voices we are able to hear communicated daily over the airwaves through the vibrations of electronic frequencies. We have an opportunity to live each day abiding in the still, small voice of God (1 Kings 19:12) and to be still, knowing that He is always God (Psalm 46:10) and that He is faithful who has called us unto the fellowship of His dear Son.

What a privilege it is for Jesus Christ to say, "You don't have to worry about what to say. I will give you My mouth and My wisdom, and you will speak what I want you to speak in that hour when they take you and persecute you because of their contempt for Me."

As we realize the reality of a spiritual urgency, we make commitments to come to church—many come, but many don't. We make commitments to pray—and many do, but many don't. We make commitments to fasting, because some things will not be delivered by any other way, according to Mark 9:29. But fasting is a privilege, and by it, the Holy Spirit can perform surgery—not only on us but also on peo-

ple we love. Quietly and secretly we can pray and fast for those we love with all of the fervency of faith that pleases God. Again, many do, but many don't.

Jesus said to the disciples, "After this, you shall receive power," and they did. And everyone who is saved has been baptized by the Holy Spirit into union with the Body of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). We have all been made to drink of that same Spirit. We can continually be filled with this precious Holy Spirit by honoring faith, walking in the light, and confessing any known sins. As we are filled, we can walk in the fullness of the Word of God (objectively) and in the filling of the Spirit (so that we are protected subjectively). As a result, God controls both the objective and the subconscious mind.

Follow the Shepherd's Voice

We have the privilege to walk in wisdom (Colossians 4:5) and to walk in love as dear children (Ephesians 5:2). We have the sweet fragrance of incense coming through us. We have the privilege to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). According to 1 John 1:7, we have the privilege to walk in the light as God Himself is in the light.

The entrance of God's words bring in light (Psalm 119:130). Step out when God speaks. Walk with the words of God as a lamp unto your feet and light unto your path. Every individual has the same privilege, because God is no respecter of persons.

There are different kinds of spirits in the world. The two disciples in Luke 9 did not know what kind of a spirit they were of, and Jesus confronted them. John and James wanted to bring fire down upon those who were not walking in the way of the disciples (Luke 9:52-56). But the Lord rebuked the 'sons of thunder', saying, "You don't have any idea what kind of a spirit you are attached to."

There are Christians who are good people, but at times they have the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees, the attitude of self-exaltation, the attitude of "doing it their way" and not esteeming others better than themselves (Philippians 2:3). They do not honor the brethren with high esteem, but secretly they execute and exercise their personal dominion through a spirit of self-righteousness.

Jesus Christ is the Spirit of meekness and gentleness (2 Corinthians 10:1). He is the Spirit of being lowly in heart and the Spirit of patience.

Because of this, the Word of God has made it clear that this power He has given us isn't a subjective force to be reckoned with. The objective Word of God is always sent forth to seek and to save that which is lost, revealing the hearts of men as the sound of His voice goes forth.

CONCLUSION

After Elijah responded to the call of God to "arise and eat," God led him to a mountain (1 Kings 19:8-13). There, the Lord passed by. A strong wind broke the rocks in pieces, but the Lord was not in the wind. Then there was an earthquake and after that, a fire. God was not in the earthquake or the fire; but, "after the fire a still small voice."

God is very interested in our thoughts. Because the heart of man is the control center for all motivating thoughts and behavior, it is imperative that we hear from the right source. Twice the Lord asked, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" and the man was forced to address the issues of his heart.

The spirit of the scribes revealed their own way of doing things. Their attitudes quickly became critical. But the Spirit of Jesus Christ waited forty years for Moses, thirteen years for Abraham, and He waits gently for us. The Holy

Spirit waited for Peter to turn around after he cursed God. The Spirit of God didn't go around criticizing Abraham, Moses, and Peter. Instead, His Spirit of patience waited so they could carry on with God's call.

Realizing that we are unworthy, we can finally discover that we have a power within. The mouth and wisdom of God can be ours if only we will abide, comforted by the voice of God's nature.

Coming Home

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Coming home is an event often filled with emotions. Many people who have served in the military know the thrill of finally coming home after a war. There is a feeling of freedom and relief if there were no serious wounds or injuries. As my older brothers came back after World War II, my mother would just weep with thanksgiving, so grateful to have them at home again. They all saw action and were wounded, yet they all came home.

It is such a thrill when someone who was very close to death comes home from the hospital. This happened when a dear friend was expected to go to heaven to be with Jesus; but after a time, he was pronounced well and sent home. He was very happy about coming home, and so were his loved ones.

The Word of God describes many cases of people coming home. The prodigal son, in Luke 15, came to the end of himself and said, "I will

arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:18-19).

While he was still afar off, the father saw the son coming home. He ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed his neck again and again (Luke 15:20). The son said, "I am no longer worthy to be your son." The father's answer? "Bring my son the best robe. Put a ring on his finger. Bring him shoes for his feet, and kill the fatted calf." The father did all of this because his son had come home.

As this booklet will reveal, the father did not care what his son had done; he just wanted his son back home. The fact that he had gone to a far country and wasted his inheritance was not an issue. The father just wanted him home. What mattered is that the son came home. Any believer who has failed can come home at any time, because God's righteousness is ours forever.

Chapter One

THE CURSE IS CONQUERED

"LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions:

"How he sware unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob;

"Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;

"I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids,

"Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob" (Psalm 132:1-5).

David made a unique statement in this Psalm. What did he mean? Think about it: God was not at home with David. David was definitely God's child, but David did not have God at home in him.

Many Christians are saved, they have been born again, and yet they know nothing about the habitation of God. Yes, God is in them. He

inhabits their hearts. But a "habitation," spoken of in Psalm 132:5, means something different. The Hebrew word refers to an inner dwelling place.

It is vital that we understand this: All of us have sinned (Romans 3:23); and because of sin, God has allowed the curse of spiritual death to come upon God's people (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23). When we give a place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27), we deny God an inner dwelling place.

The Blood of His Promise

Then came Jesus Christ, the God-Man. He went to the Cross on Calvary, shed His precious blood, and died. He was buried, but then He rose again and ascended to heaven—and He will come back again. Based on God's promises to Abraham, Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law of sin and death. Now, through faith in those promises, we receive the Holy Spirit, according to Galatians 3:13-14:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we

might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Jesus Christ took away Satan's legal right to judge us, to accuse us, to say anything about our sin. Jesus took away Satan's legal right; therefore, there is no more power or fear in death for the Christian. The believer who dies goes home instantly to be with God. Before he can blink an eye, his soul arrives in heaven.

Satan has lost all of his legal rights to administer the curse of death. The fact is that Satan doesn't have a single right to our lives in any situation—even in our worst state, even in the worst messes we have made.

The Source of Shame

The first time Adam and Eve were aware of being naked was recorded in Genesis 3:7. Prior to this time in the garden of Eden, they wore no clothes, but they were not ashamed. The awareness of their nakedness indicated that shame and guilt had entered their consciousness. The inner man of the soul brought forth false concepts about nakedness. Adam and Eve knew that Someone saw their sin. They were naked, and they knew that God saw that they were guilty.

There, Satan began to administer and execute the curse of spiritual death, defiling their souls. Guilt, shame, fear, insecurity, inadequacy—all of these things came in through Satan's administration.

Chapter Two

OUR DECLARATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:21-26).

In Nehemiah 1:9, God is saying, "Turn to Me

and come home, backsliders!" Even the worst backslider in the world still has been declared righteous—once, and for all time. On the Cross, Jesus purchased our redemption with His blood. Because of that, Satan is not allowed to bring up anyone's sin.

Does that mean we have a license to sin? Absolutely not. God forbid that anyone backslide. *God forbid!* Just as children are disciplined by their earthly fathers, backsliders will be disciplined by their Heavenly Father. A backslider can never be happy in his sin, yet God has declared him righteous—and nothing can change that (Romans 8:33-39).

As Christ is in heaven, so are we in the world (1 John 4:17). Christ is righteous; therefore, anyone who receives Him is righteous forever.

The Representative Man

When David went up against Goliath, the rules for the challenge were clearly established. The nation that won the battle would rule the other nation. Both sides had a representative man. If David won, every Israelite would go free. If Goliath won, the Philistines would reign over Israel and make it a nation of slaves.

David took five smooth stones—five, the number that stands for grace—before he headed into battle with his sling. He only used one stone to slay Goliath, and that stone represents Jesus Christ the Chief Cornerstone. David relied on the Chief Cornerstone, and that one smooth stone went right into Goliath's head.

David ran boldly at the giant, saying, "The battle is the LORD's" (1 Samuel 17:47). Then, he went over, jumped on Goliath, and cut off the giant's head. I am sure that when the Israelites saw that, every one of them cried, "We are free!" Israels' representative had won. The Philistines, meanwhile, ran in fear because their man lost, and they knew their whole nation had lost.

Just as Israel was in David when he fought Goliath, we were in Christ when He died and was buried and was resurrected by the Holy Spirit and the Father (Romans 1:4). I was in Christ, you were in Christ. When He won, *we* won. *We won!* We are saved, we are resurrected, and He has declared us righteous. God gave us His righteousness, through His forbearance (Romans 3:25). He won, we won, and now Satan has no legal right to our lives.

We know that God will discipline through His love, and He will let believers reap what they sow. But, God will never let Satan say a word against a backslider. He won't let anyone say anything about a backslider. We can go alone to a backslider to restore him, but we go because of love, according to the table of organization (Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1).

If we must go to someone, we go in meekness, considering ourselves. Why? Because every born-again believer has been declared to be righteous. There is no question as to whether or not he is righteous. God has declared him to be righteous. That is it. We go to the backslider in an attitude of love to restore him so that he can live according to his righteous standing.

Our state, which is righteousness, is our standing. Our position is our eternal condition. Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4), and for us to live is Christ (Philippians 1:21). The moment He declared us to be righteous, we became just as righteous as God is, right now on earth. Even with our old sin nature. God Almighty has declared that we are righteous—just as righteous as He is (Romans 5; Philippians 3:9).

Chapter Three

REIGNING BY THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE

"In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:6).

"In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness" (Jeremiah 33:16).

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

"And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

"That no flesh should glory in his presence.

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

"That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:25-31).

In Christ, we have His wisdom, His righteousness, and His sanctification, freely. We have been justified freely by grace through faith in His blood. He has declared us to be righteous.

We can be more spiritual, but we cannot be more righteous because we have Christ's righteousness. It was given to us as a gift. We received the abundance of grace and the gift of His righteousness. Now we reign in life by One, Jesus Christ (see Romans 5:17).

How do we reign? Simply by receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. Consider that! We reign by receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. That is how we reign!

We do not reign by works, by striving or try-

ing, or by human good. We reign through the abundance of grace and the gift of His righteousness.

The righteousness of God is from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). The just shall live by faith. Roman 10:6 speaks of faith righteousness and Romans 10:8 refers to the Word of faith. We grow in experiencing our righteousness by receiving and applying the Word of God by faith.

In Psalm 132, when David referred to a "habitation," he was saying to God, "I want to make a home for Your righteousness in me." We must understand that God's righteousness lives in our bodies. We are not righteous because of the way we act, but because of what God gave us and because of what we have received on the basis of grace. We received the abundance of grace. We received the gift of righteousness. We received redemption through faith in His blood. At that moment, God said, "I declare *you* righteous—now and forever."

Clothed By God

"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD re-

buke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

"And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zechariah 3:1-4).

The devil came up with the whole list of Joshua's sins. But Jesus stood up and said, "Don't open your mouth. Be quiet and get out of here." Joshua may have been a backslidden man, but he had received perfect righteousness that was given by God.

This is the point: We can always come home to Jesus. Every believer has a home where he is totally accepted. We are personally righteous because of Christ's righteousness. Even those we minister to who aren't making the progress we think they should be making are righteous, too.

Yes, we need to grow. No one *wants* to be out of fellowship with God. I can't think of anyone who wants to be disciplined, even if we are disciplined in love. But the bottom line is this: We

are righteous, and the devil has no rights to accuse, or to judge, or to utter a single word against one of God's righteous ones.

Satan Has No Rights

Satan's legal rights have been terminated. He can no longer administer the curse to a believer. He can no longer bring in the fear of death—we won't even taste death because Jesus tasted death for us (Hebrews 2:9; John 8:51). We will never die spiritually in our souls (John 11:25-26). Therefore, Satan's days are totally over. We can stand up boldly with integrity, without pride and without dishonesty and say, "Devil, you are looking at a righteous man. Take a good look—I am righteous."

Every Christian can say that with integrity through grace and through mercy, because our righteousness is of God. For this reason, whenever anyone goes around judging others according to the law, his righteousness is as filthy rags (see Isaiah 64:6). We cannot compare or measure the righteousness of others. We do not measure ourselves by ourselves or compare ourselves with ourselves. We are what we are by the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10). Because God is righteous, you and I are righteous. I cannot mea-

sure my righteousness against your righteousness because both of us have perfect righteousness forever. We each wear the robe of God's righteousness. We are sealed by the Spirit. We are His.

CONCLUSION

As Christians, we learn to settle differences by letting God be at home in us, letting His righteousness have its inner dwelling in us. When there is an issue to discuss, we can start by understanding that we both have the righteousness of God. We are just two righteous people who are about to discuss something through grace. That approach alone could solve so many problems.

The prophet Elijah was just a man, yet he prayed and the rain stopped for three and a half years. Then, he prayed and the rains came back. He was just as we are—righteous. God found a home in him, and Elijah was living through God (Galatians 2:20).

After His resurrection, Jesus said to Mary, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father" (John 20:17). Imagine the Father saying, "You have come home! Oh, I have missed You." Jesus Christ came home as a Man, glorified. And

because of God's righteousness in us, He will welcome each of us home that way.

In Acts 7:55, Stephen was being stoned, and Jesus stood up to welcome him home to heaven. I can hear Jesus saying, "There is Stephen, my servant. He has been persecuted and has suffered so much pain. But he let My righteousness have a home in him, and now he is coming home with Me."

In Luke 15, as a father ran to meet his son, he said, "There he is—my son! He's limping, he's barefooted, but he is coming home to me." Just as the prodigal was welcomed home, the Father gladly welcomes us home if we have strayed away.

If you have been born again, you are perfectly righteous. More than just forgiven sinners, we are righteous saints. The righteousness He gave to us as a gift can now have its home in us. We can abide in His righteousness every day. It is ours forever.

The righteousness of God has a home in us. In our marriages, in our churches, in our schools, we desire to reveal the complete righteousness of God in every situation on earth. As David prayed, so we need to pray that we might be a habitation for God.

Commitment Is a Decision

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

In Ecclesiastes, chapters 11 and 12, Solomon deals with a vital yet misunderstood subject: God's call for us to make a decision and to stand by it with a decisive practice of obedience. I have been meditating and pondering on the need for making proper decisions. In businesses, families, relationships—whatever the situation, people need to make godly decisions. To do that, however, we need to operate with the mind of Christ.

King Solomon experienced many great exploits in his life, yet he found no happiness in them whatsoever. He could have any woman in the world, and he had them—thousands of them, from every nation in the world. He possessed vast quantities of gold, silver, and ivory. Everything he could possibly want, he got. Second Chronicles 9 reveals that he was, perhaps, the greatest businessman who ever lived upon the earth. But, none of those experiences helped

him; rather, they left him sad, sorrowful, and incomplete.

Now his life was coming to a close, and he had very little to show for his efforts. This once extremely handsome man now walked stooped over, and he had just a few teeth left in his mouth. There was no osteopathic doctor or chiropractor to fix him up, no orthodontist to fix his teeth. There was no exercise program that could make him straight again. Imagine it! Here was a guy with all the money in the world, but he was basically miserable, with a bad back and nearly toothless.

In this context, Solomon began to write about the importance of decisions and precise obedience. This booklet examines what the book of Ecclesiastes teaches about the importance of making a decision to commit our ways to the Lord.

Chapter One

SURRENDER YOURSELF TO GOD

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

"Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.

"If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

"He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.

"As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all" (Ecclesiastes 11:1-5).

The fourth verse in this passage concerns how we as Christians have a tremendous call to fill our lives with faith and ventures of faith.

Here, Solomon begins to get into the subject of commitment. A relationship without a commitment is like a spiritual gift without an anointing. I am dogmatically certain that the problems with the human race in the Christian community develop when people have a relationship with God through salvation but they lack a commitment to truth and the Body of Christ. Therefore, when trials come to a church, they flee. They have a relationship; they are saved people; but, they never make a commitment to the Body of Christ and God's Word.

Those commitments also affect marriages and businesses. When you have performed as many marriage ceremonies as I have, I can remember looking into some couple's eyes and wondering if they really, truly have ever made a heart commitment in truth to each other.

Taken Hostage by the Grace of God

"[Christ], when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

Commitment is very unusual because it involves literally surrendering to be God's hostage. In 1 Peter 2:23, the Greek word *paradidomi*

speaks of commitment as giving one's self into another's hands. It is a commitment that represents my decision to give myself completely over, regardless of risk or consequence.

What am I giving myself over to? The grace of God (see Acts 14:26).

In the plan and purpose of God, committing myself wholeheartedly to someone—to my business, to a church, to a pastor, to a wife, or to a husband—is something beautiful. Solomon showed us what commitment is and what it is not. With all of his waywardness and capricious activities, he described his realization of the effects of what he did not do and then what he did do.

Solomon did not make precise decisions with commitment to the Word of God, which his father, David, and his mother, Bathsheba, taught him. Proverbs reveals beautiful teaching—lessons that came especially from David, but also from Bathsheba. She was an excellent teacher to her child and among the best mothers represented in the Word of God.

First, Take Up Your Cross

Whatever we do, we must take our time and decide whether we truly wish to enter into a

particular commitment. Many Christians commit to things without taking up their cross. They do not understand that taking up their cross involves becoming someone who lives as one raised from the dead in spiritual resurrection (Romans 6:13) because he has identified with Christ.

Before entering into a relationship and making a commitment at the marriage altar, people should first understand what it means to take up their cross daily. Otherwise, after a number of years, the struggles, the strife, and the warfare will begin to diminish their capacities to fulfill what they sincerely desire to have in their relationship. The issue is not what you have but what you are willing to lose (Mark 10:21-22). A capacity for life comes by taking up the cross and following Christ.

Taking up our cross is really a motivational issue. It isn't about suffering; it is about taking the cross of Christ where we were crucified in Him. We died with Him and we were buried with Him. Since we were buried with Him, we have also risen from the grave with Him. Our cross has nothing to with suffering. It has everything to do with living on the resurrection side of His death.

People get weary and exhausted in what they do because they make commitments without taking up their cross. Solomon became bored and frustrated, even with all of his wealth and education. He was making commitments without committing himself to the Source of all the blessings he had received (1 Kings 3:7-9).

Chapter Two

COMPELLED BY LOVE

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:14-17).

A man who makes a commitment and is compelled by love is a man filled with patience, joy, peace, and longsuffering. He can suffer long in a situation and not even try to find a way out

because he made a decision in a commitment of love.

If I make a commitment to God without His love, I will never make it. Without receiving the love of the Spirit and the power and motivation of love, I am sure to backslide and fail. I must make my commitments on the basis of receiving and walking in God's love as that love is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5; Ephesians 5:2).

What good is any commitment I make to my wife if I do it without the motivation of love in that commitment? The love of Christ compels me, motivates me, and energizes me.

We say to God, "I am Your bond-slave. I am Yours. I am Your hostage." The commitments we make to God that are motivated by love bring us to the place where we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And living according to a precious New Covenant, we have a capacity to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31).

Committed to Family and the Family of God

This is what brings everlasting commitments at the marriage altar. This is the foundation for everlasting commitments between parents and

children, children and parents, friends and friends, pastors and their people, people and their pastors, body members and body members. These commitments are decisions we have made to base our actions on God's love—the very thing that saved us from hell and took care of all our sins.

One commitment that people so easily ignore is the commitment to the local assembly. Sooner or later, conviction from the Word of God enters in—for example, when the person begins to recognize what the Word of God says about the pleasures of the world and the demons that have controlled his schedule. Some people get off in this area, because they have never made a decisive commitment to the Cross with God's love motivating them to stand in obedience to His Word.

Chapter Three

KEPT BY THE POWER OF THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

Any commitment we make must be according to every single word of God. If I am going through something, someone can show me something from the Word of God. At that point, it is important for me to recognize that I must live by every single word of God without any private interpretation. I commit myself to God and then I purpose to rebound every time I fail.

This is how God can set a person free from drugs and alcoholism. One great baseball player in the Hall-of-Fame was asked how he stopped drinking. He told of the time when he saw a video taken of him while he was drunk. He saw it, and his children saw it, too. "My God—my kids see me like this!" he said. That moment, he stopped drinking, and he has not had a drink since then.

This man made a commitment. Eventually,

he became born again. But at that time he made a simple decision and followed through with a commitment to never take another drink. His love for his family proved greater than his love for alcohol.

The great thing about our commitments as Christians is that we have the precious Word of God to guide our steps (see Psalm 119:133). So many people I know have lived for years in obedience to a commitment. The decision to hear and receive the Word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit and to respond with faith obedience has kept them—often through very difficult times.

The Necessary Filling of the Spirit

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:18-19).

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of

the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).

There is no way I can keep any commitment without the filling of the Holy Spirit. This filling gives me God's power to live in my eternal purpose. Therefore, my decision in a commitment is one that, by the grace of God, glorifies Jesus Christ and blesses the angels.

This filling of the Spirit also keeps me humble and contrite. There is no way anyone can enjoy his commitment and do it with enthusiasm and joy without brokenness and humility. These are the characteristics of God, and they are so crucial for our own lives.

God Uses Us in All Things

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Solomon wanted to leave some instructions in the final chapter of Ecclesiastes. "I have made a mess of my life," he is saying here. "Still, God has been so good to me. After all of my miserable failures and defeats, God never left me or forsook me."

The writing of Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon came after a journey of almost constant

failure. God took this old man, King Solomon, put an inspired pen in his hand, and told him to write his experiences as a warning and a witness, for all people on this earth to read. The devastating, self-destructive roads of failure Solomon followed did not disqualify him from God's service. This is very encouraging to all of us serving God today.

No matter where we are in life, we can make a decision to live in our commitments before God, and let Him use us in His eternal purpose and plan.

CONCLUSION

Solomon's message to us is very clear: "Remember Your Creator." God is the One who made us and bought us with the blood of His Son. We belong to Him.

Early in his life, Solomon followed the Lord. Then, success came and the test of success changed the king of Israel. He grew bored and frustrated. His real problem was simple: he forgot to decide, on purpose, to live in a commitment to the Word of God. He rejected the guidance of the Word for his life and instead went after everything he could get his hands on that the world had to offer.

In the midst of all his sin, Solomon began to hate himself—and this is why: God had put eternity in his heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Eternity was in his heart, but it was not controlling his thoughts and decisions. He found it difficult to live with himself in the midst of idolatry and materialism.

Decide to make and to keep commitments to God through His Word and His Spirit. Purpose to honor Him in everything you do. Then, your relationship with Him will bring you joy in your business, your marriage, and your friendships. Purpose to keep your relationships under the Source of blessing. If you do, God will let you enjoy the good things of this life because He wants to bless you. He wants you to enjoy the fruit of your labors. He wants you to be happy. He wants you to keep following after Him, knowing that everything comes from His hand, by His grace.

Committed to Purity

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INTRODUCTION

Our nation has reached an all-time low in morality, and it is true even among Christians. Those who do not live in immorality often suffer guilt and other effects from past failures or abuses. They want deliverance.

Yet, so many sit idly in Laodicean churches, living comfortably with a conscience of convenience while souls go to hell. Laodicean churches preach Christ but produce a false peace. If anyone can have peace without divine convictions, it is a false peace. We don't want to be a church that winks at sin or lives in double standards. And we don't need the kind of evangelicalism that draws big crowds because of popular personalities and gifts rather than holy men with divine convictions.

What we need today are old-fashioned, Bible-loving, gracious, whole-counsel-of-God Christians of conviction. God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, he will reap. If he sows

to the flesh, he will of the flesh reap corruption. But if a man sows to the spirit, he will of the Holy Spirit reap abundant and everlasting life. "…And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not" (Galatians 6:7-9).

This message is not to condemn anyone but rather to stimulate a desire for purity in all of our lives. Satan's strategy is to wear down the saints, and Christians need convictions to be able to stand against the devil and resist him in the name of Jesus Christ. Then we will be able to go forward, walking on water by faith and showing Satan that we are more than conquerors (Romans 8).

My prayer is that this booklet will inspire you to enter into God's final authority, and that without living in any measure of relativity, you will be empowered by God's love and grace as your motive.

Chapter One

COMMIT TO THE AUTHORITY OF THE PURE WORD

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:4-5).

We are living in an age when many do not recognize a final authority—no final power nor absolutes. Instead, our society promotes the relativity of opinions and experiences, but it does not understand the principle of commitment to

convictions which lead to conversions through communion with God in His Word.

Thank God, we know there is a Final Authority. There is an Absolute Power, and He is revealed in the Bible, which provides foundational, categorical absolutes. His Word is our provision to know God's thoughts on any subject. Understanding these truths imparted to us by the Holy Spirit, we come into a personal relationship with God, who is our Final Authority and our Absolute Power. The Lord then gives us a final word for every category and detail of life.

Conviction that Leads to Commitment

Believers today must break out from Laodicean lukewarm attitudes. In 1 Peter 2:23, Jesus *committed* Himself to the righteous Judge, knowing it would lead Him to death on the cross. The Greek word *paradidomi* describes the action of giving things over into the hands of Another. *Poieo* is also a word for commit, which means "to do" (James 1:22-23). We are to do God's will from the heart with a form of thinking that comes from the Scriptures and produces fruit (see Matthew 7:21; Ephesians 6:6; and Romans 6:17).

Commitment also speaks of making a pledge to engage ourselves in our convictions. A con-

viction is a firm belief which comes from the evidence of God's divine authority, illumination, and revelation through inspiration from categories of Scripture. For example, I have a conviction that God speaks through His Word and that what He says is true because God cannot lie about any subject (Titus 1:2). It is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). Every Word of God is pure, and if any man shall add to it, he is a liar (Proverbs 30:5-6).

Conviction means that I understand that God is not a man that he should lie (Numbers 23:19). Therefore, I am to lay up the words of God in my heart and soul, to bind them as a sign upon my hands and as frontlets between my eyes (see Deuteronomy 6:6-8). This is a picture of my mind functioning through the power of God with the provision of the Word.

Conviction means that we are not to add to or take away from the Word of God (Deuteronomy 12:32). So when I have convictions, the Word of God is *the* final authority on marriage, friendships, and issues of morality. The Word is the final authority for why the Church is here and how it is to function on the earth.

God's Word is absolute. By the grace and love of God, I commit myself to divine convictions

that are based upon the evidence of divine inspiration.

The Curse of Adultery and Divorce

There is a lot of adultery going on, even in churches. Adultery is a criminal act: "and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23*b*).* If a man or woman has sex outside of marriage, it is a criminal act in the eyes of God! Any person who willfully commits sin must make a commitment to repent totally, without sentimentality and with no abstract interpretation of the Word of God.

We need to make a commitment to have a conviction of what God's Word says about adultery. "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). In Matthew 5:28, Jesus said that even to think about committing adultery is to do it.

God considers adultery a crime. If someone broke into your home today and stole your valuables, you would consider that a criminal act wouldn't you? It's robbery, it's stealing. Isn't it just as much a crime to break up a family?

Recently, I read statements made by children from broken homes during counseling:

"I would rather my parents die than separate."

"I would rather die than have my family break up."

"I feel like nobody loves me."

"I don't trust God because of what He let happen to our family."

From these comments, you see that divorce is worse than death in the eyes of some children.

Yet, when two people get married, they swear to keep their vows to their own hurt (Psalm 15:4). They make a commitment to God to express unconditional love to each other. They make commitments to show grace, mercy, forgiveness, and patience—personal commitments to Jesus Christ and His words of conviction.

Establishing Precise Commitments

One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to convict. Jesus said that when the Spirit would come, He would "reprove," or convict, the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged.

Oh, how our nation needs convictions! We need convictions to love righteousness and hate iniquity (Psalm 45:7). Our convictions must agree with what God's Word teaches us.

Convictions lead to precise commitments. For example, Mark 13:10 says this Gospel must

be preached in all the world. I thank God for the many programs I hear on Christian radio and television which promote world missions. God wants us to make a commitment as a church to publish the Gospel in all the world.

We are also to make a commitment to love as God loves, to forgive as God forgives, and to be pure as God is pure. We are to have godly, categorical commitments. Paul wrote, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment [meaning doctrine]; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be [pure] and without offence till the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:9-10).

God wants our love to be according to the Word through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who sheds that love abroad in our hearts with the same power that sent Jesus Christ to Calvary to die in our place. He wants us to make commitments to Him and to His way. He is saying, "Trust in Me, and I will bring it to pass—there's not a thing I will hold back."

The Power of Prayer

There's a true story of a little girl who was taken from her parents and put in a orphanage. The parents had separated and were living in

immorality, drinking, and drug addiction. It was a harrowing situation and the girl had to be removed from it.

Some people from a Bible-believing church had an outreach to that orphanage. They went every week and loved the children, brought them clothes, and gave them Christ. This little girl received Jesus as her Savior and made a commitment to the Word of God and to prayer. She prayed five times a day, "God, please save mommy and daddy and make us a family again." She kept praying and kept thanking God for hearing her prayer.

In time, the mother attended a Billy Graham crusade in California and was gloriously saved. She called her husband in New York and said, "I've got to see you." She flew to New York and her husband also was gloriously saved. They found their little daughter and became a family again. The girl's prayer was answered. She had a conviction that God hears and answers prayer, and she made a commitment to pray. We need to make commitments to love, to pray, and to believe for our loved ones no matter what their state is.

When we make a commitment to something we receive from the inspired Word of God, it

produces a deeper conviction. God has the final word. God is the final authority. And He has the final provision. He wants us to live under the control of the precious Holy Spirit.

During World War II, a Hungarian man found that his whole family had been taken captive by Hitler's army. After walking nearly a hundred miles, he managed to escape the country, and found his way to Brooklyn, New York. One day he was telling his story to a stranger while riding on the subway. After listening intently, the stranger introduced himself and said, "I heard a similar story from a woman with the same last name as yours. I still have her address!" The Hungarian man made a phone call and found out that this woman was his wife. She was living alone, thinking everyone from her family had died. They were reunited because God has the final authority; God has the final power; God has the final word.

Convictions about Eternity

We have to get back to the precious Word of God and live in holy convictions. Our faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Every word of God is pure. It is only by the pure Word of God that we learn to make

commitments. Let's make commitments to friendship, to purity, and to study.

We need to understand that it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Let's make a commitment to share the Gospel with those who are bound for hell. Some Christians need to reestablish in their convictions that there is indeed a hell. It is a wicked place of unending torment, where the fire will never be quenched.

Also, we need to have a conviction that there is a heaven. What a precious reality. We need to have a conviction that God will never impute our sin to us, that when we believe, we receive total forgiveness of sin. Yet, we must also have a conviction that He will lovingly chastise us if we don't repent of our sin and grow in grace and knowledge. He loves us and desires that chastisement will produce peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11).

Faith that Serves by Love

Each of us must make commitments to serve and to give. Someone once said to me, "I can't love my partner." I said, "How about having an understanding of Galatians 5:6 and revealing a faith that serves by love?" You don't

have to 'feel' love to love someone. You just *will* to love them. You will to forgive, to understand, to be kind, to be patient. It's all a matter of choices.

People think that they are going to "feel" something forever in their marriage. Truthfully, no one feels something *all* the time. You simply love with your will, and you make a conscious decision to be faithful, come what may. You determine to be pure toward your partner because of a conviction from the heart that is according to God's will (Ephesians 6:6). You make a commitment to that conviction through the grace of God and the Holy Spirit.

We need a reason to be true, and the reason is the reality of God. We need a purpose, and we have an eternal purpose according to Ephesians 3:11. Besides needing a reason and a purpose, we also need a provision, and *God* is our provision. His Word is our provision. We need a motive, and the love of God is our motive. There is no greater power, no greater force in all the world to motivate us than the love of God.

**Read* Sin: The Great Detective, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

CHOOSE TO WALK WITH CONVICTIONS

"For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.

"Wherefore henceforth *know we no man after the flesh*: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore *if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:14-17).

We don't know anyone after the flesh, because the flesh in every man is evil and sinful. When God says that in Christ we are new creatures, He means it. Therefore, I have a conviction that every Christian is a brand-new creature, that old things have passed away, and that all

things are new in Him.

The alcoholic says he wants help, but he won't come to church. He is hopelessly, helplessly lost because he won't choose to draw near through a commitment to God, a commitment to the Body of Christ, or a commitment to holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of Truth that sets people free.

Addictions have no power over divinely inspired convictions from the power of God. God has the final authority over drugs and alcohol. He has the final authority over immorality. He can break the strongholds and release the person who is trapped.

God has the final authority over lying, over sentimentality, and over social drinking. God has the final authority to release you, to set you free, and to give you a single eye and a single heart (Matthew 6:22; 2 Corinthians 8:5).

Taking Control

We need to make a commitment to honor each other (Ephesians 5:21). Understanding that these are the last days, we need to make a commitment to take control of our lives through Jesus Christ. If we don't, the devil and the world will take control. Pride, circumstances, and the

love of money will take over. Relative righteousness will take control unless we are controlled by God's perfect righteousness, which was imputed to us at salvation and is imparted to us as we receive Bible doctrine daily.

We need the Holy Spirit's old-fashioned final authority. Recognize that God's Word and His provision are final; we need nothing less than that. All of God's promises are yea, none of them are nay (2 Corinthians 1:20).

We need a conviction to love one another, to edify and not blame, to build up and not tear down, to speak well of people and not speak evil. We need a conviction followed by a commitment to have pure thoughts. Christians should be convicted for the immorality of fornication, pornography, and lust that they allow into their lives through X-rated and R-rated movies and television. They don't agree with God, neither do they have His convictions on the subject.

Men need to have convictions to work hard and be diligent in their labor so they can provide for their families. The man who doesn't provide for his family is worse than an infidel.

We should have a firm conviction that Satan wants to plague us with sickness and disease.

He wants us to accept the curse of the Fall and to live in the law of sin, death, and illness. We are new creatures. This must be our conviction. Everything about yesterday is gone forever. God's mercies are new every morning and His compassions will not fail. He is the portion of our life (Lamentations 3:22-24).

We need old-fashioned biblical convictions for every area of life. Convictions lead to commitments, conversions, communion with God, and proper communication with people. The result is a divine provision to evangelize others, all because of the godly convictions that emanate from our souls, manifested through Jesus Christ in us. When we have convictions, we will never be the same, because convictions received through the love of God always lead to conversions.

Set Apart for God Himself

Billions of years ago, God had a plan to make His deity incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through the 'hypostatic union' He became fully God and fully Man (John 1:14). As a part of that plan, Jesus would die for the sins of the whole world in the unlimited atonement (1 John 2:2). But God did something else so crucial in that

"time before time": Because of His omniscience, He set apart the godly for Himself (Psalm 4:3). And anytime they call, He hears.

The Lord said in Isaiah 43:7, "Every one that is called by my name…I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). Our spirit, soul, and body were created strictly for the Lord's pleasure and for His glory, to be set apart unto Him.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).

God's grace has appeared to all men through the creation and the gift of God-consciousness (see Romans 1:18-32; Romans 2:14-15). The word "teaching" in Titus 2:12 is *paideuo*, referring to the entire process of educating people with *all* of the Bible. This goes way beyond giving instructions; it teaches us practical ability and capacity

to apply the entire Bible to our lives.

The first thing grace teaches us is to deny ungodliness. Then we can live "soberly"—with discreet, quiet truth, having the rooms of our soul filled with categorical doctrine—"righteously and godly in this present evil world" with the expectation of His return. This is our blessed hope. We grow to love Him so intimately that we constantly look for Him to come back, yet without living in presumption or anxiety.

"[Jesus Christ] gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all *iniquity*, and purify unto himself a *peculiar* people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and *rebuke* with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Titus 2:14-15).

In this passage, "iniquity" speaks of emotional rebellion against spiritual authority because of lust patterns of self-exaltation. Christ died to redeem us from iniquity and to "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "Peculiar" refers to something chosen to be one's own possession. Interestingly, the word "rebuke" means to bring in conviction. God is purifying people who will be His own possession. And how does He do this? By bringing in conviction through His Word.

Chapter Three

THE DEVASTATION OF FORNICATION

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9). God looked across time billions of years ago, saw us and called us by name. "I want Jack and Jim and Mary. And while they are on earth, I want them for Myself. I will add things unto them, but I want them entirely—spirit, soul, and body—just for Me."

In 1 Corinthians 6:15-17 we read, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that *he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh*. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." We are members of His body, flesh, and bones (see Ephesians 5:30).

Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 6:18 that

we are to "flee fornication." Though he often mentions adultery, here he specifically says fornication, which means to engage in sexual activity outside the boundary of marriage; it includes adultery. "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth *against* his own body."

Think of the spiritual, physiological, psychological, and emotional aspects of God's divine illumination on the subject of sexual sins and why we must flee them. Proverbs 6:32 says that people who commit adultery lack understanding. They do not comprehend how the physiological, psychological, and spiritual aspects are intertwined and effect the central nervous system. They misunderstand the 'libido' (or sex drive) and what it means to connect or to be joined to another, as described in 1 Corinthians 6:15-16. The sex drive, often characterized by libido 'waves', is a normal and necessary function in a wholesome union. When, however, it is outside of a relationship sanctified in heaven, it means that a person places himself under bondage to a terribly destructive pattern and force that only God can deliver him from.

In the Genesis 4:1 description of a sanctified union, Adam "knew" Eve and she conceived.

When two people commit fornication, they "know" about each others' physiological and emotional responses. They are *joined*—they have become one soul and one flesh—and the energy stimulated by the libido waves make them want the connection again and again. Men will often turn to pornography to satisfy this desire, and because there is so much trash on TV and over the internet, sin rages out of control in this area of immorality.

One Soul, One Flesh, Two Hearts

When two people enter into fornication (which includes adultery) and the pattern is repeated without repentance, there is a connection to the old sin nature and to Satan's system. The connection is "closer than air," and it cannot be sundered (Job 41:16). They become one soul and one flesh, but they are not one heart, neither can they be.

But the reason they have to do it again and again is because they became one soul, and now Satan is energizing the affair through the emotions and through the libido waves, so they can fulfill their lust. Galatians 5:16 says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Please recognize that an isolated act of fornication causes two people to become one soul and one flesh—wicked, evil, and infected. (For a person who is involved with pornography, his infected soul and flesh are attached to demonic influence.) If a couple divorce and remarry, unless there is repentance and the attachment is forsaken and dealt with thoroughly with God's purging, it is a marriage that is one soul and one flesh but two damaged hearts.

What happens when people involved in fornication get married? What happens to someone who is married and becomes involved with pornography? The wife doesn't desire her husband, and the husband doesn't get any satisfaction from his wife, because they have destroyed the physiological and psychological capacity of their libidos for the one person God gave them. Therefore, they have sinned against their own bodies and are in bondage to forces that make them crave further stimulation. This pattern will go on for years, unless they receive deliverance from God.

Unfortunately, there are people who are not committing sexual sins, but they have not been good marital partners for a long time because of what happened prior to marriage. When they

sinned against their own bodies, they damaged their souls and affected the libido, which must be guarded with great care. The same effect is often realized in the innocent victims of molestation, who must be counselled with great sensitivity.

But a married couple who are right with God have one heart, one soul, and one flesh. They belong to God; they are His cherished possession. That is why no man dare try to separate what God has closed. "Let no man put asunder" because the two have become one flesh (Mark 10:6-9). On the other hand, Jonathan and David had one heart and one soul, but in the purity of their love for each other, "…passing the love of a woman" (2 Samuel 1:26), they were *not* one flesh (Acts 4:32). With the relationship of a man and a woman, however, the flesh plays a major role in the unity of their double trinity: their spirit, soul, and body.

This is why God commands us to *flee* fornication. A man is not to know any woman in the flesh. He is not to know any woman but his wife in the sense of sexual thrills and thoughts. Fornication is so destructive. Those who commit it lack understanding, and they destroy their capacity for the marriage bed, which is undefiled (Hebrews 13:4).

If you are reading this and feeling condemned, remember that God wants to bless and instruct you through the whole counsel of God. This can all be corrected. God doesn't want to condemn you—He loves you and wants to help you.

God's Initiations, Our Responses

God initiates and we respond. When this happens, He is revealed in us. He is reflected through us, and He is glorified by us.

Isaiah heard the Lord saying "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The prophet said, "Here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

Initiation. Response.

In Acts 9, the Shekinah glory of the Lord shined down on Saul of Tarsus as he was on the road to Damascus. The brightness of God's glory knocked him down and he heard a voice: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?…I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:4-5). Saul was kicking against the Church, but he was really kicking against Christ. Finally, Saul said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord initiated and Saul responded. As Saul (who later became Paul) continued to respond to God's

initiations, he became a great missionary and also wrote eleven New Testament epistles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In Song of Solomon 5, Jesus is pictured as the Bridegroom with His locks filled with the dew of the night. In verse 1, He initiated to the Bride, saying, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

But in verse 2, the bride had a separated, questionable response. She said, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." She recognized the voice of her Beloved knocking at her door, saying, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." He had a tremendous savor of spices coming out of Him toward the Bride.

"But," she replied in verse 3, "I have taken off my coat, and I've washed my feet; how can I defile them again?" She didn't respond to His initiation. And when she went out into the town to find Him, she was hurt by those who were supposed to be watchmen because she hadn't

responded to her Bridegroom.

The key to our relationship with God is to have an intimate, personal communion with Him where He initiates and we respond. In turn, we can initiate to God based upon His initiations to us, and God responds to us. Billions of years ago, He desired our fellowship with Him. He wanted our fellowship to be in the Spirit (Philippians 2:1) and in the light of His Word (1 John 1:7). And He desired that sometimes we would fellowship with Christ's sufferings for us through resurrection power and the Cross (Philippians 3:10).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy [Spirit], be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14). Our fellowship is derived from communion with the Holy Spirit. *God wants fellowship*. He wants a community where He initiates with His Word through the divine vibrations of His Spirit. Through our fellowship He wants to give us an eternal purpose, an eternal destiny, and an eternal relationship—an intimate, positive, ever-growing, ever-glowing, overflowing life between us and Him. It's a fellowship of life (1 John 1:2), love (1 John 1:3), and light (1 John 1:5-7). As God does this, the Son of God is revealed in us.

Chapter Four

MADE CLEAN BY THE WORD: A SPIRITUAL CATHARSIS

In Galatians 1:15-16 Paul wrote, "…It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen." First, the Son has to be revealed in us to take over our human spirits, our souls, and the libido waves that effect our bodies. We must become His—spiritually, mentally, and physiologically. That needs to happen first, and then we are clean through the Word, after we have rebounded.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14).

The blood of Christ shall purge us from "dead works," meaning anything done in spiri-

tual death. We are purged and made clean to serve a living God! We don't have to live in the consequences of immorality, in the consequences of sin and iniquity, or in the consequences of evil, always trying to pay for what we have done. The blood of Christ through the eternal Spirit will do a catharsis, purging the one thing that needs to be purged and made brand-new: *the conscience*. This brings in God's norms and standards for the spiritual, the psychological, and the physiological parts of man. Once our conscience is purged, a new line of communication opens up—an intimate fellowship with God in life, love, and light.

"If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psalm 130:3-4).

God wants us to walk in the Spirit and to fellowship with Him. He sets us apart for Himself. He purifies us so that we can be His own possession. He wants to possess a man's entire outlook and attitude. He wants to possess the thought life as well as the schedule, to give a life filled with joy. Joy is a wonderful power. "The joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

The love of Christ is a mighty power, a wonderful force. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:18-19).

In these two magnificent verses God is saying, "My love takes care of guilt. It takes care of fear and insecurity." In fact, when the Holy Spirit sheds love abroad in your heart, fear is *cast out*. No special meeting is required. You don't need someone else to help you do it. The Holy Spirit's love casts out fear. It does a complete catharsis.

In Revelation 2:1-7, God commended the church at Ephesus very highly. Yet, they lacked one thing. God said, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4). "First love" means God loving me as a depraved sinner, God loving me while I was ungodly (Romans 5:6), while I was yet a sinner (Romans 5:8).

"God justifieth the ungodly" (Romans 4:5). I was ungodly. My whole head was sick. I was sinking, but I reached out and said, "Oh, God,

are You there? Forgive me. I believe!" He justified me on the basis of the faith I expressed, and He came into my heart to live. By His grace, love, and mercy, I was saved. On top of that, forty-six positional things were done at the moment of salvation, before I could blink an eye.

Not only are we saved by faith, we are purified by faith (Acts 15:9), and 1 Timothy 5:22 says, "Keep thyself pure." But how? We are purified by faith in His Blood and by faith in His love. We simply *receive* it. As we receive it, God turns us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:18). He gives us an inheritance with the saints who are sanctified by the faith of Christ.

Every child of God can overcome and be a winner. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest" (Jeremiah 45:5).

The "evil upon all flesh" speaks of satanic infections in the soul and body. Don't seek things for yourself. Make a commitment to be a good steward and sacrifice for His work. If you don't seek things for yourself, God will give your life as a "prey," meaning you will receive a special

prize as a winner wherever you go. But if you do seek things for yourself, evil will come upon you. Infections come in through the devil's cosmic system, affecting your spiritual, psychological, and physiological makeup. These infections will stay with you, even as you *seem* to go on with God, and secretly you will become double-minded.

Renewing the Mind

But there is an answer: Receive first love. Allow the precise convictions that come from categorical doctrine to produce a continual renewal. God says, "I will purge your conscience and get rid of the infections. I will make you clean, and give you a catharsis if you will just receive first love." When you received Christ, you received first love and you were saved. You didn't do a single thing but believe upon Him. Now that you are saved, receive "first love" for the purging of your conscience. God will make you brand-new, spiritually, psychologically, and even physiologically, regarding the response of your libido.

"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23). "Be renewed" is *anakainoo* in the Greek, which comes from *kainos*, an iterative

present tense, which implies a daily succession of moments where you keep being renewed. It means there is nothing old going on inside of you because of this continual renewal in your human spirit and in your mind. The verb *anakainoo* is intransitive, which means the subject (*you*) receives the action of the verb (*be renewed*) with no object. The verb is followed by an instrumental case of agency. In other words, with help from the agencies of the spirit and the mind (which is now the mind of Christ), and by the provision of the Word and the Holy Spirit, we are renewed daily.

Having conviction with a commitment to purity brings us into fellowship with God in victory, power, life, and with an expectation from Him in everything (Psalm 62:5). We go forward knowing "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). God always causes us to triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14), so let's grow, glow, and go in the light of intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Every believer needs to have a conviction that says, "I am God's beloved." Get alone with Him and make some serious commitments to Jesus Christ based upon that conviction. We need precise convictions through a precise provision—the Word of God and the power of His Spirit. That is the only way to stay on the straight road of protection where God commands a blessing. Instead of being conformed to this world through wrong decisions, let's make commitments to draw near to God and be filled with the Spirit continually.

If you are backslidden, you can have a conviction that you are a new creature in Christ. Having a conviction of grace teaches us to deny ungodliness in this present evil world. You can glorify God with a commitment to your convictions through the promises and mandates of the Word of God.

If you are lost, you need to have a conviction

too. Without receiving God's free gift of salvation, you will go to hell when you die. But God loves you and paid for your sins. If you believe in your heart that He died, was buried, and rose from the dead for you, He will save you right now, and you can have the conviction that you have eternal life.

Let's walk in love as His dear children and have convictions—divine propositions from God to us in the integrity of His love. Receive mercy, forgiveness, and grace, and let Jesus Christ produce the change. He is the final authority. His Word is final and His grace is the ultimate provision for life. His love is the only true motive for change, and His purity is the life of holiness which comes to us by imparted righteousness so we can reveal His nature.

Communion

Within the Church

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INTRODUCTION

Every Christian has been bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ; we are not our own. Each one of us is a member of the Body, of which Christ is the Head; and our Head would like us, the Body, to be His life, His flesh, His very bones. Even the weakest member of our Body is still Christ's. The one who has failed still belongs to Him, but few in the Church today discern this truth. Each member of the Body must be treated *as* Christ because Christ possesses him; therefore, we are to honor the Body, identify with it, and express life to it.

When I look at another person in the congregation I cannot afford to get caught up in personality clashes, resentment, bitterness, insecurity, or fear. Instead, I must love each member, for each one is in Christ and, therefore, he is a part of me.

No one is perfect at this point, but in heaven,

everyone will be perfected and we will spend eternity together.

Knowing this, we are to love each other as we grow, mature, and take our particular places as particular members of His Body. There is no need to rush out from your particular place and into someone else's. God has placed each member in the Body according to His design. This booklet will help us all to realize the benefit of staying in our particular place and learning how the whole Body is blessed by the diversity of its members.

Chapter One

PLACED AS IT PLEASES HIM

The Body is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is the Body. A body cannot separate itself from its head, neither can the head separate itself from the body. The head perpetuates its life through the body.

Everyone who receives Jesus Christ has become a member of His Body and a partaker of His life. In 1 Corinthians 8:9-13, Paul communicated the principle that any time the weakest member of the Body is offended, Christ is offended as well: "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for

whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

The Oneness of the Body

Ephesians 5:30 defines it: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," and every single member of the Body is a member in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27), and a new creation in Christ.

God places every member of the Body as it pleases Him. When one member of the Body rejoices, all rejoice. When one member of the Body suffers, all suffer. When one member of the Body is honored, all members are edified. We weep when one is weeping; we laugh when one is laughing. Over and over in the Scriptures we find a consistent expression and manifestation of the oneness of the life of Jesus Christ in His spiritual Body.

The ability to discern the Body of Jesus Christ is extremely important. Many have a disillusioned attitude toward His Body, not discerning the variety of gifts that are at work. The Body is one, yet it is very diverse. Some believers cannot

understand the Body's diversity. As a result, there is confusion and even separation regarding the gifts God gives.

The diversity of gifts is meant to edify the Body, not to divide it. These gifts should be used for building people up, but instead, one will not recognize certain gifts of another. Jealousy, insecurity, and pride cause division. When these attitudes get in, believers don't have the liberty to express their diverse gifts as God meant for them to be expressed.

Diversity and Unity

The Body should always have unity, but it will always be filled with diversity. Diversity complements, balances, builds, and edifies the whole Body unto the maturity of our Head, Jesus Christ. From the beginning of time, many ministries have had divisions because there was no understanding of spiritual diversity.

To properly discern the Body, we must first see that the Body is Christ, and Christ is the Body. Next, we must recognize that every single member of the Body is a *particular* member, sharing a portion of the whole. Not only is each one a particular member, but each one is a particular member put in place by God. Therefore, we must

understand that God gives His supreme grace to each individual He places in His organism, by giving them His spiritual life.

Chapter Two

NO LIFE APART FROM THE BODY

The one who knows how to discern the Body realizes that if he withdraws from the Body it is like the arm withdrawing from the shoulder. Picture my arm departing from my shoulder, saying, "Pardon me, I'm tired of just hanging around that shoulder." The arm somehow becomes detached and claims that it has a right to be his own member. If it were possible for my arm to detach itself from my shoulder, my arm would be dead! There would be no life in it. The arm that's detached isn't receiving any life from my head.

Perhaps you would rather talk about legs. Suppose your good leg got up and left your body. It just decided to become detached. You can talk to that leg all you want, but you cannot talk that leg into living. It's been severed from your body. You can make it look any way you want it

to look. Go ahead, dress it up! Hide the place where it's been cut off. If it's a woman's leg, you can put on the prettiest nylons in the world. But that leg is simply a corpse.

An arm or a leg on its own couldn't even get subjective—it's just dead. It couldn't say, "Well, I've been alone with God." There's nothing wrong with being alone with God for certain seasons. But, beware of those who consistently disappear and talk of being alone with God. Eventually, they become Lone Rangers for God. Such people detach themselves from the Body and they cannot receive any life from the Head, Jesus Christ. Many hyper-spiritual, subjective believers treat the Body of Jesus Christ like this. They have gone beyond the mere diversity of gifts and have become detached.

Life for the Weak

Jesus Christ pours His life into every member of the Body. Because Satan is constantly trying to take advantage of God's people, the weaker the member, the more they need God's life. When the life of Christ is not flowing in the Body, Satan uses his supernatural skills, wisdom, and power to his advantage. Paul told the Corinthian believers in that local assembly to forgive the man

who had repented of incest, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Paul spoke of how it grieved him that there were groups within that church saying, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:12). Satan was able to take advantage of that Body because the life of the Head wasn't flowing through it. People in Corinth had no true discernment of Jesus Christ as the Head of the Body.

The time has come: Satan knows his time is short. We must begin to realize how imperative it is to discern the Body of Jesus Christ.

Developing Discernment

"LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear" (Psalm 10:17).

Let's take notice of how discernment of the Body is developed. Reckoning that there is no way the Body of Christ can function without the humility of its Head, this verse describes three things God does for the humble. First, He hears their desire. Secondly, He prepares their hearts. Finally, He causes their ear to hear. In humility, Jesus pours out His Spirit through every mem-

ber of the Body. Then, the Body is able to function in prosperity.

God begins to do great things when humility is present in the Body. The Scriptures tell us that every spiritual promotion comes through humility. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4). Humility brings in the greatness of Jesus Christ.

"When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person" (Job 22:29). There are periods of time when we may experience being cast down. But God will deliver the humble person who is in this condition.

The Work of Humility

Some sincere people come to me and say, "I know what the Word of God says, but this is what I'm going through. How do I get out of it?" There's no way out of it without the humility of the Cross; no way out except for taking that lowly place with Jesus Christ, identifying with Him, and letting His life flow to us and through us.

"But he giveth more [greater] grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6). The humble

person receives *greater* grace; he is honored and exalted, and receives spiritual riches. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6). At a point in His plan, God chooses to exalt us. The original setting of this text reveals that the humble person stays humble. It appears that everyone is taking advantage of him, yet he remains lowly. He continues to sit in the last seat; he doesn't exercise certain rights that he might have, but, in due time, he is exalted by God.

It is time to honor the Body of Jesus Christ. When people are operating in greater grace, there doesn't have to be incompatibility in relationships. A husband doesn't have to leave his wife; teen-agers don't need to rebel. The spirit of faith replaces the spirit of fear. There is no reason to withdraw and become detached when a situation comes up.

I want you to understand how beautifully humility works as God exalts and promotes. He meets the desires of our hearts, lifts us up, and promotes us in due season, all because we take up the spirit of humility and allow the Holy Spirit to make us willing to be the last and the least, in childlike faith.

Chapter Three

THE CUP OF BLESSING, THE BROKEN BREAD

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12).

There are many strangers' voices today. These voices are crafty voices, very shrewd and cunning. The work of Satan is expanding and extending itself, permeating the fiber of the Christian community. A dull spirit comes in, characterized by familiarity, insensitivity, and carelessness. Humility is gone.

Something happens in school and the teacher is blamed. Something happens in the youth group and the youth director is blamed. In these cases, the heart is not prepared for the Body. The ears are not open to hear from God so there is no hearing because there is no humility. It's foolish to blame someone else for what God is trying to do in us. If we would humble ourselves, God would cause our ears to hear. He would prepare our hearts and give us His desire for the situation.

Pride causes a person to detach and isolate himself from others, making decisions that only benefit himself. A humble person, on the other hand, always makes decisions to build up others, to bear their burdens, and to seek for their benefit and prosperity over his own.

Capacity for Communion

"The cup of blessing," in 1 Corinthians 10:16, speaks of our capacity for communion as sons of God; the communion of one bread reveals our capacity as partakers of one body. Our capacity—the measure of our ability to receive and to give—comes through the blessing of the Blood in our relationships. Our cup of blessing speaks of our capacity to relate to one another in our

sonship, discerning the Body through His blood. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Jesus Christ has established the means of fellowship. We are to bless the cup, which represents the blood He shed on Calvary. Our capacity in relationships is revealed by the blood of the New Covenant. In the Old Testament tabernacle, the blood of the sacrificial animals was sprinkled on everything, but its effects were only temporary. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats … sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:13-14).

The blood of Christ washes away sin; it purges the conscience. According to Romans 5:9, the blood takes care of our justification, as we appropriate it by faith (Colossians 1:20-23). It reveals to us freedom and purity, as it washes over our hearts, minds, ears, and tongues. It takes over our frame of reference and our souls. His blood becomes our capacity to bless other body members.

1 Corinthians 10:16 also talks about "the bread which we break." Shed blood and broken bread—these are the two things that characterize discerning the Body of Jesus Christ. Let me illustrate it for you. Let's say I must communicate something to one of my associate pastors. I must remember that he is redeemed, purchased by Jesus Christ's own blood. But Jesus also gave His body on the cross. My fellowship with that pastor must be around the shed blood *and* broken body of Jesus Christ. Through the same Holy Spirit of my Head, by faith I allow Jesus Christ to break me and bring me into humility. Then, I am able to express life derived from Jesus Christ to this pastor, and our fellowship is around the Blood.

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man

shall bear his own burden" (Galatians 6:1-5).

This is a tremendous principle. When there's repentance, sin cannot stop the power of God from going through a ministry. It's not sin that stops God's power, but rather, it's a heart that's deceived—someone who thinks he is something when he owes his success to the fact that he was purchased by Christ's blood and bought with the power of His broken body. We are one Body and we're all partakers of the one Bread of Life.

When I look out at an audience, I don't see the work of a man or men. I see the work of Christ. When I watch dear folks going to the foreign mission field, I don't see a work of a man, I see the work of God.

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Romans 12:9-13).

Blessing the Cup

Jesus Christ penetrates into the fellowship of God's people when the cup is blessed. Capacity

for the life of Christ is encouraged in the Body. We become broken bread as Jesus became broken bread. He had no place to lay His head. Dying on the cross for the guilty, He became guilty, bearing the sins of us all. Broken Bread: His life flowing through me and you; life that cannot be divided. Jesus Christ cannot be divided when His life penetrates into His people's hearts. Only those things that come from the subjective soul life of men can be divided.

What can we add to the blood of Jesus Christ? Nothing, of course. The Blood has cleansed us from all sin. There's nothing more that we can do but have brokenness. A broken and contrite heart God will not despise (Psalm 51:17).

1 Corinthians 10:24 says, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." In studying this passage, I discovered that I am not to seek for that which will profit me, but I am to seek for that which will profit others. This is good, even for businessmen and companies, when it's understood properly and spiritually.

Seek not your own, but for another man's wealth; bear another's burdens; seek what will benefit others. This isn't natural or normal, humanly speaking. This is Body life. It's not pleasing men, it's not promoting people in the

flesh, it's not exalting people who feel a need to be exalted. It's something entirely different. It is humbling ourselves in the sight of God, esteeming others, and laying down our lives without reaction or resistance, without superficiality. I am to discern the portion of Christ in others, the life of the Head flowing through the Body.

Think of all those who have Jesus Christ inside of them. Each one represents Christ's own body. Each one is a new creation, redeemed, seated above in heavenly places, and bought by His blood to be a part of Him. "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17). This is the picture of the Body of Christ.

CONCLUSION

I want to thank all the teachers in our school and Bible college for their commitment to spiritual excellence in Jesus Christ. It's a commitment to humility with a life laid down, being motivated by love. For every administrator, Bible study leader, student, and usher, I thank God. For every believer-priest in our Body, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

God sent you to serve. He sent you to be ministered unto by the life of the Body. Somewhere you heard Him call and you answered the call. You have lived through testings, suffering, trials, and persecution. You were all a part of it all, and now you're ready to experience the blessings that come with humility. You were sent and you stayed in the place of God.

Unless we, as believers, humble ourselves and pray, there is no way under heaven our nation will see revival. We must live by every

word of God, through recovery and following after Him. Let's prove our work, always making sure it's the work of Christ—the work of love, redemption, reconciliation, and edification. Our work must be the work of laying down our lives, the work of compassion, the work of faith, the work of selflessness.

One of the characteristics of greatness is humility that abides in the darkness, without sight. One of the great expressions of faith is to have the ability of grace to be sustained by Him who is invisible, when all the visible odds are against you. One of the great marks of a local assembly, such as the one I have had the privilege to experience the life of Christ with, is to be a people who draw near.

Let us draw near to the cup of communion. Let us draw near to the broken bread. When we draw near, no matter how we are feeling, the spiritual and physical weariness goes away. We are many members, but one Body; many members partaking of the one Bread of Life. Let's always recognize Christ as the Head of our Body with His doctrine governing our relationships, the Finished Work controlling our fellowship, and spiritual gifts for our edification and production.

Complete in the Family of God

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INTRODUCTION

The family is an institution established by God early in His creation. It started with a man and a woman, and He designed it to provide an environment where children can grow in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord.

Satan, of course, noticed the premium God placed on the family. So immediately after his fall, he set in motion a plan to fracture the family structure and cause division. He used deception to drive a wedge between husbands and wives. That diabolical effort continues today, evident in the skyrocketing divorce and separation rates.

Jesus Christ came to defeat Satan's master plan. His death, burial, and resurrection opened the way for us to become sons and daughters of God the Father (John 1:12). His Blood covers us, and it makes all Christians members of His eternal family.

This booklet examines the reasons why Satan attacks the concept of family and reveals

the deep reality of who we are in Christ and why we can never be divorced from Him.

Chapter One

WHAT THE DEVIL LOST

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

"And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

"And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:7-9).

"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

"Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy

mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

"By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

"Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee" (Ezekiel 28:13-17).

"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (Luke 10:18).

Lucifer was in a family in heaven. He was created as a perfect being, with a free volition. In heaven, he was beautiful all of his days. The Word of God tells us that Lucifer had a covering of stones—*sardius, topaz, diamond, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, emerald,* and *carbuncle*. These nine stones were his covering. Yet, though God created Lucifer as perfect (Ezekiel 28:15), the Word of God declares that he profaned the sanctuary.

Furthermore, a third of the angels were cast down, with Lucifer, to the earth, because they became familiar with doctrine and familiar with God (Revelation 12:4).

The stones for Lucifer's covering stood for the nine fruits of the Spirit, in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. The first three represent God's character operating inwardly. The next three speak of God's character reflected outward to the world. The final three represent God's character in us going upward.

New Stones for New Life

While Lucifer's garment had nine stones adorning it, the high priest was covered with twelve—an additional three stones that were not a part of Lucifer's covering. The high priest, whose office was fulfilled by the great High Priest Jesus Christ, possessed three additional characteristics that Lucifer did not have.

The breastplate of the high priest, as described in Exodus 25 and 35, was adorned with twelve stones. Not all of them were expensive gems, as we think of them. In addition to representing the twelve tribes of Israel, each stone

also represented distinct characteristics of God.

Ligure was one of those stones, and it stood for obedience. It points to the obedience of Christ who said, "I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O Lord" (see Hebrews 10:7). Christ was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross (Philippians 2:8). Christ's obedience to the Cross did not benefit Lucifer, as Jesus did not die for evil.

Agate was another stone on the breastplate of the high priest. This gem with its multi-faceted edges and colors represents the diversity of God's grace and the many stripes Christ bore on the way to Calvary. By these stripes we are healed (1 Peter 2:24). It also pointed to the cloud of incense, which represented the presence of God. Jesus Christ, our High Priest, always walked in the presence of God except for those three hours on the Cross when He became sin for us. With our sins upon the Son, God the Father in all of His holiness could not look upon His Son.

The last stone on the priest's breastplate was an *amethyst*. The color of this stone is clear purple—a combination of red and blue. This color speaks of Jesus Christ's hypostatic union as the perfect God-Man on the earth. He never surren-

dered His royalty as the King of kings, although He did empty Himself of the power of Deity. Jesus walked upon the earth under the leading of the Holy Spirit. He was never overwhelmed with the cares of this world. Jesus was never intoxicated with worry. In His perfect humanity, He never employed His deity, but He always trusted in God the Father.

The Worms that Never Leave

Isaiah 14:11 says of Lucifer, "the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee." One meaning of the word "worm" is conscience of memory, and the plural "worms" speaks of many memories through the conscience.

Satan has his place in hell because of his terrible conscience. God found iniquity within Lucifer, the star of the morning who was brought to the ground because of his volitional decisions. For now, he is the god of this world's system (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The obedience of Jesus Christ's humanity never profited Satan as a covering. The many beautiful facets of God's grace were not available to Lucifer. The stripes of suffering would never profit the devil. The blue of Christ's heavenly origin and the red of the blood He shed re-

vealed the purple of His hypostatic union, which never profited Satan.

Satan never wore these particular stones.

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

"Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded" (1 Peter 2:5-6).

This is God's declaration concerning every born-again believer. When we are built up as "lively stones," our lives are filled with love, joy, and peace—sardius, topaz, and diamonds. All of these stones speak of the fruit of the Spirit as they are active in us. God takes us as lively stones and fits us together in His family on earth.

Satan was cast out of the heavenly family. Through the obedience, the grace, the holiness and the manhood of Jesus Christ, now we are fitly framed into God's family.

Chapter Two

ADDED INTO THE ROYAL FAMILY FOR ETERNITY

The family is such a beautiful institution. It was the second institution established by God. He instituted marriage, in which husbands and wives nourish each other. The husband cherishes his wife as Christ cherishes His Church (Ephesians 5:25). Together, they develop an inner life with God. Confidence and a good self-image take root as they follow the wonderful plan of God and establish a family.

Children learn most about life by what they are exposed to in the home. Their training, their development, their spiritual lives, their practical lives, and their responsibility come from what they learn in the family.

Personally, I was one of seven children. My father died when I was three years old. We had a huge long table and we all sat around it for dinner. I can still see my mom making pork and

beans, homemade rolls and pies. You name it, she made it. It was precious and wonderful for me. Still, I always wondered what it would have been like to have a father. Then, I got saved. I found Christ, and I found God the Father.

Power that Breaks Bondage

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

We are made children of God by His Spirit, never to go back into bondage again. The spirit of fear no longer reigns in us because we can say to God, "My Father, my dear Father." The Holy Spirit witnesses to our spirit that we are the children of God. When we receive Christ, He gives us power to become the sons of God, members of heaven's precious family.

Every Christian can say he is a child of the Father of all mercies. He can also say that His Father is the God of all comfort and the God of all patience (see Romans 15:5). The God of all grace is our Father.

It is personal—He is our Father.

Another beautiful truth is that Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call us "brethren" (see Hebrews 2:11). He said, "I will declare thy name to My brethren, and a new song I will sing in the midst of the congregation." At that point, Jesus was just being a brother to the disciples and to all of us.

In Song of Solomon 4, the bridegroom said to the bride, "My love, my sister, my undefiled." The Groom, who is Jesus Christ, was saying, "You are everything to me. You are my family. We are all members of one precious family."

"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Psalm 42:7).

What does it mean when God says, "the deep calleth unto deep"? This is a very important passage, because eye has not seen nor has ear heard what the Father has prepared for them that love Him (I Corinthians 2:9).

We are not of the spirit of the world. We are of the Spirit of God that we might know those things that are freely given to us. For God has not given us the Spirit of this world's wisdom, but the Spirit that is of Him.

The Holy Spirit searches all things and reveals them to us (1 Corinthians 2:10). We have the mind of Christ. The mind of eternity past is reaching into the human spirit of man. It brings with it His eternal revelation of love, joy, peace (the inward qualities of God) longsuffering, gentleness, goodness (the outward fruit of God) faithfulness, meekness, and temperance (the maximum glorification of God while we are on earth).

These all categorize the deep things of God.

Chapter Three

THE BRIDE: THE DARLING OF HEAVEN

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-48).

Remember that according to Ezekiel 28:11-19, Satan was cut off from the heavenly family, to be put in a place where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched. The memory and conscience never die. When we receive Christ, we receive a new mind, and the Holy Spirit is constantly cleansing our conscience as we bring every thought into captivity (2 Corinthians 10:5). But those who end up in hell because they rejected the Savior must live with their memories and their consciences forever.

We, on the other hand, will enter into the New Jerusalem as Christ's Bride forever. Consider this: Eve came out of Adam; God took one his ribs to make her for him. Therefore, she was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. In the same way, we are Jesus Christ's. We are bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh in this world. God brought Eve to Adam as his wife, just as the Father will present all born-again believers to Jesus Christ as His Bride.

When judgment is over, Christ will, for an instant, pull back the veil of hell (Isaiah 66:22-24). We will see what separation from the family of God will mean. We will see how the worms die not. We will see the fire that will never be quenched. We will see a place where

there is no gravity—the place of the bottomless pit (Revelation 9:2).

But that will not be our place.

Set in our Heavenly Position

"And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

"And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it" (Luke 8:20-21).

All over the world, there are precious Christians. Yes, all of us still have an old sin nature. Still, He has called us members of the family of heaven because of the truth of our position in Christ (Ephesians 2). We are complete in Him. We have been made perfect in Him, Jesus our Savior, Jesus our elder Brother. Because I never really knew my own father, it was so important to get to know my heavenly Father. And because of Calvary, I can say to God, "My Father."

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

"And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

We are the darlings of heaven. We are His. We are the object of God's affections and attention. He made us complete in His family, and He has committed all of His promises to us.

CONCLUSION

It is a great thing to understand that we can shine instead of whine. This week do not whine. Purpose on it! Just remember that you are a member of His family, complete and entire—a member in particular of Him who is the Head of all principalities and powers. According to Colossians 3:3, we are hid with Christ; therefore, our record will always be perfect.

We can shine and not whine all week. We can bloom and not live in gloom. We can be better and not be bitter. Our minds can focus upward and not downward. We will not have to focus on what might have been or wonder why something happened.

Let's talk about the Lord Jesus Christ and our Father, who can make things happen in our lives. We can grow in joy and not in sorrow; we can grow in health and not wallow in sickness. We can live in meekness and not self-consciousness. We can grow in humility and not promote

ourselves in pride.

Our memories can be cleansed. There is no need for us to think any negative thing when we are filled with the Word of God. It will dwell richly in our souls and teach us to speak to ourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Our hearts can be filled with melodies to our Father through Christ. Therefore, whatsoever we do in word and in deed, we will do to the glory of God.

Consider the Questions

God Asks

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INTRODUCTION

When God Almighty, the One who is omniscient, asks questions, it is extremely important to consider why He asks them.

One of the first questions God asks is in Genesis 4:6, when He asked Cain, "Why art thou wroth? and why is your countenance fallen?"

Abel brought the right offering of a lamb, but Cain brought the fruit of his own labors—the production of his work in the field. God asked those questions because He was more concerned with Cain's soul than He was with his offering. He wanted to give Cain the opportunity to bring the proper offering that required shedding blood instead of an offering of human merit without blood.

God asks questions so that we will think. Ultimately, He is concerned with the health of our souls. His desire is that we draw nearer to Him and be conformed to the image of Christ. God's questions cause us to examine our own hearts

and focus our attention on Him.

I pray that this booklet will be a blessing to every reader because of the Word of God. As you receive this message, let it speak to your heart. Rejoice that every question is answered in Christ—and we can think with Him because we have His mind.

Chapter One

WHERE IS YOUR PORTION?

"Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him, for it is *his portion*" (Ecclesiastes 5:18).

"Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword:

"From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have *their portion* in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.

"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:13-15).

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? And

there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

"My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and *my portion* forever" (Psalm 73:24-26).

There are unbelievers and believers whose portion is in this world, who make their decisions according to their desire for worldly gain. This is their portion, God says in Ecclesiastes 5:18. There is nothing else for them.

Before I became saved, I was in a show that played music that did not glorify God. We played to packed houses in Maine. But the moment I was saved, I quit. I didn't go on to try to make it big and try to live the same life I was living before I was saved. A saved man is a transformed man, or he hasn't been renewed by God.

Once I received Jesus as my Savior, I no longer desired my portion to be in this world. God gave me a new heart and a new desire (2 Corinthians 5:17). Don't let your portion be with people whose portion is with the world's system.

Follow the Counsel of the Word

God is there to guide us with His counsel from the Word of God. It is a simple life. Live by

every Word of God, be guided by it with your steps in the Holy Spirit (see Psalm 37:23; Psalm 119:133; and Romans 8:14). Say to yourself, "I am not going to be my own man, I am going to be God's man."

Seriously, who have we in heaven but God? There is none on earth to desire but God. We don't need soul-power relationships with our closest friends. Our hearts should not desire the people or the things of the earth.

Is that how you feel? Or, do you have some things that you still desire on earth?

"My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

"For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.

"But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works" (Psalm 73:26-28).

We should demonstrate, manifest, and realize that God is the strength of our hearts and our portion forever. We should not desire anything on earth but God. In heaven, He will be the only One we desire anyway. So let's learn to make Him our portion now.

This doesn't mean that we don't have love

and intimacy while we are here on earth. Of course, we do. Do we enjoy great friendships and love? Of course, we do. But we understand where these friendships are—they are going to end down here.

Settle the Flesh Issue

We can have our portion down here with our careers. We can have our portion here with what we eat and with the people we know. But these things will come to an end. Or, we can have our portion in heaven and live with Jesus Christ as our only desire on earth.

Yes, we have deep love relationships here, but Christ remains our desire. If we come to know Him as many great saints do, every day our desire is ever growing to love Him and to know Him. To know Him is eternal life.

If we really knew Him, we would not have some of the problems that we have with our flesh.

"What do I do with my flesh?" you ask.

Get it crucified. That is the only counsel I can give. Get rid of whatever fleshly thing is plaguing you and stop doing it.

"What do I do with what's bothering me?"

Get rid of it! That's what you do with it.

Jesus and the apostle Paul just said, “Stop doing what you are doing and live for God.”

“How do I stop?” is the next question.

Make a decision to stop, and trust God. There is no other answer I can give. Don’t tell me you can’t stop. Many simply will not stop because their portion is with the worldly people who are doing it.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem…, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!” (Luke 13:34). God always has a provision for His children, but it is up to us to receive it.

Chapter Two

WHO DIRECTS YOUR PATH?

God's questions have always been so important, but so are the questions that people have asked God.

Susanna Wesley had nineteen children; however, several of them died. A very disciplined Christian, she fasted for a long season, and she must have prayed, "God, I love You with all my heart. Why have You taken my children? They were so young."

God answered her according to Proverbs 3:5-6: "Totally depend on Me, Susanna. Trust in the LORD with all thine heart. Lean not on your own understanding. Acknowledge Me in all your ways, and I will direct your paths."

Susanna got up and said, "I believe You completely; but, Lord, I need more faith."

God said: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). God told her in His Word that faith was nigh in

her heart, even in her mouth, "So confess it!" (Romans 10:6-9). Then she read a very beautiful passage:

"How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:14-15).

We can make it through even the most difficult circumstances if we will trust God.

Sent by God

Here is a question from God: Have you been sent?

Many people make decisions to go on the mission field who are never sent. In Acts 13:2, after a time of fasting and prayer, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate unto Me Barnabas and Saul according to My call on their lives." Those two men did not just go independently; they were *sent*.

To be sent means to come under a table of organization. We submit to it by choice and we are sent. This is how it should work: A servant comes to the table of organization and they go

together to God. They pray, knowing that the majority who come in this way are really sent by God. But if someone leaves without being sent, God can still bless him. It is between the individual and God.

Now, when Susanna Wesley read those verses, God was telling her, "If you are not going to learn about hearing from the preacher, you need to have a pastor-teacher."

She got on her knees and said before God, "Guide me to a pastor-teacher who teaches the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)."

Then God said, "I want you to train up your little son, John Wesley." He was one who was miraculously saved out of the fire.

Training in Godliness

Susanna trained all of her children to live disciplined lives. They did think she was very strict at times. Some would call it harsh; she called it godly. It is not harsh to train your children to be godly.

This woman had prayed, "God, would you give me one preacher boy who will make an impact on the world?" John was only seven when she prayed that prayer.

God told Susanna Wesley, "If you will go to

a pastor-teacher, be faithful, hear the Word of God, and be consistent, I will give you a special child. Go regularly and hear doctrine more than you have ever heard it before."

She prayed over that child, loved that child, reared up that child, and many of you know the story. John Wesley became a great preacher who traveled 5,000 miles a year on horseback to deliver four and five sermons a day.

Susanna Wesley's prayer was answered. She joined a local assembly, got a pastor-teacher, drew nigh to doctrine, and God gave her this tremendous son named John. Remember that at first, God's question to her was, "Will you draw near Me and get yourself some good teaching and preaching?"

She said, "Yes, I will. I will do it."

Chapter Three

DO YOU HAVE POWER TO FACE THE STORMS OF LIFE?

God's questions are so crucial. In Matthew 8:26, Jesus said to the disciples in the boat in the midst of the storm, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

In other words, God was saying to them, "Don't you realize that I have brought you into this storm, this terrible storm, with water coming into your boat? I have done all of this to teach you some lessons."

God said, "O ye of little faith" for one reason: They were walking by sight and not by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). They did not realize that the Man sleeping in their boat was omnipotent. He could have told them again and again, "It is the perfect will of the Father for Me to be sleeping (in My humanity) while the storm is raging, O ye of little faith."

Jesus did answer the disciples' fears by say-

ing to the atmosphere: "Demons, be muzzled. The storm ceased and they were at once on the other side" (see Mark 4:39).

Wondering about Signs

God asked another question in Mark 8:12. To the Pharisees, He said, "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation."

Many people seek signs and wonders today. Really, there is only one sign that the world needs to recognize, and that is the Resurrection.

"An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet [Jonah]:

"For as [Jonah] was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39-40).

The Resurrection is the sign that God wants us to see. He wants us to see the sign of resurrection power in marriages, in families, in friendships, in pulpits, in pews, in businesses. In every type of motherhood and fatherhood, God wants to see the sign of His resurrection power (Philippians 3:10).

There are so many "sign seekers" today. Will you be one who seeks Him instead?

The Power of the Word

Jesus did not think much of those who sought signs and wonders. But there is one type of believer He considers highly, according to Matthew 8:

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

"And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

"And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

"The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

"For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant Do this, and he doeth it" (Matthew 8:5-9).

Jesus marveled at this and said, "I have not found such great faith even in Israel."

Of course, the centurion's servant was healed,

because Jesus spoke the Word.

The Word Meets the Need

"Speak the word only…." It is all that needs to be done. Speak the Word through the Holy Spirit and not through academia nor signs and wonders. This is the Word of God for revival.

When you have a need, speak the Word. Speak words of faith, and speak words of love. Speak the words of grace, and build up yourself in the most holy faith. Keep yourself in the love of God and pray in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20-21).

Don't confess what others have done to you. Confess what God has done!

While you think you really have a crisis, often the problem is that it is a crisis of the flesh.

A nobleman came to Jesus and said, "My son is near death. If you would come to my house, my son would live."

"Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

"The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

"Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way" (John 4:46-50).

This nobleman's servants came out to tell him that his son was healed the same hour that Jesus spoke the Word.

The 'Good' Thing

God had all kinds of beautiful questions. To the rich young ruler, Jesus asked, "Why do you call me good? there is none good but God" (see Matthew 19:17). The rich young ruler said that he had kept all the commandments and he saw Jesus as a good teacher who could tell him something about the Law that he didn't know.

"If all you think of Me is that I am a teacher, don't call me good. Only God is good," Jesus was saying to him. He was inferring that He was God, of course, and this guy didn't know it. The young ruler was just thinking about the Law.

He started by asking, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16).

Jesus said, "You really want to know? Sell all that you have and give to the poor" (see Matthew 19:21). Wait, salvation is by grace through faith, you are saying to yourself. Yes, it is. But this young man had an idol in his life—money and possessions. That is the only reason Jesus related this to this man. He had an idol and could not

believe that Jesus was God. Money was this man's god and he went away sorrowful (Matthew 19:22).

The Sinner's Potential

The Lord asked many questions about Mary Magdalene. She was an amazing, precious woman who was delivered from seven demons (see Luke 8:2). As she poured expensive ointment over Jesus' head, the disciples had a question: "To what purpose is this waste? Why wasn't it sold and the money given to the poor?" (see Matthew 26:8-9).

Jesus had a question for their question: "Why trouble ye the woman? Leave her alone. She has done what she could, and every thing that she has done will stand as a memorial to her forever" (see Matthew 26:10-13).

Mary Magdalene was transformed. Imagine living with all of those demons. Yet, she had potential, and that is what Jesus saw.

Do you know that every person living in sin has great potential? It is not the wicked sin we should see; it is the need for the Savior and the need for the forgiveness, mercy, and love of Calvary.

"Leave her alone," Jesus said to the disci-

ples. Do you know what God wants to say about a lot of people who are criticized and condemned and judged by Christians? “Leave them alone. They are doing what they can.”

Chapter Four

WHAT MORE COULD GOD DO?

"Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

"And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest wine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

"What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" (Isaiah 5:1-4).

"What more can I do unto you than I have already done?" God is asking in this passage. What more could He have done?

Glory to God, He became a Man who suffered—the Just for the unjust—and shed His own precious blood (see 1 Peter 1:18-19). Thank God that this Man came from heaven to show us the nature of God and the Father's heart (John 14:9). He came to reveal a nature that would do a miracle when He was sleeping, one that would do a miracle even when He was frail and weak.

Thanks be to God that the man Jesus Christ paid for every sin that we would ever commit. There isn't another thing more that He could do. He came into us to live, and He has given us 3,780 promises.

We don't need the world, Jesus. We just need You, the desire of our hearts.

He Is with Us in the Valleys

"Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? Why hidest thou thyself in times of troubles?" (Psalm 10:1).

"Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? (Psalm 44:24).

Every Christian has had times when it seems as if God is hiding. According to 1 Kings 8:12, God "would dwell in the thick darkness." In Exodus 14:20, the darkness came over the Egyp-

tians, but that same darkness was as light to the people of Israel.

The things that are dark to the world are light for the child of God who has God's light, life, and love in his heart. The same thing that appears to be darkness to others is light to the Christian who walks in the Spirit of God and by the power of His Word. Trials become light for him because they are opportunities to exercise faith in Jesus Christ through His Word.

Trials, agony, and pain are filled with darkness, but if we make our bed in hell, God is there (Psalm 139:8). I thank God that in times when it seemed as if He were hiding Himself, I found Him in the darkness because He was already dwelling there.

"And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by name, am the God of Israel" (Isaiah 45:3).

"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God" (Isaiah 50:10).

To those who are battling deadly and debili-

tating diseases, God is dwelling in your darkness. I guarantee you that God is there with you.

Are you walking in darkness and you have no light? Trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon your God.

Draw Near to Him

Sometimes God hides Himself so that we will draw near to Him and to His people with true faith and assurance (Hebrews 10:22).

Another reason God hides Himself is because He wants His people to hunger and thirst after His righteousness so that they can be filled (Matthew 5:6). God hides Himself because people live in self-centered sin. They live there, and for some reason, they won't repent, get right, and stay right with God. They need to humble themselves before God and confess their sins. Until they do, God will hide from them.

God also hides in the midst of the angelic contest so that we, as Job did, will glorify the Lord before Satan and the demons. God hid Himself from Job, and through it all, Job discovered deep things about the character of God (Job 12:22). Ultimately he confessed, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15).

What If This Is All There Is?

Why do the wicked prosper? That is a question asked of God in Jeremiah 12:1. The answer, as we related at the beginning from Ecclesiastes 5:18, is because all that they will ever have is a portion in this life.

A couple in my church tell this story: The wife treated her husband so beautifully. She was precious and sweet; he was stubborn, and he just refused to get saved.

One year, on his wife's birthday, he asked her, "Why are you so kind to me? I can't understand it."

She said to him: "Because you are never going to get any kindness except what you get in this lifetime. You are not saved; that's why I am kind. I am sure you will never see this in eternity. You are not going to get it unless you get saved."

That man became saved and was baptized not long after that.

The wicked prosper because what they have on earth is the only portion they will ever have.

What Do You Have against Him?

"Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far

from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" (Jeremiah 2:5).

"What do your fathers have against Me?" God asked Israel. "They never honor me. They have constantly disobeyed Me." Today, God would ask why so many are involved with lust and pornography, or are so self-centered in their schedules and what they do in life that they refuse the holy and heavenly call that He has for them.

Can't you see the pleading heart of God saying to His people, "What do your fathers have against Me? What more could I do unto you than I have done?"

God spoke to Solomon and said that one day Israel would be ruined and the question would be asked, "Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house?" (1 Kings 9:8).

"And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil" (1 Kings 9:9).

Iniquity, which is emotional rebellion against God, is what brought down Israel, and it is what

brings down God's people today. The question is this: What more could God have done for us?

"My God and my Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Jesus asked on the Cross. The answer to that question is this: Every sin and every iniquity was placed upon His precious body and was pressing on His soul. God forsook Him because our sins were upon Him, and in Habakkuk 1:13, God cannot look upon iniquity. To defeat death and give His people the victory over sin, God the Father placed every sin of the entire history of the human race upon His perfect Son, Jesus Christ, so that now we can be cleansed and free from sin forever through faith in Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Jesus came from heaven and asked Paul a question: "Why are you persecuting Me?" (See Acts 9:4.)

"Who are you?" Paul said. In other words, "I am not persecuting You. I am persecuting the Church."

"No, you are persecuting Me. Why persecutest thou Me?"

In 1 Timothy 1:13-15, Paul said that he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, an injurious person, but that he obtained mercy because he did those things in unbelief. He went on to say that God gave him grace, faith, and love through faith in Jesus Christ, who "came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

Jesus prayed on the Cross for people like Paul: "Forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). They do so much in zeal as religious people. But like Paul, they can receive mercy, grace, faith, and the love of Jesus

Christ, even if they consider themselves to be the chief of sinners.

God's questions are so crucial, and His answer for every seeking heart is that He loves us forever. He draws us to Himself with everlasting love and with lovingkindness.

"Listen," God is saying, "I paid for every sin. Believe Me. Come unto Me and receive life."

To those who are lost, God has one more question: "What are you waiting for? Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (see 2 Corinthians 6:2).

Corporate Pentecost

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INTRODUCTION

I would like to discuss the subject of Corporate Pentecost. First of all, I would like to make it clear that there will not be another Pentecost, like the one in Acts, chapter two. This Corporate Pentecost will have an unbelievable impact, just as the Acts two Pentecost did. Many believers have experienced a personal Pentecost after going to Calvary. But here, I am speaking about a Corporate Pentecost.

We are functioning as a corporate Body, and, as we submit to it, we are following God's vision, purpose, and heart for that Body. This, in itself, is a corporate renewal. God revealed years ago that we would be raised up and used of Him to usher in a fresh, new Corporate Body emphasis. He would bring into our midst a Word of God renewal. This simply means that every single thing we do will be saturated with the Word of God.

The Lord said He would give us many out-

reaches. He said He would give us a day school, a high school, and a Bible college. He said we would send teams into all the world to preach the Word of God. More than sending missionaries, we would send Corporate Bodies into the world. These "Bodies" would carry with them an emphasis of corporate love that can only come through Jesus Christ's fullness and an understanding of His Finished Work.

From this international, corporate expression of Him, God would raise up His fullness in many different visions, such as radio, television programs, booklet ministries, and so on, which would grow from this corporate expression.

God said that through the Holy Spirit, we would be able to have amazing ministries to various segments of our society—to the down-and-outers and the up-and-outers, to unwed mothers, to the mentally retarded, to orphans, to alcoholics and drug addicts, and to many different language groups, including the deaf community. He said He would raise up a corporate ministry that would especially minister to each one.

These are among the many things that God promised. Most of them have already come to pass, and we are in the adventure of seeing oth-

ers open up before our eyes.

There is one thing God told us that I will never forget. He said that He would call us out and put us in places that have been trodden down by men. He said that we would travel to places where legalism and law and stifling religion have gone before. As we travel these roads, we will walk by faith.

God promised, "I will give you a baptism of love, and this love will be shed abroad in your hearts experientially. Not only will I give the Body a baptism of love, but I will give the Body a revelation of grace that few ministries have ever had."

These are things that God told us early one morning, years ago. I ask you now, are these things coming to pass? The Biblical test of a ministry of God is found in Deuteronomy 18:22: Things that are prophesied must come to pass. If they do come to pass, the ministry is of God; if they don't come to pass, it is not of God. It's that simple.

We are living in the beautiful fulfillment of the prophecies that were given that morning. Most of them have been realized, and many of them are on their way to being realized.

Chapter One

THINGS TO COME

I want to show you what the Lord is going to do in these last hours of human history, and I will keep the message extremely simple. I want you to receive it, because it is about you. You will play one role or another in this ministry of the future. The Lord is going to do something else in this and other ministries in various parts of the world that serve as remnants of God's corporate thought through a corporate fellowship. He is going to bring a Corporate Pentecost.

A time is coming that was described in Joel 2:28-32:

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

"And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my

spirit.

"And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call."

In this portion of Scripture, the Lord says there will be a remnant who shall call upon His name. It does not say that the members of this remnant will just be saved. It says they will be delivered. They will be delivered from the terrible day of the Great Tribulation. But beyond that, they will be delivered from all the natural laws of the flesh. They will be delivered from all the structures of ecclesiastical Christianity.

They will be delivered from the selfish and materially-oriented mind of Adam. They will be delivered from all the plagues and diseases of the Adam nature. They will be totally delivered from one kingdom into another, not only in their positional theological concepts, but also in their

experiential responses to life. They will be delivered.

Jerusalem will one day be the headquarters of Jesus Christ, and Mount Zion is where the corporate Body of Christ will reign with Him. One day soon, His New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven, as it is described in Revelation 21.

So there will be a remnant. And this remnant will be a group of people who have not only entered into the corporate organism of Jesus Christ, but who will also enter into a Corporate Pentecost.

What a beautiful thing it is to be able to go through life and not be tortured and tormented by the self-life! We don't have to be hindered by depression, medication, guilt, liquor, lust, envy, or religious oppression. What a beautiful thing it is to go through life and be totally delivered out of the structure of the world's system. What a great thing it is to be free from the influence of the propaganda of superficial, pseudo-religious communication in a world of overtly sinful activity. The only way one can really be delivered into this type of life is through a Corporate Pentecost.

Hundreds and thousands of people have no

idea of what a Corporate Pentecost is. Many who claim to be Christians are double-minded, and they live in selfishness and greed. Some of them probably are not even saved and would go to hell if they died tonight. They need to repent of sin, receive Christ, and be saved the right way: through the Bible.

If they were truly saved, they would not practice sin. But, they continue to be independent in their lifestyles, alienated from the true expression of Christ. They continue to walk apart from the humility of the Cross, without submission to God's government and the authority of His throne. They alienate themselves by entering into the natural desires of the materialistic kingdom, of economic striving, and of immoral sexual pleasure.

It is amazing to me how many believers can hear messages and not receive the life that God longs to give them—life that would transform them in a moment. Every child of God who hears truth can be transformed the moment the truth is spoken, unless they allow unbelief to rob them of life.

Of One Accord

In Acts 2, "when the day of Pentecost was fully come," Jesus' disciples were gathered together, in one accord and in one place. This is beautiful. They were about to receive a Corporate Pentecost—the most amazing revelation the world had ever experienced. The living God would take over their bodies. Divinity would enter into humanity with all the supernatural flavor of a supernatural accompaniment. They all showed up, and their hearts were filled with the Word of God. They were so one, and something fantastic was about to happen.

Chapter Two

PREPARATIONS OF THE HEART

Notice the first thing that God does as He prepares for Corporate Pentecost: He purges hearts that are not in one accord. Before He reigns in a Corporate Pentecost, the Lord Jesus is going to take away those whose hearts are not purified within. He will separate those who are not corporate in oneness of belief, those who have a double mind on the inside, who go along with Christianity on the outside to avoid hell. Before this Corporate Pentecost, the Lord Jesus will separate the wheat from the tares.

This is a painful operation. As I see it right now, we have one of the healthiest, most wholesome church bodies that we could possibly have. I am not a prophet of doom, trying to present a negative application of this prophesy. I am simply stating that there will be a measure of purging. Some people will follow along with the Body and conform outwardly to what it is

doing. Inwardly, however, they have never been baptized with the fire of God's Word and the power of God's grace in a Body that embraces God's conviction. Consequently, they will leave.

They will not leave Christianity, but they will depart from a living organism that is going into all the world. They will leave because they will not submit to a corporate government, to corporate convictions, to corporate authority, or to a corporate vision that is worldwide in its scope.

They want to settle down into a domestic sea of comfortability, where they are not constantly reminded that Jesus is coming back soon. They don't want to be told that we have a great task to accomplish and that we are privileged to do it.

Instead of hearing, witnessing, and presenting their bodies as living sacrifices, they withdraw into their domestic scene and are limited by their humanistic horizon. They live in a horizontal plan, propelled by their own egocentric, adamic emotions, which constrain them to abide in the selfishness of their own hidden nature.

Jesus is going to purge people whose hearts are not on fire. Some people's hearts are not on fire because they have not been taught. Others are not on fire because they have not submitted

to what they have been taught. Others just want to settle down in a safe, going-to-heaven, easy-to-conform-to, comfortable Christianity. They love the Word of God until it totally crucifies their very right to live.

The Word of God will do nothing less than crucify every single thing within us and leave us totally dead. Every child of God must live in Resurrection in order to be effective. This makes the Christian life so simple. We abide in His death by faith and live in His resurrection by grace.

One of the things that Jesus Christ tells us about Corporate Pentecost is that in order for everyone to be in one accord, He will purge out the hearts that are not. He knows how to do it, because He has all knowledge. He knows just how to operate with the knife until, ultimately, He cuts away the things that are not in one accord.

Pure Hearts Drawn Together

I want to talk to you, heart to heart. More than ever before, do not walk by sight in your lives. Don't rationalize in your Adam nature. Don't judge according to appearances. Live inside the Body and humble yourselves. Let the

love of God flow. God is going to do things in the next months that will totally astonish you. When all is said and done, He is going to have a living epistle in people who will reign with Him and take this corporate life message into the entire world. But He is going to operate on the cancers in the midst of the Body. He is going to deal with the diseased cells.

God is going to bring in the Cross again and again. And the Cross, not you or I, will separate hearts. Jesus will take the pure-hearted and put them together to form a particular community. I'm not speaking of a geographical location. But these Christians will form a community based on heart attitude. Then He will take those who do not have pure hearts and separate them from the from the pure-hearted ones.

This division will come through the execution of the Word of God by the authority of the Holy Spirit in the corporate, providential revelation of human events. God is going to do many things to get a group of people who are totally and absolutely in one accord. When the time of separation comes, you will remember this message. The separation will shock you as much as the renewal will amaze you.

Notice that the Holy Spirit makes us one.

But, in Acts 2, they had to be one before He descended. You and I have no excuse for not being baptized with power. There is no excuse for not being one in attitude, in one place, waiting for the fulfillment to come. A lack of knowledge is never a reason for believers not to be in one accord.

As God does the cutting and the separating, He is still going to have an army. He won't raise up just a few. He is going to raise an army of Christians who are totally baptized in the corporate organism of oneness. I have never been so excited. I told the Lord Jesus that the adventure and excitement of living in Him has so overwhelmed me that I can't live. And He said, "Then get up and walk by faith."

Chapter Three

LED BY THE RESURRECTED CHRIST

Luke 24:50 reveals another thing that must take place before we can have a Corporate Pentecost: We must be led by the resurrected Christ. Friends, it is so important for us to be led by the Lord Jesus Christ. I am getting my life to the place where I am actually being led detail by detail, second by second. Have a schedule in which Christ, without any turmoil or strife, is able to lead you, right down to the seconds of your life. This is the only way He can ever capture the thoughts of your heart.

Many, many Christians love God, but they don't know what it means to be led moment by moment by Jesus Christ. They love him moment by moment, but they don't know how to let Him lead them on a second-by-second basis. The measure that I am led by Him will be the measure to which I have His health.

It doesn't take long to be led into something that can hurt you. You can be hindered by passivity of thought, lack of discipline in you schedule, and the inability to orient your life to a reasonable order of divine importance. Every moment of our lives is important. Even the moments that I go home to rest are vital. If my life is filled with moments of being led by Jesus Christ, then the devil can't have me—not even for a moment.

We must understand that we could not have the seven-day week unless God was on schedule. Unless the Lord Jesus Christ was a God of order, there would be no organization to His creation and there would be no life for humanity. Men, woman, and teenagers need to have schedules that are ordained by God. I am not talking about legalism that is governed by the flesh and unduly punishes people for not being on time. This is about having a life that has every step ordered by Jesus Christ (Psalm 37:23).

I need a life that is so beautifully oriented to God that He can order my steps, my moments, and my seconds, to lead me in His plan. You will discover the time that something crept into your life was a time that you were not necessarily doing anything bad. You were not doing any-

thing particularly evil. You were loving God the best you understood, and you thought you were following God. But to follow God without being led by Jesus Christ is to give the devil a chance to get in with wandering, wilderness, oppression, and a subtle invasion of diseases.

Blueprint For Health

There are all kinds of carriers in the atmosphere trying to carry some disease to my physical body. Therefore, the moment I am not led by the protective hand of Life—by Jesus Christ who has life in Himself (John 5:26)—that is the moment I give the enemy an opportunity to use the atmosphere to bring a disease to my body.

God has ordained a divine blueprint for me to be led, moment by moment, by the Spirit of God through the Word of grace. He breathes in me. He takes me by the hand and leads me. I must refuse to walk, except as He leads me. This is the privilege I have as a man of God. I have a will. I have a healthy mind, healthy emotions, and a healthy body. I have the privilege to receive, to understand, and to be led by God.

When I reside in passivity, my schedule is no longer oriented to the divine order of health for my mind, emotions, and spirit. God's order is to

give health to all my flesh (Proverbs 4:22). Jesus wants my mind to be purified, cleansed, powerful, active, creative, and redemptive. He wants it to be filled with all the compassion and vision of His purpose, which is to express to everyone in the world that He loves them.

He wants my emotions to be filled with love beyond knowledge, peace beyond understanding, and joy that is unspeakable. He wants my emotions to be filled with all the benefits of a healthy mind. He wants my will to be established in the Kingdom of God.

Let me show you how Satan gets in very subtly. Whenever God speaks, do not be introspective and attack yourself. Instead, attack the enemy by obedience and faith instantly. Use your will to gain a victory and to win Christ. When God's people learn how to be led, He will lead them right into a Corporate Pentecost.

What keeps a believer from being corporate? What keeps a believer from having fullness? What keeps a believer from having a sound mind? It is in the moments when he gives in to some power other than perfect love, perfect grace, perfect peace, perfect revelation, perfect fellowship, perfect guidance, and perfect inspiration.

When Jesus Christ is leading me, I am conformed to an image that makes me live above everything with Christ. The problem is this: Moments slip away because we think that is "just being human." We surrender moments when we lack the discipline of the Cross and the unction of His presence. We fail to give room to the One who wants to take up every room in our mind, emotions, and will. We must allow our seconds to be led by the divine Eternal Is of God—the great I AM—who created the seconds in order to inhabit us and reveal His love, which is eternal, in time.

Chapter Four

THE FULLNESS OF TIME

When the fullness of time came, Pentecost came. The timing was perfect. In the fullness of time, Jesus was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4). You are living in the fullness of time. Every step you take must be oriented to the government of life so that the authority of His life can govern every situation.

"And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50-51).

I want you to picture this scene. Can you see His hands lifted up? He is leading the disciples. He is getting ready to ascend. He lifts His hands and it is a beautiful scene. Jesus would not take that trip before He showed them His hands.

Jesus Christ would not ascend unless they saw Him. He would not leave them before He

blessed them with ascended power. He would not leave them before telling them what to do and what was going to happen. In Luke 24:49, He told them to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they "be endued with power from on high." He told them to tarry.

"And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

"And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen" (Luke 24:52-53).

The disciples did exactly what they were told to do. They returned to Jerusalem in peace and with great joy. This was their strength. They were in the temple daily, singing and praising God. Later, in Acts 1:14, we find the disciples assembled in the upper room, with one accord, in prayer and supplication.

Corporate Pentecost will be ushered in when we do things together and do them with joy. This seems so simple, doesn't it? Do you realize what it means to God when we obey His Word precisely, with divine order and joy? As we do things together, we learn how to spend hours in the upper room of prayer and supplication.

Christians must understand what it means to pray with one voice, one heartbeat, and one conviction of love. Through this type of corpo-

rate expression in oneness and prayer, He will save, heal, deliver, and renew. When God's people pray in the Spirit, they shake heaven for a response.

And as we do it more and more and learn how to cultivate it, we will see an earthshaking corporate oneness. We will see people touched because of the prayer that brings us together in one place and in one accord. As we pray, the Holy Spirit will groan in us (Romans 8:26), and Jesus Christ will intercede for us before the Father. What a combination! In the authority of oneness, the corporate Body will warn the world that Jesus Christ is coming soon.

Supernatural Works of God

I think you can understand why the "tares" wouldn't enjoy a prayer revival. Do you see why there has to be a purging? There cannot be one accord until there is a purging, because it is not natural to get on your knees and pray for hours. The natural mind hates it, gets bored, and wants to run. What we are going to see God do will not be natural. It will be supernatural. He will use people who simply have child-like faith and who go on in obedience (Acts 2:1).

Can you imagine what the disciples felt

when Jesus Christ blessed them and then ascended, in Luke 24:50-53? They saw Jesus lift up His hands, and they stood there staring at the sky until the angels came and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" (Acts 1:11). Now they had to get to that upper room and obey the Son. They needed to get ready for Pentecost.

The disciples came to one place with one accord, and they were expecting by faith. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2).

Suddenly, an amazing manifestation of Jesus Christ took place, a manifestation that turned the world upside down. Isn't it amazing when we wait for a long time and then, suddenly, God fulfills what He promised? Can you imagine the scene in that room? The disciples were rejoicing and praying. They were all in one accord; they were all in one place. They had seen Him ascend, and they heard the angels speak, "and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind."

When His Body on earth is in one accord, God will rush in to bring the baptism of His corporate power to the corporate Body in the newness of a revival. The result will be the same as the first Pentecost. Jesus Christ will give us the manifestation of languages so that people of every nationality can understand, because He wants them to be saved from the terrible day of wrath.

The tongues mentioned in the book of Acts are such that people can hear in their own language how to be born again. As the disciples were baptized with the Holy Spirit, God gave them national languages so they could communicate the Gospel to the lost. This group did not receive the gift of tongues so they could be privately edified. God gave tongues as a mighty force to win the lost.

In a short time, the Holy Spirit will do these things on a large scale. We will have a Corporate Pentecost, and many people will be speaking in national languages, because God loves the whole world. He is seeking to save the lost.

The Great Tribulation is coming. Before that time, the Rapture of the Church, the Bride of

Christ, will occur. Jesus is going to give His people every thing they need in order to win the lost everywhere before He takes them up in the clouds. They will know how to pray and shake heaven. They will learn how to live in a heart attitude of supplication. There will be joy because they are living in the purity of holiness. They will live with one heartbeat. They will be able to receive all the power to carry out His ministry, to go into the world, and build up the Body.

There will be an amazing manifestation of Throne power on the earth. Not a single thing will be able to touch it. The manifestation of signs and wonders will not be for those in God's Kingdom, but for the lost who are precious to Him. Therefore, many signs and wonders will come from heaven, because Jesus Christ wants to win to Himself every possible soul, before the Rapture.

Chapter Five

PREPARING THE REMNANT

Right now, God is preparing a fantastic remnant—us and others in the world who feel just this way. I am totally convinced that every word I am telling you is from Jesus Christ. I am also convinced that we are experiencing the most delicate and most momentous hour of human experience. He has chosen us by grace, and we are here by mercy. Not one of us could look up to heaven and say that we deserve what we are experiencing. We deserve hell—not the love, mercy, and grace He has given us.

Just before Jesus comes back for His Bride, to gather us in the clouds of the air, there will be the great outpouring of this Corporate Pentecost. Many Christian leaders have written books and have said in messages a time when they believe Jesus Christ will come back. I don't know when He is coming, and I never make any predictions. But in my heart, there is a yearning to

see Him. In my heart is a living faith that says He is coming very soon. I honestly believe that many of us will never taste death. We will be raptured—caught up to be with Him in the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52).

I personally believe that the Rapture is so very near, and that tells me there will be a purging. Don't get yourself involved with the purging. Don't you start judging the severances that come. Don't start playing judge when the purging comes. This is all going to be an act of God, as a preparation for the Corporate Pentecost.

Because this day is coming soon, I must do the best I know how to make every day count. I am going to live in faith rest. I am going to live in joy. I am going to live in the conviction of reality. I am going to ask God to guard my moments and my seconds with divine order, for prayer, soul winning, and building up the Body.

Everything will be done decently and in order so the movement of God will not be delayed. Because of God's commitment to human volition, it is possible for man to delay a movement of God. Please understand this: People do not delay God from His ordained knowledge of an event, but with rebellious passivity and an undisciplined response, people can delay God

from moving.

Gifts Used Rightly

We are going to see the most fantastic things we have ever seen in our lives. Love is already here. There is hunger in our hearts. We love God and we love each other. We understand grace. Now God is going to give us an understanding of grace so we can handle the gifts and the signs properly, to insure that those things will never be put ahead of Him. We have been seasoned in the Word, we have been conditioned by the Word, we have received purpose through the Word, and we have been prepared by love through grace. So, when these signs and wonders come on a grand scale, we will be able to use them for the purpose they were given: to win the multitudes who are lost.

We will not use them to satisfy our religious egos. We will not use them to raise a banner of spirituality. No, we will use them humbly to build up each other and to show people that there is a kingdom on the earth.

This is the most exciting and privileged time that we could be alive. As far as I go, I love to live. I am very much alive. I know that God's people who really love life are going to have the

most thrilling days that they have ever experienced. Just look forward to the blessing, and He will take care of everything else.

The Corporate Person

The angels said, "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11*b*).

First comes the corporate preparation, then the corporate power, and then the corporate Person. Now we are in the preparation stage, and we are experiencing a measure of the power. The preparation will take away some whose hearts are not right with God, and it will bring in the corporate power. Then the corporate Person will come back in the clouds.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the corporate Person—our head, Jesus Christ—will come back in the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). Many of us will never taste death. What happens to the world's system during this period won't happen to the Kingdom of God at all. The Lord is going to show the devil a healthy Body, not a sickly one, before He comes to get His Bride. This will be the fifteenth round of the fight between the Lord and Satan, and the Lord

is going to come out strong when the bell rings!

CONCLUSION

Satan thought he had Jesus counted out a few times, but he is going to be amazed at the freshness, purity, power, and strength of His living Body. As a result, we will be less and less accessible to anything that isn't of Him.

We have had mass healings. We have had many salvations. God is moving in a massive way to rebuke Satan, to humiliate and expose him, and to make a display of his defeat. Can you imagine what Jesus will do when He has a whole corporate Body that has a Throne ministry Pentecost? As His Bride draws near with healthy faith, having oneness, faithfulness, and obedience, then Jesus Christ will expose the devil and all of his lies.

Imagine that moment when Jesus returns in the clouds for His Bride. All the saints from the Church Age will be resurrected, and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

"Then we which are alive and remain shall

be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18).

What a scene that will be! Believers going up in the clouds, ascending right through the devil's kingdom. Imagine the holy, sacred satisfaction of the Master. Here He is in the clouds of the air with His people. They were knocked down but never knocked out. They were hit again and again, but never destroyed or defeated. Here is His Bride made perfect. She is His forever and ever, and He doesn't see one single spot in her!

When Jesus poured out His Spirit, He made us one. He will let us see a corporate revival, and at the very end of this massive revival, He will take us home forever. Christ was crucified. He was resurrected. And then He ascended. We will go through the trials of our faith in a corporate crucifixion, and it all leads to a corporate resurrection and a corporate ascension, because we have a corporate faith.

Cosmic Loneliness

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Loneliness is a condition that comes from a sense of being cut off from others. It produces feelings of sadness and desolation, an existence that lacks hope, warmth, life, or kindliness. David Riesman, a noted sociologist, declared loneliness to be one of the greatest human dilemmas.*

Without the Word of God, man is left with the option of self-improvement programs, self-realization, psychoanalysis, and psychotherapy. These options may elevate his desires and drives caused by anxiety to a higher, more acceptable level of behavior, but he ultimately battles this problem to no avail.

The unsaved man is, by nature, in bondage to the world system that is under the control of Satan. Though he may not acknowledge it, that is the case. The saved man is a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Still, he remains prey to Satan's strategies to keep him from un-

derstanding and experiencing the truth of his inheritance in Christ.

The Bible describes Satan as the Wicked One, the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Accuser. His self-appointed purpose is to blind the minds of men and women to the truth concerning Jesus Christ.

The believer who makes a provision for anxiety-produced loneliness, allowing it to remain unchecked and unresolved, is inviting the evil forces of the atmosphere to lead him down a path of greater loneliness to a point of cosmic loneliness. What he needs is to be transformed by the operation of Christ and His Word.

The purpose of this booklet is to examine the problem of loneliness, take note of its effects, and offer the biblical solution. This will enable people to face the problem and deal with it victoriously through the supernatural power of the Word of God.

**Riesman is a co-author of* The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character, *published by Yale University Press in 1950.*

Other scholarly studies on the subject of loneliness and man's need for acceptance are Neurosis and Human Growth, *by Karen Horney (1950), and* Psychology and the Human Dilemma, *by Rollo May (1967).*

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN LONELINESS

In Matthew 27:36, Jesus was on Golgotha, having been tried and sentenced to death. There He was, on the Cross. "And sitting down they watched him there." Those who crucified Him sat down and kept watching, waiting for Him to die.

At no other time in human history has a scene evoked so many emotions: anger, fear, frustration, guilt, sorrow. And what person could feel more sorrow or loneliness than the Son of God? He was rejected by His own people, and now, for three of the darkest hours of all time, He was cut off from His Father in heaven.

Perhaps the most interesting thing that we learned in David Riesman's book on the lonely crowd pertains to young people who, in this present time, cannot define their anxiety. Teenagers or adults, people in every walk of life

live in undefined anxiety. Except for necessity, it causes them to become separate from the crowd for a period of time. They become very much aware of their separation and it produces human loneliness.

As human loneliness takes over, cosmic loneliness, an undefined oppression, sets in—something far greater than human loneliness. Cosmic loneliness is marked by an inordinate awareness of impending death; awareness of living in a body that is vulnerable to every kind of sickness or harm; and secret, subjective fears of the unknown. No matter how much day-to-day living causes them to be around people, cosmic loneliness establishes a pattern of negative behavior in their lives.

The principle of cosmic loneliness reveals that men and women who do not have certain spiritual values have a problem with undefined anxiety, even if they are born again. Many other people recognize their problems with normal anxiety, but because they do not repress the problems, they keep the anxiety under control. But still a third class suffer from neurotic anxiety. Neurotic anxiety sets in when people magnify the problem continually. Then they repress it, which distorts their capacity for personal re-

sponsibility in the subjective realm of their emotions.

Many successful actors and comedians have said in private interviews that often after a successful performance in front of a large audience, they experience symptoms of cosmic loneliness. They don't call it "cosmic" but they feel that no one really knows them or cares and that every relationship they have is a "parliamentary" relationship. They work together and make decisions together, but nobody really knows one another on a personal level. As a result, many famous people who seem to have everything going for them suffer from alcohol and drug abuse, depression, and unstable marriages.

One actor, after receiving a tremendous award, fell into a severe depression. Cosmic loneliness. Success didn't change it. Acceptance didn't change it. Popularity, clothes, money—none of these things resolved the problem of cosmic loneliness.

This particular actor said that when she completed a performance, she would go to a party, and the party would stimulate her with a sense of well-being. She would enjoy that for a couple of hours, but then she would go back to her room and have to get up at four-thirty the

next morning for three and a half hours of makeup and hair styling for the camera. She said that she was constantly haunted with unhappiness, and yet, she was considered one of the best looking women in Hollywood. She was plagued with cosmic loneliness.

The Struggle with Depression

But whether a person is a stage and screen performer or a student or a professional in a highly competitive job market, cosmic loneliness tends to lead to one of four kinds of depression, depending upon a person's temperament.

The first kind of depression is melancholic: a person being dissatisfied with his own production because of idealistic standards that are neither realistic nor practical.

The second is aggressive depression, with a person blaming everyone under the sun, even from years ago, and becoming violent in his emotions.

The third type of depression is passive: not wanting to get up in the morning and not wanting to deal with any kind of problem.

The fourth kind of depression is marked by mood swings: high one day, down that night, down the next day, and up the afternoon—de-

pending upon circumstances.

So what do these people do? They join the herd, and they forget. They begin to take drugs, alcohol, and become involved in immorality. For many students, college means nothing except that they have to perform for their parents. The parents do not understand their cosmic loneliness because the parents, too, are having the same problem on another level. The problem stems from anxiety that is undefined, and the parents don't know it themselves. Young people look up for an example, and they try to get help, but how can they get it? The parents cannot give them anything but temporal security with no significance of reality.

When people join the herd to escape their problems, immediately they lose their identity and any possibility for proper potential development. They may be stimulated for a season but only to discover that they are not making progress. Thousands of people commit suicide every year and many more attempt suicide—all because of this compound psychological structure called cosmic loneliness.

The Process of Cosmic Loneliness

What happens in cosmic loneliness? Undefined anxiety produces separation for a season—at least mental separation if not physical separation. This leads to normal human loneliness. Unchecked, it becomes cosmic loneliness. Cosmic loneliness in turn results in a form of depression. That leads many to the 'herd' mentality, and then to a loss of identity with no desire to compete and do their best, but to do just enough to get along.

This characterizes to some degree what happened at the Cross of Calvary as we consider the people that were there, who watched Jesus die.

From the standpoint of human behavior, there is the theory of dynamism which takes over when people are caught in the cycle of cosmic loneliness and depression. Negative thinking causes them to take their energies—mental, physical, and spiritual—and direct them toward wrong behavioral patterns.

To understand the principle of dynamism from the standpoint of evil, it is simply the work of Satan's system on the subjects who make themselves available for it. Satan's program is to interfere in the lives of men and women, with a

goal to destroy mankind. It is a work of destruction from the slanderer, the maligner—the devil. So here is what happens.

Satan comes in and begins to take advantage of recent circumstances in your life or a series of circumstances that have happened over a period of years. Then, the past begins to trouble you, causing undefined anxiety and a sense of detachment from other believers.

When human loneliness gets in and cosmic loneliness follows, one of the forms of depression sets in. The dynamics of that depression releases the manifestation of negative energy.

Men who constantly go out on their wives are influenced by the dynamics of lust. When a person begins to take his God-given energies and place those energies into fear, then he has the dynamics of fear.

Another individual, depending on his strongholds in the flesh, may take those energies to pursue some worldly release by going to barrooms or dances or whatever the world has to offer, especially the wicked part of the world system. Of course, this does not mean that everything we call "fun" that people like to do is wicked. I am referring to a principle that is true when a person pursues the cosmic system.

For those who are not checked by God, by grace, by Jesus Christ's solutions, they are living in the dynamics of worldly pursuit.

In view of this, the next thing that people begin to enter into is the "self system." The self system begins when a man tries to insulate himself from the pain of wounds and emotional hurts from the past. Unfortunately, he will also reject honest, objective truth that is meant to set him free if he senses a threat of being hurt again. It becomes a system of self-defense.

The Value of a Unifying Purpose

In that scene at the Cross, there was a mob. The Pharisees were there. The scribes, the Sanhedrin, the Roman soldiers, the army officers, the brutal soldiers that stripped Jesus and drove nails in His hands and feet, even the crowd that cried out "Hosanna, Son of David" on Palm Sunday: they were all there in masses.

A number of those who were a part of the five thousand that Jesus fed with five loaves and two fishes, as well as the four thousand, were probably there. Perhaps those who had been healed, lepers who had been cleansed, were there. Prostitutes who had been saved by grace were there. An amazing, diverse group—saints

and sinners—were all there. But they all watched Him die.

The Bible says in John 19:38 that Joseph of Arimathaea, "a disciple of Jesus," was there, but he secretly feared the Jews. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, and he was there. But until the spear went into Jesus' side, he was silent.

Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night, was there, but he was silent for the same reason. He feared persecution.

So these individuals—the jeering crowd, the fearful ones, the antagonistic ones, the broken ones—they were all there, and they gathered around Calvary to watch Him die. None of them spoke up.

Joseph of Arimathaea had access to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea who gave him permission to bury Christ's body. Pilate was there, but because of political expediency he had washed his hands of the matter. He tried to be excused by God after receiving a message from his wife not to convict this just Man because of a dream. Nevertheless, he turned Jesus over to the angry mob and blamed His death on them. Then Pilate ceremoniously washed his hands in innocence, though he was absolutely guilty.

Chapter Two

THE EFFECTS OF COSMIC LONELINESS

Scores and scores of people watched Jesus die, and many of them are in hell today. These individuals who were gathered at the Cross gazed upon the beautiful Savior and looked upon His naked body.

Many of them could see the blood as it dripped from His wounded body down to His feet. They looked at His crown of thorns. They saw the nails that were in His hands and feet. With an unholy gaze, they looked upon His precious body. And there He was, dying, becoming the guilty One, bearing their sins and ours—and they just watched Him die. But they never accepted Him as their Savior.

The coward was there. The secret believer was there, silent. And perhaps upon a little hill not too far away were His disciples. Backslidden, they were there, but only from a distance.

I think about that scene, and I consider my own life. I consider the seriousness of the Cross and remember some of the great hymns about the Cross. I think about people like Fannie Crosby, that beautiful lady who was blind and who said that God allowed her to be blind. Her blindness was something that wasn't good, yet He made something good out of it. Jesus came alive in her heart when she believed on Him, and she wrote hundreds of hymns. She heard His promises and honored Him. One of those hymns was "Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross."

The problem today is that thousands of believers watch the Cross, and they are saved, but they do not accept the Cross for their personal walk with God.

The Problem of Evil

The forces of evil exist in this world. Rollo May, a leading psychologist in the nation, spoke of the forces of evil in our society from a psychiatric viewpoint. He maintains that those forces take what is beautiful and pure, such as the human body, to produce sensual images through the dynamics of lust and lewdness. They take the character of strength and pervert it to become aggressiveness and violence through the

dynamics of power lust. They take a sound mind and add confusion through mental projections, ultimately producing forms of mental illness, including schizophrenia (split personality), through the dynamics of insecurity. Satan will use these principles to blind the minds of people.

Consider the young man in the country of the Gadarenes who lived alone among the tombs (Mark 5:1-13). He was naked. He was violent. And though he had often been bound in chains, he easily broke loose through the demonic power within him.

When Jesus addressed the unclean spirits that controlled the man, He said, "What is your name?" The answer was, "My name is Legion: for we are many." In the Roman army, a "legion" was as many as six thousand soldiers. But the young man was delivered of every one of those demons by the power of Almighty God. Once again, cosmic loneliness was defeated.

The Problem of Weakness

Consider Abraham, called the father of our faith and a friend of God. For thirteen years after going in with Hagar and producing Ishmael (the wild man) after the flesh, Abram had no communion with God. After thirteen years of si-

lence, he did not repent or get right.

But in Genesis 17, God came to him, and for the first time said, "Abram, I am El Shaddai, Almighty God. Walk before Me. Get up from your face." The Lord was saying, "I am the strong One that will give you strength and nourish you and give you grace. So get up! You have lived in failure for thirteen years. You are miserable. But I am here, the El Shaddai. Get up and start walking. I am still going to give you the promised child!"

The Lord said, "You have denied Me. You do not believe Me. You have disobeyed Me. You went against Me. But you are still going to have Isaac. I will give you the strength for your weak, frail, compromising body, and I will give you grace, mercy, and love. I will pour it into your soul. Get up! By the way, your new name is Abraham.

"Do not be occupied with your defeat. Don't be occupied with the concept that it can't happen because you are ninety-nine years old. I will do a miracle. I will perform a miracle of grace with both you and your wife, so walk before Me, Abraham. I am El Shaddai."

It is so vital that we understand that as God's people, we do not have to accept problems above the promise of God. I don't care what the problem is. We do not accept depression as a way of life, and we do not accept anxiety to overwhelm and frustrate our capacity for strength, help, and nourishment from the great I AM. We believe God! There is not a single problem in all this world that is too great for the great I AM, the great El Shaddai.

In Genesis 17, ten consecutive, unconditional "I wills" were given to Abram by the great I AM as his name was changed to Abraham.

In the twenty-ninth chapter of the book of Job, as Job was occupied with human good, El Shaddai came to talk to him. Over and over, the Lord said to Job, "I am God Almighty. I will take care of you."

That is what grace is all about: God saying to us "I will" in spite of all of our confessions of "I can't."

Negative dynamics go. Cosmic loneliness is dispelled. Undefined anxiety and its undefined effects in the maladjustment of the emotional structures are released. Man's desire to be "part

of the world's crowd"—involved in drinking, immorality, and all the things he uses for temporary stimulation—is overruled as the great I AM comes in, and individuals begin to practice the presence of God.

Men and women, with their insecurity and emotional problems, now face the reality of God. We now have God's attitude for every detail of life. We have His grace, His power, and His willingness to give us something unconditional: *impersonal love.*

The Value of Impersonal Love

We operate so much in personal love that we don't know a thing about impersonal love. Thank God that God's love for us is not only personal.

Personal love depends upon what people do as individuals. It is conditional. Impersonal love is God's love which always flows to man without any personal response.*

And that is why God loved Abraham after thirteen years of failure. God's love did not depend upon Abraham's actions in any way. He had impersonal love toward him.

That is why when problems arise in marriages, and depression and discouragement pre-

vail, many people act as conquered victims because they do not understand the principle of impersonal love.

Don't misunderstand: Impersonal love is very personal, meaning that it is filled with God's tender mercies toward each one of us; but before we can respond to His personal, objective love, He creates a capacity in us with His impersonal, unconditional love (John 3:16).

**For more about the impersonal or subjective love of God, read* The Love of God *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

THE CROSS: OUR ESCAPE FROM LONELINESS

Jesus Christ hears the sincere person, the person who may not have pure motives because he is weak (as we all are so often). For example, when Jesus asked the disciples if they knew who He was, Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). And Jesus said, "No man has revealed this to thee but my Father who is in heaven."

Well, that was beautiful. But then, in Matthew 16:21, Jesus said to them, "By the way, the Son of man must go and suffer and be delivered up to the council where He will be crucified, and after three days He will be brought back from the dead."

And Peter said, "Be it far from you! We don't want a suffering Savior; we want a divine one. We don't want your Cross; we want your Kingdom. I am Peter, and I am rebuking you."

A rather interesting turn of events.

Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" and He said it to a person. "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. The fellow who said it, who received that revelation from heaven because he was saved, was also used by the enemy to rebuke the Savior. If we are ignorant of Satan's work, he can certainly work through our ignorance.

Contempt for the Cross

What happened at the Cross? The people said, "Come down off the Cross, and we will believe!" The religious crowd said, "Come down off the Cross! If You are the Son of God, save us and save Yourself."

Peter said, "We don't want a suffering Christ. We want a divine one."

Satan said to Jesus in the forty days of temptation, "Do you see those stones there? You're hungry, aren't You? Don't suppress Your hunger. Turn those stones into bread. You are human. Eat!" (see Matthew 4).

"Don't go to the Cross. People will follow You if You will just jump off this mountain. Go ahead. The angels will take care of You" said the

father of lies as he misquotes the Scriptures.

And Satan says to us, "Don't preach the Cross. Don't go to the Cross. Don't suppress Your sex drive. Don't suppress Your anger. Express it! Don't suppress Your desire for drink. Drink! I'll give You authority in my kingdom without the Cross."

From the spiritual viewpoint, our motives may seem very good and noble and sincere. But Satan would love nothing more than to see a believer living, thinking, analyzing, serving, responding, reacting, and initiating without the Cross. From the spiritual viewpoint, that is contempt for the Cross (Philippians 3:18).

When it was time for Jesus to climb Golgotha's hill, only the three women and John were there (John 19:25-26). All of the disciples fled for fear after Jesus was arrested—even John, though he came back. But Peter and James were not there with Jesus on Calvary. Now, in 1 Peter 5:1, Peter says that he was "a witness of the sufferings of Christ." He certainly was, but from quite a distance. Peter loved the Lord, and he was no different than we might have been.

But the thing I want to call your attention to is how Satan always brings contempt to the Cross—always. And when Christians do not have proper values, he can come in with undefined anxiety that leads to cosmic loneliness and emotional disturbance, ultimately to destroy us.

When believers have proper values, they will begin to have virtue: motivating virtue, operational virtue, and functioning virtue (2 Peter 1:5). Virtue is far more than mental excellence. Virtue is the spiritual mentality of the integrity of truth.

When believers begin to receive the Word of God, we begin to be filled with motivating virtue. In other words, the motivation for our thought life is excellent.

We begin to receive the Word of God in our hearts, and that virtue grows, until we function with moral virtue from God's Word, not from just human good. And then we are able to respond with virtue. We are able to pray with virtue. We are able to go through the worst trial that God could ever put us in, and in that trial, we reveal the virtue that Jesus Christ has imparted.

The Christian does not need to function with undefined anxiety, normal anxiety, or neurotic anxiety. Human loneliness, cosmic loneliness, melancholic depression, aggressive depression, passive depression, and the mood swings of manic depression have no dominion over him. They have no power. He acts upon the Word instead of reacting in the flesh, and the grace of God covers him. The great I AM is in his soul, unconditionally holding him up with the Word of truth. This individual begins to be an example of virtue. He is virtuous, having integrity and honor.

But at the Cross, neither Peter nor James had virtue. In the face of unmatched shame and suffering, the three women and John were the only ones that Jesus Christ had.

Everyone was amazed that this Man who said He was God would be crucified in weakness and shame. But the crowd had diminishing virtues. They did not have motivating virtues or functioning virtues, and they did not have the Word of Life.

There are many believers who know exactly what God says but who act as though there is no God when their emotions take over their soul. They know that the power of the Holy Spirit

gives them a divine IQ.

Do you know that if a person were to memorize all of the Bible but was not filled with the Holy Spirit, he would not have spiritual intelligence? We have power when we operate in the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). If I know the truth and I grieve the Spirit, the truth will not set me free. Jesus said, "The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. And the flesh profiteth nothing" (see John 6:63). Even if your words are filled with Bible verses, that is only data.

The Difference between Milk Drinkers and Meat Eaters

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). Milk does not always refer to new Christians, though in 1 Peter 2:2 it does. But the Bible says in Hebrews 5:11-14 that the Hebrew Christians, when they ought to have been teachers, instead had a need that someone teach them again. They were in "need of milk and not of strong meat"—and everyone who uses milk is "unskillful in the word of righteousness."

Those Christians had Finished Work doctrine coming out of their ears. They had been

taught categories of doctrine from one of the finest teachers—one who knew that Christ was superior, that the work was finished (Hebrews 10:10), and that they were positionally perfected forever (Hebrews 10:14). He knew it all, and he communicated it.

Furthermore, the Hebrew Christians were free from offering up animal sacrifices. They were liberated. They had the Finished Work Cross as their once-and-for-all sacrifice, but what happened? *It was only data.* The problem wasn't that they were brand-new Christians who had never been fed strong meat. Some of them were twenty-eight years old in Bible doctrine. But when persecution came from the Judaizers, they revealed that they didn't have the capacity for meat. They went back to making animal sacrifices, even though they professed to know the Lamb of God who shed His precious blood for their sins.

Meat does not refer to words that some preacher preaches with eloquence, filling you up with mysteries so that you go out and say, "I've never heard that before. That's phenomenal." That is not meat. It may be meat to you, but to somebody else, it is a message—just data. The Word without the Spirit.

Meat is the application of data. That's all it is. Perhaps you have a troubled marriage, and you hear God's thoughts about it through the preacher in a message from the Word. When that information touches your heart, and you go home with your wife, take her hand, and say, "Honey, from now on in this area that the pastor spoke on tonight I am a changed man" and your life reveals it, that is meat.

The Hebrew Christians received data, but they did not apply it. And data, which is knowledge without meat, produces carnality.

If the preacher says, "We ought to have a burden for the lost," we can go to the Holy Spirit and get God's mind about the lost. We get God's character and compassion for the lost. And what happens? We start being burdened for the lost.

We may not have a lot of data, but we hear something and we practice it. Even many relatively young believers are meaty Christians. Data means that we know it, and meat means that we practice it. That's all. Meat eaters are "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14*b*). When we use data in obedience, we end up with meat. Self is no longer the center. Christ is, and cosmic loneliness no longer

has a place to take hold in our lives.

The Gifts of God

Every believer has a special, God-given gift (2 Timothy 1:6), and when we use it, we minister to the Lord. Those folks at the Cross did not use their gifts. Except for the few who remained with Jesus, none of the disciples exercised their spiritual gifts. They were so overcome by cosmic loneliness, they didn't recognize what the Cross was all about.

They saw the agony upon His face when He cried, "Father, why hast thou forsaken Me?" They saw His emotions being tortured. They saw the sky turn dark as night for three hours in the middle of the day as the Son of God entered into spiritual death, separated from the Father. They watched as the Roman soldier pierced His side with the spear, and the blood and water poured out.

Those individuals were living in the awareness of their environment. They lived in self-consciousness of persecution, filled with such intensity of cosmic loneliness in the midst of that crowd that they had no objective values. They had no objective virtue to repudiate the darkness and the oppressive atmosphere.

No matter what happens in our lives, behind it is the unconditional I WILL of God's grace. We have to take steps of faith. We need to be courageous in faith. We have the advantage when we are precise in faith, practical in faith. Therefore, we must go forward in grace, with our faith, knowing that we are loved and that the great I AM will stand up for us—even if we deny Him.

There is a beautiful hymn that says "Stand up for Jesus, you soldiers of the Cross." We need to understand that proper values and proper virtues from the Word of God, mixed with the power of the Holy Spirit, will always teach us to stand up as soldiers of the Cross.

In what seemed to be the end of his life, after thirteen years of living in cosmic loneliness, separated from fellowship with God, Abraham said, "Listen, I failed Him miserably. I was chosen. Now I have an illegitimate child running around like a wild man. I've made a mess of things. But I heard Him say it. He is going to make me the father of nations. He is still going to bless my seed. He is going to bless them that bless me and curse them that curse me. Almighty God is going to do all of that for me."

Abraham didn't do a thing to prove that he was capable or worthy of anything. Abraham simply believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness (Romans 4:5; Genesis 15:6).

Oh, if we could only communicate that truth. Why be tormented? Why live in guilt? Why run yourself down? Why be open for syndromes of emotional problems—secret and otherwise? Why stare at the Cross with no action when the great I AM says, "I will bless thee"? Abraham was flat on his face in backslidden defeat, and the great I AM said, "I will bless thee. Get up and start walking."

Abraham was so blessed. As his name was changed, he was changed. After the promised child was born, he could offer Isaac on an altar without doubting God in any realm. He had no anxiety. He wasn't lonely. He could bring his Isaac to an altar on Mount Moriah and get up and trust God's Word, because I AM said, "I will give you a promised child, and the Messiah will be born through his seed." That was a promise from God, so Abraham knew that if he killed Isaac, God would have to bring him back to life.

Do not be a victim of circumstances through selfishness. Don't be in bondage to the effects of undefined problems through ignorance. Don't

give in to despair and depression through loneliness. Walk! Get up and be a man of God. Be a woman of God! Walk before God.

CONCLUSION

Has God ever failed anybody? The answer is no. Has He ever left a believer? That is impossible (Hebrews 13:5). Has Jesus Christ ever said no to one of His promises? No, He has not. His promises are yea and amen (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Walk before God. Put your shoulders back and walk! Do not live in the dismal doom of self-pity. If you are lonely even with the Comforter around, perhaps you need to let Him renew your relationship. The moment that you let Him relate to you, you will not be lonely. You have practiced the presence of God, and you trust God when He asks you to give up your Isaac. Give up your Isaac and be blessed. Whatever Isaac is, give it up.

Peter didn't want to give up Jesus because he was emotionally attached to Him. Many people have emotional attachments and call it love, or sentimental relationships and call it spiritual. They trust and depend upon a person or cir-

cumstances. And when God, as He always will, takes that person or removes the circumstances that they have been leaning upon, they enter into cosmic loneliness. They need to give in to the unconditional I wills of the great I AM:

"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. I will go with you to the end of the world. I will strengthen you. Be still and know that I am God."

Father, You have ministered Your love and grace through this message. As we consider what happened on the Cross, what our sins did to Your Son, we pray that we would see Your love, Your grace, and Your mercy, and receive this message in our hearts.

In a time when so many people are devastated by cosmic loneliness, use us to bring the light of the Glorious Gospel to them. We ask it in Jesus Christ's precious name. Amen.

Coverings

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

In Mark 10:45 and 1 Timothy 2:6, the Word of God says that Jesus Christ gave Himself a ransom, or a covering, for His people. In the Old Testament, the blood of lambs *covered* sins. In the New Testament, the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, *did away* with all of our sins. So the Blood not only covered them, it cast them away forever.

We have been given the protective covering of the blood of Christ through the New Covenant. Ever since then, the Lord Jesus Christ has provided for His people a diverse assortment of coverings, and a covering is just what it implies—it's a covering.

Because of the law and self-righteousness, the Jewish people did not have the proper covering. Isaiah 28:20 says, "the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

To understand the principle of coverings, we must realize this: Any area in which we reject

God's help, God's provision, God's given promise, or God's presence and manifestation is an area where our lives are left uncovered. Because of human frailty, weakness, and sin and evil, it is imperative that God's people be covered.

It is very true—and very sad—that coverings in the Word of God are so misunderstood by God's people. We leave ourselves uncovered in so many areas. If we continue to reject any of God's coverings then, before long, we will cover ourselves with another kind of a covering.

Chapter One

LUCIFER'S PRE-CREATION COVERING

"Thou [Lucifer] hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst

of the stones of fire.

"Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

"All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be anymore" (Ezekiel 28:13-19).

God said to Lucifer, "Every precious stone was your covering. You had a covering! Your covering was sardius, topaz, diamonds, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle."

There were nine stones, and according to isagogics, these nine precious jewels refer to the fruit of the Spirit, in Galatians 5:22—love, joy, and peace; longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness; faithfulness, meekness, and temperance—derived from the essence, nature, and attributes of God.

God said to Lucifer in Ezekiel 28:13, "the

workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created."

At one time I thought the pipes were musical instruments, but through a study of isagogics, I found that the pipes were actually jewels. The tabret, or tambourine (much different from the one we have today) was especially made to worship God with, but the pipes were jewels, and these jewels, as I've mentioned them, were prepared in him in the day Lucifer was created. God said to Lucifer in verse 14 and 15, "Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so….Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee."

"*Light Bringer, Knowledge Informer*"

Before Lucifer's fall, his name was "light reflector." After he fell, it became "light bringer" or "knowledge informer." Lucifer had an amazing covering. More than all the other angels in heaven, he understood that his covering consisted of the attributes of God, represented by the nine stones. So, the fruit of the Holy Spirit became his covering. In other words, it became his outer garment. He was a teacher to the an-

gels, the leader in doctrinal instruction and worship. For example, in Revelation 4:8 the seraphim (the six-winged beasts) were "full of eyes," meaning "full of doctrine."

Lucifer, under God's leadership in Ezekiel 28:14, was a covering for the angels. That position was delegated to him by God. He was the first representative delegated to cover other created beings. God said, "Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and *I have set thee so*."

In addition to teaching doctrine to the angels, as the highest-ranking cherub, Lucifer was responsible to guard the throne. Because of his position, he had access to the Trinitarian planning sessions and heard the conversations among the Trinity. After iniquity was found in his heart, Lucifer told the angels that the Trinity had a very special agenda: to send a third of the angels to hell. Lucifer told the angels that this was the Trinity's secret plan in the eternal convention of heaven, which he had access to at one time. He not only was on the holy mountain, but he also "walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" (Ezekiel 28:14*b*)—the attributes of God—with the Holy Spirit, who is God, mastering the provision of light as far as Lucifer was concerned. This means that the Holy Spirit, the

"spirit of burning" (Isaiah 4:4), also taught Lucifer before he fell.

The Covering Stripped

Because iniquity was found in Lucifer, he fell as lightning when he was kicked out of heaven (Luke 10:18). Now he doesn't have a covering, but he is highly informed. But I would suggest to you, his covering has been stripped.

If I reject the Lord's help, then I'm left without certain coverings—as so many in the Body of Christ are. They are not covered. When you do *not* have a godly covering, and you refuse to accept the covering revealed by God's Spirit, then, eventually, after much patience, God strips you of every covering that you have. *Be sure your sin will find you out*. Any covering that you've manufactured (fig leaves, for example, in Genesis 3), will be stripped off. The covering that is not of God will not stand.

In Isaiah 28:15, the people of Israel had made a covenant with death and an agreement with hell. Their covering was something outside of God's life. But in Isaiah 28:18 God says that the covenant with death will be disanulled, and the agreement with hell shall not stand. This means that their coverings would be stripped.

We have so many false coverings today all because we do not understand the principle of being rooted and grounded in the faith (Colossians 2:7).

Chapter Two

TRUE COVERINGS

Few people esteem God's Word more than the food they eat (Job 23:12). But I want you to see that as I have grown in understanding the coverings, I have advanced far beyond the book I once wrote on this subject. Today we've doubled our understanding of coverings.

Jesus Christ's Covering

Jesus Christ, during His temptation, said in Luke 4:4, "It is written." Verse 8: "It is written." Verse 12: "It is written." What was His covering? *It is written*. The covering for the Lord Jesus was what was written. It is interesting that He had the Father, He had the Holy Spirit, and certainly they were a part of His covering; we will not take away from that. But, in application, Jesus' covering was doctrine.

That is why the people "were astonished at his doctrine" (Matthew 7:28). His covering was

knowing how to think with God the Father. According to Isaiah 50:4, the Father woke Jesus up every morning so He might learn "how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." The Father taught Him *what* to speak (a word), *when* to speak (in season), and *to whom* He should speak (to the weary).

Jesus Christ was taught categorical doctrine by God the Father from the time He was a little child. He had no outside teacher. The Father woke Him each morning to teach Him doctrine. Jesus Christ—in His humanity—was subject to doctrinal teaching daily, *seven days a week*. His morning time was spent learning doctrine for hours. His evening time, late at night after He had ministered, was prayer. That's the way He did it. There's no record of Him studying at night when He got through ministering. He may have done so, but there is no record. But the original language in Isaiah 50 says He was taught doctrine seven days a week, every morning. The Hebrew tenses reveal it was *all* the time in the morning: "he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned."

The Word of God produces a covering for every situation. Understanding that, the Word of God—and positive volition toward it—is my first covering. I must be extremely positive toward the Word of God. Then, when I am in Satan's three-fold temptation of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, I'll be able to say, "It is written! It is written! It is written!" never moving back from what is written. This reveals the value of a Bible college education. It reveals the value of receiving doctrine daily. "It is written" shows us the value of church attendance, corporate fellowship, and the continuation of receiving the Word of God.

When I use my positive volition, the first thing that God covers me with is His policy of *grace*—something I don't deserve.

The second covering I have is the *love* that God has toward me. Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).

The third covering I have is *mercy*.

The fourth covering I have is total *forgiveness*.

The fifth covering I have in the government of the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Spirit residing in me—is *rebound*. When I fail, I can instantly

rebound. I name my sin, isolate it, forget it, and go on, never being occupied with it again.

The sixth covering I have is my *pastor-teacher* and his messages.

The seventh covering is to be hid in the *body of Christ*.

These are the major coverings that God has given us.

Chapter Three

FALSE COVERINGS

God sends pastor-teachers. If a person doesn't have a pastor-teacher, then he doesn't have that particular covering, and he is losing out on what God planned for him billions of years ago in His foreknowledge. Hundreds of people who left the ministries where God called them are losing out today because they never followed up by going to any other ministry. And often, those who do go to other churches don't stay. Therefore, they have substituted a covering that is not of God.

In Isaiah 30:1-2*a*, the Lord says, "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: That walk to go down into Egypt…." Notice that God says, "You have a covering, but it is not of my spirit."

Satanic Light

The first covering that Satan offers is light, *not* darkness. He offers light—the light of the intellect, the light of experience, the light of private interpretation of the Bible, the light of practicality, the light of having to earn a living, the light of domestic affairs. In other words, a situation could come up and you may say, "I have to do thus-and-so." That may be true to a degree, but it becomes a covering without the proper channels of Christ. So Satan brings in light because he's the 'light bringer' and the 'knowledge informer'.

He doesn't offer people a covering of *known* darkness; he offers them "light." And that's why, in 2 Corinthians 11:14, he is called "an angel of light." Satan transforms his ministers into ministers of righteousness—not obvious devils, but ministers of righteousness. In other words, they minister with the Law, legalism, taboos, do's and don'ts, attainment, achievement, and performance. As you understand how this works, you begin to realize that these are coverings that are not of God.

The Right and Left Emotions

When a woman is not properly covered by

her husband this is how Satan's "light" works. (Remember, this is a new correlation of divine content in perpetual truth). Just as we have two ears, two eyes, two kidneys, and two feet, there are two emotions: the right, relating to the temporal value system, and the left, which relates to God's eternal value system. Satan hooks up with a woman's right emotion, and that emotion is very real.

What happens to the single woman who does not have a husband as her covering? Satan hooks up with her right emotion so that she functions in the temporal value system. Now she can't wait to get married. Certainly, marriage isn't wrong if it's God's will, but this woman can't wait to get married. She can't wait for changes. And the woman who is married can't wait for the husband to make better money. She can't wait for things to work out better. It's all happening in her *right emotion*!

The right emotion, or temporal emotion, is in conjunction with the old sin nature, which is in conjunction with the angel of light. The free volition—in conjunction with the angel of light—hooks up with self-consciousness, which is in conjunction with the woman's self-essence. She could be quoting Scriptures all over the place,

yet flourishing in her right emotion because she doesn't have the proper covering.

What if her husband is not a man of God? Then she still has a provision. She draws near to the Word of God. She does whatever she can to make sure she receives from her pastor-teacher and from Spirit-filled people in the ministry.

If a woman is single, she has her pastor-teacher, her own relationship to God, and spiritual people in the ministry for her provision. But her relationships must operate through her left emotion (which relates to the eternal value system).

If a man does not operate through his left emotion, he can become very work oriented. There's nothing wrong with being a great worker. But if he does things in his right emotion and has two bad weeks, then misses a paycheck because the company is going through a rough time, he will start acting weird. And because he comes home in his right emotion, the first one to notice the weirdness is his wife. "How's it going?" she asks him.

"Ah, it's all right," he replies, obviously downcast.

Then, during the third week, he finds fault with people in the company, and the fourth

week, he doesn't even want to speak to some of the people he works with. The fifth week, he feels like suicide would be a good way out! Now I'm exaggerating. But the thing that causes this is his right emotion.

The problem for the Christian man who is an executive, a leader, or a highly skilled professional is that when he works hard, he may shift from his left emotion to his right emotion. Exhaustion and tiredness take over. The taxation of his capacity penetrates his human potential and possibilities. His right emotion is engaged in the temporal value system. Satan will always be there to use human rationalization to continue the process of the right emotion. I hope you'll remember that. The angel of light will give you every reason to justify staying in your right emotion. The reasoning he offers is three-fold: the reality of sight, the reality of your experience, and the reality of how you honestly feel, which you cannot correct by yourself.

Losing God's Covering

If that is your experience, somewhere along the line, you left God's covering. You left the covering of the Blood, the Trinity within you, the Word of God in categorical doctrine, grace, love,

mercy, rebound, and all the attributes of God.

Lucifer was covered with love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance—the nine jewels, according to isagogics. Thus, when the angels saw Lucifer lead music and teach them doctrine, he was a picture of the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit.

When you lose your covering, you're not the same around people. What you reveal is not love, and everybody knows it. Nobody is fooled. It's not joy, it's not peace, it's not longsuffering, it's not gentleness, it's not goodness, it's not faithfulness, it's not meekness, and it's not temperance because you have a covering that is not from God. Your bed is too short, your covering is too narrow to wrap yourself in (Isaiah 28:20).

According to Job 24:7, the absence of a covering results in coldness. The Hebrew isn't talking about the literal coldness; it means when you don't have God's covering, your heart gets cold.

Chapter Four

HONORING GOD'S COVERING

The thing that covered the law in Exodus 25 was a golden mercy seat. Once a year, the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, over the blood from the previous year (Leviticus 16). And, of course, when the high priest brought the blood in, he couldn't see the tables of stone, Aaron's rod, or the manna. Everything was covered by the golden mercy seat.

The rod, which hadn't yet budded when it was put into the Ark, was covered. The two tables of stone written by the finger of God, representing the law that reveals our sin, were covered. And the manna, speaking of fresh bread from heaven, was covered.

It's important to know that the mercy seat covered the manna, which speaks of fresh doctrine, because doctrine can condemn you very easily if you're not oriented to the Blood. I think you can see the value of this covering.

When a wife doesn't submit to her husband, I'll guarantee she will live in her right emotion. She is to minister to her husband in order to produce a capacity in him. If her husband can't cover her through prayer and love, or if he isn't covering her like he should, then she covers him. She covers him through God, through the pastor-teacher, through what she receives from the pulpit and through the Body. Therefore, there's never a time when she has an excuse.

The husband who will not abide under the covering of Jesus Christ and Bible doctrine will definitely be passive and filled with apathy. Then, the Word of God says in Psalm 109:18, "As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come unto his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones." This is speaking of a person's emotions being destroyed because swearing and getting angry have become his covering. And if you do anything wrong to him, he lets you have it. Cursing and reacting to the details of life are his covering. It's not of God. It's not of the Spirit.

Psalm 109:29 says, "Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover them-

selves with their own confusion…." Here is a case where, if Jesus Christ isn't my covering, eventually shame and confusion will become my covering.

"I've been through so much. You don't know all I've been through!" That's what you hear from these people. They're always confused.

They need to have medication for their "condition." They need to have people around, and they require personal attention every day—all because confusion is their covering. They remain in that covering, and if you talk to them, they're very confused about issues of life, ready to cry all the time. Confusion is their covering.

Special Authority

According to 1 Corinthians 11:10, a woman who submits to her husband in the Lord has "power on her head." Obviously, her long hair, as beautiful as it is, isn't the power on her head. The word for *power* in this case is *exousia,* and it means *authority*. If she submits, God gives her special authority from heaven for her marriage and her family, but only if she submits.

God says, "Okay. She's in a bad situation. But she's honoring the Word. She's honoring love. She's honoring joy. She's got the covering.

Her covering is the fruit of the Spirit. So I'm going to give her special authority in prayer."

By the same token, single men, according to 1 Corinthians 7:37, have power over their sexual desire when they submit to God. They have no desire to live in their flesh or mentally lust after women. They receive *exousia*. If they submit to the pastor, submit to the Word, and submit to doctrine, they are given a special badge of authority against sexual lust. Their submission brings them a covering. God promises a special authority over lust. If a single man obeys the pastor who rules over him with the Word of God (Hebrews 13:7,17), that gives him a special covering. In addition, wherever he may go in the world as a believer-priest he obeys from his heart the Word of God that he has learned. He has this special authority so that he can be around women and never lust. That's quite a victory!

Covered by Glorified Humanity

In Song of Solomon 3:10, regarding Solomon's chariot, the Word of God says, "He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters

of Jerusalem." (In other words, *for* them so they would be able to see it.)

Silver speaks of redemption. And gold refers to the deity of Jesus Christ. The purple covering points to the *hypostatic union* of Christ—the God-man, who is now our High Priest in heaven. So the covering is the glorified, hypostatic union of Christ, human in heaven, but now glorified humanity. That's your covering. You can understand why the road was paved with love—the love of the One who covers you.

The Covering of Love, Friendship, and Purity

"He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Proverbs 17:9).

God's love is an amazing covering. Not only does it cover a multitude of sins, but it never repeats the matter unless a person refuses to get right with God. Love covers a multitude of sins (James 5:20; 1 Peter 4:8). Not sentimental love, but real love.

Friendship is also an amazing covering. We're not talking about acquaintances or associates. We're not talking about having mutual interests, mutual pleasures, mutual likes, or mutual dislikes. We're talking about *agape* love,

the love of God, which produces a friendship that sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24). Proverbs 17:17 says "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." I don't think a man should ever get married until his love for his wife could be called "born for adversity," until, in her worst trouble, he could say he was born for *that* day. That is Proverbs 17:17.

Purity is a covering against impurity; integrity is a covering against dishonesty; hard work is a covering against laziness; edification is a covering against negativity; wisdom is a covering against knowledge of the letter; healing is a covering against sickness; a sound mind is a covering against fear; and love is a covering for all.

Protection from Evil

"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!" (Isaiah 31:1). This is an unusual verse. Consider the people who leave a ministry and then attack it. Here in Isaiah 31 they walked away from their covering. Does that mean they

couldn't have another covering? Well, it wouldn't have been as good, but it would have been better than nothing. (After all, some covering is better than none at all!)

"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots…they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!" Israel made a league with Egypt. They didn't go to the Lord for help. How many people do not go to the Lord for their precise covering? They just don't do it. They will make fifteen telephone calls and not sleep all night, but they won't go to the Lord.

They Don't Call Back Their Words

"Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words." He will not call back his words. He will not change words that he said ten or fifteen years ago. Even if he comes back to church because he's miserable, he will not call back his words.

This person is involved with evil. He's sick of it, but that doesn't do any good. Even though he's unhappy, he'll never call back the words that he said against the people he was against—including the pastor. He will not call back his words. Even if he comes and sits in three ser-

vices a week, comes to the rap sessions, and doesn't say anything negative again, he's *still* controlled by evil because integrity, truth, and a godly confession are not his covering.

Luke 17:3 says, "If he repent, forgive him." For *my* sake, I forgive him mentally, even if he doesn't repent (Matthew 6:14). But for *his* sake, I don't forgive him unless he repents. Can you see this? I forgive him *mentally* so that what he did doesn't eat me up, but I don't forgive him *experientially*, because I have to mark him. If, however, he came and repented—even if he fell and repented seven times a day!—I would forgive him every time.

Too many people misunderstand the balance between divine counsel, the wholesomeness of divine government, and the reality of divine preciseness in the details of divine application. Mentally, you forgive because you don't want what he is doing against you to eat you up. But you don't forgive him outwardly until he repents. You mark him, and you're not sentimental, but you are courteous. And if he ever calls and says, "I repent," you say, "You're forgiven," and you no longer mark him. That's the principle.

Our minds need to be covered. Our emotions need to be covered. Our attitudes need to

be covered. Our plans need to be covered every morning by the grace and love of God that motivates us. We need to plan to assemble with God's people every time we have the opportunity. Our purpose needs to be covered. *We need to be covered,* and if we don't have God's covering, I'll guarantee you, we *will* have another covering.

Cover the Man of God

My favorite passage on the subject of coverings is in Genesis 9:20-27. Ham did not cover his father Noah. Ham said to his brothers, "Did you see Daddy? Didn't you know he was drunk? He's naked and drunk, and he's right in there." But Shem and Japheth didn't see a thing. They walked into Noah's tent backwards and covered him.

Would you be that way today if you saw a man of God out of God's will? You should be. You should turn him over to God, because he may have failed only once. If he's doing something really wrong, go to him alone. You have every right to—and you should. But would you do what Ham did?

Chapter Five

PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT

"For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean. Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts" (Isaiah 28:8-9).

My son and I were in a car a year ago and we heard someone say, "Doctrine is not the issue. We don't like that doctrine stuff." Do you know what he was saying? He may as well have said, "We don't like that 'thinking with God' stuff." *Doctrine* is "thinking with God," and *categorical doctrine* is "thinking with God precisely and accurately, being in tune with what He is thinking that moment in you."

That's why we have a doctrinal church. Our emphasis is on the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. But today, Satan has taken away the covering of many by causing people to cleave to

emotional movements and religious systems.

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine?" The answer: "Them that are weaned from the milk," the milk of emotionalism, the milk of experiences, and the milk of "working it up." This verse is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Why else would I constantly be teaching the people in my church? It's because of the importance of coverings and the danger of becoming familiar with the daily provision for doctrine.

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10). He does not say, "Song upon song, song upon song." He says the issue is "precept upon precept, line upon line." *Doctrine* is the issue. And we worship God by understanding doctrine.

"To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear" (Isaiah 28:12). What is the 'rest'? Bible doctrine. We are a ministry of the Word, and no one is going to change that. Hearing the Word of God, hearing the precepts, hearing doctrine—this is the refreshing. This is the health. It's not doing, but hearing. The Word of God produces the rest.

"But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (Isaiah 28:13). God was saying He will have His preachers preach doctrine in order to drive away those who only seek after experiences and emotionalism and to establish true disciples of Jesus Christ in the reality of truth.

The Danger of Rejecting the Word

"Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement…." (Isaiah 28:14-15*a*). Let me show you what happens when people reject sound doctrine. These people don't realize it, but they are making a covenant. Not only that, but they take on a false covering:

"Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth…." (Isaiah 30:1-2*a*). So, they have a covering. They

do have a covering.

There are people today who have a religious covering, and they are going to be ashamed when they meet God. There are also political coverings and social coverings. These are all coverings, but they are not of God.

Stones Missing from Lucifer's Covering

"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created" (Ezekiel 28:13).

In their historical frame of reference, these nine stones mentioned in Ezekiel 28:13 speak of the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit. God isn't just talking about some beautiful stones. This verse is talking about the character of God. Just as every name had a meaning, every stone had a meaning also. Before Lucifer fell, every one of these characteristics was his covering.

Now I want to show you a unique mystery of God, as we compare Ezekiel 28:13 with Exodus 28:17-20:

"And thou shalt set in [the breastplate of the high priest] settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings" (Exodus 28:17-20).

Contrary to what most commentaries say, these twelve stones do not refer to the twelve tribes of Israel. Though there were twelve stones on the breastplate of the high priest, only nine of them are listed for Lucifer in Ezekiel 28:13. Why is the third row on the breastplate of the high priest missing in Lucifer's covering? It is because the third row speaks of *obedience*, *faith*, and *steadfastness*, and "three" speaks of resurrection—life out of death on the earth.

Left Uncovered

"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee…. therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire" (Ezekiel 28:15-16).

Lucifer had been covered by love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance, but he went against his covering, so God destroyed it. Lucifer had been a covering for the angels, but God destroyed that covering. Today, Satan rules people, but he doesn't cover them. He will give drugs to kill them. He will give them alcohol, immorality, promiscuity, and pornography, but he will not cover them. Therefore, when people get into these things, they make a covenant with hell for self-destruction, covering themselves with false coverings.

If a woman doesn't want to live with her husband, even though he doesn't beat her up and he doesn't get drunk, one of her girlfriends may become her covering. I will tell you, that covering is not of God.

Consider social coverings. Instead of getting close to God, some people go out to barrooms and drink with their girlfriends or boyfriends. They have a social covering, which gives them a false peace.

Washington is filled with political coverings. Much of the medical world has been filled with wrong motives that produce false coverings. They don't want the world of nutrition mixed in

as a needful alternative for good health. Thank God for all the good medical professionals, but the medical field has provided, to some degree, a false covering for sick people.

The moment God's people step outside of God's covering, they become damaged. Many people train up their kids to have athletic heroes as a covering. Television, with some of its weird programming, becomes a covering for the mind to become spellbound by it.

Religion is one of the most deceptive coverings in the world. When a person attends a church out of habit, tradition, or a sense of duty, especially when the church does not teach the whole counsel of God, he takes on a false religious covering. Even when a person knows he is not following precept upon precept and that it's not doctrinal, he won't quit because he doesn't have the character to get right with light!

Lucifer had God's characteristics of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance. He walked in the midst of the "stones of fire," referring to those characteristics of God. Matthew 3:11 says that when Jesus came, He would baptize with the Spirit and with fire. In Isaiah 4:4, the Holy Spirit is the "spirit of burning." Fire

speaks of the characteristics of the power, energy, and bright light of the eternal nature of God. So Lucifer walked in the midst of the characteristics of the eternal nature of God, which always purifies by taking away every bit of the dross that is in it.

Lucifer was created perfect and had the nine stones in a gold setting—gold speaking of deity, completeness. But I repeat: Three stones that were on the breastplate of the high priest are not found in Ezekiel 28—obedience, faith, and steadfast patience.

It's a terrible tragedy when someone takes on a covering that is not of God. When a person's intellect comes under an educational institution that doesn't teach Christ as Lord and Master over education, then he is stripped of a covering.

The Mercy Seat

The tabernacle in the wilderness had to be covered with badger's skins, which speaks of the humanity of Christ. Inside the tabernacle, the bowls had to be covered; the table had to be covered. Everything had to be covered. When Aaron, the high priest, went into the holy of holies once a year, he had to burn incense on the

coals coming out from the outer altar so that he couldn't see the mercy seat. He had to look up, because he wasn't allowed to see the mercy seat.

Moses, however, was able to go into the holy of holies, in Exodus. He could look right at the mercy seat, and Jesus would teach him doctrine. Then Moses would come out, his body filled with glory. No one wanted to be around him until the glory faded. So Moses could look at the mercy seat, but Aaron could not, because Moses was the communicator of Bible doctrine. He wasn't into much of a "movement" in those days. Things weren't like they are today. Moses just went into the holy of holies, received the message from God, then came out and told the people.

According to Exodus 25:17-22, two cherubim of gold were connected to the mercy seat as they looked upon it. In Genesis 3:24, after the Fall, the cherubim kept Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden. They stood for justice, purity, righteousness, and God's holiness. But now, in Exodus 25, they are looking down at the mercy seat, connected and one with it, because the blood has been sprinkled on the lid that was covering it. They had once stood for judgment. Now they bowed, *one with mercy!* The blood stands for mercy; the blood on the mercy seat was for *God*

to look upon! That's why He said in Exodus 12:13, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The blood was for God. So, God saw the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat, representing Christ's blood. Today, the Blood is a covering for us, so God can fellowship with us through the blood of His precious Son.

"So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (James 2:12-13). This verse is saying, "When we are judged, let us be judged by the perfect law of liberty." Way back in Exodus, the cherubim were making a declaration that whenever a soul believes in Jesus Christ, mercy rejoices rather than condemns.

Leaders and Their Covering

God gives us the covering of the pastor-teacher, the covering of the husband, the covering of the father and mother, the covering of Christian leaders who are real leaders. Everyone of these people become a covering. And do you know how they become a covering? *Precept upon precept*, *line upon line*, *here a little*, *there a little*. And do you know what this does? It causes

the weary to rest.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:2-3).

What is it that people will not endure? Sound doctrine! They want a movement. They want emotionalism. They want experiences. They want signs. They want to make-believe because they will not receive sound doctrine. They want a religious system. They will not endure sound doctrine. They make comments like, "All they do is teach us God's Word."

When a husband gets on his knees and prays, Jesus, who is his Head, becomes his covering (1 Corinthians 11:3). This man takes on the nature of God through the Word of God. He takes on the character of Christ, and produces the fruit of the Spirit, which becomes a precious stone that covers him as a husband and a father.

Then, the wife takes on the covering of Christ from her husband, and she produces every precious fruit of the Spirit. Jesus is being revealed in her (Galatians 1:16), but she pro-

duces the fruit of the Holy Spirit outwardly. Every time a situation comes up, she reveals love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. Everywhere she goes, her life covers.

She brings her children to church on Sunday nights because the Bible tells her to. She's going to cover her kids by getting them to fall in love with obedience to the Word of God.

In 1 Corinthians 11:15, her long hair is a covering. Long hair represents the submission of the wife's soul to her husband. This symbol of submission is what the elect angels look into to see that a wife is submitting to her husband (1 Peter 1:12). Short hair for a man is the expression that he is submitting to Christ.

The angels look in and say, "Okay, these people are taught precise doctrine. The husband has short hair. He is submitting to Christ. He understands doctrine. And the woman has longer hair. She is submitting to him. Her long hair—which reveals her submission to Christ—is her covering."

Receiving Right Counsel

"Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me [meaning

they don't receive Bible doctrine]; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin" (Isaiah 30:1). They go down to be strengthened in Egypt—the world system—as their covering. They don't want God's precepts as their covering. They want something that a nice, "educated," worldly person can give them for a covering. But there's just one problem. This person has had his covering stripped.

When a woman's husband is not what he ought to be, she applies 1 Corinthians 7:14, and her amazing, Spirit-filled life sets her husband apart so he can't interfere with her walk with God, and her inner beauty may begin to win him (1 Peter 3:1-2). She has an alternative, an option. She has Jesus Christ and her local assembly to make up for the covering her husband is not giving her.

She doesn't need to run around asking questions of everyone she sees. She only needs to *hear* the Word of God, *receive* it, and *go* to the Father. The Father was the covering for Jesus Christ's humanity.

The Fullness that Fills All in All

The Body is the fullness of Christ because, as an organism, it has a Finished Work covering.

The Blood covers all our sins—it is a Finished Work covering. We have a grace covering and a mercy covering that rejoices against judgment. We have forgiveness that forgets as our covering. We have divine patience as our covering. We have the inner covering of joy as our strength. Wisdom from above gives us the covering of peace. All of these coverings belong to the believer.

We don't receive our counseling from the world. The Word of God says in Psalm 1:1, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly…." The psalmist said that his meditation was on the Word of God "day and night" (Psalm 1:2). You see, it's the *Word*! As we meditate and reflect on what God is thinking, the Holy Spirit makes it fresh.

We don't need a social covering. We don't need a domestic covering in the world. We don't need these kinds of coverings. We have the covering of the mind of God (the Word of God), the Body of Christ, the local pastor, and Spirit-filled Christians. We have God's covering. Yet even though Satan is now uncovered, people get under him, but he is not a covering. He will give you a good time on your way to self-destruction, *but he is not a covering*. There is not one verse in

the Bible that says Satan covers anyone.

Concerning Satan, Isaiah 14:11 says, "the worm [singular] is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee." This does not mean worms as you would normally think of them. If you study Mark 9:43-48 carefully—"their worm dieth not"—along with Isaiah 66:24, you will discover that worm means "conscience and memory." So Isaiah 14:11 means that Satan will live with his own conscience in hell forever, and all around him the consciences of the inhabitants of hell will be screaming. If you don't believe me, read Revelation 19:20 and 20:10.

Imagine Satan's conscience, throughout all eternity, witnessing to him that he lost the covering of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. He was stripped of his covering over the angels and now he's in hell without a covering. All the people who reject Christ are in hell without a covering.

Thank God for Calvary!

CONCLUSION

The tabernacle was covered. The bowls were covered. The spoons were covered. The cloud in the wilderness was a covering for God's people (Psalm 105:39). They had the cloud by day and the fire by night as a covering to lead them (Numbers 9:15-16).

All people who are truly saved have coverings available to them. They have their local pastor, precept upon precept, the Finished Work, and involvement in the body of Christ.

We have the Word of God and the Spirit to lead us. Glory to God, the single person has a covering! A widow has a covering. The victim of divorce has a covering. People who have lost children have a covering. Those who are sick have a covering. We have a covering when we're tempted.

The Word motivates us supernaturally, entering into the fibers of our being in the operation of the supernatural transfer of God through

the Holy Spirit. The message isn't "deep." Just listen to the Interpreter! The Holy Spirit will reveal it. *All* Scripture is profitable, and when Christians receive the Word in the Spirit, they will obey, they will be faithful, and they will be steadfast—fully adorned as royal priests because they have received their covering from the Lord.

Created to Have Dominion

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Man was created to glorify God. Still, so many people wander through life oblivious to their purpose on earth. Great debates have been waged over our place on this planet and how we, as human beings, are supposed to behave upon it. The Bible, however, is crystal clear regarding our position on earth.

God intended that man would have dominion. According to Genesis 1:26-28, He made us to rule over the earth and all that is upon it. Adam and Eve lost that privilege when they fell, choosing instead to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. When they lost their authority, it was taken by Satan. But after Christ was crucified, buried, resurrected, and ascended, God took back the authority—over the earth and over hell and death (Revelation 1:18). Now, as believers who are hid with Christ in God, we have a new authority and a new dominion in Him (Matthew 16:19).

God redeemed mankind through the Blood of Christ so that if we believe and accept Him as Savior, we might rest in His love and reign with Him in the midst of this world's system. When we grasp this, we will respond with worship and with a testimony that glorifies God.

Chapter One

THE STANDARD OF GRACE

"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

"They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

"Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

"This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not" (John 8:3-6).

The Pharisees came to Jesus with a woman taken in adultery and asked Him what He had to say about it. But Jesus, knowing that they were trying to trap him, stooped down and wrote something on the ground. Trying their best to provoke Him, the Pharisees kept badgering Jesus with questions. Finally, He lifted Himself up and made one of the greatest statements

in all of the Bible:

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7).

With that, Jesus issued the standard for judging others, making it very obvious as to what He meant. Then He went back to writing on the ground.

Now, the Bible does not say what Jesus drew in the dust while He was stooped down. My opinion, however, is that the first time He bent down, He wrote the word "LAW." "What do *You* say we should do to her?" the Pharisees quizzed Jesus. They were trying to get Him to contradict His own words. Jesus had presented Himself to them as a Rabbi—one who understood, proclaimed, and followed the Scriptures—and the law said that an adulterer must be stoned. Based upon John 1:17, I believe that the second time Jesus wrote in the dirt, He wrote "GRACE." Though the Law came by Moses, grace and truth had come by Jesus Christ.

Here, Jesus established a great standard and set every born-again believer under His policy of grace. Obviously, He didn't mean that we should continue in sin that grace may abound, but He did put all of us under His grace policy. He knew that the only way we could have do-

minion was by receiving His gift of grace.

First Fruits for God

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

We worship God because He is the Lord of everything. In Deuteronomy 26:10, the children of Israel worshipped God when they "brought the first fruits of the land" as an offering. To have dominion over the earth, which is temporarily under Satan's rule, God and His Kingdom must be put first in our lives (Matthew 6:33).

Psalm 96:9 declares that we are to worship God in the beauty of His holiness. Yet, there are many people who cannot worship God. They do not understand who God created them to be.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that

creepeth upon the earth.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26-28).

God created us in His own image, after His own likeness. He created us to have dominion over every living thing that creeps upon the earth, over all the fish of the sea, and over all the fowl of the air. The cattle, the birds—everything was created for us to rule over. After that point in creation, on the seventh day, God rested.

From Dust to Dominion

Two things that God wants us to understand are these: one, that He has a plan for us, and, two, that He always desires to give us rest in that plan.

In Genesis 1, we were created to have dominion. Genesis 2:7 tells us that He made us out of the dust of the earth and breathed into us, giving us a spirit and making us a living soul.

But in Genesis 3, man failed and lost his right to have dominion over the earth. And even though Satan had already been banished from heaven for his rebellion against the throne of God, now that old serpent was cursed for tempting man. His punishment was to eat the dust (Genesis 3:14). This means he was cursed to feed on our weaknesses. In a sense, he has permission to "chew" on our weaknesses.

Redemption was not the result of a change in God's plan; rather, Redemption fulfilled God's plan. Man's dominion was lost. Satan usurped his authority, but God took dominion and restored it when He redeemed man through the perfect sacrifice of His Son. Now, God says to the believer, "I want you to have dominion in Christ." He rests in His Finished Work of Calvary. He rests when His people have dominion through His Word and the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two

REST BRINGS RESULTS

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)" (Romans 5:17).

"And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee" (Exodus 25:21).

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God" (1 Corinthians 2:1).

God's men and women were made to reign (Revelation 5:10). God desires that we would rule in Satan's domain as God's guests of honor (James 4:7). God teaches us to reign as we receive the abundance of His grace and the gift of righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ. God rests in the fact that you and I represent His reign

over Satan. The Lord has already defeated the devil, and we are to rest as we reign over him. He gives us His testimony, which speaks of His requirements, standards, provision, and policy. As we have received God's policy of grace, we declare His testimony.

God is not a man that He should lie. What He has said, He will do! (see Numbers 23:19). As we have learned, God calls on His people to be witnesses for Him in the courtroom of heaven. Satan is the one who is on trial—not us—and he foolishly stands for his own defense. Jesus Christ is the prosecutor in this case that is already decided. But, when the accusations come like a flood against those of us who are believers, He is our advocate. Then, He calls on us to testify. Our proclamation is the Holy Word of God, which declares the truth of our position according to Redemption.

The testimony of Jesus Christ is fulfilled, and God wants us to rest in what His Word has already proclaimed. After forty-nine years of farming the land, Israel was supposed to let the land rest for seven years. This allowed the soil to be replenished of the nutrients that had been depleted in the fruit-bearing process. This plan, which is detailed in Scripture (see Leviticus 25),

has made all the difference between abundance and poverty throughout generations in farmlands around the world.

If we really understood the character of God, we would learn what it really means to rest. In Mark 6:31, Jesus told His disciples to come away and rest a while. In Matthew 11:28-30, the Lord said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He gives us the rest of reigning, and we can indeed reign. And as we reign, we worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth, because any authority we have is from Him and through Him.

Relaxing in the Word

"To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;

"To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

"To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion." (Proverbs 1:2-4).

The Word of God beautifully explains worship in Proverbs the first chapter. Worship is hearing, growing, receiving, loving, responding, and worshipping the living Word of God. The result is that we enter into praise, and praise expresses faith-rest—an attitude of being totally re-

laxed and occupied with Jesus Christ.

To worship because of God's testimony is a key element of reigning with God. God wants us to receive and enjoy His character as we keep His testimonies.

I read an article recently that spoke of a woman who came down with Alzheimer's disease just before she was fifty years old. She was a Christian lady with a husband and two children who were also Christians. As the family gathered around her one day, this woman came out of her world of Alzheimer's and said to her husband and children, "Come here and let's worship God." She would never regain any capacity for recognition of her family again, but in that moment of clarity she was able to sit up and say, "Let's worship God."

That is the kind of testimony God desires from His people in the spontaneity of His love. The Word of God in this woman's soul enabled her, if only for a moment, to reign over a terrible disease as she worshipped Him.

Triumph and Testimony

One of our young people was attending a local community college and was told to write a paper defending homosexuality. Another as-

signment required her to explain why young girls need to have as many sexual experiences as possible in order to learn how to relate to men. This girl refused to defend these practices. I never heard what grade she received for that class, but if she got an “F” from the teacher, I know she will get an “A-plus” from God for reigning in her testimony.

Chapter Three

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

"Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (Isaiah 49:3).

"Glory" speaks of the place where God's essence is realized, experienced, and practiced. It reveals the presence of His character. It refers to the presence of God saying, "I will indeed give you dominion in Christ. Through My testimonies, I will give you dominion that you never knew you had. I created you to have dominion in My kingdom. And, since I redeemed you, I can rest in My love (Zephaniah 3:17). Because of My omniscience, I know without a shadow of a doubt that as you turn to Me, you will have dominion and I will be glorified."

God rests in all that He has done for us. We just come to where He rests and He gives us dominion. He wants us to reign as His children. He wants us to rule as a new creation in Him. That gives Him glory, and this is why we were cre-

ated.

Giving Him Glory, No Matter What

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23).

The Word of God says we are to glorify God in worship and praise. We are even instructed to worship God in our afflictions and trials (see 1 Peter 4:16). We can worship God in our sickness (John 11:4) and in our healing. As we learn to understand the character of God and His deep love for us, we can glorify God even when our healing does not come.

Awoman with terminal cancer pleaded with her family to take her to church. There wasn't much left of her and her family was afraid she might take a bad turn so they wanted to sit in the back of the congregation.

"No, I want to be right up front," the woman said. There, she worshipped with all of her heart and with all of her soul during the song service. During the sermon, she worshipped and praised with all of her heart and voice. Then, at the close of the sermon, she went home to be with God. Just like that. She glorified God in her condition because she received grace to have dominion

over her circumstances.

Alongtime TV pastor who had cancer and is now home with Jesus told a story of visiting a certain woman in the hospital. He said to her, "The doctors say you probably have a year to live. In my business, I prepare people to live. But today, I have to prepare you to go home to be with God." He went on to tell her of the great reunion awaiting her in heaven and the marriage supper of the Lamb. He told her that her life on earth was all in preparation for the most magnificent event of all, when she would be introduced to the Bridegroom as His beloved—face to face.

The woman took these things to heart and somehow managed to get hold of a white gown. One morning the nurse came in and found the woman, with her countenance radiant, worshipping and praising God and wearing the gown. The nurse left the room for a moment, and when she returned, that lady who was so sick had died. God had taken her home. A note the woman left behind said, "I knew I was going to meet Him today, and the white gown was for Jesus."

She glorified God in the midst of her sickness right until the end.

"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels" (Proverbs 1:5).

As I think of Jesus Christ today, all I can think of is how He deserves my worship. He wants me to keep His testimonies and glorify Him. For this, I was created: to glorify God. And with that, He gives us dominion over the enemy.

Every time we enter into our reign with God, we can be sure that we will be tested. In our testing, we will not be perfect people. God saw Job and bragged about him to Satan: "I have this mature man. Test him and see how he turns out" (see Job 1).

Job succeeded in the first couple of trials, but in his third trial, he failed six times. Finally, in the fourth trial, Job came to the full understanding of reigning with God, and God gave Job an A-plus on that test because he used rebound and prayed for his friends who had condemned him and turned against him.

Yes, we have an enemy, and he is real. But we have been given grace to overcome the trial we are facing, and we have been given mercy to

release us from the sins of the past. By the power of His Word and the indwelling strength of His Spirit, we can reign over every circumstance that comes our way. As we learn to rest and be replenished, we will understand that we were, indeed, created to have dominion.

CONCLUSION

My prayer is that this booklet helps us to see the privilege we have of living in the dominion God has given us through faith-rest in Him.

Having faith-rest is knowing that the work of God is finished.

Having faith-rest is believing that the work is done—once and for all.

Having faith-rest is receiving wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity (Proverbs 1:3).

Having faith-rest is when the Lord Jesus Christ reigns supreme in my heart.

By the grace of Almighty God, we can learn to truly love Him with all of our heart, soul, and body. Then, as we worship and keep His testimony, we develop a desire to glorify Him. This is what man was created for and how we were intended to live—through the policy of grace and the gift of mercy, robed in His righteousness and crowned with His glory.

Dear Lord, thank You that we do not have to

wonder about where we stand with You. You have shown us Your heart's desire for us to live as kings and queens because You delegated the authority of Your kingdom to us. We pray for wisdom to choose life and to always speak and operate by the authority that rules in love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Damaged Goods Can Still

Receive God's Love

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Many Christians are deeply injured in their souls. They are men and women with "damaged goods," characterized by the circumstances that have occurred throughout their lives to harm their emotions and injure their souls. They are partakers of lost emotions. Their emotions have been in total disharmony for years. Their conscience is infected with guilt and negativity. They are not consistent in receiving life from God.

This condition paralyzes a person's capacity by producing a damaged capacity that generates the same problems month after month and year after year. They will either live in self-inflicted misery or sublimate into the world's system to try to fill the gap. They may become neurotic and enter into serious illness, which might even lead to psychosis. Their capacity has been so damaged that even when they enjoy the Word of God, it is only a brief encounter that produces

a temporary hope.

These people have heard the same messages that other people have heard, but they are not delivered because they have damaged goods. Life has affected them in such a way that they have an impairment that nullifies the proper use of their design and their faculties. They often struggle with their self-image. Even when spiritual life is an option through the availability of the Word of God, they resist it because of fear of change. Why do they fear change? They are risking rejection and failure, and they fear becoming paralyzed forever.

God does not condemn them. God would not consider cursing them. But the events in their lives have brought in rejection that is almost unbearable. This rejection produces unimaginable misunderstanding and error experienced by people throughout Christian churches regarding the grace of God and His unconditional love. Many times the misunderstanding is because of ignorance, but the ignorance is not so much a lack of knowledge. More often, the ignorance is due to a lack of receiving life from God freely and all that is included in that life by God's grace.

People simply cannot receive life from God

in their damaged capacity. What every Christian needs to understand is that God has given them permission to change, and He provides divine protection for the process. This booklet reveals God's heart toward us, His children, and that He is ready, willing, and able to heal, restore, and renew our souls from moment to moment.

Chapter One

SELF-REJECTION

"Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:13-16).

I heard a story of a man who was brought to one of the greatest houses in the world, a mansion. He was given a Rolls Royce and his wardrobe was filled with the best possible clothing. He was lavished with every sort of luxury. But he said, "I cannot accept any of it because I

haven't earned it."

We do not know all that transpired in his life before, but whatever it was, it left him with damaged goods. He felt he deserved punishment because of a self-image struggle that emerged in his soul and translated into fear—a fear of rejection, a fear of change, and a fear of failure. I suppose we would be shocked if we realized how many people exist with such "damaged goods"—people made in the image of God but battered and left with scars.

One of the Rockefellers, at the age of 50, had a serious problem digesting food. The diagnosis by his medical doctors indicated that he was a victim of damaged emotions. Success in his life had been disappointing. After dealing with his self-seeking, selfish attitude, he built the University of Chicago and the Rockefeller Center, and he began secretly giving away money to help people; but, more than that, in his own way, he submitted to a principle of God's life. He traded in self-absorption to be filled with God's portion and its abundant overflow.

The tragic deaths of movie stars like Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley revealed that even though they were highly successful in the world, their success frustrated them and produced

great disappointment. Every time they performed, they performed with damaged goods.

When teenagers rebel against parents, refusing to honor that which would protect them and bless them, they begin a process of developing a damaged soul and damaged emotions. Even if a parent is harsh or inattentive, rebellion is a result of a young person's wrong decisions. People are responsible for their own actions. Without a healing, there can be no change of heart. Therefore, as these young people grow up, even secret rebellion will continue to impair their capacity for God.

When a person does not have a proper capacity, change is impossible. For change to transform the heart, the capacity must be healed.

I met a young woman who heard me speak about "islands" in the soul—places that are detached from God's life—and His provision for grace, mercy, and victory.* She was overwhelmed with new hope. She understood for the first time how five consecutive years of suffering had damaged her emotions. She goes to a church that preaches the Gospel and loves God. She attends three services every single week, but she is just getting worse and worse. It is not the fault of the church, and I am not blaming her.

She is a person with damaged goods.

We discovered in communicating with her that her loved ones have expected too much from her. They have not evaluated how serious her condition is. They do not understand the pain she has gone through. She was molested by an older brother, and when she tried to tell her father, he wouldn't listen. She has damaged emotions, an injured soul, and an infected conscience.

A church atmosphere will help to some degree, but it cannot change her. It will also require a direct understanding of certain truths from God's Word. One message may start a new, wonderful process for change.

**Read* Leaving Your Island for a Brand-New Garden*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

ABOVE ALL, ADD LOVE

"And above all these things, put on charity…." Colossians 3:14 translates as "submit to love and let it be added in everything." We have already put on the qualities of verses 12 and 13: mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, and forgiveness. And now comes charity—something that God produces in the heart that bonds the entire soul together in a quality of life that only someone who can receive from Christ can experience.

"Above all these things, submit to charity." Charity combines all the other fruits of God's Spirit. Let love hold everything together and become the brand-new motive of mercy. This will be a bond of perfection, or maturity, connecting them together continually and dogmatically, in the present tense.

God's love is something to which we submit. God is not saying, "Submit to My will." He is

not even bringing in the will of God at all. He is saying, "Submit to My love." Just receive the love of God.

When Peter, being questioned by Jesus Christ, heard Him ask, "Do you love Me more than these?" Jesus used a word that indicated the highest form of love, a love that had no feeling to it. That love was not based upon friendship, husband, or wife for fulfillment. It was based upon something that was resident in God through the Holy Spirit. There were no emotional responses to that love, so He said, "Do you love Me with a love that demands no feelings, love that isn't even responding to something that people have done?"

Peter, immediately stirred up, replied, "I love You with a warm, passionate, deeply emotional love, and I want you to know that. I love you with feelings."

Jesus challenged Peter again, "Do you love Me with *agape* love?"

Peter passionately answered, "I love you with a *phileo* love."

Phileo love has a very beautiful meaning, as it is a love that two people have toward each other as close friends. It is the objective love of God in a relationship. It is the kind of love that

is in the mind, but it is also very emotional. The love of God, however, is not necessarily emotional. It may be, but it may not be. The subjective *agape* love of God is something that a believer submits to and believes in. Therefore, the love of God, while it is based upon an outward source, is completely subjective, meaning it is inside of me, and it is being motivated from within, not on the basis of a response.

Phileo love is motivated by support on the outside, and it brings in the passion of feelings and warmth and emotional motivation. There is nothing wrong with it. The Father loved Jesus that way, according to John 15:9. Jesus loved His disciples with *phileo* love in John 20:2. We are told to love God in that way, in 1 Corinthians 16:22, because it reveals a responsive relationship with Him.

For this reason, Jesus challenged Peter every single time until the last time, and then He said, "Okay, you don't understand right now. So, do you love Me with a *phileo* love?" Peter, triumphant, said, "You know that I do." That is all Peter understood right then, and it was a wonderful love.

Divine love is a gift from God, and it works through *phileo* love. Divine love is simply an atti-

tude of the will, based upon an inward condition of the Holy Spirit shedding it abroad in our hearts.

God's love is determined some days by being consistent to bring the injured person to the point where he can receive it. When I love my enemies, in Matthew 5:43 to 48, I am simply loving them to get them to be able to receive a gift from God. So the greatest thing in the world is not submitting to the power of God first, and it is not being concerned about submitting to the will of God; rather, it is submitting to the love of God and receiving that love as a gift.

This is what Jesus meant in 1 John 4:19 when John said, "We love him, because He first loved us." According to 1 John 4:10, He first loved us and gave His Son as a propitiation for our sins.

More than anything in the world, we must learn to receive God's love. Do not worry about submitting to the will of God. Do not worry about failing. Do not worry about rejection. When you are saved, God will not reject you, even if you will not receive His love.

A Christian couple who were alcoholics and drug abusers heard us on radio. They were both people with damaged goods. He was a deacon of a Bible-believing church. After being saved

and totally delivered, the effects of the chemical abuse lingered in their bodies for several years, causing rebellion and reaction toward each other. He was told he was schizophrenic. She was told that she would never really be well.

We sent them a series of tapes and booklets. Everything we sent them was grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, joy, and peace. They promised me that they would listen to one tape a day and read one booklet together every day. Within one month, they were totally delivered from the effects of the drugs and alcohol. She is no longer walking around with damaged goods. In fact, she now speaks to women's groups throughout the state where she lives. Her husband is no longer reactionary or angry, secretly wanting to "let her have it." He is now the responsible father of five children, and he is a magnificent husband.

What happened? They simply received the love of God, and love never fails. God's gift of love, if we will continually submit to it, will never fail. It cannot fail (1 Corinthians 13:8). It will do more than medication (and I am not against medication given by doctors. I am not an extremist. If the doctor told me to do something, I would do it.) It will do more than speaking

many words; it will do more than blaming one another. Simply submit to charity, and that charity will bind everything together through the Spirit, and it will give you a life within that controls your life without.

Chapter Three

LOVE IN ACTION

One of the most exciting testimonies I ever witnessed occurred while a visitor was speaking at our church. I didn't appreciate his long testimony of telling how bad he was as a criminal member of the Mafia. I heard every sin he ever committed! I traveled with him for four nights in a row to four churches. I heard that story, and I began to feel sorry for him telling that story every night! (By the way, I don't agree with that kind of Christian testimony. Christ and all that He has done should be the central theme. Anyway, it was quite a story!)

This man, a member of the Mafia and a drug addict, was placed in prison. After he was finally released, he continued to commit worse crimes and was sentenced to prison for thirty more years. Through a guard, he obtained some drugs, and through connections, he escaped from prison.

His wife became a beautiful Bible-believing Christian. Every single night at six o'clock, her five-year-old son prayed for his daddy. He prayed, "Jesus, save Daddy. Save Daddy."

After the father escaped, he took a .45 pistol, and he was on a mission. His one desire was to kill his wife and kill his son and then kill himself. Drugs had severely affected his mind.

The taxi drove him to his home. He went into the house, found his wife in the kitchen, and beat her with the pistol in a tremendous rage, intending to kill her.

Then, when he went to his son's bedroom, he heard, "Lord, please save Daddy tonight. Please save Daddy tonight, dear Jesus."

The Holy Spirit came upon that man. He dropped his pistol, grabbed his son, called the hospital for his wife, turned himself in to the police, and his son led him to Jesus.

That man was such a model prisoner that in three years he was released on probation. He toured America, and he stayed in my home for three nights, preaching the Gospel of grace.

What changed him? He simply submitted to a gift of God's love. That gift changed his life inside and outside. In that horrible condition, he made a decision to take his wife to the hospital.

In that condition, he accepted Christ with his son telling him, "Just believe, Daddy." Even in that condition, the Spirit of God moved upon him rapidly.

In 2 Corinthians 12:15, Paul said, "The more I love, the less I am loved." He was saying, "I don't expect anything in return. That is not the kind of love that I have. I do not love you folks at Corinth because you are treating me well, because you are not." Then he said, "You do not have to do something to motivate my love, but I want to tell you that I wish you the very best that God could ever give you."

An Attitude of Love

The Bible scholar William Barclay teaches on the attitude of *agape* love in his word study. This is the great principle of how God's love comes into our lives through the Holy Spirit so that we can receive the Word of God. His Word will dwell richly in our hearts because of God's love, which establishes a new capacity in place of damaged goods.

First, the Holy Spirit must fill us. Many Christians try to memorize Scriptures, yet they never get filled with the Holy Spirit. Many Christians receive counseling repeatedly

throughout their entire lives. I understand the need in certain situations, and I am not against it. Many, however, have placed their confidence in the arm of the flesh (2 Chronicles 32:8*a*), and instead of getting filled with the Holy Spirit; they just go for more counseling.

If you are filled with the Holy Spirit and He sheds the love of God abroad in your heart, then the love that died for you when you were yet a sinner will not fail your soul. Love will heal the injured soul, the infected conscience, the wounded emotions. It will heal, because that is the love that saved us while we were sinners, and that is the love that heals us when we are Christians with damaged goods.

We do not have to submit to God's will—not at first. Rather, we submit to His love. God first loved us, according to 1 John 4:19. So when we are filled with God's love through the Holy Spirit, we do not have a need for people to submit to something about us. We love them because of who we are in Christ. They do not have to give us support, encouragement, or motivation. Sometimes our expression of that love may not be intensely obvious, but love would do anything it had to do to bless others.

Sometimes it may indeed be *phileo*, which is

godly, too.

The greatest need in marriage is first to submit to the gift of love. I don't care if you have done some bad things or not. I am not even interested. Submit to God's love. Don't worry about anything. Just submit and keep right on submitting to God's love. The simple promise from the Word of God is that this love will not fail us (1 Corinthians 13:8).

Love will not fail the people who are failing us, either. If we have a love for them through Jesus Christ, love may not be able to help them today, but it will desire their highest good. We do not compromise or become sentimental, but we do everything we can for their highest good—not because they are good and not because they are doing anything good, but because we want them to come to the place where they can submit to God's love which will not fail them.

Chapter Four

A PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION OF LIFE

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (Colossians 2:6).

"That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18*b*).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

Let the Word of God dwell in you richly—not just in the letter of the law, but with the love of God. Let it dwell in your hearts richly, "in all wisdom"—in all application—"teaching and ad-

monishing one another…."

The word "teaching" is *didasko*, a present active participle. It is the practical manifestation of life to show people their highest possibility because of receiving love. "Admonishing" is *nou - theteo*, also a present active participle, which continually produces an action when it is needed. This is the divine truth about love. It is not only to influence the intellect, but I receive love so as to have my will changed for a new capacity. That is what "admonish" means. It does not mean to condemn, to exhort, or to run down. It means to minister this gift through the Holy Spirit so that it does more than touch the intellect; it changes the will into the transformation of a new capacity of love.

Finally, we are to teach and admonish one another in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"—songs of praise such as those in the Old Testament. Praise Him often, throughout the day.

I did not feel anything when I got in my car this morning. I did not have any feelings because of the long hours lately. I had God. And I said, "I thank God that I am pure and peaceful and happy. I thank You, God, that You are going to quicken my body." I started to make up

songs. I'm always making up songs.

A hymn is any song that celebrates truth. They do not always come from the old hymn books, though many of those are beautiful. Some folksongs and some southern Gospel songs, as well as others, come under this category, because through these songs, the heart is celebrating truth.

The last category is "spiritual songs," *odais pneumatikais*. It is a general description of anything that isn't done in the flesh. Someone could sing the greatest song in all the world like "The Old Rugged Cross." It is such a precious hymn, but sung in the flesh, it would not be a spiritual song.

The Bible mentions "singing" as a present active participle. The Greek word is *ado*, and it implies having "a lyrical emotion from a devout soul." The emotions are involved on the inside because you are completely occupied with being loved by God. This is when it is right for the emotions to be involved, because love is motivating them to respond. Somebody might judge you, but they are judging what love is doing to help you.

Then it says we are to sing "with grace." Oh, the sphere and the kingdom of the government

of grace! Everything we do is because we have been given something that we do not deserve. It is ours, and it is unconditional. We do what we do with grace in our hearts, in our frame of reference, in our motives, in the motivational center of the heart and the self-essence of the soul.

And who are we singing to? The Lord! We are doing this to the Lord! There may be hundreds of people around, but we are doing this to the Lord. He loves it, because in us He sees that what started out as a gift of love is now able to heal us and affect us, giving us a ministry to Him, out of His source, and it is operating in you and me by grace!

CONCLUSION

We have been called to receive the benefits and blessings of the cup of salvation (Psalm 116:13). And just as we have received the Holy Spirit and the gift of repentance, we have received forgiveness of sins and a godly inheritance. Forgiveness is something we simply receive. Receive it, and believe it, and you have it. Remember, charity never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8*a*).

The Word of God asks us to draw near. That is all! Draw near. God never asks us to perform but to draw near and receive. God gives us permission to change no matter how long we have been wounded, and then He gives us protection in the process through grace.

Paraphrased, Colossians 3:13-15 says that if you have a quarrel against one another, forgive one another with unconditional favor as Jesus Christ also forgave you with unconditional favor. And above all things, put on charity. Then,

let divine peace rule in your heart. Let it be umpire. Let it be the decision-maker of your new life of divine peace. As a result, because you are now available to have a capacity for love, injured souls are receiving an ointment. The damaged goods are being healed.

Dancing on the Dust

of Your Tomb

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

All of us labor, struggle, and strive through external pressures, through soul structures, through human constructs, and through the letter of the Word. Like Paul when he was living in the Romans 7 experience, we try again and again, and we may have some success. But God says, "Listen, I want to write my laws in your heart. I want you to understand that I will be merciful to your unrighteousness. Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

God doesn't want us to have a thing to do with the old law, even though it was perfect. He would have us live in the age of the Holy Spirit, allowing the Spirit to glorify Christ and reveal the Word of Life. He wants His life to be written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

It is my hope that through the message contained in these pages, each of you will be enabled to enjoy a brand-new, glorious adventure of growing, knowing God intimately, going

from faith to faith, from grace to grace, and from glory to glory. Let the splendor of the risen Lord shine out through your soul. May you learn to bury condemnation and guilt and then *dance on the dust of your tomb*.

Chapter One

DESTROYING THE EXTERNALS

The Lord consistently destroys the externals that we, unknowingly, have been locked into for years. I recently read of a beautiful man of God—a missionary for many years—who had a nervous breakdown. He got so locked into his programs, into his "external commitments," never having a beautiful principle from God speak to his human spirit or write in his heart with the Word of Life.

This man had to be counseled intensely for six months. He had been serving God faithfully on the mission field for twenty-seven years. Though he did not get into overt sins, he was locked into a rigid program, not understanding the precious life and fellowship he could have with God.

There is a major difference between *controlling* our walk with God and *surrendering* to Jesus Christ. It is so easy to have many external rela-

tionships and control them with a religious spirit, adapting the Word of God to the process we use, instead of enjoying all of the amazing things that come from walking with God in the Holy Spirit each day.

Dr. McKinley, a great Scottish preacher, was a Bible-believing fundamentalist who had a tremendous gift of joy and humor. He was loved by those who knew him intimately, and he made a great impact upon those he ministered to. Once, while preaching at a camp meeting to approximately eighteen hundred people, he received a letter that said: "Would you stop being humorous and get down to serious preaching of the truth?"

Dr. McKinley read the letter and went on to tell one of the greatest jokes that he had ever told. With his eagle eyes, he gazed upon the congregation and picked out one older lady from that huge crowd. He said to her, "There you are!" (He called her out because she didn't have the courage to sign her name to the letter, and she was the only one in the whole place who wasn't laughing hilariously!) That lady obviously didn't know the joy of the Lord.

We have a pastor in our church who is blind. One day, he and his guide dog went into a de-

partment store and he started whirling his dog around. A clerk ran up to him, saying, "What's wrong? What's wrong?"

"Nothing," said the pastor. "I'm just looking around the store." Now *that's* a sense of humor!

From the Mountain to the Valley

One of the greatest reasons the Pharisees, scribes and other religious people of Jesus' day arranged His crucifixion was that, to them, Jesus seemed *too* human, not perfect. Remember, the reason Jesus was charged with blasphemy—the most serious charge among many other accusations—was that He was seen as being too human (Matthew 11:19).

Jesus was perfect—you and I know that. He was sinless, but that's not what the religious crowd thought. "He's of the devil," they said. If you study the Gospels, you get a good idea why these things were said.

In Matthew 17, for example, Jesus was transfigured while Peter, James, and John looked on. What a beautiful conference they had up on the mountain! What a glorious experience it must have been to see the Lord Jesus totally transfigured before their eyes. What a wonderful event! The three disciples fell on their faces.

But, notice what happened further on in this chapter. Jesus and the disciples came down from the mountain, and the multitudes rushed to Him. A father came and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatick, and sore vexed: for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him" (Matthew 17:15-16).

Here, we see the humanity of Jesus coming out in freedom and liberation as He said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me" (Matthew 17:17).

Jesus did not come with some whiny voice and say, "Oh, this is awful! Bring the boy to me." He said, "How long have I been with you, you perverted people?" After such a wonderful conference on the mountaintop, Jesus said this.

Darkness and Light the Same to God

What was He saying? Hear it: "Darkness and light are alike to Me. There are highs, and there are lows. I deliberately brought you down into the valley, where this lunatic child was being absolutely driven by demons, so that you would not stay on the mountaintop. I want you to face *practical reality*. I dwell in the darkness,

and I dwell in the light. I dwell in your highs, and I dwell in your lows. That's reality. I dwell with you when you go into the furnace, and I dwell with you to keep you out of the furnace, sometimes. That's reality."

Jesus Christ, in His humanity, was trying to get the disciples to see reality. He went from one extreme to the other: He was so absolutely human and yet, so divine. But He was *so* human that the Pharisees hated Him and arranged His crucifixion.

Chapter Two

THE SPIRIT'S WITNESS IN THE HEART

Follow this carefully. First, there was the age of the Father, when Israel wanted the Law. But, living in their externals, Israel failed the test of reality every time. Then came the age of the Son, when Jesus Christ came and gloriously revealed the Father's heart. Yet, His own disciples forsook Him, even in the age of the Son. Today, we have the age of the precious Holy Spirit, Who has come to regenerate and to seal men and women who believe in His Gospel. The Spirit reveals the glorified Son in the throne room of our hearts, writing the Word of God upon each heart.

"Whereof the Holy [Spirit] also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:15-18).

The Holy Spirit witnesses the New Covenant as He writes the Word of God in our hearts and in our minds. The Lord is merciful to our unrighteousness, and He remembers our sins and iniquities no more: He makes *life* the issue.

This is what Paul discovered and learned in Romans 7 (which was, if you want to be realistic about it, a diary of his sins—his own personal diary). He cried out, "The things that I *do*, I should not do. And the things I do *not* do, I *should* be doing! I am a wretched man." (Romans 7:19, 24). Paul's heart had not yet been circumcised through the Spirit. Even though he *knew* the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul's heart had not been circumcised; he still had confidence in his flesh. I love the Phillips Translation of this passage. After Paul confessed, "O wretched man that I am," Phillips' says "I thank God through Jesus Christ, *it is finished*."

Struggling in Conflict

At this point, Paul hadn't resolved his conflict. He was exhausted, struggling in his flesh, striving in his soul. He had theological concepts

and illuminations that he received in Arabia (Galatians 1:17), and God had spoken to him. But, finally, he stopped struggling, striving, and trying to live in externals. Finally, the Daystar arose in Paul's heart and the light began to shine in the dark places. Now he could say, "No condemnation!" When Paul made this discovery, his heart was gloriously circumcised by the Holy Spirit.

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his" (Hebrews 4:9-10). This passage is interesting, isn't it? There is a rest that remains. A rest beyond sin. A rest beyond the Law. A rest beyond struggling. A rest beyond keeping externals. A rest beyond our old human constructs. A rest beyond the old religious institutions that try to go on serving God after the Holy Spirit has been quenched and the life and glory of God has departed.

When the Ark of the Covenant lost the glory of God, it was just a box. The splendor of God's glory had departed. When an individual or a church loses the freshness of the Holy Spirit speaking to the heart, then the splendor of God's glory has departed, "having a form of godliness,

but denying the power thereof…" (2 Timothy 3:5).

The Life Issue

The Holy Spirit's witness of the New Covenant is a life issue, not an external issue. It is not a sin issue, or a struggling issue—it is a life issue. What are you doing with the life of the New Covenant? What are you doing with the grace of God? Are you hiding in it? Or, are you growing in it? Have you surrendered to God's life, or are you trying to control 'Adam,' the old sin nature, in an effort to live for God in the external realm? Is your program to manipulate individuals? Or, are you in a process that completely brings in rest?

God says, "There is a rest that remains." He goes on to say, "You have to cease from your own labors, as I did from mine." But then He says, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest." In some translations, *labour* is rendered *be diligent*, but the Holy Spirit has revealed something about this. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The Christian is always trying to labor, and he constantly gets himself into the process of being heavy laden.

Why? Because he is a free-will agent—because he's human!

Accept the fact that you are human. Of course, transformation can happen in a moment. But accept the fact that there is a gradual process going on. Don't have a fantasy of God. Don't live in the idealistic realm of subjectivity. Don't manufacture a God you cannot satisfy.

Chapter Three

MARRIED TO ANOTHER

Recently, I read an amazing book. It was about a man who, when he was seven or eight years old, heard his mother screaming as she prayed in the bathroom, "My son is going to hell! Save him! He's going to hell. My husband is going to hell. Save him!" The mother prayed, screaming at the top of her lungs. When her son was nine years old, she died. At the age of 13, the boy needed psychiatric help—and why? Don't misunderstand me, but, that mother's prayer was *not* of God. It was a prayer of condemnation, a prayer of judgment. It was not a prayer of faith, not a prayer of love, not a prayer of humility. Who is to say that a normal seven-year-old boy is going to hell?

Later on, as part of his therapy, the psychiatrist took the young man back to his home town. The old house was just about gone, but one room that was left was the bathroom. When he

saw it, the boy started weeping and sobbing. Every day for years he had heard the screams, "My son is going to hell; my son is going to hell. Save him. He's going to hell!" And ever since, he had been living in self-atonement, trying to pay for his sin. His father also had a nervous breakdown because of hearing the same prayer.

That kind of Christianity is not life. Certainly, I thank God for praying mothers. But the prayer *that* mother prayed was not life.

We labor, struggle, and strive through externals, through structures, through human constructs, and through the letter of the Word. Like Paul when he was living in Romans 7, we try again and again and have some success. But God says, "Listen, I want to write my laws in your heart. Don't you understand that I will be merciful to your unrighteousness? Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

God says, "I want you to have nothing to do with the old law, even though it was perfect. Instead, I want you to live in the age of the Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit glorify Christ and reveal the Word of Life. Let life by the Holy Spirit be written in your hearts."

Let's enjoy a brand-new, glorious adventure of growing in God and knowing Him intimately,

personally, living with no condemnation, going from faith to faith, from grace to grace, and from glory to glory. Let the splendor of the risen Lord shine out through your soul.

Remember, there is a corruptible seed; and then, there is the new birth—the *in*corruptible seed planted in a corruptible pot of clay, a treasure in an earthen vessel. God hasn't removed that earthen vessel; He hasn't removed that pot of clay. But, there's a precious, beautiful, incorruptible seed—an embryonic seed—that germinates and then grows and expands in a beautiful life process. Every time we respond to God without condemnation, under the terms of the New Covenant, and let the Holy Spirit teach us beautiful, precious, glorious life, then we begin to surrender our lives to Christ.

Taking up our cross does not mean suffering. It means the *old* is dead, the *new* is alive. As we go on with this new life, we experience many deaths and many resurrections every day. Yet, in obedience, through retroactive faith, we die with Christ in order to experience this new life.

Dead to the Law—the Old Husband

The young man in our story went back home. On the airplane, he began to realize that

the way his mother prayed brought all the condemnation of the Law upon his soul. His mother expected from him what he could not perform nor give her, and at such a young age.

When he read Romans 7, the young man was overwhelmingly blessed. A couple of years later, the Holy Spirit revealed to him that he was dead indeed to the 'old husband'—the Law. In his case, it represented the mother's condemning prayers. He was now dead to that husband, the husband who had ruled in his little conscience since he was six or seven—that husband who only condemned him and caused him grief, heartache, condemnation, and subjective guilt.

Before, when he went to church, he tried to live in self-atonement, trying to pay for his own guilt, and trying in some way to pay himself back as a penalty for his failure. He didn't know exactly how he had failed, but he apparently felt wretched before God because of his mother's prayers. Then, Romans 7:3-4 came in and he finally understood that he was dead to the law of the old husband and married to another, *even Christ*. These verses took over this young man's heart in his teen-age years.

Later, he said, "Many times, working out my salvation with this new revelation of grace, it

was as if the old husband would come out of his coffin in the middle of the night while I was sleeping. That spirit of condemnation, the spirit of judging, the spirit of failure would come out to say, 'You're going to fail, God's going to reject you. You're not going to make it.'" Even after he had mastered the truth as knowledge in his mind, he still had dreams of the old husband coming out of the coffin.

Finally, after suffering years of guilt, the young man read Romans 7:25 and 8:1; and the Holy Spirit wrote it on his heart in light: "I thank God that my Lord Jesus Christ finished it! *There is no condemnation*!"

In his heart, the young man saw that coffin filled with all his condemnation. Then, he saw the dust collect on top of the coffin, and it was as if the Holy Spirit said to him, "Go and dance on the dust of the coffin." He pictured himself, in the Spirit, dancing on the dust of the coffin. Totally liberated and married to "Another," he experienced the life of Jesus Christ, the life of resurrection, the life of God's grace, the life of unconditional love, the life of mercy rejoicing against judgment, the life of peace, the life of imputed righteousness, the life of wisdom, the life of joy, the life of happiness.

Chapter Four

COME UNTO ME AND REST

Can you picture the Lord Jesus Christ coming to the man who had been ill for thirty-eight years and could not walk?

"Would you like to be healed?" Jesus asked him. Well, what would you want after thirty-eight years? I guess he would like to be healed, wouldn't he?

"Take up your bed and walk," Jesus said (cf. John 5:8). The Lord Jesus addressed that man's response to His words.

How simple it is for God to address a person's response to *words:* words of life shining in a dark place, words of grace penetrating the mind. Words enter the mind which, like an iceberg, is ninety percent submerged, the subconscious and unconscious making up the vast subjective mind.

I want you to notice how Hebrews 4:9-10 says that there is a rest that remains for you, but

you have to cease from your *own* labors, as God did. When Hebrews 4:11*a* says, "Let us *labour* therefore to enter into that rest," labour means "let us be diligent." But Jesus Christ also said, "All ye that labor and are heavy laden, come unto me, and I will give you rest."

God knows that we're going to labor. He knows it because we are human, because we go through gradual growth processes. And, because we won't fully accept what has been done for us, we will not readily accept all the grace available this moment. So, we labor.

And God says, "Go ahead and labor; you'll come out. When you get exhausted, you'll accept my provision. No matter what I say to you, you're going to go through *so* much laboring—so, go through it. When you get sick and tired of it, when you're exhausted by the external programs you've carried on for years in the energy of the flesh, you will finally say, 'God loves me anyway!'"

This reminds me of a young Christian who was in our church in the early days of our ministry. He was twenty-nine years old, a rugged man, but he was young Christian. Someone in the church put a guilt trip on him because the young man got angry, lost his temper publicly,

and he couldn't control it. Well, he had only been saved for a couple of weeks, but a deacon took him outside and really told him off, telling him how bad his anger was.

The man got into his car and drove to a cemetery. He cried as he thought, "I'm not going to make it!" Here's this 240-pound man saying to himself, "I'll never make it. I'm going to fail. God *can't* accept me." He began to think he would lose his salvation. Immediately, there in the cemetery, the man saw an amazing sculpture of Jesus Christ with His arms wide open. Above it was written, *Come unto me, and I will give you rest*.

This rugged young man, two weeks old in the Lord, said to himself, "Well, they don't love me at the church, but I guess I've got to come to the cemetery to get rest." (Of course, there's a happy ending. Eventually he met a very kind pastor from our church who invested in his life. Today, this man serves God with a meek and gentle spirit.)

I love this little principle: Jesus said, in Mark 6:31, "Come apart and rest awhile."—If you don't, *you'll come apart!*

There was a book that came out years ago called, *Get Rid of Your Phony ID*. Maybe some of you have read it. I often wonder if part of the reason we don't want to get rid of our ego is we think that if our ego dies, there'll be no resurrection for anything. "Why, if I give up my old life and God doesn't perform a resurrection, can you imagine how terrible my life will be?"

"Come unto me and rest," Jesus says, "My yoke is easy, and the burden is light."

In Romans 7, Paul lost confidence in his flesh, and he could finally say, "Have no confidence in the flesh. My sufficiency is Christ" (Philippians 3:3, 2 Corinthians 3:5). He became so exhausted trying to keep the law and trying to make it with his ego. He knew truth but didn't let Christ and the Holy Spirit take over his ego.

Thank God that we don't actually *lose* our egos. If that were true, how could we present our *selves* to God? God's Holy Spirit and the human spirit have to be on top of the ego, controlling it. Then we use the ego to receive, honor, and obey God as we surrender, allowing Him to take over instead of trying to control our own lives.

Romans 1:16-17 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

The Universal Logos

In Romans 1:18, God justifies His right to bring His wrath upon the universe. Watch how He introduces a unique premise in this verse. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men…against whom? Those "who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

Romans 1:19 is a key verse. I have never understood it the way I understand it now: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them." Think of this for a moment. "That which may be known of God is manifest..." where? "…*in them*." Do you understand that? "*That which may be known of God is manifest in them.*" The verse goes on to say, "for God hath shewed

it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen..." (Romans 1:19:*b*-20*a*).

But, compare this with Romans 2:14-15: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law *written in their hearts*, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

The work of the law is written in their hearts. God writes something in a '*universal logos*'—the expression of God's thoughts to man—and He writes this 'universal logos' in men's hearts.

Well then, do we need to preach the gospel? Of course we do! Do we need to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth? Yes, of course we do. Cornelius, in Acts 10:1-33, didn't have the Gospel, but he honored the light that he had, and the Holy Spirit brought Peter to him.

Do you see how this works? God wrote something in Cornelius' heart, and he listened to his heart—from God, *not* from his flesh. He listened to that heart, honored that heart, and became devout and hungry for God. Then God sent Peter to him.

God writes in people's hearts. There is a 'universal logos' as well as the creation logos (Psalm 19:1-6).

I want you to notice a passage in Romans 10, that is seldom preached upon. There are ministries that preach certain things but have left out something that I am going to show you.

"How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

"But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Romans 10:14-18).

"*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" That's very clear, isn't it? Then, read verse 18 carefully, "*Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*"

There is a 'universal logos' God writes in people's hearts, and the wrath of God will come because people didn't honor the initiation of love and grace shown to them even before the Living Word came. They didn't honor the light that they had, even before the Word defined it. God says, "I say unto you that they have heard. And I say unto you, when the Gentiles have the same thing in their hearts without the Law, it bears witness to their consciences." In other words, "that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them."

This is the faithfulness of God, preparing people and showing them somehow, some way, even before the Gospel is preached to them, how much He loves them. He tries to draw them and puts truth in their hearts. And when they honor that still, small voice, then He sends men and women to preach the Gospel and bring the Word to them.

It's a beautiful provision to have a 'universal logos'. God sends it throughout the world, because He created us. Yes, we fell into sin, but God's love wants to buy us back by having us respond to His drawing power of grace.

What a beautiful, precious thing it is to know that God hides in the darkness as well as in the light. Light and darkness are just the same to God. Job said, "he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him" (Job 23:9*b*). Then he said, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined" (Job 23:10-11).

God is not going to let any person live on the glorious mountaintop for very long. He will let us internalize love, internalize life, internalize grace, allowing the deep to call unto the deep. As He does this, He brings us into the opportunity of faith, the opportunity of finding Him when He is hiding. He's right there, hiding.

Then, He tries us. "I couldn't find him," Job said. "I looked to the left, I couldn't behold him. Then he tried me, and I knew that He knew the way I would take. After I was tried, I knew that I would come out as gold. My walk of faith did not decline or fail. I esteemed His words more than my necessary food" (cf. Job 23:12).

Job was saying this: "Many, many times God places me right in the center of darkness and

doesn't seem to answer my prayers—it doesn't seem as if He will come through at all. I can't feel Him. But I have discovered that he knows the way that I take. After He tries me, He will bring me out like gold, because He is hiding *in* the situation."

Do you understand this? God dwells in darkness. Yes, Peter, James, and John were on the beautiful mountain. Jesus was transfigured, glorified right in front of them. Then, He took them right down into the valley, to a child who was a lunatic. In the rawness of human expression, Jesus made this statement: "How long must I put up with you, you perverted generation, you faithless generation?" That wasn't very sweet, was it? That wasn't exactly a whiny voice, trying to be kind, having a superficial smile, and *trying* to act in the realm of "reality."

God wants us to experience the reality of our humanity, the reality of His Word, the reality of failure, the reality of faith, and the reality of love. He wants us to experience the reality of weakness and, yet, the reality of His strength; the reality of darkness and, yet, the reality that He's hiding in it. He will lead us and guide so we can internalize promises, internalize truth, and have deep-rooted communion with Him.

Regardless of what the externals are, throw away the old constructs. Stop trying to keep the Law. Be dead to the first husband. Bury him with the coffin. Let the dust gather. Get on top of everything that represents the Law and the old man, and dance with joy. Dance with God's love. Enjoy the feast and the victory of the Lamb.

The Lost Parts

In us there are many lost parts. Now, it's possible for God to reveal those parts. But you know, none of us can receive it all from God, so do you know where we look to fill in our lost parts? We look to the Body of Christ. Do you know what happens when we look to the Body for our lost parts? We receive from the Body and love the Body of Christ.

If, however, we're living in distress or guilt or fear, our view is filtered by a distorted heart toward God.

Let me tell you of a man in Florida, a pastor of a certain ministry down there, who fell into sin. He came to the church after having a heart attack and confessed and repented for months. The church would not forgive him, and he literally died because he wasn't accepted.

The person who told me about this said, "The church members saw themselves in his sins, so they tried to get rid of what was inside of *them* by condemning *him*." You see, the life of God hadn't been internalized. Forgiveness hadn't been internalized. Mercy hadn't been internalized. An external message with an external construct of the 'old husband' affected those church members.

Often, we hear the voices of our parents and think it's the voice of God today. Certainly, our parents contributed values to us, but we must not mistake the voice in our conscience, from a parent, for the fresh life of God today.

In marriages, a woman must not merely echo her husband, and a husband must not echo his wife. They both must grow, into the individual process of internalizing God and being alive in the Spirit—thinking, making decisions, and growing in faith. That's honoring your spouse. The wife is not to rebel; she's to honor her husband. But she will face God at the Bema Seat alone; therefore, she must individualize her walk with God so that when her husband dies, she can face the wilderness, seeing eye-to-eye with God, knowing the Master and walking by faith.

No one can be cloistered, obstructed, or restricted by anyone or anything. Every individual must get to know God. I can guarantee you, He will pull you out into the wilderness, give you *no* support, and say, "*Now* are you willing to get to know Me?" Your flesh will fight, and you'll rebel and react. Then you'll say, "I can't stand it!"

And God will say, "Stay out here."

You'll say, "I don't like this."

And God will say, "Stay out here."

Then you'll say, "I surrender. I accept Your love and mercy," and the struggling is over.

Then do you know what we find out? His yoke is easy. His burden is light, and we enter into a wonderful communion with a risen, ascended Lord who's really real. It's a communion that's a living reality, one that's practical, one that we can trust. And we can go out in an adventure of obedience without living in resentment, bitterness, or reaction with the sins of the mind.

CONCLUSION

As we continue making the amazing discovery that we can utterly, totally, and completely trust every word of God and have His life, recovering instantly when we fail, let us go on in the amazing witness of the New Covenant by the Holy Spirit. Let's recognize that we are married to Another, completely! *married to Another*. Don't go back into spiritual adultery with condemnation, with the law, or with the flesh. Don't enter into spiritual adultery.

That old husband is dead. The coffin is closed. He's been buried. There's dirt over the grave. Go and dance on the tomb (spiritually speaking) and be free and clean through the Word of God.

Dead and Buried

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INTRODUCTION

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11).

One of the major problems in Christianity is the refusal to accept our historical death and burial with Jesus Christ. Consequently, we are unable to experience the impartation of resurrection life. In my forty-some years of preaching, I have discovered that the average husband and the average wife do not want to hear anything about burial because a person has to die before they get buried! Often, these marriages crystallize into one long battle over things they should have died to years before.

Reckon in Romans 6:11 is an accounting term, meaning that we are to 'calculate' ourselves as being dead to this world. Our reckoning must be based upon absolute truth, historical fact, and present reality. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin"

(Romans 14:23). In order for our lives to be experientially accurate in Christ, we must recognize the historical accuracy of our death and burial with Him. We are to yield our bodies to God, allowing ourselves to become instruments of His righteousness.

Chapter One

BAPTIZED UNTO LIFE

"For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews and Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified

with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:1-6).

The operational meaning of baptism has been widely misunderstood in Christian circles. Many churches teach the right things about baptism. They teach that it represents our death and burial with Jesus Christ. Though there are no particular problems in terms of theological understanding, many pastors and congregations alike still do not experience the practicality of baptism.

At the point of salvation, every Christian receives the 'one baptism'—each one is baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Water baptism, which follows a person's salvation, is a witness to Jesus Christ's historical death, burial, and resurrection. In essence, the believer who receives water baptism is saying, "I am burying everything concerning my old life, or, Adam's nature. Everything Adam *was* and everything he *did* has been condemned and crucified forever.

When a believer comes up from the water, he is saying that *only* that which comes from resurrection can enter into him now. How his parents treated him is no longer an issue. Marital

difficulties don't enter into the picture, because everything about the Christian's old life was dealt with through the death and burial of the Savior two thousand years ago.

Dealing with Adam

God cannot stand to look upon sin because His eyes are holy (Habakkuk 1:13). Because He loves righteousness and hates iniquity, God cannot accept a single thing from Adam. If Adam was guilty of even the smallest offense, then God could have nothing to do with mankind.

Adam's execution has already taken place. Judgment was passed and he was found guilty, condemned to die with Christ at Calvary. Historically, Christ took everything about Adam upon Himself, both individually and corporately. On the cross, Adam was condemned and crucified in Christ's flesh (Romans 8:3). Then he was buried with Christ. The beauty of this is that Adam's death in Christ qualifies us for resurrection.

Nothing about the old creation can ever enter into the new creation. Everything about Adam has been taken out of the way once and for all. All of his weaknesses, symptoms, sins, and iniquities were transferred to the Son.

Resurrection life has been imparted to the spirit, soul, and body of the believer, bringing in the new creation. The old creation has been left behind, with all of the complaining, bickering, bitterness, and mourning of Adam. I'm not talking about mourning over the loss of a loved one; there is a season for that. But resurrection life will not allow me to mourn over growing old or not feeling well. When I am filled with resurrection life, circumstances cannot touch my inner man, nor can negative feelings enter in to trouble me. I will only receive what Christ initiates.

Chapter Two

BURYING THE PAST

"…[Jesus] saith unto them, our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead" (John 11:11-14).

A sick man goes to the hospital, but a dead man goes to the grave. The dead man is taken to the funeral parlor, where his body is embalmed. Then, he is taken to the cemetery and buried. Jesus told the disciples plainly, "Lazarus isn't in the tomb because he is sick or sleeping—he's there because he's dead."

"Give me a possession of a buryingplace …that I may bury my dead out of my sight" (Genesis 23:4*b*).

When we were buried with Christ by baptism into His death, our past in Adam was buried forever. Whatever has been buried is out

of sight, so we can no longer dwell on it.

Dying Comes First

Whatever has gone into the grave should be left there. But, of course, a person has to die before he can be buried.

I am reminded of an affluent woman, quite deranged in her thinking, who wouldn't let her dead husband be buried. She had his body embalmed, kept him in the house, and talked to him every day. He was dead, but she wouldn't bury him. She just went on making believe he was still alive.

Many Christians cannot bury the past because they haven't died to it yet. The majority of counseling sessions are over things people refuse to die to.

Some people try to die by having themselves buried. They live in self-denial. Burial, however, is not a *means* of death, but the *result* of death. You cannot bury someone who's still alive.

That's why many believers try to resuscitate the past. Certain areas in their lives have never been reckoned as dead, so they continue on as weak, ineffective believers, playing their games with heaven.

When a believer enters into the historical

death of Jesus Christ, the past is finally buried. Christ would never bring us into His death without also bringing us into His burial. Burial always follows crucifixion. We don't need to strive to be buried; Jesus did it all.

In John 8:32, Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Few Christians want this kind of life today. It seems too simple. They would rather continue in the way they are going, experiencing only moments of rebound and moments of being filled with the Holy Spirit, but never on a consistent basis. These people are not Bible believers. In some cases, they need more than counseling—they need salvation.

Chapter Three

LIVING IN RESURRECTION POWER

Many Christians do not understand the proper application of positional truth. I must insist that I am historically dead, historically buried, and experientially alive unto God through the resurrection of Christ.

In counseling, I am careful to be patient, loving, kind, and gracious. I give everyone an opportunity to communicate thoroughly. Ultimately, though, it all comes down to this: Has resurrection life quickened you for this very hour?

When a Christian is filled with resurrection power, not a single thing from the old life affects him. His priorities are in Christ. Jesus is exalted: He is everything to the believer and He adds all things unto the one who seeks first God's Kingdom (Matthew 6:33).

Union with Christ

When I put sugar in my coffee this morning, I noticed that the sugar couldn't be seen after it dissolved into the coffee. It blended in so completely that it wasn't visible. The sugar entered into a union with the coffee. They were no longer separate, but one.

In the same way, we are in union with Christ's death and burial. Everything about my life was crucified and buried with Him. Everything my father or my grandfather may have done to me, as well as everything that was passed on to me through genetics, was transferred to Christ at Calvary. All of those things entered into union with His death and burial, out of God's sight forever.

Only the carnal believer ever tries to resuscitate the old life. Only a carnal believer, refusing to accept his co-death and co-burial, will reject greater grace. But when a believer accepts the greater grace that's given to him, resurrection power and love are imparted to the soul. This power and love can now emanate from the Christian's life, reflecting the presence of God's divine character in this wicked world.

An elderly lady was burned in a fire. In an attempt to graft skin from other parts of her body onto the burns, the doctors discovered that the procedure wouldn't work because the woman's skin was too old. However, when they grafted skin from the woman's younger sister, the process worked beautifully.

Branches from weak trees are grafted onto strong trees. A little slip is made for the added branch and it begins to derive life from the healthy tree. In time, the engrafted branch is producing fruit.

Historically, we have been condemned and crucified, in a sense, grafted into his death, burial, and resurrection. Just as Jesus brought us into His death, He also raised us up into the newness of life, where we can now walk as brand-new creations.

God is offering total freedom from Adam. He offers freedom from the negative words you speak about yourself and from the bad things that have been said about you. God can change your personality, alter your moods, and expand your capacity for Him, because all that you *were* was placed upon Christ. All God asks is that you

accept your historical death with Him so you can begin to live in resurrection life.

God can handle any situation if we will allow Him. Resurrection life can be imparted to us. We can have all that is in the New Creation and leave everything else buried with Him.

Chapter Four

LIVING WITH A PURPOSE

"Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him" (Ecclesiastes 7:13-14).

The reality of our death and burial in Christ is a finished work. Based on this, we can reap all the benefits of eternal life, spiritually, while living in an earthen vessel. When you prosper, rejoice! But ponder this: Alongside of prosperity, God places adversity in the life of the Spirit-filled believer. He does this so we can't figure Him out; instead of becoming familiar, we learn to trust Him by faith.

Destroying the Works of the Devil

"All things have I seen in the days of my

vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness" (Ecclesiastes 7:15).

The wicked declare that because they have not been chastised, everything is fine. What they don't realize is that God has given them their portion in this life; but, in terms of eternity, what they *seemed* to have will be gone forever. The world system, or, *cosmos diabolicus*, is ruled by the great deceiver. Lucifer was one of the most beautiful beings created by God, even though he is commonly portrayed as a weird, ugly creature with horns. By his outward attractiveness, he has been able to infiltrate people's lives, stealing innocence and bringing death and destruction (John 10:10).

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8*b*). Without the manifestation of Christ's resurrected life, Satan's works could not be destroyed. Today, if I do not see the manifestation of God's resurrected Son, I am helpless, hopeless, and impotent, unable to destroy the works of the devil against me.

As Christians, frail yet trusting in a God we cannot see, we have two things going for us: the

will of God, with all of its provisions, and the work of God, with all of its "adventures." When we begin to grow, God help us not to live in denial, reaction, or blaming others, but to decrease that Christ may increase (John 3:30).

The Need of Every Heart

"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He also has planted eternity in mens hearts and minds [a divinely implanted sense of a purpose working through the ages which nothing under the sun but God alone can satisfy], yet so that men cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11 Amplified Translation).

God has placed eternity in every heart—a desire to never die, a desire to live forever. By God's design, that desire can never be satisfied except by Him. But because of sin, the devil comes along and brings in the fear of death, the fear of disease, the fear of people, the fear of failure, the fear of being found out. As part of his diabolical set-up, he offers drugs, alcohol, and illicit sex to "get rid" of the fears. In reality, Satan has made slaves out of individuals who are now dependent upon the devil's provision.

The god of this world, trying to be the god

of your need, wants to serve your needs—he wants you to talk about them, magnify them, and remain unfulfilled because of them. As a Christian, you will start expecting people to fulfill your needs, even though the God of heaven is living inside of you. But, God Almighty says, "My grace is sufficient for you," yet, you've never utilized His provision through personal communion and intimacy.

God's Supply

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Apart from Christ, people may go after religious experiences and false works. Even born-again believers may try to get right with God by performing works of righteousness (Titus3:3-7). Yet, when the eternal life of Christ comes into your heart, that life is always sufficient.

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). The work of God brings love, forgiveness, cleansing, hope, healing, kindness, and tenderness. It transforms the mind so that we are understanding, not easily provoked but

easily entreated. The work of God does so much more than merely sustain us; it brings a life that has no limits, happiness that can't be quenched, and joy that flows from eternal fellowship with the Word of God.

The Work of God

Then, what is the work of God? "Then said [the disciples] unto [Jesus], What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:28-29). The work of God is simply believing—truly believing—what He says, what He does, and what He promises. Jesus said, in John 5:17, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He was speaking of winning and discipling souls.

We are His workmanship. We have been created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, and ordained to walk in His steps (Ephesians 2:10). The Greek word for workmanship is *poiema*. It speaks of something that is made in a process, such as fabric. First, we are made anew, passing from death unto life. Then we are in a process—from our position to our experience—until Christ is formed in us.

We *are* the work of God and we are in the work of God. When we manifest the Lord and His provision, it destroys the works of the devil: divorce, negativity, anxiety, lust, anger, materialism, unhappiness, the wrong kind of fear. The manifestation of the resurrected Lord in our lives destroys the process of Satan in Adam's prison house.

Consider the work of God—we must not have anything less than this. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

CONCLUSION

Is it any wonder Paul said, "I have been crucified, buried, and risen with Christ. And because I am risen with Christ, I seek only those things that are above. My life is hid with Christ in God"?

Christ died once, He cannot die again. He was buried once and cannot be buried again. Christ is our life from now on. That's very simple, isn't it? His wisdom, His power, His knowledge, and His provision are at work in me.

The Holy Spirit imparts a resurrection force, which brings God's energy into my life. I bring His energy into my business, my conversations, and my relationships—even to my enemies. As I walk through valleys, His life continues to fill me.

Because we have accepted our death and burial with Jesus Christ, we can truly enjoy His resurrection life.

Dealing Precisely with Demons

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INTRODUCTION

The demon world is an organized, invisible, inaudible, and powerful kingdom of armies. Unless we keep our conscious thoughts and subconscious imaginations within the boundaries of God's Word, we will become victims of demonic attacks upon our minds. The plan against us is to divide and conquer by sowing discord, insecurity, suspicion, paranoia, bad health, and intellectual pride. Though we never see the enemy, we see the physical manifestation of his devastation being worked out all around us.

From the record of Jesus Christ's battle in the Garden of Gethsemane, we know demons can inflict tremendous tension and pain. Great drops of blood came out of Jesus' pores because of the intensity of the attack upon His life. Satan was desperately trying to keep Jesus from going to Calvary where He would pay for the sins of the world with His precious Blood. Knowing His purpose was to reach the Cross, Jesus wrestled

in prayer that night in the Garden and "was heard [by the Father] in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7*b*). Satan could not kill Him prematurely. Jesus went on to lay down His life on the Cross as a ransom for our souls.

Considering the struggle Jesus faced against the demonic world, we cannot afford to underestimate the power of the devil. Called "the prince of this world" in John 14:30, his methods and strategies are more sophisticated today than ever. For this reason, we have written this booklet, which is part two of a series that will be continued in the next issue of Doctrine Weekly. These booklets identify several specific groups of demons and their operational roles in the plan of Satan. Read it prayerfully, because no Christian can afford to be ill-equipped for the warfare in these last days.

Chapter One

RULERS OF DARKNESS

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Satan's armies have supernatural oneness in their attacks. "Rulers of the darkness of this world," they are infectious ones that spread their infection through contact with people who are the objects of Christ's redemption and targets of Satan's fierce hatred for the Redeemer. According to Job 41:16, "One is so near to another, that no air can come between them." Demon armies work together to bring in preoccupation with ourselves and others and circumstances so that we will not even recognize the invisible, inaudible warfare going on around us. This is the job of the general of communication in the atmosphere known as *Hupsoma* and his army.

These demons are directly under Satan who is called "the prince of the power of the air" in Ephesians 2:2.

The head demon officer, *Archon daimonion* (the prince of devils, Matthew 9:34) cooperates with *Andres*, who comes against the will, and with *Eloces*, who afflicts the physical body, to bring swift destruction to the mind and the body and reverse healthy processes so a Christian will give up being an instrument for God. They work together with amazing oneness to cause division and stress, and to bring strangeness into relationships. They attack the pastor, his staff, marriages, families, friendships in the church, and businesses. The whole purpose is to make people feel distant from one another, forced to build walls to protect our fragile dispositions in Adam because of the Fall. The royal law of love is not in it. Demonic wounds are in it—wounds that make us self-conscious of the scars and filled with self-imposed misery.

Infections and Incurable Wounds

Many of us have found ourselves wounded not because of a broken heart of love, but because of infections. We justify our position in a human proposition and neglect a divine proposition. At

the end of many trials and having failed to find a lasting solution, there is no cure for Adam's infections. We must die. That means we need to die to everything about Adam's life—even the "good" things. That news, at first, doesn't seem hopeful. But God has given us His Word, categorical doctrine that produces faith in His finished work.* He has given us His Holy Spirit that reveals His love. We can give grace (for grace we received) instead of retribution, mercy instead of judgments, and we can experience faith-rest instead of internalizing stress.

Andres attacks the volition and breaks down the function of the conscious mind by attacking the unconscious mind, establishing a premise to control future thoughts, confessions, and habits. This army also attacks evangelical pulpits by bringing in demonic doctrines and causing emotional movements that are not of God. Even though a Christian may believe in the Cross, demonic doctrines are organized to attack the nature of God and to make the Cross of none effect. Ultimately, this demon army wants to cause believers to depart from a categorical system of faith (1 Timothy 4:1). Those believers live with a double mind and a divided heart (James 1:8; Hosea 10:2), all the while they confess they are

right because they embrace a system of organized doctrine that is not the mind of God.

As we have mentioned, *Eloces* works to break down the health of the physical body and bring it into subjection to *Andres*. The body becomes passive so it can be controlled by *Andres* through a deep work in the central nervous system.

Another group of demons function as organizers to make sure there is uniformity in the well-ordered attack on individuals. They monitor situations and relationships and bring a report back to *Hupsoma*, the head demon of the air, to make sure the other agents have been effective.

Monitors in this realm observe countenances (Isaiah 3:9). They listen in on our confessions and monitor depression, self-image, and emotional complexes. While this is going on in the invisible battleground around us, do you know what we are doing? We are fighting each other's flesh and registering complaints of everything someone else has done to us through the years.

The work of these specialized demons goes on without detection because we don't know how to discern the spirit world. Discernment can only come through doctrine and the Holy Spirit.

So in the area where we are being attacked,

if we give in, we are not living in divine guidance or divine inspiration. Instead we are receiving stimulation from the spirit world through angels of light, demons of illumination, and intellectual distortions in the three parts of our mind.

God's Plan of Attack for His People

As we will see, the only way to resolve the problem is first to walk by faith and not by sight. That means we must live in what we know about the character of God when our circumstances and even the condition of our relationships seem to be giving us another message.

Then, the faith we walk in must be a faith that serves by love that comes from fellowshipping with God's promises and thinking with His thoughts (Philippians 4:8).

Finally, we live practicing the royal law of love, toward God, ourselves, and each other (James 2:8; Mark 12:28-34; Romans 8:4, 13:8), as believer-priests in heaven's royal family. By letting the whole government of God operate in and through our mortal flesh in what we call theantric action, we take back stolen property from Satan, who is both a liar and a thief.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5).

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds), Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

These verses teach us the importance of having dominion over our thoughts. God has established boundary lines for our thought processes in every area of life. The Word of God defines these boundaries in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are *true,* whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure,* whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *a good report*; if there be any *virtue,* and if there be any *praise, think on these things.*"

To live within these established boundary lines, we need to exercise our faculties and cate-

gorize our thoughts under those headings. It is vital that we control the power and function of the mind as it receives and develops mental images through it's three parts: the unconscious, subconscious, and conscious.** That is why it is so important to stay within the bounds set forth in Philippians 4:8.

How Demons Gain Access to Our Thoughts

Andres and his army begin their attack on the mind through the unconscious. They begin with our genetic weaknesses. "Let not sin [(your genetic weaknesses)] therefore reign in your mortal body" (Romans 6:12*a*). Here, *Andres* works together with *Eloces* to bring about the swift and ongoing destruction of the mind in conjunction with the progressive destruction of the body. Their goal is to destroy the spirit, soul, and body of God's creation so we will not live in the image of God.

Next, *Andres* fights against genuine brokenness in the believer's life. As a ruler over the mind, he works through habits we have established by wrong decisions and brings us into a self-image of bondage.

Demon armies also work through projections—heavy vibrations that are signals sent

through the central nervous system. These signals send suggestions that cause us to fulfill one or more of the six 'lust patterns' of the flesh. By getting us to concede to the force of these suggestions, *Andres* and his army seduce us into a lifestyle that does not conform to our image in Christ.

Lust that is fulfilled on a consistent basis over a period of time in the life of a believer establishes strong lines in his thinking patterns. The sinful habits formed are strongholds that can only be broken through the intake of the Word of God and taking up the Cross. The six most common lust patterns are *material* lust (craving possession of things), *power* lust (desiring to have power or control over others), *pride* (being lifted up with self-importance over others), *approbation* lust (craving to be recognized and appreciated by others), *details of life* (being excessively occupied with details to the exclusion of a personal relationship with God), and *sensual* lust (craving for sexual fulfillment outside of God's boundaries, including mental lust).

Remember, our imaginations determine our self-image. In Genesis 4, Cain was born in the likeness of Adam, according to his image after the Fall. Therefore, Cain's imaginations pro-

moted the fulfillment of his lust and the desires of the natural mind through projections from the world system. And we have all of that history on our records as members of Adam's race. Do you see why we need to strategize?

**Read* The Finished Work of Christ, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

***Be sure to read* Imaginations of the Heart, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998, for a clear explanation of this process.*

Chapter Two

BOUND BY LOVE TO HATE VAIN THOUGHTS

An imagination is a picture derived from an image received in the unconscious mind. Though these images are initially abstract, they bring in certain pulsations, feelings or sensations in the physical realm. Then the image begins to form and take shape in the subconscious mind. Finally, it is fully developed in the conscious mind where it receives the full cooperation of our faculties. By not understanding how to think, men have fallen into all kinds of evil imaginations in the unconscious mind. For example, *while* he is having sex with his wife, sexual fantasies may be produced in a man's unconscious mind in what amounts to mental adultery.

Adultery is a criminal act, according to the Bible. Far worse than the theft of material possessions, if a man raped your wife or committed adultery with her, that would be an extremely

serious offense because your wife is bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh! Likewise, mental adultery is a very serious crime in the eyes of God who knows our thoughts afar off (see Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:27-28).*

"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:15-18).

According to this passage, many sins are committed outside the body. But fornication and adultery are sins *inside* the body. Proverbs 6:32 says, "Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul."**

Hearts that Devise Evil Imaginations

Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye

are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." According to the Greek text, your body totally belongs to Him.

God hates a heart that devises evil imaginations (Proverbs 6:18). Jeremiah 23:17 speaks of those who walk after the imaginations of their own heart. Zechariah 7:10 and 8:17 warn us not to imagine evil in our heart against our brother or our neighbor. And in Nahum 1:9-11, "What do ye imagine against the Lord?...There is one come out of thee that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor."

"When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21). That their imaginations became "vain" implies that they were not thinking with God. Vain doesn't mean "empty," as is commonly taught, but to be filled with thoughts afar off, which have their source in *Andres*, a wicked counselor to the human mind.

So, when a man or a woman enters into sexual fantasies, they are having communion with *Andres* and giving place to *Eloces* to come in and destroy the capacity of the body and mind for future compatibility with their spouse. Once these demons are given a place, they will work

to destroy the emotional and physical response patterns of both the man and the woman.

"Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:24). Husbands and wives need to deal honestly before God with any ungodly imaginations. They should be accountable to each other. God is everywhere. Do they think they can get away with it in secret?

In Genesis 6:5, God saw that there was wickedness on the earth, and that the imaginations of man's heart were continually evil. By establishing strongholds that began in Adam, *Andres* has been able to control thoughts, confessions, behavior, friendships and marriages—from the past to the future—through genetic inheritance. His demon army brings people so close to him that no air can come between to stop the pattern (see Job 41:16).

Is it any wonder that we are living in an age that is so heavily influenced by erotic sexual behavior? When *eros* love, which was intended to be normal, is removed from God's unconditional *agape* love, then sex becomes nothing more than an act of lust.

The sexual union between a husband and a

wife is meant to be like the spiritual union and communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is to be a union of one heart, one soul, and one mind. God intended for two people to be one flesh, *only* inside the boundary lines of marriage. But sexual fantasies bring mental whoredom into the imaginations, and produce perverted thoughts.

There is so much power behind the mental images in the unconscious mind produced by supernatural powers! As we have seen, these images begin to take shape in the subconscious mind, and then are experienced in the conscious mind. *Eloces* extends the experience through the libido into the body by producing libido 'waves'. Therefore, infected people justify the fulfillment of their fantasies.

Limit the Manipulator: Glorify God

There are people who worry, fear, and react because of undefined imaginations in the staging area of the unconscious mind. Yet, 1 Corinthians 13:5 tells the believer that love thinks no evil. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (verse 7). And in verse 8, love never fails. That means it never fails your *mind*! Stop allowing your mind

to be a place for vain imaginations and filled with thoughts from the demon armies.

We must never blame problems in our thought life on circumstances. We have wrong thoughts because we lack communion with the living Christ. The problem is that we are not walking in love (Ephesians 5:2), therefore our unconscious mind is not established within the limits of what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of a good report, with virtue and praise. In other words, we have stepped outside God's boundary lines for thinking.

"Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established" (Proverbs 16:3). Here it is! The original Hebrew says, "Commit your *purposes* (or the motivation for your purposes) unto God." If your purpose is to glorify Christ, then the Word of God says your thoughts will be established.

In Psalm 119:113, the psalmist said, "I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love." Again, "vain" does not mean empty; it means any thought that doesn't have its origin in the mind of Christ, the Word of God.

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But

every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:13). A man is drawn away through decisions he has made to keep a secret area of weakness alive.

James 1:15 says that when the lust has conceived, it brings forth personal sin, and sin brings forth death—separation from God. Separation from God causes worry; it causes the marriage bed to become defiled; and it causes us to imagine evil things against the God of heaven, the God who lives in our hearts. In addition, a lack of brokenness produces familiarity that results in bona fide guilt and, ultimately, withdrawal. This process only serves to strengthen the power of *Andres* over a person's life. But God has a glorious provision to give every believer victory over the attacks of Satan's specialized forces.

**Read* Committed to Purity *and* Standing Firm in Godly Convictions, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

***For a more detailed explanation of the body-soul connection through chemical production in the cells, read* The War Against the Mind, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

OUR WEAPONS OF WARFARE

"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether….If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139:1-4, 8-10).

The Word of God says that as a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7). When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, who sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts, then we no longer think evil in our unconscious mind, because it is being guarded and protected by the

ability of God's divine power through the manifestation of the Holy Spirit's victory over Satan and the flesh. This is God's remedy to bring in brokenness for the believer's life.

Unconscious thoughts cause us to have feelings without definition. The subconscious mind gives us feelings with only a rough outline of definition. But the conscious mind brings in experience with our feelings. Knowing how our complex mind works, God wants to handle our thoughts before the images ever enter into the unconscious mind.

Andres' attacks on the mind can be so subtle. It may be that he simply projects one or two negative images in the unconscious after the image of Adam (Genesis 5:3). He can manipulate an unsaved mind with beautiful images that promote genius in the natural realm so that people may create great works of art in areas such as poetry, painting, sculpture, and music. Those people become stimulated by the praise they receive, but more often are driven by the "urge to create" and are blind to their need to be saved by their Creator. *Andres'* job is complete when he robs a mind of the need to be saved by Christ.

Eloces' attack on the bodies of saved individuals is so they will cease to function as God's in-

struments in missions and in life. (When I say "missions," I am speaking of the call of anyone who witnesses for Christ with a divine system and a purpose to make disciples of converts, following them up and investing with love—whether at home or abroad.)

Can you understand why this message is crucial for the hour in which we live? Few understand it, yet it has the power to change the lives of Christians, revolutionize our faith, and deliver people who worry, fear, or live in comparison because of a poor self-image.

Keep Stock of Your Artillery

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal)" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4*a*). We do not use natural weapons to match a supernatural enemy. The weapons of our warfare are these: redeeming the time, having holy compatibility in marriage, operating with integrity in friendships, and taking our place as members in particular in God's representative family on earth.

Carnal weapons (such as the lust patterns previously described) are derived from Satan's world system for the purpose of stimulating the

flesh and the soul. But God's weapons are spiritual, derived through inspiration from the mind of God to give us the protection of a perpetual provision of grace in our thoughts. Then, when Satan tries to project imaginations and high things from the air, we are able to cast them down because they exalt themselves against God's thought process—which has become *ours*. We bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Then by faith, our obedience is fulfilled; we have been occupied with obedience that revenges all disobedience. Instead of warring against the flesh, we are walking in the Spirit and do not fulfill the lust of our flesh (Galatians 5:16).

Men, be careful around women. Never be with a woman alone, unless she is your wife. Even in your thought life. Be careful that in your bedroom you don't think of other women. Never do it! Cast down the imagination that exalts itself. By fulfilling your obedience, you are revenging all disobedience in these areas. And God says, "I've got some beautiful thoughts prepared for you afar off. Choose *My* way instead of making a provision for lust to conceive and bring forth personal sin."

David acknowledged his transgressions. He

said, "…my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). We are never to be preoccupied with our sinful nature or the sins of our past. But we must be quick to acknowledge, confess, isolate, turn, and be turned. When we do not follow God's provision for repentance and personal sin is allowed to continue, it becomes an infection. That is when sexual sins go beyond fornication and adultery, and people begin to flirt with pornography. There are repeated case studies of convicted child molesters and rapists who admit to increasing exposure to x-rated films and publications (and now the internet) as a major stimulus to their perversion. Behind their wicked behavior are *Andres* and *Eloces*, who are closer than the air as they engage in their work to destroy God's redemptive creation of man.

Imaginations from Heaven: Conceived in Love

When we begin to fellowship with the promises of God, faith is conceived in the unconscious mind. Love is the power of that conception as faith begins to develop. We can't identify what's happening, but as the Spirit of God brings in the promises through our unconscious mind, little by little those promises begin to form and take shape in the subconscious

mind. Finally, in the conscious mind, whole categories of doctrine are *formed* in us! Now, not only do we have God's thoughts, but we are *thinking* with God.

As this process takes place, God may bring in a desire to go on the foreign mission field. This desire may have been far away from our thinking a few years ago, but now the Holy Spirit plants the thought in the unconscious mind. At first you're not even aware of a desire, but it begins to take on form in your subconscious mind, and it produces a great feeling. Then through the objectivity and divine guidance of God's Word and the Holy Spirit, the vision becomes crystal clear, and you become conscious of what God wants you to do.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way" (Psalm 37:23). Iniquity no longer has dominion, and my steps are guided by the Word of God (Psalm 119:133).

The beauty of all this is that for the first time—in certain areas that have always been dominated by darkness—we begin to have sanctified imaginations through the Word of God, derived from the image of the "new man, which is renewed in knowledge *after the image of him*

that created [us]" (Colossians 3:10). We are renewed after the image of God, and God's image brings in imaginations from heaven.

Keep Your Heart with All Diligence

Proverbs 4:23 tells us to guard our hearts, because out of the heart come the issues of life. Wives, do not be accessories to your husbands' ungodly acts. Husbands, do not be accessories to your wives' ungodly thoughts. Worry, fear, and even a poor self-image are transgressions against the blood of Christ. We are brand-new creatures forever. Old things have passed away and all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the LORD will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life" (Psalm 42:7-8).

As we exercise our minds through the Holy Spirit and through the Father's eternal plan and purpose, the deep calls unto the deep. It is the depth of God that controls the depth of the unknown, undefined, unconscious mind.

Because we are God's children, let's put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). Let the thoughts that are afar off come from God. A godly imagination produces a worldwide vision. We participate in the vision through prayer, discipling people, giving, and going. Some will be called to distant fields, and others will obey the call to stay as missionaries who establish a strong home base so others can go.

Whatsoever things are just, honest, pure, lovely, or of good report; if there be any virtue or praise, think on these things (Philippians 4:8). "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse…" (Song of Solomon 5:1). Imagine going to a restaurant where the waitress served you a plate of spoiled food, a drink with a terrible odor, and some moldy bread. Would you eat it? Certainly not! Then how can you expect God to eat in His garden when all you give Him is spoiled food from *Andres* and his demons?

Greater is He that is in us than the forces that are in the world, such as *Andres* and *Eloces*, that try to conquer our redemptive rights and attack our sanctified mind, our sanctified confessions,

and our sanctified habits.

The chamber of our imagery (Ezekiel 8:12) can be filled with the spices of God's indwelling thoughts. It can be the habitation for divine imaginations that come from a divine image renewed in knowledge after the image of God, fulfilling His desire for us to be like Him. "As he is [in heaven], so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17*b*).

CONCLUSION

Many Christians avoid talking about this kind of message, because deep inside, they know that no one (including them) is exempt from the influence of demonic imaginations. But God has given us a glorious provision. We don't have to be condemned. God wants conviction to lead to conversion, and conversion to lead to communion, and communion to lead to godly communication, which leads to revealing Christ to others. It's all just a matter of choosing truth (Psalm 119:30).

"By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil" (Proverbs 16:6*b*). We depart from the infections of evil by fearing God. To "fear" God means to esteem His presence highly. This brings healing and produces genuine brokenness.

God's Word is pure (Proverbs 30:5). When He tells us to do something, His attributes are behind what He says. Because of His omniscience and omnipresence, His provision of

grace and love is there to sustain us. And because of His omnipotence, His power allows us to internalize the substance of His Word.

"Lord, except You give us understanding, we will not know Your ways, and we will not have Your thoughts. But thank You that in our poverty, we can come boldly to Your throne, casting down the high things one by one. Fill us as we meditate on your awesome Word that reveals Your thoughts toward us. You are our Song. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Dealing with a Lying Tongue

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Many men and women of God speak the truth in love, exalting the character of Jesus Christ. They do not criticize other Christians who are doing the work of God. For example, Jesus Christ commanded us to go into all the world, to preach the Gospel, and to make disciples of men. If other believers would find fault with that kind of obedience by calling it a "works program," it is because they do not go themselves. Such ministers are in error. As far as God is concerned, they are liars.

Lying takes on many forms, but all of it comes from hell where Satan, "the father of lies," reigns. Distortions and fabrications cause division and heartache in the Church of Jesus Christ, corrupting our testimony to the world.

In this booklet, we will explain different types of lying and show how to help those who are caught up in it to overcome pathological patterns of deceit.

Chapter One

DEFINING LIES

No one can lie against the truth (2 Corinthians 13:8). There are lies of expedience that are told as a means to an end, usually by a person who wants to protect or defend himself.

There are lies that are very convenient and lies that are half-truths. In other words, you tell half the truth but leave the rest out. You are a liar if you do this. Others plan lies to protect themselves and their reputations. These lies are organized and well thought out.

To this, I can only quote Numbers 32:23*b*: "Be sure your sin will find you out." Don't misunderstand me. A person can lie and rebound. Lying can be forgiven just as any other sin.

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second

death" (Revelation 21:8).

This is the Word of God, not the words of a man, declaring that those who lie consistently are bound for the lake of fire.

Religious Lies

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

"And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy [Spirit], and to keep back part of the price of the land?

"Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

"And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

"And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

"And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

"And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

"Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

"Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

"And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:1-11).

This passage relates the story of Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Spirit about their offering, and they were killed instantly. They died after committing the sin unto physical death for a period of time. God had to make a point with the Church, which was just beginning.

Lies Found Out

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25).

Lying is always found out—guaranteed.

Usually, it doesn't even have to involve investigations or inquiries. Somehow the lie is exposed, often by someone who didn't even suspect that a lie had been told. This is such a serious matter, and yet God has a provision for us.

Chapter Two

LIVING IN THE POWER OF GOD

Look at an electric lamp. If it is on, there is obviously electric power going through the light bulb or it wouldn't give off light. Because power is going through the lamp, we have light. Some bulbs are burnt out; they have no light. Those who make provisions for sin are Christians who give forth no light (that is assuming they have really received Jesus Christ as their Savior). A believer is known by his fruits.

A Christian is a communicator of *dunamis*—God's power. Just as when the power effortlessly flows through wires as a current to an electric lamp and the light works, when the Holy Spirit flows through us, we are lights to the world.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost

part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

This isn't just referring to power for witnessing. It speaks of our whole life being a witness of power. Ours is a life of God's power flowing through it. This is what we need to be vessels of honor.

If there is no *dunamis* going through me, I am a liar. I cannot live with integrity and honesty apart from the Holy Spirit's power.

Honestly Dealing with Issues

Jesus was addressing a certain group of religious hypocrites when He said, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44).

One of the great problems people have is when they lie against everything that they have been taught by not being honest in dealing with issues. If you have been lying, deal with the issue right now. No matter what it costs you, deal with your lying and be through with it.

Having been a salesman and having been around salesmen, I know how some lie in order

to bring a deal to a close. Actually, that is extortion. Many times their lies are not outright, but they are just not providing the complete truth. They may make lots of money by lying to their customers, but in the end they lose integrity and will probably suffer from the principle of reaping what they have sown.

Have you ever lied because you did not want to face the consequences of your wrong actions? If you have an honest weakness, a man of God can receive the truth from you about the sin, pray, and offer a covering. But you must be honest and deal in truth. It is the only way to handle such issues.

Truth Continually Prevails

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4).

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Just before He was crucified, Jesus prayed to the Father for His disciples: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The picture painted here is that truth always prevails, even if there are consequences to being honest and truthful. This is all very simple, and

yet very deep.

We have discussed lies of expediency, used as a means to an end for self-defense. Lies of convenience allow a person to avoid paying certain consequences at that moment. There are half-truths (or "the sins of omission"), which neglect expressing the whole truth. Many people think telling a half-truth is fine, and they are quick to justify it. Premeditated lies can cause a person to become a pathological liar.

Another kind of lie is when one person provides a false covering for someone else who is doing something wrong. That person insists that he cannot reveal what the other party is doing. Yet if the situation is handled properly, according to the Scriptures, he will avoid living in the guilty person's lie. Please understand that no one is helped by a false covering. The one who is trying to provide the covering is living a silent lie, because a little leaven leavens the whole lump. It is wrong to go to others and tell them about the situation. What is the solution?

Here is how to handle it: We are to go to the person alone first (Matthew 18:15) and in an attitude of meekness (Galatians 6:1). If the party reacts, then go again with a pastor. It is not to be shouted from the rooftops. If you don't go alone,

then you are practicing a lie against God's table of organization. Even if you just repeat the matter of the sin to your spouse, you are living a lie because you are not honoring God's way of dealing with these issues. But always go with the attitude of reconciliation, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1*b*).

Chapter Three

THE GLORY OF GENTLENESS AND MEEKNESS

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient;

"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

Have you ever entered into striving? A person who is striving is not relaxed. Instead, he is tense and on edge, and other people can see it. They communicate a spirit of striving. Martha, Mary's sister, communicated a spirit of striving in her "much serving" (Luke 10:40). Peter, the disciple, communicated that attitude when he vowed that he would never deny the Lord (see Matthew 26:34-35). Both of them were living in a lie against the revelation of God.

Striving is a lie against the Finished Work.

Christ has done it all, so there is nothing for us to attain to in our efforts. Whether it is in selling, raising children, or ministering, a great enemy against success and against spiritual blessings is striving. To strive is to approach people or circumstances with insecurity and stress. It involves internalizing negative possibilities in any situation.

Whenever I deal with a problem such as somebody lying, one of the things I have to be very careful about is that, as a leader, I never strive when I am dealing with people. If someone has a disagreement, I must make sure that I express a meaningful, gracious, and poised attitude—even if what he says is not true. I must let him say what he has to say, whether it is true or not. If it isn't true, I am still in good shape. I don't even need to defend myself. I simply say a few words, become quiet, and bless the person by letting him talk.

Also, I must deal with the problem privately, leaving room to be able to teach through the situation. In other words, I should not deal harshly, but gently and graciously (Nehemiah 9:20). When he leaves the office, we have taught him something. He will respond when he sees that we are gentle, honest, and meek. And because

our spirit isn't striving in a lie, we have already learned something, and we are able to display a tremendous attitude when dealing with the problem.

Instruction with Correction

Discipline includes teaching with instructions for correction. It is a marvelous thing when we can help a rebellious person turn failure or problems into lessons he can live by for the rest of his life. Our instruction can contribute something that will help to bring him out of the state he is in. We must, however, do it in meekness.

"Meekness" means to be God-conscious, having God's provision and God's Spirit. In meekness, we instruct those who oppose themselves (2 Timothy 2:25).

Let's be honest. If I were to do something wrong in my life, who would I be opposing? Myself. If I live in ignorance, rebellion, or sin, I am opposing myself.

God is inside of every born-again believer. When we pray, we should say, "My Father who is living in me,…" This makes it very personal. Jesus taught the disciples to say, "Our Father which art in heaven…" in Matthew 6:9, because the Holy Spirit had not yet been sent to them.

Now, the Spirit is in us, the Father is in us, the Son is in us. Sin is simply me opposing myself.

Our desire for those who oppose themselves is to get them to stop hurting themselves in self-destructive patterns. In meekness, we instruct. The word is "instruct"—not "condemn." There is a big difference.

If we instruct properly, our attitude is gentle, and our spirit is filled with meekness. Then there is a great possibility that they will receive from God a gift of repentance, so they can be changed and stop opposing themselves.

Liberating the Ensnared

"…That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:26).

A snare is a trap. Most of have us have laid traps for mice or other pests. Satan lays traps designed to get Christians caught up in self-destructive patterns. He takes people captive at his will whenever he wants. Those who are living a lie can be taken captive in their experience for a couple of days and reveal a bad countenance and discouragement.

This is why it is so important to learn how to live in spiritual autonomy. Pride, arrogance, or

withdrawing from fellowship with spiritual Christians will not become our a problem when we are living in the truth of our convictions. To operate in spiritual autonomy is to function with God in truth in all situations.

Thank God for His provision to break down the devil's strongholds. Instead of the old lying tongue of Adam, we have been given a silver tongue of redemption, to speak truth into the face of every lie we encounter.

CONCLUSION

The apostle Paul wrote, in 2 Timothy 3:13, that in the last days, evil men would wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. Recognizing and resisting these deceivers and their deceptions requires spiritual autonomy that comes from knowing the Truth. Having this kind of autonomy means having freedom from the influence of the world system, able to think with God in every situation.

The spiritually autonomous believer is always part of the solution, not part of the problem. He is a faithful steward and caretaker of God's ministry. When he opens his mouth, it is to edify even when correction is involved. He draws near and is faithful to the assembly as he learns how to be a member in particular. He is a good steward of grace who presents his body as a living sacrifice daily. His mind is renewed daily through receiving the Word of God, and as best as he can, he obeys (Psalm 18:44). He works

hard, pays his tithes, stays current with his bills, and doesn't meddle in the business of others. He does not live in a lie nor in a lying spirit, but by the truth of every word of God.

Heavenly Father, we pray that each of us would learn to live by every word in the Bible, believing every single word of God and rebounding when we fail. We thank You that obedience to Your Word is the greatest single experiential achievement a Christian can enjoy by grace through faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Dealing with

Stressful Times

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INTRODUCTION

Psalm 119 has always been one of the most loved psalms in the Bible because of its supreme emphasis upon the Word of God. In one way or another, almost each of the 176 verses in Psalm 119 makes reference to the Word. Perhaps the central verse would be verse 89: "Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."

We live in an age of stress. In 2 Timothy 3:1, Paul describes "perilous times" in the last days: "But understand this, that in the last days will come (set in) perilous times of *great stress* and trouble [hard to deal with and hard to bear]" (Amplified Translation). Why are the last days characterized by "great stress"? I believe it is because many Christians—though they may have good knowledge of the Bible—do not have sufficient *inner resources* in the Word of God. Instead of internalizing daily pressures, we must learn to internalize God's Word through meekness and humility. Then we will have an inner,

spiritual bulwark of truth, ready to face whatever comes our way from the world around us.

Few believers in this day and age have been delivered unto death because of their faith. Unless we "study its mysteries and slight not its histories…," it is possible to read the Bible without identifying with the suffering of the children of God throughout time.

As individuals, families, and churches face the inevitable troubles and temptations that will come, it is important that we face them with inward strength, inward joy, and inward recall of the Word of God. We are not only to remember words of truth but also to live in the power and authority of that truth.

In this booklet, we will discover the unique story behind the writing of Psalm 119 and gain insight into how the believers at that time in history dealt with the unparalleled pressures and stresses that they faced.

Chapter One

THE STORY BEHIND THE PSALM

Though most people assume that David was the author of Psalm 119, ancient isagogics reveals a very different story. This psalm was probably written by Ezra's father, Seraiah, and later completed by Ezra during the march of the nation of Israel into Babylonian captivity.

Every nation, whether professing to know God or not, is still subject to the laws of God (Ezra 6:22, Jeremiah 4:9). As great nations rise and fall, throughout history we can trace a pattern to understand *why* they fall. There is a definite progression, which we refer to as the five cycles of judgment or cycles of discipline.

In the first cycle, the spirit of Laodicea creeps in (Revelation 3:14-17). People settle on their lees, and evil trends go unchecked as people who once had convictions lose their edge. Secondly, the trends of socialism, liberalism, and immorality are endorsed by the society at large.

Thirdly, because the foundations have been weakened, that nation suffers violence and crime, including perverted sexual behavior. The fourth cycle of discipline is economic disaster. Finally, in the fifth cycle, comes military insurrection.

Israel was under the fifth, and *last*, cycle of discipline as a nation. Under this cycle, individuals lose personal freedom, as well as national freedom, and may be taken captive by a foreign nation, as was the case for the nation of Israel.

The Setting for the March

It is vital that we understand the conditions that the Jewish people endured during their march to Babylon. The march was in two parts: from Jerusalem to Lachish, then from Lachish on to Babylon. In the daytime, the captives were chained together as they marched. All babies and children under ten years of age were killed because they were unable to march. Most of the older people and the infirm died on the way, unable to tolerate the hardship.

To add to the difficulty of the march, the people were given no change of clothing, no provision to wash, and what food they were given was indescribably bad—including rotten

raw pork. The Chaldean soldiers would mock their prisoners, eating their fare in full view of the Jewish people.

Every night when they set up camp, the soldiers would get drunk. They would beat their male prisoners and force them to watch as their wives were brutally raped and molested in front of them. These perverted soldiers also raped and molested the teenage girls and boys. Can you imagine the horror of knowing that every day you would have to march for twelve or thirteen hours with practically no food, and then to face being beaten or raped every night?

A Teenager Named Ezra

Among the multitudes of Jewish people on the march to Babylon was a teenager named Ezra. Ezra was about fifteen years old at the time of the captivity. Here was a young man who fell in love with the Word of God. He had already received extensive teaching in the Scriptures for at least six years. Because Ezra had internalized what he had been taught, he was able to face this crucial time with inner resources—he had the mind of Christ! External pressures and trials were unable to destroy him.

Though Ezra's father probably wrote most

of Psalm 119 during the march, he was later killed in Babylon. Careful study reveals that Ezra probably took his father's writings, put them into files, and finished the writing himself. Ezra 7:6 says he was a "ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given" when he went up from Babylon.

Every day as the people of Israel marched, Ezra's father would teach them the Word of God. Remember, the people were chained to each other, and the soldiers, following close behind, didn't prevent the people from saying whatever they wanted. Because of the raping, molesting, and beatings that went on at night in the enemy's camp, Ezra's father would wait until late at night and early in the morning to meditate on the Word that was hidden in his heart. During the day, he would teach all that he had learned from God in the dark and quiet times.

It was this daily teaching of the Word of God that preserved a remnant of the people on the march to Babylon as well as during the long years of captivity. Eventually, God reversed the captivity of Israel, and the remnant was allowed to return to their land. Nehemiah led the first group back to Jerusalem and successfully rebuilt

the wall around the city. Later, Ezra led a second group back to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple.

The Files

Psalm 119 was written in twenty-two "files," each containing eight verses. There was one file for each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Every file had a specific theme. In the remainder of this booklet, we will consider the *zayin* file (verses 49-56 of Psalm 119). The King James spells it *zain*, but the correct rendering is *zayin*. This file deals with the power of the Word of God. Originally, *zayin* meant "weapon," and later came to mean "sword." Here in Psalm 119, it speaks of the Word of God as an offensive sword. The Word of God must be inside the soul of every believer as an offensive weapon against an invisible enemy.

Chapter Two

REMEMBER THE WORD

"Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope" (Psalm 119:49). The first word I want to consider is "remember." In Hebrew grammar, this word is a *kal imperative*. The kal stem speaks of a simple action, and the imperative is a command. This could be translated, "It is imperative that I be able to recall your Word." To the Holy Spirit, this would be a simple thing.

Then the psalmist uses the word "hope." Here, the grammar indicates the *hiphil* stem and the imperfect tense. That's why he says, "thou hast *caused* me to hope." The hiphil is the causative stem. It is only God's Word which causes us to have hope. The imperfect tense indicates that this hope would continue.

Try to imagine with me what Ezra's father was saying. He has seen terrible things happening all around him—the men being beaten, the

women and the young people being raped and molested. He has seen his own son suffering in the midst of these devastating trials, and he realizes that the only way they will ever get through it is to have inner resources—divine, inner resources from the Word of God.

Satan can attack your body, but he can't affect your soul unless you *let* him. People can kill your body, but they can never take away your inner resources. When circumstances overwhelm us, just as with Ezra and the people of Israel, we too can use the Word of God as an offensive weapon to protect our souls.

Quickened by the Word

"This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me" (Psalm 119:50). "This" refers to the Word of God. The word "affliction" is not the best translation in the English. It really speaks of unbelievable supernatural pressures. Please remember their predicament: They had no change of clothes, no way to wash, very little (and barely palatable) food—all compounded by nightly rape, battery, and molestations. That would equal supernatural pressure for anyone! And yet, the writer finds something to comfort him—the incomparable Word of God.

Then comes the great confession: "For thy word hath quickened me." The Hebrew word for "quickened" is *chayah*. Though it can be translated as "Thy Word has *caused me to live*," here the meaning is more closely rendered, "Thy word has *refreshed* me." Ezra's father was a man who fell in love with the Word of God. The Word ruled his soul and controlled him. The external pressures were unable to affect his spirit.

Sometimes when I see people crying over their circumstances, and then I read this psalm, I realize that we don't know a thing about *real* problems. We've never had troubles to this degree. Think of it. Your wife and daughter are dying, weakened from the abuse; you are tortured daily, eventually to be killed by your captors; your son is raped and there is nothing you can do. These are real problems! But the writer of this psalm was so rooted and grounded in the Word that he was able to say, "This is my comfort in my affliction: for [the Word of God] hath quickened me."

"The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law" (Psalm 119:51). "The proud" were the Chaldean soldiers who were doing all these horrible things to God's people. But the writer says that he did not

decline from the *law*, speaking of God's categorical doctrine. It would have been so easy for him to fall into decline under all the adverse circumstances, but his confession was, "This is my comfort. I have not declined from Your Word under severe stress and outward disaster and tragedy."

Comforted by Remembering

"I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself" (Psalm 119:52). "Judgments" refers to the Scriptures. The revelation and explanation of the Scriptures will make a judgment. For example, the Scriptures tell me how to be blessed. They give me a judgment for blessing, a judgment for favor, and a judgment for promotion. Often in the Old Testament, the Scriptures were called judgments (plural) because they produced decisions for the people who chose to receive them.

We could translate verse 52, "I remember thy *Scriptures* of old, O Lord…." But the most beautiful part of this verse is "…and have comforted myself." This will make you weep when you understand the story behind it. "I have comforted" is in a *hithpael* stem in the Hebrew text. The hithpael is reflexive. Ezra's father is saying, "I don't

have a single person that can help me—not one. So what am I going to do? I'm going to comfort myself, in my soul, with the Scriptures I have on the inside. My body is going through hell, but my soul is focused on the Word of God through the endowment of the Holy Spirit." In spite of his circumstances, he was able to receive the comforting provision of the Word of God.

A Plan to Surpass the Problem

There will never be a situation under heaven where a trial or a little detail of life will be greater than God's perfect plan for you. God's perfect plan for us may include all kinds of things happening—both good and bad. But when our hearts are fixed (Psalm 57:7), and we speak to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making a melody in our hearts unto the Lord (Ephesians 5:19), then we can celebrate a fellowship with God *Himself* inside our souls, even when bad things do happen.

The truth is, we are not always going to have people around us as support systems. At one time or another, every one of us will come to a place where we will not be able to have friends or family with us. The things that happened to the nation of Israel in the fifth cycle of discipline

could happen to us in our lifetime. I'm not saying that it will. It is not a threat against America or any other country. I'm just saying that the possibility is there.

In the midst of outward calamities, the psalmist was enjoying an inner celebration. God had placed a wall around his soul, but not around his body. Doctrine builds up spiritual walls to protect the soul. Certainly, Ezra's father understood truth like few people ever do.

"Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law" (Psalm 119:53). The sense of the word "horror" could be better expressed by saying, "Suddenly, all at once, something shocking, something completely unexpected happened to me; I never thought it would happen." That is the way accidents are. That's the way cancer is. Or death. You're sitting next to someone at the table. He's fine. He doesn't have any pain, and the next thing you know, he has a heart attack and God takes him home. It's so sudden.

Chapter Three

INNER RESOURCES AND OUTWARD REFLECTION

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). This verse teaches us the principle of inner strength. It is the reason we must have the Word of God dwelling richly in our souls. It's an absolute must! Only then can we go from strength to strength, leaving a dry, barren desert place as a well of water (Psalm 84:6-7). That's exactly what Ezra's dad did, and that's what Ezra did later on. After going through this devastating trial, they left the treasure of Psalm 119 for us today.

It's disturbing to me that, with all of the material provisions we have in America, we can still find something to complain about. Even those with lower incomes have access to receiv-

ing aid in this country, though the provision may be very humble. Yet, we find reasons to complain. Contrast that with the nearly inhuman conditions experienced by the writer of Psalm 119. Nevertheless, the Word was dwelling richly in those who received it. They magnified God's inner provision over the outward adversities.

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage" (Psalm 119:54). After doing some research on the word "statutes," I learned that it speaks of the Scriptures correlated into orderly themes. In other words, Scriptures were arranged in an orderly fashion, compacted and condensed into very specific and precise themes or subjects. Today, we would call them "categories." These scriptural themes became the psalmist's songs in the house of his pilgrimage. He didn't have an earthly house, not even a bed to sleep in, but he had heaven as his home, his only dwelling place, his only covering.

Songs for the Night Seasons

"The words of God, dwelling in my soul in categories, have given me songs," said the psalmist. The New Testament commentary on Psalm 119:54 is Ephesians 5:19: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual

songs, singing and making melody in you heart to the Lord." The unusual thing about Ezra's father was that not a single thing caused him to react.

"I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law" (Psalm 119:55). The psalmist was thinking about the *name* of God. Perhaps he was thinking about Exodus 33:19, or Exodus 34:5-6: "And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with [Moses] there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

To think upon kindness, mercy, and forgiveness at a time like this was incredible! He could have been thinking about how the soldiers would come and rape the women and the young people that night. He could have been thinking about how much his stomach ached from hunger. But he didn't. He thought about lovingkindness, mercy, and grace when there was no outward expression of these attributes from anyone—it was all a treasure that he possessed on the inside.

It is very significant that the writer said he

remembered the Lord's name "in the night" because the soldiers inflicted all of these atrocities on the people at night. He was saying, "When I see them coming to abuse us and rape us again, my soul just thinks of you, Lord. Whatever happens will happen. I cannot change it. In my soul, I will think of you and celebrate inside with what you have said in your Word, with your promises!"—all that he learned from the teaching of the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:15-17).

Statutes, Precepts, and Testimonies

Verse 55 ends with the words "[I] have kept thy law (*torah*)." One of the many meanings of the Hebrew *torah* is *doctrine*—how to think with God precisely.

Remember, God's "judgments" refer to the revelation of the Scriptures, guiding us to make proper decisions. "Law," in simple terms, means the whole Word of God as it was kept at that particular period in history, the totality of all the inspired books written. "Statutes" means scriptures correlated into orderly, precise themes.

The *zayin* file concludes with verse 56 as a declaration of God's faithful provision: "This I had, because I kept thy precepts." Now, we add one more word: "precepts," which means the

authority of God ruling in our souls through His Word. In precepts, the Word of God becomes the inner authority of the soul through grace. As a result, our lives declare the *testimonies* of the Lord—evidence that the authority of the Word of God is our provision in stressful times.

CONCLUSION

Psalm 119:49-56

Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.

I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself.

Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law.

This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

These words will never be the same to me.

The reason Ezra's father was able to remain so relaxed and so peaceful in the face of natural

and supernatural pressures was because he simply accepted the Word of God as his provision. There is no indication in Psalm 119 that he ever prayed for God to remove the pressures and trials. If he did, it is not recorded. All we can see is one reference after another to the awesome power of the Word of God. He lived with a song in his soul, and a celebration in his heart. He was able to comfort himself when no one else could because he drew upon the inner resources of truth stored in his heart (Psalm 119:11).

How do we as Christians deal with stressful times today? The same way Ezra and his father dealt with them nearly 2,500 years ago—through the authority of the Word of God becoming resident inside the soul. This comes through receiving daily instruction from the Word of God and allowing it to dwell in us richly until the Word becomes an inner resource to draw upon for any outward pressure or circumstance.

Dealing with the Real Issues

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The people we see every day, including ourselves, have a terrible disease. In Isaiah 1:5, God looked upon His people and said, "Why should ye be stricken any more?…The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." This can be said of every one who has ever lived.

Today, the greatest mystery that the world will ever see is in a sinner who can say, "I am alive in Christ, and Christ is in me." He is a man who, apart from Christ, is inwardly sick and in a body of death. Desiring to be well, he went after every kind of cure, but what he needed was a proper diagnosis.

We spend so much time treating the symptoms of sin. This booklet will show us our need to discover and deal with the real issue, and to discern the distractions that keep us from revealing our true identity in Christ.

Chapter One

AN ETERNAL PURPOSE

"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

"Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:21-23).

"[This is] the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:26-27).

The eternal purpose of the Lord Jesus for our existence is that we will experience the mystery of Christ in each member of the Body of Christ.

Jesus Christ has taken His place as ruler over everything, and as children of the King, we have the right to claim what was Satan's territory. But to experience our victory, it is important for us to be aware that there are principalities and powers operating to hinder us from experiencing this mystery.

The Power in Ungodly Covenants

Many Christians do not understand that when we do not choose to participate in the fellowship of the mystery of godliness, we become targets for the principalities and powers of the satanic atmosphere.

There are demons that want to establish ungodly covenants in churches among similar-minded people. These people have no understanding of covenants—especially the power in an ungodly covenant made to attack believers, churches, or pastors.

In 1 Kings 18-19, a woman named Jezebel had made ungodly covenants with Satan against the people of God. Jezebel had unbelievable powers. Elijah had killed 850 of her demonized prophets with a sword. But getting rid of them was only treating the symptoms of a much worse problem, which was the real issue. Those

prophets were only part of the evil that Elijah was about to face. When he was finished, Jezebel sent a messenger who told Elijah what she had planned for him. In total depression, God's man withdrew into the wilderness and wanted to die (1 Kings 19:4-5). At the cave, in verse 9, God asked him what he was doing there. God knew that the root of the entire problem was Jezebel. It wasn't the 850 prophets. They were just the symptoms of Jezebel's evil alliance with Satan.

Likewise, time and time again in the churches of Jesus Christ, the symptoms are identified, but the root problem is never addressed. So much counseling deals with the symptoms. You may kill the 850 false prophets who were causing problems, and yet, you never get to the root, because it is cleverly concealed by the head demon running the satanic army that is attacking.

Who Is on the Lord's Side?

In 2 Kings 9, God anointed Jehu to be the king over Israel and appointed him to destroy the house of Ahab, to "avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel" (verse 7). The kings of Israel and Judah were right to be nervous when Jehu showed up in

Jezreel, where Ahab had reigned. When King Jehoram (the son of Ahab and Jezebel) asked, "Are you here for peaceful purposes, Jehu?" he replied, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" (verse 22).

After killing the evil king Jehoram, Jehu went to see Jezebel. She put on her makeup and sat in the window, looking very pretty. He cried out in verse 32-33, "Who is on my side? Who?" and two or three eunuchs, there as her servants, responded to Jehu's request and threw her down to the ground. Her blood spilled out as the king drove his horses over her, and the dogs ate her remains.

Jezebel had tried to entrap Jehu, but she didn't get away with it. In the end, the root problem of the entire nation of Israel and its false prophets and idolatry had been dealt with.

Chapter Two

GROWTH WITH GOD'S PROVISION

Regarding Jezebel, what was the spiritual principle in operation? It was control and manipulation through a powerful force—not just a charming personality, but a supernatural power to control. Elijah was not threatened by Ahab—and he was king. The 850 prophets could not overwhelm Elijah; he slew them. But the voice of one woman, Jezebel, brought him tremendous fear—so much that this prophet of God was scared to death and wanted to die. She was one woman with supernatural powers. Though she was extremely beautiful, she was a witch, and her covenant with Satan was the cause of Israel's idolatries.

"All That Glitters Is Not Gold"

Satan's will is to cause people to be around very wonderful, attractive, and winsome per-

sonalities that have connections with supernatural powers. They use those powers very tactfully and carefully to cause division in the Body of Christ. Undoubtedly, they do not know how badly they are deceived (Proverbs 31:30*a*).

Even as there are underlying causes to many problems in a ministry, there are also underlying causes to the problems in our life. This is why we need to understand the great principle of identifying the root, going way beyond the symptoms. Every single thing we do must be identified. First the pastor and then each member of the congregation, must examine himself through the Word and the Holy Spirit and take care of any causes, as God leads.

It is so easy to identify symptoms, and it is even possible to move away from the symptoms. But that is not how healing comes. Healing comes by recognizing something much deeper. For the addict, it is saying to himself, "Wait! Don't you know that drugs aren't the 'cause' of anything?" Drug addiction is just a symptom of something that causes people to take drugs, that's all. He doesn't say, "I am a drug addict." That is merely his symptom of a relationship he has with a power and a force beyond himself. He has no idea of what else that

power can do through self-destructive patterns as he becomes available to its control.

Adultery, homosexuality, and fornication are only symptoms of a deep-rooted cause from a leading demon of the powers of the air (Ephesians 2:2). The Word of God says that Satan made the world a wilderness and destroys the cities thereof (Isaiah 14:17). He sends in his armies to destroy cities and countries and to weaken the nations. Though he comes in as an angel of light, his entire purpose is to destroy them, inasmuch as this whole world lies in his infectious government (1 John 5:19b).

We Need the Right Diagnosis

So many people depend on help from secular counselors. Though they may temporarily deal with symptoms, they can never settle the problem outside of Christ.

When a person becomes real with Jesus Christ, he begins to deal with the cause of his problems, which is spiritual wickedness in the atmosphere. Principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world: *they* are the cause.

Only the filling of the Spirit and the conviction of the Word of God can help us. It deals

with us quickly and powerfully to separate the spirit from the soul. This is our only possibility for deliverance.

No one is free from the need for deliverance; the attack of Satan is against every believer. For example, a young pastor told me how, in a certain situation, he tried to examine his heart. "After half an hour, I couldn't see the answer; then I said, 'I'm not going to try. *You* show me in the light of the Holy Spirit, according to Psalm 26:2.'" God revealed what he needed to see—but first, the pastor needed to get out of the way.

Chapter Three

CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell;

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

"And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Colossians 1:19-21).

Pride is only a symptom of a relationship with the wild pride of Satan. Anger is just a symptom of a relationship with the angry demons that are destined to go to hell forever. The issue is always about our relationships.

Why is this? Because Ephesians 6:12 says we do not fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and rulers of darkness. So, if that is true (and it is), why would we analyze the flesh, and counsel it, and try to make

it better? What we need is a revelation of Christ.

Once we begin to grasp the real issue, we can go forward in our call. And the call of every believer is to make all men see the mystery of who Christ is in a man—"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:25-27). We can do this only through the three "R's" of the Cross: redemption, restoration, and reconciliation. Through the Cross! It comes when we are dead to everything that we *could* have, and we are alive to everything that God is (Galatians 2:20). This is the great principle of having our identity in Christ.

It's Time for a Second Opinion

If, on the other hand, we examine ourselves, and we identify lust, or pride, or double-mindedness, or fear, or moods, all we have done is identify symptoms. Every time our emotions (which can't think) are controlling our mind, the symptoms will cause us to withdraw from God.

Satan says to his demons, "All you have to do is make them deal with their symptoms. That way, they will never get to the cause. The cause is really that they have given me a place—but all they can see are the symptoms."

Whether we are speaking about perversion,

fornication, or any number of vile and overt sins, we only address the symptoms when we just deal with the sin. As bad and as destructive as these sins are to marriages, families, and nations, the devil is behind it all because people have given him a place (Ephesians 4:27).

Out of natural goodness, some try to help. They develop programs that will help people withdraw from their symptoms. So, if a person gets a victory over drugs, that is wonderful. But he needs to have the right relationship with God, or he will not be delivered from the world's unseen powers that are *behind* the drugs. The drugs may be gone because of a concentration of effort, but the victory hasn't come.

In time, that person will have to deal with fear. The next thing will be insecurity. Then, it will be unhappiness in some other area; and all because the destructive, supernatural forces continue to change their direction of attack to stay in control of that person's life.

The Strange-Woman Syndrome

In Proverbs 5:1-5, the Word of God talks about the strange woman. This "strange woman" refers to Satan's system, designed to counterfeit Jesus Christ's Bride-to-be.

In other words, the Church has been called to respond to God and to serve men. But when instead of responding we take over leadership in place of God, that is the strange woman. It is a part of a system of religious works that has sent diverse attacks upon the whole human race.

What Satan wants is for us to identify with this strange-woman spirit. This is not necessarily about women. This is about a system that usurps God's authority. Men and women in this type of strange-woman system hear truth from the Word of God that is meant to convict them. They hear "reconciliation" and refuse to be reconciled. Then, they withdraw into moods and draw away instead of getting right with God. It is a superficial symptom with a satanic root that has separated and divided people from the fullness of Christ, which is His Body.

There is one thing that the Holy Spirit always says: *Draw near*. Draw near to the throne of grace. Draw near to mercy. Draw near to godly people. Draw near to the Body of Christ. Instead of having fellowship with iniquity in the communion of demons (1 Corinthians 10:20), we need to experience the fellowship of the mystery in the Body of Christ.

Chapter Four

CHRIST IN YOU: THE REVELATION OF A MYSTERY

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)....

"…Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who

created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:1-4, 8-9).

Paul said that to him, who was "less than the least of all saints," this grace was given, that he should preach among the Gentiles. His message was the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Unsearchable. That meant Paul was preaching a message that he couldn't trace out, that was inexhaustible and unfathomable. Yet, though this message could not be fully comprehended, it was the message he would learn. This must be our attitude, or we will not understand the Word that we have received with the fullest of blessings.

When Paul began to preach about the mysteries and riches of God, he renounced other subjects, such as legalism. As precious as the law of God was, he preached against legalism. His message was about the unsearchable riches of Christ. And every time he considered it, the apostle knew that he would never be able to fully search out what he was preaching nor comprehend it in this lifetime. He realized that he could never trace the depth of those riches, because they are eternal, reaching beyond the limits of human understanding.

According to Ephesians 3:5, the mystery of Jesus Christ, "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men,…is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets *by the Spirit*." The only way the mystery will ever be revealed is by the Holy Spirit. The purpose of Paul's message was "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9).

"To make all men see" means "to bring into light" (to men who are willing to see it) a revelation of the fellowship of the Word of God, and the life of God, and the Spirit of God in the Body of Christ—a mystery that will only be revealed to us by God.

Though Christ paid for the sins of all men in the world (1 John 2:2), in Ephesians 3:9, "all men" refers to those who would be willing to see the mystery and be illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

"The fellowship" speaks of the participation of redeemed sinners in relationship to the Body of Christ, hid with Christ in God.

"To the intent that now [(in this lifetime)]

unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, *According to the eternal purpose* which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:10-11).

Enter into Fullness with a New Identity

The Body is the fullness of Christ. If we believe that, why would we ever want to be separated from fullness and be a target for demons to have a banquet at our table (1 Corinthians 10:21)? Why would we want to have demons serving us at their table when we are alone because we have withdrawn?

Satan doesn't want us to be fulfilled in this life on earth, so he has a temporal purpose to distract us and make us withdraw from God, His Word and His Church. When we withdraw, we enter into a temporal preservation of self. We hear all kinds of strange voices. Yet, God, through the Cross, has an eternal purpose for us.

The Word of God says in Ephesians 3:8-11 that we can make a show of the demons in the air when in weakness we apply doctrine on every side. In our hearts, we are able to implement doctrine. To have "manifold wisdom" means to have doctrine on every side. We reveal

the living Word of God, and we confess it to the air.

What happens when the demons see that coming? They say, "Oh no! It's the living Word that created us, and it's coming back at us. Back off!" Then, by the living Word of God, we expose Satan's strategy and get to the real issue, the heart of the matter: Christ is everything. He identified with us on the Cross, and He is willing to dwell in us and become our new identity when we accept Him as our Savior.

CONCLUSION

To the person who is an alcoholic, alcoholism is a symptom. It is not a cause. There are demons that cause alcoholism. There are demons that cause perversion. So the problem is not what demons cause us to do. Those behaviors are the symptoms. Through careful study of the Scriptures, many of these demons have been precisely identified by name.* As a result, many Christians have experienced great victories by fasting with prayer that addresses the enemy specifically.

With the intensification of warfare in these last days, more than ever, we need to understand that God has given us an eternal purpose: that we should make all men see the mystery of God, which we can never fully comprehend or explain. The nature of God is in us, on the resurrection side of death.

Thank You, Lord, for revealing to us this unsearchable mystery. Thank You for giving us spiritual

health and wisdom by keeping us surrounded with a great wall of doctrine, which protects us as it feeds our souls. In Jesus' Precious name, Amen.

**The purpose of identifying specific demons and knowing their names is to give us an advantage in warfare because we identify the cause, not just the symptoms. For more about angelic warfare and the names of certain demons, read* Dealing Precisely with Demons*,* Exposing Satan's Armies*, and* Operating in the Authority of God's Kingdom, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications.*

Dealing with the Spirit of Compromise

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible declares the whole counsel of God. All Scripture is inspired by God. All of it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that we may be thoroughly equipped unto all divine good (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, "Man must live by every word of God," and He meant it. Of course, when we fail, we rebound. If, however, we are not obedient in any part of the whole counsel of God, then we are not living by every Word of God.

In Acts 20:27, Paul said, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Therefore, when the Bible is so clear, why is it that we sometimes find it difficult to obey the whole counsel of God?

God has charged us with a duty to live by His Word. This includes keeping ourselves from the infections of the world and preventing infections from spreading. This booklet will show

that we cannot afford to be sentimental when it comes to dealing with people who choose to reject God's counsel. There are times to minister to the backslidden, but there are also times when we must avoid those who live contrary to the truth.

At the time, we may not understand why a situation requires us to take a stand that seems to go against a fellow believer. Imagine how God feels when He has to break fellowship with us when we live in sin. The Holy Spirit lives in us to empower us, and the grace of God is freely given to help us. Therefore, we can live by every single word of God.

Chapter One
SHIPWRECKED FAITH

"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

"Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

"Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Timothy 1:18-20).

"Holding faith" speaks of the entire human personality leaning on God in absolute trust and confidence with a good, clear conscience. By rejecting truth and thrusting it from the conscience, some individuals have made their faith shipwreck. In this passage, Paul addresses Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom he delivered unto Satan, that they might be chastised and hopefully, repent.

Many of the people who were active believers and then stop following God will have a shipwrecked faith after Satan gets through with them. Yes, there are people who leave churches in peace—they have every right to, for they stand or fall before God alone. But those who depart and turn away from God altogether will wind up shipwrecked, sooner or later. We need to be taught the whole counsel of God and we need to hide it in our hearts, because Satan and his demons are doing everything to deceive and destroy people.

Deceitful Hearts, Sick Heads

Inside of every Christian is a heart that not only is deceitful, but also is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). Not only is the whole head sick and the whole heart faint, but we are covered with running sores from head to toe. These sores have not been mollified with ointment (Isaiah 1:6). That is the natural condition of our hearts from God's viewpoint. With this in mind, we should never give the heart a chance to be deceived.

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

"Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

"All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23).

Evil thoughts proceed from within the heart of every man and woman because all of us have been infected with an old sin nature. This infection stirs the production of evil thoughts that are in every person's heart, including the Christian's. There are no exceptions.

These evil thoughts bring adulteries and fornication—unlawful sex in the life of a single person. Then after fornication come murders—either in the mind or in the act. Next are thefts and covetousness—gambling, coveting other people's possessions. Then, because the person involved in this cycle lives in self-denial, wickedness (a series of infections) and deceit follow. "Deceit" here equals self-denial. This proceeds to "lasciviousness," a careless lifestyle; an evil eye that turns toward evil things (such as pornography); and finally blasphemy, pride, and foolishness (non-thinking).

All these things come from within, defiling the hearts of men.

Thirteen terrible things in the heart of every

man cause a shipwrecked faith. These infections are in my heart and in your heart, just waiting to develop, waiting to take over, waiting to control. Think of those thirteen wicked things in every heart. Is it any wonder that we need the Word of God? Is it any wonder we need the Cross of Calvary? Is it any wonder we need the local church?

The Quarantine Principle

When I was a salesman, selling from door to door, I could not go into a certain house because a woman in the home had scarlet fever and was quarantined. According to the law, the Health Department posted a sign on the door and no one could enter or leave the house to prevent spreading the disease. The woman was a personal friend of the family. Did we love her? Yes. Yet, because of her condition, we could not express our love as we could when she was well. In time, with the proper treatment, she regained her health, and the quarantine was lifted.

The same principle applies when people who call themselves Christians have spiritual infections. The Bible is the whole counsel of God, and what it says about treating those influenced by demonic infections is crystal clear. In 1 Cor-

inthians 5:11, Paul said, "I wrote unto you an epistle not to keep company with fornicators." That is the Word of God telling me that I cannot keep company with a fornicator. I do not have a choice if I want to remain spiritually healthy.

When a person is quarantined, does it mean we do not love them? No. Does it mean that we will be courteous? Yes. But it also means we must obey the Word to avoid passing on a serious infection. Do I love that person in terms of wanting to help? Yes, I do. Will I be rude to that person? No, I will not. Would I speak to that person as I go by? Yes. Still, the Scriptures tell me not to keep company with them. We are not to eat with them, and we are not to fellowship with them. We are to avoid them. That is what the Bible says, to protect us from becoming infected ourselves.

Chapter Two
KEEPING THE RIGHT COMPANY

We are to avoid the fornicators of this world. Not only that, but we are to avoid the covetous who are jealous of others. We avoid "extortioners," the people who cheat when they sell. We avoid "idolaters"—those who put other things ahead of being a member in particular with the Body of Christ.

There are times when we will come in contact with such people. We can say "hello" and "good-bye," but that should be the extent of it. Of course, we have to exist in this world, so there is no way to completely avoid dealing with people who live in overt sins. Otherwise, as Paul said, "for then must ye needs go out of the world" (1 Corinthians 5:10). You might have a friend who you know is living in habitual sin. Politely, you say "hi" and you minister if the opportunity arises, but you would not go to his house to eat. Neither would you fellowship with

him. God commands us to operate this way (1 Corinthians 5:11).

The Bible also says we are to stay away from the "railer," one who speaks harshly about others or gossips behind people's backs, using abusive language against others, defaming their character whether it is true or not. The Bible says I am not to eat with a railer.

If we would honor these verses, there would be fear about entering into those sins as a believer. If you know that a brother is living in adultery and you treat him as you always did, then he will keep doing it if he is an evil person. But if you mark him and say, "I cannot eat with you. I'm sorry, but I cannot because the Bible tells me not to." Then he will see that his actions have a consequence.

Remember, we are still courteous, but we won't fellowship with him. We are not to keep company with that person.

Be Separated unto God

"For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

"But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that

wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5:12-13).

In other words, God said, "Put away from you the ones who are infected with these sins and who refuse doctrinal approaches to repent and rebound." "That is unkind," you say? That is just being obedient to the Bible. That is not, like the Pharisees, acting "holier than thou," and it is not legalistic, acting on the letter of the law without the Spirit. It is simply obeying the Scriptures. Of course, they could still come to church.

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

"Nor thieves. Nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

A true confession of faith always results in the gift of eternal life. God gives us eternal life forever. If, however, a person was not truly saved, he will not go to heaven.

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the [Holy] Spirit of…God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

The Bible says, "Be ye not unequally yoked

together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

"And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in [you], and walk [with you]; and I will be [your] God, and they shall be my people.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you,

"And I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

God says, "I want separation. Separate yourselves from wickedness and worldliness."

This principle of being set apart is particularly important when a believer considers marriage. Although we cannot judge a person's motives, we must use wisdom, which includes discernment. A person may say he is a Christian and even attend church to win acceptance. But this is the issue: Does he hunger for prayer? Does he go to services three times a week? Does

he love to hear the Word of God? Does he enjoy fellowship in the Body of Christ? Do you share the same call and the same vision regarding the local church, soul winning, the mission field, and so on? Many beautiful Christians have compromised God's call on their lives because they married for the wrong reasons.

Marked for Separation

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

If someone causes a division from what you know is right and from the biblical truths that have been taught in the pulpit, avoid him. Even if it is your boyfriend or your girlfriend, take a stand and say, "We are not for each other."

"I beseech you that you mark them." Mark them in your heart. You do not eat with them; you do not keep company with them. You mark them.

These people may attack your character. They may even spend the next six months trying to find out the bad things people say about you. But God is saying, "I beseech you. I plead of you. I beg of you to mark them which cause

divisions contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them. For they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own emotions; and by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple (those who are ignorant of doctrine)" (see Romans 16:17-18).

Do not fellowship with people who cause division. Do not even say, "They are still good people." Mark them until they name their sin, get right with God, and confess what they have done. You mark them. You mark those who cause divisions contrary to the doctrines that you have learned. Avoid them, for they do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter Three

DOING OUR DUTY BY HIS STRENGTH

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as you have us for an ensample.

"(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

"Whose end is [physical death or] destruction, whose God is their [emotions], and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things.)

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:17-21).

This is the second time that Paul is writing,

"Mark them."

"But I can't do that," you say. If we say we can't take a stand with God by avoiding those who go against godliness, then we are compromising the truth and the convictions we have developed since our conversion. The Bible is the Word of God.

Many Christians like to hear about grace; they like to hear about forgiveness; they like to hear about unconditional love. But hearing about convictions with a conversion to God's standards in the Bible is another matter.

God is holy. Yes, He gives grace. Yes, He forgives—but nobody living in immorality will ever go to heaven. If evidence of God's chastisement does not show up in such a person's life, then he is not saved. That is a fact (Hebrews 12:6-8).

We do not know who these people are, but God does. If they can live immorally and God doesn't touch them, then they were never saved. If they do it and God disciplines them, then they are saved. If they continue in their sin, they have started down a path that will lead them to physical death—the final step in God's program of chastisement (1 John 5:16). God takes them to heaven before their time. They go home early

and suffer the loss of all rewards.*

Moses told Israel, "The Edomites are evil people, but we need to go to their market places and buy food. Don't chat with them. Don't fellowship with them. Do your business and come right out" (Numbers 20:14-20).

A Duty and a Privilege

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

We should be dedicated to our duty toward God. Our duty is accountability. Although many parents are wonderful, some parents do not have standards for their children in the home, yet they expect the schools to train their children. A Christian school cannot be a reform school. The teachers minister in these schools; they give grace and invest. But parents need to set standards for their children in the home. Some parents are unaware of the wrong things their children are doing. This is evidence of a family out of control.

In Joshua 24:14-15, Joshua challenged the people of Israel to serve God and put away their idols, saying, "Choose you this day whom ye

will serve….but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." He took charge of his house. Many of us need to reevaluate our priorities and lead our families back to the place of honor that God intended.

We have a duty to be with God's people so much more as we see the day of the Lord approaching (Hebrews 10:25). Who would want to be out with the devil's crowd when your church and your pastor are ministering to God? It would be a terrible disgrace to miss ministering to each other and, most of all, to miss being ministered to by God.

If your spouse will not come to church, then you come three times a week anyway. You decide that you are going to follow God, no matter what. Make that choice. Hold to God's standards. Do what the Bible tells you to do. When you step out in faith, God will honor you—and you have honored Him.

The End of Our Strength

"For when I am weak, then am I strong," Paul said (2 Corinthians 12:10b).

Now, the best thing in the world for a Christian is to be helpless. When a Christian is helpless and he takes his helplessness to God, he receives

God's dunamis—God's power, God's ability, God's love, God's help (Ephesians 1:19).

The greatest thing that happened to the prodigal son, in Luke 15:17, was that he came to the end of himself. Psalm 107:27-28 describes those who are brought to a place where they must admit their weakness and cry out for God: "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses." It is a beautiful thing when a person comes to his wits' end; that is when God steps in with wisdom.

Human frailty, when we bring it to God, is the secret to the holy life. Human failure, when we come to God, is the secret to the holy life. The more a person comes to the end of himself, the more God steps in with His love and power.

Our inadequacy brings in God's adequacy. His power kicks in when our power shuts down. When our possibilities are gone, His possibilities become ours. His fullness comes when we become empty. Our importunity gives Him opportunity.

Throughout Romans 7, Paul could not get victory. He could not find success. Finally, he found victory through being forgiven, discover-

ing that there is no condemnation. As a result, he began to experience the Holy Spirit's power (see Romans 8:1-39).

John the apostle was exiled to the isle of Patmos and burned in hot oil three times. He was an old man, probably 106 years old. But on that island, John saw the glorified Christ and wrote the entire inspired book of Revelation. John was weak, empty, and helpless. His strength was hopeless; he had no power. He depended on God's mercy just to live for another day. God came and gave him the book of Revelation.

It is not weakness that destroys us, but not letting God's strength take over. It is not the helplessness that defeats us; rather, we are defeated by not going to God our Helper. In Psalm 46, God is an instant help in the time of trouble. It is not failure that ruins us, but our failure to go to the One who forgives, restores, empowers, enables, and takes over our weakness with His strength. We have no excuse to live a defeated life when we know the victory God is ready to give us.

The next time you are faced with an opportunity to stand with God, consider it a duty and a privilege. When the spirit of compromise suggests ways of getting around an issue, give in to

the Spirit of Truth and trust the Lord for the consequences. Remember that He is waiting to bless you.

*Read The Great Detective: Sin, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.

CONCLUSION

If I had gone in to my friend's house while she was quarantined with scarlet fever, I probably would have become infected too. What is worse, I could have given the disease to somebody else. Clearly, the reason God tells us to be separated from those living in sin is that we will not become infected and give that infection to somebody else.

There is not a sin that God has not paid for. There is not a person whom God will not restore. There is not a situation that God will not forgive. There is not a circumstance for which God is not the answer. That is the balance on this subject. We must, however, deal with the spirit of compromise anytime we come up against it.

The Bible says we will be blessed if we keep His commandments. When we stand up for the truth and for what is right, we will be blessed mightily by God.

Defining the Warfare against Relationships

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The human mind is extremely complicated. Little is understood about the three compartments of the mind: the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious. The unconscious is vast, making up 90 percent of the mind. Largely undefined, the unconscious is open to Satan's entrapments. Often, Satan projects lies about the images in the unconscious mind to the subconscious, which represents 5 percent of the mind. The subconscious feeds the conscious mind—the remaining 5 percent.

Through the objectivity of the conscious mind, we can perceive truth. But when the conscious mind receives misinformation from the unconscious, it operates in confusion and indecision.*

Man, in his essence, in his being, has the unbelievable potential to live the rest of his life in the history of Adam. In Adam he has the potential to be very good. It is called human good, but

human goodness cannot save a man's soul.

Man also has the potential to be very bad. In the old sin nature, he enters into personal sins, iniquity, and evil. Personal sin involves wrong decisions, individual mistakes that he makes through self-gratification. Iniquity is emotional rebellion against authority. Evil is when a man participates in Satan's cosmic government, ultimately going against his church or pastor by conspiratorial, anti-biblical attacks aimed at destroying the work of God. Conspirators often claim to be acting in the name of God, as revealed in John 16:1-2. This is Adam's potential. And though Jesus shed His Blood to pay for the sins and iniquity of all mankind, He did not die for evil.

This booklet will show that it takes more than psychological evaluations to figure out who we are. It takes more than understanding the human psyche, the soul of a man. Adam needs to be crucified, and we need to have the mind of Christ so that we can live in who Christ has made us to be.

*For an expanded description of the subjective and objective functions of these compartments in the mind, read Imaginations of the Heart, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.

Chapter One
THE HISTORIES AT WORK IN US

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12)

"Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me" (Lamentations 3:52-53).

Few understand the supernatural reality of Satan being the god of this world.

In the complex process of projections, there are two demonic armies at work—Thereuo (Psalm 59:3, Ecclesiastes 9:12) and Krataios (Psalm 54:3). Thereuo's job is to compile a record of a person's weaknesses and strong points in Adam. After Krataios receives the information from Thereuo, Krataios works to reinforce this information in the unconscious mind, along with

the history of Adam.

This transfer is easy for the demonic armies to do because every one of us has so many points of reference and contact with the family history of Adam (what your uncle, your father, or your partner in business did to you). The demons use your failure and attempt to leave you bottled up in guilt. All of this activity is part of reinforcing the history of Adam in the mind.

Deep within, in the genetic code locked into every cell, two things are working against us: Adam's history and our own personal history derived from the old sin nature. Knowing this about us, Satan attempts to blind our minds to the truth of our new life in Christ—life that sets us free (see 2 Corinthians 4:4). When we are blinded and we end up living in the effects of the old sin nature, no secular counselor can make an honest evaluation of our condition. He can evaluate several things about us, but he cannot evaluate the whole person because all he is doing is coming up with a diagnosis of a history in Adam. While this goes on, Satan's demonic armies project lies to the subconscious mind, trying to get us to blame others so that the conscious mind will become polluted with confusion. No divine prognosis can be made.

Hell's Hypnosis

Satan's master plan is to hypnotize people, which the word "bewitched" suggests in Galatians 3:1, according to Greek scholars. Everyone has areas where Satan's hypnosis is at work. This causes us to misbehave at any given moment, hour, or day. We come out of it, because we do not live continually in the hypnotic forces of the supernatural. Still, because there is a war going on against us, if we do not consciously put on the whole armor of God, we will be more apt to become Satan's target.

One demonic army evaluates our outward weaknesses, and the other accesses and stimulates our internal weaknesses in the unconscious mind. This is about spiritual warfare, not human psychology, upon which so many people solely concentrate.

The real provision for the problems and needs of man is spiritual counsel from the Bible, not human counsel from the flesh. So many have learned the lessons of the flesh and the psyche. They have learned about psychological living but not spirituality.

Confusion and Dissonance

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the

things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:5-9).

Two more demonic armies enter the picture. They work to affect the "ganglionic process" in the central nervous system and create cognitive dissonance in the mind. The ganglionic process involves the chemical communication system for the nerve impulses that travel from the brain throughout the human body. Cognitive dissonance is mental confusion that involves a discrepancy between our beliefs and behavior. When our behavior doesn't line up with what we believe, the result is dissonance—a disturbing lack of accord—and something has to give. Unless the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are in control, people tend to change their belief in

order to accommodate their behavior.

This is the work of the demon army known as Andres, which takes over after Krataios, by lying and trying to destroy us through its effect upon the unconscious mind. These demons want to throw the body's chemical process off balance so a person will have no solution except to take medicine for the rest of his life. Please understand: I am not against medication. Some people have deficiencies in their chemical make-up and they cannot function properly otherwise. But it is this demon army of Andres that targets the unconscious mind. Andres gives a false covering (Isaiah 30:1), not of the Spirit, and begins to control the auto-immune system in the spiritual realm. Following the work of Andres is Eloces, an army that affects the body with aches, pains, and physical problems under the law of psychosomatics. Yes, there are very real aches and pains that bother some people; however, demons are very often at work stimulating these reactions in some people.*

Divorce and Division

In Job 41:16, the Word of God teaches us that there is no air between the demons in Satan's armies. They have amazing unity as they work

together in supernatural oneness. Their efforts involve a process of causing internal disconnections in the compartments of the heart, the streams of consciousness, and the five parts of the soul. They attempt to divorce the Word of God from the new heart and have the unconscious mind replace control of the human spirit, which desires that we be God-conscious.

The demon armies are always trying to produce a constant process of divorces inside of a man. First, these armies try to divorce the conscience from the standards of grace and mercy. Next, they work to divorce self-consciousness from occupation with Christ. Then, they try to bring a divorce of the mind from precise doctrine. Finally, they wound the emotions in a plan to divorce the emotions from responding to the reality of God's love as it is placed in man's human spirit through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Is it any wonder that marriages end in divorce? At least one party has already experienced a spiritual divorce within himself.

*For more about the demonic warfare, read Dealing Precisely with Demons, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.

Chapter Two

BUILDING THE RIGHT SYSTEM OF PERCEPTION

Satan's other target in a man is the central nervous system through the ganglionic process. His demonic armies work from the outside to gain connections to the nerve fibers that are components of the central nervous system. The person being attacked responds to Satan through feelings and experiences that are outside of the system of faith.

These responses involve empiricism and rationalization—two systems of perception that are rejected by God. Empiricism is to make observations by feelings, experiences, and senses; rationalization is to intellectualize through human wisdom without the Cross or divine truth from the Word of God.

Faith is the only system of perception revealed and accepted by God. It is to hear the Word of God, receive it, and keep it through the

Holy Spirit, using rebound when we fail.

Faith, Glory, and Strength

Romans 1:17 says "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." In the Greek text of this verse are a pair of prepositions—ek (out of) and eis (into). Therefore, in the original language's accusative case it reads, "out of faith, into faith…." This means that in day-to-day circumstances, we go from one realm of faith into a new realm of faith. We please God with each brand-new realm of faith in the midst of trials, adversity, and blessings.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The same Greek prepositions appear in the phrase "from glory to glory." We go out of one realm of faith into another area of faith, and we also go out of one realm of glory into another realm of glory.

Glory speaks of reflecting God's nature. Perhaps I have patience, but I need more kindness. In going from "glory to glory," I grow from patience into kindness—another area of reflecting God's glory. Tomorrow, I can go from kindness

into gentleness, which is another realm of His glory. Next, I may grow into meekness, another realm of God's glory.

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Psalm 84:4-7).

We also grow from strength to strength. We grow out of one area of strength for a situation into another area of strength. We are always growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ out of one area of faith and into faith, from glory to glory, and from strength to strength.

Cognitive Dysfunction

Christians who don't live in this process of growing in grace and knowledge are susceptible to cognitive dissonance. Cognition is the process of knowing or acquiring knowledge. Dissonance happens when we do not appropriate and apply the knowledge we have received. To know right and to do it not is sin (James 4:17).

How does this happen? Satan blinds the mind so that a person lives in partial ignorance with only measures of light as a Christian. Because he is ignorant of what is taking place, his point of reference is something in Adam's history.

Our own personal history in Adam involves people hurting us, iniquity, and governmental evil. Then we have the history in the genetic code that we got way back from Adam himself.

Through empiricism and rationalization—two systems of perception rejected by God—a counselor may figure out five things about you, smile at you, and make you happy. What has he done? He has gone into your limited personal history of Adam, but he has no knowledge of Adam's history in you. You don't do the things you do because of mom, dad, grandmother, and grandfather. You do what you do because Adam's history in you goes all the way back to the Fall (Mark 7:21-23).

God has declared that the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint (Isaiah 1:5). Every person's heart is desperately wicked, so much so that it is impossible to know just how wicked it is (Jeremiah 17:9). We have to deal with Adam's history in us as well as our history in Adam through applying the Cross of Christ in our lives.

Chapter Three

BEAUTIFUL GRACE MARRIES THE GREAT KING

According to the book of Ruth, in chapter one, Elimelech, whose Hebrew name meant "God Who is my King," lived in Jerusalem, "the place of peace." He married Naomi, whose name meant "pleasure." God-Who-is-my-King married Pleasure. But when a famine came, Elimelech left Peace (Jerusalem) because of the trial of his faith.

The most beautiful thing to do in the midst of the trial of your faith is to continue in faith and be promoted. Satan hates to have a Christian depend upon God. The thing that pleases God is when we depend upon Him with all of our hearts. We are to trust God and lean not on our own understanding. When we acknowledge Him in all of our ways, then He will direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5-6). If I know that only faith pleases God (Hebrews 11:6), then in every area

of my life I must learn to please God by placing my faith in Him.

Satan deceived Eve so that she would not depend upon God, but instead would depend upon her own thinking, feelings, circumstances, and observations through her experience. This is the beginning of how we walk by sight and live in the lie of our Adamic history and Adam's history in us.

If I see a chair and I believe it will hold me up, that is not faith. It is only when I sit in that chair that I have faith in it.

Faith only comes by hearing, receiving, believing, asking, obeying, and praising God just because of who He says He is in His Word. Satan will always try to keep God's people from depending upon God completely.

The Human Spirit Emerges

The human spirit makes me God-conscious. Now my subconscious reflects whatever area of God's nature I need so that my conscious mind can interpret, receive, understand, and use it.

As the Word of God dwells richly in my unconscious mind, giving me all wisdom, then I begin to speak in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in my heart to-

ward God (Colossians 3:16). Every word and deed I do in the name of Jesus, I do it to the glory of the Father by Him. I do it with all my heart, unto God and not unto man (Colossians 3:23). Now, because I am fellowshipping with God, I can have real fellowship with others who are in Christ.

After we have been cleansed, the conscious mind is filled with objective truth from God's Word. Therefore, I can fellowship with others as objects of God's love because I fellowship with God subjectively, as His subject. Subjective love means that I am filled with all the fullness of God as a subject, and nothing anyone can do can make me love more or less. I can even have God's love for my enemy (see Matthew 5:38-48).*

Signals of Subjective Love

The principle of subjective love cannot be emphasized enough, because when an individual has his unconscious mind cleansed and purged, God's thoughts take the place of Adam's perspective.

First, the subconscious mind says, "You need kindness so I am going to reflect it."

The conscious mind responds, "I am getting your signal, Subconscious Mind, and I will re-

spond by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit." This is how the Holy Spirit makes us kind, gentle, or meek in any situation.

It is important for us to understand how the mind of Christ works in "Adam's" body. This is all about you and me. We are examining the function of the spirit, soul, and body. Even God talks about how our hearts are deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). He makes reference to all of these things in the Scriptures. We are responsible to understand what God is teaching us. No one can give true counsel unless he grasps these principles, because it will not be spiritual counsel. It may be academic counsel. It may be counsel through psychological living but not through the spiritual reality of God's Word.

Returning to the Place of Peace

Back to the book of Ruth—God-Who-is-my-King married Pleasure, and they had two sons, Mahlon ("sickness") and Chilion ("pining away"). Elimelech died, Mahlon died, Chilion died.

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Before the two sons died, they had wrongfully married Moabites, Orpah and Ruth. After ten years, a famine came to Moab, which refers to

the flesh as it represents our history in Adam and Adam's history in us.

The famine came, and Naomi declared, "I am going back to Jerusalem—the place of peace." Both daughters-in-law wanted to go with her. Naomi said, "No, go back to your people, go back to your gods." In the Hebrew, Orpah means "double-minded," and "a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). Orpah kissed Naomi, wept, and went back to the Moabites.

Now, Ruth kissed Naomi, too, but she said, "I am not going back. I will go where you go; your people shall be my people; I will lodge where you lodge; your God will be my God; where they bury you, they will bury me" (see Ruth 1:16-17). Ruth's mind was steadfast, and Naomi could not talk Ruth out of following her.

It should come as no surprise that Ruth means "beautiful grace." "Double-minded" went back, "Beautiful Grace" followed after God.

For some Christians, when the least little thing happens to offend them, they withdraw. Why is this? They do not understand that at any hour they could be face-to-face with God.

John 4:24 says, "They that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth." "Wor-

ship" in the Greek is *proskuneo*, and it conveys the idea of "kissing." This verse speaks of a Christian in the spirit world worshipping so deeply that Christ breathes life into him and he responds to the breath of God, which is the life of Christ.

Brand-New Beginnings

When Naomi arrived back in Jerusalem, she was hardly recognized. "I went away beautiful, but I have come back bitter," she said in so many words (Ruth 1:20-21). Bitterness had taken over Naomi's soul. She and Ruth had no food, so Ruth went out to glean in the fields. As Ruth was gleaning, she was observed by Boaz, who found out about her decision to follow Naomi. He said to his harvesters, "Make sure you leave plenty of grain on the ground for Ruth to glean" (Ruth 2:7-17).

It was the beginning of the barley harvest when Naomi and Ruth came back. "Barley" speaks of resurrection and a brand new beginning. That's exactly what Naomi and Ruth got once they came back to Jerusalem, the place of peace. I bring up these applications of the Word of God because they reveal that the Bible is relevant, pertinent, reliable, and absolutely correct

in the smallest details—above and beyond any book that was ever written. It is magnificent.

The Great Wedding

Boaz, a kinsman of Elimelech and his sons, sought to do the right thing and take his relative's widow (Ruth) as his wife. There was just one problem—another relative was closer to Elimelech's family than Boaz was. This relative did not want Ruth because she was a descendent of Moab and therefore considered impure. His rejection of her represents the rigidity of the Law.

Boaz, the kinsman redeemer, covered Ruth when he found her at the threshing floor. Later, they were married at the city gate in the presence of the ten elders. Kinsman-Redeemer marries Beautiful Grace—what a beautiful picture of our redemption. God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and condemned sin in the flesh. One day, the Lord Jesus Christ, our kinsman Redeemer, will marry us, and we will be the picture of Beautiful Grace.

"Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by

night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go" (Nehemiah 9:19).

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

"And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war" (Revelation 19:7-11).

At that moment in Revelation 19, Jesus Christ will be marrying us, and grace will have

perfected us. Not another thing perfects us. It is all by grace and grace alone. Just imagine what it means to be perfect because of grace, with mercy following us all the days of our lives (Psalm 23:6). We have grace upon grace upon grace (John 1:16).

Unsearchable Riches

"Beautiful Grace," said, "I am not going back. Where you will lead me, I will follow. Your people will be my people. Where you lodge, I will lodge. Your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die. Where you are buried, I will be buried."

This is what happened between us and Christ. He has gone with us to the very end of the world (Matthew 28:20). When Christ died, we died. We were buried when He was buried. We were raised when He was raised. We ascended with Him and one day we will marry Him as the Bride of Christ. We will never taste death because of His life in us.

Ephesians 3:8 speaks of the "unsearchable" riches of God's grace. We will finally understand this in heaven when we see Christ's glorified hands, feet, and side with those wounds (Revelation 5:6). We won't see blood on Christ, but

will see the fresh wounds. Think of it! When we look at those wounds, we will never remember our sins. We will only remember how much He loves us. All of the former things of our lives will be wiped away, but His wounds will not be taken away.

The warfare against us will be over. We will not be conscious of sin because we will not have an old sin nature. We will only be conscious of our perfection. Yet, we will never forget that we were there because of His Beautiful Grace. For all eternity, God will show the exceeding kindness and the riches of His grace toward us. That is what those wounds are all about.

* Read The Love of God, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998, for more about the objective and subjective love of God.

CONCLUSION

God sent His Word to heal us. Every word in the Bible is psychologically accurate and spiritually relevant to establish, to heal, and to encourage relationships. All of it happens by grace through faith.

God wants us to be truly healed, and we are healed by grace. We are not healed by performance, or law, or works. We are healed by grace that works by God's perfect love—both toward us and abiding in us.

The unconscious mind can be filled by the Word and the Holy Spirit, which become the premise and presupposition of the subconscious that now controls the conscious mind. Now we can take on the mentality of the Word of God. Our emotions can respond in a healthy way. Our conscience can have grace and mercy and forgiveness as its norms and standards. Our self-consciousness becomes this: "For me to live is Christ." Our free volition is positive. Our old sin

nature is dormant. We have joy as our strength.

At times, the warfare against us makes it so hard to believe that we are complete. Therefore, we must practice worshipping God in positional truth. That is spirituality. Learn to think beyond the letter of the law. Think in spiritual revelation, illumination, and inspiration through the application of God's truth.

Defining the Call of God

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

As Christians, we have been called out of the darkness into God's marvelous light. Our calling is holy and heavenly for it comes from the Lord who is above and in all. It is not something we do to bring about social change and to provide a decent life for ourselves and for our families; indeed, that is the purpose of an *occupation*. But our call is a *vocation*, a lifestyle ordered by the Word of God.

God desires that we bring forth fruit unto godliness, but this will only happen when we allow our lives to be defined by the Word of God. Having this definition produces tremendous stability deep within the soul, which results in an outward application of the truth we receive.

When we operate in our vocation, we abide in a heavenly call empowered by the Holy Spirit through the Word of grace. As a result, our lives will be fertile ground for a full production of all

the fruits of the Spirit. The inward qualities of lowliness and meekness and the outward expressions of longsuffering and forbearance will bring forth unity among the brethren with great peace.

Chapter One

WALKING IN A VOCATION

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:1-6).

The apostle Paul, writing this epistle from prison, begins the fourth chapter of Ephesians by using the expression, "beseech" (*parakaleo*), which means to call near, to invite, to entreat. He is calling us to cross the bridge from analysis to action, from theology to spirituality. In other words, we are being called to go from knowledge that produces morality (human good) to a

revelation of doctrine that produces a practical lifestyle in the Spirit (divine goodness).

The first three chapters of the book of Ephesians lay the foundation of sound doctrine. In chapter four, the Holy Spirit beseeches us to enter into the practical application of that doctrine.

Paul beseeches us to "walk worthy" of our vocation. "Walk," the aorist active infinitive of *peripateo*, means that at a point in time, we are to produce the action of ordering our behavior in God's divine purpose. "Worthy" is *axios*, which means "having the weight of another." In other words, we must bring everything we know to God's scale of balance. We should have a balanced walk on the scale of grace.

When God says to "walk worthy," He means keep going, keep moving, keep progressing, don't stand still. We must grow and not quit. We do not go backward and forfeit what God has called us into, rather we walk balancing what we hear and what we know with how we live.

The Call to the Assembly

"Vocation" is *klesis*, an invitation or a divine summons. "Ye were *called*" is *kaleo*. Why is this important? Because a church is a gathering of 'called out ones' (*ekklesia*). We must get this truth

into our hearts! Church is not someplace where you just decide to *do* something, like choosing a profession. There is power in the *call*.

For example, in John 11:43, Lazarus had been dead and in the grave for four days. Jesus called to him and said, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus came out of the grave! The power was in the *call*, in the words that Jesus spoke. Some Christians, however, just decide to *do* something without acknowledging God's call. But that's not what Ephesians 4 is teaching. Some scholars say that "vocation" speaks of having doctrine as a profession, a trade, or a class of life. You may need an occupation to make a living, but you need doctrine so you can live. Your occupation must serve your vocation, or it won't be any good at all. I don't care how noble or how rich your occupation is; it must relate to your call.

A Royal Priesthood

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Christianity is not something I just "take

up." Being a pastor or a missionary is not something I just decide to try. Becoming a member of Christ's royal priesthood is not something I decide to do one day, like choosing a job. Certainly there is nothing wrong with any occupation, as long as it doesn't prevent me from serving Jesus Christ in the process. Paul made tents to provide for his material needs. But my *first* call is to make doctrine my profession in life, my trade as a human being.

I bring a revelation of doctrine into application for practical living, which develops my understanding of how to think, choose, initiate, and respond in the details of life. This is my vocation.

Walking worthy of my vocation will make me a good husband, a good father, and a good pastor. A heavenly vocation will make me a good student and a good friend. It will make me someone very valuable to the community. In fact, I will be valuable anywhere I go because I have more than a trade, more than a craft. I have a vocation. It is my *life*, and that's the key.

Called to Intimacy with Christ

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto

the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are *called*, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:22-24). The key word in this passage is "called." I've been summoned; I don't have an option. Through the Church, God issues a universal call to the whole world: that men everywhere would repent (Acts 17:30). We are to proclaim that call.

We are called ones. This is why we don't get weary in well-doing. We accept the fact that we are called; we don't struggle with our moods. And along with accepting the call comes the provision for maturity and stability. We preach the Cross, and to those who perish it is foolishness; but to those who are saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Think of it. God, the Creator, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Lord of everything has given each of us a personal call. And according to Ephesians 4:1, we have a personal accountability and responsibility to that call. First, Paul builds us up in how to think with God, how to derive our thoughts from Him. Then he brings us into the privilege of experiencing God's life. It is not a list of rules or a standard for conduct, but we are called to have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two

SUMMONED TO WARFARE

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19*b*). The "standard" is to live by every Word of God in the life of the Spirit (Matthew 4:4). It is reflective thinking with precise illumination of how Christ thinks. This standard is the truth that sanctifies us in John 17:17.

Having God's standard means that if God has called me to go to Bible college, by God's grace I will not quit after one semester due to a lack of finances. I will find a way to pay my bills because I know how to pray. I will not quit; I will walk forward in my call understanding that my occupation must always be submitted to my vocation, which is a life of categorical doctrine in the power of the Spirit.

During times of war, nations often reserve the right to summons young men into military

service. It is difficult to imagine that someone would respond by saying, "I would rather not go, if that's okay with you." On the contrary, though people do defer for various reasons, the call to military service is taken very seriously. How ironic that people can so casually say no to God, exalting self above the Word of God.

As believers, our walk must have its source in Bible doctrine, not in human good or natural disposition. Some people get saved yet never grow in their walk with God because they rely on their upbringing, their natural disposition, and their natural understanding of moral light. They stabilize at that level and never learn how to derive power for their walk through thinking accurately with God with categorical doctrine in the power of His Spirit.

Maintaining a Vision

We cannot let our personal vision be weakened. Let's grow from strength to strength in our valleys. Leave the wilderness filled with pools of living water, instead of old, dried-up places (Isaiah 35:6-7). We go from "strength to strength" (Psalm 84:7), "faith to faith" (Romans 1:17), and "glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18). As we are decreasing, Christ is increasing (John 3:30).

Notice what the Word of God says in Romans 8:30, "Moreover whom he did predestinate [because He foreknew who would choose His Son], them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Our calling came *before* our justification and our future glorification.

The reason that we will not go back into the world, that we will not make carnal choices, is this: *We stand on the fact that we have been called.* Second Timothy 1:9 calls it "a holy calling"; Hebrews 3:1 says it is "a heavenly calling"; and Philippians 3:14 calls it "a high calling." "Holy" means to be separated unto categories, having spirituality with godliness. "Heavenly" speaks of having positional truth above the chief demon of the air (2 Corinthians 10:5; Ephesians 6:12) and the demons of the dust (James 3:15). "The prize of the high calling" speaks of our entrance into maturity to experience the phenomenal rewards of Jesus Christ.

We have a heavenly calling, not an earthly one. The call comes from Jesus Christ, not from men, and everything in our life must submit to that call. It should be every Christian's vocation and emphasis. Our vocation is to have doctrine as our profession and trade so we can live by

every single Word of God. Then, when we face Jesus Christ individually at the Bema Seat, it can be said of each of us that we honored the mandates of the Word of God. We honor and live up to our vocation, using rebound when we make mistakes and fail, as all of us do.

In Matthew 17, Peter, James, and John were on the mountain with Jesus Christ when He was transfigured. But after that glorious experience, they had to go down into the valley. Their call for that hour was to be in the valley.

Quickened to Grow

"Even when we were dead in sins, [He] hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:5-6).

We couldn't quicken ourselves; we were quickened by the *call*. When we were dead, we were quickened with Him, raised up with Him and seated with Him. *The power was in the Word that called us.* This is so important to understand, because the average Christian does not know how to abide in his calling (1 Corinthians 7:20).

Don't change your vocation and place your occupation above it. Don't treat Christianity and

receiving sound doctrine as a second-rate experience.

Seeds Sown on the Inside

Titus 2:10 speaks of adorning "the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." This principle means that our vocation springs from the Word of God within us.

Consider this with me. When a farmer puts a seed into the ground and buries it, there will be a season where there is no evidence of growth. Then the sun will shine and showers will come. The seed germinates and begins to grow though it's hidden. Then finally, a little sprout pushes its way through the ground. For a time, there was no evidence of growth. But through the changes of weather and the process of time, the seed grew. God nurtured it because His life was in the seed.

The Word of God is an incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23). The seeds of the Word of God that go inside our souls have God's life in them. Just as the seed in the earth goes through changes because of the weather, we go through various patterns of thinking and behavior in response to what goes on in the world around us.

Sometimes we may become incompatible with our Creator and stray outside of God's boundary lines of the Word into transgression. Still, the sunshine and the showers from heaven come down to nourish that incorruptible seed within us. It may appear that someone you love is not growing, and you may think they are not going to make it. But it's just a matter of time before the life in the seed causes the little green shoot to break the surface of the ground.

Even when there is no evidence of growth in the lives of those around you, it doesn't mean that they are not growing. The grace of God is working inside them and they will bring forth fruit, which is evidence of growth, in due season. Remember, it is the grace of God that teaches us how to grow.

Chapter Three

CHRIST'S WALK IN US

In Christ we have our heavenly standing (Ephesians 2:6; Romans 5:2). In Him are the riches of grace. All of His ways are perfect. In *us*, however, Christ must have His earthly walk—a true expression of His character as He dwells in us and manifests Himself through us, His body.

In us, Christ has His walk on earth (2 Corinthians 6:16). That is the call of God, and the call is in the Word. Our vocation is His Word, categorical doctrine—how to think as He thinks while we grow in grace, rebounding when we fail.

How are we to walk? "With all lowliness, and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). "Lowliness" is *taipeinophrosune*, meaning that inwardly I think and live in the spirit of grace through humility produced by the Holy Spirit when I take up the Cross. Lowliness springs from a true esti-

mation of myself. Lowliness is what I am like inside as I think in grace, which is unmerited favor. It is thinking in love with a humility that is produced not by self-effacement, but by the Cross of Calvary. I experience the truth of my death, burial, and resurrection with Christ, and this produces humility in the presence of God who indwells me: "I will *dwell in* them, and *walk in* them…" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

Meekness

Next, we are to walk with "meekness"—*kaipraotes* in the Greek. No one who depends on human good and natural disposition is meek. People who get angry in a moment have never had the Spirit's fruit of meekness. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, *meekness*, and temperance (Galatians 5:22-23).

Meekness, then, is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that brings in a divine disposition. It is produced by being humbled and accepting retroactive positional truth for personal application and experience as I accept my vocation in the power of His Word. The truth of my position is retroactive, because two thousand years ago I was crucified, buried, and resurrected *in* Christ.

Meekness is in-wrought grace that takes over the capacity of my mind, emotions, conscience, self-consciousness, and volition. It renders my old sin nature dormant because of the activity of the retroactive truth of Calvary.

In myself, I can never produce meekness. If I have the right genetic makeup and moral training, I may try to counterfeit it through human goodness and natural disposition, but I can never produce genuine meekness.

Longsuffering and Forbearance

Lowliness and meekness are produced in us through the words and power of the Holy Spirit, which give us the ability to abide in the call. Then we are called to walk with "longsuffering." The Greek word in Ephesians 4:2 is *makrothumia*, not *hupomone*. *Makrothumia* has to do with how I relate to people, while *hupomone* relates to circumstances. Longsuffering is an outward production of the Spirit. God gives us the capacity to be patient and suffer long in relationships with people. There is no reaction, no negativity, no eye-for-an-eye or tooth-for-a-tooth attitude.

Next, the Word of God says "*forbearing* one another in love." Forbearance works itself out joyfully, happily, peacefully, and kindly. We fore-

bear because of in-wrought grace, humility, and our retroactive life in the Word and the Spirit.

Now our state can correspond to our standing; our walk can reproduce our talk. All of a sudden, we realize that our position now becomes our condition. Our fellowship with each other relates to our relationship with Christ through the Finished Work.

We forbear one another "in love" (*en agape*). This means that love itself is forbearing. This is an obligation in missionary service, but it is something no one can do in his own strength. The Christian who forbears will benefit by having love work in him—a direct result of the Word of God working in his heart.

When a Christian who forbears in love receives the Word, he can accept people in love (Romans 15:7). They bear afflictions (2 Thessalonians 1:4), and they endure hardships (1 Corinthians 4:12). This is the fruit of forbearance, the mechanics of forbearing in the Word of God.

Peace in the soul doesn't just happen. Neither does lowliness or meekness just happen. Without surrender to God, there can be no conversion. After conversion comes consecration. Then, as I concentrate on the Word, every room in my soul receives the Spirit of the Word and

the Word of the Spirit. Finally, as I apply the truth that Christ has conquered *for* me, *as* me, on the Cross, then I can be more than a conqueror in this life (Romans 8:37).

Keeping Unity

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Unity doesn't happen by itself. It happens when a Christian practices Ephesians 4:1-2. "Endeavouring" (*spoudazo*) means I am always to choose positively regarding the call, walking worthy with all lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance. As I make right decisions, the truth will take its place in my experience, *keeping* the unity of the Spirit. "Keep" is *tereo,* which implies that I guard and keep a close watch on the unity God has given through the Spirit by making right choices. I choose the thing that will bring me into an eternal purpose among all the members in particular, in the Body of Christ.

So, as we keep the unity of the Spirit "in the bond of peace," tranquillity is produced because our mind is stayed on God (Isaiah 26:3). Also, "in every thing by prayer and supplication" we make these requests known to God (see Philippians 4:6-7).

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism…

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Ephesians 4:4). The hope of our calling originates in us through our fellowship with the Holy Spirit and a doctrinal lifestyle.

Ephesians 4:4-6 speaks of seven unities: "…one *body*, and one *Spirit*…one *hope* of your calling, one *Lord*, one *faith*, one *baptism*, one *God* and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Why is there so much division throughout the churches of Jesus Christ? It is because people do not take the summons seriously; therefore, they do not define the call of God for their lives.

Controlled by the Spirit

The Trinity dwells within each of us. If the one Spirit is controlling the one Body, and one Father is above all with one Lord (the Son) executing the Father's plan within us, then why is there so much division? First Corinthians 1:10 tells us that Christ cannot be divided. Yet division takes place when the Holy Spirit isn't allowed to take control and the Father's plan is forgotten. The Son's characteristics and the Finished Work are neglected, the Holy Spirit is

grieved, and Christianity is reduced to limited dimensions because the whole counsel of God is ignored.

We must begin to take on the *whole* counsel—every Word of God—and grow in it until we finally become mature in practical application of "one faith," which also speaks of categorical doctrine, for faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

The "one baptism" speaks of the Holy Spirit baptizing each of us into the Body of Christ at the point of our salvation. The Holy Spirit baptizes us into positional union with Jesus Christ. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

CONCLUSION

More than ever, we need to realize our vocation as it is expressed in us through the Word of God by the Spirit. Our analysis of truth must become applied doctrine in the details of life. Paul beseeches us to walk worthy of the call so that we would be transformed by the revelation of doctrine, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith...unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Our call is not something that we subjectively respond to in human ability and emotion. It is a summons defined from heaven. It is holy, and it sets us apart in this world as we walk in obedience by faith in the Finished Work.

Within us, a great work is being accomplished. We are being steadily transformed as faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word. This definition in our souls will bring outward victories and a great testimony to the faithfulness of God.

Demolish the Emotional Walls

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

People often find comfort within walls. Walls almost always speak of protection, separating whatever is within from hostile outside forces. In Zechariah 2:5, God Himself is a wall of fire round about believers, protecting us from the attacks of our enemy, Satan.

There are, however, walls of division where oneness should be. Often, we build walls to "protect" ourselves from the ones who care the most. These walls are usually a product of unhealthy emotions, and they can prevent us from having godly relationships. Though the cause of a problem may be hidden, scars from old wounds may remain in our unconscious mind, feeding our emotions with thoughts that produce negative reactions.

Though we are quick to play the blame game, the cause of many problems in our emotions is not a person or an event, but a wrong relationship between us and God. This booklet

shows that the walls of division—whether between a brother against his brother or a man against himself—need not exist.

When Jesus Christ died for us at Calvary, He broke down the middle wall of partition that separated us from the healing love of God. That alone will demolish the emotional walls that divide.

Chapter One

EXAMINING THE SOUL STRUCTURE

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

"Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats:

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

"The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words" (Proverbs 23:6-8).

"The spirit of a man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the [emotions]" (Proverbs 20:27).

"But there is a spirit in man: and the inspira-

tion of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8).

God created man in His own image. Just as He is three distinct Persons in one—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—so we were designed to function with three distinct parts: the physical body, the human spirit, and the soul.

The soul of a man is his essence. The Bible often refers to the soul as the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). It includes the operations of the mind, volition, self-consciousness, conscience, and the emotions. For many people, the most common problems—physical, spiritual, and mental—are linked to the emotions.

To understand emotions, first we need to understand how thoughts are processed.* The left hemisphere of the brain is where information is first received. Sometimes referred to as the perceptive lobe, it is the place of first impressions, awareness, and knowledge. Anything we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or otherwise sense is recognized here first.

From the perceptive area, the incoming information must be processed by transferring data to the right side of the brain where it becomes practical—ready to be applied.

Naturally we are self-conscious, but the

human spirit, designed to function in the right side of the brain, is God-conscious. It is the lamp of God's revelation to the soul (Proverbs 20:27; Job 32:8), imparting the breath of God and the life of God. In a Spirit-filled Christian, perceptions are processed through the human spirit, by the Holy Spirit, to the mind.

Through the transforming power of God (*en - ergeia*), the Holy Spirit transfers what we perceive from the Word of God, through the human spirit to the soul. There the Word of God becomes available, and we can apply it to our situation. As we purpose to have a daily intake of Bible doctrine, the Word of God goes into the new heart (Ezekiel 36:26-27), giving us a new frame of reference, divine viewpoint, and a new premise for thinking and meditation. This provides us with new conclusions for making decisions.

Detours after the Fall

Because of the Fall, all men since Adam are born with a lifeless human spirit. That presents a problem, since the human spirit is the only place where God communes with man. So, until the spirit of a man is quickened by the Holy Spirit of God, he has no way to operate with the mind

of Christ. As a result, the perceptions of the unsaved individual and the carnal believer (one who has grieved or quenched the Holy Spirit) are transferred directly to the soul. Having bypassed the cleansing power of the Cross in the human spirit, those perceptions now affect the emotions.

The emotions, which are part of the soul, were designed to respond to and appreciate the things of God. According to Jeremiah 17:10, the plural form of *kilyah* (translated as "reins" in the King James Bible) speaks of the emotions as having two parts.**

The "upper" emotion represents spiritual capacity. Connected to the human spirit, the upper emotion receives the truth and life that is stored in the memory center by the Holy Spirit. Operating from the upper emotion helps us to experience victory, courage, happiness, peace, and joy that is our strength.

When the human spirit is not functioning, the "lower" emotion often becomes dominant. The lower emotion deals with temporal values and security for the flesh. Living in this emotion causes a person to be troubled most of the time because it does not receive eternal provisions from God for life.

Volition—the ability and freedom to make choices—was God's first gift to man. It gives us a choice to go either positive or negative toward God's initiations. The old sin nature was imputed to us from Adam, but it was crucified with Christ at Calvary. Therefore, if we agree that we are dead indeed with Christ, the old nature can stay dead, powerless, as we choose to take up our Cross daily. Otherwise, we can choose to activate the old sin nature through negative volition toward God.

The Cause of Separation

"Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images" (Hosea 10:2).

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8).

When the old sin nature is connected to the lower emotion, the first thing to happen is that the heart becomes divided, even in a Christian. This makes a man "double-minded" (*dipsuchos*, in the Greek). The divided soul operates either through the new heart given by Christ or the old heart inherited from Adam.

A divided heart immediately affects relationships as it becomes negative. Negativity, in

the form of bitterness and mistrust, is established in the lower emotion. If it goes unchecked, walls of separation go up. There is a lack of forgiveness, a lack of grace, and a lack of God's love towards the other party.

Next comes the blame game. The person who lets these walls go up will blame someone else for the way he feels in his emotions (which are now controlled by the temporal "lower" emotion).

Blaming others is usually followed by name-calling. The Pharisees called the Gentiles "dogs" (Matthew 15:26). Name-calling springs from arrogance and pride with the false notion that we are better than another person.

Right Choices, Great Rewards

The greatest rewards given by God when we stand before Him will be given for what we have done in our bodies (2 Corinthians 5:10-12) —for choices we have made along the way. Choose to stay positive, agreeing with God, and we will live in the consequences of God's love, God's mercy, and God's grace. But if we choose to go negative, there will be division and separation and we will reap the effect of the negativity that we sow.

Sadly, Satan has been very successful in bringing division and separation into the sacred institutions of marriage and family. But when the upper emotion is in its proper relationship to the human spirit, connected to God-consciousness and being filled with wisdom, we will produce life, divine vitality, and the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We will truly love others with God's love.

Do everything you can before God to have godly relationships. Be very kind, very gracious, and always forgiving. Build up one another and offer understanding, even when you are weary and tired. Give honor and esteem as unto the Lord. This will bring some of the greatest rewards in heaven (I Corinthians 3:14).

**For more about thought processes in the soul, we suggest reading* The Hearing Heart, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

**Living in the Spirit, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2002, clearly describes the principle of two emotions.*

Chapter Two

DRAWN NEAR BY LOVE

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

"Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

"And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

"And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (Ephesians 2:13-17).

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring

themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

"But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you" (2 Corinthians 10:12-13).

Jesus Christ did away with the problems of the heart on Calvary. He abolished separation and tore down the walls that separated us from the Holy presence of God. Today, He wants to remove the walls that divide where oneness should be. He wants to remove blaming and name-calling through His Blood that was shed on the Cross of Calvary. Our love has a source on the resurrection side of Calvary. We don't have to blame others, compare ourselves to others, or measure ourselves by others.

Instead, we can love with God's love the way one beautiful Christian woman I know did. She was 21, a junior in college, when she was left partially paralyzed after a drunken driver crashed his car into her car at a high speed.

From the hospital, she called him at the jail and said, "If there is any bail, I want to post it for you. I want to help you because I am sure you are filled with shame and guilt right now."

Later, she led this man to the Lord and then pleaded with the judge to be lenient with him. Why? This 21-year-old woman did not have enmity in her heart. Her upper emotion was connected to her human spirit. There was no wall separating her from Christ's compassion, and she lived in an eternal value system. Rather than live with bitterness and resentment, she took this opportunity to show unconditional love toward someone who had hurt her.

Love Breaks Through

Emotional walls go up so easily.

Years before she was married, a woman had been raped, but she never told her husband about it. She admitted to me that she became mean and hateful to her husband, whom she described as a wonderful man—"one of the best."

Aseries of messages on the power of love released her totally. She told her husband the story and asked him to forgive her for being so mean and hateful toward him. They were recently baptized together and are now enjoying a magnificent life as born-again believers.

Love broke through the wall of partition, bringing the healing presence of God into this woman's emotions. "I was blaming my husband

for something another man did to me," she said. "I was so wounded, and I could not get delivered." The love of God broke down that wall.

Two brothers I know became enemies. They would not speak to each other. There was plenty of blaming and name-calling until a terrible accident claimed the lives of one brother's wife and daughter. The pastor in that town visited the families, and several members were led gloriously to Christ.

Finally, at the end of a memorial service, the brother who lost his wife and daughter embraced the brother with whom he had been so angry. He wouldn't let him go. Today, they are closer than any brothers I know.

The walls of division are brought down through the Cross of Christ. He tears down the walls we have been conditioned to raise up through the years. Jesus Christ is in the breaking-down-walls business to release our emotions.

Chapter Three

BRIDGES ACROSS THE BREACH

"Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; [though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;] (Nehemiah 6:1).

"He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them" (2 Chronicles 29:3).

"If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar" (Song of Solomon 8:9).

Beyond tearing down the walls in our emotions, Jesus Christ also repairs the breaches and fortifies His walls of protection. Godly walls of categorical doctrine can be established in our souls—walls of gold and silver, walls of truth, proven in fiery trials.

Jesus Christ takes a divided heart and floods it with the filling of His Holy Spirit, His grace, His mercy, the forgiveness of His Cross, and a peace that is mature because of His impartation of thinking. He brings us into a large place and rewards us according to the righteousness He gives us (see Psalm 18:19-20). Our coasts, our hearts, are enlarged because the walls of partition are gone.

Peace and Reconciliation

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:20).

When the walls come down, there is a bridge. We can meet others on that bridge of love and grace. The blood that Christ shed brings peace and reconciliation through the Cross. I can relate to others without putting up walls, regardless of how they relate to me. Great peace have we who love Christ Jesus—*nothing* offends us (Psalm 119:165).

Have you been offended recently? If so, it means that you don't have an intimate relationship with the One who breaks down the walls of offense.

If anyone had a right to raise up a wall and keep it up, it was Joseph, the son of Jacob. In Genesis 37-45, his brothers put up their own emotional walls against him and it led them to sell him into slavery. Later, Joseph was falsely accused by his boss Potiphar's wife of attacking her, and he wound up in jail for several years. Another wall could have gone up right there. Instead, he lived before God and the seeds of the Word of God he sowed in his life sprung up and bore fruit on branches that grew beyond the physical walls around him.

God said of him, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall" (Genesis 49:22).

Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12) and "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44). We must not let emotional walls come between us. Do not say even one unkind word about your enemies. We have been given a silver tongue of redemption (Proverbs 10:20). Let God's redeeming love demolish every wall that is not of Him.

CONCLUSION

God has given us a ministry of reconciliation. We preach the glorious Gospel, liberated from the bondage of our emotions. We know what it means to be free in Christ.

Many Christians have walls in their emotions. There is no Cross in their relationships, thus there is no unconditional love or resurrection power. There is no divine patience, no waiting upon God.

Are you in this state? Receive something that will really make a difference in helping your mind, your emotions, and your conscience. Let the river of the Holy Spirit produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit through your streams of consciousness so that your heart can think with God. Receive the mind of Christ.

This will not happen because we merit it. It will happen because we take advantage of the opportunities, provisions, and privileges that Christ achieved on our behalf. We can enjoy the

tremendous privilege of being free. We can have glorious liberty from the wounds of childhood, from the bondage of Satan's infiltration.

This can happen when we set the Lord before our faces and have only God between us (Psalm 16:8; 1 Samuel 20:42).

Designed for Victory

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INTRODUCTION

Your vocation—the specific call of God in His overall plan for your life—was designed by God to give you a life of victory.

In order to live in our vocation, each of us must be rooted and grounded in the Word of God. This is why I encourage high school graduates to get one year of Bible college before they go on to another educational institution. In doing this, they learn how to think with God. Bible college is the highest form of education. Through it, God clarifies His plan in people's lives.

God has a work in His Kingdom specifically designed for each one of us. Whatever we do in our occupations in the world, everything should be done to the glory of God.

If we do not take up our Cross, then we will quit our call. Without the Cross, we won't give His call the proper priority.

Satan wants to get the believer to live in defeat. He wants to draw each of us away from

God's specific call. My prayer is that this booklet will inspire you to seek God first and experience the victory that is found in living in God's plan for our lives.

Chapter One

LOVE THAT COMES FROM LIFE

"And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 4:21-5:3).

"When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said" (John 2:22).

Recently, a pastor shared with me that out of twelve students who were doing great five years

ago—all but one of them is now living in sin, with some kind of addiction. The call of God, plans for the future, and eternal rewards were lost because of fulfilling elevated lust patterns. During those times, because of wrong choices, these young people lost ground they had gained spiritually throughout the year with God. Wrong decisions led to rebellion and resulted in some becoming casualties in the plan of God.

This is the problem: We must understand that God's resurrection life comes through faith. God gives us a love that comes through that life—love that comes through the resurrection life of God when the Holy Spirit is allowed to speak to our human spirit day in and day out.

No one can love his brother or sister unless he is rightly related to God. A right relationship with God always gives me the right attitude with my brothers and my sisters.

The Degrees of Hate

One way to stop living victoriously is to live in some form of hate. Hate is characterized in many different ways.

In the original language, "hate" simply means putting something below God in order of importance. If I rate anything above God in my

life, then that is an expression of "hatred" toward God. It may not be vicious hatred, but it is hatred nonetheless.

Hatred is also expressed when I refuse to have a right relationship in my marriage, with my friends, or within the Body of Christ. Wrong attitudes in my relationships reveal a wrong relationship with God.

Criticism reveals a third form of hatred. If I live in arrogance as an established way of life, I will probably be a critical person. In being critical, I exalt myself above God, just as Satan did when he pronounced the five "I wills" in Isaiah 14:12-15: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

Another form of "hate" is to dislike something because of personal preference and not because of spiritual integrity. One example is musical taste. Love God so much that you will

love others instead of criticizing them for their music. Some get blessed by one style of music, others get blessed by another style. Because we desire to bless the entire Body of Christ, we have a diversity of music in our services.

The final form of hatred is vicious in its expression. It involves hurting and assassinating someone's character. Anyone who lives in this kind of hatred is obviously living in sin. They must repent and put God first.

Love Needs an Object

In the act of loving, there is a process of initiation and response. God's life only comes through faith, and love only comes through life. Love is an action, not a feeling, though the results of love often produce feelings. Love needs an object. The only visible objects to whom love can be expressed are the children of God in the family of God.

God's attitude toward everyone is this: He loves each one of us enough to die for us. If we say that we love God whom we cannot see, our attitude should be one of loving the brother in Christ whom we can see. This is the proof of our love. It is genuine love that is not based upon sentimentality and emotional soul power. It is a

love based upon a faith that serves by love (Galatians 5:6, 13).

For this reason, people must learn to avoid the wrong crowd. We must be Spirit-filled in our relationships with others and maintain those relationships through prayer and grace.

The Word of God clearly teaches that love is not a feeling. Love is an action that needs an object.

Chapter Two

TRUST GOD THROUGH OBEDIENCE

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:14-22).

Laodicea was not a "bad" church. The people there were neither hot nor cold, but it wasn't a bad church. Jesus was saying to these people, "Buy something better than the gold you are accustomed to. Buy of Me spiritual riches that will give you eternal wealth." Then He said, "Let Me anoint your eyes," speaking of eyes that enable you to see God with your spirit. Jesus was saying, in effect, "Buy of Me and trust Me for the consequences of your obedience."

We need to trust God for the consequences of our obedience. He will always bless obedience. For example: church attendance. The more we obey and worship God by coming to church on time and participating in prayer and singing, the more we will be healed, touched, blessed,

and used. We will be filled with power, with meekness, with humility, with grace, and with love.

As a result of our obedience, we will enter a life that comes through faith and a love that comes through light and life. That life of love will go out to others and bring many to Christ as it loves the brethren and glorifies God.

Resurrections Begin with Crucifixions

God needs someone just like you. He has made every one of us to be effective, productive, successful, and blessed. God has made a provision for us to go forth unto maturity. It is crucial that we understand this and redeem the time we have because the days are evil.

None of us knows how much time we have here on earth. Getting to know God is the reason we are alive. Preparing to meet God is why we are here. Our occupation is an opportunity to touch lives because of what we have received from God.

We are not here so that people can be pleased with where we went to college and to enjoy some intellectual symbol of success. Often, Bible college is made out to be a lesser thing. But the "less" is blessed by the Greater (see Hebrews

7:7) as we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

God never made a soul for defeat. He never redeemed a person only to let that one be defeated. God *always* provides for a victory. Receive this truth. Absorb it, ponder it, meditate upon it, reflect upon it, believe it, and go forward in it.

People are so afraid to let death come into their marriages. Yet, if a marriage doesn't die, it can never be resurrected, therefore it will not have the power of God in it. The great preacher Lester Roloff had a sign on his wall that said, "There can never be a resurrection unless there is a crucifixion." This is so true.

To experience death, you have to be willing to risk things. Take risks by faith, and God will take care of you if you are wise, gracious, and kind. Go forward in His wisdom.

Chapter Three

EQUIPPED TO GO FORWARD

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts

of the wicked.

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:10-19).

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

"Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:13-16).

Many Christians today do not know how to use the armor God has given them. They never think of it, because they are just too occupied with their personal lives. But if the armor is not put on, we cannot fulfill God's plan for victory.

With a "breastplate" of imparted righteous-

ness and "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel," we are ready to go against the enemy. We can walk in the Spirit, fulfilling the Word of God instead of fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. The "helmet" of salvation means that we have the mind of the Finished Work that protects our soul as the Holy Spirit speaks to our human spirit. It is important to pray every day that the Holy Spirit will speak to your human spirit, for it is in our human spirit that we hear His still small voice.

The "shield of faith" protects us from all the fiery darts of the devil, which are targeted to poison and destroy our souls with an infection from Satan's kingdom. "The sword of the Spirit" is the Word of God, speaking of the doctrine that we are to learn, know, and absorb. We are to think of it, ponder it, live in it, and use it in practical ways every day.

In Revelation 3, Jesus said, "If you hear My voice, I will come in and sup with you." He is knocking on the doors of the hearts of every man and woman, wanting each one to hear His voice. Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. This means that every Christian needs a preacher, a pastor-teacher who lays down his life to pro-

claim and teach the Word of God.

Delight in Doctrine

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

"Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

"For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1:1-6).

Delight in the doctrine of God and you won't have a second-hand religion. My hope is that you will have a strong vertical relationship with God (see John 15:1-7). Learn to initiate wisdom, promises, power, and prayer in a gracious way with your loved ones. As salt of the earth and a light of the world, you can influence peo-

ple to follow God.

By delighting in doctrine day and night, we will prosper spiritually and physically. God has made us to be blessed. Our "leaf"—referring to our entire inner life—will not wither or become dried up. We won't be sucked into the things of Satan. Instead, we will be as trees planted by a river, bringing forth fruit in season.

Behind us is god's Omnipotence, and we were made for victory, so we can go forward with Him.

Get Up, Go On, Go Forth

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.

"I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness" (Micah 7:8-9).

If we despair, we go on no matter what happens. If we awake discouraged, we get up and go on anyway. If we become depressed, we get up and go on anyway. We were not made for failure. We were made to be victorious.

We get up, and we go on—again and again.

We go forth. We won't let ourselves be deceived by satanic concepts, precepts, and notions. We won't let ourselves be ruled by the superficiality of sentimentality, loving pleasure more than loving God.

Joseph was accused of rape, lied about, and thrown into prison by Potiphar and his wife. Much later, God promoted him and he became second in command over the empire of Egypt. Daniel was carried away as a slave to Babylon, but the Babylonian rulers were impressed by his character. He was promoted to a high position and allowed to study in their libraries, among the scholars. God promoted Daniel when he was supposed to be a slave.

According to Revelation 11, during the Great Tribulation, two witnesses sent by God to testify of the Gospel will be assassinated and left in the street as the world celebrates over their dead bodies. But these witnesses will rise again. God will resurrect them before the eyes of the world, and Satan will once again be defeated and embarrassed just as he was when Jesus came forth from the grave.

Another person who had a great personal struggle was the apostle Paul (see Romans 7). He began to live a victorious life in Romans 8,

through the work of the Holy Spirit in him.

Designed for victory, all of these men triumphed because of their obedience to the plan of God.

CONCLUSION

We are led into victory by the Holy Spirit.

The Word of God has so much to say about how love is shown through obedience. Obedience is experiencing the Holy Spirit in God's design for our victory. It is only the Holy Spirit who interprets the Scriptures for us (see 1 Corinthians 2:9-14). It is only the Holy Spirit who can minister to us the spirit of adoption (Galatians 4:4-6). It is only the Holy Spirit who bears witness with our human spirit (Romans 8:16).

Only the Holy Spirit shows us ownership of our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The Holy Spirit fills us and indwells us (Acts 2:4). Only the Holy Spirit brings truth into our memory center supernaturally and recalls that truth when we need it (John 14:26). It is the Holy Spirit who serves us, possesses us, and empowers us to reign over the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

The Holy Spirit produces in us the fruit of

love, which results in joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. It is the Holy Spirit who inspires truth in the preacher.

The Holy Spirit intercedes for believers and commissions missionaries. The Holy Spirit oversees the Church, giving wisdom, teaching, and serving believers, wherever they are. This is the Spirit of burning, the Spirit of glory, the Spirit of promise, and the Spirit of wisdom.

By this Spirit, understand your design for victory. By this Spirit, pray without ceasing. In other words, have an attitude of being ready to pray at any moment. Praise God. Worship God. Love God. Concentrate on God. Enter into a response with God. Fulfill your design by going on in victory.

Developing Disciples

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

God is in the business of building His Church. He wants His house to be full, and His way of doing that is by making disciples.

A disciple, by definition, is a learner. This dynamic process, which is governed by the Holy Spirit, involves men and women who receive life from God through His Word and who are willing to pass on that life to others.

Throughout the Bible, we find great demonstrations of this discipling process at work. Jesus Himself spent three years personally investing in people—preaching, loving, and teaching men and women who wanted to learn. Moses spoke face-to-face with God and then shared what he received from God with Joshua. These exchanges prepared Joshua to take the lead as Israel was being prepared to cross into the Promised Land.

This booklet examines God's process of developing disciples through His Word and His

Spirit, and it reveals how He raises up a team of teachable believers who go forward in His purpose and plan—bringing the Gospel to all men, everywhere, to give glory to God.

Chapter One

THE REALIZATION OF DIVINE EXPRESSION

"As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses" (Joshua 11:15).

God raised up Moses, and Moses taught Joshua what God had taught him. Notice that every single thing Moses told Joshua to do, Joshua did. Obedience versus lip service: That was the whole key to Israel's success in the Promised Land.

This is Christianity at its height, at its best. Making disciples is Christianity in motion, Christianity in action, Christianity in expression. This is divine expression that results in a divine realization and is then followed by a divine manifestation. It leads to an experience of what God had in mind when He commanded Moses.

God said, "This is the way it goes, Moses. Do

you understand?"

"Yes, Lord, I understand," Moses responded.

"Listen very carefully, Moses, and everything I teach you, you are to teach Joshua. Will you do that?

"Yes, Lord, I will."

"Everything you teach Joshua, Joshua will teach to the people—to Caleb and all the others."

The content of the substance and meaning of God's message was very clear, very precise, and all inclusive. God's purpose for Moses included teaching Joshua and discipling him.

A Realization of What God Has For Us

Our ministry should always be responding to God, the Great Initiator, in appreciation of His expression to us and in the application of His manifestation through us. We want to experience a similar realization of all that God was to Moses, all that He was to Joshua, and all that He became to the people of Israel.

But as we apply this principle, is it enough that we go out and win souls, and that the people we teach also win souls and bring them to church? The answer is no.

Developing disciples involves bringing people to the place of illumination of the Word of

God. Our minds and bodies receive millions of vibrations in the course of a day. The unconscious mind begins to reciprocate these vibrations, grasping words that are hidden in the subconscious mind and bringing them into our conscious minds.

When these are godly vibrations, suddenly, through our faith-obedience, we arrive at what we call a revelation—a supernatural comprehension of some area of truth. The realization of revelation gives us illumination, which is the ability to walk in that truth through the Holy Spirit working in us. As we enter into this glorious place of illumination, we begin to discover God in the glorification of His truth.

The Light and the Glory

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17).

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he

shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13-14).

Only God can glorify truth. When truth reaches the subconscious mind, we do not fully comprehend it. We do not fully understand what it means. But as we begin to grasp this revelation of truth, we enter into illumination, and we begin to walk in the reality of God's nature in us.

Chapter Two

TRAINING PEOPLE ONE BY ONE

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

When we are saved, we receive the Holy Spirit. As we present ourselves to God daily (Romans 12:1) and purpose to study the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15), the Spirit fills us and the Word of God dwells in us richly. We are not subjective when we hear the Word preached, therefore we are not detached or distracted from God. Rather, we enter in to the illumination of a realization of a divine expression through a divine

manifestation. This helps our subconscious, subjective mind to understand the revelation given by God through the Holy Spirit.

Think about it!

God wants to show us how we can escape any self-destructive patterns of thinking so that our minds will enter into the truth of the Word. We can reciprocate our potential through the possibility of the revelation of these truths and the consistency of their correlation by experiencing them in our lives.

God taught Moses. It was just God and His man—that's all—and this man had an impediment with his speech. God was very, very thorough in teaching this man, both in His scope and His provision.

"Moses, I am teaching you the best I can right now, considering your limited capacity and limited understanding," God said. "Listen, because I want you to teach everything I am telling you to Joshua. It is really very simple. You simply need to hear Me and then tell him. Hear, tell. Tell him everything, and make sure Joshua understands it. He must understand it. Leave nothing out. None of what I teach you must be left undone with Joshua."

Success Comes with Simplicity

Successfully, and with great simplicity, Moses began to enter into supernatural reception and a supernatural experience of understanding God's plan. Moses taught Joshua, and Joshua taught the people of Israel. It is a beautiful process.

We are called to develop disciples. The way to win in life as a Christian is simply in passing on what God communicates—person to person to person. I disciple Tom, then Tom disciples Joe, and Joe disciples Sam, and on and on it goes. Before we know it, we have a whole group of disciples—fervent learners with godly convictions. And all they are doing is telling others what God told them and helping them to apply it.

One by one—that is how disciples are developed. It goes beyond big crowds. It goes way beyond buildings. It extends beyond all that is superficial. By developing disciples, we enter into a ministry filled with the strength of corporate oneness—the one new man of Ephesians 2:15.

If the fifth man in the chain receives the exact thing from God's Word that was taught the second man (through God's Word), then we all have the same things to fellowship around.

Imagine the effect of this development process when it reaches the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth person!

By this stage, any church can flourish, nourishing others and springing up toward heaven. This is how the New Testament Church of Acts 2 was so beautifully developed.

A strong, fervent local assembly is built when we refuse to fragment God's truth. This is how God builds a ministry—in a region, a nation, or even a continent. It will work anywhere and everywhere—North America, South America, Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe. This is how God builds His Church—by making disciples, one by one.

Chapter Three

HUMILITY, MEEKNESS, AND A TEACHABLE SPIRIT

God's process of discipleship requires concentration by every individual involved in the process. If I misunderstand what is being communicated to me from God's Word, or if I fragment the progression of God's words as they were communicated from God to Moses to Joshua, then part of the ministry will get off. Remember that the words went from God to Moses to Joshua, exactly as God first expressed Himself. But down the road, men perverted the words that they had heard with subjective thinking.

You would be shocked and amazed if you realized the games that Satan has in store to stop fruitful ministries from developing disciples. There are so many schemes and approaches Satan uses to interfere in our lives.

Satan's goal is always to establish the element

of control in relationships. The devil is all about control. He would rather have one man control another man. When that happens, instead of developing a disciple, he makes a person think a certain way, but without the heart and motivation of God.

When someone starts exercising control over another person, introspection often comes in. This person being controlled may think he isn't trying hard enough. He begins to look within and confesses negativity, "I am not a very good disciple."

If this negative relationship continues, you end up with two very legalistic believers. Their entire program will be built on control, not on receiving the truth from God.

Growth Leads to Growth

Here is how God's discipleship process should work.

I share what God gives me, and a man is drawn to it. He is very studious and very sensitive. He observes carefully because he sees results. Our hearts are knit together in the knowledge of God's love. My communication and my teaching build him up. As he is edified, he then goes on to build up someone else in

God's truth.

As he continues to learn in the preciseness of correlation of the Scriptures and the progression of revelation and illumination of God's truth, he passes on what he has learned to someone else, and God makes another great disciple.

It is vital to understand that each man stands alone before God (Romans 14:4). I may be the avenue to teach him and develop him, but he learns to hear from God for himself, with his own vertical relationship. The Holy Spirit leads him in his own walk. We still have a connection because we have the same mind (Romans 12:16), and the origin of our communication came from God. The Holy Spirit teaches this man in the freshness of revelation, and he advances in the same structural truth.

Of course, this happens with women as well. They get hold of this glorious principle, and as they grasp it, they share it, and they grow in it. Some women become spiritually very deep, and their lives and conversation serve to disciple others.

The Lord commanded Moses to speak to Israel for Him, and he said, "But Lord, I have a speech impediment! No one will listen to me."

The Lord commanded me to study, and I

said, “But God, I have no education.”

God answers us just as He answered Moses and any man who ever feared the thought of being used by God. “Never mind that—*I* am going to teach you. All you need is My Word and the Holy Spirit and a contrite heart.”

Humility and meekness can bring in a teachable spirit into anyone’s heart. God knew everything about our lives before we were saved. He uses men who are broken and who are teachable. God deals with everyone differently; but in every case, His program is to raise up godly men and women. That has always been his program. He builds His Church by developing disciples, using the foolish things to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27).

CONCLUSION

This is the essence of discipleship: We take what we have learned from God and invest it in others. We invest love, and we invest grace. We invest our hearts and minds and souls. We reveal how much God loves us, and we express that love to others.

God needs disciples and He needs His disciples to disciple others, prayerfully and with edification. There may be times when gracious correction is administered. But everything God initiates is in love and in the meekness and humility of the Holy Spirit.

One Christian receives from God, and then he shares what he has received with another believer. That one passes what he has learned on to someone else. That is how this life of God is revealed. This is the only way God has established to develop fervent, active assemblies that will go forward with Him in His plan to reach the world with the Gospel.

Digging Ditches by Faith

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INTRODUCTION

Everything about the world is often aimed at stimulating our senses and our intellect without God. On one hand, there is a what-you-see is-what-you-get mentality. On another hand, we are told to "follow your heart," and let your feelings be your guide. But God asks us to walk by faith, without benefit of sight or feelings.

Walking by faith may require that we do something just because God tells us to do it. The Lord has given us emotions and insight so we can appreciate and respond to Him. Still, there are times that He ordains when we feel nothing and see nothing in our relationship with God.

It is during these times that we must practice what we have heard, what we know is truth, and begin to dig ditches by faith. As this booklet will reveal, when we allow the Holy Spirit to teach us inwardly, we develop a capacity that clears the way for Him to bring us great victories outwardly.

Chapter One

THE NEED TO BE SPIRIT-TAUGHT

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

"But the *natural* man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

"But he that is *spiritual* judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto *carnal*, even as unto babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:13-16; 3:1).

There are three kinds of men who dwell on this earth. The "natural man" referred to in this passage is *psuchikos* in the Greek. He is not re-

generated or renewed by the Holy Spirit. Rather, his soul houses the *kosmos*, which is Satan's world system on earth (Ephesians 2:2); therefore, because his spirit has not been quickened, his soul dominates his existence and he is "soulish."

"He that is spiritual" (*pneumatikos* in the Greek) speaks of one whose soul houses the Spirit of God (John 16:12-15). Filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit, this person can receive the mind of Christ, and his life reveals the fruit of the Spirit. Experiencing his position as seated in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:6), his relationship with God is alive and personal, unhindered by circumstances or atmospheric projections.

First Corinthians 3:1, however, speaks of the "carnal" man (*sarkikos* in the Greek). This man has been regenerated, but because he has not allowed the Word of God to take root in his life, he walks in the flesh like the natural man (Romans 8:3-6). Without a life of faith, he produces only dead works that pertain to the flesh and worldly things.

Be Careful How You Hear

Though they are unaware of it, many people have a soul-power relationship with the Word of

God. As long as their emotions are being stirred and they sense God's presence, they can receive the message. But when they are preoccupied with self through the soul, they lack the capacity to receive the diversity of God's modes of expression. If, for example, God uses a teaching anointing and the pastor accurately reflects God's mood for that message, it may not be a "soul-stirring" message but a very precise, low-keyed, point-by-point presentation. Unfortunately, the hearer who lacks spiritual discernment will also lack appreciation for the message God ordained for his life at that time.

Whenever we study or listen to a message from the Word of God, it is crucial that we do not listen with our natural, soulish capacity. Each of us has a unique emotional and physical makeup, and all of us have faced a variety of experiences in past and current situations. Therefore, if we listen with our human understanding, we can come up with many different interpretations and wrong conclusions.

Unless we are tuned in to the Holy Spirit, the situations we face in life and the pressures we are under will color our perception of what we hear. The soul is a vital, integral part of every man, containing the conscience, self-conscious-

ness, emotions, volition, and mind. Still, the natural capacity of the soul can never instruct us in the things of God. The things of God are only revealed by the Spirit of God.

Rising Above It All

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

It is vital for the spiritual man to operate with his human spirit leading his soul, and not the other way around. It is unusual, though, for a person to be able to rightly divide the difference between the two processes. Even a preacher can preach through his soul, and there may be nothing noticeably wrong with his message, yet it lacks something. The key is in the fruit of the message and the impact it has in the Kingdom of God.

For example, the soul naturally carries feelings from previous experiences into the present capacity of today. So if you have gone without sleep, your soul cannot be quickened and you will experience legitimate tiredness. If, however, you are hearing the Word in your human spirit,

the quickening process of Romans 8:11 takes place. The Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead will quicken you. There will be an impact on your soul, and your body will respond to that process.

Many people get a vision for their life, but they do not allow the vision to invade their human spirit. When God doesn't come through as they think He should, the vision is transferred to their soul where they try to fulfill the vision in the flesh. That is why a carnal person can hear a message, love it, and respect it. But if the soulish nature of the carnal man does not receive something from God that has to do with his vision, and if the vision does not come to pass, he becomes discouraged and disheartened.

There are precious times when the Holy Spirit breaks a preacher and causes him to weep while he speaks; however, if those are the only times you are blessed by a message, then you are living in carnality. There is no record of Jesus weeping His way through the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11) or when He addressed the Pharisees (Matthew 23:13-39). Of course there were occasions when He wept and broke down in tears—but not during *those* messages.

So we see that the soul does not possess the

faith of Jesus Christ. It is self-conscious, and self-consciousness neither offers nor produces faith in God. The soul offers only human faith in self-consciousness through self-awareness. What we need is to have the Holy Spirit quicken us—body, soul, and spirit—so we may be God-conscious through the faith of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two

OPERATING IN THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

"For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:16-20).

The Limits of Our Own Faith

As we have seen, the soul is able to produce in us a faith in our human ability. Human faith has great power. Scores of unsaved businessmen and entrepreneurs have become multimillionaires through tremendous human faith in their abilities. There is just one problem: Their faith is limited to self-consciousness through self-awareness and the capacity and ability of the human soul.

Because of the limitation of human faith, people who do not possess a great natural capacity and ability cannot overcome the obstacles to personal success. So many alcoholics and drug addicts cannot leave their addictions. Their bodies and their souls have become very needy. Occasionally, they may allow someone to help them, but the help they accept is based upon very temporary reasons to fulfill the immediate need in their souls.

This limitation is also a reason why some pastors are defeated in almost everything they do for God. They try with all their hearts to do something for the Lord, but things never seem to work out. Why? The self-consciousness of human faith in the natural ability of their hu-

manity falls short. They use the natural to try to generate supernatural results, and that is an impossible task.

The Cutting Edge

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

The Word of God divides the soul from the spirit. My human soul needs to be separated from my human spirit through meditating on and reflecting the truth. I must not attempt to do anything through my soul. When I receive the Word of God in my spirit, I may not feel any different than when I was just receiving the Word into my soul; however, I am very conscious of God in my human spirit, and I am also very conscious of faith. God is everything that He says He is, and He doesn't need my emotions to help Him out!

Released into Faith Rest

When I am being Spirit-taught, I do not require hearing from a certain personality or re-

ceiving special treatment in order to be blessed. The Holy Spirit blesses me and teaches me. God is involved with my capacity, and I derive faith from the Word that I hear. I am conscious of having the faith of Jesus Christ. That faith is produced by the Word that I hear, not by the self-consciousness of my soul.

Some people work up their emotions in the soul, and in their human capacities they produce extended prayer times. I thank God for every prayer that is prayed, but to be effective, the spirit, not the soul, must be involved.

When the human spirit is involved with our activities, our focus is to maintain our relationship with God. We don't try to work, or try to promote and produce a revival. Frankly, we just care about God and us. We just walk with Him—believing, trusting, praying, abiding, asking, and thanking Him. Whatever happens becomes a matter of supernatural faith that accepts God's sovereignty in the final analysis of any result.

Chapter Three

DISCIPLINE THAT CREATES CAPACITY

"But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may inquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

"And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

"And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

"And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not

that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

"But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

"And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches" (2 Kings 3:11-16)

The kingdoms of Israel, Edom, and Judah were joining forces to battle Moab. Jehoshaphat was alone in asking to hear from the prophet of God. Elisha was called and he gave the kings a word from God: "Make this valley full of ditches." And this speaks of discipline.

The word "disciple" (*mathetes* in the Greek text) refers to someone who is constantly under discipline. One of the challenges that all of us face as Christians is in establishing personal discipline. It is very easy for us to become immobile and stagnant in a certain type of situation. When are not functioning in personal discipline, we cannot work our way out of it. Like Jehoshaphat and his men, we need to discipline ourselves through the blueprints of God and through the divine map of God's instructions. Simply put, we need to hear from God and obey.

"God wants you to start digging ditches," Elisha said. "It's going to be hard work, so start right away. The enemy outnumbers you by a very large margin, so make the valley *full* of ditches. This is what God has told me to tell you."

Our ditches are not something we dig with a spade. They are the things God tells us to dig because of personal discipline in our spirit life. Our faithfulness to do this will always bring the victory.

"For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

"And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

"And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

"And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the coun-

try was filled with water" (2 Kings 3:17-20).

An Offering That Pleases God

After digging the ditches, the first thing the armies did was to present a "meat offering." Then, the waters came and filled in all the ditches. The Book of Leviticus, in chapters 3-5, describes the various offerings that God required of His people: the sin offering, the peace offering, the meal offering, and the meat offering. The meat offering speaks to us of total dedication and commitment to Christ, presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). The offering was done early in the morning, representing the godly nature and attitude of God's people in putting Him first.

The water came by the way of Edom (representing the flesh or the natural man). Something had to happen to the flesh. To walk with God, our flesh must be crucified with Christ. God takes our supernatural faith—enough to dig ditches—then, supernaturally, He brings the water of the Word through our humanity, baptizing us into His death, burial, and resurrection. But the water could not come in until the ditches were dug and the offerings presented.

It takes real humility to dig ditches. It takes

brokenness. If I desire success in my business, I have to dig ditches to deepen my capacity for success. I need to dig ditches so that I will not be insecure in my relationships with the people I love. If I want a healthy marriage, then I must dig ditches so that the water of the Word can come through the desert of my life, bringing refreshment and new life.

I must dig ditches so that I can properly relate to the Body of Christ. The water of the Word brought in by the Holy Spirit becomes a river of life to fill up my capacity, to fill up the ditches I have dug—because I heard from God and I chose to obey Him by faith.

Chapter Four

FAITH'S TRIUMPH OVER FEELINGS

"For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts."

"And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border.

"And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood:

"And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.

"And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country.

"And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees: only in Kir-haraseth left they the stones thereof; howbeit the slingers went about it, and smote it.

"And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not.

"Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land" (2 Kings 3:17, 21-27).

God told these kings that they would see no wind and no rain. In other words, the victory was not going to come through feelings of affirmation or sight. Our souls always want feelings and our souls always want something to see. But God would give Jehoshaphat and company neither. Only supernatural faith in the human spirit was going to work in this case.

The kings could have said, "Hey, it's only natural. We want to see the rain come. We want

to see the wind blow. Then, we will know that all of our work is going to make something happen."

But God said, "No, you won't feel a thing. Furthermore, you won't see a single drop of rain." By sight, nothing seemed to happen. But by morning, the ditches were filled with water, more than enough for a tremendous victory.

Overcomers through the Blood

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11).

The Moabites arrived on the scene ready for war. The sunrise made water in the ditches appear as red as blood. Thinking the armies of Edom, Israel, and Judah had destroyed each other in a violent civil war, Moab's soldiers charged into the valley, looking to gather the spoils. Instead, they ran straight into an ambush and were chased back to their own country. The soldiers of Israel, Edom, and Judah came at the Moabites from every side.

Moab, her army outnumbering her opponents by hundreds upon hundreds, got up that morning looking to claim territories; but she fin-

ished the day utterly destroyed as the armies on God's side destroyed her cities. Even the king of Moab became so desperate that he took his son and burnt him as an offering to the false gods of the Moabites (2 Kings 3:27).

The enemy retreated because the water that filled those ditches (which Israel dug by faith) looked like blood, because of the reflection of the morning sun. This is God's way to victory—through the water and the blood. All we have to do is back off and rest in Him. Then, our victories will come through the Word and the Blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10)

God wants us to dig ditches without regard to our feelings or our sight. He wants us to keep on digging as we develop a capacity for Him to work. This takes humility, but in His time He will lift us up.

I can remember so many times when there was nothing for us to do but dig ditches. There was nothing to see, nothing that made us feel like going on. It even began to look as though there was only one thing left to do: to quit.

But instead, we dug ditches.

God said, "How about digging some ditches?"

We said, "Lord, can we just see *some*thing—*anything*—to give us a hint of what you are doing?"

"No. Just keep on digging."

During much of that time, there were no feelings and nothing to hold on to for support.

With discipline, because of obedience, we dug ditches. It turned out to be a beautiful lesson. By God's Word and through the Blood of Christ, the great victories come. Like Israel, once we obey, we need to back off—resting in God's provision while the enemy is set up for certain defeat.

And now, having seen the hand of God in action, we have the capacity for even more success in His plan and purpose for us. "…In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

Discover the True Meaning

of Life

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INTRODUCTION

So many people face terrible things today. Technology has brought the world to our living rooms. Anyone who has a television, radio, or Internet connection has immediate access to unedited events as they happen around the world. Even our vocabulary has been expanded to include words such as realtime, surroundsound. We don't just read reports about the ravages of war and terrorism. We can see and hear disaster as it unfolds.

And, when individuals are faced with terrible tragedy, they struggle to make sense of it all. "What is the purpose? What is the meaning?" they ask.

We have a great resource that provides us with structure and definition from the mind of One who is all knowing, all powerful, and everywhere present. This resource is the Word of God that stands forever. From its pages, we receive doctrine, reproof, correction, and in-

struction. As we take in the Word of God, we receive the mind of Christ. We have instant access to His timeless thoughts about every situation we face, with up-to-the-minute direction from the One who knows the beginning and the end of every matter.

This booklet describes how God uses each believer individually and specifically for the purpose of spreading the message of grace to this world. Read on and discover just how much meaning your life can have.

Chapter One

WHY ARE WE HERE?

What is the meaning of life?

This question has been asked over and over by students and professors in colleges and universities through the years. But without Jesus Christ, the question can never truly be answered. If the subject comes up, they declare that no one can prove the existence of God. "There is no empirical evidence," they say. Yet, within each one is a longing to belong to Someone bigger than himself. Many go along living in sublimation and waiting to die. Their lives are considered no more valuable than that of a mosquito in the barn or some kind of animal.

The problem is this: They fail to recognize their destiny in God's plan.

The Problem Defined

A person who is born-again has been regenerated by the Spirit of God. Eternally secure, his

salvation was sealed by the entrance of the Holy Spirit the moment he received Christ. He walks in the Spirit and has fellowship with the Father. He grows in grace and in the knowledge of Christ through the Spirit. If he fails, he can rebound instantly by the power of the Spirit through the Blood of Christ.

Beyond the constraints of time and space, the Spirit-filled Christian has a consciousness of the "eternal is"—the past is all gone, the future doesn't exist, and now just passed by. It is a taste of the supernatural life that he will have forever. On the other hand, the natural man is always seeking fulfillment, which can never be found outside of Christ. Though he may find temporary satisfaction from day to day, his life has no eternal value unless the time is being redeemed by God's life.

Life must have meaning. Meaning must have truth. Truth must have an origin. And, the origin of truth, regarding the meaning of life, must have a way to be expressed. The way will be revealed by God's life. The meaning, the truth, the origin, and the way lead to an experience that brings us to the security of our destiny with God.

There is no immortality without God's life as

the origin of all life. There is no divine good if there is no God.

Wherever there is evil, there has to be good to answer it. The question some of you are asking now is this: "Why did God create evil?" He did not create evil. Like men, angels were created with volition, which is the power to make choices. Unlike men, they lived in a perfect environment, free from the temptations that men face. Lucifer rebelled against the government of the Trinity, and one-third of the angels chose to follow him. As a result, evil entered the earth.

God created man as being "good"—that is, without sin. But when Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden after being tempted by the devil, man's volition became negative. Thus, the old sin nature was introduced and passed down by imputation to every person.

The Progression of Rebellion

"There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.

"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

"There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.

"There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men" (Proverbs 30:11-14).

There are four kinds of generational curses that express the way of rebellion. The sins of rebellion are passed down from generation to generation. The first step of the curse starts with children cursing their parents, lacking honor and respect, and refusing to submit to bona fide authority. They disrupt the order of the family, which was instituted by God.

The second generational curse is pride, which justifies rebellious behavior in the home. Young people contend that they have rights that cannot be taken from them regardless of their age. Their rebellion intensifies through excuses.

The progression continues into the third generational curse, which is arrogance in action. Under this curse, people live in a state of rebellion that has been locked into the heart. They promote a standard of living, a self-centered exploit, that declares: "No one has a right to stop me." This has its root in the self-consciousness that entered the heart of man at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The fourth curse goes much deeper. People

seem to lose all measure of restraint, involving crime and gross immorality. The degeneration follows a pattern of perversion, pornography, drug addiction, violence, and even murder. Generations have suffered the effects of this curse at the hands of despots such as Nero and Hitler. Hitler instigated the Holocaust of millions of Jews after a series of choices to do evil and exalt himself. He was under the control of the mystical principle of approbation lust and power lust to create his own destiny and to deify man.

Death is the ultimate result of these curses. Each curse leads to a place of destruction. Man takes a life, and he cannot give it back. However, when he gives his life to God, God gives back to him life eternal. That is the difference.

Chapter Two

LIFE DEFINED BY THE WORD OF GOD

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

An atheist in England once said, "There is one thing I have never been able to understand in my atheism: it is my longing to belong and to be loved. I seem neither to belong nor to be loved."

Said one theologian, "The only thing in this world that matters is that I have meaning because of God. I have truth, and I have love. I have experience with God, which brings security and a destiny. Without that, I would not want to live."

This sense of meaning is what motivated

Mother Teresa. Over her eighty years, she continually laid down her life for the weak, for the sick, for the disfigured, for the castaways. Food that she needed for herself, she gave away to others who needed it more.

What was it that gave her life meaning? The love of God and the Word of God.

The Profitability of Scripture

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible was written by God for man. It is indeed the Word of God. Men drafted it under the control of God, who breathed divine inspiration into their hearts.

We study the Word of God with all of our hearts because we understand that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. This Word is, by God's divine authority, profitable. It draws us into a new birth and a new relationship with our Savior—the One who shed His blood, who died, who was buried, and who rose again.

The Word is profitable because it teaches us God's forgiveness and how He cleanses and purges us from iniquity, transgression, and sin.

It is profitable because it gives us a purpose through our God toward developing the ministry of reconciliation toward one another. It is profitable because we can take the Gospel and bring new life, new hope, and new joy to the hopeless in our Jerusalems, our Judeas, and our Samarias. It is profitable because we can take it to the uttermost parts of the world to those who have no peace.

The Word is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction. Doctrine shows us how to live on the highway of life. Reproof represents God's red lights on that road—"Stop here! Stop doing that!" If we ignore the "stop" signal, God comes in with a heavenly order of correction, which gets us off the detour and back on the right path.

We grow to a place where we can receive instruction in righteousness. Here, the Word of God is being hidden in the deepest part of our souls. It is where we can hear the voice of God. It is where we sense that eternal unction, that sense of destiny. We develop an identity, a self-image of walking with the Person of Jesus Christ. When this happens, a Christian is equipped and furnished with everything that pertains to divine good in a life that is based on

eternal truth.

Excellence, Reverence and Permanence

There isn't anything in the world more excellent than the Word of God. This is why I preach it and teach it.

Not only does the Word of God define pure, eternal excellence, but also it inspires reverence. There is such reverence when we enter into the presence of God, knowing that He is in us, that He is with us, and that He is for us. God speaks through us as He takes over our entire being with our consent. We become His ambassadors with the Word of reconciliation. The Word brings this kind of reverence into our lives.

"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89).

This verse illustrates the glorious principle of permanence, regarding the Word of God. It is irrevocable in its value; it is timeless and therefore indestructible; it is indisputable in terms of human reasoning. It is historically correct, and it reveals divine ethics in all that it teaches and in all of its results.

Relevant Truth

Finally, the Word has great relevance. If a

person is sick, the Bible has promises for healing. If healing does not come, the Word motivates the person to seek God and find Him in sickness, while the grace of God catches up to deal with our heartaches.

When guilt and insecurity try to work their way into our lives, the Word is relevant as it reveals the integrity of God's love and concern for every individual. When we need to believe that life has meaning, the Word reveals it through the understanding of the Holy Spirit. By identifying with the Cross of Christ, I find that I have an eternal purpose in God's plan.

Everything about the Word of God is so well organized, so beautifully constructed, and without a flaw. The Old Testament reveals preparation. The Gospels reveal Christ's manifestation. The book of Acts declares the Gospel's propagation. The epistles offer God's explanation. And, Revelation displays the consummation of time as we begin our life in eternity. That is the Word of God.

Chapter Three

OUR PLACE IN THE BODY

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:1-6).

The main thing Paul wanted for the Ephesian church to understand is that we are members of Christ's Body. This is mentioned more than eighty times in the Greek text of Ephesians.

Romans chapters 1 and 2 deal with the natural man. First Corinthians 2:14 and 3:1-3 focus on the carnal man. Ephesians chapters 1 and 2,

however, refer to the spiritual man. This epistle takes us into the heavenlies, where we are seated above with Him.

People from all over traveled to Ephesus to worship the goddess Diana in a temple filled with idols and prostitutes. Idolatrous images and objects were sold at great profit all over this city. And here, in the midst of an evil and perverse society, Paul declared that the Christian's life has a meaning that is far above that of any idols.

The Authority of Grace

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward:

"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

"Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

"That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his

promise in Christ by the gospel:

"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:1-8).

Too often, we do not make enough of every word in Scripture. It is one thing that Paul identified himself at the beginning of every epistle he sent, so the people in the churches would know who was writing to them. But when, in the middle of a letter, he used the phrase "I, Paul" (as in Ephesians 3:1), Paul was emphasizing the importance of what he was about to say. He mentions his name not because of who he was as a person but because of the authority of his office.

"For this cause I, Paul…." It is as if he were saying, "I want to get one thing straight before I continue with this letter: I have a name. That name, given at my conversion, is Paul, which means 'little.' I am not using my name because I think highly of myself. I am indeed a little man in my own eyes. But with my new name, God also gave me an office. I am an apostle, a pastor-teacher, and an evangelist. I am under the do-

minion of God and the authority of heaven, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, honor the office, because my authority and my communication is from God for you."

Paul went on to describe how he had received the great revelation of God's grace, and it was given to him specifically for the Gentiles—referring to all people who were not Jewish. He loved the nation of Israel, and he would have given everything for his Jewish brethren to receive the Gospel message. But Paul's office was to be used to draw Gentiles to God. He was a prisoner, a captive of Christ, for this cause.

By submitting to God's call on his life, Paul recognized the true meaning of his life. As a result of his obedience, the Gospel of grace was spread throughout the Roman Empire. Paul marveled at the revelation of God's grace, and he could only describe it as unsearchable.

The Scope of Grace

The policy of grace was established in Genesis 3:21; it was not a new revelation, withheld from the Old Testament saints. Moses knew it well. David lived by it. Yet, the Cross broke down the wall that separated people, making a way for all men to receive the gift of salvation.

Paul, who at one time sought to kill Christians and destroy the early Church, now lived to proclaim the victory of the Cross—all because the Shekinah glory of God had shown down from heaven and invaded his life (Acts 9).

Paul personalized the dispensation of grace. He said, "I was wretched. I was arrogant. I was proud. I am chief of all sinners. I cannot figure out His great grace, but because of it, I am a preacher both to the Jews and the Gentiles."

Paul received his call as a commission and a gift from God. It motivated him to build upon the foundation of the Church (which is Christ), imparting this great grace wherever he went. The one who saw himself as less than the least and as the chief of sinners discovered the meaning and purpose of his life—"That I may know Him" (Philippians 3:10).

CONCLUSION

As members of the Body of Christ, each of us is unique and each one has a purpose. Each one of us is necessary and valuable, having various portions and gifts that complement one another. These distinctions make all the difference in every local assembly.

Finding meaning for our lives is as simple as receiving the Word of God. The Word and the Spirit will bring definition and purpose to everything that we do. We all have been given a gift of great grace. And this grace must go out, into all the world.

Dear Father, thank You that we have been sealed and filled by the Holy Spirit to share this grace. Bless us all as we develop a relationship to Your truth and love, to exhibit lives filled with meaning and purpose. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Discover Your Cross

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INTRODUCTION

The following statements are not my own. They are the expressions of students studying in our Bible college. All of them are very good definitions and reveal an understanding concerning the dangers of worldliness and our need to take up our Cross against it.

"The world is anything that lures me away from intimacy and precision with Christ."

"The world is any good thing—even participation in church—that is not derived from the Spirit of God. Satan is over the world, and anything in it belongs to him."

"The world is a system of thinking that is independent of God as the source of everything. It seeks to be independent of God because of its inherent insecurity and seeks to heap praise upon itself for what it does, even using the logistical grace of God. It is a God-hating, God-rejecting attitude that people have; and that, frankly, is why I believe John said, 'The whole world lies in wickedness.'"

"The world is anything that seeks its own apart from God. It is anything that does not participate in what God says, in obedience."

"The world is any sort of deception that would or could draw you away from God's perfect plan for your life. It is Satan's playground for a short time where he tries to deceive us into walking by sight instead of by faith."

"The world is anything that's eating from the Tree of [Knowledge of] Good and Evil rather than the Tree of Life. If you lift up the real thing, then the counterfeit becomes very apparent. When we lift up Christ and the Word of God and its doctrines, everything else becomes very apparent when it is a counterfeit."

"I believe the world is anything that blinds our eyes from our total depravity apart from Jesus Christ and gives a false security in anything apart from the Cross."

"The simplest definition of the world is life as we know it, without the Cross."

"The world is anything that runs contrary to the character and nature of God."

"The world is anything that sends you down the wrong path, ending in something that is not of God—anything that is not truth but lies."

We can only overcome the world's system

through the Cross. This booklet shows that at first, we see it as Christ's Cross—His suffering for our sins. Then as we grow in our understanding, we see the doctrine of the Cross—God's plan from the foundation of the world both to satisfy His justice and to give us a way to have eternal life. Finally, we take it up as our Cross—a personal application of the doctrine so that others might find what we have received freely, all because of Christ's Cross.

Chapter One
LOVE NOT THE WORLD

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One,

and ye know all things" (I John 2:15-20).

One of the most vital things we can do for ourselves is to make sure we have a good attitude in the morning. Then throughout the day, we need to make sure we don't slip into a bad attitude. It is the difference between godliness and worldliness. Bad attitudes come from the negative transference of energy in the air and can easily stir up an otherwise peaceful atmosphere. We need to discover the Cross.

In the passage above, John starts out with a simple command: "Stop right now loving the world, neither anything in the world." We are not to love anything in the world. Sadly, many Christians know what the Bible says about worldliness, but they do not obey the Word.

This is a problem illustrated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

This verse contains the Greek word *ginosko* for "know," meaning that you know something but only generally speaking. "Known" is *epiginosko*, which speaks of fully knowing and experiencing what you know.

"The world" is *kosmos diabolicus*, the system of government operated by the prince and the

power of the air, Satan. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" is another iterative present active phrase. Theantric action (God's nature controlling a meek believer through the government of the indwelling Word and the power of the Holy Spirit) cannot operate in one who loves the world, because a love for the world system and the love of God the Father cannot co-exist in a person.

The World Lies in Wickedness

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:16-17).

"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

If the whole world lies in satanic infections, then the world is a system and an organization whereby Satan is the god of its productions, purposes, and promotions. The world's social life, the world's entertainment, the world's domestic values belong to Satan, the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4).

As Christians, we are to go into the world to

preach the Gospel, but we are not to become a part of the world. Are you of the opinion that certain things in the world are okay? “Love not the world, neither any thing in the world.”

Chapter Two

ESTABLISHING THE RIGHT POINT OF REFERENCE

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:18-19). Ponder on this passage for a moment.

Every single thing in the *kosmos*, the world system, is wicked. I am not speaking of asceticism, legalism, or taboos. I am speaking of the world. It should be easy to see why we must rightly divide the Word of truth.

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here

a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:9-10).

Whom shall He teach knowledge? And who will understand doctrine? Those who are weaned from the milk and go on a steady diet of the Word of God. We must have knowledge and understanding of doctrine and be weaned from the milk of self-reliance. This requires having the Cross as a point of reference in our hearts. Then we must have a frame of reference—categories of doctrine from the Word of God—with explanations and vocabulary that precisely order our hearts and minds.

The Word that we receive beyond mere knowledge goes into our human spirit and is then transferred into the memory center. The memory center is in the soul, which includes categorical storage of Bible doctrine and other compartments of the heart and the streams of consciousness.*

Communicating the Cross

The point of reference for everything is the Cross. We cannot have a proper frame of reference without the right point of reference. The Cross is the point of reference for the new heart and the human spirit. Jesus Christ gives us a commandment to take up our Cross and follow

Him (Matthew 16:24). In Matthew 10:38, Jesus says, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." The Greek tenses in this passage indicate a requirement of commitment that is personal to the Cross just as commitment is personal to salvation.

Taking up the Cross is first a commandment (Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23). After fulfilling the commandment, a Christian must make a personal commitment to the Cross (Matthew 10:38). First, it is called His Cross. Next, it is called the Cross and then finally it is called your Cross.

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God

by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

"But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:17-25).

In the first part of this passage, it is made clear that our communication must be through the spirit of the Cross. So, we have a commandment of the Cross, a commitment to the Cross, and communication based on the Cross.

Contention between the Cross and the World

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes

ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

In this verse, "bare," from the Greek word anaphero, infers that every single sin that we have ever committed had to be individually placed upon Him. Jesus Christ bore our sins, died, was buried, came forth from the grave, and ascended to heaven. That was His Cross—dying for us and taking every one of our sins upon His body.

The Cross brings reconciliation (Ephesians 2:16), and the Blood shed on that Cross brings forgiveness and peace in that reconciliation (Colossians 1:20).

What is the problem between the Cross and the world? They are at odds. Notice the attitude of every non-Christian and of every carnal Christian (who is saved but backslidden) toward the Cross: They hate it. Consider just how much the world hates what the Cross stands for. They don't understand that Jesus Christ's love is unconditional and immutable and that His love is for everyone. The message of the Cross is a grace message with a mercy reference and a love motivation.

If I take up my Cross, the world is dead to me, and I am dead to the world. This goes far beyond the overt sins that you normally think

of. It has to do with attitudes, living in a godly attitude and living with a satisfied heart.

I wake up extra early some mornings to make sure I have plenty of time for my attitude to be showered, spiritually speaking. It is better for me to have my attitude in focus than to be tired and exhausted. I need to be focused on being occupied with Jesus Christ.

The point of reference is Christ's Cross, which was the Cross. Now, our frame of reference brings in the plan of God where it becomes our Cross. Our Cross is derived from the Cross, which was His Cross for us, and now we are taking His Cross to be our Cross for others.

*Read The Hearing Heart, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.

Chapter Three

DEATH THAT WORKS LIFE IN OTHERS

How would you define your Cross? According to 2 Corinthians 4:10-12, it is this: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you."

That is your Cross. In order to experience your Cross, it takes having a storage of categorical doctrine and the power of the Holy Spirit. This is very practical, and separate from "denying yourself daily." Yes, the world will hate it; the carnal Christian who has not grown in the Lord will hate it, too. They do not want conviction, so they will give you their opinion, and their opinions affect many people.

Motivated toward the Cross

At the Bema Seat, where Christ will evaluate the work of the Christian, Christ will reward us according to what we have done. If we have discovered our Cross, we will always bear in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus. We are not able to take up a daily personal Cross unless we make a commitment with a positive attitude toward it.

Without the love of God motivating us, we cannot take up our daily Cross (2 Corinthians 5:14-17). Therefore, our communication must be through the Cross. When we are motivated by divine love, we communicate the wisdom of God that has gone through death, burial, resurrection, and ascension because of the Cross.

Overcoming through Resurrection Life

There are many kinds of depression today: clinical depression, domestic depression, financial depression, manic depression, marital depression, and so on. Those who live in depression allow their emotions to receive negative vibrations instead of the mind of Christ. In this condition, a person can only communicate the world's interpretation of the Cross, which is not Calvary. The carnal Christian's interpretation of

the Cross is "Get saved, be a good person." That is all; nothing more—no growth, no Word of God, no filling of the Spirit.

When people enter into a mental attitude reaction like depression, the first thing they retreat from is the Cross. Then they enter into mental attitude rebellion and then mental attitude retrogression. They do not experience life from God, so they are very weary. They become weary with studying and weary with working in the Christian environment. They are weary with their schedules because they do not have the resurrection life of Christ and have not been delivered unto His death with their Cross. Christ's life is not being manifested in their mortal bodies, so their mortal bodies cannot enjoy a renewed mind (Romans 12:1-2).

Fellowship with His Life through the Cross

We are not to be conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of our minds. Then we can prove what God's perfect will is. A person who loves the things of the world is in serious trouble. No Christian can have an effective ministry if he doesn't take up his Cross daily. A life that begins at the Cross is totally opposite from a life that continually asks for self-

rights and self-preservation.

God allows things to happen in our lives so we can have the privilege of fellowshipping with His resurrection. When you are delivered unto things that rub you the wrong way, do you take them gladly, or do you get angry? Do they make you sad, reactionary, or rebellious? Do you withdraw or retreat? If you are taking up your Cross, those things will not affect you at all, because you are dead to yourself. A dead man is not troubled by circumstances in the world.

We can live in the convenience and the comfortableness of God's will, or we can live in the Cross of God's will. Many things that happen to all of us are the result of God asking Himself, "Now, how am I going to give you your Cross today?" To you it is just a good day or a bad day, but to God it is His perfect plan for your life. He wants you to reveal resurrection life in your mortal body and for you to be prepared to meet Christ at the Bema Seat.

Chapter Four

RESPOND TO THE CORRECTIONS OF LOVE

Some people have problems defining the world because they think of worldliness as adultery, alcoholism, lying, and cheating. But the world goes far beyond these things, which are merely "of" the world. What do worldly Christians do when you try to pin down worldly things? They defend themselves. "Don't be so legalistic," some will say. Yet, God makes strong statements concerning the world. We are not to have anything to do with it.

The world was declared evil by what was written by John (1 John 5:19b)—before television and before so many terrible things that are going on now. Imaging how much more evil it is today.

The Offense of the Cross

Jesus Christ became obedient even unto the death of the Cross (Philippians 2:8). The Cross

brings tremendous offense (Galatians 5:11). As an example, Paul said, "If I were to stop preaching on the issue of circumcision, then the Cross would have no offense because I would be holding back the truth about it. The truth is that you do not have to do it any more because it is the heart that needs to be circumcised."

The Cross offends, and the person who communicates the Cross—even if he is loving, gentle, caring, and compassionate, and even if he is not legalistic—offends people very quickly.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).

The best way to determine whether a person is worldly is if when he is reproved he also needs to be rebuked as a follow-up.

Responding in Meekness

As a pastor all these years, I have had to make many, many changes in my ministry—not in my doctrine but in my sermon styles. I have had to make many changes in the ways I deal with people, in the ways I handle situations, in the ways I respond to God, and in the ways I react to men. The Word of God has faithfully reproved, exhorted, and sometimes rebuked me

right from heaven in a godly, sweet, loving way. I have taken those corrections knowing that if I obey, I will be a better pastor.

I remember that after the first few times I preached, an older gentleman came up to me and said, "I want to see you for a moment." Of course, I thought he was going to say it was a good message, or something like that.

But instead he said, "You were too hard on the people."

"I was?"

"Yes, you were; you were too hard. I understand that you want to preach the whole Word of God, but I didn't like the way you said it."

I said, "Okay, then tell me, because I want to learn."

He said, "You spoke down to the people. It is one thing to preach the Word. It is another thing to make them feel that you are much better than they are."

I never forgot that, and I instantly learned how to preach grace as a result of his rebuke. My next sermon was about unconditional love. That man's rebuke was a fantastic asset to my life.

By accepting divine correction through death, burial, and resurrection, I became a better pastor. It is so important that young pastors

continually see how they can become better pastors.

As the Scriptures teach, we have nothing to glory or boast in except the Cross of Christ, where every ounce of pride, selfishness, and lust was crucified (Galatians 6:14). We have a new identity, because we are in Him and He is in us. Now, we have the added benefit of taking on His Cross as our Cross.

CONCLUSION

Missionaries from Africa who were in their eighties have come to my house to stay. They were creative as they shared things about the church, making suggestions that were equally creative reproofs. I can honestly tell you that I implemented what they said because I could see that they were right.

It is so crucial to understand that a meek person will accept rebukes and not feel condemned. A humble person will accept reproofs providing they are expressed in love and not in arrogance. We can accept reproof, rebuke, and exhortation, taking up our Cross.

If Christians would accept reproof, rebuke, and exhortation when it is needed, think of how much that would add to our joy from now until eternity. Sadly, the average Christian does not encourage others, and this keeps many from receiving a great blessing.

Let us reprove, rebuke, and exhort one another with all longsuffering in authority and in love. Whatever we say to one another, our goal should be to make it a blessing. Reproofs can be a blessing in disguise if they make us better people. They help us to discover the Cross, which was Christ's Cross and now has become our Cross.

Divine Convictions

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Divine convictions definitely seem out of fashion today. The unchecked development of the "entertainment culture" has brought in all kinds of worldly influences, much of it through the wrong music, worldly television programs, and ungodly sites on the Internet (all of which rely on atmospheric vibrations to be communicated).

It is true that many people have reacted to overbearing legalism and the hypocrisy that goes with that system, and they have rejected a godly lifestyle as too rigid, confining, and impossible to attain. Yet, the Lord intends for us to live by *every* word of God.

Siding with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God brings great protection for our souls. Establishing the standards of the Word of God that have the Cross at their center keeps us from evil. But on the other side, it is very easy to think that

we can get away with fulfilling the desires of our flesh. Sadly, many have found out that this type of "fulfillment" only results in feelings of uncleanness and defeat; and down the road, it reveals itself in a worldly lifestyle.

This booklet reveals the necessity of divine convictions and how they can enable us to reach for the prize of our high calling in Christ.

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF GUILT

"For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

"Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.

"Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

"Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.

"Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, the LORD be magnified.

"But I am poor an needy; yet the LORD thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God" (Psalm 40:12-17).

"And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard" (1 Samuel 21:13).

"And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them" (1 Samuel 23:26).

Psalm 40 was written by David when he was frightened and facing death. His actions, which included feigning madness and fleeing Saul (1 Samuel 21 and 22), resulted in the entire city of Nob being destroyed, as well as the deaths of eighty-five priests. David held himself responsible for those deaths. He entered into tremendous, indescribable guilt. He was filled with guilt, shame, and remorse for the time that he was in retrogression in Gath.

Fulfilling the Flesh Damages the Soul

Many Christians live in unjustified guilt. Usually that is because they do not understand grace and the Finished Work of Jesus Christ. But guilt can be bona fide. Don't try to talk anyone

out of guilt until that person has repented. If a person is living in sin and hasn't repented, guilt, and the shame that goes with it, is bona fide. Now, David was experiencing guilt reactions because he was reflecting on his failures, reinforced by Satan's accusations (see Revelation 12:10).

For a person to sin, first he has to live in the flesh. Secondly, he has to accept the consequences of the law of sin and the law of spiritual death.

By the way, nobody has the right to get into anyone's business, no matter who you are. Remember, God is in control. Unless something pertains to you directly, stay out of it. And even when the matter does pertain to you, unless it is a judicial offense, you are very limited in your rights.

Everyone has experienced having fleshly desires. Those desires may not seem to be evil—they may even appear to be perfectly harmless. Yet, even if we do the things we desire, we can never be fulfilled if they are not God's desires, too. A Christian can never be fulfilled by living in the flesh. Recently, some young people attended a concert where the members of the group they went to hear believed in the power of crystals instead of the power of the Holy

Spirit. It wasn't rock music, but neither was it God's music. They went because they desired to be entertained with that crowd singing good lullaby songs. The Christians who attended that concert were being entertained by worldliness.

You may not like or agree with my convictions, but you are not going to change them. We need to have the convictions of the Bible. We do not need to be entertained by the world. Take your boyfriend or girlfriend on a date where you get on your knees and pray up a revival. Go out and have a nice dinner, then give the waitress a tract.

Here is the point: No one who is spiritual will ever be fulfilled by making a provision for the flesh. It doesn't matter who you are. If you do fulfill your flesh and you are a Christian, you will feel unclean. Even if it is simply a lustful thought, you will feel unclean.

Side with the Spirit and the Word

Fulfilling the flesh not only leaves one feeling unclean, it also causes damage to a person's soul.* The Word of God teaches couples not to have a physical relationship before marriage (see 1 Corinthians 6: 18-20; Proverbs 6:32*b*). No one will ever change my mind about this subject.

Fulfilling fleshly desires stirred up by libido waves will destroy your soul. "It is good for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Corinthians 7:1) means that it is good for a man not to touch a woman in an inappropriate manner. A man should honor and esteem his future wife and cherish her as a precious vessel, pure and clean.

Furthermore, even if he never touches her physically, if he entertains lustful imaginations toward her, he was already carnal before those imaginations came in. Let me illustrate it this way: On one side, there is the flesh. On the other side, we have the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The Cross is in the middle. The flesh may restrain itself, and it may live in human good. Still, it is on the wrong side of the Cross. We will not be tempted when we are on the side of the Spirit and the Word. We are only tempted when we are on the other side, where we make provisions for the flesh and where we don't fear God's presence.

A man told me he lived in hell every day for four years, having left his wife and children for another woman.

"There had to be days that were better than others," I said.

"Not a day," he insisted. "I lived in the hell

of guilt for four years. The Holy Spirit would never let me be happy in what I was doing." Finally, after years of conviction, he repented, and he left that relationship.

That is an example of bona fide guilt: a problem for the flesh, but a solution for the soul that would be restored to God.

**We suggest reading Standing Firm in Godly Convictions, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17).

"Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

"And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Corinthians 10:5-6).

A spiritual man cannot be fulfilled when he fulfills his flesh. When carnal imaginations are acted out, they may stimulate you, but they will never fulfill you. It can be so frustrating to have desires in the flesh and not experience them, but it is even worse to fulfill those desires. If you do, your life becomes a living hell, filled with guilt,

shame, and remorse when you try to be spiritual. That is because the flesh is against the Spirit and the Spirit is against the flesh.

This is how it is when you belong to God. Trying to fulfill your flesh or letting someone play with your flesh causes a war within. I said recently to some young women, "Even though you are pure, make certain that you dress purely and modestly. Walk with God's people, and don't become a stumbling block for those whose flesh is easily stimulated through the eye gate. When you live by divine convictions, you will see your temptations eliminated, practically speaking, except for what happens in the angelic conflict."

God has all this arranged with the Holy Spirit. If a Christian goes out and fulfills his flesh, he pays a horrible price of guilt. If he were to spend sixty seconds lusting after a woman, he would pay a very great price, even if he never fulfilled anything physically. Why? Because the Holy Spirit would convict him of mental adultery (see Matthew 5:28). Though he could rebound and confess, he still would experience a season of bona fide guilt because he sinned willfully. The issue has to be resolved once and for all—at the Cross.

In Psalm 40:12, David was scared to death. He considered himself responsible for the destruction of so many lives at Nob. His thoughts at that point were, "God is going to get me."

The truth is that David had taken on the identity of a guilt complex, and it was a legitimate guilt complex. He took on the identity of shame, because he should have been ashamed. His identity was based on what he did.

Inasmuch as the flesh is condemned already (John 3:18), when I live in the flesh, I am already condemned, even if I am saved as far as my position goes. David had a guilt reaction, and a guilt reaction brings vulnerability to deception in the natural life. His natural life was being attacked because he was living in it.

For this reason, God said we are to cast down every imagination and every thought that exalts itself against the doctrine of God (see 2 Corinthians 10:5). Every Christian who is reading this probably already knows that after acting upon carnal imaginations, our experience can become like a living hell. Once we have satisfied the flesh, we are left unfulfilled and guilty.

"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Here, the Word of God is saying that there are many sins that can be done outside of our bodies (for example, stealing, cursing, being hateful). But if we commit fornication, that is a sin inside the body. It is the most difficult thing in the world to get rid of the terrible feeling, the wounds, and the damage that this sin causes.

Proverbs 6:32 says fornication destroys the soul. It will affect any future sexual relationship unless a person enters into cleansing and purging through the Cross, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit. When he does that, he receives a brand-new-creation attitude toward himself and toward God.

A girl was once alone in a car with a man she had dated just a few times. When he reached over and tried to touch her leg, she smacked him in the face, got out of the car and walked a half-mile back to her dorm. He was more than a little surprised! She told him, "I was taught not to let a man do that," and then she got out of the car.

She let the guy have it and gave him a whopper of a bruise. That was their fourth and last date. That guy must have been very careful before he thought about trying that on anyone else.

The Bible doesn't say these things to legislate behavior; it says these things to protect us. The Bible doesn't say these things to impose superficial convictions; it says these things to help deliver us unto divine convictions. Christians need to abandon the leaven that they have been leavened with, get right with God, and start agreeing with every word of God.

Chapter Three

STANDARDS ESTABLISHED BY THE SPIRIT

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14).

Living clean isn't "hard"—I never want to hear that again. Sinning is hard, the way of the transgressor is hard (Proverbs 13:15). But the way of God is not hard. His yoke is easy, His burden is light (Matthew 11:30).

Never say, "I'm doing all right, but it is difficult." No! No, it is not difficult to live godly. It is not hard. Going the way of transgressors is hard. The way of Christ is easy. And because His yoke is easy and His burden is light, you can find rest without shame, without guilt, and without condemnation. You will find peace that is perfect by

yoking up with Christ.

If you think that your little child cannot walk in God's way by learning to identify with Christ and taking up His yoke, then one day you are going to be held accountable. A time may come when you cannot control that child and you have to deal with the consequences of his behavior publicly.

There is always a right crowd and a wrong crowd. Stay with the right crowd. Some young people would violate their father's rule under which he brought them up for years. For example, they stay out until one-thirty in the morning when they have been told to be home at eleven. Someone who tries to talk a young person into violating the investment of his father and mother is part of the wrong crowd, even if he doesn't do anything terrible.

The Word of God says that rebellion is as witchcraft (1 Samuel 15:23). If you allow rebelliousness in the home (sometimes masked as an independent spirit) to go on, then as parents you are wrong. If you walk with the wise, then you will be wise. If you walk with fools, then you will be a fool (see Proverbs 13:20).

No parents want to admit it when their child is wrong, but they have to face it. Lovingly, justly, graciously, kindly, but firmly, these situations have to be handled, not ignored as a passing "phase."

"These are just children," you say. Well, these children can be taught to act like ladies and gentlemen.

As Christians, we ought to be available to those parents and children who are having problems. We ought to be willing to invest in as many lives as we can on a personal level. We should love each one and never penalize anyone without offering a provision to show our love. We must not, however, compromise our standards of discipline.

Most parents are completely supportive of godly standards. Most people who have had such difficulties are broken and humble, and they love the support we can offer as friends. Many would pledge their cooperation because they have divine convictions. If parents teach their children to live by these godly standards now, their children will be spared much heartache from making the wrong choices later.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

The apostle Paul was disciplined by God for four years in Jerusalem—just for going to Jerusalem against God's will. Paul, however, rebounded much more quickly from his failure than David did. Paul went into amazing recovery toward greater grace right away.

In the original Greek text of Philippians 3:13-14, Paul admitted, "I count not my thinking, my estimation of God, as being right—I count not myself to be a possessor of grace. I haven't taken complete possession of 'this one thing' but I will." Paul used the word *epilanthanomai*, which means "forgetting." It was caused by his convictions. Paul was saying, "I consider everything that I did in the past as being in oblivion, and I am putting the past, with all its failures and mistakes, behind me forever through the action of faith with God."

Paul put his failures behind him and determined to "reach forth" (*epekteinomai*) into the Word of grace. And he did it immediately.

Paul said, in effect, "I am not going to live in a guilt complex. I have confessed that what I did was wrong. Four years was a long time for me to be sentimental toward my Jewish people, and that caused me to disobey God's will. I just didn't get it. But I am going to forget those four years of retrogression. I am forgetting it, and I will now reach forth toward greater grace. I haven't attained greater grace yet. It is a process. But I am reaching forth unto it."

CONCLUSION

In Romans 8:1, Paul made a declaration that he would not live in guilt. He was on the road to *greater* grace, and he declared that his recovery was complete. David, on the other hand, didn't dare to make such a bold declaration. At the time that he wrote Psalm 40:12-17, David had not yet rebounded, because guilt kept him from doing so. At that stage, David was afraid for his life. He could have rebounded; the opportunity was right in front of him. Still, he didn't do that until later.

We don't have to wait to rebound. In an instant, we can reestablish divine convictions in our lives that will govern our actions. The God of all grace loves us deeply, and He only wants what is best for us. His Word details our path to victory and the abundant life. The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth (John 16:13). Not only that, He will also work in us to will and to do God's good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

If you are burdened with guilt, come to the throne of grace and find help in your time of need. Your advocate, Jesus Christ, is waiting for you there. When He has control of your life, you will be filled not with fearful apprehension but with divine convictions, bringing life to everyone you touch.

Divine Coverings

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

God's covering is vital for our growth and maturity. No matter how old we are, and no matter how mature we may be, we will always need a covering.

I always need someone to cover me, and then I must also be a covering for others. What better place to discover this covering than in the Word of God.

There are really two parts to a covering—one is sweet and the other is bitter. The sweet part is in knowing that God loves me. The bitter part is my responsibility to live in that love. It goes like this: God says, "This is what I expect from you, but with that, I will give you all that you need to fulfill that expectation. I will love you and encourage you as you do what I want you to do."

The pastor in his church, the teacher in the school, the husband and father in the family—each has expectations of a measure of responsi-

ble behavior from the people he serves. At the same time, he is responsible to create a capacity in others to meet those expectations.

People who tell the truth are great coverings for us. Few people will really tell me the truth except my spiritual friends. A worldly friend may not tell the truth because it does not profit him, but the Spirit of God in a man will always speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

As you will see in this booklet, God covers us so that we will keep moving forward in His great plan and purpose. How do we keep moving forward but by being around godly people who cover us with prayer, fellowship, and words of love spoken in season and out of season. And as we grow, we become coverings for others. The key is to live in and through a great God, hearing the Word of God from a great pulpit, and being led by the great Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth.

Chapter One

GOD'S PROTECTION

The Word of God refers to many different coverings. That is why it is sad when God's people will not forgive each other and will not be coverings for each other. Do not misunderstand this. We do have to deal with situations, and individuals need to be accountable the way God tells us. From the time Jesus Christ shed His blood for us, was buried, and rose from the dead, it has all been about God's coverings. Hebrews 9:22 tells us that Christ's shed blood covers all of our sins.

In the Bible, covering means "to protect, to hedge about, to cover." God is constantly covering His people. Positional truth (the principle that once we are saved by faith, we have an eternal position as a child of God) is a great example and demonstration of God's eternal covering. The fact that our position is eternally secure is another manifestation of God's eternal

covering. God disciplines His children in love, but He always covers us as He does it.

He Clothes Our Nakedness

After the Fall, when they realized they were naked, God provided a covering for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3). He has always been in the business of covering men's nakedness (see Isaiah 58:7; Ezekiel 16:8). One example of this kind of covering is found in Genesis 9, when Noah got drunk after planting a vineyard.

"And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

"And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

"And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

"And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.

"And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

"And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

"God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Genesis 9:20-27).

Noah planted a vineyard, partook of the grapes, got drunk, and was uncovered. His son, Ham, went into the tent, saw his father, and told his brothers. The moment Noah awoke, he knew what Ham had done; so he cursed Ham, and Ham was cursed.

Notice a couple things here:

1. Noah was guilty.
2. He did get drunk.
3. He was naked.

But notice how Japheth and Shem handled the situation. They had been taught to cover, and cover they did. They backed into the tent so that they would not see their father naked and unconscious. Ham's actions can at very least be defined as slander and gossip. He, too, could have responded the way his brothers did.

Isaiah 30:1 talks about having a covering that is not from God: "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin." Is this

not what Ham did? He did not cover, but instead he added his sin to the sin of his father.

Chapter Two

LOVE IS THE ISSUE

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8).

Love covers the multitude of sins. Just plain love does it. One who cannot forgive another obviously does not have the right kind of love, because the right kind of love forgives as Christ forgave (Ephesians 4:32). Covering may mean it is necessary to go alone to a person in meekness to restore them. God covers sin (Psalm 32:1). He does not impute iniquity (Romans 4:7-8).

Why is it that we read these words over and over again? Could it be that God is trying to make a point to us? According to Psalm 85:2, God has forgiven the iniquity of His people and covered *all* their sin. In Proverbs 10:12, love covers all sins. God keeps using this word "covering."

One who seeks love covers a transgression,

but those who do not seek love repeat a matter and separate even close friends (Proverbs 17:9). Either there will be covering, or friends will be separated because someone will not cover.

I have always looked at it like this: Why do I have to put the negative things I know into somebody else's head? Even if a matter remains unsettled, it is not my business to get others to carry that stuff around in their minds. They shouldn't have to, because God will take care of it, and God will have his way.

Things must be covered.

The Shadow of His Holiness

"And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people" (Isaiah 51:16).

"Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee" (Isaiah 22:17).

In Exodus 26:13, the curtains were hanging over the side of the tabernacle to cover it. The ark was covered with a veil. The cherubim covered over the Mercy Seat with their wings (see Exodus 37:9). A covering of gold was over the

cherubim. God covered the ark with a cloud of incense (Leviticus 16:13). Everything about the tabernacle had to be covered because of the doctrine symbolized in the Old Testament. When the Lord passed by Moses, He covered Moses with His hand (see Exodus 33:22).

Only Finished Work believers will cover others. No one else will cover. Whether it is a pastor of a certain denomination or whoever it is, he will not cover unless he is grounded in the Finished Work. Why? Because it takes a person who knows he has been covered to cover another. It takes someone who appreciates all the coverings of God to cover someone else and to carry out the redemptive work of the grace of God.

Chapter Three

COVERING CREATES A CAPACITY FOR MATURITY

How many times have we talked with someone else and uncovered a person or a situation, all in the name of getting another person to pray with us? By doing that, we have, in a sense, trampled on the shed blood of Jesus Christ that covered that person. Therefore, we have "done despite" to the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29).

According to the Word of God, when you confess your sin, acknowledge it, isolate it, forget it, and move on with God (see Philippians 3:13-14), that sin is buried forever, and it cannot be brought out of the grave. Our sins have been buried in the deepest, deepest sea (Micah 7:19).

"And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12).

God covers all the day long.

Here is something else God covers, even though man has tried to ruin and destroy it. According to Psalm 139:13-14, God covers babies in the womb. He has each one in His mind before they are conceived, and He covers them in the womb after conception. Abortion is taking away from God's covering for the child conceived in the womb. It is taking away the covering of protection that God ordained.

God covers us for the day of battle (Psalm 140:7). For the deep, we are covered (Ezekiel 31:15). For the shadow of death, we are covered (Psalm 44:19). God is always covering us.

Covering in the Home

How does a husband cover his wife? He covers her by laying down his life for her, by loving her as Christ loved the Church (see Ephesians 5:22-25). That is how he covers her. He nourishes her and cherishes her, covering her through washing of the water and the sanctification of the Word of God. It is my belief that there are many women who would respond wonderfully to that kind of covering, because it is a genuine covering of Jesus Christ's love. The husband loves his wife. He loves her uncondi-

tionally and he uses the Word of God to bless her.

The wife, in turn, can cover her husband by respecting him (Ephesians 5:33) and showing reverence for him. If she cannot show reverence for his life, then she can show reverence for the fact that he is her husband. Parents can cover their children by not provoking them to wrath (Ephesians 6:1-4). They cover children with love, with investment, with prayer, with kindness, and with discipline when they must discipline in tough love.

Covering on the Job

In the business world, employees cover their employer, and the employer does his best to cover the employees individually. There has to be a covering in the business world, just as everything else in life needs to have a covering.

In my position in our ministry, I have been effective at covering. I deal with problems, but you must understand—I don't just cover sin and then do nothing about it. When things have happened, by the grace of God, we have exercised an amazing covering that has been very scriptural. It is so important for pastors to keep confidences so that people can trust them. Psalm 91:4

tells us that God covers us with His feathers. This means He protects us as a hen protects her little chicks. It means that God gives caring protection and a warm provision. God is faithful to give us a caring, warm provision for our lives.

We are covered with the robe of His righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). God covers us with the shadow of His hand (Isaiah 51:16). He covers us with silk (Ezekiel 16:10). Silk is one of the finest quality fabrics. In the Bible, silk speaks of the pure, unadulterated grace of the Finished Work. Exodus chapters 25 through 39 describes how God used blue and purple in the coverings of the tabernacle and the priests clothing. Blue is the color that points to Christ's heavenly character. Purple is the product of red (referring to the Blood and Christ's humanity) and blue together, and it refers to Christ's hypostatic union—the reality of Who He is: both God and man.

Sadly, many people cover themselves with their own works (Isaiah 59:6). Really they are covering themselves in their own dust, and that dust is energized by demons (see Isaiah 29:4). Some of those satanic coverings include the covering of shame (Obadiah 1:10), the covering of violence (Habakkuk 2:17), and the covering of confusion (Jeremiah 3:25).

Room to Grow

Covering is God's way of creating capacity, of stirring compassion, of conforming people to His nature by giving them space to grow, space to fail, space to rebound, space to fall again, space to grow out of that, and space to rebound again. This is what God's covering does for us. It gives us room to breathe. It gives us space until we are strengthened through the Word and have our own vertical and accept deliverance from whatever Satan is trying to tempt us with.

In Matthew 4, Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. The first temptation was directed at His physical nature, challenging Christ to turn stones into bread after forty days of fasting. The second temptation, misquoting Psalm 91, the devil dared Jesus to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple.

The last temptation in the wilderness was aimed at the vocation of Jesus. Satan offered up all the kingdoms that belonged to the devil because of his status as the god of this world. All Satan wanted was for Jesus to bow to him. The devil knew that would put Jesus outside of His vocation, which was the purpose for His life on earth.

Satan also attacks our physical nature, then he aims for our spirituality and tries to tempt us to live in pride or in arrogance as we usurp authority when we have no right to. Lastly, Satan always attacks our vocation. The last thing he wants is for us to live in God's eternal purpose.

Thank God for His covering that will shield us from these attacks. Beyond that, God's covering creates in us a capacity to gain rewards that will be revealed in eternity. It is amazing how God rewards us. He rewards us for giving out the cup of cold water. Every time we go to church we earn rewards. Every time we talk about Jesus Christ, it is written down in God's book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16). Every prayer said in the power of the Holy Spirit will bring a reward. All of this is possible because of the covering that God gives us.

CONCLUSION

God covers us from the time we are saved until the time we go home to be with Him. God never, ever takes His covering back. Lot was covered even in the midst of his life in Sodom and Gomorrah and later when he sinned with his daughters. The results of his sin are still being felt in the world today. Yet, Lot was covered with God's righteousness, even though he was disciplined (see 2 Peter 2:7).

Never reject God's covering for others. Cover each other, even if you should have to deal with a certain problem. Cover and allow God to create a capacity for repentance and rebound. God desires that we would grow and grow. Remember, the righteous man can fall seven times in a day and get back up again and continue on (Proverbs 24:16-17).

Why does God allow such a thing? It is to give space for believers to get up, stay up, and grow up. He covers and covers until He gets

someone to the place where that person can stand on his feet and then live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, grow in the Spirit, and reveal the Holy Spirit.

God covers us to give us time, to give us patience, and to give us "space." There is not one Christian in the world who does not need room to grow. You would never think of approaching a little two-month-old infant and demand that he start walking immediately. No, you would train and teach the little one and allow him to learn by your example.

It is such a beautiful thing for God to deal with us at our own personal, spiritual level. He understands everything about us, and He always upholds us with the right hand of His power. He gives us His covering so that we may grow into His image word by word, step by step, and moment by moment.

Divine Humility & Meekness

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Any believer who wants to be serious about his walk with God must focus on Jesus Christ, being open and in tune with the Holy Spirit's prompting. As we see miracles happen in our midst, many of them medically confirmed, we reveal an advanced faith. Groups everywhere will experience this great moving of the Holy Spirit. There are remnants throughout America who love Jesus and are being called away from error because of the purity of their motives and their hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Still, one thing is so necessary, yet sadly, few have even heard of it: *divine humility*. I did not say "humility" but "*divine* humility." It is not self-effacement, which comes from a works program of false piety, trying to get rid of 'self'. Divine humility comes from recognizing our cocrucifixion and coburial that took place nearly two thousand years ago.

In this international ministry, I receive calls

and letters every day from people who need to grasp this truth—not just from our own missionaries and pastors who serve in cities and remote villages throughout the world, but from those we reach here in America through radio and television. People from several denominations call us for counsel; these calls come at all hours of the night. The schedule isn't hard, it's fun! But I'm only human.

What I find lacking in so many who seek counsel is a godly humility that (a) doesn't criticize, (b) isn't paranoid but always thinks the best, and (c) produces a capacity that is far greater than most of us have ever considered. As this message defines it, let the Holy Spirit instruct you in divine humility.

Chapter One

WHILE WE WERE SINNERS

Knowing the pain, knowing the heartache, and knowing the cost, billions of years ago the Father planned to send the Son to become the number one transgressor in world history (Isaiah 53:12, Mark 15:28). When accused, He was not to open His mouth. In fact, never once did Jesus criticize His disciples. He warned them, prophesied a sentence, but never criticized them. He only built them up.

Divine humility is Jesus Christ accepting us while we are ungodly and imputing His righteousness to us the moment we believe. Please understand this: He imputes *His* righteousness to our account the moment we believe; and, according to Romans 4:5, He does it *while* we are still ungodly. He justifies us and vindicates us in divine humility.

We understand that because of divine humility, He does not impute sin to us. We also under-

stand that all of our sins were imputed to Him, and that is divine humility. But *not* imputing sin to us when we do sin doesn't even seem fair! It is divine humility.

Divine humility is always willing to become the victim, the one whom every person steps on. The only time that doesn't happen is when the aggressor needs to be held accountable. In that case, divine humility reproves.

I want you to see that in divine humility, you are relaxed in Christ. You are poised and peaceful. You allow the Holy Spirit to communicate the Word of God as the absolute measuring line. It isn't what you "feel." It isn't what you "think." It's not what somebody did. Rather, when the Word of God becomes your measuring line, you have no other yardstick but the Word of God.

Divine humility is Jesus saying, "Father, forgive them; for they don't know what they're doing" (Luke 23:34).

Divine humility is Paul saying, "I wish that I could die and go to hell for Israel, and let them go to heaven instead" (Romans 9:3-4).

Even after Moses had been angry, filled with righteous indignation against the Jews, he went to God saying, "If you're going to send them to hell, send me to hell, too" (Exodus 32:32). *That* is

divine humility.

Divine humility is Stephen, martyred by religious leaders, saying, "Lay not this sin to their charge." Not only did he not mention their sin, but he said, "Do not lay it to their charge," while they were stoning him to death (Acts 7:55-60). That is divine humility.

Derived by the Spirit of Grace

Divine humility is derived by the Spirit of grace. Hebrews 10:29*b* brings out the Spirit's name and His characteristics. He is called "the Spirit of grace."

When divine humility is channeled by the Holy Spirit and by the Word of God into man's soul, it gives that man the Spirit of grace. A man who has the Spirit of grace is gracious.

But here are the saddest words we could ever say about this: If a person does not enter into divine humility, he will never experience the residential incorporation of the Word of God. This person will neither experience the viability, authenticity, and validity of the presence of God, nor become a channel of His communication. (I use the term *channel* because it best describes the process. It is not the demonic channeling we hear about today.) He will never become the

method for God's manifestation nor the means for His divine might. While he may know intellectually every possible thing about the power of God, he will never experience what he knows until divine humility takes over his humanity in the capacity of his soul.

This is why the Bible says in Isaiah 57:15, "I am the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, and I also inhabit him who has a contrite and humble spirit." He quickens the spirit of a contrite one according to His life, His nature, and His essence. He acts in Resurrection power over the humble. He inhabits us with Himself.

Divine Prerogatives

When God says to humble yourselves before God and He will lift you out of the mess you're in (James 4:10), that does not speak of a person who has entered into self-effacement or temporary quietness that comes from being stimulated by a message. It speaks of someone who has entered into the reality of the Cross, the reality of death and burial of self. Then he enters into the reality of Resurrection, the Ascension, and the positional prerogatives of choice. As he enters into these divine prerogatives, he enters into divine humility.

Because of the divine prerogative, Abraham could say to Lot, "You choose first, even though it's my right. I will choose with God, and God will choose for me" (Genesis 13:8-12). "You choose first, then I'll choose." That's divine humility—a very unique personal experience.

In Luke 11, the Lord taught the disciples about the Father's heart. (By the way, a note on academics in exegetical principles: Often, when the Gospels repeat phrases in different texts, although they may appear to be exactly the same, in application they are not. For example, Matthew 7:7-12 deals with men relating to other men, whereas Luke 11:11-13 deals with the image of the Father toward men. It is not the same.)

"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" That means the Father will operate toward those who ask for the Holy Spirit's operation.

Chapter Two

WHERE TROUBLES COME FROM

The first thing to understand here is that God does not give sickness to people, and the troubles that Christians have do not come from God. I do not blame Christians for their troubles. But, because men and women are created with free volition, we love our freedom to choose, yet we do not love the consequences that come with having it.

It would be great if you could have free volition *because* you are a mature, wonderful person; but the problem is that the gangster has a free volition, too, as well as the drunkard on the highway. So, God intervenes to bless people who are victims of the free volition of others. Indeed, He may not prevent things from happening to Christians. Regardless of what happens as a result of someone's wrong decision, even if it's a fatal accident on the highway, God takes the believer home to be with Jesus instantly.

But often, in the midst of troubles, we think, "Why did God do this?" I hear that every day of my life. Now, why don't you get this straight in your mind and start being mature? *Troubles and sickness and disease do not come from God.*

The best way to gauge it is this: Would you give your child cancer? Would you say, "I'm going to plan for my son to be in a bloody accident tomorrow. I can't wait!" No, you wouldn't.

If we, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father give good gifts to *us*, His children?

Am I saying that all these things are caused because of unbelief? Absolutely not. But I'll tell you what they are caused by. Troubles are caused by people who abuse their free volition. So what does God do, since He gave free volition as the first gift to mankind?

For a Christian who loves Him, God works something good out of the worst thing that can happen. He is always working something good out of our circumstances.

He ordains our steps, but He does not ordain the steps of the unrighteous. It is not God's fault that the air is polluted with invisible viruses that are so devastating to us. God did not create the

environment that way. He created a perfect environment. God didn't create men to die. We were created to live forever, but death came because of negative volition.

The Responsibilities of Freedom

While it's not your fault when sickness comes, and though it may have absolutely nothing to do with your lack of faith (that's another message!), you must understand this: God did not give you what you think He did, though He is allowing it to happen to you.

Maybe you would like for God to change. Maybe you would like to have God withdraw the gift of free volition. Every morning you could get up like a robot who turns on the faucet, brushes his teeth, takes a shower, combs his hair—just going through a preprogrammed routine, with no choice in the matter. Is that what you would like? God wouldn't be able to glorify Himself through you because you would only be manifesting a computerized robot.

Somebody said, "If what's happened to me comes from serving God, then it's no fun to serve Him."

Once again, the terrible things that have happened to your life did not come from God.

"No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11*b*). God is not in the business of sending bad things to His own people. Often, He allows us to reap what we've sown. You want it? Go get it. It's *your* free volition, but be willing to live in the consequences of your terrible choices.

God may say, "If you want to have cirrhosis of the liver, then you may. Go ahead. I will not stop you. You may do it. I will not interfere."

Interrupted by Mercy

Of course, God also acts in divine intervention many times—more than we'd ever begin to imagine—to deliver us and save us through an invisible work.

Let me tell you a true story of a lady who had deep desire to have a child. Finally she had a child, but at the age of two and a half, the child was rushed to the hospital and died. As a result, the woman never wanted another child, though her husband did. She was deeply wounded, hurt, and deeply opposed to the one she loved before it happened—*God*.

This woman was a nurse in the hospital, and she made it very clear that she did not want to work on the pediatrics unit.

One weekend when many of the staff were out sick, her supervisor assigned her to the children's unit, saying, "You're going to have to work pediatrics today. Everyone else is sick."

She said, "No."

The supervisor glared at her and said, "You'll work in pediatrics or you're fired."

When she got to the unit, there was an eight or nine-year-old child who had been unconscious and supposedly was going to die. That nurse walked into the room reluctantly. She hated being in that room, and, of course, the child's mother didn't know what she had been through.

Suddenly, the girl woke up! Supernaturally, as though she had never been sick and after being unconscious for several days, she spoke: "Oh, I was having such a good time, and I have to come back *here*?"

The nurse was shocked. This child had died. Now, awake, she continued to speak: "The person I was with all that time was my friend. She told me to come back and tell somebody it's okay to have another child, and to let them know that she is in heaven." This is a literal account, documented by a secular journalist.

And she said, "The girl's name was Wendy."

That nurse, whose daughter, Wendy, had died, walked out of the hospital supernaturally healed by God.

Consequences of the Fall

Over and over again, God has His ways of moving through the Holy Spirit. That mother was totally set free. She had become so bitter; but, God loved her so much, He intervened with His mercy.

God will never give us a stone when we ask for bread. When you suffer, many of you think God has given you a stone, but He hasn't. He has given you bread, and your suffering is for a divine cause.

God doesn't give you these terrible things. We are the product of a body of death. We have a body of sin. That's a part of the universal principle of sin through the Fall. We can't blame God for the universal Fall of man, and we can't blame God for the consequences of the Fall which include a body of death—and with that, sickness and disease. But, God did not give these things to us. Sin did. And it may not be any particular sin that you are committing, but the consequences of genetics and the Fall. God does the best thing He can do. He makes it up to

you and blesses you. He is always *for* you, and because you're a Christian, He never leaves you nor forsakes you.

If you would give your children the very best—and practically speaking, all parents would give their children the very best—then you would not plan for one of them to have a disease tomorrow. So what makes you think God would do that, if He is better than you are?

As Ye Sow, So Shall Ye Reap

I don't deny that we cause so many of the problems that we face. Because of negativity, we do not have divine humility, and because of things that go on in our lives, we do reap what we sow. If we refuse to allow God to sow in His righteousness (Hosea 10:12) so that we can reap in mercy and reap His standard and provision for living, then we will reap what we sow. But we will also reap what others sow. Because we have no divine protection when we choose to go negative, we will reap what other people with negative volition sow.

That's why I've often said you cannot be around somebody with negative volition unless you're going to try to help them. That person will always end up blaming somebody else in-

stead of repenting of sin and entering into divine humility.

Chapter Three

HAVING A HEAVENLY VISION

Some people have a vision, and others do not. Because Proverbs 29:18*a* says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish," we must be sure to understand what a vision is.

Do you know there are people who try to get others involved in their "vision"? (And, heaven help you if you don't respond!)

But, a vision from God starts with seeing Jesus Christ high and lifted up (Isaiah 6:1). The next thing about a vision is to see your*self* undone—not someone else who said something you didn't like, or somebody who wasn't there when you "needed" them (because it's you, after all, and you're *so* important). Yes, you are important, but you've got to be realistic. You know, there are times you may call upon God, and it appears He doesn't answer.

"God, why didn't you answer Your phone?!

I've called fifteen times; don't you know it's me? Let's get this straight, God. I'm the one calling today."

A vision that doesn't see Jesus Christ first is not from heaven. It's an earthly vision.

Secondly, if I have never seen myself in my utter wickedness, and my utter sinfulness, if I have never seen the exceeding sinfulness of my sin—as Paul did in Romans 7—if I have never seen the ugly, sick person that I was, then I can never be trusted with a vision.

As a growing Christian, nobody ever taught me this, but I've been thinking about visions that people have—visions that don't begin by seeing the Lord high and lifted up in the Holy of Holies. But when I see the Lord high and lifted up, the next thing I see is my *self*—so rotten, so absolutely sinful in relation to holiness and perfection that it's pathetic. I don't ever have to look at anyone else. I've seen all I need to see right in little old me.

But, I can exchange all of this through the Cross to receive the gift of righteousness and the abundance of grace—to have that New Covenant image, that new self-image, that new esteem, those new dynamics in the Spirit—so I don't have to live as the 'tail'. I can now be promoted

in my position as the 'head', and it's all a faith operation through the resurrection power of God (Colossians 2:12).

Psychiatrists, however, do not want us to see ourselves. They love to tell you that it's your husband's fault, that *you* didn't make a bad decision.

Yes, you did.

"Well, I, ..."

No. You made a decision for the flesh.

"No, but . . . ."

No. That's not it. Your problem is that you don't want to surrender to the truth.

Set Apart by the Holy Spirit

If I am not sanctified by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2), then grace and peace cannot be multiplied for my sanctification.

Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17). What does it mean?

It means that our memories, our frame of reference, and our streams of consciousness are set apart by the mind of God—the Word of God. Then, the Holy Spirit takes that Word and sanctifies our decisions, our relationships, and our experience (1 Peter 1:2), and God is in charge of

the operation of our lives.

When I fail, I rebound immediately. I recognize my failure and confess it. I recognize how terrible it is, I name the sin, and I mean it with all my heart. Then I forsake it, isolate it, and go on with God.

The life given to us through the Word of God has one purpose: to help us relate to the Lord, to ourselves, and to others. Light shines upon darkness, exposing darkness. The Word of God says, "God is light. In Him there is no darkness at all." The Word of God makes it crystal clear in Psalm 104:2 that God wears the garment of light—He wears it! And those who receive the Morning Star Order are going to receive a garment of light because they lived in the light of God's Word, in the light of the Holy Spirit, and in the light of the sanctification of the Word and the Spirit. The ultimate, most precious place to be is where the Word is set apart in my spirit by humility and meekness, which is "divine humility." Then, the Holy Spirit can utilize the Word that is in my soul at any time (John 14:26), uniting and establishing His truth in me.

When the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and multiplies grace and peace with the Word that He quickens us with, then we are sanctified

into Christ's holiness and unto Christ's provision. Sanctification is so crucial.

Because I'm truly growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, I have now been sanctified out of the problems I had twelve months ago. Through divine humility, God is able to promote me out of any problem I face and into sanctification.

Lord, Set My Feet on Higher Ground

I believe God wants to bring us into a divine vision, with divine light, through the operation of divine sanctification so that we understand what 1 Thessalonians 4:3a says, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification."

First, it means that we are to be set apart today and set apart tonight for God's eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:10-11).

Secondly, it means to be conformed to God's image at noon and conformed to God's image at night, no matter what happens (Romans 8:29).

Thirdly, it means to reveal the Son of God even if you are in the furnace of fire.

As you begin to grasp these things, you will see that it all equals what is called 'higher ground'. That means you're higher than you were yesterday—mentally, emotionally, and

physically. You have better relationships. You have better understanding. And most of all, you have become established in grace with divine humility (Hebrews 13:9*b*).

CONCLUSION

The greatest need on the earth today is divine humility.

I want to summarize with a word about divine humility toward the lost. Divine humility has paid for every sinner's sin and for every soul in hell today. Not one person will go there because of their sins but because they rejected the Savior. Divine humility paid for all their sins, yet because they rejected the Savior, they will go to hell forever. That is how humble God is.

God is so humble that at the White Throne Judgment for the unsaved, He won't even mention their sins. Of course, here on earth Christian's bring up people's sins all the time—but God will not. He won't say, "You were a drunkard." He will just take all their good works and say, "You fell short." He will look at the works they performed but not the sins they committed. Why? Divine humility.

Let us walk in the light as He is in the light

(1 John 1:7). That's divine humility. In Him is no darkness at all. So let us walk in love as dear children (Ephesians 5:1-2). But most of all, let us walk, even as He walked (1 John 2:6), and be as He is in this world (1 John 4:17). That is divine humility.

God says, "Whatever I've asked you to do, I will perform." According to Job 23:14, God will perform the thing that He has appointed for me, and, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

In divine humility, Jesus Christ took care of all of my sins and gave me all of His righteousness, that is, the spirit of the meek who will inherit the earth and who now have power over Satan because he's defeated.

Divine Motivations

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Motivation—it is what moves our hearts, our minds, our souls, our wills, and our bodies. What motivates a Christian to continue walking with God by faith, when neither sight nor feelings encourage him? John 1:1 does not say "In the beginning was love," although certainly love was there in the beginning. That verse says, "In the beginning was *the Word*." The greatest motivation for us in these last days will come from understanding what existed in the beginning: It was the Word.

We were created by the Word (Genesis 2:7). The heavens were created by the Word (Psalm 33:6). The worlds were framed by the Word (Hebrews 11:3). Everything is held together by the Word (Hebrews 1:3). It is not our feelings, our emotions, nor our opinions that motivate us. It is the objectivity of the Word of God.

Jesus said we are to live by every single word that proceeds out of the mouth of God

(Matthew 4:4). Consider that! In this booklet, we will see what it means to have His Word as the motivation for our thinking. When we hide the Word of God in our hearts, we do not practice sin (Psalm 119:11), but instead we are cleansed (Psalm 119:9). Then, when the tests come, truth will control our opinions and emotions because we have divine motivations through the mind of Christ.

Chapter One

THE LIVING WORD WHO LOVES US

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:2).

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1)

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Throughout the Word of God, we see that God has ordained families and congregations of believers to provide a healthy environment for individuals. In these provisions, there must be love, communication, compassion, wisdom, con-

viction, and integrity.

A woman's husband was dying. Overwhelmed with fear and sadness, she visited a certain church because members she knew said they would pray for her husband. The day she went, they sang "The Old Rugged Cross." They just sang it, and this woman started crying profusely. As the tears ran down her cheeks, she said that was the first time she heard "The Old Rugged Cross" sung with such intensity. "On a hill, far away, stood an old rugged cross…." The people sang it with conviction, expressing a love for the Savior that was unsurpassed.

"And I love that old cross, where the Dearest and Best, for a world of lost sinners was slain…." With those lyrics, this woman thought of her husband going into eternity at any moment, and she thought of the Old Rugged Cross that could assure her husband of heaven.

She almost ran to the altar to be saved. There, she prayed that her husband would become conscious so she could lead him to Christ. He did become conscious when she went to his bedside, and she did lead him to Jesus. Not only did he become conscious, but slowly he was miraculously healed through a doctor's care and by the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of

God sent to heal him.

"The congregation gave me love and hope," this woman said. "The Word that was preached and the music that was sung meant more to me than anything in my life. Thank God for that local church."

There is healing, there is love, and there is edification in the local assembly. Deep friendships are found in the local church. Patience, compassion, and forgiveness are all found there because it is Christ's Body. We all need to get to know the Body of Christ in our local church and in the Word of God that motivates us.

Visions that Changed Lives

The following testimony was given by an Arab soldier who was present during the Six-Day War against Israel in 1967. Several nations were fighting over land that belonged to Israel by Divine decree.

Near the end, it was clear that Israel would win the war. As Arab leaders were about to order soldiers out of the Golan Heights, many of the enemy reported seeing chariots—thousands of armed chariots in the sky that helped Israel win that war supernaturally. They put down their weapons and ran. That happened on the

final day.

But before all of that, this young Arab soldier who also believed he was serving God, tired and hurting, cried out, "God, please show Yourself."

When he looked up, he saw a vision of Jesus Christ facing toward Israel. Behind the Lord, but toward the man who had just prayed, were written these words: "The Lord Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God, loves you."

Today, this Arab citizen still tells the testimony of the supernatural answer to his prayer. This is a true story. Oh, there is such power in the Word of God! (See 2 Kings 6:15-17.)

The Master vs. Moods

The Word of God motivates us because He lives and abides forever and ever. It is so vital that we grasp the greatness of the call of God. We can have an intimate relationship with the Savior by knowing God's thoughts toward us. He has a plan for every detail of life we face. And that kind of oneness will only come from abiding in His Word. This is the truth that sets us free from any moodiness we may be living in.

Someone said that people who are plagued by moods shouldn't pray about them. Instead,

they should kick the moods, because moods are physiological, and they have nothing to do with the psyche.

Moods begin in the physical realm of the body. So, stop being moody! It is only a habit of your Adam nature being expressed through your genetic makeup. Start thinking with the mind of God on purpose, and don't let yourself be ruled by your physical body. You are a brand-new creature, and you have been re-gened. *

Motivated to Serve

The Word of God motivates us to serve. The Word of God motivates us to make the Word our life and to be convicted of truth by the power of the Word.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). The Word is "for ever settled in heaven," and not one single thing about it has changed (Psalm 119:89). A person who is hungry and thirsty after the Word shall constantly be filled when he knows the Word of God as the Word of Life (see Philippians 2:16).

The story has been told of a man in a prison. He was visited by a woman who told him the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). He

read the story and became gloriously saved. Then he went out and affected thousands of people with his life. Persecuted, he died at a very young age, but here was a man who made the Word of God live. Others' lives were changed forever because he made the Word of God live.

What should motivate us? The Word of God. That is why Bible college is so crucial. Every Christian should study the Word of God on purpose. We should plan to receive at least one hour of doctrine daily. That is the source of our strength and the basis for a walk of faith.

**Read* Re-Gened, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

WORKS THAT STAND THE TEST OF FIRE

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

This verse is the first thing that should motivate us in the Scriptures. We will receive the things done in our body. If they are good, we receive good; if they are bad, we suffer loss. But we must all appear before God. There isn't a single thing that can stop anyone from appearing before Christ—either at the White Throne Judgment for the lost or at the Bema Seat evaluation for all born-again believers.

Romans 14:12 tells that believers will appear alone before our Creator and Redeemer at the Bema Seat. Remember, we will not be at the Bema Seat to hear about our sins. It is an evalua-

tion, and what happens there will determine whether or not we receive rewards.

Building with the Right Materials

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:11-13).

The Word of God says that the day will come when it will be declared what sort of works we have done. They will all be tried by fire. If the works are gold, silver, and precious stones, we will be rewarded. If they are wood, hay, and stubble, we will suffer loss. Yet, each one who received Christ as his Savior will be saved even as by fire (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Dear friend, these are the facts. Gold represents living in the nature of God by receiving His Word through the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:4). Silver is living in grace because grace is the only thing that can buy back what Satan has robbed. Precious stones speak of being hid in the local assembly and becoming a vital, committed part

of Christ's Body.

1 Peter 2:5 refers to us as being lively stones and members in particular of the Body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:27). Ephesians 4:16 tells us we are to support the Body with what God has given us, fitly framed and compacted by that which every joint supplieth. Wood, hay, and stubble, on the other hand, refer to what we have done in our own strength and energy without God.

Seek First the Kingdom of God

Lovingly, kindly, and graciously, the Lord pleads with us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God—and the Word was God. Seek Him first, and all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:33).

This is how it works. New Testament believers gave themselves first to God and then to the apostles by the will of God (2 Corinthians 8:5). For us, this means we are to get on our knees every morning before we do anything else. We should seek the Lord as our Savior and our Redeemer.

Seek the Lord as the One who made you and redeemed you, and go to Him. As you go to

Him say, "You are first, Lord Jesus. In every decision today I will put You first and then Your Word, as preached by your representatives."

God's way is unique. Christianity is not difficult; it is impossible. He doesn't ask us to try to live a better life. Rather, He demands that we give up our lives to follow Him.

"And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee withersoever thou goest.

"And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

"And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

"Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

"And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:57-62).

God wants to be first in our lives.

"Knowing therefore the [fear] of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (2 Corinthians 5:11).

Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men so that the truth will be made manifest. This fear is not one that has torment. This fear speaks of reverence, respect, and honor, knowing who God is so that we have Him as our motivation.

"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28). "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate" (Proverbs 8:13).

The fear of the Lord is not just the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7), but the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).

You would fear today if electrical wires were down, and you were in danger of coming in contact with them. You would not be casual, as though they were not worth considering, but you would have a realistic fear of the power in them. More so, we should have the fear of God in a good way—to esteem Him and honor Him with great reverence.

Chapter Three

CONSTRAINED BY THE CROSS

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

In 2 Corinthians 5:14, we have another motivation: It is the love of Christ.

Here is the love of God: He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to the Cross. And did you know that when He went to the Cross, Jesus had to have His human preferences and His human desires crucified? In Matthew 26:39, Jesus prayed in the Garden, "If it be possible, remove this cup from me: nevertheless thy will be done." There, God the Father had to tell God the Son, "It is not possible."

On the Cross, Jesus said, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

Yet, God did have to forsake Him because the sins of the entire world—past, present, and future—had been placed upon Him, and God could not look upon sin. It wasn't His desire to be forsaken, but Jesus had to have His desires and His preferences crucified.

That is what the Cross does. It crucifies our opinions, our preferences, our lusts. It crucifies the old sin nature in us. There are so many heartbreaking problems because people won't let the Cross crucify their well-preserved lives.

When people refuse to get right with God, they repudiate unconditional love, grace and mercy, and the ministry of reconciliation. They repudiate all the attributes of God in order to get their own way. They may say that they don't care—but the day is coming when, guaranteed, they will reap what they sow.

Walking in Integrity

"But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

"My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD" (Psalm 26:11-12).

This means that if I am being mistreated, the only thing that matters is my integrity, not the

person who is mistreating me. If I walk in integrity, I will respond in the filling of the Spirit and the love of God. Maybe the person is obnoxious, but I will walk in my integrity. And while I do it, I will say, "God, give me mercy."

If you will just walk in the integrity of the living Word of God, in the integrity of grace, in the integrity of mercy, in the integrity of love for yourself, then you will be healed and cleansed. You will feel good about yourself and your foot will stand firmly at Calvary. The Cross is an even place in the midst of the congregation.

Our prayer for the assembly and for ourselves ought to be that we will continually walk in the integrity of what has always existed from the beginning—the Word of God. There we discover the depth, height, length, and breadth of His unconditional love for us.

The love of God—what an amazing motivation. To think that He loved me so much that I will never have to face Him for sin, or iniquity, or evil, or anything else! That is motivation for me to love Him and to love others regardless of what they do to me.

Know No One after the Flesh

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man

after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Corinthians 5:16).

Jesus was crucified in weakness (2 Corinthians 13:4), but He was raised up in resurrection power. Therefore we are not to know anyone—neither family, friends, nor other believers—after the flesh. We are to know people after their capacity today. We are to know them in such a way that our love will do everything in its power to help the need, the cause, and the pain of it all.

A woman pleaded for help when she found out that her husband was leaving her for another woman. "I love him," she said. "I have never gone out on him. Is there anything I can do?"

It is so easy to see the faults of the other party and to get to know him after the flesh. But we are not to know each other after the flesh. Yes, we are aware of what is going on; we are not foolish. But I will not know people after the flesh. I will get to know others after what they need from me. They need to be loved with the love of God, even though I will not compromise the truth.

We said to her, "Quiet your soul before God. We will help you in every way we can, but the

battle is the Lord's—and the battle isn't over yet."

We Who Have Been Forgiven Much, Love Much

I pray with many who go through battles with drug addiction. "Pray for me, I can't get out of it," they say. "I will do anything. I want victory. I just can't get it." I see such a hunger for deliverance in their eyes. They want to be delivered as much as we want them to be. So, instead of knowing them after their addiction, I determine to know them only after the love of God. If enough of us will operate this way, I believe that the love of God will never fail (see 1 Corinthians 13:8).

We do not know them after the flesh, because Jesus said in Luke 7:47, those who have been forgiven much, love much. Obviously, we are not to sin so that we will love more. But those who are truly forgiven, who go on beyond their failures in the power of God, will have a tender heart, a sensitive spirit, and a deep love. They have been forgiven much, therefore they find it quite easy to forgive others.

Love is a motive for not knowing *anyone* after the flesh. That means we are not to know ourselves after the flesh. We are to know our-

selves after the Finished Work of Christ.

Completely Brand-New

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Greek text of this verse includes an aorist, active, indicative, dogmatic assertion of a fact that is true forever: Old things *have* passed away. All things *are* new—a perfect active indicative relates to something that happened in the past. The perfect tense means that it stands forever. Christ produced the action of making us new creatures. The indicative mood is an assertion of an absolute reality that cannot change. This means that if *any* man be in Christ, he is a new creature, and old things are passed away; all things have become new.

Don't think of somebody else's flesh, or even your own flesh, if you are fighting a battle. Think of the new creation; think of the new nature. Think of the new potential. Think of your new life (see Romans 6:4). Think of the new love that you are experiencing through being loved by God, the new capacity you have through grace and forgiveness. Spend time with God every morning, noon, and night. Remember this:

All things have become new.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

We have a ministry of reconciliation, a word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors representing heaven, representing the New Covenant, representing the new creation. Jesus Christ has given us all this through the Cross.

Jesus could have said, "Why is the Father doing this to Me? I have never done anything to Him."

Oh, how great is the love of Christ, that He never mentions our sin.

Consider the motivations we have: the love

of God, the Word of God, the Bema Seat, reverence toward God, knowing no man after the flesh, the new creation, the ministry of reconciliation. These are our motivations and the foundation of our integrity. If I have the integrity of the Finished Work, then it doesn't matter what anyone thinks of me. It only matters that I walk in mine integrity.

If people try to hurt a person who has integrity, he will not react because he is motivated by that integrity—because of the love of the One who died for us all. Remember, we are all dead because Christ died for us. Now, we must not live unto ourselves, but unto Christ who loves us.

Let Truth Have Control

Truth can control our emotions. Recently I read an amazing article about a couple and their eleven-year-old daughter, Audrey, who were in a train that plunged into a river after a bridge was knocked out. The daughter had cerebral palsy and was in a wheelchair. This couple did everything in their power to save the girl. They had just enough strength to push her to the rescuers before they were both pulled under and drowned. Truth controlled their emotions through love. It would have been only normal for them

to want to save their own lives, but they gave their lives to save their little girl.

Truth sets us free, and the truth can control every emotion we face. When we are led by God, we will not respond to situations by sight. Instead, we will hear from heaven. With divine motivations, we will seek those things that are from above, to impart "a word in season to him that is weary...to hear as the learned." Then, we will not be ashamed when we face God (see Isaiah 50:4).

CONCLUSION

Like never before, let's begin to face every situation according to the Spirit. If the Word of God says something and you disagree, don't argue the point with your personal rights. Just agree quickly with your adversary, the Holy Spirit (Matthew 5:25), and obey the Word of God.

There isn't a single thing in this life that is more enjoyable than knowing God—really knowing Him. There isn't anything more fun than making a decision to put Him first, and then to know personally and experientially the power of His resurrection.

Sharing the fellowship of His sufferings is a great, great privilege. Life comes and life goes, but His life will never leave us, because we are one with Him forever. In Him, we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:28a). Every breath that we take is because of Him. He is our reason for living. He is the divine motivation of all things eternal.

Divine Resources for Healing

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

"Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

"For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh" (Proverbs 4:20-22).

God loves to heal people. In Proverbs 4, He declared that *His* words are life and health to those who discover them; and in Psalm 103:3, the same One who has forgiven all of our sins also heals our diseases.

How vital it is that we believe this great truth. Instead of remaining in sickness and defeat, unable to comprehend the breadth and height of God's power to make us whole, we can be released into the care of the One who knows what we need before we ask (Matthew 6:8).

Unfortunately, it is possible to stroll into a church service with little expectation of what God can do and then leave without receiving the

resources He so faithfully and lovingly provides.

This booklet reveals God's amazing resources to heal and restore everything about our lives. By receiving these great truths, we can better understand the divine resources available to make us well.

Chapter One

ESTABLISHING A CAPACITY

"I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

"It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.

"Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.

"Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:125-128).

Reverence toward God's presence establishes our capacity to receive a message from the Word of God. Long before we reach the sanctuary, we need to prepare our hearts to receive. We learn to concentrate in absolute objectivity without paying attention to physical distractions. Then, as we focus on the Provider—with a hunger, a thirst, and an expectation from His Word—we will begin to recognize the provision.

In church services, my soul must be single-

eyed toward the presence of God. I love the whole Bible; therefore, I do not favor certain themes from the Word.

Selective hearers will implement a message because it fits their situation. Yet, the truth is that everything from the Word is for *me*. I want to be conformed to Christ's image; therefore, my need on a particular day should not govern how I hear. Instead, my desire to be conformed to His image can keep me listening with meekness toward God and with tremendous concentration and discipline.

The Word of God is quick and powerful, able to transform the mind. It is sharper than any two-edged sword. Psalm 18:44 commands us to obey as soon as we hear the Word. That enables us to live in prosperity of the soul (Job 36:11, 3 John 2).

The Problem of the Emotions

"I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:10).

The feminine plural of *kiljah*, the Hebrew word for "reins," speaks of the two lines for human emotions: the "right" emotion, based on

a temporal value system, producing primarily negative reactions, and the "left" emotion, connected to God's eternal value system.*

One reason many people are not healed is that the "right" emotion, which should be an appreciator of what God is doing, is controlling the soul. The "right" emotion involves the body's muscles and nerves. Individual cells act as receptors to the millions of vibrations in the atmosphere for what become stimulus and response patterns. The "left" emotion, however, is controlled by information from the heart, which contains the premise for all motivations, and the basis for all operational behavior.** The heart is the supreme communication center for every thought and decision, controlling every operation of the soul. The mind, with its subconscious and conscience, receives truth, affecting the left emotion, which has an impact on the rest of the body through a sympathetic response.

This whole process happens in an instant. We receive the Word in the heart, and that affects the right emotion, then it goes on to the left emotion, and faith connects everything together. The Word, through the power of God, is mixed with faith and flows out to the cells in the nerve and muscle fibers of the body. Healing streams

affect the bloodstream, bringing messages of health into every system of the body. The adrenal glands, the thyroid—*everything* is affected.

Healing can happen very quickly because it is a divine process. God sent His Word to heal (Psalm 107:20).

**Read* Coverings, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

***Read The Hearing Heart, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN ENERGY

"He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Psalm 107:20).

A French doctor teaching in Vienna understood the problem of complex human emotions, and he developed a great premise for God's life. Through his research, he recognized that the emotions are complex and that they are formed biologically, physiologically, and psychologically. Certain impressions and processes are engaged in the realm of our responses, reflections, and appreciations.

Twenty-three million people in America have been diagnosed with emotional disturbances. Neuroses and psychoses devastate people's lives. Satan traps people when they start to live outside of truth and turn to earthly counsel concerning their situation. Good human energy,

which can come through natural support systems, sustains and preserves the right emotion.

Still, destructive mood swings come from fluctuating emotional energy levels. No person can keep up the same level of energy for very long. Atmosphere, weather, and circumstances all affect our emotional energy levels. What our bodies go through in transitions contributes to how we respond.

Think about it. When you encounter someone who is very angry, you can sense the negative energy coming from him. Sometimes you can still sense it in the atmosphere after the person has left the room. This energy can stay with you throughout the day and affect you even that night.

Negative, demonic energy is real—you are not imagining it. We must resist it; otherwise, a self-destructive element will enter our lives.

A study done at the University of Pittsburgh showed how two cancer patients responded to the same situation. Researchers measured levels of energy in their bodies. One patient was very negative—cursing and despising his condition. His level remained very low and he did eventually die. The other one could not even speak for a time. Yet, that person stayed positive and the

levels measured much higher. She lived.

It definitely helped that this woman was a Christian. The Word of God formed walls of doctrine in her soul, and the cancer could not defeat that protection from the Lord.

Drawn to the Hem of His Garment

In the Gospels, the woman with the issue of blood was drawn to the positive energy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 9:20). Because of her disease, she was not allowed to go out in public. The law caused her to be excommunicated from the synagogue, divorced from her husband, and ostracized from her community. But she heard about Jesus Christ and she took a risk, though she could have been severely punished for being found in the crowd on that day.

When she reached out by faith and touched the hem of Jesus' garment, He sensed that someone had touched Him with divine faith. He realized right away that "virtue" had gone from Him to her. She received divine energy from the Lord, and instantly she was healed.

Christ's virtue became for her the power of divine healing. She received a precise gift from a precise aspect of God's nature to meet her precise need, spontaneously and instantaneously.

This is the reason she was trembling as she came before Jesus. The healing was quick and powerful. It was not accomplished in human energy; it was supernatural.

Chapter Three

THE GRACE PROCEDURE BRINGS VICTORY

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:5-6).

In the Greek text, the word "resist" indicates that God makes war against those who are proud, those living in the natural life of their right emotion disconnected from their spiritual life through the left emotion. He has given a divine blueprint for life, one that is phenomenal in its provision. Yet, the proud refuse to live in this blueprint, so they keep living in self.

As a result, the proud man has no resources for healing.

For a Christian, to depend on emotional human energy is sin. We need to develop a spiritual relationship with God. When we purpose on this, then no matter how exhausted we become, we will not respond according to the flesh.

In my own life, I must purpose to make sure that my entire soul enters into rest through the left emotion, which is attached to eternal values. Every day, I study to be quiet so that I am not depending upon natural energy. Sometimes I will listen to music or just meditate and reflect on the holy things of the Lord. I simply want to enter into the reverence of God's presence.

By building myself up this way in the most holy faith, always praying in the Holy Spirit, I keep myself in the love of God (Jude 1:20-21). This is a grace procedure, and God immediately rewards it, because in Him we are divorced from dependence upon emotional energy.

Living in pride and human effort is just playing right into Satan's hands. Hell revels in seeing us struggle to find our own ways out of sickness and disease. The devil enjoys it even more when we give up and stop expecting God's Word to heal us.

God *did* send His Word to heal our diseases.

It is our most powerful resource in this life. We must receive it and cling to it in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then, we can watch Him defeat the powers of hell.

A Testimony to the Atmosphere

The following verses show just how God will heal us to make us an example to our enemies. The devil brings attacks against us, but when we respond to God's resources, we are healed, and God makes a show of Satan's defeat.

"There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines.

"All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased.

"Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee.

"Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon

thee will I give for a prey.

"For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after" (Jeremiah 30:13-17).

Soul Prosperity

Many approaches in medicine today seek to stir up energy in the right emotion and to develop that energy. Through certain initiations, some people can stir up a measure of health and power that goes through the bloodstream and into the bones.

These approaches are not necessarily wrong. They do help some people. But think how much more effective it is to be Spirit-filled, having the joy of the Lord as your strength. Think of how great it would be to have a cheerful countenance and then to have your bones rejoice!

The Word of God brings divine structure to our emotions and eliminates a multitude of negative initiations. Instead of going after the biological, physiological, and psychological crutches, we can allow our souls to prosper. This, in turn, brings us health.

It all starts with the Father imparting His

righteousness to us. We have received justification by faith, personal love, and logistical grace—all through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, with no works on our part except to believe (John 6:29).

Now we can choose to live in our positional righteousness, having Christ surround us with His wall of fire: categorical doctrine through the Word and the Spirit. Satan's arrows cannot penetrate this wall, and we therefore can live our lives in grace, mercy, and truth: our divine resources for healing.

CONCLUSION

Every morning we can make the choice to receive divine resources for our lives. Imparted righteousness will fill up the chambers of our souls. We can then live in the viewpoint and power of God's energy.

A tremendous process of healing is available to us, expressed by the various Greek words used for "power" in Ephesians 1:19-21: God gives us His *dunamis*—that is, His inherent ability because of who He is. *Energeia* is the operation of God's power in its proper place. *Ischus* and *kratos* work together to manifest that ability toward us. Then, in faith, believing, we choose to operate through His power in our frame of reference. Thus, we experience divine deliverance based on *kuriotes*—Christ's dominion over all things.

Even when our sickness is for the glory of God, working in us a faith more precious than gold, we still need to live in divine resources

(Psalm 41:3). Instead of living in the fluctuating cycles of human energy, we can have His supernatural resources that will flow from our hearts to our minds and out through our emotions with divine power. God shall supply our every need in healing.

Divine Thinking Skills

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INTRODUCTION

Henry Ford, the inventor of the automobile, had a tremendously qualified staff. Each member was an expert in his particular field. When Mr. Ford was asked why he had hired those particular people, he answered, "So I can be free for the really hard work—*thinking*."

Thinking is work, and it requires great skill to do it properly. Amind needs to be trained, especially so it can respond rightly in the midst of pressures.

Christians, because they are under constant attack in this world's system, need to make sure that their minds are sharp. Truth and light need to be stored and cataloged so every situation has an answer from the Word of God.

This booklet shows how a mind that is rightly related to the Word of God and to Jesus Christ can be fully equipped in the power of the Holy Spirit. With this kind of mind, a believer's body will function according to faith and not accord-

ing to sight and feelings.

Chapter One

DEFINED BY DIVINE VOCABULARY

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

"In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight" (Colossians 1:18-22).

Our minds can only think on the basis of the words that we know, the vocabulary that we

have, and the capacity that knowledge produces. I have many books and tapes that examine the roots and origins of words. Without understanding the roots of words, books on vocabulary do little good. Words take on more relevance when you search out their roots.

The process of building a vocabulary is challenging and progressively wonderful. It produces amazing capacity within a Christian, and he can learn to think rapidly and fervently. Whenever a problem arises, he has the knowledge to think his way through it.

As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7).

Imagine receiving directions with a limited vocabulary. Suppose you want to know how to get to Interstate 95 from downtown. If someone were to say to you, "Go three blocks and hang a left. Then go three more blocks and make a right." A problem arises if you have no idea what a "block" is or the names of the streets where you should turn. Just how long is a "block," you wonder? You could end up confused, embarrassed, and probably lost.

Agodly vocabulary should define our thinking process. Instead of being stimulated based upon emotional enthusiasm, our thoughts will

then be based upon the inspiration of God's words in the various departments that dwell in us.

The Head Is in Control

Consider this: We could do nothing without our heads. Thank God for our hands, our fingers, our thumbs, our feet, our toes, our legs, and our arms. Thank God even for our tongues. These parts all work beautifully, but they are all controlled by the head. My head says, "Let's walk down the hall," and my body finds no problem at all with obeying the command from the head.

There would, however, be quite a problem if my fingers had a meeting and decided to let the thumb dictate how to administrate the task. What if my one hand said, "Scratch his back" and the other one disagreed and said, "No, get a drink of water"? Eventually, there would be a committee of fingers and thumbs that would be deeply confused, and all because the head was not directing them.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture

hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38).

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High" (Psalm 46:4).

Jesus Christ has taught us that it is absolutely crucial for a head to function through the mind, the soul, the heart, and through the river of the Holy Spirit. The streams referred to in Psalm 46 are the streams of awareness. The conscience directs the mind in how to think according to the norms and standards established in the soul. When that is happening, we are being motivated by a most wonderful, powerful thing called the heart. This is why our bodies must have a right relationship to our heads. It is the key to emotional, spiritual, and physical health.

Chapter Two

WORDS THAT GIVE LIFE

"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

"And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

"Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not

"And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Malachi 3:16-18).

The body is habitually sympathetic to its head. As a child, when I hurt my big toe, the pain was transmitted to my head and through

the network of nerves in every member of my body. I ran crying to my mother holding my arm.

"What's wrong," she asked. "Did you hurt your arm?"

"No, I hurt my toe."

"But you're holding your arm."

What I didn't realize then, but I realize it now, is that my arm was sympathetic to my big toe because my head was transmitting the message of pain to every member of my body. My hand and arm received the signal of how much my toe hurt, so they were compassionate members and did what they could to help with the pain, though they were not directly affected by what caused the toe's pain.

One late, great preacher used to say this: "I can only go as far as I think."

Malachi wrote during extremely dark days in Israel. And according to Malachi 3:16, when one of God's people thought about Him, the Lord hearkened. The original Hebrew text indicates that God also had something to say about it: "Hush! Someone is thinking and talking about Me."

At some hour, the queen may be speaking in London. The president of the United States may be giving an address to the news media. Members of Congress may be having important conversations and debates. The Lord, however, is not necessarily listening to them. But let two or more people start thinking and talking about the Lord, and the illustration in the original text reveals that He bends over and draws near, inclining His ear to listen. In fact, according to James 4:8, if anyone draws near to God, He will draw near.

"They are talking about Me! Hush!" He says.

Beyond all that, God writes down what is thought and said in His book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16). This book will be on display to be read throughout the ages and ages of eternity.

Think about it this way. Four or five people are on their way to outreach. Tears come to their eyes as they talk about Jesus. The Lord makes note of it. He hearkens unto their prayers. He hears what they say, and He writes it down.

A billion years from now, what that group said remains recorded in a book of remembrance. Those moments will be God's jewels for

all of eternity.

Origin of Fellowship

The most beautiful and precious thing is to be around men and women who fellowship with the Lord. No one can adequately function in fellowship without fellowshipping with God first.

Just a sentence, and there is divine inspiration and compatibility because of the origin of fellowship with our Head, Christ Jesus. Fellowship with Him brings about magnificent fellowship with men in the Light of God.

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130).

"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:26).

The word "simple" speaks of humility. God's words come and give direction because they come from the Head. The moment a man or woman has the Word of God flowing through them from Jesus Christ, he or she does not need to be told where to go. We go where God goes, because where God is, is where we want to be.

This represents a beautifully refined relationship between the Head and the members of His Body. It is quite simple for the members of Christ's Body to do what the Head tells them to do. Everything is well with the Head, and the members of His Body find it no problem to be in unison with the Head. The members have no desire to walk contrary to the dictates of the Head. Wherever the Head is, the members of His Body are there in the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3).

Chapter Three

SKILLED THINKING BRINGS RIGHT RESPONSES

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

God so desires to give His people divine thinking skills. These skills have everything to do with being successful in business. For example, if I enlarge my capacity to think with God, I increase my vocabulary, and I stay in tune with the Head, Jesus Christ. That way, God can reveal things in the marketplace. He may reveal a tremendous opportunity for a unique business.

There are men and women whom God has blessed with divine thinking skills. They have started businesses that meet demands of the marketplace, and they learn how to close sales, how to do their jobs more effectively, and how to do many things they would never have dreamed of doing without knowing how to think with God.

God is willing to give us opportunities to have the greatest thinking skills we could ever have. When we develop our thought processes through increasing our vocabulary, our capacity is increased. As a result, our social interaction is no longer artificial and our communication is no longer superficial. We have substance as God's subjects and as the objects of God's love.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

The Word of God is the first thing that the mind must receive to experience and enjoy the plan of God. The Word produces faith and equips the soul to utilize its divine assets, its divine potential, and its divine ability in one's humanity. We can, indeed, learn to think literally and actually with God.

Categories of Thinking

Slowly, as we receive the Word of God, the categories of our thinking are built up. These categories are doctrines composed of scriptures, organized and classified by subject. There is, for example, a classification or category of doctrine for marriage that includes Ephesians 5:22-25 and 1 Peter 3:1-7. It details the husband's and the wife's responsibilities and privileges in relation

to each other.

First, each one lives before God individually in a vertical relationship with the Head. This vertical fellowship is the source for divine thinking skills. These skills define what a husband should do as the Holy Spirit brings it to his memory. The Spirit tells him, "You are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church. That is, you lay down your life for her."

The Holy Spirit tells the wife, "This is what you should do: Respond, honor, love, and submit to your husband. Do not manipulate, do not be careless in the way you appreciate his initiations."

Divine thinking functions in the power of the Holy Spirit as He communes with the human spirit. It is something that goes far beyond the letter of the words we read and hear. Our thought processes must develop through the Word of God, so we can grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). We must decrease as God increases (John 3:30). Once we begin to be moved by proper thinking, we will have classified doctrine governing our souls.

Everyone knows how articles in a newspaper are classified. Some items are emphasized

and magnified and put to the forefront, while other items are subordinated. This is what the Holy Spirit does with our thoughts. At certain times, certain thoughts become very important as they relate to our lives. Through properly receiving the Word of God on a consistent basis, we receive the vocabulary and the spiritual life that we can exercise and function in through a divine thought process. We can do a marvelous job of letting the classified doctrine operate in us accompanied by the Holy Spirit. Because of our diligence in receiving the Word of God, the Spirit keeps bringing His words into remembrance exactly when we need them (John 14:26).

Categorical Storage

Categorical storage develops when our minds have grown in their processes, premises, and presuppositions. Through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to arrive at many divine conclusions on serious matters. What's more, we do not fall into decay in terms of knowing how to think.

Many people will be doing well, then something happens in the family and suddenly they are not doing so great anymore. Why? They have not learned how to think things through

with God. But when a tragedy or an accident comes, those divine thinking skills are necessary. In these days, we need thoughts that are inspired and mobilized by grace, by wisdom, by mercy, and by love. When we allow proper information to be stored in our minds through the humility of taking up our cross daily, we will always have proper inspiration, regardless of what we face.

Worry doesn't need to control us. Yes, sad feelings may come. There surely are times when we will be legitimately and completely heartbroken. But by thinking with skills derived from God's viewpoint, we will be able to be inspired and go on in victory in the specific circumstance, detail, or situation. This can happen because of divine categorical storage.

By God's mercy and grace, categorical storage is the reason I can preach every time I am in the pulpit. My messages are drawn from classified doctrine that has its origin in the premise of the Word of God. Those thoughts may not be categorically rooted at first, but they are dwelling richly in my heart. In time, these thoughts are ready to come together through the mobilization of my thought processes, and thinking skills with divine viewpoint are oper-

ating in specific areas of need.

The thought processes in those departments take over the emotions, and out of all of this comes a beautiful thing called security and a godly self-image. Our self-image grows as our souls and minds grow. No matter how deep the problem we face, we have something with God that is so much deeper.

CONCLUSION

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;"

"Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee" (Proverbs 2:10-11).

Many people hear teaching upon teaching. Still, they remain spiritually ignorant and rebellious. The things they learn do not accomplish a purpose in the utilization of a thought process that glorifies God to bless and to love people.

Divine thinking skills make a Christian extremely wise. He understands that God who is in him is greater than he who is in the world. He does not give in to his emotions or to the rebellion of another person. He does not give in to reactions and negativity. Instead, he just stays cool with God because he has something very pleasant on the inside.

Operating with divine thinking skills by having the mind of Christ is how we represent God. He died for every man and woman when

we were on our way to hell. Jesus Christ went to the Cross and died, not only to keep us out of hell, but also to bring Himself out of heaven to live inside of men. With Christ on the inside, and the Holy Spirit directing our thoughts, knowledge is no longer used as a head trip, but it reveals just who our Head is.

Do I Really Know

How to Pray?

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INTRODUCTION

So often, because of busy schedules and time restraints, we neglect meaningful prayer. Probably more than any one thing Satan does—even before he begins to invade a Christian's life—is to hinder a believer's prayer life. It's easy to speak, and it's easy to *do* many things. Still, it is another thing to truly and earnestly purpose in our hearts to become more than just people who pray. We desire to become intercessors, and we need to learn the means of supplication, prayer, and intercession.

The first premise to be effective in intercession and supplication is this: We must have nothing between God and ourselves. That means, when we fail, we rebound immediately. We use prayers of supplication, allowing God to meet our needs. Next, we need an attitude of praying without ceasing. When you hear a name mentioned or come to mind, pray for that person—whatever you're doing at the time. It means to

pray for someone spontaneously if you know something about their need. So, there are times of prayer we plan, and there are the instantaneous prayers that come without ceasing.

We need to do much less talking and much more praying. Unless there is much intercession, we won't win the war in cities where there are murders nearly every day. We need to stop vacillating with double-mindedness. We need to have convictions about the value of prayer if we want to see young Christians make decisions based upon the conviction of God's Word.

Do you realize that the Lord Jesus Christ in His unchanging priesthood "ever liveth to make intercession for us"? "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the *uttermost* that come to God by him..."—that touches my heart so deeply—"…seeing *he ever liveth to make intercession for them*" (Hebrews 7:25). This makes our lives so meaningful. As servants, we can be helpers of people's joy (2 Corinthians 1:24).

How many cases become complicated, difficult, exhausting, and wearisome because we did not use intercession as a weapon to deliver people from the bonds of the enemy? *Knowing how to pray is the key.*

Chapter One

CALLED TO INTERCESSION

I often wondered what the Lord meant in Isaiah 59:16 when He said that He "saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor." In Ezekiel 22:30, God said there was no man "to stand in the gap." Think of an entire nation, chosen and nurtured by God Himself, yet not one true intercessor could be found among them! Oh, there may have been religious men offering prayers on their lips, seen of others as holy. Yet, one who intercedes has such intimacy with God, such an intricate relationship with the Savior.

True intercession can be a full-time mental operation motivated by the Holy Spirit in love. How often do we think we have to go and see somebody, to "straighten out" something? Chances are that we mentioned their name for two or three seconds in a prayer meeting. That is *not* intercession. To intercede is to *ask,* making

our requests known to God with fervency and intensity, as God leads, because of our desire toward the one we're praying for. Then, *expect* that God will answer, *look* for God to answer, and *watch* how God answers. Prayer replaces so much talking. Pray instead of rationalizing. Pray instead of evaluating.

"He is able also to save them to the uttermost…seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:25-26).

The Lord in heaven is *praying*! What do you think He is praying for? We know the Blood has cleansed and paid for our sins; we know our sins will never be charged to our account. The Son satisfied the Father's justice pertaining to our sins. So why is He ever living to make intercession for us?

The Lord Jesus Christ is praying that we will allow Him to keep us by the power of God while we live in the devil's world. He's praying for His people because we still have an old sin nature. Always, in every one of us, He is praying that the old sin nature will remain under His provision of death, and burial, and resurrection.

He's praying that we will gain wisdom from above and discernment from within. He is praying that we will get a burden for the lost that will grow in intensity. He is praying that we will not be wrapped up with details, self-occupation, presuppositions, and human energy.

To think that such a high One—holy, undefiled, separate from sinners, higher than the heavens—is praying for us! Because He is, He will save us to the uttermost in this world's system. The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are indeed the children of God (Romans 8:16), confirming our convictions and affirming what we believe and experience.

When you intercede, have great expectation. Our bodies are groaning under the disease of this world's system and all the problems that take place. Right in the middle of that groaning, waiting for the adoption, we discover this reality: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Romans 8:26*a*). How does He do it? The Holy Spirit comes in with groanings that cannot be uttered; He groans when He makes intercession for us (Romans 8:26*b*). If we could only grasp this! Picture it: the Holy Spirit—God Almighty—*groaning*.

Each one of us has very specific needs, specific areas where we want God to move. We need to realize, however, that because of His great love for us and because He is omniscient, each member of the Trinity is already at work on our behalf.

The Father loved us enough to make a plan to save us, to do it all. Then He loved us enough to move inside of us, guaranteeing our perfection (Philippians 1:6) through His plan, in His purpose, with His provision to work it out.

The Son, who died for us, ever lives to make intercession for us, saving us to the uttermost from the corruption, contamination, and infections of this world.

In harmony and in concert with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit (as the third member of the Trinity) convicts and witnesses to the truth with our spirit, even as He prays with unspeakable groanings for needs we are not even aware of.

Feeling Empty?

When you experience measures of emptiness, remember this: The Son of God is interceding for you, and the Holy Spirit is groaning with

intercession; they are calling you by name. The Holy Spirit searches hearts. "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27).

So, the Holy Spirit checks with God the Father, and He checks with our hearts, and He goes to work to match up the Father's will with where our hearts are at, groaning as He intercedes. This is a sobering, but marvelous truth.

Then the Word of God says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). In other words, the Holy Spirit is groaning for our needs, searching our hearts, matching the will of God so that all things will work together for our ultimate benefit.

The Prayers of the Saints

Clearly, there are two intercessors in heaven—the Son and the Holy Spirit—pleading our case before the Throne. But, there is a third party interceding: His Body upon the earth today.

Paul said, "Please pray for me, that I will

speak the Word of God freely" (2 Thessalonians 3:1); "Pray for all believers" (Ephesians 6:18); then, "Pray for one another" (James 5:16).

Prayer is the breath of fellowship with the inspiration of communion. It is a faith operation motivated by the promises of God, acknowledging His presence. Pray for one another! Pray for me! Pray without ceasing, with importunity, and with tenacity.

There may be times when we simply have to withdraw from certain activities just to be alone with God. Of course there is a balance. For example, we realize that fasting is not something to be done in an attitude of works or striving with religious motives. We know that there is no commandment to fast. Yet, God will lead Spirit-filled people to have meaningful times of prayer with fasting to deal with the difficult cases of demon activity and cosmic functions in Satan's world system.

The Lord Jesus Christ wants to teach us how to intercede.

Intercession is not just praying. An intercessor lives with fervent trust and reliance on God for what's going on right now. His prayer is the verbal expression of his heart, with great expectations. A person who intercedes increases in

wisdom and understanding. His communion with God becomes more keen. As his relationship with God develops, he has far more sensitivity when he speaks.

Chapter Two

GOING FORWARD ON YOUR KNEES

I believe that God would call individuals to a mission field for the sole purpose of intercession. They would be a vital part of the missionary team, but their role and primary function on the team would not be soul winning, teaching, song leading, or discipling but *praying*. They would pray for the country, the city, the people, the team members and their families, the finances, and whatever details, as they are led by the Spirit.

So much can happen in an area because of natural gifts: gifts of music, financial security, and the ability to stimulate people to meet their emotional needs. Yet, I am convinced that God wants to move people in a way that can only happen through intercession.

John Wesley was a brilliant theologian; but more than that, the reason for his success as the

founder of the Methodist church was his availability to intercede for the people God called him to. He prayed every morning, without exception.

When you think of prayer, think of Moses and the two men who held up his arms. Think of the effects of their service. When they let Moses' arms down, the enemy prevailed. But through God, Israel conquered Amalek by the faithfulness of Aaron and Hur who "stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Exodus 17:8-13). It is such a gift to a man of God to have prayer warriors who continue day and night, doing battle on their knees!

When we withdraw into intercession, clean before God, with nothing preventing our requests, there is no need to broadcast our endeavors. People will *know* that we have been with God.

In Christian service, there will always be some casualties, and there will always be people who get weary serving God. We need to hold up their hands so they will be strengthened; we need to pray for them with intercession.

To really understand the operation of intercession, we must look to our greatest example—Jesus Christ in His humanity. Before He chose the disciples, Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness, praying and fasting to know the Father's choice. He withdrew from the influence of the world and went alone to His Father, whom He trusted completely to answer His prayer.

Then, as Jesus faced myriads of demons in the garden of Gethsemane, He knelt down in weakness, "and being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:39-44). Can you see the picture? Jesus *groaned*. "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

Did you notice that the disciples were sleeping during that prayer meeting with His Father? They were not sensitive because they were not "prayed up to date." So, in Matthew 26:56, each one forsook Him.

From the standpoint of His humanity, Jesus Christ's own prayer life is such a beautiful illus-

tration of the virtue and value He places on the power of prayer. We look for people to change. We try to figure out how we're going to change them, but that's not the answer. The answer is always *intercession*. Though we may play a part in lives being changed, it will always happen because of bringing them to God through intercession.

Rest and Relaxation through Supplication

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice….Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God…" (Philippians 4:4-8).

Do you know that one translation for the word "rejoice" is "relax"? Relax in the Lord, and again I say, *Relax*! It's a mandate. Then it says, "In *every* thing..."—watch this—"…by prayer *and* supplication," we are to make our requests known unto God. We come to God not only in prayer but also in supplication, beseeching God on our own behalf.

"…And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall *keep* your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." In everything, relax. In everything, by faith, start praying with suppli-

cation and thanksgiving that come from a relaxed capacity that can relate to God. As a result, the peace of God *guards* the heart.

Why are you to guard your heart? Because you need to have a boundary line for your thoughts. Guard your heart so you can think of the things that are true, pure, kind, and lovely; things that have virtue and praise. It's the work of the Spirit; *He* is praying for you, and He will guard your heart as you take opportunities to pray with supplication for everything.

Every one of us has failed so many times. Yet, I believe with all my heart that this ministry is where it is today—having touched over 120 countries, with full-time ministries in more than forty countries and throughout the United States—because of the consistent prayers of intercession and supplication before God.

In the pioneer years of our ministry, we began every day with early morning prayer meetings. Just a few came in the beginning. I never wanted anyone to be in bondage to a program, and prayer meetings were never legislated from the pulpit. But after a while, many would gather at five-thirty every morning—and not just for one or two years, but for ten years. We never quit or became familiar with God's

provision. Now, with a vision to seek the lost in 220 countries, with 1,000 missionaries by the year 2000, our prayer should be no less fervent.

The Value of One

When Job prayed for his friends, everything turned around for him. Remember, it was his *friends*, not his trial, that got him off-center. Job's reputation before his friends came into question, and he couldn't handle it. He could handle everything else but their speculation. He couldn't deal with how his friends thought of him, and it made him want to die. The answer was to pray for them; and finally, everything turned around.

How many things can turn around by our prayers? In this lifetime, we can never measure the value of one who believes, on his knees.

Your mind doesn't need to wander if you're talking to God. He is speaking to you with His still, small voice. The Christian who prays knows with a certainty that God is going to release things, change things, and bless—at some point. Remember that Jesus is praying with you, the Holy Spirit is praying, and the Father is receiving each request.

God has called many people only to inter-

cede as prayer warriors. They are not highly visible in their call here on earth. But when we get to heaven, we will meet them as they reveal the glory imparted because of their faithfulness in quietness and confidence. From an earthly vantage point, prayer causes blessings, like nothing else. What good is my obedience in other areas of my Christian life if I lack obedience in the areas of supplication, prayer, and intercession?

Chapter Three

BIRTHING A VISION WITH PRAYER

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, *supplications*, *prayers*, *intercessions*, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

"For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

"Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:1-6).

The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle to write this, and he began by saying "I *exhort*…." This word carries the force of an urgent appeal. Paul meant, "Timothy, I'm not just saying this for

your passive consideration. I want you to step over the line from *knowing* to *doing*."

As a pastor who is accountable to teach the whole counsel of God, I have been pondering this subject of prayer. Obviously, not every idea presented here is original with me. I glean from many godly portions, but every credible thought is original with God! And the Lord has exhorted us to pray for all men, with supplications, with prayers, and with intercessions. These three classifications are God's order in God's way.

Supplications (Greek, *deesis*) are personal requests to God. It means we bring our own needs and requests to God the Father fervently in prayer. Examples of this kind of prayer are seen from King Solomon (1 Kings 9:3) and David, his father (Psalm 6:9). Also, it is the kind of prayer that Jesus used to teach the disciples in Matthew 6:5-13. The order of this kind of prayer is so important. Before we can ever pray effectively for others, it is vital that we establish a solid personal relationship with God. It is how we get to know Him, see His faithfulness and trust His character. It is our response to His bidding, "Come unto me….learn of me" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Next, Paul mentions *prayers* (Greek, *proseuche*).

Although these petitions may not have the degree of intensity, the fact that prayers follow supplications in God's order reveals an important principle: Just as I cannot love others until I am able to love myself because of "first" love (1 John 4:19), I cannot effectively pray for others—either generally or with the intensity of intercession—until I have the convictions that come from meeting God at the throne of Mercy as a sinner saved by grace. So now, in my prayers, I can ask God to bless other men of God and their ministries. I may not even know them intimately or be aware of a particular need, but I know they are serving God.

Pray for men like Dr. Dobson, whose radio program reaches more stations in Russia than any other. Pray that he would have good health, and pray for his wife and family. We must learn to exalt Christ and never have barriers among ourselves, in terms of love. We must love and pray for all ministries that preach the truth.

Finally, Paul referred to *intercessions* (Greek, *enteuxis*). The technical use of the word describes a person meeting with a dignitary, such as a king, engaged in fervent conversation regarding his petitions. In application, it is a picture of a believer representing the needs of *others*, argu-

ing their case in a godly way, humbly yet boldly approaching God the Father, with the authority of the Son. When Jesus prayed at Calvary, in Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"—that was intercession: an intense argument of love (not in a negative sense) in favor of a person or a cause.

Who to Pray For

Day in and day out, the Bible says we are to pray for leaders in government. Beyond political leaders, we need to get the names of the people in authority, and pray for them. Get the names of police officers, attorneys, the state's attorneys, city attorney. Get the names of leaders in the fire department and sheriff's department. Pray for them specifically. Knock on heaven's door for them.

We should learn to pray beyond generalities; we should find out the names of leaders in every level of government—local, state, and federal; cabinet secretaries, delegates, representatives, committee chairs; even heads of international governments—and petition God for them. And the Bible says we are to pray for kings and for *all* men and for *all* things, with supplications, prayers, and intercession.

If churches in a city would agree to pray together, they could literally build a wall of prayer around their city. They wouldn't have to have a common meeting place. Rather, if thirty churches in a large city agreed to take one day each month to have their members pray in specifics, then they would see God act in the fullness of His character! A very large city could conceivably enlist sixty churches and have two churches praying at the same time.

As we pray privately and corporately, we will receive direction from heaven for new ways to go forward in practical visions with practical means of reaching people.

In praying for *all* men in authority, we must include mothers and fathers who are in authority in their homes. We should get their names and pray fervently for them. The list would also include the pastor, staff pastors, music leaders, worship leaders, security, ushers, deacons, each staff member. Pray for them *by name*. Pray for their families. Each portion is so vital to the working of the whole.

Jesus Christ should always come above and beyond denominational differences. We should

pray for men like Billy Graham and for all the ministries that make such an impact upon the nation. Find the names of other missions boards that are doing a work for God and pray for their leaders, staff, and missionaries.

If we will pray for those in authority, the Bible promises that we will be able to live peaceable, godly lives. That's a promise from Jesus Christ.

Often, I've heard people say, "I never know what to pray for! I run out of things to say." Well, I think I'm giving you enough so you would never run out of things to say! This kind of praying will produce a spiritual barricade—a wall of prayer against the enemy.

Praying According to the Word

Because of my call to be part of an international ministry with many missionary teams throughout the world, I hear from pastors and their people who struggle. Perhaps they are young and growing, but things are not happening the way some people feel they ought to. Can you imagine what would happen if there was an intense chain of prayer among the members of a church instead of criticism for the pastor and his wife? I'm not saying there is not a place for cre-

ative communication and encouragement as long as it is done according to Matthew 7:1-12, Matthew 18:15, and Galatians 6:1, going alone in humility and after much prayer. But can you imagine the effect of Spirit-filled people in a church who pray and keep their mouths closed, except to "go alone"?

We have been called to go forth, praying through the Word, praying in the Word, building barricades with Holy Spirit prayers against the onslaught of the enemy. Jesus Christ went about, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, healing every sickness and disease among the people. Think of it! He went into the cities and the villages, even teaching in the religious synagogues!

"But when [Jesus] saw the multitudes and he was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. Then said he unto his disciples, *The harvest truly is plenteous*, *but the labourers are few*. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:36-38).

We pray and send out labourers into the harvest here in our 'Jerusalem' and to the uttermost parts of the world, praying through the Word.

That is a Holy Spirit prayer meeting!

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35).

Why did Jesus say this? So many people living in sin are coming to the end of themselves. They may have been arrogant a year ago, yet some of them will not be that way today. They may have finally come to the end of themselves, and they know God is their only answer. The harvest is all ready—prepared for the laborers. In Luke 10:2, Jesus said, "Don't say, 'It's not ready yet!' Lift up your eyes and look on the fields: for they are white and ready to harvest, *now*."

Chapter Four

PRAYER AS CHILD-BEARING

We should never consider the cost of obeying the perfect will of God. We can never put a price on reaching the lost. Programs, seen in the light of God's eternal purpose, are important, but they do not have first place. Giving birth through travailing comes first. The pain, the agony, and sometimes, the suffering in praying: *these* come first. It takes pain to bring forth a child from a mother's womb, and it's going to take pain to bring a soul into the kingdom of God. Sarah prayed, and finally Isaac was born (Genesis 21:1-3). Hannah prayed, and Samuel was born in the eternal purpose of God (1 Samuel 1).

When Paul said in Galatians 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you," he was saying, "I can feel the pains of child-bearing." Prayer becomes so intense; and because nothing happens right

away, the only thing Paul could compare it to was the pain a woman has bringing forth a child. Paul prayed that Christ would be formed inside of the people in the Galatian church.

In time, there is a birth: the birth of a vision, the birth of a mission field, the birth of outreach teams. The teachers of our Christian schools are giving birth to miracles that take place in the lives of their students. All fruit comes through a birthing process, and prayer is the thing that brings it forth. *Prayer* brings forth a brand-new birth.

I believe that the birthing pains of travailing in prayer is what is lacking in the major cities where sin is rampant. This is why I believe that if thirty churches in a major city like ours would take one day every month and pray, we would see miracles. Can you imagine the results? Every day, through prayer chains, an entire congregation would lift every leader, every problem, and every need before the throne of God—with supplications, prayers, and intercession. Before you know it, believers everywhere would recognize Jesus Christ interceding with us as our Mediator.

I don't know how long it would take, but miracles of salvation would take place, and the crime rate would go way down. The Lord Jesus

Christ would reduce satanic activity, including the drug and alcohol factor and demonic relationships. He would give victory over the terrible emotions that have hypnotized and plagued individuals. Through our travail, God would produce new life in our cities. We would see it all because of Word of God, shield of faith praying.

Take up the Shield of Faith

"Take the shield of faith, that you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with prayer and supplications with thanksgiving for all saints" (Ephesians 6:16-18).

By the grace of Almighty God, we can bring in something new for our city through travailing (and in more difficult cases, through agonizing). God will move to nullify the effects of sin and evil.

Remember, we wrestle not against flesh and blood. The Bible exhorts us time and time again to *know* our enemy. We need to learn to identify demons and not live in abstract thinking with impersonal knowledge of their existence.*

We cannot begin to understand how a vision is born, yet I know that every man and woman in the Body of Christ has a personal and solemn responsibility in seeing it come forth.

We have been exhorted to pray fervently for all men. The result: We will live peaceably, with godly, protected lives. Prayer protects and provides; then, through the Holy Spirit, it penetrates and permeates, convicting the souls of men and women whom Jesus Christ died for. As you ponder this, think of the visions that could be given birth when people act together.

As we minister in our Bible clubs and in visitation throughout the city, we discover so many needs people have. There are homes that need cleaning, not because of carelessness but because of illness or infirmity. There are filling stations that we use regularly, but the workers have no vision for having a clean workplace because their own lives are so disorderly. Imagine having a team of people go to these places to clean them for nothing, as a ministry. To protect their dignity, call ahead to make an appointment. You do it in an act of love and kindness, not preaching to them. Leave a Gospel tract and pray for

them. Only God knows the potential of a ministry where people are willing to sacrifice and lay down their lives this way, giving birth to a vision.

With birthing come compassions. We understand that the fields are white, all ready to harvest. When men and women who are lost can *see* the Lord Jesus Christ, they can be won—whatever the cost. The Holy Spirit can soften the hearts of men and women who don't even know who He is. They will know that we are not trying to *get* anything but to *give* something. They will know that, indeed, we love our neighbor as ourselves.

**See* Can Anyone Overpower the Power of Demons?, *Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Five

THE SUBJECT OF PRAYER AND FASTING

According to Daniel 10, the Lord instructed Daniel in a vision and he fasted three weeks. In the third chapter of Jonah, the entire city of Nineveh was saved because of prayer and fasting by people who believed God. In Esther 4, through prayer and fasting, God delivered the nation of Israel. Through prayer and fasting, demons were cast out (Matthew 17:14-21); the will of God was revealed (Acts 9:9; 13:2); and the elders were ordained (Acts 14:23).

These verses show that the New Testament also firmly supports the purpose of prayer and fasting for the Church. Also, the promises given in Isaiah 58:6-12 for those who fast and pray are for us today: "...the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose

waters fail not…." (Contrast that with Isaiah 58:1-6.) Also, I believe that as an application of 1 Corinthians 9:27, prayer and fasting is a way of bringing our body into subjection.

Prayer and fasting ministers unto the Lord (Acts 13:1-3). *It ministers!* And it gives individuals power to engage in spiritual warfare.

There are different ways to go about prayer and fasting. Usually, it is done for a predetermined amount of time. Some people refrain from all food and drink except for water (Matthew 4:2); a partial fast is described in Daniel 10:3, restricting the intake of certain foods; a liquid fast is what many people use, restricting the intake of all solid foods; and a total fast is to refrain from all food and liquids (Acts 9:9; Esther 4:16).

Regardless of the kind of fast, a person definitely needs to be led by God in order to have a spiritual fast. In Matthew 4:1-2, Jesus was led to fast and pray. There are times when an individual senses the need to fast and pray (Matthew 6:16-18). God may call an entire church body to fast, as He did the people of old (Joel 1:14; 2:15-16). In our church, we have times appointed monthly when, as the Lord leads, whosoever will may participate in a corporate fast. We dis-

tribute prayer lists to use as a guide. No one ever knows who is fasting or who is not, so there is no badge of spirituality attached. God looks upon the hearts of individuals.

The Purpose for Prayer and Fasting

Remember, supplication means to beseech God, pleading with God in a very special, personal appeal. Prayer is communication between God and man. Intercession is an intense argument of love on behalf of another. We are God's people, and He calls us by name. We wait upon God in quietness and make petitions of Him, seeking His face.

Consider Isaiah 40:31, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk; and not faint."

Jabez prayed in 1 Chronicles 4:10, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!" And God granted his request.

There are so many hindrances coming against believers. In order to match the wiles of

Satan—his devices, schemes, and supernatural ability—we've got to understand Mark 9:28-29. The disciples asked, "Lord, why couldn't *we* cast out the demons?" Jesus replied, "This kind can come forth by nothing, *but by prayer and fasting*."

Sometimes, the kind of prayer engaged with fasting is intercession, pleading our case that God would do something beyond our expectation. It may mean that we keep on the path we were called to, doing what we believe God would have us do, but we pray that God would supernaturally accompany us, giving wisdom as we go.

Then, as the Shepherd goes before us in our walk (John 10), He goes before us in our prayer and fasting for people to be saved. Every city has so many strongholds; I don't believe we will see many people saved and delivered unless we pray and fast for supernatural intervention in a supernatural demonstration of the love, grace, and mercy of God. I am not only speaking of large cities. Small towns and rural areas have severe strongholds. Intercession is the key. Prayer and fasting is often the means of breaking through.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let

your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6). Always be thankful before God. When I am very weary, sometimes I just walk the floor thanking God, praising Him. I thank Him for everything under the sun. He loves it!

Preparation to Prevent Hindrances

It's so crucial to pray through the unction and power of the Holy Spirit. Don't just say words; pray in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:14-15; Ephesians 6:18, Jude 20).

Several things interfere with prayer and fasting. Undisciplined thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:4-5) lead to undisciplined feelings, which open the door to projections and impressions that lead to undisciplined reactions.

Next, asking amiss is a hindrance to effective prayer (James 4:3). In other words, not having direct, clear petitions according to the Father's heart is asking amiss.

When a person tries to cover old wounds without forgiving, his prayers are hindered (Mark 11:22-26). He may pray as though everything is all right, but he is living in self-denial because of unforgiveness. Instead of tucking bad experiences beneath the surface, the believer

needs to experience an act of forgiving another person completely, totally, and biblically.

In Psalm 138:6, pride is a hindrance. In Hebrews 12:15, it is bitterness. In James 1:5-7, it's unbelief. And according to 1 Peter 3:7, having an improper relationship with his wife could hinder a man's prayers.

A person could pray an hour every day; yet, think of all the hindrances that would make that prayer null and void.

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

This verse reveals two essential tools for waging warfare in prayer. We approach God with confidence, having the right motives in our hearts. Then, with our minds focused, having a peaceful mental attitude, we begin to pray according to God's will. And according to God's Word, we *know* we have the petitions that we asked.

CONCLUSION

When you're having trouble with someone, do you realize that Satan matches people to go up against you just to give you trouble? His goal is to cancel your entire prayer life.

Get on your knees, and even if the other person is guilty, forgive him and write it down—not with words but in your heart. Note the point of time, and through the Holy Spirit forgive him completely. Then, just as though that thing never happened to you, begin to think through the supernatural resources of God. You will experience a brand-new life of completeness through prayer.

Father, grant us grace and mercy. Write the truth about prayer upon the tables of our hearts. Throughout the churches of our city, bless each one equally as we reach out to the community. May we be able to go forward in quietness and confidence, developing a partnership in prayer where Jesus Christ will be exalted above our different names and labels. We pray that you would be glorified. Have supernatural access

to the bondages and slavery to sin that so many have because of ignorance, because of environment, and because of wrong decisions. Use this message in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

Do You Love Me

More Than These?

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs" (John 21:15).

Peter loved Jesus with human love. He even admitted that he loved Jesus with *phileo* love—a good, brotherly kind of love—but not God's love. A great dilemma for many Christians is that their love for Jesus is limited by their capacity in the flesh. Loving Jesus in the flesh will only last until God tests that love. Without trials, tragedies, or disasters happening in their lives, probably no one would discern that they were operating in human love.

We must let God's Spirit search our hearts and reveal the source of our love. Our schedule and our preferences reveal whether our love is human or divine. In some situations, we may lack faith in the supernatural simply because

our love is human, though we call it divine. We delay obedience because human love is not sufficient motivation for us to obey God.

There are so many poor marriages even among Christians because people have only human love for God and each other. Human love tries to counterfeit divine love through reason, sight, need, experience, and wrong priorities. That is why the Lord Jesus asked, "Peter, do you love Me more than these?" In effect he answered, "You know that I don't. I love You with human love." In the end, Peter revealed a transformed life of divine love as he manifested the very character of God, even as he was being martyred.

Jesus will challenge each of us with the question: "Do you love Me more than these?" And as this booklet will reveal, most of us will see that we have an ongoing need to be transformed, but that we also have an unlimited provision from God's own heart.

Chapter One

THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN LOVE

"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

"If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?

"Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?" (1 Corinthians 9:11-13).

Pastors with a heavy schedule have to watch constantly that they don't try to fulfill their duty in human love. Even in the greatest churches, the real problems occur when people serve in human love.

A woman who at one time attended church

faithfully has been backslidden for eleven years. She is totally living in the world, living with a man she is not married to, all because another man broke off a relationship with her. She put her need for that relationship first and revealed that she never truly loved God.

Fret Not!

Worrying is the first indication that we don't have the right kind of love. The only reason people live in fear is because they have human love, which cannot cast out fear (1 John 4:18).

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

If you go to work and worry about what people think or wonder whether you're doing a good job or not, you are going to work in human love. You don't love Jesus more than your fears, your worries, and your anxieties. When you get offended, it is because you are living in human love, and the flesh reacts.

In heaven, we will not need grace, even though it will be displayed in the glorified body

of Christ throughout all the ages. We will not need mercy in heaven, because we will not sin in heaven. We will not need forgiveness, because the past is forgotten. But in heaven, we *will* need love.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13:13)—and charity never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8). Furthermore, we follow after charity (1 Corinthians 14:1*a*). And when we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, the whole issue will be this: Did we love Jesus, who is the Living Word, and His written Word "more than these"? More than all the things of the flesh and all the pleasures of the world, we were made to love Him.

Loving Jesus Above All

I love my wife with all my heart, but I love God more. I love the Body of Christ deeply and richly. I love coming to work, getting in the car after a time of prayer with my wife, and heading to the office; but, I must love God more than my vocation. I don't ever want to be familiar with the details of my schedule. I want Christ to be revealed to everyone I see.

I love my church and the people in it. But

more than my church, I love Jesus Christ. I thank God for the love my church has for me, but I thank God that they love Jesus Christ more than me.

"Do you love Me more than these?" Jesus said.

Someone who loves God more than any other thing in this world is the most peaceful. So many people have confused emotions. A woman may have a good report on Thursday, and by Saturday she is talking about the problem again. Divine love was turned into human love, and her confession came from human love.

A man who is discontented lives in human love. With God Almighty inside of him, why would a man be discontented? We are going to heaven! We have eternal security. Sin cannot be imputed to us. God will never forsake us. We have elect angels that follow us. We have a prayer life before the throne of God where God hears us. How could any Christian be discontented?

It doesn't matter what a person says about me or what they think about what I do. I love God more than I am concerned about what people think. I love soul winning—it is one of the most precious things in all the world. But I love

God more than soul winning. The point is that there are people who evangelize in the flesh. And because they are not motivated by loving God first, they are not sensitive to His still small voice to find the key to a lost person's soul. We ought to love God more than our own concepts and be led by him.

Don't Preserve the Flesh

Christians who do not get offended love God more than the flesh that some try to preserve. Are you easily worried and upset? Love God. Just start loving Jesus. That's not difficult, is it?

We do not want to hurt anyone. We honestly want to help. But we must love with Jesus' love, and His love is not sentimental.

A man came to see me about a trend going on in some churches. Many people in one church had begun drinking, and at a function several became intoxicated. It all happened because one pastor tried some non-alcoholic beer, which led to drinking real beer and wine. Then he declared that it was all right to do it "in moderation." Many were affected by that deception and did the same.

What happened in those churches is sin. The

pastor has quit drinking, but he cannot get his people to stop. They love their "liberty" more than they love Jesus.

Do you love Jesus more than your liberties? Do you love Him more than your opinions? More than your rights? More than the opinions of your friends who believe it is okay to do things that hurt others?

"Do you love Me more than these?" Jesus is asking.

Christians will be faithful to attend church and to gather more often in these last days because they love Jesus more than their own lives.

Chapter Two

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:2-3).

God's commandments are not difficult. They are not heavy. His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). The key to every issue is loving God with God's love and not human love.

I received a call from a man who said, "I have listened to your radio program, and a message I heard really convicted me about my sin. I am living in adultery. Can you help me?"

I wept as I asked him, "Do you love Jesus more than you love your adultery? Do you love Jesus more than being immoral? Do you love Jesus more than hurting your family or your church? Do you love Jesus more than hurting your testimony?"

I continued, "Sir, the problem is this: You don't love Jesus. If I can help you to love Jesus, then you won't ever want to be alone in a room with any woman unless she is your wife. You won't even let your mind wander."

"Oh, I feel so ashamed," he said.

"Do you love Jesus more than being ashamed?" I asked. "Do you love Jesus more than feeling guilty? Confess your sins to God and repent. Let Him turn you."

Filled with His Love

Jesus said, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:11-13).

Therefore, I can say to God, "I can't love You with human love, though I have tried it many, many times. Please give me Your heart of love." Human love may even keep you from overt sin. But that love will be tested, and only God's love will make it through the fire.

I love Jesus more than fear. I love Him more

than disobedience, more than anger. I love Him more than despair and depression. I love Him more than negative reactions. I love Him more than going around with a negative attitude.

Perfect Love Gets Rid of Fear

What does love do? It casts out all fear. Fear was the first sin of Adam and Eve after the Fall. They were hiding from God because, Adam said, "I was afraid" (Genesis 3:10). Fear is the premise for all other sins. But if the love of God is flooding my heart, then I don't have a single need or fear. If I do live in fear or need, then even when I am doing the best that I can, I am doing it in human love.

We need to ask Jesus to fill us with the Holy Spirit. "Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:17-18). Then, as dear children, we are able to "walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2).

The Great Occupation

In front of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus

said that to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength was the "great commandment." The second commandment is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. These two are the greatest *commandment,* He said (see Mark 12:30-31). Jesus refers to the "commandment" in the singular. We are to be so occupied with Christ that we love Him with all of our hearts and all that is within us.

People can receive dying grace when they receive the love of God and love His promises more than they fear death. Many prayers for healing are not answered because we are occupied with the sickness more than the love of God that can heal sickness through love.

I am to love the Lord my God with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind, and all my strength. This is the first and great commandment.

Divine love is the whole issue. If a man becomes separated from his wife, he should love God with all his heart and let God meet all his needs. Then he can go back to her and honor her, and love her with God's love. That means if he had to be the victim, he could be.

Chapter Three

REST THAT BRINGS MUSIC IN THE SOUL

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope:

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us" (Romans 5:1-5).

Take a moment now and say, "God, I really love You with Your love. I love Your people with Your love. I love my spouse with Your love. I love my children with Your love. I don't love my opinions or my liberties more than You and Your

truth. I don't love my rights. I don't want to sin against You (1 Corinthians 8:12). I am not a victim of fear because Your love casts out fear. I am not a victim of need because Your love fulfills every need."

That's exactly what the Word of God says.

In Zephaniah 3:17, Jesus says, "I will rest in My love, I will joy over thee with singing." In the original Hebrew, it says, He will rejoice in "the music of My soul." Jesus is resting in *His* love.

Shortly after reading this, some will not be able to remember what they have read. Why? Human love was allowed to come back in to replace divine love. We should begin each day on our knees with God. Before every church service, we should all spend time in prayer to prepare our hearts for the message. Whatever we have to do, every moment we can claim the filling of the Spirit.

True Love in the Home

Some husbands just do not know how to love their wives with God's love, and they wonder why their wives react and become emotional. These men expect sex from their wives, but they need to learn how to make love to their

wives. A real man of God will do everything he can to build up his wife, being kind and loving her with tender touches. He can have skills of righteousness as a gift in the realm of lovemaking.

A man should not blame his wife for not responding until he gets right with God and learns how to love her properly. Too many men do not love their wives beyond their own self-gratification. They think they are doing their wives a favor!

A man of God can fulfill his wife and endure without self-gratification because he is so sustained by having the right motive in lovemaking—godly love for her body *and* her soul.

Now don't get upset because I mentioned sex. We are all alive today because our moms and dads had sex. We didn't just appear! This should be no great revelation, but the problem with the Christian world is that people have not been taught how to love spirit, soul, *and body* through the Holy Spirit and through Jesus Christ in the sacredness of love.

Deliverance Comes through Love

When I was a young pastor, a man who was an alcoholic asked Christ to be his Savior. For

several months, he came to my house drunk. I would go out for coffee with him late at night. Then finally, I said to him, "Let's settle this once and for all. Go out to your car and get your bottle—I know it's out there. Come back, and while you're at it get your cigarettes, and bring them right here on my porch."

He did it.

"Now," I said, "do you love Jesus Christ more than that bottle and more than those cigarettes?"

He was delivered that night, right there on my porch. His problem wasn't his drinking; his problem was that he didn't love God.

The love of God casts out fear, and it gives victory, power, and joy. The love of God puts music in our souls. We must rest in that love. This love is in a personal relationship by grace through faith with the living and written Word of God.

To the dear people who are always having such battles with depression, why don't you start letting God love you? Let God fill you with the Holy Spirit. Become spiritual—not just for a day or two, but for seven days and seven nights every week of every year. Shout it out: "Alleluia, praise the Lord—God loves me and I love God!

For some people, the least little thing happens and they become so upset at life. I pray with this one and then I see him a couple of weeks later with a frown on his face. There is sadness on his countenance. There is no joy in his soul, no spring in his walk, and no glow on his face.

The problem isn't his circumstances, as he has made himself believe. The problem is that there is no personal relationship with Christ, where the love of God flows freely as a gift, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Then comes walking in the Spirit so that you don't fulfill the lusts of the flesh (see Galatians 5:16).

Being filled with the love of God: This is the key for everything. It is the key to relationships, to happiness, to prayer. It is the key to being happy when you are alone and it seems as if no one cares.

Just let God love you, and respond through the Holy Spirit by giving that love back to Him. "You have never walked in my shoes," you say? That's true. But having the love of God shed abroad in your heart is the key.

"Do you love Me more than these?" Jesus is

asking.

In all brokenness, I can say that I want to, I will, and I do love Him more than anything. That is the key to living. I am not going to need grace in heaven. Neither will I need mercy or forgiveness there. Once redemption gets me there, I won't need redemption either. But I *will* need love forever and ever. That is what will make eternity a destiny of glory and joy forever.

CONCLUSION

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Corinthians 5:14-16).

Under divine love, we know no one after the flesh anymore because we don't have human love anymore. Do you know your husband after the flesh? That means you have human love. Do you know your wife after the flesh? That means you have human love. We are to know no man after the flesh, not even Jesus Christ. And though He was crucified in weakness, He is now glorified and ascended, and seated at the right hand of the Father forever. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, and he loves God

with divine love. Charity cannot fail.

If the Spirit is bringing conviction, tell God—and God alone—that even though you have been coming to church faithfully, you have had a lot of human love with people—even in serving God. Human love comes under attack, but divine love is beyond attack. Natural love feels the problems; divine love cannot see the heat when it comes. Circumcision—speaking of fleshly legalism—or uncircumcision avails nothing. All that matters is a faith that serves by love.

Let us keep ourselves in the love of God and rebound when we fail (see Jude 21). We keep ourselves in the love of God by letting Him love us and loving Him back with His love. We will have no needs because He supplies them all if love is the issue.

Father, we pray that these words on love may be revealed to each believer personally. Encourage each one as we desire to love You more than everything. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Don't Be an Abstract Christian

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Among Christians, there are those who live by superficial principles or abstractions. That which is abstract or theoretical lacks substance. Abstract leadership lacks strength to stand when the enemy comes in like a flood, as when Saul faced Goliath (1 Samuel 17:4-11). Abstract love lacks divine substance; it sets conditions. Yet, when Jesus Christ said, "I love you with an everlasting love," He was saying, "There is nothing abstract about My love for you. When you think that you are unworthy of My love, that you have gone too far, I will go where you are and I will draw you with cords of unconditional love."

An abstract Christian is one who is not properly prepared to face the details of life with God. He may say things that sound right, but because he lacks the practical, concrete, unconditional love of God, he is quick to judge others who do not live according to his standard. He puts his pain or circumstances ahead of Calvary. He may

enjoy fellowship in the local church, but he doesn't experience the practical blessings of Christianity in his daily life. As a result, he is easily moved.

This booklet describes how important it is for believers to cling to the concrete, practical, objective promises of God. These are the things that stand in the midst of any storm.

Chapter One

REPAIRING WOUNDED CAPACITIES

"The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me" (Song of Solomon 5:7).

"For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous" (Jeremiah 30:12).

"For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after" (Jeremiah 30:17).

When wounded spirits are not healed, people tend to be abstract in their relationships. Recently, a young man came into my office in need of counseling. He was struggling in school, and I could sense that he was hurting.

"Two years ago, my father left my mother

and me, and we haven't heard a word from him," the boy told me in tears. "I feel so empty."

The father's leaving had left this boy living in an abstraction toward God that affected his interactions at Christian school. His wounded feelings controlled his responses. He was not a bad child, just abstract in his relationship with God.

Scars That Linger

"Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound" (Isaiah 30:26).

Awoman wrote to me about the terrible molestation she endured for three years. Her father would go to her room and sexually abuse her, which severely wounded her emotions.

She told me of how she had never been able to get hold of God personally, though she had received Jesus Christ as her Savior. The problems were magnified after she was married. She would hear her husband walk up the stairs, and back would come the memories of her father's footsteps.

Isaiah 30:26 speaks of the stroke of a wound and the breach it creates that only God can heal. The stroke speaks of the mind and emotions being beaten repeatedly. The strokes of this woman's childhood caused a breach in her marriage. She was living in what her father had done to her, though many years had passed since she had seen him. Obviously, the pain and the agony she went through was tremendous (Jeremiah 30:12).

"I have never told my husband about this. I have defrauded him and I argue with him for no apparent reason," she said. "I have been a terrible nag to him because every day of my life has been a replay of what happened when I was growing up."

She has begun to receive counseling, and I believe she has also begun to receive her healing.

The Word Sets Us Free

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18).

Many pastors have experienced these kinds of situations. One woman told me she gave in to her stepfather's sexual advances just to keep the monster from doing the same thing to her younger sisters. It is easy to see how these wounds and bruises bring in such an abstract capacity in people's lives.

Still, I have met so many men and women who have courageously overcome these traumas and refuse to let themselves get taken back into bondage. They have come through so beautifully, and we are so proud of their hearts toward God. The Lord has healed their wounds and their broken hearts. He has taken the shards of shattered lives and put them together again. They are seamless in their beauty, as only the Lord can repair such broken lives.

Chapter Two

AN OXYMORON: A LIVING SACRIFICE OR THE LIVING DEAD?

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

We have been dealing with the term "oxymoron" in our recent studies. An oxymoron is defined by Webster as a combination of contra-

dictory or incongruous terms. It is a figure of speech that represents contradictory ideas, such as "thunderous silence" or "sweet sorrow."

Literally, the Greek root means "pointedly foolish." Many Christians live a life that could be described as an oxymoron. They could be described as "shameful believers," "the resurrected dead," saved people living as if they were lost—sometimes falling into adultery, fornication, or addictions.

What are you like in your marriage? Do you consistently demonstrate and manifest God's love through your life, or are you unkind? As a believer who was saved by grace, do you love to find opportunities to share Christ? Or, do you find that you hardly dare to share what God has put within you? If the latter is the case, you are a living oxymoron.

God has a perfect, glorified resurrection body waiting for you, yet you are destined to be ashamed, because the motives of your heart will be revealed at the Bema Seat. There, the Lord will unfold a spiritual evaluation of your life. The number one criteria for His evaluation will be, "How did you appropriate My Word and My grace in your life?"

This is quite a subject to ponder. What will these people experience at the Bema Seat, that moment in eternity when Jesus Christ evaluates the production of their lives? I imagine they will, for a moment, experience shame in the perfection of their resurrection bodies. Each Christian will come to the Bema Seat all alone to receive the rewards for the things done in his body. Some questions will be posed:

Did you go soul winning?

Did you take advantage of hearing the Word preached whenever it was possible?

Did you purpose to live a pure life, and did you rebound when you failed?

All of the evaluations are going to be based upon how we presented our bodies through the mercies of God, reflecting the activities and decisions of our minds.

Chapter Three

PURE SUBSTANCE: THE OINTMENT OF LOVE

"The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious" (Proverbs 12:27).

"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (Psalm 22:14-15).

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

"But he was wounded for our transgres-

sions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:2-5).

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:7-9).

I was thinking of the pain that Jesus went through. His heart was broken; He was so wounded, so shamefully treated. Yet, He did not sin. He nearly died in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He experienced so much pain—perhaps even more pain than He experienced on the Cross.

Jesus was wounded by His own disciples. The eleven forsook Him, went up the hill and watched Him die. Their relationship to Him at those moments was totally abstract. The concrete substance of the Holy Spirit shedding love abroad in their hearts was missing. That would come at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit would

fill all of them in that upper room (Acts 2).

There is nothing worse than having people turn against you, especially in a church. One of the most difficult things a pastor will go through is being wounded by people he loves. When some start to plot against you, you can sense Satan behind your back. These are wounds you do nothing to deserve, wounds without transgressions (see Job 34:6).

It is very precious when we allow these kinds of wounds to be healed by the ointment of love in all of its substance.

The Power to Forgive

Richard Wurmbrand, the late Romanian evangelist who spent years in Communist prisons, told this story. He was talking to a German soldier shortly after World War II.

"What has your life been like?" Wurmbrand asked the soldier.

The soldier responded by naming all the places where he killed Jews. He spoke of one city where he helped kill every Jewish person there.

"Would you like forgiveness?" Wurmbrand asked him.

"What? There is no God, so there is no forgiveness. There is no God, and there is no sin."

"We will see," said Wurmbrand who then went upstairs to wake up his wife, Sabina, and brought her downstairs to meet the soldier.

"Sabina, I would like to introduce you to the soldier responsible for killing your mother, your father, your two brothers and your two sisters. Here he is."

Immediately, Sabina knelt down and began kissing the man's feet, saying, "I forgive you. Please, I would love to make you dinner. Will you stay?"

This woman had godly substance through the power of love and the power of forgiveness. She lived and experienced a relationship that went beyond circumstances, situations, and pain. She simply trusted her Savior.

Charity Triumphs

I can remember having dinner with the Wurmbrands once, and I watched how this woman waited on her husband. I studied how she watched every one of his moves just to make sure he was okay.

What an amazing thing to see one man and one woman living beyond the natural concepts of love. Everyone experiences times when they are afraid to love with their whole heart. I re-

member being in a place where I felt as if I could not trust one person living on this earth. I really feared trusting until God brought me out of it.

"You will have to trust Me for the people you can't trust," He said to me.

"How do I know that circumstances won't turn them against me?" I said to Him.

"You will just have to trust Me."

I did trust God, and I am thankful that I can say it works.

Charity never failed in Sabina Wurmbrand's life. "You killed my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters—I forgive you. Let's eat."

By the way, I believe the soldier did gloriously accept Christ at that dinner table. That is the crucial part of the story, of course. He said, "I can't understand how you can love me. But now, I can see in you the God of love."

The Lengths Love Will Go To

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

"But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the

rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

"For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:

"Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

"To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (2 Corinthians 10:12-17).

How did God the Father measure the Son's love? The Father measured the Son's love by the fact that He gave His life for us.

How does God measure our love? He measures it by how willing we are to give of His love and to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16).

Love that preaches the Gospel in regions beyond us, a love that takes the Word into the whole world, is a love that is more than theoretical. This love has substance. God measures peo-

ple by seeing how far they will go in presenting their bodies and taking their love to the world.

God measures a marriage by seeing how far a husband's love will go toward making it a continual honeymoon. There are no unkind words between the couple—they go on in quietness, gentleness, and edification. This is a marriage of substance. They live in the substance of the crucifixion, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

All conspiracies in local churches are based on abstractions—concepts and notions that lack the substance of love. Be careful in your relationships with your peers. You probably have friends who are the same age and you get close to many of them. But before you know it, a few may become abstract in their convictions, and the substance of godliness will be absent in their fellowship.

Let your relationships be established on things that are true and godly. Guard against familiarity, so that each one is a relationship of substance.

Keep your communication in heavenly places. Speak of the blessings you have received, of what God has done for you. Let your love go beyond the abstract. That love, communicated in the tenderness and gentleness of the Holy Spirit, carries the substance of Jesus Christ.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)* .

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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Don't Be Intimidated

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most subtle attacks of Satan against God's people is intimidation. With intimidation, his goal is to incapacitate believers in their response to truth, to challenge the unconditional nature of their love, and to hinder the boldness of their faith so that ultimately they will stop growing in Christ.

Moses felt intimidated because he had an impediment in his speech. When God spoke to Moses from the midst of the burning bush, the devil whispered, "You cannot speak. You talk funny." Moses confessed that he was slow of speech, and after much discussion, God appointed Aaron to speak for him. (Exodus 4:10-16).

Before Moses, Abraham was intimidated because God had not done what He had promised to do, and he reasoned that time was running out. The child of promise was not yet conceived, and Abraham became intimidated because of his age and Sarah's. As a result, he went in with

Hagar (at Sarah's request), and Ishmael—a wild man—was born. Abraham just could not wait for God's Word to be fulfilled through faith in God's grace. In spite of his sin, in God's perfect timing, God came through, and Isaac was born.

Job was another man of God who was constantly facing intimidation. His three friends sat down with him and did not talk to him for seven days and seven nights. Then, when they started talking, everything they said was part of Satan's plan to intimidate Job.

In this booklet, we examine the story of the two disciples who were walking toward Emmaus when they met the resurrected Lord, Jesus. Those men were confused and could have been intimidated by fear and failure, but God loved them back into a capacity to serve Him.

Chapter One

SATAN'S ATTACK PROGRAM

"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25).

Instances of intimidation are recorded throughout the Word of God. Peter was intimidated by the crowd who recognized him during Jesus' trials—so intimidated that he went out and wept bitterly after he denied Christ three times.

Before he met Jesus and became the apostle Paul, Saul of Tarsus instituted a program of intimidation against Christians. His goal was to kill them off and to have as many as possible sent to prison. After his conversion, as he worked to spread the Gospel throughout the world, Paul became the focus of the intimidation. He endured shipwrecks, stoning, arrests, and attacks from Christians and non-Christians alike.

Much of Satan's program of intimidation was focused on Jesus Christ Himself. His own family members questioned Him, and He could not do much among them because of their unbelief. When His own disciples forsook Him, the devil was using them to try to intimidate Jesus.

When the disciples slept while Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsamane, that was an attempt to intimidate him. When Judas betrayed Him with a kiss and the soldiers and the mob came after Jesus with torches and swords, that was Satan exercising intimidation.

Constant intimidation—that is Satan's way.

Refuse Intimidation, Refuse to Intimidate

As the pastor of this particular church, I want to encourage you: Don't be intimidated. What's more, don't be used in Satan's program of intimidation.

Refuse to allow Satan to intimidate you through people, as he constantly tries to do. The devil wants to intimidate you by causing you to question who you are in Christ. Hell wants to intimidate you into not recognizing your potential in Christ. Satan attempts to intimidate you from having love shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). The devil will always

try to intimidate you through the gossip and criticism of people who choose to ignore God's love.

Yet, in spite of the constant attacks involved in Satan's program, God is ready to redeem it all as He makes all things work together for good to those who love Him, "who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Chapter Two

IS JESUS A STRANGER TO YOU?

"And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

"And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

"And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

"But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

"And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

"And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass therein these days?

"And he said unto them, What things? And

they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (Luke 24:13-19).

Intimidated by the turn of events that led to Jesus Christ's death and an empty tomb, two disciples headed out of Jerusalem to Emmaus. As they walked and talked, trying to figure out what it was all about, Jesus drew near, but they did not recognize Him at first.

How many times have we gone through times where Jesus was right there with us in our furnace of affliction, but we were unaware of His presence? Our eyes of faith could not behold Him, even though He was there in our deepest trial. Jesus is with us in the midst, no matter what people try to do against us.

As Jesus joined these disciples on the road to Emmaus, He wondered aloud, "Why are you communicating like this? Why are you communicating such negativity and sadness?" This was a very beautiful approach by Jesus. He wanted to know why the disciples were communicating things that were not able to build them up. The resurrection had happened but they did not believe the report. At this point, they could not fathom the truth that Jesus was really alive.

The fact is that many of us do not fathom it either. I would like to see every believer live in resurrection life twenty-four hours a day. That is what I would like to experience in my own life.

Think of it. Just as He had told them, Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, had died on the Cross, shedding His precious blood. Now, Just as He said, He was resurrected in a precious, glorified body. Yet, these disciples considered Him a stranger.

That scene on the road to Emmaus represents an expression of a human heart weighed down by intimidation. Jesus Christ is alive, glorified, and we see Him as a stranger.

Jesus Christ is a stranger to Christians who criticize. He is a stranger to those who judge and bring up other people's sins. He is a stranger to those who speak unkind words and think unkind thoughts.

The Sadness of Human Reasoning

These disciples were so occupied with sadness. They were doing so much reasoning that Jesus, who was walking with them, was not honored, reverenced, respected, or known.

When intimidation gets to me and I withdraw and get sad, my precious, glorified Christ

becomes a stranger. When I just sit in my seat, act forlorn, and refuse to rejoice, I have made Jesus a stranger to me.

How does a believer avoid this pattern of thinking? Hear every message you can hear. God wants His house full and His people to hear every single message, because every message is going to tell us something that will help our lives eternally.

On the road to Emmaus, the disciples were caught up in reasoning and rationalization concerning the events of the day. More and more, I am convinced that I cannot judge a single situation. We do not know *anything* unless God reveals it to us in black and white. We cannot afford to speak about things we cannot fathom. Only by faith can we discern truth.

Take Care with Your Remarks and Opinions

Purpose to be careful with your remarks. Be careful about expressing your opinions. Be careful with your evaluations. Be careful. Why do I say this? Because, you may just make the glorified, ever-living Christ, who lives in you, a stranger in the peace of your redemption.

Again and again, I have purposed in my heart not to communicate negatives and not to

listen to them. Not listening to them can be hard, especially as a pastor. Still, I purpose to keep every conversation focused on redemption and reconciliation, with the Cross as my frame of reference.

I cannot understand how some people can hear the messages they have been hearing and yet remain befuddled and upset because of a problem in a relationship. Sometimes it is a such a little thing that can make a person sad. If this is the case, then Jesus Christ has become a stranger. The intimidation process of Satan has frustrated them.

Chapter Three

JESUS DRAWS NEAR TO OPEN EYES AND HEARTS

In the midst of the disciples' disappointment on their way to Emmaus, Jesus drew near. He did not want the disciples to remain in their sorrow. He wanted to reveal something wonderful to them.

God's people need to know how to walk and not be sad. We ought to be tough and have a chin that can stand a spiritual punch. We ought to have fortitude that can take anything that God allows to come our way. Every child of God ought to stand with legs of iron and feet of brass (Daniel 2:33; Revelation 2:18). Our loins are girt about with truth. We should be wearing our breastplates of righteousness and our helmets of salvation (Ephesians 6:14-17).

Jesus Christ is risen! Nothing can change that fact. Not only has He risen, He has ascended to the right hand of the Father.

Knowing these truths, how can there be a reason to be downcast? We are hid in the Body of Christ. We have been baptized by the Holy Spirit. We have the opportunity to be filled with the Spirit moment by moment.

Still, there are times when Jesus draws near and says, "Why are you so sad?"

The disciples could not see Jesus at that point. We are the same way. We hear so much about Jesus, but we do not see Him in certain situations. We listen to so much talk about Him, and still we fail to see Him in our particular situation.

The disciples had heard that the tomb was empty. The women who went to the grave told them of angels dressed in celestial white. "Jesus is risen," they declared. "He is alive!"

Those disciples could not see Him, however, because Jesus Christ can only be discovered by faith. They heard the word that He had risen, but what they had heard did not produce faith (Hebrews 4:2). So they saw Him not, and they started down a new road. They were sad and troubled, and they were leaving Jerusalem—the place of peace—to go to Emmaus, which means "wandering." Their eyes of faith were not single and now their minds were wandering (Luke

11:34).

The Foolishness of Faithlessness

"Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:25-27).

"Oh, fools." Here is the loving, tender, glorified tongue of Jesus addressing His disciples. "Don't you know that the just shall live by faith? Do away with your reasoning in Adam. Don't you know that you must not walk by sight?"

Every time God calls His people "fools," it is always said with regard to their lack of faith. When the disciples panicked on the boat in the storm, Jesus called them "ye of little faith" (Matthew 8:26). We are fools when we give in to the intimidation around us and refuse to live by faith. We do not have to be bogged down by sadness. We do not need to be stuck in depression or to go through life with a wandering mind, threatened by intimidation.

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

"And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

"But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

"And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

"And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

"And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

"And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

"Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

"And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in break-

ing of bread.

"And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (Luke 24:27-36).

How did Jesus deal with the disciples' slowness of heart? He opened their understanding through the Word of God. He started with the books of Moses and continued through the prophets to show the disciples the reality of what had happened. He expounded the truth about Himself.

This is the most beautiful thing about our Lord. He did not forsake His disciples even when they were intimidated and walking by sight. That must have been such a precious moment when they finally recognized Him.

Here was this intimidated, defeated group of men, and Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, was about to break bread with them. I like to imagine that He did something like this: He took the bread and the wine, and all of a sudden, there before the disciples were the nail-scarred hands —then, He vanished.

He vanished because He wanted them to learn to walk by faith and to worship by faith. He wanted them to believe.

Now these men had open eyes and burning

hearts and they were running back to Jerusalem —the place of peace. They were going back to peace. They took the broken bread. They drank the wine. They saw the nail-scarred hands and they witnessed His glorified love. They had fellowship with His Spirit as He shared the Word of God with them. Those men would go back to Jerusalem in the power of God.

Love Came Down

All of that happened because the God of the universe took time out and walked with two men when they were sad. He walked with them when they were off, and He walked with them when they were wandering out of His plan.

The open house, the open Scriptures, the open hearts, the open eyes, the open attitudes—they all were opened by Jesus Christ. God's availability brought into their hearts a brand-new, astonishing experience.

The Lord wants to give us the life, the peace, the attitude, and the power where we can be ourselves in God. We can live as individuals in grace and be led by the Spirit and the Word. We can be bold and confident.

Let others judge by appearances and by their standards. Jesus Christ is our standard. Let's go

forward in His mercy. Do not be intimidated by anything the devil throws at us. The Lord of the universe is in our midst, and we shall not be moved!

CONCLUSION

Do not be intimidated by sight. Do not be intimidated by what the world says. Do not be intimidated by trials and by their findings in your life. Do not be intimidated by accusations or by people's plans to demote you and ruin your reputation and assassinate your character. Do not be intimidated by religious concepts or by what others think about the way you worship God.

Instead of rationalizing your situation, let faith reign.

The Spirit of God is saying to your heart, "Don't let your slowness of heart intimidate you. Abide in the Finished Work." Do not judge your spirituality by your moods and your situation. You can only judge your spirituality on the basis of the Word of God and the truth of Calvary, the truth of His resurrection, and the truth of His ascension."

Judge your spirituality based on who you are in Jesus Christ. You are complete. You are

whole. You are full. You are hid. You are cleansed. You are purged and made perfect in Him. You are redeemed. You are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6).

Just live the life of Christ by faith in His rest. In the face of the storm, He rests in His love (Zephaniah 3:17).

Don’t Distance Yourself

from the

God Who Loves You

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INTRODUCTION

More than ever, people like to pay to be entertained. The movie industry alone profits billions of dollars each year. With promotions that are part of the mainstream culture, many Christians seem to know more about recent video releases than they are aware of the moving of God's Spirit. In fact, many Christians would rather stay at home and watch TV than go to church and learn to love the will of God and the purity of God's grace through the preaching of the Word (Titus 1:3).

I know that most people in the world do not read the Bible, but I would seriously like to know how many Christians really read the Bible. We talk about reading the Bible in schools. Let's start reading the Bible in our homes. We talk about wanting public prayer in schools, but what about public prayers in our homes?

The problem is that many have distanced themselves from the One who really loves them.

Through ignorance, carelessness, and rebellion, we have filled our lives with things other than the things of God. Yet, the Father still longs to draw people to Himself. As this booklet will show, God wants His people to walk close to Him as we receive His truth in our inward parts.

Chapter One

LOST IN A LOST WORLD

In the book of Jeremiah, God was dealing with a divided kingdom—Israel and Judah. Soon God's people would face seventy years of captivity in Babylon under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar. The king took all the wealthy people and all the craftsmen who could benefit his kingdom, and he left behind the poor and the destitute to fend for themselves. Still, God had a provision.

No matter what situation we are in, God always raises up men of God. In captivity, God raised up the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel, while He told Jeremiah to stay with those who were destitute. That rough and rowdy gang would not hear him speak, and, eventually, even they were taken captive by the Egyptians. They would not listen to the prophet Jeremiah who warned them not to trust in Egypt (Jeremiah 29:19).

Jeremiah had a ministry to people who refused to listen to him. Many scholars believe that he was stoned to death in Egypt. Yet, he stood fast as he proclaimed the Word of God to people who despised him.

Lost Opportunities, Lost Rewards

Exodus 21:19 says that if men strive against one another and one is wounded, the offender "shall pay for the loss of his time." Numbers 6:12 says "the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled." Ezekiel 19 describes a time of lost hope, lost peace, and lost opportunities for the children of Israel. The Lord wants us to know that wasting time—our own or another's—is sin.

The principle of being lost is so sad. People lose time, whether days, hours, or moments. With that, they lose meaning, purpose, joy, reality, and reason. They lose spirituality because they cannot find what they have lost, and they do not purpose to restore what they have lost. Lured into captivity by the pleasures of the world, they move away from the heart of God.

First Corinthians 3:13-15 says that at the Bema Seat evaluation (where believers will receive or suffer loss of rewards), "Every man's

work shall be made manifest…." Whatever goes through the fire and remains will bring eternal rewards. If, on the other hand, any man's works are destroyed by fire, though he will go to heaven, he will suffer loss of rewards for all eternity.

It is amazing to me how many believers have no idea whatsoever about losing opportunities because of lost time and compromising their relationship with God because of self-occupation, carnality, and ignorance of truth. And yet, because of the Finished Work of Calvary, if we will turn to the Lord, He will restore the years that were devoured (Joel 2:25-26). That is the heart of God.

The Seeking Heart of God

Luke 15 is a chapter about lost things. Jesus said that when one sheep was lost, the shepherd left the other sheep and went into the wilderness to find the lost one. When the shepherd brought back the lost sheep, the neighbors joined together and there was a party. There was joy and rejoicing over the one who had been found.

God is always seeking the lost. He is always looking for ways to show us the areas in which we are lost and then to bring us into His reality

—an eternal state of forgiveness.

Also in Luke 15, Jesus told about a woman who had ten pieces of silver and then lost one coin. She swept her house until she found that coin. Then, she called her neighbors, and there was joy and rejoicing over one lost coin that was found.

Then. we find the story of the prodigal son who came home after wasting his inheritance on "riotous living." The father gave a celebration, announcing, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24).

The average Christian has little understanding of how, on a day-to-day and moment-by-moment basis, Jesus Christ seeks and saves that which is lost. It is not a last-ditch effort. The Lord is continually seeking the lost.

When we do not have the mind of Christ, we have lost our way of thinking with Him. When we do not have the right confession, we have lost our way of communicating God's Finished Work viewpoint. When we do not have faith-rest in Christ, we have lost our way of living. When we do not have the proper joy of God, we have lost our way of strength. When we do not have the proper obedience, we have lost our

way of honor. When we do not have the proper comprehension of doctrine, we have lost our way of inspiration.

When we do not have these things, then we are suffering loss, and the loss will be culminated at the Bema Seat, where we will miss eternal rewards.

God is always seeking that which is lost. Some are lost because of ignorance, such as it was with the sheep. Others, just like the coin, are lost through carelessness. Some are lost because of the rebellion revealed in the prodigal son.

Being lost is a terrible thing. Just as the coin was lost inside the house, Christians can be lost within the church. They will go to heaven, but they have no real value system. They lack virtue that redeems the time in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus' entire purpose was to reveal the Father by revealing His nature so that people can find this revelation and not be lost.

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but

dung, that I may win Christ,

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:7-10).

Chapter Two

THE GOD WHO IS NEAR

"Thus saith the LORD unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water.

"So I got a girdle according to the word of the LORD, and put it on my loins.

"And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying,

"Take the girdle that thou hast got, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock.

"So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me.

"And it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there.

"Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it: and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was prof-

itable for nothing.

"Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

"Thus saith the LORD, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.

"This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.

"For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear" (Jeremiah 13:1-11).

As God did with several Old Testament prophets, He gave Jeremiah a very unusual assignment. Jeremiah was commanded to wear a white linen girdle every time he spoke. He was not to clean this garment at all.

Next, God told Jeremiah to travel some two hundred and fifty miles on foot, hide the girdle under a rock near the Euphrates River, and then go back—a total of five hundred miles round-

trip. That is quite a journey to take on foot! With cars and airplanes, it wouldn't be such a big deal; but in Jeremiah's day, that sort of trip took a lot of work.

The interesting thing is that Jeremiah simply obeyed God. He did not ask questions. He walked two hundred and fifty miles with the girdle, hid it under a rock, and then walked back two hundred and fifty miles. A while later, God told him to go back and get the girdle. So he walked two hundred and fifty miles, found the girdle (what was left of it, that is) and walked back. The damp environment near the Euphrates left the girdle soiled and profitable for nothing.

An Illustration of God's Heart

Through this ordeal, God wanted to make a point.

God was trying to demonstrate to His people just what was happening to them spiritually. The girdle was used to draw attention to their lost state, which was a result of refusing to hear the Word of the Lord.

God was saying, "I wanted that girdle near you because I want My people close to Me. Yes, it was dirty and unclean. But just like that girdle

clung to you, I want My people to cling to Me.

"I am after intimacy. I want My people to talk with Me and walk with Me and think with Me. I want you to have fellowship with Me, to honor and obey Me.

"I want you to be able to understand My desire for you who have rejected Me, refused Me, and dishonored Me."

The children of Israel would not listen to Jeremiah, so God orchestrated this illustration to get through to them and help them comprehend His desire toward them.

The point is that God wants His people to draw very close to Him. Do not distance yourself from God through the ignorance of truth. Do not distance yourself from God through careless thinking when you are alone. Do not distance yourself from God through rebellion, as did the prodigal son.

I must not distance myself geographically from the One who is omnipresent. I must not distance my understanding from the One who is omniscient. I must not distance my weakness from the One who is omnipotent. I must not distance myself through natural thinking about love from the One who loves unconditionally.

There is One who loves me and established

grace toward me before He formed the stars, the sun, or the moon. He saw me in His purpose and plan before He spoke the forests, flowers, and herbs into existence, before He created the fish of the sea and fowl of the air. I must not distance myself from my Redeemer who loved me so much that He made a plan that included shedding His blood on Calvary's Cross.

It is amazing to consider how the world behaves and then to see that many average Christians are operating the same way, doing the same things that the world does. They are living this way because of the distance between them and the One who loves them.

"To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it" (Jeremiah 6:10).

God always wants us to be close to Him. He wants us to draw near to Him in every single situation—even if we have no feelings, even if we have no capacity, even if we have no desire.

We should stay close to Him because it is the right thing to do.

Chapter Three

GOD LOVES YOU: THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Man has a duty. He has a duty to be honest, a duty to honor, a duty when he is married to be faithful. He has a duty to work, a duty to pay his bills, a duty to honor people. Man has a duty to honor the God who sent His Son to pay for our sins by grace on Calvary.

Spirit-filled believers must understand that we are bound to duty. Duty is our response to love. This is not a "salvation-by-works" program. Duty represents a right response to love. As Christians, we have a duty to be fervent, to work hard, and to take advantage of our opportunities to serve Him. It is the duty of the inward man to stay pure, clothed in the meek spirit of

God's grace, using the inner resources he receives as pearls of great price.

"By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life" (Proverbs 22:4).

This verse means that humility toward men and reverence toward God are the riches and honor of our lives.

There was not much left to Jeremiah's girdle. Yet imagine the extent to which God went to communicate His thought to the prophet: "Jeremiah, you represent Me. The girdle represents My people." The dirty girdle deteriorated more and more. It was not on the rock, as Moses was; it was under the rock, and it was far away from the city that God had given His people.

God Seeks Out the Worthless

People get so far away from what God has given them. In Jeremiah's time, many of God's people were in Babylon, mired in captivity. Their days were lost, their hours were lost, their minutes were lost. They were living in a wasteland. Like the girdle that Jeremiah walked two hundred and fifty miles to retrieve, God's people felt worthless. Yet, God still wanted them. This was God's message to the people still living in Jerusalem.

"Yes, you are lost. You were taken out of the way by your own wrong choices. As worthless as the girdle appears to be, I still wanted it close to My prophet. In the same way, I want you close to Me, even in your present condition.

"If you are close to Me, I can minister to you so you can receive My love and have proper capacity for life. I want your life close to Me so that I can direct you and keep you clean through My Word and the Holy Spirit. To those who are far off and without hope, I want to give hope."

This is the heart of God, who loves us. Do not distance yourself from that love. Draw near.

CONCLUSION

Like Jeremiah's girdle, God still values every soul, no matter what condition they are in. Even those people whose hearts have drifted far from Him remain the objects of His great love. Just as the Lord sent Jeremiah to retrieve the ruined girdle, God sends those who represent Him after unworthy people.

The value of this unusual lesson is this: Every person has value, no matter how lost he is. God would leave the ninety and nine sheep to rescue any one of us who would wander into the wilderness of defeat and sin.

The lost coin in Luke 15 is a picture of someone lost within a church. The house represents the local assembly. God wants the members of His churches to sweep and clear away the old things—to search and to find those who are lost to their purpose. The Lord wants us to redeem the time and to redeem what was lost so there can be celebration and rejoicing, no matter what

we go through.

Even rebellious sons can come home to the Father, because though they may not understand Him or know His heart and purpose, they can still know His love. They will grow tired of being in the far countries of sin and will come back to receive the love of the One who is ever waiting to be gracious.

Don’t Fight Back:

Trust God!

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

What do you think of when you imagine a garden? Do you smell the fragrance of the blossoms, see the variety of colors, hear the sound of wind rustling leaves, taste the sweetness of the fruit, feel a quietness mingled with joy?

If you are a person who has spent any time working in a garden, you probably imagine the scent of the earth, envision weeds (some with thorns) that seem to grow before your eyes, hear the insects that help pollinate (and those that gnaw!), taste saltiness of sweat, and feel the dirt in your hands (and an ache in your back!). Yet according to a recent survey, despite all the apparent toil involved, one of the most desirable recreational pastimes for people in every walk of life is gardening.

Often in His descriptions of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus referred to gardening of one sort or another. Most often in those accounts, God is depicted as the husbandman, or gardener (John

15:1). Do you know that as a born-again believer, you are a garden? Not just a flower or a fruit branch, you are to God soil that needs cultivating, planting, nurturing, and harvesting. And because you have the potential of bearing fruit, you have the possibility of producing other gardens.

Due to the nature of God's creation, the same wind that blows the fragrance abroad can bring seeds that produce thorny weeds in our gardens. Unless we understand God's goodness and yield to His care, we will find ourselves kicking against the pricks (Acts 9:5).

In the beautiful process of God, don't resist the Lord's arm as He breaks up the fallow ground, roots out the weeds, pulls down and destroys old unfruitful overgrowth (Jeremiah 1:10). Don't depend on the arm of the flesh (Jeremiah 17:5). Instead of trying, instead of resisting, *trust God*. Let Him make you a garden of His planting and a place of rest for the weary—fruitful and bringing great pleasure to God.

Chapter One

THE TREASURE WITHIN

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

"Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

"Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

"Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

"How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!

"Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of

Lebanon.

"A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (Song of Solomon 4:6-12).

In this passage, the Lord is teaching about the Resurrection side of the Cross. It's the place where all the shadows flee away, the mountain of myrrh, and the hill of frankincense—the Resurrection side of Calvary. But many people are so occupied with the "burden" of the Cross and the "trials" of the Cross that they lose the entire meaning of the Cross of Calvary.

There are people who get saved and start going to a good Bible-believing church (and I thank God that they do) but in the past have had serious marriage problems. Though the Word preached is meant to heal old wounds, some people continue to live in subconscious guilt. The Resurrection side of the Cross took care of that guilt! It's so vital that we understand this.

In verse 8, the Bridegroom, representing Christ, calls out, "Come with me…my spouse, ...look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens."

Amana means "above all" or "the highest height." *Shenir* deals with being at the top of an experience in which you have conquered, over-

coming your enemies. *Hermon* speaks of the freshness of a relationship, and "from the lions' den" refers to being completely above the "lions": Satan and the demons of hell.

That verse speaks of the Christian's position. Represented as the spotless bride throughout the Song of Solomon, we are looking *down*—looking down from above, looking down from our position, seated with Christ. Therefore, we rest in our position *with* Christ, *in* Christ. Looking down, our attitude reveals that we understand His triumphant victory.

Unfortunately, it is possible for believers to gather for worship, communicate, and have fellowship and still not comprehend the triumphant victory of our position. This is the case for so many people who really love God but find themselves looking up at the face of their adversary.

So, as He looks down, God is going to do something with something we have inside of us.

God's Desire to Take Possession

"There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise" (Proverbs 21:20*a*).

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7*a*).

There is a treasure dwelling inside the wise

Christian who is filled with the Word of God—and God desires the treasure, but He does not have it! The treasure is hidden in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7). And there is "oil," a precious commodity yet to be tapped. God desires that treasure. Here is the question: How will He get that treasure into production? These verses as our premise will help determine how we understand the next few verses in Song of Solomon, chapter four.

Remember, God is looking *down* because He is completely triumphant. He is far above all principalities and powers, and He is looking down. This is also the believer's position (whether he knows it or not).

In verses 9 and 10, the Bridegroom's desires became one with the desires of his bride: "Thou hast ravished my heart, *my* sister, *my* spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, *my* sister, *my* spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!" He uses "my," a personal pronoun of possession, nine times in the passage we began with—nine times, to speak of His possession. The desires of the Bridegroom and the desires of His beloved have finally come together

as one.

When a Christian is not Spirit-filled, he fights being possessed by God. When someone is co-dependent, depending upon someone or something else to make him happy, he fights God who wants to possess his body, soul, and spirit. The drug addict doesn't want God to possess him. But when he is ready to surrender to God's desire, God comes in and says, "Listen! You are Mine." And then He says, "Not only are you Mine, but our relationship has developed beyond that between a husband and wife." In other words, now there is a marriage, but the relationship has developed. God says, "Because you are My bride, we have a sacred relationship as husband and wife. And you are My sister, so we also have a family relationship. You are able to manifest a variety of relationships to Me."

Every Christian is designed to have relationships both with God and with other people in various manifestations: as siblings, friends, co-workers, parent-child, teacher-student, and so on.

God is saying, "Because you are responding to Me in personal intimacy, because you are intimately Mine, I desire you. I desire to be around you. I desire to be with you. Because of your confession and because of the way you're acting

and the way you respond, I'm extremely interested in being with you. Before, I did all the initiating and you did not respond. Now, you are responding. Now I can receive pleasure and joy from our relationship."

Desires Fulfilled

What happened in these verses? Desires became identified and all of a sudden, the bride began to realize the tremendous blessings of her heavenly, faith-rest position.

Someone once told me that a certain man was going through a nervous breakdown. My response was simple: "He will have to go through it inside of Christ."

I am *inside* of Christ. If I'm anxious, I am anxious inside of Christ. God's protection and His provision are available to me, but the "wills" have to be identified. In Song of Solomon, the bride developed an attitude that said, "Thy will be done. What your will is, is my will, and I want *your* will to be done." With that attitude, she ravished His heart. She stirred up His love "with one of her eyes," which means she was single-eyed (Matthew 6:22), and "with one chain of her neck," meaning she was always focused upon Him in obedience. She was focused with a

single eye and a positive volition.

Song of Solomon 4:11*a* reads, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue." Honey strengthens certain weaknesses, and milk builds up and edifies. He is saying to the bride, "Your lips are strong in your weakness," meaning they build up, they edify.

"And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." Her garments gave forth the fragrance of the life derived from her position. Once she understood that she was living in the heavenlies, seated in the heavenlies, she began to have a fragrance because of the incense of the heavenlies. She began to realize that He Who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are one (Hebrews 2:11)—*totally* one. The Lord is not ashamed to call us brethren.

Chapter Two

DIGGING FOR TREASURE: BY FAITH AND NOT BY SIGHT

The bride of Song of Solomon is entering into a very new experience. Her inward life, her treasure, is now ready to be expressed and her garments will have a fragrance. The Bridegroom initiated to her repeatedly. At first, she responded to theological knowledge, and she utilized it, but it had no intimate value. But now, that precious flow of God is going to open up what God desires: *her treasure*.

There is a treasure inside each of us, and God desires it to be revealed on the outside through our habits, our speech, and our manners, in the fruit of the Spirit. But what is it that God desires?

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). "...I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit..." (John 15:16). He desires the trea-

sure to bear fruit. God looks upon a situation in a home, and He sees the treasure inside the people in that home. He desires that the treasure become a fragrance on the 'garments' of their outer life. That is His desire.

When the time comes that the desire of a child of God is the same as His desire, then from the garments of that person's life comes a 'fragrance' that you can observe and appreciate.

The garments give forth their beautiful fragrance! And the Lord wants to do something that is so difficult for some young people to understand. As they mature, their dependence on their parents becomes less and less. They develop a healthy independence in their volition, forming their own godly convictions. Ultimately, however, what God desires is to make every single person totally and absolutely dependent upon Him.

Godly Dependence vs. Co-Dependence

It is vital that every Christian understand this: The Lord Jesus Christ desires to bring adversity and circumstances into our lives to finally break us down, making us so utterly weak that we will become completely dependent upon Him. "I came not to send peace, but a

sword" (Matthew 10:34*b*). We fight becoming dependent because of what we know about co-dependency on a human level. But also, total dependence on Christ means becoming detached from co-dependent relationships and soul attachments.

So many people have co-dependencies, but God wants us to be absolutely dependent upon Him. He doesn't want your inner life to have unusual needs regarding other people. If God had His way, He would make you so strong that you would be free to appreciate people, love people, have fellowship with others, be a portion and a provision to those who are able to receive. That is excellent, and it is God's plan for us as a spiritual family in a godly community.

But if God had His way, you and I would be so dependent upon Him that we would trust Him with all of our heart, not leaning on our own understanding. We would acknowledge Him, and He would direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5-6).

The Chain of the Neck

The Word of God goes far in teaching the principle of dependence. Occasionally, we see young people from godly homes who don't want to be dependent upon God or "closed in"

to Jesus. Though their families always express Christ in their relationships with each other, these young people resist and fight. They won't admit that it's God they are resisting, but they rebel because they don't want to become a "spring shut up" unto Jesus Christ.

People who consistently have nerve problems do not want to be "shut up" to Jesus Christ. Some people who have domestic problems often refuse to be absolutely dependent upon God.

If there is something I am supposed to be doing that I am not doing, then I need to do it, in obedience—that's what "with one chain of thy neck" means (Song of Solomon 4:9). To be truly obedient, I need to be dependent upon God. Then my desires become His desires, and we have a union of oneness according to God's will. I will become a spring shut up instead of shutting off God's flow.

Filling the Vessels

"Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead;...and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

"And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do

for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.

"Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shall set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out.

"And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest" (2 Kings 4:1-7).

This woman's husband had died, she was not able to pay her bills, and her children were going to be taken away. But the prophet Elisha came. The sons brought the empty vessels, and because Elisha depended upon God, the vessels were filled supernaturally. Elisha prayed and the vessels—not a few!—were filled. The widow had money to pay off her debt. Not only that,

she had oil left over to live off of because *all* of the vessels were full.

The widow borrowed those vessels. Likewise, God wants to borrow our free volition. He wants us to pray and be totally dependent upon Him so He can fill our empty vessels.

Digging Ditches

In 2 Kings 3:4-24, the armies of Judah, Israel, and Edom were going to fight Moab, but they found themselves in a valley where there was no water. There was no provision for the men or their animals, and it seemed certain they would be delivered to their enemy. Through the prophet Elisha, God told the kings, "I want you to dig ditches tonight." As the night progressed, there was no wind nor rain. They needed a miracle from God and were totally dependent upon Him. They had nothing to lean on by sight—God had taken that away. No rain. No feeling of the wind. God wouldn't let them see anything.

Some of you want God to do something, but you continue to want some sign, some evidence that He's working so you can walk by sight. You want sight; you want feelings; you want experiences to confirm that you are walking the right way. But God wants to get you into that place

where you are finally dead to everything. He will not give in to your desire for sight. Nor will He give in to your flesh or your emotions. He cannot, if He is to conform you to His image.

The armies of Israel and Judah went on digging. The next morning, with no wind and no rain, the ditches were filled with water—more than enough. It was a miracle God did under ground. The "deep calleth unto deep" (Psalm 42:7), and God performed a miracle; the ditches were filled from underground.

God wants to do miracles "underground" in our souls, in our subconscious and unconscious minds. And when a Christian is dependent upon God, out of him shall flow rivers of living water (John 7:38).

Ravish God's Heart

If I am properly single-eyed, I ravish God's heart and He loves to be around me. He loves to fellowship with me. He loves to have communion with me. He loves to answer my prayers. I am in union with Him, and out of me shall flow the rivers. I just need to have the right source—and the source must be Him.

God doesn't react to most of the problems that we experience. God doesn't shed any tears

over our sickness and disease. Yes, we have a High Priest who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15), but He has passed into the heavens and is approaching us from a Finished Work perspective. In His plan, everyone is going to die, and He knows exactly how and when. No one can go with you when you face the valley of death. When you are in that bed alone, unconscious, you can still hear loved ones as they try to minister to you—while you know very well that you are dying. And the only one who can go with you is the Lord.

Sometimes, God puts you in a place where all you can do is grab hold of God, and that's how it was meant to be. When we finally reach out as we face the details of life, God probably says, "I wish you had done that ten years ago! I want your absolute dependence. The more you depend upon Me, the deeper you dig the ditches, the more water will go into your soul, and the greater your supply for others."

On Their Knees

In order to dig the ditches, those armies in 2 Kings 3 had to get on their knees. It was hard work. They had to bend over, get down, break up the soil, and dig very deep in order to have a

capacity large enough to supply themselves and their animals.

God wants our ditches dug very deep; then from Him shall flow rivers of living water, filling our capacity. Empty vessels shall be filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit, which will produce the fragrance of God in the outer life. That life will be a miracle.

He desires a treasure, and that treasure is in us. How often do you think of the treasure that is "in" you? It's a treasure richer than any wealth in the universe. We go around as human beings acting so foolish. The words that come out of our mouths are sometimes so strange, while inside of us is this treasure. God desires that the treasure would speak, that the treasure would listen, that this treasure in us would respond to the truth and accept His plan. He wants the treasure to become fruit: the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Chapter Three

A GARDEN ENCLOSED

"A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (Song of Solomon 4:12).

Notice, God isn't referring to many gardens in this verse; He says "garden." He is not dealing with the masses; He's not even dealing with a church. He is dealing with an individual.

If you have a garden, you can't plant at random. You cultivate the soil, plant the seed, and nurture it. The process must be done in an orderly fashion, very neatly and wonderfully.

But here is the part that many young people don't want to hear. God is saying, "The garden must be enclosed. It's Mine, and I will take care of it. I want the garden to depend on Me."

The Lord wants every Christian to be His garden, producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. But few people really want that. Some may get emotional and say, "Thy will be done, Jesus!"—

but try living with them the next five days, and you'll see if they really meant it. God wants His garden so enclosed that He can control it completely. Yet, many Christians don't want God to tell them where to go to church or how often to go. Furthermore, they would rather be free to "tell people off" once in a while because that's their "temperament."

God wants control. He wants a soul that He can possess. He is not going to stop working on us until He has control, until we are set apart for Him and Him alone. Then, He can take away our dearest treasure and we can trust Him. God can allow everything to be taken away—even wealth and health—and we can trust Him.

Sanctified for His Purpose

The garden is enclosed, the spring is shut up, the fountain is sealed. "I want you to fulfill all My good pleasure, just for Me," God says. "If that means I allow Job to become sick, I will. If I want Amy Carmichael to be bedridden for much of her life, then I will allow it. If I want Fanny Crosby, who wrote more than eight hundred hymns, to become blind, then I will. I will because I created her for Me. I didn't create her for any other reason. I sanctify the godly for My-

self (Psalm 4:3)."

The Lord is saying, "You are My garden enclosed; I don't want you to go outside of the garden. You are a fountain sealed; I don't want other "fountains" from the cosmic system to come into your life. I want the spring to be shut up; I don't want waters from the world coming into that spring."

The Creator of the universe has a desire toward us. He says, "When I come and fellowship with you, I don't want you talking about something that comes from the devil or from your old sin nature. I want to know that I am having fellowship with something that comes from Me!"

The River Flows

"Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices" (Song of Solomon 4:13-14).

This is what happened to the bride in Song of Solomon. The treasure within became the nature of God's fruit, His life in her. God's desire was that the treasure would become fruit, and not just something inside of her. Suddenly, she

became a miracle, expressing frankincense—love—to her partner. The believer who operates from this supernatural source can give forth that fruit, even to a partner who doesn't deserve it, and do so with ease.

The bride had a river flowing. It flowed *out* from the Bridegroom, *into* her, then *out* of her and *into* others. This flow isn't based upon the receiver: It is a river, and she was flooded with the river of God. The oil of the Holy Spirit filled her empty vessels and the spices were everywhere! The spices speak of love, grace, joy, patience, mercy, peace, and wisdom—all the fruitful attributes of God's character.

Now, she is simply revealing something about God. Every thought is controlled by Him. Every word. Every response to others is controlled by Him. The spices flow out and God is made known through her life.

The Fragrance Blows On

"A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits" (Song of Solomon 4:15-16).

Now God changes to plural references—*gardens*, *waters*, and *streams*. The bride of Song of Solomon is reproducing. And through the life of the Church, the Bride of Christ, there are all kinds of people who now reveal God because we have revealed the fragrance of the Holy Spirit. It flows out of us from the throne of God into people who are negative, people who have no faith, people who do not know Christ. It flows and flows toward them until finally, because of love, it flows into them. One garden is now producing many gardens.

Then the bride prayed a beautiful prayer. "Awake, O north wind! I want the Holy Spirit to keep right on glorifying Christ (John 15:26). I want the spices to flow out. So, north wind, keep blowing! Blow the spices in the direction of those people who are miserable, who are hurting, and who are wounded," she prays. "North wind, take this treasure, blow on it and let the spices be released."

Here is someone who is totally under the control of the Spirit. At last, she has absolutely discovered Jesus Christ's love. She has entered into an excellent relationship. "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits" (Song of Solomon 4:16). He is her source.

He is the cause. And He comes to eat His fruit.

Deal with Satan's Temperament

Here is how this works with us. God delivers us into situations that are devastating. Consequently, we often withdraw into our emotions or into our natural temperaments. We are miserable, we're unhappy, we're rebellious—and we represent Satan's kingdom. In that state, we reproduce a characteristic of a demon, an attribute of Satan's temperament. Satan is anxious, he is presumptuous, and he is fearful. So even though there is a treasure within us, we often end up revealing who Satan is, instead of Christ.

But when we go to the Cross and settle the issue, Resurrection power comes in. God settles me, and the flow of the river begins to come from Him through me, and that settles it for others. Once this is going, God not only wants to be in me but around me. For example, in the Book of Job, God had cultivated a great relationship with Job. When Satan challenged the depth of that relationship (Job 1:9-11), God said, "You want to tempt Job? Go ahead!" Job came through victoriously. There were moments of failure, but he got there eventually. And the Lord was eating of *His* fruit from *Job's* soul.

The garden is the Lord's, and the Lord is mine; He is *my* Lord and I am *His* garden.

We must not be co-dependent on any person; we must be totally dependent upon the Lord. The reason things don't always happen as we had hoped, whether in the marriage or on the job, is because God wants us to depend upon Him. When adversity comes, when trials come, when temptation comes, God wants to be able brag on His fruit because in our thoughts and in our confession, we have depended totally on Him. This is what we were created to do.

Created for Glory

For His glory, we were created (Isaiah 43:7). For His pleasure, we were made (Revelation 4:11). We are made for God's pleasure. Get this straight. He wants each of us to have such absolute and total trust that we can say in the face of our circumstances, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15).

Perhaps you have this kind of life with God. If you do, you are having a ball serving God, using rebound in those isolated incidents when you slip. I know some of you are there. Yet as a pastor, I still see people manipulating others in soul-power relationships and becoming co-de-

pendent. These people are miles from experiencing Resurrection life. Some blame their co-dependence on dysfunctional families. My advice? Get into a functional family from heaven!

Even when the bride in Song of Solomon wasn't right, the Bridegroom always spoke to her kindly. Everything He said to her built her up until finally she responded. As she responded, her desire was that the treasure within would glorify Him. He declared, "I love everything about our relationship. You are my spouse, my sister, my family. You have ravished my heart." That is our life with Christ. And this is what happens when we walk alone before God (Genesis 17:1), depending completely upon Him.

CONCLUSION

You will never know that God can heal until you get to know Him as the Healer. You will never get to know whether God will bless you until you know Him intimately as the Blesser. You will never know what it's like to be free from sin's habit until you have fellowship with Him intimately. You'll never know whether God can satisfy you until He is the only One you are satisfied with.

There are places we haven't walked so we don't dare to trust Him for things we haven't experienced.

Trust Him with all of your heart—*all* of your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. Don't get a divorce, trust God. Don't resist obedience to God, trust Him. Don't fight back: Trust God!

I do things on purpose to maintain my health, eating properly and exercising regularly. Some of the juices I drink are not pleasant, and I

don't like them. But they are good for me, so I purpose to drink them every day. I am determined to trust God and do it.

Obedience to God reveals "one chain of thy neck" (Song of Solomon 4:9), which speaks of our volition. As we enter into this arena of faith obedience in our fellowship with Jesus Christ, we walk a narrow road. Years ago, God revealed that the 'narrow road' means this: God is going to take everything out of my life until eventually I am with Him alone on that road when I die.

The road isn't narrow because of legalism; it's narrow because not one other person can go with you. Mommy can't go. Daddy can't go. Your spouse can't go. The way is very narrow. Only God can go with you. He created and redeemed you for His glory. He will never leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). He will go with you to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20).

God wins! And when we become totally dependent upon Him and He wins and enjoys His treasure in us, the victory becomes ours.

Don’t Live Outside

of the Garden

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The Garden of Eden was a perfect place: no striving, no strains, no struggles. But then Adam and Eve failed the volitional test as they partook from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and were driven from Eden. Work was now the order. Tilling the ground and making a living came with toil and sweat. Thorns and thistles made Adam's labor more difficult and he ate his bread in sorrow.

While we cannot journey back to Eden in the physical sense, we can abide there mentally and emotionally. Thanks to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we can let our thoughts and words be governed by the Holy Spirit. And when we receive doctrine daily—as Adam and Eve did in Eden—our lives will be operating in the Truth.

Living inside the Garden represents personal daily fellowship with God. This booklet will show that this way of living is a relaxed, confident expression of God's grace.

Chapter One

HAVING A WRONG RAPPORT

"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

"And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself….

"Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

"So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:8-10, 23-24).

Eve had a great lust for knowledge. She had a perfect marriage and was living in a perfect

place. But in Genesis 3:6, faced with Satan's temptation at the Tree of Knowledge, she revealed an amazing lust to know what good would be and what evil with self-consciousness would be. Beguiled and deceived, she became spiritually dead.

Adam was beside her, still perfect at that point. But for him to continue his relationship with Eve, Adam *had* to partake of the fruit himself. When he did this, all the Bible doctrine he had learned was not being applied.

We know God taught Adam and Eve doctrine every day. In Genesis 3:8, when the Bible says that "they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," the tenses in the Hebrew text signify that He had been coming to meet with them in the past and would continue coming to them.

Consider that in order to have any relationship with his wife after she ate of the Tree of Knowledge, Adam had to partake of the forbidden fruit also. He had to violate doctrine. After Eve fell, she became very seductive in her appearance and behavior. Mentally, she had traded away her virtue, her spiritual integrity, and her values, which depended upon God and living inside the Garden. So, to maintain their relation-

ship, Adam had to trade away his values too. He, who was given headship by God, now would let Eve lead him. To have rapport with Eve would lead Adam to leave doctrine. And now, everything in his life would be experienced *outside* the Garden.

The Substitute: Human Virtue

Recently I heard an interview with a popular singer who is saved. He has sold millions of records and is famous throughout the world. Yet this man said that more than anything, he wants to be a husband who won't fail his wife, a great father, and a good son to his parents. At one point in his career, he admitted to being unfaithful to his wife. Stating that he was actually afraid of the effects of his success, he quit touring for several years to improve his marriage.

All of that is very noble in the human virtue sense. In this case, however, though he now has a good family, he is existing totally outside the Garden, completely untaught. And, though he vaguely testifies of a love and desire for God in one or two of his songs, he will not publicly *say* that Jesus Christ is his Savior. Why? Because he has established a worldly rapport that is outside the Garden.

There are two kinds of fellowship: that which is *inside* the Garden and that which is *outside* the Garden. The problem with divisions between believers is that their fellowship is outside the Garden. Some Christians would marry someone who lives outside of the Garden without a second thought. But because they are still saved, they have the same convictions that they had inside the Garden. Therefore, except for isolated moments, they cannot be happy outside of God's will. That singer said he *needs* to struggle —to fight something—in order to satisfy himself. He said, "I'm almost happy being *un*happy." When a person is saved, they cannot be truly happy while living in sin.

Chapter Two

THE LEADER BECOMES A FOLLOWER

After eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the only rapport Adam and Eve had was outside of God, outside of His Word, and outside of His will. Everything about their lives was now outside of the perfect environment they had always known. There they were, outside the Garden—two adults with brilliant minds but living in spiritual death. They knew what they were missing because they now had a conscience, but they didn't understand how to be free. There are so many individuals who live in this kind of rapport, outside of the Garden.

Adam and Eve's rapport after eating from the Tree of Knowledge was now based upon spiritual death. No one can willfully sin unless it is based upon spiritual death and the needs of the flesh. Adam, the leader, was now led by the

woman. Divine authority was ignored. Human volition would not honor and reinforce divine authority, and human responsibility was misplaced.

First, Eve had to misplace her values. Then, she lost her virtue of integrity. Next, Adam misplaced his values. So, there they were, hiding in spiritually dead rapport and refusing to go to doctrine class. God came at the same time He had been coming every day to teach both of them. God came, but they were not there because their values had changed. Their spiritual integrity was gone. Every thought they now had was outside of the Garden, outside of God's will, and based upon misplaced values.

When people get angry, that anger is based upon spiritual death. When they become proud and refuse to draw near to the Body of Christ as humble members-in-particular, they are living in spiritual death. The only way to have a relationship with them is to live in spiritual death.

Many people are saved and know how to say spiritual things; they know how they ought to live. But, they are living outside of the Garden, and they have a limited eternal purpose.

When it comes to making decisions, if there is someone I like, Satan may try to use this person's influence and personality to stimulate a rapport that is outside of the Cross. This person may be very nice, someone who is saved and does not live in overt sins, but the moment I cross over the line and there is no cross between us, I am outside of God's purpose and God's will. Now, my rapport is with this person, instead of having a rapport with Bible doctrine. I am being led by a person instead of Bible doctrine. My relationship has become my leader.

Chapter Three

THE JOY THAT BRINGS STRENGTH

After the Fall, Adam and Eve no longer had what I call "*plus*-joy," which is the joy of the Lord that strengthens us (Nehemiah 8:10*b*). Any marital happiness Adam had now came from Eve, and any marital happiness Eve had now came from Adam. If Eve did everything to please Adam, and if Adam did everything to please Eve, all they would ever have is a rapport of human happiness that had nothing to do with God.

Plus-joy is so fulfilling! The joy of the Lord is our strength. Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). When we are under attack, under pressure, or under temptation, overwhelmed by stress, we need to get back into the Garden where we can live in *plus*-joy.

Are you covering someone or uncovering them with your words? If you are uncovering someone, what is your motive, when you are not perfect yourself? Ephesians 4:32 says "be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." And from Colossians 3, we see that kindness characterizes people who live inside the Garden.

Is what you have to say true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? Of course, it is never necessary to uncover anyone—whether he is right or wrong—in front of others. That comes from living outside the Garden. I have to have rapport with the accuser of the brethren to do something like that. I have to have rapport with Satan to go after anyone in the presence of others.

Inside the Garden, we walk in truth and fellowship with truth. People who live inside of the Garden are kind. Every day while they lived in Eden, Adam and Eve heard Bible doctrine. And in the Garden they always enjoyed perfect sex with each other, though it was only one expression of love. But outside the Garden, sex would not be as perfect because of the imperfections of life, unless it was through redemption.

Furthermore, when they lived inside the

garden, Adam and Eve never worried. Do you realize that we have to go outside of the Garden to worry? As long as we are in the Garden, our value system, our faith, and our virtue keep us from worrying. We have to step out of the Garden of grace to be impure, or to lust for knowledge or anything else.

Whatever problems or pressures we face, we can live in *plus*-joy. Even if we were to be martyred—even if we are killed for Christ's sake—we can live in *plus*-joy—the joy God gives to make us full. When you get stressed out, you are outside the Garden. Don't condemn yourself. Just say, "I am going right back into the Garden to get my joy back—*plus*-joy!"

Misplaced Motivations

The problem in America today is that instead of God, greed and fear motivate so many decisions. Greed and fear come from a relationship with the flesh outside the Garden, which motivates wrong decisions. Outside of the garden, our view of people is not of faith. Outside of the Garden, our prayers for people are not of faith. Outside of the Garden, our expectations are not of faith.

Imagine a marriage of two unsaved people

who live in spiritual death. They can have a wonderful marriage without God. They can have happy lives together, but then they die and go to hell. They may have a marriage that is better than that of many Christians because they agree and are compatible in their souls while they live in spiritual death outside the Garden.

In 1 Corinthians 15:22, the Bible says that "in *Adam*, all die." Romans 5:12*a* says, referring to Adam, "Wherefore, as by one *man* sin entered into the world…." It doesn't say, " In Eve…." Eve had a human volition, and she was responsible for her choice to sin. But, she was deceived. Adam deliberately made his choice to sin. Some scholars believe Eve's sensuality and the seductive appearance she took on after her fall really got to him. For the first time, she was exhibiting a fallen nature. Many scholars agree that Eve's fall was from a lust for knowledge and that Adam's fall was from the lust of the flesh for sex.

Outside of the Garden, there is limited eternal purpose. When God clothed Adam and Eve, they were saved by the grace of God. Then, through Bible doctrine, they could have virtue back (spiritual integrity) and values back (putting Christ first, daily Bible doctrine, a relationship with Him). Then, the Word and the

Spirit could lead them (Psalm 119:133; Romans 8:14-15), and they would be back to growing in values and virtues.

People who consistently live in frustration have a value system that is off. Two Ivy League professors have said that the problem with Americans is that their top priority in life is money.

One well-known politician said, "Judeo-Christians are taught to love one another. But we still have racial problems, divorce, and greed because money has replaced love and purpose. Evangelical Christians who execute Judeo-Christians principles have love among themselves."

Joy in the Garden

When God's people have *plus*-joy—the joy of the Lord—that joy becomes their strength. We can have busy schedules that seem to leave no time for sleep, and yet we can go on and on. The reason? We have joy inside the Garden. We have a rapport with God and each other inside the Garden. We have the same purpose for life inside the Garden. We possess the same vision, the same values, the same virtues, the same desires, the same hopes, and the same aspirations. If one should fail, we all have the same opportunity for

rebound inside the Garden.

In order to have a marriage that lasts, a marriage that perpetuates love, grace, and happiness, the relationship needs to be in the Garden. Rapport is not outside the Garden; conversations are not outside the Garden. They must abide inside the Garden.

Staying inside the Garden brings lasting friendships that do not decay, spiritually. By staying in the Garden, you can live in a world filled with sin, yet you do not deteriorate morally. The key is staying inside the Garden.

Those who attack others do it completely outside of the Garden. Their conversations and everything about their rapport are outside of grace, outside of love, outside of truth, outside of kindness.

Learn to Discern

Don't let anything take you outside of the Garden—not any individual, not any group of people, not any need through subjectivity or emotionalism. Learn to discern those who would have fellowship outside the Garden. Love them, but don't enter into a rapport with their spiritual death.

Many believers are sweet people who are

growing, but who lack discernment. Jesus did not pray for the Pharisees. He died on the Cross for them, but He didn't like them. He had subjective love for them, but not objective love. There wasn't a thing in their lives He valued.

Worldly entertainment, worldly music, worldly statements, immodest dress, and gambling destroy families. All of these things take people outside of the Garden.

We need to love what Jesus loves and hate what Jesus hates. Jesus isn't neutral about these things. People who live outside the Garden are not *for* some things, but neither are they against them! Remember: We ought to hate what Jesus hates.

Friendships, marriages, families, parents, church leaders—all of those who abide in the Garden are inseparable. Perfect love and perfect unity are in the Garden. The greatest place anyone can be is inside the Garden.

It is so hard for some people to live inside the Garden because they don't have *pleroma* faith. The Greek word *pleroma* speaks of fullness, drinking from a full cup, and the fullness of joy that comes from living inside the Garden (Ephesians 3:19).

No one can have *plus*-joy that fulfills unless

Jesus Christ gives it through the Spirit and the Word. We have to agree with God and walk in the Spirit of the Word inside the Garden.

When your "friends" start to get off doctrinally, don't get off with them. Don't leave doctrine. Don't go outside of the Garden and leave your relationship with God just to satisfy your flesh.

Live inside the Garden. Promise yourself to do what is best for your soul, what is best for God's will, and what is best for your heart. Do what glorifies God and make decisions that will keep you *inside* of the Garden."

CONCLUSION

Thousands of people turn out to see that singer I mentioned. They scream as he jumps up and down and rolls through the songs. He doesn't look like a man who wants to give it all up. Still, he tells people, "I love the crowds and my fans, but sometimes I just can't fight the emptiness inside." He is a man stuck outside of the Garden and looking for the way back to that personal fellowship with God.

The way to stay inside the Garden with God is through hearing the Word of God and allowing the Holy Spirit to hide it deep in your heart. Inside the Garden is the only place where we can have pure and eternal fellowship.

Also, it is in the Garden that we find *plus*-joy—the joy that gives us strength to overcome anything Satan and his world system might throw at us. By God's grace, we can enjoy the freedom and victory that was meant to be ours from the beginning. Our minds do not have to remain under the dominion of the Tree of

Knowledge of Good and Evil. We can look to the Cross and be transformed with renewed minds and healthy emotions.

Don’t Wait

Until It’s Too Late!

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INTRODUCTION

Recently on my way to work, the traffic was backed up due to a terrible accident. From a distance, I saw the lights of an ambulance. As I moved closer, I could see the wreckage of several vehicles, one of which looked exactly like my daughter-in-law's car. The possibility that someone I loved could be involved was overwhelming, and you can imagine the relief I felt when I realized it was not her car. Still, it was a horrible thing to witness.

A woman went shopping and left her eleven-year-old daughter home alone. Upon arriving at the shopping center, she heard on the radio that a little girl had been murdered in the area where they lived. Without hesitation, she turned around, drove forty minutes back to her house. When she burst into the house, her daughter said, "Boy, you're home early!" That mom was overjoyed to find her daughter alive and well.

Christians should have this same urgency to seek the lost. The hour is later than ever before. God has sent out a warning, and soon Jesus Christ will come for His Church. When that happens, our opportunities will be gone forever. For the people who were killed in that accident, their opportunity to hear the Gospel is gone. Today they are in eternity.

It is too late for believers to wrap themselves up in the things of this world. People need to see that Jesus Christ alone is the way, the truth, and the life. Let's get up from our beds of complacency and participate as called out ones, borrowed by God to reveal His life before it's too late.

Chapter One

IS ANYONE LISTENING?

When I think of what the Jewish people have gone through and will go through as a nation, I am overwhelmed. For example, in Jeremiah 22, the prophet warned Zedekiah, king of Judah, to either get right with God or expect destruction to come upon the land. Angered, Zedekiah took Jeremiah, who was God's "mouthpiece," and threw him in the dungeon. A short time later, an enemy besieged the nation (see Jeremiah 38). Frantic, Zedekiah brought Jeremiah out of the dungeon and said to him, "The enemy is coming through the walls. What do we do?"

The only words Jeremiah could have said were, "It's too late. *It's too late!*"

The enemies took Zedekiah out into an open field along with all of his children. They killed his sons, then they blinded the king by putting his eyes out. One of the last things Zedekiah saw

was the slaughter of his sons (Jeremiah 39:6-7).

Earth-Shattering Silence

Not long ago, during my private meditation, I spent time going over this passage. One minute seemed like an eternity to me. For sixty seconds I kept my eyes closed and just repeated those words, "*It's too late*. It's too late!" During that time I thought of individuals, people I meet every day who are without the Savior. I thought of the people I have preached to in churches and through television and radio, and of those throughout the world who have read our books or heard our tapes.

After God impressed me with the urgency of moments, He urged me to bring it to the congregation. I shared with them the reality of those moments. As every second ticked away, time had run out for one more soul. I asked them to stop and, with eyes closed, to consider the moments that make up each second and the seconds that become minutes, passing by while we barely notice them.

"Imagine how many souls go to hell each minute." The room became very quiet, and I said, "Think of friends and loved ones. Quietly say to yourself, as Jeremiah said to the king, '*It's*

too late!'" For one minute I repeated the phrase. "It's too late….It's too late….It's too late….It's too late….Too late….Too late!….Too late….Too late….*Too late!*….Too late….It's too late!"

Then, the room became absolutely silent.

Take those sixty seconds and magnify them by eternity. It is too late for every person who is in hell today. It's too late for Christians to be carnal. So many refuse to get right with God and do not comprehend why we are here and where we are going. Oh, how serious a time it is for every person who does not evaluate the Word of God properly. Christians need to understand the seriousness of the times we are living in.

Important Salutations

In Jeremiah 6:10, the Lord said through the prophet, "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear?" God was speaking, but nobody wanted to listen.

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isaiah 1:2-3).

When there is a *double salutation*, the words

that follow are of utmost importance. "Samuel, Samuel"; "Abraham, Abraham"; "Moses, Moses" —all of these salutations were followed by hallmark declarations from God.

Many times in the Gospel of John, Jesus used the salutation "verily, verily." These salutations should speak to us, saying, "This is important. This is very important." I have studied the "verily, verily" passages in my private devotions. Every time before I read a verse that begins this way, I acknowledge that God is saying something to me that is very important for my life.

There is, however, only one *triple salutation* in the entire Bible. It is found in Jeremiah 22:29: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD." If a double salutation indicates something of the utmost importance, can you grasp the intensity of a triple salutation? "O earth, earth, earth…." This is the heart of God crying out to His people: "O earth, earth, earth. *Hear the word of the LORD*."

During some services, this verse comes to mind as I look over the congregation and notice those who are missing. Perhaps they are more concerned with their own business than they are about being in church with the Body of Christ. They do not recognize the value of being avail-

able for the anointing in a church service. The anointing of God's presence is so deep and rich; it is lofty even in God's viewpoint. Still, these people do not discern it. Today as much as ever, God continues to cry out: "O earth, earth, earth: Hear the word of the Lord!"

A Call for Consistency

The Word of God also records many *national salutations*. Three times in Jeremiah, God addresses Israel saying, "*Return* unto me" (see Jeremiah 3:12, 14, 22). And Israel would not. Malachi 3:7 makes it clear that God's own people had no desire to return to the One who had delivered them so many times.

Among the most revealing questions posed by the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah are those found in chapter 5:29-31: "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and *my people love to have it so,* and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

God's people did not desire things as they were in the days when they served God rever-

ently and experienced His holiness. They were well aware of the corruption yet contented with their present condition, with no fervency, consistency, steadfastness, or desire to draw near to God. They were content in their complacency and were not consistent. As Christians today, we need to examine our lives before God and be consistent.

The Word of God makes it very clear that we are headed toward troublesome days. Very shortly the Rapture of the Church will come; but in the meantime, we will encounter many sharp curves, steep inclines, and dangerous precipices on the road ahead of us. As we face these perils on the road of life, we must understand that judgment will come first to the Church. The Word of God says, "The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:30-31).

Chapter Two

RECOGNIZING GOD'S VOICE

Israel so often turned a deaf ear toward the cries of God. "To whom shall I speak?" God said, but Israel didn't want to listen. No one wanted to hear. Yet God spoke tenderly to His people. In Isaiah 51:12, His words were "I, even I, am he that comforteth you." He longed to bring comfort and blessing to them.

God has tried everything to get through to His people. In Isaiah 58:1, He said to the prophet, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions." In John 7:37*a*, Jesus Christ stood up and cried out. In Isaiah 42:2-3, however, God spoke very quietly; His voice could hardly be heard, if at all.

He speaks in many ways. In Revelation 1:15, His voice is as the sound of many waters. Other times it is a still, small voice (1 Kings 19).

God will speak before He brings unbeliev-

able cataclysmic events upon the earth—and even now, He is speaking. He will only restrain His judgment for so long, then, all of a sudden, He will not hold it back any longer. The Word of God says in Isaiah 2:19 that a terrible earthquake will shake the whole earth. It will not be localized but widespread in its devastation.

Revelation 8:1 declares that as God gets ready to pour out the trumpet judgments on the earth, there will be silence in heaven for the space of one-half hour. Then, in verse 5, there will be "voices, and thunderings, and lightenings, and an earthquake" that will shake His own creation. Even then, *God does not want to judge the earth*. He has held back His wrath for thousands and thousands of years. But the day of God's wrath *will* come (Revelation 6:16-17).

Before the Tribulation on earth, the Church will be taken up in the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). All born-again Christians will be in heaven either to receive rewards or to suffer loss of everything they could have had. Many will suffer loss because they didn't understand that now is the day of deliverance, *now* is the time of salvation.*

"Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation. For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets" (Jeremiah 9:20-21).

That verse contains a *domestic salutation*. God was saying, "Your children and young men are going to perish. Mothers, start mourning; Fathers, take this seriously. Your children are going to die!" With this, I think of the six million Jews who died under the orders of Adolph Hitler. I also think of the tenth through the fourteenth centuries when the Jewish people suffered repeated persecutions. Little Jewish children would come home to their daddy and mother, and ask, "Why do they mock me at school?" As sad as it is, the answer is revealed in Psalm 44:14 where God says He would make the Jewish people a byword among the heathen, "a shaking of the head among the people."

Is it any wonder in Jeremiah 31:29 that God said, "Your fathers have eaten a sour grape, and

the children's teeth are set on edge"? Yet, God has been faithful to send His Word. He brought it to the earth. He has brought it to His people wherever they have been.

In Psalm 137, the people of Israel were in captivity in Babylon. When their enemies required them to sing one of the songs of Zion, they couldn't sing, nor could they play their instruments. Instead, they hung their harps upon a willow tree and wept. But, I also read in that psalm that they were not so concerned about God as much as they missed their homeland. *It was the land they longed for and not God!*

Here they were in captivity because of iniquity, because of a series of wrong choices, nationally and individually, and *still* they had no concern about God.

In Jeremiah 9:6, the Word of God says, "Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit." I am overwhelmed as I consider many evangelical Christians in America today who are in habitations of deceit. I thank God for all the godly Christians who love Jesus Christ. Many, however, have become so protective of their reputation in the eyes of men that when a brother is accused, they often go along with the crowd against him. But we have been called to operate

with godly character that goes alone, believing the best, in the spirit of Matthew 7 and Galatians 6:1.

Though the Word of God is clear concerning what the Jewish people have gone through and will go through, we also read that God has kept a door open. In their backslidden state, God said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jeremiah 31:3). *The door is always open*. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3). Oh, the faithfulness of God! He is *always* faithful, *always* caring.

**For a thorough study, read* The Pre-Tribulational Rapture *by Dr. Daniel E. Lewis, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Three

GOD OUR REFUGE

Psalm 62, written by King David, is a beautiful story of growth and maturity. Absalom has gone against his father in a conspiracy to take over David's throne and the kingdom. Despite many questions, David reveals a tremendous level of maturity. His heart is fixed. At this place in his life, he has learned a magnificent way to study to be quiet. He understands that communion and fellowship with God are everything to him.

As I think back through the years, I can see how God has consistently given us stillness and quietness under stress.

"In God is my *salvation* and my *glory*: the *rock* of my strength, and my *refuge*, is in God" (Psalm 62:7). This verse deals with hope, courage, and stillness. David addresses God as *Elohim Yesha*. *Yesha* means "freedom from distress." A place of refuge is a place of freedom, a

place of trust where no harm can come. Godly freedom leads to safety and allows an individual to pursue the will of God.

Jeremiah 17:14, a parallel passage, speaks of God becoming a dynamic force in our lives, emotionally and physically. Jeremiah wrote, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save (deliver) me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise." Jeremiah's eyes were like a fountain of tears, and God delivered and healed him (Jeremiah 9:1).

David knew God in spite of his distress. When he wrote Psalm 62, he was confessing, "Lord, You have given me freedom from distress, freedom from the pressure I am under. You have, indeed, healed my emotions, and I'm so grateful, Lord."

The Meaning of Glory

In the phrase "and my glory" (Psalm 62:7), the Hebrew word for glory is *kabod,* a masculine noun, implying that the reason for David's boasting was the object of his praise. "To glory" is more particularly an act of the mind and an indulgence of the emotions in either quiet repose or in an outward expression of praise derived from an inner attitude of worship. Also, "glory"

refers to that which passes through death and comes into a glorified place in the eyes, heart, and mind of God.

Every Christian has been spiritually raised from the dead and can begin to understand what Jesus meant when He prayed to the Father in John 17:22: "And the *glory* which thou gavest me I have given them." *God has given us the glory of a perfect position inside His Son!* Jesus Christ has given us the glory that covers us completely from our sins, our sin nature, and our iniquities. No matter what happens in our lives, the wicked one touches us not, in terms of our positional sanctification (1 John 5:18*b*). This is one of the meanings of glory.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our total freedom from distress and pressure, and He indeed is the One Who glorifies us.

In Psalm 32:1-2*a*, David wrote, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity." In this Psalm, David introduces his understanding of the glory of God.

In Psalm 71:15, David declares, "My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day." He understood that God's

righteousness is imputed to the believer at salvation, then imparted by receiving the Word of God. This means that we are to receive not only the robe of imputed righteousness (Isaiah 61:10), but also the mental attitude of righteousness by reflecting the nature of God through the mirror of God's Word. As we do this, we are changed from glory to glory by the operation of the Holy Spirit, who has given us the spirit of liberty (see 2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

Because of David's level of maturity he could say, "Lord, my mind is filled and occupied with You. I love Absalom and I would die for him, but I can't change what he is doing. I can't change *his* attitude, but I have set *my* mind on things above. You have raised me up, and I can completely trust You."

Resting on the Rock

The phrase "*rock* of my strength," in Psalm 62:7 includes the Hebrew word *tsur*, a masculine noun describing the material of which mountains are made (see Job 14:18). Rock is an undeniably strong substance. It can bear up under winds and storms without breaking. Here, it describes a God-given capacity to endure the winds, the storms, and all the external pressures

of Satan.

It is no wonder that Jesus Christ is called "the Rock" in 1 Corinthians 10:4. In Exodus 17, water came forth from the rock, representing the Holy Spirit coming out of Jesus Christ, the Rock (see John 7:37-38).

David also speaks of the Rock as his "refuge" (Hebrew *machaceh*), a place that protects and shelters all who go there from every single detail of life. The noun is formed from a verb that describes the action of a person fleeing for his life to find protection from his enemies. David was very familiar with the life of a fugitive or a helpless defender. So here he is, praising God for providing a "very high place" as a refuge. David's protection was not in the clefts of rock found in the Judean hills. No, his refuge was in God, whom David saw as the high place, far above all principalities and powers.

In Psalm 71:7, David referred to God as his "strong refuge"—a protection from every possible thing the enemy could do. Then, in Psalm 118:8-9, he said "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in a man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes." According to Isaiah 14:32, the poor and afflicted could always find refuge in the city of

God.

Our refuge is God, wherever we are. I love this truth so deeply.

The Matter of Trust

"Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah." (Psalm 62:8).

"Trust in him at *all* times." For a season, David's own son tried to have him assassinated. David lost his kingdom to the son who, in terms of military power, had many more people on his side. But Absalom was not nearly as strong because the Lord was for David.

The Hebrew word for "trust" is *batach*, a kal imperative. The imperative mood describes action as a result of a positive command, something that should not be avoided. The verb *batach* carries the idea of encouragement.

"At all *times*" (*eth*) speaks of that which fills my time. Also, *eth* relates to an opportunity or a season. Here it means having the proper occupation with Christ so that my time is totally filled up with trusting God.

"Ye people" is a masculine noun, the Hebrew word *am*, referring to the people belonging to a prince, or in service to a person of rank.

"*Pour out your heart* before him" (*shaphak lebab*) speaks of emptying yourself by pouring out. We can do that because God is a refuge for us. Furthermore, David said, "Not only is He *my* refuge, He is *our* refuge, *our* high place, far above principalities and powers." Our God is a shelter and a fortress, and no enemy can get in to hurt us.

Chapter Four

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

Consider some practical principles of Psalm 62:7-8. Our faith is in truth, and truth is not relative. *Truth is absolute*. For example, it was years before scientists and explorers recognized that the earth was round, though the Word of God made it clear in Isaiah 40:22: "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth." Still, people believed that the earth was flat and that it was possible to fall off the edge. Science finally caught up with the Word of God and proved that the earth was indeed round.

Truth never changes. God brings it to us as "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:17*b*-18*a*).

I thank God for the Christians who understand that truth never changes. Regardless of

how we *feel*, truth remains the same.

Breaking Barriers by His Broken Body

Jesus Christ said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," and we have peace with God by the blood of His cross, "by him to reconcile all things unto himself." We were enemies, and now we have been reconciled to God (Colossians 1:20-21).

The way for reconciliation was made when God removed the barriers between Himself and man. The barrier of *sin* was a devastating problem; so, Jesus Christ became sin for us. Then, our sins were a terrible problem; so, He bore our sins in His own body upon a tree (1 Peter 2:24).

Spiritual death was a barrier; so, He condemned Adam, died in our place, and gave us the gift of eternal life to replace spiritual death (Romans 6). *Physical death* was a barrier, so He overcame it by the Resurrection. He will resurrect us, spirit, soul, and body. In fact, the body is the only part that has yet to be resurrected. The other two-thirds—the spirit and soul—have been resurrected, according to Ephesians 2:6. He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." When we die and go to heaven, we will receive a new,

glorified body that will be absolutely perfect.

Incarnated with His Nature

When we were saved, Jesus Christ came to indwell our physical bodies, and we became temples of the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit fills us, the love of God is incarnated in us, though we are sinners saved by grace. He leads us to the right pastor-teacher in the right ministry—one where Bible study is thorough, prayer is fervent, and time is dedicated and redeemed. Being led of God to the right church is more important than business, money, or any other thing. It's too late to be in anything less than the perfect geographical will of God.

As the Word is preached and God's exceeding great and precious promises come into our hearts, we become incarnated with His divine nature. The love that was on the outside—that I so much wanted to imitate, but couldn't—is now dwelling on the inside. I have received the love that is the source of all my activity, the cause of all my effects. I have received His life, so now I can produce an eternal quality of fruit.

We begin to experience an incarnation of the Living Word when grace and faith have a marriage inside of our hearts. The promises of God

become exceedingly great as we realize that truth will never change and not a single promise will ever fall to the ground. Though we had no eternal value outside of Christ, men and women can now enter into the incarnation of God's attributes (2 Peter 1:4). Just as Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and incarnated in His perfect humanity by God the Father, we as sinners saved by grace are conceived and incarnated by God.

We receive the Word of God as we study it, love it, believe and obey it. Then, applying categories of doctrine in the details of life, the incarnation intensifies. The glory of the holy Word of God becomes a mirror that reflects who we are in Christ. We are changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the living God.

I love it! The Bible says we can experience the incarnation now. Certainly we cannot grasp all that Christ is; yet, all that He is dwells in us now. And we can experience all He is when we come out of death by the resurrection power of the Cross and say, "Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11*b*).

The "way" is reconciliation, which gives us peace through His blood. And, in 2 Corinthians 5:19-20, Jesus Christ is saying to His people, "Be-

cause My glorified body is in heaven praying for you, will you let Me borrow your humanity? You are indeed My Body on earth, formed to reveal My life to the whole world."

Jesus Christ is the Way. Not only did He give us a ministry of reconciliation, but He also gave us a way through words of reconciliation. The barriers between sinful man and a holy God have been removed once and for all. The "middle wall of partition" that once separated Jews and Gentiles has been broken down (Ephesians 2:13-15). There are no racial or social barriers between believers; we are all one in Jesus Christ, and there is no difference (1 Corinthians 12:13). That is *God's* way.

Unchanging Truth, Abundant Life

Jesus Christ is the unchanging truth. Man will change. Man will misinterpret and misappropriate truth. Man will lie about the truth because of his lifestyle. But *Jesus Christ is the Truth*. And the truth leads to emancipation. Oh, thank God, the truth sets us free!

But there is one more thing: *Jesus Christ is the Life*. He said in John 10:10*b*, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." He doesn't just give us a little

of His life—He gives it abundantly.

The *way* of reconciliation gives peace with no barriers. The *truth* emancipates us, liberating us from the law of sin and death. It sets us free from fear, insecurity, and stress. Christ's *life* gives us joy, peace, power, and a living faith in the living God that will mobilize and motivate our heart, soul, mind, and spirit. Then it begins to dwell in our bodies, and physically we can sense the elevation of resurrection power. In many cases, the pains that used to plague us will be taken away.

The Privilege of Participation

And just as reconciliation is the way and emancipation is the truth, an abundant life means participation with the very nature of God. As we participate in Christ's life and the filling of the Holy Spirit, the wealth and riches of the Word of God begin to monopolize the soul. We become partakers of heaven's vision. We can participate with the purpose of God in the Person of Christ. We can participate in the provision of Calvary. We can participate in reaching young people and adults. We can participate in making an impact on the world.

It's too late to miss the opportunities before

us to seek the lost. We have the privilege of participating with our Head, Jesus Christ, to reveal Him as the only Way, Truth, and Life.

CONCLUSION

What a wonderful thing it is to participate with Jesus Christ in a vision to win the lost. Jesus came for lost sinners. People cannot be sought unless they are lost; and if people were not sinners, they could never be saved. In God's economy, lost things are not tossed aside as worthless. They are sought for because God sees redemptive value in every person He created. He sees the precious blood of His only Son, and there lies the value. When we begin to love as God loves, we will even dig them out of a pit if we must (Psalm 40:2).

My hope is that these words have stirred you to see the necessity in the power of Christ's incarnation in these days. Needs are met when the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit motivate people into action.

Because the life of Christ is in us, it must flow out. Reveal the God Who is in you, and as you are transformed by His Word, watch how

He begins to use you to seek and save the lost—while there is still time.

Dwelling Together in Unity

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Invisible to our human eyes are a variety of armies that are warring for our attention. These armies of demons are organized with supernatural unity, according to Job 41:14-16. No air comes between them, and they cannot be separated through human effort. Their aim is to divide, to distract, and to confuse believers.

Given this reality, Christians should be determined more than ever to possess the unity that comes through the power of the Word and the Holy Spirit. Sadly, many believers feed on ashes (Isaiah 44:20). That is, they relate to each other on the basis of things that have been forgiven and forgotten. Instead of recognizing that the price for every sin has been paid through one sacrifice, they slither through the dust of gossip and deceit. The result is divided churches and broken lives.

I want to show you through these pages how the unity of God is unwavering in its char-

acter. And, if we will purpose to labor together in love, we can develop into Christians who can stand up to any onslaught from the devil through the unction that flows from the Holy One (1 John 2:20).

Chapter One

KNITTED TOGETHER THROUGH TRUTH

"And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:19-23).

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said

any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:32-33).

It is very important for believers to understand unity from the viewpoint of the Cross and from the standpoint of grace. We are hid with Christ in God in the Body (Colossians 3:3). What's more, He has promised that we will prosper even as our souls prosper (3 John 1:2).

When Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, He did not leave us with anything less than unity—the unity of forgiveness, cleansing, purging, and fellowship. There is precious unity of faith that flows from the pastor-teacher to the congregation. The power of unity is the result of resurrected life in the unity of grace.

As part of His Body, we need to guard this unity. When we grasp the significance of oneness in Jesus Christ (God is in us, we are in God, and His Word abides in us), we experience a union that cannot be severed and we all speak the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Demons are organized so that no air comes between them. Should not we, as Christians, as

the organic organism of Christ on earth, also be indivisible, serving with the same mind, the same speech, and the same love of God?

God wants us to understand that we are knit together in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The Greek text of Colossians 2:2 really brings out the principle that we are to be knit together by God Himself in love. It is only then that the Body has a unity that cannot be severed.

Filled for Unity

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we submit to one another in love. I will listen to someone who is showing me an area where I am ignorant or where I have a blind spot. "I see it, I see it," would be my response. My ignorance or blind spot is caused by not having proper information; it isn't something caused by reaction or rebellion. Therefore, as soon as I receive precise truth on the subject, I will immediately submit and get right (see Ephesians 5:21).

It is such a wonderful thing to dwell in the unity of love, the unity of faith, the unity of power, the unity of grace, and the unity of heart with God. His doctrine through the Holy Spirit produces precise knowledge that ties us together through the acknowledgment of Christ.

With this kind of response to truth that is ministered in love, we preserve the precious unity that God ordained for us to walk in.

Abundant Grace and Glory

"For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4:15).

All things *are* for my sake, and all things *do* work together for good to the glory of God. Christ cannot be divided, even though some people try to split Him up in their own situations.

Paul addressed this in 1 Corinthians. Some claimed to be of Apollos, others claimed to be of Peter, others claimed to be of Paul, and others just claimed to be the community of Jesus Christ. All of them thought that they were special and exclusive of the others. But all of them were wrong. And this time, the divisions had nothing to do with anything the leaders had done.

Each group thought they were right. Yet Christ cannot be divided. They were putting certain gifts ahead of the Giver of those gifts. These people were not humble; they were not broken before God. They did not realize or practice the truth of Matthew 20:28 where Jesus said, "I came

not to be ministered unto; I came to minister."

Chapter Two

PURPOSE TO LABOR IN LOVE

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

By this emptying of Himself, Jesus Christ was in effect saying, "All I have ever done is for you. All I wanted on this earth was to serve you. When we walk together and talk together, being a servant will no longer seem like a duty to you. Instead, you will have My Spirit and you will possess a faith that serves by love. Then, we will have a three-fold unity (see 1 Thessalonians 1:3),

and you will love and serve others as I have loved and served you."

Oh, the labor of love the people of God can demonstrate! I have been so privileged to work with many who have labored in love in God's work of faith. What is the work of faith? It is laboring in love when the crowds are small and only a few come out to your services, yet you continue to serve, obedient to your calling. You simply enjoy Jesus and honor God, going on just as if you had a great multitude serving with you.

A Purpose that Triumphs

This kind of labor brings purpose to worship and purpose to our listening. There is purpose in what we say and purpose in our fellowship. The eternal purpose of Ephesians 3:11 is evident in all that we do. We have purpose when we think. We have a purpose to receive something from the throne of God when we listen to the Word.

In Revelation 17:13, Satan's purpose is made evident. The antichrist, the false prophet, and the dragon are all of one evil mind. They live in a counterfeit unity to promote their own purposes against us. But God has prepared us to stand against them, as we stand in perfect one-

ness, knit together in His love.

Brought Together at the Cross

Picture how unity in the Body of Christ is developed. While we were God's enemies and were far, far away from Him, Jesus died for us on the Cross (Romans 5:8). We didn't love Him, and we were determined to go our own way. Yet, Christ died, saying, "I am dying to show you a love that goes beyond what you have ever witnessed or experienced in your existence."

Then, we were saved, and the Holy Spirit regenerated us. We didn't understand much at first, but the Word of God came in and we started to fellowship around it. And now, as we grow, we learn to become disciples—not of a man, but of Christ.

Slowly, through the local assembly and the pastor-teacher we develop a unity of faith. We respond to precise doctrine, and so do those around us. When any one of us fails, we rebound. Those who were wrong get right in the unity of humility. When I am wrong and someone else is right, I am ministered to, and I get right. God quickens us together by His Word.

Chapter Three

GOD COMMANDS A BLESSING

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

"It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm 133).

This is a very important psalm. "Behold" indicates that the Spirit is asking us to really focus, concentrate, respond, and reciprocate the principles about to be declared. "Good" speaks of something divinely wonderful. "Pleasant" refers to the impeccable, incomprehensible grace, love, and mercy of God that is so pleasant to live in the midst of.

We cannot afford to live outside of unity.

Ephesians 4:3 says that we must endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There are demons attacking the Body with their own brand of unity, therefore we cannot afford to be indifferent toward other believers. We cannot afford to talk behind other people's backs. This is not the time for us to live in reaction or start blaming others for what is going on around us.

There is no disunity in the Godhead. The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus Christ by bringing to our remembrance the things that Jesus has taught us (John 16:14). When He walked on earth, Jesus would not speak anything except as the Holy Spirit told Him. The Son of God would not speak without hearing from the Father through the Spirit. Each member of the Trinity has such a fixed heart toward each other.

Unchanging Oneness

What unity God has displayed throughout the ages! He has revealed such love toward His people, from the cradle of salvation until they go home to be with Him, perfected with new bodies either through death or at the Rapture. Even in sin, God deals with believers in perfect love because of the Finished Work of His Son. God

said He would never, no never, no never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Even if we make our beds in hell, He is there (see Psalm 139:8).

The Lord's message has never varied. It has always been revealed in unity.

God wants His people to be as one as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are One. Every Monday morning, I start my week off by searching my heart. I get with those who are in my office, and the first thing we consider is this: Is everything okay with me and the Body? I will not move on if there is something dividing us.

Why? The Lord will not command a blessing unless there is unity (Psalm 133:3).

God commanded light to shine, and there was light. He commanded there to be vegetation, and plants appeared upon the earth. He separated the earth from the water and He produced man from the dust of the earth. Now, He commands blessing when there is Spirit-filled, doctrinal unity.

Absolute Peace

Think about this: When Joshua and Caleb finally were allowed to bring Israel into the Promised Land, absolute peace and unity among

the nations continued for forty years. After all of the internal strife and murmuring that had gone on during their journeys in the wilderness, this was something new.

Do you desire unity in your marriage? Start by having unity with God and hide doctrine in your heart. If my heart is not one with God, then I cannot be one with my wife—no matter how sincere I am. Satan cannot do anything to a marriage that has Spirit-filled unity, the kind of unity that is produced by the Holy Spirit of grace through the lovingkindness revealed through the Blood of the Lamb.

How about the unity of turning the other cheek? I have seen this in great leaders' lives again and again. There are leaders who do more than love those who love them. They turn the other cheek to those who use them. They go the extra mile and give up their coat, even to an enemy.

Those who are united with a purpose to glorify God bring Him pleasure. They cannot be divided.

CONCLUSION

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Unity is such a beautiful thing to the heart of God. Oh, the unity of silence, the unity of thinking no evil, the unity of bearing all things, believing all things, and hoping all things. When God's people have this kind of unity, they do not look backward, and they do not look inward. No, they look upward and keep going forward.

When our souls are revived by the Word and the Spirit, we become so quickened by God Himself that we can endure all things without ever feeling worn out. Such unity brings revival, and it brings in obedience.

The unity of obedience brings about an agreement to be soul winners in our Jerusalems—our neighborhood, our towns, our cities, and our counties. It also gives us a vision to witness in our Judeas and our Samarias—our states,

our provinces, and our nations. Finally, it causes us to take the Word to the uttermost parts of the world. We agree to go out to all the world, bearing the message of the Gospel as best we can.

The unity of obedience produces a vision. This vision includes taking up our cross daily. When we take up our cross in the unity of sacrifice, God commands a blessing. Not just for today and tomorrow, but for evermore.

Each Thought, Each Step,

and Each Moment

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INTRODUCTION

It is all too easy for us to be occupied with the details of life in the busy-ness of each day. We rush through breakfast, rush the kids to school, rush to work, and then rush back home to dinner and the evening's activities. Most of the time, we keep these schedules without submitting them to God—our Creator, Redeemer, and Friend.

God, because He loves us and wants fellowship with us, desires that we follow His steps. He would have us pray over our schedules and appointments. He would have us ask others to pray with us concerning these things.

God desires that our lives would come under His divine authority, an authority that declares all things to be for our sakes, an authority that establishes and blesses individuals, families, churches, and nations.

In this booklet, we will examine the provision and protection of this authority. We can live

a life that includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit governing our every thought, our every word, our every step, and our every moment.

Chapter One

ORDERING EVERY STEP

"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:19-21).

This passage indicates that I am called to walk in God's steps, which may lead me into suffering. One of our pastors has suffered terribly in Africa. Others have suffered in Siberia and other locations. Many have been called to suffer here in America—and we should never avoid a call that might bring suffering or a call that disagrees with our flesh. The Word of God says we

should walk in His steps—and that is a very solemn statement.

The divine proposition behind such a statement is Job 23:14: He will perform what He asks us to do. Faithful is He who calls us, who also will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24). We work out what God has worked into us, and it is to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

God's Schedule

Every week I pray that my schedule will be ordered according to God's steps. To make sure what His steps are, I need to be rightly related to Him with every single thought (2 Corinthians 10:5). I have to let the Word and the Spirit guide me each step of the way (Psalm 119:133).

Has God ever postponed things that you wanted to do? Perhaps He said, "Don't go on vacation right now. It is not the time for that." Following His steps may mean putting aside my own plans. This is a part of submitting to the will of the Father.

When every step is guided by the Word, I will not be bound by iniquity, which is emotional deception through subjectivity. The only way that God can keep me moment by moment

(Isaiah 27:3) is step by step.

Right Thinking

I have to walk in God's step—not steps—but each step. I have to let Him bring each thought into captivity—not thoughts—but each thought. I have to choose to walk in step with the Word and the Spirit. God's part is that He then keeps me moment by moment.

This is how we understand what Luke 18:1 means when we are told that men ought always to pray and not to faint. When we do this, no thought will ever be outside of His way, no step will be out of His order, and no moment will ever be wasted. Certainly, we fail, but we can immediately rebound and grow in this process practically. This is God's divine proposition.

Chapter Two

THE CROSS, OUR IDENTITY

Many Christians have no idea about this way of life. They have no idea how they can experience these truths. I have heard of people who say that they ask themselves, "What would Jesus do?" when they come up against a situation. I appreciate the sentiment, but it isn't right. It makes it sound as if He is not there to do it.

God is in us to do what He asks us to do. Consider this thought: "What has Jesus done?" Every time we begin with that thought process, the burden is lifted. Christ finished the work on Calvary. And when the focus comes off of ourselves as we look unto Him, we find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

I am not self-employed. God employs me. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He wants me to have a single eye, a single thought, a single step, a single moment, a single decision (Matthew 6:22). He is inside of me to

give the power to fulfill that process.

When we go through trials, we may allow our thoughts, steps, and moments with God to fragment. That means we end up dealing with our flesh to answer the trial. We become occupied with ourselves in all the sincerity of a human proposition, with a natural commitment to come through for God. That is a system of good works, and it avails nothing.

Christ Worked In, Christ Worked Out

God employs me, but He is also my Lord, my Savior, and my Friend. The Cross is the only place where I can find my identity in each thought, each step, each moment. My identity has nothing do with genetics, past successes, or past failures. The Cross is my identity. It is no longer I but Christ who lives in me. I am crucified with Him and His life lives through me.

We need to be disciplined to go to the Cross with each thought, each step, and each moment —to be kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5).

In Isaiah 27:3, God keeps His vineyard each *moment*. He did not say each minute but each moment, "…lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day."

When you let your mind wander from God's

thoughts for just several minutes, you leave God's territorial rights. You step out of God's garden to become a target for Satan, even if you do not live in overt sin.

The moment you listen to a single negative word against another, you are living in iniquity. Your hearing is not being kept for that moment. This is why it is so important that we are careful with how and what we hear and extremely careful with what we say.

Tables of Order

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).

Tables of organization are crucial in God's plan. They represent order that comes from God. There is not a company, school, team, hospital, or church that does not have a table of organization.

Those on the staff at our church follow Christ as I do. They communicate, as they would in any corporation, about what is going on in their departments or with a certain project. They keep a schedule and tell me when they plan to be away.

We talk things over and pray to see what God wants us to do. We use the table of organization to determine whether we are doing God's will or following a human proposition to fulfill our flesh. The table of organization establishes divine order that produces humility, meekness, and discipline as the pastor follows God.

We submit to those who have the rule in love, not because of control or manipulation. God delegates responsibility and this comes through the table of organization.

Chapter Three

FAITHFULNESS—A HOLY RESPONSE

Awoman had been in a wheelchair for thirty years. She had not walked a step in all that time.

"You prayed for me, and you can see that I now walk perfectly," she said. "You gave me a list of verses on healing. You told me to read them five times a day until healing came and to include those verses in my conversations. I did that. Up out of the wheelchair I came—in front of the doctor."

The words Jesus speaks are spirit and life. And yet many people are not healed because they do not allow the Word of God to be poured into them. We need to receive the Word until those words become life. We need to hear the Word precisely, categorically, until each word becomes life to our souls.

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:20-21).

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

If we submit to God, we must also resist the devil, or our submission will not benefit us. We can go around confessing the good things God has told us and still not have victory. If we are negatively influenced by something or someone, then we need to submit to God and resist the devil, and we must never give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27).

This means we must not be around the wrong people. It means we are to submit to doctrine taught by the pastor-teacher we were called to serve under. It means we are to submit to one another in the honor system of faith.

Knowing this, we can enjoy our eternal destiny and spiritual autonomy in our believer-priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Some people teach spiritual autonomy without prefacing it with "according to God's order."

Faithfulness is our privilege and our holy response. It is a holy way to respond to the Word with each thought, each word, each step, each moment. This becomes a great privilege and it produces positive energy fields in the soul and in the body.

I have had all kinds of negative things come against me throughout my life, but in the midst of it all God has given such calmness. "How can you be so calm?" I have been asked. It is very simple: I refuse to mentally react. Instead, I choose to fellowship with the serenity of victory that is in me with the Person of Jesus Christ and the Trinity.

Total calm and absolute peace and poise are found in the positive energy that comes from above. No matter who comes against me, I will not let his negative energy invade me. No matter how cruel the attacks, I have a wall of fire around me—and so do you (Zechariah 2:5). Instead of being unprotected like a city that has no walls, a wall of doctrine surrounds me (Proverbs 25:28). I will not let the enemy invade my soul with negative energy that will cause me to react—to think about that thing that's been

nagging me a little bit today, then a little bit more tomorrow, and then a little bit more next week. If I let the negative energy in, then before I know it I will reveal that same negativity myself.

Chapter Four

OVERCOMING SELF-OCCUPATION

We are fools for Christ's sake. We have abandoned every right, every status symbol, and every option connected to the world through the flesh and the devil. We abandon our rights to think according to human reasoning through self-defense mechanisms.

When I, as a Christian, abandon self-occupation, I can only live in the occupation of Christ. I am not occupied with what people say or with what I have done. I am not occupied with my past or my future, Instead, I am occupied with hope, faith, love, and expectation, rooted in the promises that come from the living God. God's promises are the premise for the work of the Holy Spirit's operation (Galatians 3:14) in the divine nature of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4).

I can tell you tentatively what my schedule will be over the next month. But every decision I

make must go through the Cross again and again so that resurrection life will give me wisdom to either confirm or disqualify that decision. For this reason, I ask people to pray for me. I have faith in their vertical relationship with God. I need their help because I appreciate what God has said concerning five chasing a hundred and a hundred putting ten thousand to flight (Leviticus 26:8).

Don't Protect Adam

Once, on a trip, God impressed me to return two days earlier than I had planned. The Holy Spirit said, "It doesn't matter who is offended by what you do; this is what I want you to do." Now, if I had followed the pattern of what people were expecting of me, then I would have been living in self-occupation and self-preservation for others.

The most difficult times for some people come when others refuse to preserve their Adam nature mentally and emotionally. It really troubles these people, and they will say things such as, "You don't really love me!" The fact is, they are being loved more than ever. Real love will not preserve Adam but will challenge that nature.

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy [Spirit] said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

"And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

"So they, being sent forth by the Holy [Spirit], departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

"And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister" (Acts 13:1-5).

Paul and Barnabas did not go out on their own. There was fasting and prayer. People prayed for them, and the Holy Spirit sent them out. Every time we take a trip it would be wise to have people pray for us. It is not that we are involving them in our decision-making and letting our privacy be invaded. We should ask for prayer so that there will be the greatest produc-

tion and fruitfulness, so that the trip will be a great time for God. We make it a Body adventure in the humility of submission.

We submit one to another when we ask people to pray for us. We don't have to go into details; we can just say, "It would mean so much to me if you would pray for me." This is all a part of allowing God to lead each thought, each step, each word, and each moment.

Quietness is a Strength

As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7). What a great blessing it is that Satan cannot know what we are thinking. Let's say that I commit mental sins for five minutes, but I do not confess anything out loud. Instead, if I confess everything to God alone and silently rebound, then Satan has no idea about what went on.

God has given us one of the great protective programs of all times. Only God knows our thoughts afar off (Psalm 139). The devil does not.

This is why we must be more ready to hear. This is why we must be swift to hear and slow to speak, and why at times we ought not speak at all. The moment we speak, the avenues are

open and a place is given to Satan.

"I have had the worst week of my life," someone might say carelessly.

Satan hears it and tells his demon armies, "Write that down. We have a place of influence. We have a place to work. This person will always tell us what he is going through."

This is why we ought always to pray and not to faint. This is why we pray without ceasing. We cannot be on our knees all the time, but we can be in an attitude of prayer rather than talking. Oh, how Satan gets frustrated when we become still and know that God is God! (Psalm 46:10).

CONCLUSION

Has someone offended you? Do you think you have been unfairly judged? What does it matter anyway? You cannot be touched, because you are hid in the Body of Christ. What does it matter how someone feels about you? Pray. Don't talk about the issue. Be silent and pray.

There are times when counseling is bona fide. A pastor can help someone through difficult times, according to a strategy of prayer. When these matters are handled before God, they are sealed from the devil under the covering of divine guidance, and that avoids private interpretation.

It is so important that we maintain a godly attitude in every step, every thought, every word, and every moment. We can do all things with praise and thanksgiving. That is how we can reflect the very nature of the One who made us and redeemed us.

Draw near to the Body of Christ as never before. Being around one another is like being

around God. It is just like being around Jesus Christ, because we are members of His body (Ephesians 1:21-23). And as He is in heaven, so are we in this world (1 John 4:17).

Embraced by Hope

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INTRODUCTION

How many times have you said something—a faith statement—to encourage someone who was going through a rough time? "Things will work out. God is faithful!" you say, but all they can say is, "I hope so." Wearied by the valley they are going through, what they really feel is hopelessness.

As Christians, we possess something eternal, something that the world cannot grasp and we sometimes forget. What we possess is hope.

We hope for what we cannot see. Therefore, it can seem difficult to live in hope because the end of hope is unseen. But God has given us a lively hope. Our hope comes from the conviction that we were designed to have an eternal destination. It is a conviction that is based upon the Bible, the holy Word of God. That Book supplies us with faith that believes as we look upward and with hope that perceives as we look forward. When we hear the Word preached, it

stirs our capacity to face the mountains the form the valleys we go through. When we receive each of God's promises as a "done deal," guaranteed by One who cannot lie, we can rest in faith, which is the evidence of things not yet seen.

As this booklet reveals, we can live a life embraced by a fixed, lively, yet unseen hope, and allow that hope to carry us through to the end. Hope enables us to triumph over the giants of despair and defeat. In the place that was cursed forever because of sin, God has made a door of hope. Let's allow that hope to grab hold of us, take us as prisoners, and deliver us into His resting place.

Chapter One

THE EXCELLENT, PERMANENT, RELEVANT WORD OF GOD

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth….

"And God said….and it was so" (Genesis 1:1-30).

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

"The same was in the beginning with God.

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89).

Without the holy Word of God that was spoken, there would be no creation (Colossians 1:16), no people, no physical life. The world would not be fitly framed and the heavens would not declare God's glory without the Word (see Psalm 33:6). Without Jesus Christ, the

living Word of God that became flesh, we could not comprehend the power of God that holds all things together (Hebrews 1:3) or the power of His love that held Him on the Cross. Without the Holy Bible, the written Word of God, we would lack the wisdom and the hope that comes from having the mind of Christ and knowing God's heart through categorical doctrine (Psalm 119).

This is why a ministry that stands on God's holy Word must declare what God says in His Word, what God thinks in His heart, and what God does with His power. He is the Creator who has all knowledge and is everywhere present. God knows our need for all that He is, so He has given us His Word, which defines the magnitude of His omniscience, His omnipresence, and His omnipotence, as it reveals His love, grace, and mercy for us and for a world that is lost.

Inspired for Correction and Doctrine

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for

correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

At the Bema Seat, the Word will perfectly judge every aspect of the believer's life on earth. It will always do so in relationship to the Holy Spirit and His power in the believer. I am not referring to a sense of knowledge. I am speaking of the life of knowledge.

This is a very rugged pilgrimage we are on. There are many, many sharp curves, dangerous precipices, rugged cliffs, and steep inclines. Therefore, it is very important that we receive wise counsel for our daily lives, recognizing that all Scripture is inspired by God.

Sadly, much of the counsel that is given today is not inspired by God. Give me the man who knows the Book, and I will receive the life of its Author, the mind of Jesus Christ, as I learn how to live by His Word. No one can get away with fragmenting Scripture and taking it out of context with a man who knows the Book.

For Our Profit

All Scriptures—in their entirety—are given by the inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16). That means they carry divine authority in God's divine knowledge because He breathed them. The

Scriptures are profitable for application in our lives. They are profitable for doctrine, which means they define God's highway for life. They are profitable for correction, as God adjusts us and puts us back on the right highway. They are also profitable for reproof, which means God gives us a red light, a warning to stop, when we are on the wrong road. The Scriptures are profitable for instruction in righteousness, thoroughly equipping us to live down here as if we were living up there.

The Word of God is irrevocable. It is indisputable. It is historically correct. No mistake has ever been found in it. The Word of God is the benchmark for all ethical behavior. Its spiritual and moral value excel every other standard.

The prophecies in the Word of God are indisputable. Thirty-three prophecies alone were fulfilled by Jesus Christ in the twenty-four hours that led up to the time of His crucifixion. By carefully and objectively studying Scripture, any real scholar will agree that the Bible is uncanny in its correlation, accuracy, and consistency.

Forever Settled in Heaven

The three primary qualities of the Word are its excellence, its relevance, and its permanence.

The Word's excellence is a quality I love so much. It declares that five hundred witnesses on fourteen occasions saw the Lord Jesus Christ face-to-face in post-resurrection scenes.

The Word of God is relevant. It is relevant to the needs of those who are sick. It is relevant to those who need forgiveness and to those who need to forgive. It is relevant to reconciliation, to joy, to a lively hope. It is relevant to friendship and to unity in the Body of Christ.

Finally, the Word of God has permanence: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

The Old Testament marks the preparation for the coming of the Son of God. The Gospels describe God's manifestation of Christ, the living Word. The Book of Acts demonstrates the propagation of the Word. The epistles are an explanation of the Word. Then in the Book of Revelation we have the consummation of the Word.

Consider this blessed Book, the precious Word of God. Nothing could make me happier than the Word of God. I live in the relevance and permanence of the Word, in the excellence of God's character. It is the reason I can have hope.

Chapter Two

FROM A CURSE TO A BLESSING

In Joshua 6, the children of Israel had entered the Promised Land. They were clearly told not to sin because they were establishing a new nation. The reason for the drastic discipline and chastisement that came to the nation of Israel is because a new nation could not be born in the midst of the carelessness of sin.

Joshua was a tremendous leader who demonstrated clearly that his hope was in God. He received specific direction from the mouth of God, and he was faithful to instruct his men accordingly. He clearly told the soldiers not to take anything that belonged to the enemies in Jericho once they were defeated, because they and their belongings were accursed (Joshua 6:18). But Achan, a soldier in Israel's army, did not heed God's command. After winning a great battle, he coveted the spoils and stole a Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a

wedge of gold. These things he hid under his tent, but they were not hidden from God. Because of his sin, the little city of Ai defeated the great army of Israel. Joshua fell on his face and cried out to the Lord, and the Lord told him what was wrong.

Oh, how sin can hinder a family and a church. Oh, how sin can destroy the potential and possibility of a work of God—in a home, a business, a Christian school. Sin can destroy a careless pastor and his staff. Sin robs people of the treasures of the Finished Work and the happiness and joy of the lively hope we have in Him.

God commanded Joshua to stone to death Achan and his family. After that, everything about him—all of his tents and possessions—were to be burned and covered with a heap of stones. God's severe standard and policy were necessary in this case because the new nation had to be founded having respect for God's order. He disciplines seriously when something new is started. In Acts 5, as God's Church was being established, Ananias and Sapphira died because they lied to the Holy Spirit.

We must never be familiar with the Word of God. God does not wink at sin. He died for it.

When it seems the world is overtaking us and we begin to grow weary in the way, the Father longs to draw men and women unto Himself, to comfort and give hope to His people. But He will never compromise His holiness. He wants us to look to Him for a way out.

A Door Is Opened

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

"And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt" (Hosea 2:14-15).

Achan's sin occurred in the valley of Achor, the valley of trouble that was cursed. But God turned the curse into a place for blessing. To "allure" speaks of God persuading and enlarging Israel's capacity by manifesting His love for her while His people were in the desert.

"The valley of Achor I will give you as a door of hope," God was saying to Israel. "You will sing as you did in the days of your youth when you came out of Egypt. There was trouble at Ai, and I cursed that valley. But I am going to

make it a door of hope. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, will be the door."

"Hope" means that faith has already been established as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). With encouragement and confidence, hope waits for its fulfillment. In Hebrews 6:19, hope is the anchor of the soul. Hope makes faith effective as faith is hope's substance—you will not find one without the other.

No Hope for the World

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

The world has no hope. Some of your brothers and sisters have no hope. But God takes something that was cursed and transforms it into the door of hope. In every situation, we can go through that door and come out cleansed, purged, and brand-new, walking in the newness of life (Romans 6:4).

Because of the hope that embraces us, we are not passive or careless, having wandering minds. We take in everything from the Word of God as

if living this very hour depends upon it. We dogmatically receive God's messages for each of our moments.

Dogmatic Realities

Hope is not wishful thinking. It is not a sentimental tie that has you wishing something would happen. Hope is a dogmatic reality from God, who gives you joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit so that you may discover life.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy [Spirit]" (Romans 15:13).

I received a call from a man who is now an alcoholic and is dying of cirrhosis of the liver. He used to call me a lot, but he never would repent. This time he was sobbing and sobbing, saying, "I have no hope, and I am going to die this week."

The best that I could, I encouraged him with the Gospel, which he did believe. I attempted to impart to him specific promises he did not possess so he could enjoy the substance of something that would give him evidence by grace through faith in the mercy of Christ. I wanted

him to receive something he didn't deserve. I don't know the result. Faith in the Word can restore a backslider instantly, so I can only hope and pray that he received those truths before he died.

Once, a man who had slandered and gossiped against Christians called me to the hospital. He had been in a very serious car accident. Badly shaken by what had happened, he was sweating profusely, and of all people, he called for me. When I got there, I tried to take the man's hand and present him with the Gospel. He pulled away and said, "Oh, no. I have run down Christians most of my life, and now I am going to hell. I deserve hell." At that point, this man could not see the door of hope that was before him. Together, we wept and I got on my knees. Taking the authority of the Word of God, with tears of compassion, I prayed for God to reveal His grace and mercy to this man who was crying out. I prayed that he could receive hope for a new life.

Finally, he clutched my hand: "I guess it isn't too late for me." Suddenly, the inspiration and divine impartation of hope stilled his soul. He came through and recovered to become a very wonderful, helpful believer.

In our outreaches in the city, we meet so many people of such diverse backgrounds, but all with the same need: to know the Savior. On one Saturday, we met a Muslim man who lost his family and all of his possessions. He became *gloriously* saved by Christians who were soul winning in his neighborhood. He lost all he had and all that he was, but he found Jesus. He walked through the door and was embraced by hope.

Chapter Three

TRIUMPH OVER GIANTS AND VALLEYS

"And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.

"And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

"For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

"And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

"And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much.

"And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day.

"Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies" (2 Chronicles 20:21-27).

The valley of Berachah was a valley in the wilderness where Israel's army was greatly outnumbered. But God turned what at first looked like a curse into a tremendous place that was heavy laden with blessings through the door of hope. What could have been a place heavy laden with sorrows became a place where He exalted His mercy that endures forever and ever, a place where Israel was made to rejoice over her enemies.

Oh, I wish people could cast away the negativity they hold onto! At times, they are downtrodden when dealing with people, and they end up thinking the worst about their situation. I wish that they could understand that when we labor, we turn our labor over to Jesus Christ and yoke up with Him who is meek and lowly in heart. He takes the things that are troubling us and bears the load. Giving us hope, He upholds us, and we are not ashamed (Psalm 119:116; Romans 5:5; Philippians 1:20).

Sometimes we have trouble getting rid of old habits and negative thought patterns. We keep talking and talking about them, but in the valley of Berachah we can be transformed.

God Gives the Victory

"And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

"But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we" (Numbers 13:30-31).

"Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines" (1 Samuel 17:19).

Caleb desperately tried to prepare the peo-

ple for battle. He and Joshua recognized that God was with them and that He would defeat the giants of the land for them. But ten spies refused to believe: "The giants are too strong. We won't be able to win," they whined. These ten spies did not see the hope with which God would embrace them and carry them to victory. They refused to take the door of hope and march into victory.

Hope is not waiting for something to happen. It is trusting the reality that something *will* happen. In 1 Samuel 17, the valley of Elah was another place where it seemed as though Israel was destined for defeat. The giant Goliath was mocking the army, daring someone to come out and fight him. David lived in the embrace of hope and went out to destroy Goliath and give Israel the victory. There was a potential for defeat, but David went through the door of hope and triumphed for all of Israel.

Mountains Made Plains

"And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and

all the saints with thee" (Zechariah 14:5).

Sometimes we enter valleys that are surrounded by huge mountains. These mountains are trying to keep us down, trying to defeat us and hinder us. But in the midst is a door of hope. Jesus comes in and gives victory in the midst of the valley between the mountains.

These truths are permanent. Everything about that Book—the precious Holy Bible—is permanent, relevant, and excellent for our lives today.

Wandering minds that cruise through the desert of truth cannot comprehend the promised land of faith. They miss the power God has for them. They fail to live in the embrace of hope.

As people who have been totally cleansed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, we should repent of any secret sins. That is the only way we can be totally dedicated to Calvary and committed to a life that obeys God's call with fervency. Only what passes through Calvary can live. What is not of God, Calvary keeps in the grave. As it passes through Calvary, it comes out in resurrection. Otherwise, we are operating in the natural man, in religious attire, doing the best we can, trying to relate to God.

More than words, we can have the power of

God's Kingdom (1 Corinthians 4:20). Everything can be new every morning for us. Yesterday, it was new. Last night, it was new. Tomorrow, it will be new. Every time I study God's Word, it is new! Like His mercies, God can never be anything but new (Lamentations 3:23).

I have never been as happy as I am right now with Christ and the wealth of His riches. I have never been closer to God than I am right now. Why? Because everything is new each morning. I don't walk in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit.

Every day is fresh and new with God. It is so good to be in the presence of God, learning that though we have trespassed against Him, yet now there is hope concerning these things (Ezra 10:2). Instead of withdrawing and training your emotions to react, recognize that hope is the place God has designated for us to rest. And we can only rest in hope when we allow ourselves to become prisoners of hope (Zechariah 9:12), locked in God's embrace.

CONCLUSION

Don't let anyone steal your hope. I don't care if your situation appears devastating and impossible—don't let anyone destroy your hope.

We are the products of God's righteousness. We are the substance of the Father's plan for redemption. We reveal the reality of the Holy Spirit's power of resurrection. We are potential ambassadors of Jesus Christ, God's Son, as we live here on earth in His stead.

When we pray in faith, the door of hope opens to us. When we are focused on Him and refuse to let other things plague, nag, and distract us, not a single thing can break the embrace of hope.

We can be filled with hope in the midst of sickness and in times of financial need. Have hope in God's power to heal. We can dogmatically believe in the possibilities of God's divine fulfillment of our prayers through His promises.

Father, we ask that you solidify these things in

our hearts in Christ's name and according to the au - thority of Your integrity. With this, put a faith period of divine declaration at the end of these statements. Amen.

Embraced by

the Anointing of Love

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

"None eye pitied thee…but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born….And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee…*Live!*" (Ezekiel 16:5-6).

Recently, a great servant of God went home to be with the Lord. Mother Teresa served people who are outcasts, the "offscouring" of the earth. The deplorable physical condition of those people could be compared to the wretched spiritual condition of God's people, Israel. To this nation, viewed as loathsome untouchables, God pronounced through the prophet Ezekiel, "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, *thy time was the time of love*" (Ezekiel 16:8).

When asked how she was able to continue day after day with such compassion, Mother Teresa's reply was simple: "Each body I touch is

the body of Christ." We have been called to reveal light in darkness, and we need a touch from heaven. Knowing the love of God and trying to manifest that love is one thing. But knowing God who *is* Love permits Him to operate freely in us. Remember, the hand that is heavy upon a soul convicted of sin is the same hand that gathers up the young lambs and embraces His redeemed ones (Song of Solomon 2:6).

As you ponder this message, stake a claim for His compassion and tender mercies. Ask God for His anointing, His special presence, so you can go where He leads with full assurance of hope to the end (Hebrews 6:10-11).

Chapter One

DO YOU KNOW WHO LOVES YOU?

Have you ever wondered what eternal security means? God gives unto us eternal life, and no one can pluck us out of God's hands (John 10:28). Scripture says that the Lord upholds us if we fall (Psalm 145:14); that though we fall, we are not utterly cast down (Psalm 37:24); and that "he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12).

But—! (Here's the "but.") It is my conviction that the knowledge of eternal security can produce a false profession. Let me repeat that: A person who holds to the knowledge of eternal security can have a false profession if he does not understand how to be certain that he has eternal security.

The apostle John used the word "love" forty-six times in his first epistle! He said, "We know that we passed from death unto life, because we

love the brethren" (1 John 3:14*a*). He said, "We *know* it." In other words, if I love the brethren with God's love, I will know for certain that I am saved and eternally secure.

Yet, one of the most insidious counterfeits in the world today is human love in the Church of Jesus Christ. Human love ends up in division, perversion, gossip, and slander. It ends up in negative reaction and in rendering evil for evil.

God's love always ends up at the Cross of Calvary. Furthermore, God's love always takes us through the Cross by the Holy Spirit. He anoints us and sheds abroad His love in our hearts, strengthening us by it (Romans 5:5-6).

Are You 'Pitiful'?

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous" (1 Peter 3:8). We are to love one another as brethren, as God's people should love, and to be "pitiful" (Greek: *eusplagchnos*). That means we are to have good, healthy emotions.

So here is the mandate: Love as brethren, have God's love, have good emotions, and be courteous. "Not rendering [infection for infection, or penetration of] evil for evil, or railing for

railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:9).

Then God says in verse 10, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." If you would have good days and find life in the future, then refrain your tongue from evil and speak no guile.

From Bad to Worse

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren…" but, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:14-16).

Now, are you ready for this? There are Christians who are faithful church-goers, yet they hate people. They would never confess that, but it's true. Some deliberately try to cause trouble while others may only be angry with another person. But the Bible says that if you are simply angry with a brother, it is as though you killed

him (Matthew 5:21-22). Instead of hating, rendering evil for evil and railing for railing, we are called to inherit a blessing when people hurt us.

A Very Special Love

"He that hath my commandments [of love], and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). The Lord is saying, "Listen! He who knows the commandments of love and keeps them by grace through faith is a person who loves me, and the Father specially loves him. I will love him and manifest myself to him. I will make myself known to him intimately, personally, and in a unique way." This is the Word of God regarding this subject of love.

It is so important that we do not hold one thing against anyone. We may disagree, but we shouldn't have a single thing in our hearts against anyone. Instead, we have God's love.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." It continues:

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begot-

ten Son into the world, that we might live through him." And, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:7-10).

Why did God spend so much time on this subject? He said, "This is love, not that you love Me, but that I have loved you, and sent My Son to be a Mercy Seat for your sins."

I wouldn't do anything to hurt my wife, my children, their spouses, or my grandchildren. By the grace of God, I wouldn't purposely do anything to hurt men and women of God because of one thing: *I do not want to hurt love*. I wouldn't say or do anything knowingly or willingly—though I fail—that would hurt God's love.

Chapter Two

CALVARY: THE MEASURE OF GOD'S LOVE

Consider this: *God sent His Son*. Can you picture the wounded hands and wounded feet? The Father sent His Son who went willingly to a cross. When He cried out from that cross, "Father, forgive them," the Lord was teaching us that His love is not human love. His love is not natural. His love cannot be measured by anything we have done for Him or by what we have said to Him.

Calvary is the measure of God's love. His love is measured by the Cross. His love is measured by mercy. His love is measured by grace. His love is measured by His sacrifice. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). Because of God's love, there should be no pettiness among us.

In 2 Corinthians 4:2, Paul was saying, "I

have not spoken deceitfully, but openly, and I have manifested the truth."

Then he said, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts," that we might see the light of the glory of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Precious Treasure in Vessels of Clay

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). The treasure we have is what God is, and God is love. His love is in earthen vessels, and we have this treasure within every Blood-bought Christian.

It isn't any wonder that the apostle Paul said in Galatians 1:15-16, "It pleased God, who separated [sanctified] me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen…."

He said, "Here I was on the road of Damascus, responsible for the death of Christians, and it pleased God to sanctify me! Here I had chosen to kill Christians, fight the Church, blaspheme, and bring injury to them. Yet, Almighty God beautifully and gloriously "revealed his Son in

me." By that, Paul meant "God revealed His love in me."

That is why Paul, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). We have this treasure in an earthen vessel.

Oh, as you begin to dwell on this treasure, consider everything it has accomplished. I was thinking of a man I met on visitation. He was an arrogant alcoholic. As I stood before him, God brought a tremendous love into my heart toward him. I simply wept, so broken, and I said, "God loves you, sir." He accepted Jesus Christ and became a great Christian and a fantastic soul winner.

The treasure of love went from the visitor into a man's heart, and the Holy Spirit shed that love abroad. The love of God became a treasure in his heart. The anointing of love broke the yoke.

Breaking the Vessel

A dear friend wrote to me recently. She said that after walking with the Lord through years of personal trials and heartache, she has been diagnosed with an especially virulent cancer. She said, "I'm doing everything I can to stay healthy,

but there is one thing I have going for me throughout the day and throughout the night. In my heart I say over and over, 'God loves me! God loves me! God loves me!' And I know that He does." This woman has a treasure in her earthen vessel.

The Word of God says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be [revealed] in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:8-11). So death works in Spirit-filled Christians, that life may be given to those who do not have God's love.

There's such a difference between God's love and human love. Human love is regulated by circumstances, but God's love uses circumstances to reveal who we are. He uses marriages and friendships. He even uses our failure, though He doesn't cause it. He uses failure to reveal who we are—whether we are easily irritated, reactionary, negative, or careless with our confession. At times, God will test us to see if the

wrong kinds of words come out of our mouths. When we fail to refrain our tongue from evil and from speaking guile, we reveal the flesh instead of the treasure.

Broken by a Plan

God will ordain circumstances to reveal the treasure. Those circumstances are designed to deliver us to the Cross of Calvary; and as we are delivered to that Cross, *out comes the Treasure*! Out comes the One who died for the sins of the whole world. Out comes the love of God, pouring through the Holy Spirit. Out comes a love that loves us until the end (John 13:1).

When that love comes out and God uses us to love others, then we know we have passed from death unto life. We know it's true because we love the brethren. We do not render evil for evil. We do not render railing for railing: but, contrariwise, blessing. We were called to inherit a blessing, and the blessing comes through a manifestation of God's love.

Chapter Three

THE IMPORTANCE OF A MANIFESTATION

The manifestation of God's love destroys every stronghold the devil has. A manifestation simply means to make visible God's nature; to make apparent; to demonstrate by reality. The manifestation of God's love destroys resentment, bitterness, and hate. How can that happen?

According to 1 Corinthians 13, love suffers long and is kind. It envieth not. It vaunteth not itself. It is not puffed up. It does not behave itself unseemly. And think of this: *Love seeks not its own*. It is not easily provoked and thinks no evil but always rejoices in the truth. Not only that, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. *God's* love never fails.

This is how we know we're saved: We know we are saved when we have a godly love, one

for another, that goes beyond sin, beyond failure, beyond hate, and beyond resentment.

When Love Is Hurt

One of the most devastating things parents can go through is this: after they have been faithful to rear up their children in love the best they knew how, to feel that their children don't love them. That must be the most difficult thing in the world. The *greatest* thing is to have a family that does love you.

Sadly, many married people know that God's love is not in their marriage. Because there is no Cross in the relationship, one partner will begin to "seek his own." But our Father sent His only Son to a rugged cross so we could know His love. It takes having the Cross in your life to suffer long and to be kind. It takes the Cross to believe all things, to refrain from thinking evil, and to bear all things.

Love hopes all things. If you have hope, it means you don't look inward or backward, but forward and upward. Hope.

And then, love endures all things. No one can endure all things. No one, that is, unless Jesus Christ is filling him with the Holy Spirit. By the grace of God, if the love of God fills us,

then we will believe the best, think no evil, bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and we will endure all things. That is a supernatural manifestation of God in action, and we begin to reveal God's nature through an anointing.

From Revelation to Manifestation

It is so important for everyone to have a *revelation* of Jesus Christ's love. It comes as we are being delivered. One of the greatest ways to help your self-image is to shut out every distraction and let God give you a revelation of the pain, the agony, and the suffering that Jesus Christ endured for you. God wants to reveal His love in you because you are very special, and God has set apart His people for Himself (Psalm 4:3).

To have a revelation of God's love inside of you is the sweetest, most wonderful thing. It is as though *anything* can happen now—Anything! You are secure in the love that is in you because you have a revelation of Calvary working within. Therefore, the first thing we need is a revelation.

The second thing we need is *inspiration*, where God takes something simple and breathes upon it. God can breathe upon a smile or upon a handshake when it's done in the love of God. In-

spiration means that when I read something from the Scriptures, I have no familiarity with truth at all. The Word is real. It is precious. It is relevant. It is permanent. It is God. This is inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16).

The next thing that is so beautiful is *illumination*. When God illuminates us, He shines His light in our heart. When He illuminates His truth, the truth becomes our reality, along with understanding so we may actually experience it (2 Peter 1:19-21).

After this, there is *meditation*. In 1 Timothy 4:15, Paul urged Timothy to meditate on the things he was taught and to give himself wholly to them. The Greek word for "meditate," *meletao*, means to take thought for, attend to, care for, exercise, and practice. In application, it means to go over a specific truth or category repeatedly and to enjoy it until it controls your feelings. Meditation can be reflecting silently or rehearsing verbally God's Word in God's way.

I want you to think of the promises for those who meditate on the Word of God. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly....But his delight is in [doctrine, the Word] of the LORD; and in [God's] law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a

tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither"—he will be healthy—"and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:1-3).

Joshua would not allow this Word, this doctrine, to depart out of his mouth but that he would meditate therein day and night and plan to do all that was commanded (Joshua 1:8). Meditation is wonderful when it is done in the Word of God.

Following meditation we have *application*. The Word of God says in Psalm 90:12, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"—so that we may apply our hearts unto instructions and our ears to hear words of knowledge (Proverbs 23:12).

Finally—in this process of God where He demonstrates His love to me, in me, through me, and out of me—we come to the *manifestation*. It means that we are to let all of 'Who God is' come forth in the anointing and go through us and be revealed by us. What kind of Christianity do we have when we do not manifest it?

Establish Your Focus

Do not take an event and focus on it. Rather than focusing on the past or on the details of life,

focus on Christ and receive an anointing for the event you are facing. So much counseling is spent focusing upon events. Sometimes that is important and understandable. But rather than focusing on events, let's focus on the love of God and the life of God. Focus on His grace, His power, and His purity. If our hearts are fixed, and we are focused on Him, then we will experience a manifestation of God's anointing of love.

CONCLUSION

It is only when we fix our gaze on the Savior that we can understand the depth of His love for us personally. From revelation to manifestation, if we have this process operating in us, we will see good days! But, without a personal revelation of God's love as the motivating premise for our behavior, we will never have the right kind of love for the brethren or for the lost.

God wants us to take our focus away from people, events, and self. Our focus is to be fixed on Christ, and He wants to see the purity of His love manifested through us. Knowing love is one thing; the key is in the manifestation. And although a Christian will never lose the anointing he received at salvation, he may lose the manifestation of the anointing in the midst of personal problems.

Our heavenly Father desires that we would have a revelation of the love that sent Jesus to a rugged cross. Then, through inspiration, illumi-

nation, and meditation, we will apply the light of truth so we can again manifest Christ as we are embraced by an anointing of love.

Esteeming God's Presence

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INTRODUCTION

"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (Exodus 33:13-15).

Esteeming God's presence is the key to some of the greatest things that could ever happen to us, individually or corporately. Moses was determined not to move unless God's presence was with him, and the Lord honored his request (Exodus 33:17). David and Jonathan were determined to always have the presence of God between them (1 Samuel 20:42).

For a moment, think only of God's presence. He promised us, in Hebrews 13:5*b*, that He would never, no never, no never leave us nor forsake us. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus said that He would

be with us always, "even unto the end of the world." Every Christian, once he has been saved, regenerated, and sealed by the Spirit, has the promise of God's presence.

As you consider these thoughts, you will begin to cultivate a high esteem for the Person of Jesus Christ. As you do, you will stop limiting the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78:41). There's nothing you can do to qualify to receive God's provision; you simply have to trust in His character to implement all that He is, in your life.

Chapter One

ONE LIVING FAITH

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, *one faith*, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:4-7).

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

There is great value in understanding the "one faith" of Jesus Christ. From these verses, we see that every person is given common grace and a measure of faith. Every Christian has saving grace. But it is crucial for each of us to understand the power of *one faith*—a faith that

comes from hearing the Word of God, trusting God, and highly esteeming His presence.

This faith is not the faith of the atheists, who believe there is no God. It is not the faith of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who say that Jesus Christ is a "little" god, not *the* God. The faith of Jesus Christ isn't the faith of a hard worker who trusts in natural things. This one faith is a faith that grows from a grain of mustard seed, from the incorruptible seed of the Word of God.

In His presence is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). The angel of His presence saved the people of God (Isaiah 63:9). The power of the Lord's presence was there to heal (Luke 5:17*b*). The key to God's manifestations of this faith lies in having high esteem for His presence.

The Meaning of His Presence

What does it mean for us to have God's presence? According to Exodus 33:13-17, we see that through His presence, God shows us His way, we find grace, and He gives us rest. This is the presence of living faith. It is the presence of a God who is waiting to be gracious to us, of a God whose mercies endure forever. It is the presence of a God who loves us to the end, of a God whose forgiveness can never remember

anything we've done in the past, who won't stop working in us until He has made us perfect.

Moment by moment, we need to esteem God's presence. Coming to His throne of grace and mercy, with dignity and honor, we can count on His presence. In any state we are in, we can come boldly to this throne to obtain mercy and find grace to help in our time of need. God can be present with us *now* because He imputed His righteousness to us at the point of salvation; our faith was counted unto us for righteousness (Romans 4:5).

When His presence is available, why would anyone want to experience the presence of the old sin nature with all that it produces? Why would anyone want to experience the presence of someone who is alienated from God—because of indifference, incompatibility, and reaction—when he can have God's presence?

Being Still, in His Presence

In Psalm 46:10*a*, God said, "Be still, and know that I am God." He could very well have said, "Be still, and know that I am *present*, as I was with Elijah. I may not be in the earthquake, the thunder, or the wind, but I will be with you in my still, small voice."

Regardless of how you are feeling right now, it is crucial that you begin to witness and practice the presence of God. Have high esteem for His promises, for His indwelling Spirit, and for His Word. When this happens, you will be transformed by God's presence in the operation of love—without ever being self-conscious. Whenever you experience His presence, you will have a beautiful understanding of one living faith.

Chapter Two

WALKING ON WATER

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca [weeping] make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from *strength to strength,* every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Psalm 84:5-7).

I must execute a vision in order to go from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). I must not wait for strength or for faith to start a ministry. I must not wait for faith to start a vision. God's Word makes it possible to have a wonderful vision that is realistic, objective, and true. As I step forward in the vision, God will give me the strength and the faith to accomplish it.

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that dili-

gently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). In this beautiful passage, God makes a great promise: "You can please me with your faith, but you must believe that I am who I *say* I am: present with you. If you diligently seek me, I will reward you. You will find grace, and I will show you my way. My presence will be with you, and you shall find rest. Then you will begin to have high esteem for my promises."

His Presence in the Storms

Between what I desire God to do in my life and where I am today, I must give space for a living faith to work. I must give space for God to perform a miracle, space for God to give power and strength.

In Matthew 14:25-31, the disciples were on a ship that was being tossed by the waves in the midst of the sea. The wind was contrary and they were fearful. "And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear."

To the disciples, Jesus appeared to be a ghost, and they were fearful. But He said, "Don't be afraid; I am present! I am present to give you

grace, to show you my way, and to give you rest."

Peter said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Jesus said, "Come." At that moment, Peter gave space to God's grace, to a living faith, and to God's strength for the way. Without self-consciousness or fear, Peter gave a place for God to intervene as he began walking to Jesus, on the water.

Then the wind came upon him and the waves grew rough. As he took his eyes off the Lord, Peter became fearful and began to sink. Still, he knew enough to cry, "Lord, save me!" and the Lord saved him. But before the Lord saved Peter, He dealt with Peter's faith.

Jesus always dealt first with faith. Let me illustrate it. In Matthew 8:23-26, the disciples followed Jesus onto a ship. After going out to sea, a great storm arose and the waves began to fill the boat with water. Yet, Jesus was on the boat, *asleep*. "And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."

Before Jesus rebuked the storm, He rebuked the *disciples*. He rebuked them because they didn't have that one living faith: the faith of the Lord

Jesus Christ, faith to trust Him, faith to rest.

In the midst of the storms of our lives, Jesus speaks to us: "Don't be afraid. I am present to give you grace, so you can find My way. I am present so that you can find rest."

Believing the Word

A Roman centurion came to Jesus and said, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him" (Matthew 8:6-7). Jesus was ready to go to the centurion's home, but the centurion stopped him, saying, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matthew 8:8-10).

The centurion said, "Just speak the word." He esteemed God's presence; he esteemed the Word of God. And, of course, the servant was healed: "And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go

thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour" (Matthew 8:13).

In Luke 8, a woman with an issue of blood touched the hem of Jesus' garment. "And Jesus said, Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45). Peter said, "We have all touched you." But Jesus said, "No, you haven't; just *one* person touched me here today. And that one person had the one faith—a single-eyed faith—to trust me and to touch me."

The Scriptures describe her response: "And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And [Jesus] said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" (Luke 8:47-48).

Jesus turned to this woman and said, "Your faith has made you whole." She had a high esteem for His presence and she was healed.

Chapter Three

LEAVE SPACE TO TRUST HIM

Esteem God's presence. There, grace, mercy, forgiveness, and power are always with me. In His presence, there is power over demons, power over the old sin nature and power over circumstances. He says, "I go with you for one reason: to deliver you." God said to Jeremiah, "And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee" (Jeremiah 1:19).

He is not with us so we can be religious. He is with us to bless us, as He was with Abraham: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee" (Hebrews 6:13-14).

We must begin to realize that everything we do must be done by the one faith that leaves a

space to trust Him, a space for His presence, and a space for His promises. As a person exercises, he becomes stronger. In the same way, as a person loves, he receives more love. As he has compassion on others, he receives more compassion. Even as a person takes on a vision, he receives more strength to go on to the next thing. But, the one who doesn't have a vision loses even the strength that he had for his present task.

We must leave space for God's presence, for His miracles. God is present to work in our lives to reveal the manifestation of His resurrection power, the compassion of His nature, and the precious provision of His promises. He wants us to highly esteem His presence. This is why the six-winged seraphims cried to one another: "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). The angels esteem God's presence.

Throughout the Bible, whenever Christians esteemed God's presence, they were occupied with Christ. They did not focus on anxiety, insecurity, lust, fear, or people's faults. They focused on the presence of grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, and power. They focused on the Word of the living God, and it produced a living faith in them. It is so important, in the opportunities we

have in this life, that we wake up every day with His presence and continue to meet Him moment by moment.

Jesus Meets Us Where We Are

In John 21, the disciples were backslidden. They had already witnessed Jesus in His resurrected state. Yet, Peter said, "I go a fishing," and the others responded, "We also go with thee" (John 21:3). In their fear, discouragement, and insecurity, Peter led them *all* back to fishing.

They caught nothing that night. Their fishing expedition had failed. But, in the presence of God's love, Jesus was there waiting on the shore. "Children, have ye any meat?" Jesus called out. "They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (John 21:5-6). Then John realized who it was on the shore and told Peter, "It is the Lord" (John 21:7).

Jesus wasn't concerned over the disciples' backslidden condition. He was concerned with only one thing: showing Peter and the other disciples the purpose of His presence by feeding them fish when they were weary and by fellow-

shipping with them, even after they had gone back fishing.

After Jesus fed the disciples on the shore, He took Peter aside and recommissioned him to preach the gospel. He wanted Peter to know that sin could never hinder God's grace, even after Peter had denied Him three times (John 18:17-27); negative reaction couldn't stop God's love, and negative presumptions couldn't restrict God's mercy. Where Peter's sin did abound, grace did much more abound (Romans 5:20*b*). He would never, never leave Peter, and He will never, never leave us.

In Isaiah 5:4, God asked Israel, "What could have been done more to my vineyard [Israel], that I have not done in it?" During their seventy years of captivity in Babylon, the Lord said to His people, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). Under the New Covenant, God would remember their sins no more (Hebrews 8:12); He has cast them behind His back (Isaiah 38:17). God speaks in human terms here, likening Himself to us who only see what's in front of us.

Still, many of the Israelites cast the Word of God behind them (Psalm 50:17)—where their

sins were—and, because they didn't set God's presence or His Word before them, they were overpowered by their sins.

Hebrews 11:37 makes reference to believers who were "stoned,…sawn asunder,…slain with the sword." "Destitute, afflicted, tormented," they were rejected and hated. "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise" (Hebrews 11:39). These saints never saw the fulfillment of the promise, but they had faith to obtain a good report. They highly esteemed God's presence.

Recently a man in New England told me, "My mind hasn't been the same since I was in a car accident, but I love Jesus more than ever. I love Him with all my heart."

I know a woman who reached into a fire to rescue her son. She was seriously burned on one side of her body, and her face still bears some of the scars. Though her son has been an alcoholic for fifteen years, this lady will not give up on him. "I claimed a promise for my son and he *will* get saved," she told me. "One day, my son will love me." She is trusting in the character of God's presence.

If you have a vision, I hope you realize that you don't have to wait to receive strength for

your task. Take on your task without strength. Respond to God's promises in faith and give God an opportunity to provide strength in weakness. When we seek God diligently and esteem His presence highly, He will reward our faith. Sometimes it is faith with patience (James 1:3-4), and sometimes it's spontaneous faith. Whatever the case, God will come through, keeping His promise. Everything He has said shall come to pass.

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Don't let your faith become shipwrecked. Don't ever cast away that one faith that esteems His presence. God is waiting to be gracious to us. He is waiting to bless us in our vision. He wants us to have power over sickness and disease. He wants us to have power over ourselves, over our minds, and over our friendships. God wants us to have the "faith unfeigned" of 1 Timothy 1:5, a wholehearted faith that overcomes the devil and makes us winners in every round of life as we go forward in His presence.

CONCLUSION

We must exercise faith by esteeming God's presence. Our church needs room to grow. We need a bigger building, and we need to believe God for it. We want to have missionaries in 220 countries and, at the same time, remain thorough in our ministries to the local area. We are not going to wait for natural strength to do it; we are going to go on without strength.

In our weakness, we're going to walk on the water of faith by esteeming God's presence. And as we go, God will give strength for the journey. We don't need strength to keep from having a burden; rather, we need *God's* burden so we can receive strength to bear it.

As we esteem His presence, God will teach us about the diversity of His faith. It is a faith that can bring healing, a faith that can bring deliverance, a faith that reveals God before the fallen angels and before His holy angels, to

show what happens when a man completely trusts in His character and esteems His presence regardless of the circumstances. It's the faith that comes from God's nature, from His presence, and from His provision. We can trust our heavenly Father wholeheartedly, and we can please Him as children of one living faith, knowing that He will always reward those who diligently seek Him.

Eternal Life Victory

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9).

John was a prisoner on the isle of Patmos. Church history records that his situation there was far more terrible than most of us can imagine. But notice what he said: "…in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, [I] was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God…." There were no lengthy accounts of the deplorable conditions and unbelievable torture that he miraculously endured. Furthermore, every introductory phrase in Revelation chapter 1 revealed an attitude of overwhelming victory. How could this be?

Every Blood-bought child of God desires to live this way—a faithful and resilient overcomer in the face of any adversity. Then "reality" hits.

Like Job, we may start out trusting God, "bearing up" under pressure, until external forces cause us to struggle. Though we try to muster up the strength, peace, and confidence we know about so well, these have not yet become our experience. But there is a provision. The message in this booklet will shed light on our situations so we may take hold of the eternal life victory that is ours.

Chapter One

THE TESTIMONY OF A DISCIPLE

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

"(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1-3).

Let's look at verse 1: "That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have *seen* with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have *handled*, of the Word of life." The apostle said three things: We have heard with our own ears; we've witnessed it

with our own eyes—we've looked and gazed upon Him; and, our hands have handled of the Word of life.

By now, possibly 106 years of age, the apostle John really knows how to express these things. In this passage, he says so beautifully, "Remember: This isn't Buddha—and it isn't Mohammed. I have seen Him, personally. I've walked with Him. I've talked with Him. I've prayed with Him. I've won souls with Him. I've touched Him. I've handled Him. *This* is Jesus Christ."

If he were speaking to us today, John would say, "I would never lie to you. This isn't, as the pseudo-intellectual know-it-alls say, a series of lies manufactured by a group of Jewish men who want to defend their experience. That's *not* what I'm about."

"Furthermore," John might add, "I want to establish this as fact: I'm over 100 years old. In 96 A.D., I was delivered from the isle of Patmos. And, I want you to realize one thing—I will reemphasize this because it is so crucial to the authenticity, inspired validity, and absolute accuracy of the Word of God: I heard Him with my own ears!" (cf. Revelation 1:9-10).

This apostle described his experience as

Jesus' disciple in 1 John 1:1. “We have seen Him with our own eyes and we've looked upon Him; that is, we gazed upon Him on many, many occasions. Our hands have handled of the Word of life.”

What makes this passage so unique is that John calls Him 'the Word of life'. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God….And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory…)” (John 1:1 and 1:14*a*).

“For the life was manifested…”(1 John 1:2). Buddha cannot say that. Mohammed cannot say that. Yet this life was manifested visibly.

“We have seen it...”—he's going to be repetitious. “We have seen it, and bear witness.” In other words, “We're going to give a testimony of exactly what we have witnessed, to show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.”

That is a magnificent, consistent, ever-expanding revelation of the practical and fundamental meaning of discipleship: I go to God; He answers my prayer; I fellowship with Him in the midst of darkness; and I find Him, hidden in the treasures of darkness.

I talked with Him four decades ago, and four decades later, our ministry is in all the world. I wasn't a pastor—not even a Sunday School teacher—that day at Worthly Pond. A vision comes. The love of God floods into the car. I stop. Get out of the car? I can't. I'm overwhelmed. For over an hour I am unable to speak. And the Holy Spirit pours out a vision to my heart.

First He says, "I want to use you for others, and I'll give you a gift in preaching. I'll give you a gift in teaching, and I'll give you a gift in discipling men. And if you honor Me and obey Me, I will raise up churches."

I had no idea what He meant, because I was not even a pastor.

Number two: "I'll raise up ministries to go into all the world." Please understand, I hadn't heard the Great Commission taught more than three times in my life. (And when I did, it was dry.)

Number three: "You'll have Christian colleges" (plural!).

It sounds like a pipe dream.

Number four: "You'll have Christian schools,

multiplied throughout the world."

Number five: "You'll have talk radio." As it was in those days, there wasn't one Christian talk show—not one. When it happened, we were the second in the world and the first overseas.

Number six: "You'll broadcast on TV."

Number seven: "You will be persecuted heavily."

Number eight: "You'll be anointed for your ministry." (Every Christian is anointed, cf: 1 John 2:20, 27a).

And number nine: "Your ministry will endure permanently."

And the Holy Spirit comes. I don't know why. He did it because He chooses the least—the base things of the world, the things that are not (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). He did it so that no man could glory in his flesh, that no man could glory about his personal education. Every man must glory in Christ, and Christ alone, becoming established in what the Lord said in John 15:5*b*, "without me ye can do nothing."

The Manifestation of Life

John said, "For the life was manifested, and we…shew unto you that eternal life." He said,

We're making known and making visible through our mortal bodies what we have witnessed and received, and now we're going to show it to you! We're going to show you what we've learned."

It's like a young teacher, just coming out of college and going to teach school. She's finally got her degrees, and she goes into a classroom as a teacher for a certain grade. She's "showing her stuff."

That's exactly what Christianity is all about. Christianity isn't being saved for fifteen years and then withdrawing into a shell. Christianity isn't withdrawing into your sickness, or withdrawing into your 'self' or your needs. Christianity is showing, manifesting—day in and day out—what you have seen and received, what you have understood and known, and what you have experienced.

The apostle said, "We shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father [who planned it], and was manifested unto us." He kept using that word *manifested*. "That which we have seen..." (repetition) "...and heard..." (repetition) "...declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus

Christ" (1 John 1:2-3).

We're All in the Same Boat

What we've seen and what we've heard, we are declaring, and the purpose of our declaration (of what we've seen and heard) is that you may have fellowship with us.

The word *fellowship* speaks of drawing near. John said, "that you may draw near...," near the things that we've heard, the things that we've seen, and the things that we have to say. "That you may draw near...," that you will put yourself out and do whatever it takes to draw near to a corporate fellowship.

You know, you can have it any way that you want it. If you want to be indifferent, go right ahead! But there are consequences for those who want to be reactionary or passive, always expecting everyone to do for them what only God can do.

John was saying, "I want you to know that the whole purpose of this is that you may have fellowship with us." Fellow-ship: Two people in the same boat! Five people, ten people, fifty people in the same room. A fellowship. A fellowship with *love*, a fellowship with *life*, and a fellowship not only with love and life, but also with *light*.

So, our fellowship is based upon the three “L's”: love, life, and light.

And that's an interesting thought this morning. In God, there is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). That means that I could be in the darkest situation in my life and there would be no darkness at all because of my faith in the Light, in love.

Chapter Two

LIFE: EVERLASTING OR ETERNAL?

If I'm hated, rejected, resisted, and lied about, my fellowship is in the boat of love and light. And no matter what I am challenged with, I'm not fellowshipping with a life that has a beginning and an ending; but it is life that has *no* beginning and *no* ending.

Now, the average Christian cannot comprehend this—they don't even begin to. They understand very well the life that *has* a beginning and *no* ending. It's called *everlasting life*. They give and take counsel around that life. They talk about it. They enjoy it—a life that has a beginning and no ending.

A life that has a beginning and no ending will always give you a reference point to the process of things as they go on in time, since time began. But, *eternal life* has *no* beginning and *no* ending.

Billions of years ago in the Eternal Convention of heaven, God ordained eternal life, knowing that some would accept Christ. That is the life that God gives us. "These things have I written unto you that you may have eternal life, and the life is in the Son. And I give you eternal life, and no man shall pluck you out of my hand" (John 10:28). It's a life that has no beginning and no ending.

The unsaved person has a life that has a beginning but no ending; and, the carnal Christian, though he is saved, experiences a life that has a beginning but no ending: everlasting life. But, the true Spirit-filled believer who is occupied with Christ, having the love of God shed abroad in his heart; the one who keeps on receiving the abundant life, walking in the light as Christ is in the light—*that* Christian has a life with no beginning and no ending: eternal life.

The Quality of Eternal Life

Somebody came to me for counseling recently, and I began the session by saying, "I have a question to ask you. I will let you express yourself to me so that you have the privilege of being loved and heard. You can express yourself and vent anything you want to. But," I said, "do

you want me to counsel you in everlasting life or do you want me to counsel you in eternal life?"

This person replied, "I don't understand what you mean."

I said, "Well, do you want me to counsel you in a life that has a beginning and no ending, and use Scriptures for that, which will do no good at all? Or, do you want me to counsel you in a life that has no beginning and no ending?"

"I still don't know what you mean!" They couldn't grasp it.

"For as the Father hath *life* in himself; so hath he given to the Son" (John 5:26*a*). This life, *zoe* in the Greek, speaks of the timeless, eternal life God desires for every Christian (John 10:10). *Zoe* life flows like a river. But, since Genesis 3, men have been alienated from this life and live in *bios* life, with its entanglements and limitations, originating in the Fall.

I watch people in every ministry I've ever been in. The drug addict who goes back to his life that has a beginning never gets thoroughly delivered. The alcoholic who goes back to a life that has a beginning and no ending goes back to his alcohol. The promiscuous person goes back to his promiscuity because he was born in the Fall, and that fallen life had a beginning in him.

But the people who achieve through grace, attain through mercy, and grow through love, experience a life that has no beginning and no ending. Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall [set] you free” (John 8:31-32), and, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). He was talking about eternal life, a life that has no beginning and no ending.

When Ephesians 1:4 says, “According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love,” that's speaking of a life that has no beginning and no ending.

It’s difficult to be depressed inside of that kind of life. I've never yet seen a person become depressed when eternal life is reigning. A person who understands this message will not have a poor self-image—not once! There are homes where Satan has been domesticated. But, I've never seen a problem when a home becomes filled with the life that has no beginning and no ending.

The greatest way to have victory is not by talking over the sin or discussing the defeat, but by entering into the law of the Spirit of life that

has overcome the law of sin and death, and by receiving this life which is from above. The life which comes from above has no beginning and no ending. That is why Jesus said, "If ye then be risen [and you are], seek those things which are above…and set your [mind] on things above" (Colossians 3:1-2).

Paul said, "Our conversation is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). He's talking about a life that has no beginning and no ending. This life is *practical*, yet it has supernatural potential. It is unfathomable in its scope, immeasurable in its quality of being. This life is absolutely fascinating in practical observation. It is so realistic in its eternal value! This life, that has no beginning and no ending.

The woman who is around the house, frustrated and screaming at the children, is not living in eternal life. The one who confesses, "I'm worried about my job, and I can't even. . . ."—that's not eternal life.

Eternal life is very accountable, very responsible, but very supernatural. And what is impossible with man's everlasting life is always possible with eternal life.

Chapter Three

THE OPERATION OF ETERNAL LIFE

In Job 42, Job was going through all measure of trials. You know the story: This man who started out with such a positive response to God—worshipping God in spite of his affliction—could not handle the accusations and implications of his friends.

It's quite interesting. Job could stand being very sick, being very ill with boils all over his body. He lost his seven sons, and three daughters, and oxen, and sheep, and all of his wealth. (By the way, I suggest to you that there were no insurance policies in those days!)

After he lost all of these things, he became extremely quiet. Quietness and confidence became his strength (Isaiah 30:15 and 32:17). Job inhabited *sure* resting places; everything was fine, and he blessed God.

Job came through for God. He was focused

though he was in a trial—an angelic conflict—and didn't know it! But he did a wonderful job.

To add to all of those heavy things happening to him, when his three friends (and later on, another friend) came down on him, he could not handle it. He argued and reacted and wished that he were never born; he went through a tremendous struggle, battling the conflict within.

Satan always knows the very thing that we as Christians cannot deal with individually. Consider this: Job could *not* handle finding out that his friends were not true friends. They were "acquaintances" and could not be trusted. At best, they were companions; but they were not friends. This was a conditional relationship on their part, but it was an *un*conditional relationship on his part.

Reaction or Action

Job wanted an umpire between himself and God. This man, who was so unique, was going through something known as *pathos*, passively experiencing something from without, evoking emotions of pity. He allowed the things from without to control that which was within. I'll say that again: Job allowed that which was without

to control that which was within, and he was deeply affected with what he might have called a "bad situation"! Job did not act in faith; he did not act in grace; he did not act in love. Instead, he *re*acted to his friends.

The only way a Christian will ever overcome his or her potential to react is by acting in God's grace, in God's Word, and in God's love.

The Greek word, *poieo*, means to continually act properly; to make a solid once-and-for-all decision. But Job did not act in God; he was acted upon by the world and by Satan.

The most dangerous thing in the world happens when our souls are empty and we allow external forces to control the soul within.

Over these many years, I've seen people do this. You can barely talk with them, because they are so controlled by external desires, external forces, external initiations, and with significant supernatural communication from Satan.

We must be careful that we do not allow that which outside forces would have us experience. Those external forces want to waste our lives so that we become losers, inadequate and unable to establish a good value system with divine virtue and divine understanding of God's purpose for our lives.

After arguing philosophical debates, completely misunderstanding the sympathetic nature of God and the glorious, majestic attributes of Christ's love toward him, Job finally had a beautiful divine reversal. "And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10*a*). Relaxed, he now prayed for the very friends he had previously allowed to affect him. As he prayed, Job realized how he had totally misunderstood God, and he made this statement in verses 5 and 6: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

He said, "I've heard you, Lord, with the hearing of my ear, but my soul never saw you." This means that his soul never understood, by personal experience, the things that he heard. Job was a very bright and affluent man, highly intellectual, but his soul never saw truth.

It is so crucial that we understand that truth must be located *inside* of our souls. If truth is not located inside of our souls, we will never *see* it, which means we will never experience it. Pathos will become our experience, and those outside

forces will begin to infect us, as they did Job.

The Word of God says, "And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10).

Chapter Four

VICTORY THROUGH BROKENNESS

At this point, Job's soul was governed by *pantokrator*, the Almighty Giver, a description of God that is seldom used. Job came under the Almighty Giver, who filled him with *kratos*, the power of this mighty Giver. As he came under this power, Job began to take hold of it, and he became possessed by it, free to act in the life of the Word of God. As a result, job had a tremendous, divine reversal.

How does this happen? I believe that a Christian can have many divine reversals—even in the worst situation, by sight. When we pray and mean it with all of our hearts, praying for the very thing that's troubling us, praying with faith, with love, with brokenness, and in meekness, it will happen. And I believe with all my heart that when we respond with prayer in brokenness (and Job was broken, and in broken-

ness, Job repented), we *will* have a series of divine reversals.

Job had a series of divine reversals. In his situation, he not only got back his wealth and his health, but he also got his family back. And, according to isagogics, he got his friends back. God answered prayer in ancient history; and today, this great principle is for our instruction and edification.

There are many believers today who need a divine reversal. But listen, it doesn't do any good to pray for a divine reversal unless we repent of what we should repent of, unless we are broken, and unless we are relaxed as we pray for the situation. And that's exactly what the Hebrew text reveals in Job 42.

Job was very relaxed after he repented; in fact, he became extremely relaxed. With fervency, quietness, and confidence, he prayed about the problem. And the Almight Giver, *pantokrator*, filled him with *kratos*. At last, Job—full of power as he gave the problem to God—became free to act in behalf of his friends, and God reversed every situation.

His Righteousness, Our Blessings

Do you understand that when you were

saved, you were given a gift of imputed righteousness? That righteousness was not yours nor mine, but it is God's righteousness. And with that gift of righteousness, derived from Christ and imputed to our account, come what we call *relative absolute blessings*. What is a relative absolute blessing? it is the kind of blessing given to every person who has received this gift of imputed righteousness.

It means that because of the integrity of God in my life and in your life, we receive these relative absolute blessings from God. In other words, if I walk uprightly, God's integrity blesses me, because it's His life in me. He is blessing a life that I've *derived*. And God has to bless His derived life because of His justice, because of integrity—because of the nature of His essence. he blesses people. So, when a person is broken, that person becomes the recipient and a partaker of God's nature through the promises. God, in a relative situation, in an absolute way, has to bless that one who is filled with the Spirit.

You say, "But what about sickness? Or, what if something bad happens?"

When God allows adversity, then, without you realizing it, you are being promoted for all

eternity—*while* you are in that situation! That's what happens. And if I'm walking in the light, I can know, biblically, that I am being promoted. Any temporal loss incurred while I'm walking in the light will prove to be an eternal gain. But I can also know that God will indeed reverse my situation.

God may allow us to experience His character of patience, after we've done the will of God and after we've claimed a promise (Hebrews 10:35-36). We are told not to cast away our confidence because we have need of the character of God to permeate and possess us, controlling us so that pathos and the outside influences cannot have their way in us.

Targets for God's Blessing

I want you to think how God—Who is so unique, and so precious, and so ready to bless us—can now begin to move in us in a way that is pleasing to Him. He takes a hold of our lives and possesses the target of His blessing. For example, when I have the character of patience, that's a target for God to bless me with His absolute relative righteousness in the integrity of His justice. If I forgive others, and I have a forgiving spirit, then the relative absolute equity of

divine justice—without reservation or without limitation—forgives me.

And in brokenness, when I know I have a human weakness—a drug addiction, a habit of lying, stealing to get drugs, or whatever I would do—and I'm experiencing the weakness, then I come to God in the bankruptcy of my need. In the brokenness of my heart, the Holy Spirit comes in and makes my integrity of brokenness the target for the relative absolute blessing of God's diving equity.

Justice and integrity have to bless whatever is operating in me that has its source in God. Meanwhile, God may work in me a certain fruit of the Holy Spirit. He does this to possess my 'inner man' so external forces cannot control my capacity for that situation. For example, He'll work patience in my life. Therefore, God will "procrastinate" in His answer for only one reason: to work the character of God within me and to conform me to His image in that specific detail of life.

CONCLUSION

Many Christians, for some unknown reason, teach something entirely false about the character and nature of God. By the same token, they often touch a part of the truth, but they don't know the truth that I'm speaking about.

When I'm filled with the Spirit, unless I'm getting eternally promoted in the front line of warfare in the angelic conflict, then the absolute righteousness and integrity of God's justice, by reason of reality, has to bless that part of Jesus Christ that's operating in me. It has to!

The righteousness of God cannot forsake the righteousness of Christ. The integrity of God cannot forsake the integrity of God's life in me. Therefore, the wisdom of God cannot retaliate against the wisdom of God in me.

So the Christian who walks in wisdom, filled with the Spirit, becomes the recipient of a brand-new life, wholesome joy, and wholesome happiness. He will prosper in business and pros-

per in health, unless God has another purpose. (Then, he will prosper in the adventure of the need—and God will supply the provision!) All of these things happen because the integrity of divine justice cannot forsake the integrity of God's righteousness in the believer. Let God permeate and penetrate your human soul with this truth.

Eternally Secure

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The basic problem for mankind is that we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:9-20). Man is separated from God because of sin. This separation is positional and experiential. Yet when a man trusts Christ for salvation, he is positionally reconciled to God forever. Romans 3:21-26 teaches that when we believe in Jesus, we are freely justified by grace forever.

Many Christians, however, do not believe that their salvation is eternally secure. They think that sin will be able to separate them from our precious Savior positionally as well as experientially. And when a backslidden Christian finds his way back to God, many Christians who do not believe in eternal salvation will put him on probation to make sure he is sincere. This is not God's heartbeat for the believer.

The devil, the accuser and slanderer of the brethren, has a constant ministry of accusing be-

lievers when they fail. Satan wants to make them doubt their salvation so they will not be restored to their relationship with God and continue to live in their failure. Therefore, we must have a strong and precise doctrinal conviction from the Word of God on this issue to refute attacks that come against the Finished Work—our resting place.

Salvation is a gift of God by grace (Ephesians 2:8,9). This booklet presents the evidence to support the doctrine of eternal security that covers every believer from the moment he receives Christ until he is face to face with Him in heaven.

Chapter One

IT IS WRITTEN

In Matthew 4, Jesus Christ was in the desert, fasting and praying. It had been forty days since His last meal. The Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness, and now Satan was coming to test the limits of the Son's humanity.

"I know You are hungry," the devil hissed. "But You are God and man, both human and divine. If You are the Son of God, take these stones and make Yourself a meal. Turn them into bread."

How many times have we been in that situation? We are waiting upon God for our provision and the devil tempts us to find our own way rather than waiting for God to provide. We pray for bread, but all we see are stones.

Jesus had a real material and physical need at this point. Satan wanted the Son to do something in Himself and not wait for the Father to provide. But Jesus answered Satan's temptation

with the Word of God:

"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

The Pattern for Victory

Other challenges were made to Jesus during that time, and every time He answered with "It is written." His response represents our pattern for victory over Satanic projections. The Word of God, forever settled in heaven, is our answer today, just as it was the answer for the Lord Jesus. If it was good enough for Him, it has to be good enough for us.

Christ's entire human experience was designed to prove the veracity of the Word of God. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was the Word made flesh (John 1:14). He dwelt on earth and lived a life full of grace and truth. At Calvary, Jesus proclaimed, "It is finished." He committed His spirit into the hands of the Father, and then He died. This He did in His humanity, knowing the promise of Psalm 49:15: "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave."

Jesus the Man believed that death would be swallowed up in victory and that He was and is the Resurrection and the life. He was raised by

the power of the Holy Spirit and is now in heaven, interceding for us, seated at the right hand of the Father.

Every Word Is True

We have to start with the Word of God as our basis for truth. If a man does not believe the Bible to be true, then there is nothing we can do. The Bible says it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). What God has said, He will do. He shall make good on what He has spoken (Numbers 23:19). His Word is forever settled (Psalm 119:89, 152). It shall not fade away; the Word shall stand forever (Isaiah 40:8). Every word of God is true (Revelation 21:5).

If every word is true, then it is true that God will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

If every word is true, then it is true that we are new creatures in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17).

If every word is true, then it is true that neither height, nor depth, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things to come shall ever separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

Our position—that every Christian is eternally secure—has a sure foundation: the Word of God. Whenever Satan challenges our position

in Christ, our answer is always, "It is written." The Scriptures support no other position. *Every* word of God shall be fulfilled, including those pertaining to His children.

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18).

The Scriptures Attest That Salvation Is Forever

"God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it" (Numbers 23:19,20).

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalm 23:6).

"I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

"But my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished" (Isaiah 51:6*b*).

"But my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation" (Isaiah 51:8*b*).

"And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life: and I will raise Him up at the last day" (John 6:40).

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10).

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29).

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

"Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" (2 Corinthians 4:14).

"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18).

"Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he

ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

"Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Scriptures to Show That God Keeps and Guards Believers

"For the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance" (Psalm 94:14).

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

"And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39).

"And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

"And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:21).

"But God commendeth His love toward us,

in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (Romans 5:8-11).

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Romans 8:31,32,35*a*).

"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us" (2 Corinthians 1:9,10).

"Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:21,22).

"Faithful is He that calleth you, who also

will do it" (I Thessalonians 5:24).

"If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

"for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5*b*).

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).

Chapter Two

JUSTIFIED: OUR POSITION AND OUR EXPERIENCE

"He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.

"Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up" (Isaiah 50:8-9).

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10).

God is constantly reinforcing in our minds the principle of Romans 8:1: There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. No

one can condemn us. Satan accuses, but he cannot contend with us. He cannot even operate as our adversary without God's approval. By faith, we have been justified. By faith, we have peace with God. We have God's righteousness by faith; we did nothing to earn it. It was ours the moment we believed.

The doctrine of eternal security is one that Satan tries to pervert. He has half of Christianity fighting against it. Those who do not believe in eternal security say, "You teach a doctrine that means a Christian can do anything and still be saved."

Yes, we do. There are, of course, things that a Spirit-filled Christian will not do *because* he is saved. And if a child of God sins, he will be disciplined, but God will make him to stand (Romans 14:4). The basis for this position rests on the following scriptures:

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28-29).

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Romans 3:3-4).

The Father Chastens Whom He Loves

"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

"But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

"For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:4-11).

Because Christ is in us, there are things that we will not do (and if we do those things, we will be convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit and we will hate what we did). Yet, there are those who say that we lose our salvation every time we sin. The question then becomes, what constitutes a sin? James 2:10 says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Under this policy, if I had an angry thought against my brother this morning and did not repent, and if I were to die right now, I would go to hell. If a backslidden loved one does not attend church for several years and suddenly dies without confessing and repenting, is he going to hell? The problem with this viewpoint is that it goes against the character and nature of God and the veracity of His Word.

This does not mean that a Christian can do as he wishes and that God will overlook his ungodly behavior. According to Luke 8:18, God knows the heart of everyone who professes to be

saved—and clearly, not everyone who professes has truly been born again. If a person continues in sin without any conviction, it is questionable that what he "seemeth to have" is real conversion. We can choose our actions, but God will choose the consequences. If a Christian continues in sin, God will start the discipline process. He disciplines not to punish but to restore His children to a godly lifestyle.

In 1 Corinthians 5, a man who was saved was living in adultery, and he was in danger of committing the sin unto physical death. God does allow believers to die early, and I believe that as they die, they are not sure of their destiny.

No one who is living in sin can experience the assurance of their salvation because they have grieved and possibly quenched the Holy Spirit within—and He is the only one who can bear witness with the human spirit that we indeed are children of the living God (Romans 8:16; Psalm 37:24).

The wages of sin is death. That is true, and God does chastise His children; however, God's discipline is always done in love. We did nothing to earn our salvation, and we can do nothing to lose it. We are kept forever by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5). If we fall, God will hold us

up (Psalm 145:14); we shall not be utterly cast down (Romans 14:4).

Once we were saved, we were sanctified or set apart because of the offering of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:10). He perfected forever them that are sanctified (Hebrews 10:14), so we are positionally set apart in Christ forever. In fact, the moment a person is born again by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, sixty-eight things happen to him that seal his salvation.* Like the thief on the cross, he may be on his deathbed and have no opportunity to perform righteous works, still he is secure forever in Christ.

Walk in the Power of God

Our position in Christ never changes, but our experience of walking with Him in the power of the Holy Spirit is a process of growth and development, of being changed into His image (Colossians 3:10). As we purpose daily to study the Word and to obey God, we grow in our experience of sanctification (see 1 Peter 1:2). One day, each of us will have a brand-new body—one that is free from the old sin nature. And at that moment, we will be perfected forever (1 John 3:2; Philippians 3:21; Romans 8:23).

But while we live on earth, Satan wars

against us, trying to gain influence over certain areas of our brains. The mind, the emotions, and the memory are influencing factors of our confession and our decisions. These areas must be filled with and exercised in doctrine, or they will be open to deception.

The last thing Satan wants is for the believer to experience the doctrine of eternal security. If we are secure in our position and the love of God, then the devil knows that we will not fear failure. Fear is one of his most effective weapons, paralyzing our capacity for God so that we will not function properly spiritually. He knows that if we are faithful to hear the Word of God, and especially if we understand the doctrine of eternal security, then we will become strong enough to resist him and to make him flee.

**For a complete list and doctrinal summary, read* What Happened When You Received Christ? *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Three

LINE UPON LINE, COMPARING SPIRITUAL WITH SPIRITUAL

"But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him" (1 Samuel 16:14).

"So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it" (1 Chronicles 10:13).

Saul was Israel's first king. He was chosen by God and anointed by Samuel. He started out small in his own eyes, but in time he became arrogant and jealous. He did not follow God's Word or God's way, and his disobedience to God cost him his family as well as the throne.

The Lord does discipline His children, as the record of Saul's life shows. Saul suffered terribly in his emotions, but he never lost his salvation. Yes, he did attempt to track down and kill David.

Yes, he did consult a witch. But consider God's words to Saul through the prophet, in 1 Samuel 28:19: "Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines."

From this passage, we must conclude that Saul was saved and belonged to the Lord. Remember that Samuel, Saul, and Jonathan lived under the Law; grace and truth would come by Jesus Christ. Yet, the heart of God has always been the same toward His people. These men were chosen and called by God according to the promise of the Messiah's coming. After their deaths, Saul and Jonathan would be with Samuel in paradise.

Saul lost his kingdom, and he died on the battlefield, but even he could not pluck himself out of the hand of God. Physically he died, but his spirit and soul joined Samuel's in paradise. And though Saul never repented of his jealousy that led to bitter striving against David, after Saul and Jonathan died, David said that they were lovely and pleasant in their lives and not divided or separated in their deaths (2 Samuel 1:23).

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

"Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

"And this will we do, if God permit.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy [Spirit],

"And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

"If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:1-6).

This is perhaps one of the most debated passages concerning eternal security because it refers to those "who fall away" after "tasting" the salvation of God. There are those who believe a Christian can lose his salvation, and they use this passage to prove that one can "taste and see" that the Lord is good and then become

blind again and return to darkness. They preach Hebrews 6:4, which says that it is *impossible* for those who have tasted salvation to renew their repentance. If it is impossible for those who have fallen away to "renew" their repentance, then why bother preaching to them? According to that viewpoint, those folks have no hope.

The Importance of Rightly Dividing God's Word

Again and again in Scripture, we are counseled to *hear* what the Lord is saying. Jesus Christ challenged people through parables because, He said, "…hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13:13). The word for hearing in this passage is *akouo*. It means to be endowed with the ability to hear and then to attend to or consider what is or has been said. Most important, it means to understand by perceiving the sense of what is said.

Orthotomeo is the Greek word for "rightly dividing" the Word. It speaks of cutting straight rows or paths and it infers handling the word aright, teaching the truth directly and correctly (2 Timothy 2:15). This means to approach a passage according to the times, the context, the people being addressed, the first mention of the

subject, the full thought as the subject is revealed throughout Scripture, comparing spiritual with spiritual, line upon line, here a little there a little. "Rightly dividing the word of truth" considers the language of the original text and the shades of meaning that are not easily rendered in our own language. It always takes into account the character of God, which never changes.

Careful exegesis of the Greek text of Hebrews 6:1-6 reveals what the author was saying to his readers.

The writer of Hebrews was trying to spark readers to go on to spiritual maturity. That is the context of much of the epistle. Believers are continually referred to as "brethren," which indicates a blood relationship. All Christians have been washed in the Blood of Christ and made clean. Possessing an eternal position in Christ, believers are encouraged to live out that position in their experience.

"For those who were once enlightened" appears as *tous hapax photisthentas* in the original Greek manuscript. The phrase literally means "once and for all illuminated," according to both Kenneth Wuest and the Amplified Bible. *Hapax*, in particular, speaks of something happening

once, with everlasting results, and therefore with no reason for it to happen again. It is not that it can never happen again, but that it need never happen again because it is a completed action. Simply put, this passage means that once someone receives the light of God, that light can never be turned out.

The word used for "enlightened" is from the Greek word *photizo*. The grammar case is an aorist passive accusative participle. In this context, it means to be spiritually enlightened, once and for all, as a completed action.

"Tasted" is *geuomai* in the Greek text. Along with "to try the flavor of," it means to partake of, to eat, and to experience. It is an aorist middle accusative participle, speaking of a completed action with a result. In this case, the result of tasting the heavenly gift is salvation. This same word is used in Hebrews 2:9, which speaks of Christ tasting death for every man.

More Than a Sampling

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9).

Harold Barker, in his book *Secure into the Ages*, makes an important point by saying that the word *tasted* in Hebrews 6:5 goes "…beyond the idea of just sampling salvation or of coming to the threshold of salvation without really believing….Did Jesus just sample death or did He thoroughly enter into it?" Of course, we know that Jesus fully experienced death—physically and spiritually—and then became the firstborn from the dead in His resurrection.

In the same way, Hebrews 6:4 is speaking of people who fully tasted salvation; they experienced it and they are God's children. A Christian can slide away from fellowship with God just as we can slide away from fellowship with our family members. But this fellowship can be restored and refreshed in an instant; however, the blood-bought relationship of the Christian to the Father cannot be altered. Once we come to Christ, we are His forever.

"…And were made partakers of the Holy [Spirit]" (Hebrews 6:4).

The phrase "were made" is *ginomai* in the Greek. The grammar form is an aorist passive accusative participle. This means, again, that the action was completed with a permanent result.

"Partakers" is *metochos* in the original Greek

text. This means to share in, to become part of, or in this case, to become a partner with the Holy Spirit. Only when a believer truly accepts Christ as Savior does the Holy Spirit come to indwell him (1 John 3:24; 4:13). The Holy Spirit seals the believer with an irrevocable promise of the believer's future redemption as God's present possession (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30). The indwelling Holy Spirit is the "earnest"—the down payment or security deposit—that God has placed on our souls, marking us in the spirit world as His property, securing our eternal salvation (2 Corinthians 1:22 and 5:5; Ephesians 1:14).

Therefore, based on what the Bible clearly teaches, it is "impossible" for a Christian to recreate his salvation experience. If it were possible, the writer of Hebrews says it would be the same as Christ having to be crucified again and again and again. Christ died "once for all." His sacrifice is one that will never have to be made again. Once we become hid with Christ in God, our position is set and our place in eternity is forever secure.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy [Spirit],

"And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

"If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Another viewpoint says that this passage refers to people who were never saved. Some church scholars interpret the word "taste" to mean that certain ones have "tasted" the Gospel and spit it out, just as Jesus tasted and spat out the vinegar while He was on the Cross. This view comes from their interpretation of the Greek tenses. They do not recognize the aorist middle accusative participle, which shows a completed action, with the emphasis of the action referring, in this case, to salvation. The action—tasting—was entire. It included partaking, eating, and experiencing. Regarding salvation, the action was complete.

According to that erroneous viewpoint,

some have taken the participle *geuomai* ("tasted") to mean that what was received was aborted before the process of regeneration was complete. Their contention is that those who "fall away …crucify Christ afresh" by returning to the animal sacrifices of the old Hebrew ritualistic ceremonial laws. They claim that it is impossible for these people to repent because they continue to take the information of the Gospel and crucify Christ afresh every day by not receiving Him.

This viewpoint, which challenges the doctrine of eternal security, also says that the phrase "partakers of the Holy [Spirit]" means that some people are 'worked on' by the Holy Spirit, that they comprehend the Gospel and even acknowledge that it is true, but that they never receive Christ. It is like someone who receives a tract, reads it, and comes under great conviction, but is never regenerated.

Again, this view fails to take into account the culminative aorist tense in the Greek text, which causes this passage to mean that they have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit to the full extent through receiving the free gift of salvation, and that there is nothing more that can be done for them. The true implication of Hebrews 6:4-6 is this: For all Blood-bought believers who fall

away in their experience and do not choose to get up and go on with God, as shameful as their state may be, their sin is no longer the issue. Their position—that they are hid with Christ in God—is unchanged. The Blood of Christ paid the debt for their sin, and the only thing left is for them to look unto Jesus and be turned at some point in the process of discipline.

God Cannot Deny Himself

"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:11-13).

Again, a passage of Scripture must be reviewed in its context. The context of verse 12 is speaking of having perseverance in suffering, and receiving rewards for holding on to Christ. Some take 2 Timothy 2:12 and stand it up on its own without the verses that surround it. By itself, this verse seems to indicate a way for a believer to "sin" himself out of his salvation by denying Christ.

The Greek word translated as "deny" is *arne - omai*. This word refers to denying the faith. But

we have to continue reading verse 13, which explains that God will remain faithful to us, even if we do not believe.

If you are born again, the moment you were saved, the Holy Spirit quickened your human spirit and Christ took up residence inside of you. At the same time, you became an integral member of the Body of Christ, and you were hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). Therefore, because God cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13), and because He now lives in you (Colossians 1:27), you are eternally secure in Him.

In his *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible,* Spiros Zodhiates explains the Greek text of 2 Timothy 2:12: "This [denial] does not refer to a denial of entrance into heaven…but only the privation of privileges and rewards even as the believer failed his Lord on earth."

"Believe not" is *apisteo*, which speaks of not having trust in, or of failing to exercise proper faith, confidence, or dependence upon Christ. Even when we do not exercise the proper kind of faith, God remains faithful. "His trustworthiness does not depend on our trustworthiness," Zodhiates says. "There is a certain faithfulness, which God demonstrates toward His children, which is not conditional."

God knows what we are like. He knows that we are but dust. For this reason, every new believer is hid with Christ in God the moment he believes. From that moment on, we are beyond Satan's reach. In 1 John 5:18*b,* speaking of everyone who is born of God, the wicked one touches him not. We have been made new, and the old things have passed away. What we once were, we can never become again.

We were saved by grace. It is not of ourselves. Salvation has never been about us. It is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). Jesus Christ is both the Author and the Finisher of our faith. The *Lord* is our light and our salvation. He is the strength of our lives. Therefore, there is no reason to fear (Psalm 27:1).

CONCLUSION

What is eternal security? When the believer received Christ as his Savior, God gave him eternal life. He sanctified him, He gave him His righteousness, and He filled him with the Holy Spirit, once and for all. This means that the believer can never lose his salvation because Christ died for all of our sins. He bore the penalty of our sin and then opened the way of being reconciled to God by applying His Blood on the mercy seat in heaven (Jonah 2:9*b*; Romans 3:21-26, 5:15-21, 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 9:26*b*, 28*a*; 1 Peter 2:24a; 1 John 2:1-2; Titus 3:5*a*; Proverbs 28:13).

God cannot deny us because He cannot deny Himself, and it is He who indwells us. Thank God today that we are justified in Him (Romans 5:9). Confess that you are justified forever. You are sanctified because of the Blood shed at Calvary. You are His, and nothing can take you from Him.

God the Father gave His only Son. What

more could He do? Do you think He would sacrifice His Son to save us and then leave it to us to keep our salvation secure? "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10).

Thank God for eternal security. If you have received the free gift of salvation, you are eternally secure in the love of God that never, never changes. But if you, for whatever reason, do not experience the joy of the Lord as your strength, and now God seems so distant, this does not mean that you lost your salvation. Just turn to the Lord. Acknowledge the finished work that took place at Calvary, and let Him turn your heart with true repentance so you can sense His presence once again.

If you have never received Christ as your Savior, believe that He loves you so much that He was willing to die for you on the Cross and pay for all of your sins. Let Him into your heart. He will take care of changing you into His image. In fact, He will make you a brand-new creation.

There is not one soul who is good enough on his own (Isaiah 64:6). And thank God, there is not one soul who is so far gone that God cannot

make him brand-new if he will just come, believe, and receive. Would you pray right now?

Dear Lord Jesus, I now receive You as my Savior. Thank You that You died on the Cross to purchase my eternal salvation. Thank You for giving me a brand-new life, a brand-new heart, and a brand-new soul. Lead me through Your Word. As you send people who will minister Your life to me, help me to grow and to be a light to show others the way to the Father. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Experience the Finished Work

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:29).

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (1 John 3:7).

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

A skill is a capability developed through the habits that a believer practices in his life. Skills are different from talents, which represent natural gifts. Anyone—even someone who seemingly possesses very few natural talents—can develop a skill if he puts in the time and effort.

When the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us the skills of righteousness, He is teaching us the skills of being right in all situations. Many skills are defined in the Bible, but I want to focus on

the skill that Abraham learned when he believed God. Abraham learned how to think with God, and it was counted to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6).

In Romans 4:5, we see that the one who believes is the one who is counted righteous. This righteousness is reckoned by grace, not by works. A Christian needs to teach himself to see that God's righteousness is his, and his forever. To think this way is a skill that a believer develops through his walk of faith.

Leaders, especially, need to develop skills in righteousness. Many leaders can be mean, reactionary, and hateful. That's wrong. Any leader in a Christian assembly should purpose to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath (James 1:19). I pray every day that leaders delegated by men will operate in skills of righteousness consistent with the Finished Work.

As we will see in these pages, there is a particular skill every believer needs to learn, and that is the skill of experiencing the Finished Work.

Chapter One

SKILL YOURSELF TO THINK IN LIFE

"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:11-17).

A divine thinking skill in righteousness accepts what Christ did on our behalf in perfect humanity, making us just like Him the moment we get saved. From then on, this believer does not see himself as having to perform to get more righteousness. He just has to develop the skill to know and think upon what happened the moment he received Jesus.

A number of things happen to a believer when he is born again. One of the most important things is that he experiences a positional death. That is, once I received Jesus Christ, I died with Him and I was buried with Him. Also, I was raised with Him from the dead, and now I am seated above with Him at the right hand of the Father. Positionally, I am dead to sin and its effects. This is a wonderful kind of death. It means that I am hid with Christ in God. Still, I need to skill myself in getting this truth, knowing this truth, and believing this truth.

Understanding Death in order to Know Life

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There

is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

"All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death" (1 John 5:16-17).

There are many kinds of death that we understand from the Scriptures, and in this passage the Bible refers to an early death that can come to a believer because of sin. David spoke of the potential of this death in Psalm 118:18, where he wrote: "The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death." The king of Israel was writing this after his sin with Bathsheba. Clearly he understood that there is a sin that leads to physical death.

The Word of God tells us that He chastens His children in love (Hebrews 12:11). His purpose is to bring us joy and peace. God's grace is here today. Still, believers who consistently fall into a pattern of what I call "chain-sinning" can expect that God will implement His Word. Wickedly wrong choices can bring extreme consequences. Remember, God is still in charge of every heart that beats upon this earth.

Physical death is really a graduation for the Christian. The reality of going home to heaven and beginning an existence of being face-to-face with Jesus makes the Christian faith so wonder-

ful. An angelic escort arrives and up the believer goes as he draws his final breath (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21; Acts 7:55; Luke 16:22).

Spiritual, Temporal and Operational Deaths

Yet, the Bible also describes a spiritual death. When Adam and Eve ate from The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the innocence that they had lived in was gone, and they became self-conscious. They were now sinking back to the dust from which they were taken. Spiritual death represents the state of every person before salvation. At the moment of salvation, Christ quickens that one who was dead (see Ephesians 2:1).

A Christian who functions outside of doctrine exists in operational death. The basis for this principle is found in James 2:26: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." These believers have measures of faith but doctrine is not at work in their souls.

Another "death" a believer can live in is temporal death. This happens when a Christian commits himself to sensual pleasure—hedone in the Greek—and refuses contact with God. Of course, Christians can experience spiritual plea-

sure that comes from being motivated through the Holy Spirit. When this is the case, the believer's mind is filled with the Word, his will is positive toward Christ, his emotions are healthy, and his body is presented to God as a living sacrifice.

Then there is a sexual death of barrenness or impotence, which Abraham experienced for a season. In time, God fulfilled His promise, and Sarah conceived Isaac.

Finally, the death that motivates us to go into all the world with the Gospel is the second death, described in Revelation 20:10-15. That death is the destiny of every unsaved person who rejects the salvation presented to him in the person of Jesus Christ.

It is very good for every one of us to understand these various deaths. But God really concerns Himself with bringing the Christian out of temporal and operational death. And He does this by ministering life to His people through the Word spoken from His pulpits and in the midst of Body life in His churches. Under this order and authority, Christians can enjoy amazing peace and success. In other words, we can experience our position in Christ and revel in the Finished Work.

Chapter Two
ABBA, FATHER

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

"Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 9:11-13).

"Father" indicates the presence of a parental relationship. All of us have fathers and some of us have wonderful relationships with our fathers. Others really know very little about their

fathers.

There is no father like God. He is "Daddy"—that is really what the word "Abba" means. The term "Daddy" reveals a relationship of mercy and a relationship of comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3). His mercies and comforts are new every morning. God, our Daddy, relates to us with patience (Romans 15:5). His relationship to us is built upon divine love (1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:18-19).

What I like about our Father, our Daddy, is that Psalm 68:5 says that He is also the Daddy of the fatherless. If your natural father forsakes you and leaves you alone, then our heavenly Daddy will pick you up (see Psalm 27:10). In 1 Peter 4:10, our God is the Daddy of all grace and the Daddy of all faithfulness.

Open Arms for the Troubled

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:17-24).

Who went out to meet the long lost son? Was it a just a father? No! Daddy went out and hugged his boy and kissed his neck again and again. A parent may have had plenty to say to his child, but Daddy was just too happy to have his son back home with him.

The love of God goes out clearly. It is the most refreshing message in the whole world. But those who hear it must receive it as if it is coming from Daddy.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that he did more than preach to the people there. He im-

parted his own soul because the people were dear to him (see 1 Thessalonians 2:8). Still, the message must be received. Some people live and die without ever knowing God the Father as their heavenly Daddy.

My Father, Your Father

Think about what Jesus said to Mary Magdalene on resurrection morning: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). In other words, Jesus was telling her, "My Daddy is your Daddy."

I cannot think about that reality without weeping.

I will never be an orphan. Even if everyone left me and I was here by myself, I would still have my heavenly Daddy. Underneath me would be His everlasting arms.

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable" (Psalm 145:3).

In the Upper Room, Jesus Christ was getting ready to go out and head toward the Cross. One of His final statements to His disciples was a prayer to His Daddy. He wanted them to be one

with Daddy as He was one with Daddy.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20-21).

Chapter Three

GENTLENESS AND GREATNESS

"For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?

"It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

"He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places.

"He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

"Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

"Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip" (Psalm 18:31-36).

Any skill in righteousness is related to the greatness of God's nature. David expressed this to his Daddy: "Your gentleness has made me great." It wasn't killing the bear and the lion in the field that made David great. It wasn't his great triumph over the giant Goliath that made

David great.

David recognized this very important truth: God's gentleness is what makes us great. For this reason, King David was kind and secure when Shimei cursed him and threw stones and dust at him (see 2 Samuel 16). Some of David's men wanted to take off Shimei's head right then and there, but David did not answer in natural strength; instead, he responded with the gentleness of God in his heart.

"And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

"It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

"And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.

"And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there" (2 Samuel 16:11-14).

Do you see how great David was because of the gentleness of God? David never boasted in

himself; he always boasted in what the Lord had done for him.

Before you react to any situation, take a moment and think about the greatness of God in your life. Think of how gentle He has been with you. Speak the truth in love and let your speech be seasoned with resurrection life. Consider the terrific relationship you have with your heavenly Daddy. You have a Finished Work relationship with the Father, and you can cry to Him, "Abba! Daddy!"

Get to Know Who You Are

Some believers are wandering in search of an added experience. That just brings confusion to their lives. The essence of our Christian life is a process of us getting to know what happened to us forever at the moment we were saved. The Finished Work is just that—the Finished Work. There is nothing more that I can do. Jesus did it all for me.

God wants us to get to know Him as Daddy. He wants us to get to know Jesus Christ our Lord through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Paul's prayer was that this would be every believer's experience. He wanted every Christian to perceive his calling from God and to live

in their glorious inheritance, in the exceeding greatness of God's power.

The Christian life is not about me doing better. It is not about me changing myself. No, the Christian life is about me getting to know who I have always been by grace through faith in the Finished Work.

I have always been complete.

I have always been seated above.

I have always been hid with Christ in God.

I have always been justified by faith in Jesus Christ my Lord.

This same faith gives us access to Daddy. It is in His grace that we stand. It is in the glory of God that we rejoice and hope.

Faith Tested, God Proven True

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

"Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

"Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

"But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD" (Job 1:7-12).

God allowed Job's faith to be smashed. He saw Job as one of the most mature men on the earth, and Satan said, "Let me at him." So God allowed the hedges to come down. Job did not like the situations that came his way during those difficult days. He failed several times, and he asked many questions of God. Still, Job clung to this reality: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25). Job always saw himself in the Finished Work, even when everything and everybody seemed to stand against him.

Just keep experiencing what God has done in your life. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. Let's stay rooted and grounded in love. We can rest in the love of Christ that passes all knowl-

edge because we know that His Finished Work has done exceedingly, abundantly above what we could ask or think, according the power that works in us.

CONCLUSION

Knowing Christ in our daily experience is what learning the Bible and walking by faith is all about. Day after day, moment by moment, God desires to reveal to us the reality of who we already are in the Finished Work.

It is so important for us to develop this great thinking skill. That is what will bring us to discernment and wisdom. With a mind that possesses a clear view of the Finished Work, we can quickly cast down vain imaginations and empty thoughts. Deception will not capture us and carry us away.

My prayer is that each of us will come to be skillful in the righteousness that God has put upon us. It is ours by grace through faith. It is the gift of God and it is ours forever. Let us live in the Finished Work in our relationships and in our dispositions. Let's allow our heavenly Daddy to draw out of our hearts the new creation temperament that He has put there.

Exposing Blind Spots

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

When we say that people have a "blind spot," it means that in a certain area of thinking, they fail to use proper judgment. Blind to the truth of God's Word, they are easily deceived in that area. I believe that pastors should receive special training on the subject.

Many Christians do not understand spiritual warfare, and their blind spots cause serious problems. They approach an invisible enemy by substituting faith with sight, defending themselves against people and circumstances. They think they are fighting against flesh and blood, unaware of the demonic principalities and powers at work in the air (Ephesians 6:12). Usually negative or sarcastic, they say things to one another as a result of blind spots, without having a revelation of God's love from Calvary's throne.

Satan, the accuser of the brethren, has a plan to deceive the whole world (Revelation 12:9-10). Whenever I have to deal with something as a

pastor, I must first examine my heart through the Finished Work to make sure that I am not deceived because of a blind spot.

This booklet will show that to avoid blind spots, a believer has to let wisdom have a home in him—a habitation, a dwelling place. Where wisdom has a home, more light can come in, and the light already received will remain.

Chapter One

WHOSE SIDE DO YOU TAKE?

When a person is deceived, the first indication is that he hears the Word of God but does not practice it. This type of hearer doesn't receive the Word of God with meekness. He doesn't put away all "superfluity of naughtiness" (James 1:21). He doesn't have categories of doctrine engrafted in his soul.

Scores of Christians are deceived and do not know it. They always have something to say, but they do not listen to and apply wisdom. Wisdom is crying out in the street (Proverbs 8). Categorical doctrine is available to be applied in the Holy Spirit's power of love; it is crying out to be appropriated.

Strife comes when we take sides in the flesh and stick with it, instead of identifying with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:13). A person who takes sides is not easily entreated. The first side to be heard has the advan-

tage, and that is usually the side that wins. But the one who chooses sides is usually deceived and he doesn't even know it. He has a blind spot about relationships.

"The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.

"The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart:

"And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee" (Deuteronomy 28:27-29).

Here, Moses warned that disobedience to God's commands and ignorance of His Word would leave Israel groping in the darkness. "The blind" would grope in the darkness. Their light would turn into darkness—they knew not the light because they were not living with a single eye toward Truth (see Luke 11:34).

Differences That Divide

Many times, young Christians have differences with people because of blind spots. Certainly, the other people have blind spots as well,

but too often, we don't recognize our own. That is the problem with blind spots. They are so easy to find in others, and they make us angry. Yet, every one of us has blind spots and novice traits that we need to deal with. This is the only way a church can have a fruitful, worldwide ministry that reproduces itself in the principles of God's grace.

"They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments" (Lamentations 4:14).

"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

"That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

"Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

"He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them" (John 12:37-40).

"…Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and

the rest were blinded" (Romans 11:7).

The Novice and Human Opinions

You have to be in a leader's position to know why he does some of the things he does. Men and women of God who have been through battles understand angelic warfare. Without lording it over people, they command respect as they take authority in situations. A leader must cover people's failures when dealing with certain issues because his goal is restoration and reconciliation. This means he will not tell you who he is covering or why. He is dealing with people and situations before God.

Sadly, some people develop opinions without doctrine, and they are not wise to do so. Certain things they have done in the past or the circumstances in which they were raised cause them to form strong opinions. God, however, never accepts the knowledge of opinionated people. He only accepts the wisdom of love through the application of grace in the window of mercy and the patience of forgiveness. We need to let the wisdom of experienced men of God help us out of our novice traits.

Chapter Two

SEEING BEYOND THE VEIL

I preach the Finished Work, and I counsel scores of people from a Finished Work perspective. When I am quite certain that they trust me and that they know there is no condemnation, I can tell them what their blind spots are. Yet, some of those people continue to analyze their Adam nature and rationalize their deviation from the truth.

Blind spots cause light to turn to darkness, and that person does not know it. Second Corinthians 3:14 speaks of the veil that was done away with by Christ and also the veil that is "untaken away." When the veil of carnal thinking is not taken away, instead of having the mind of Christ, the mind is darkened. When a veil remains, that person cannot see and apply Calvary; therefore, he is not conformed to Christ's image. He becomes established in a blind spot. But what is worse, he is not afraid to

repeat his opinions to others, which sows discord among the brethren.

Stuck with Sight Evaluations

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

"And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:5-9)

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

"(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

"Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" (Philippians 3:17-19).

A Christian who has blind spots gets stuck

in wrong thinking in certain areas of his life, yet he goes on as if he "knows it all." He is neither humble nor meek, and he stands by his opinion. Though he may serve God, he has become an enemy of the Cross. He might be right-on in fifty areas, but he could still have three deadly blind spots.

The self-righteous Pharisees were filled with blind spots. Six times, Jesus called them blind (see Matthew 15:14; Matthew 23:23-26).

What the Mind Really Sees

Most people assume that what we see with our eyes is what is reported to the brain. In fact, the brain interprets and adds substantially to the reports it receives from the eyes. Much of what we see is actually interpreted by the brain in the reality of sight, through the mind. The emotions may respond short of grace in the conscience, drawing from old thought patterns and wrong belief systems. Natural thinking is the result of self-consciousness lacking God-consciousness and promoting negative volition toward Calvary.

Physically, the front of the eye operates as a camera lens, directing light from each point in a given space to create a "picture" on the retina, a sensory membrane which lines the eyeball. The

picture is transferred by photo receptors (chemical and nervous signals produced on the retina) through specialized brain cells or neurons that make up the optic nerve, to the brain. On the back of the eye, at the place where the optic nerve is attached to the retina, there are no photoreceptors; therefore, the brain receives no information from the part of the image that falls in that spot. This is called the optic disk or *blind spot*.

Spiritually, a person who has novice traits and blind spots is a person who, having perceived the truth, does not practice the Finished Work truth experientially and personally. The information is fragmented because of blind spots, and if he is not Spirit-taught, the missing information is apt to be filled in with things that seem good but are not *the* truth.

First Peter 5:8 speaks of the devil as a "roaring lion" who preys on the weak and the young—those who because of opinions take sides, instead of taking a stand with truth. They follow what they *think* they see.

Matthew 9:34 refers to "the prince of the devils"—*archon daimonion*: the one who has official authority in the life of anyone who does not go through the Cross. When I do not apply the

Cross by reckoning myself dead, buried, and risen in Christ (Romans 6:1-11), Satan has final authority over my behavior. I will take on his justifications of self-defense, and I will become impersonal toward Calvary. Therefore, it is vital that we recognize our blind spots and let the Holy Spirit reveal the whole picture to our hearts.

Chapter Three

A VIEW TOWARD CALVARY

In Matthew 4, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, where Satan demonstrated his power. The devil had power to tempt Jesus with a three-fold temptation. In verses 8-9, Satan offered to bring Him material success.

Satan also has the power to steal the Word of God from a heart that is not guarded with doctrine (Luke 8:12). We can hear Finished Work messages and enjoy them when certain points apply to us, but then the devil comes in and steals that doctrine. The empty place creates blind spots and self-deception. Negative reactions, self-defense mechanisms, unforgiving spirits—all these things are the result of novice traits and the deception of blind spots.

The devil has the power to drive a man (Luke 8:29). Demons have the power to give a person a driving spirit. Demons have the power to influence a man to betray God (John 13:2) and

then to blind him to that fact. They also have the power to oppress (Acts 10:38), to pervert God's ways (Acts 13:10), and to take men captive at their will (2 Timothy 2:26).

Wisdom from Below

Satan has the power to devour the inattentive believer (1 Peter 5:8) and to cast him into prison—both literally (Revelation 2:10) and spiritually (Psalm 141), using wisdom from below (James 3:13-15). The application of Bible doctrine without the Holy Spirit is wisdom from below. The application of knowledge without the power of the Spirit leaves us with human wisdom—acting like "wise" people who know it all.

Methodeia is the Greek term for Satan's "wiles." This refers to the power he has to practice deceitful scheming with the intent of leading people astray through his demon armies (Ephesians 6:11). Snares, in 1 Timothy 3:7, are set-up traps. Once a man establishes a communion table with demons (1 Corinthians 10:21), he spreads carefully organized doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1) promoted by seducing spirits. A man can use his personality to seduce people. His belief system doesn't have Calvary at its center (James 2:19).

Phronimotatos is the Greek word for "serpent" in Genesis 3:1. It describes the subtle way Satan can convey an understanding in supernatural wisdom that rationalizes the world system without the Cross. This kind of thinking infects a person with a capacity for supernatural light that is really darkness toward the love of God.

Demons cause confusion. They try to give a believer a poor self-image and to bring in depression through projections. Satan has a powerhouse of supernatural attacks designed to make people depressed and then to lead them into receiving wounds and bruises. Remember, we are not battling against flesh and blood alone, but against principalities and powers of darkness. Therefore, when our blind spots are exposed, we will see that the wounds and bruises do not come from people.

These attacks affect us when we don't have on the whole armor of God and when we confess how we feel in Adam. As believers, and according to the divine ability that is in us, we need to live in the victory by faith and communicate the truth that Christ is on the throne.

Stay in the Love of God

The Word of God makes it clear that we are

to build ourselves up in the most holy faith. We are to think, meditate, ponder, preach, teach, communicate, counsel, respond, and initiate in the Word. Let's keep ourselves in the love of God. Only respond in the love of God. Do not step outside of God's love or confess anything outside of it. Pray in the Holy Spirit and look for the mercy of God. Friends, thinking with the Word of God is how we confront blind spots.

The Word of God tells us that the victory has been won and the penalty for sin has been paid. Iniquity and sin can never be charged to us again. The Word tells us that we are hid with Christ in God in the heavenlies. No matter what sight dictates, the truth is that we cannot be moved out of that position.

I love to hear Christians say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" and, "Thanks be unto God who always gives us the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ." It is fun to serve beside them and to minister with them in this world where so much that appears to be light is really darkness. These are Christians who have the Light of God shining through them. Their blind spots have been revealed and overcome by the Truth.

CONCLUSION

This message is the product of some forty years of pastoral experience. The lessons communicated here have been tested in battles.

In Matthew 6:12, Jesus Christ taught the disciples to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." A thorough study of that verse reveals that we are to automatically forgive and forget whenever something is done against us—the moment we hear of it. We do not react. We don't even have to confront the person. Instead, we return good for evil, forgiving and erasing the offense from the memory, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Everything in our lives must go through Calvary so that our hearts will be established in wisdom for the situations we face. This is the way to overcome blind spots. A Spirit-filled Christian doesn't take sides; he stands or falls before God. He privately studies the Bible as a believer-priest. He doesn't say negative things.

He listens carefully, ponders over truth, and prays on his knees. God will always reveal that the only side that matters in any issue is *His* side—and He *always* causes us to triumph over the devil.

Exposing Satan's Armies

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INTRODUCTION

"Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies" (Psalms 27:11).

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

When I preach a series about angelic warfare such as I did recently, there are the occasional few who question the need to go into the topic in such depth. We have said it before, but one of Satan's more successful ploys is to make people think he doesn't exist or that if he does, that he is merely a toothless roaring lion without real strength. But without looking very far, we can see the havoc wrecked in the lives of believers who did not properly gird themselves with understanding of the devil's tactics.

Warfare is more than putting on armor and hoping it protects you. It involves preparation in how to wield the sword, when to move, and

where to go. Proper military combat training includes getting to know the enemy—his habits, his weaknesses, his strengths. How does he think? What kind of information does he have?

It is true that any move our enemy makes on us must first go through God, as Job 1 clearly shows. Ultimately, whatever God allows us to go through is to glorify Himself and to add degrees of glory to our soul bodies.

But immediately, think of the battle in terms of fallen soldiers and unsaved men who desperately need to be rescued. How can we go after them except we step onto the battlefield? And how will we succeed except we know our enemy? And how can we know him except we be secure in the love of the One who already has declared the victory? Get excited when you feel the thunder and see the lightning. Redemption draweth nigh.

Chapter One

UNCOVERING DEMONIC IDENTITIES

"And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof;

"And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!

"I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly"

(Proverbs 5:12-14).

The question is asked of me over and over, "This is what's happening. Tell me! What should I do *now*?" Usually, this is the cry of someone who has been sitting under instruction from the Word of God, but who has not recognized the value of what is taught. Like Solomon who confessed his sad state in Proverbs 5, there is a good chance that they did not obey instruction.

An unusual verse in Hebrews 5:8 says, "Though he were a Son, yet *learned he obedience*

by the things which he suffered." The verb forms in the Greek are constative aorist indicative, showing that a past action is continued, implying that in His humanity Jesus continually obeyed the Father; He didn't "outgrow" His need to be taught.

Luke 2:52 says Jesus grew in "wisdom and stature." He was Deity. He was the Creator! But He emptied Himself (though He was always God), and He learned obedience as a man. *Manthano* is the Greek word for "learn" that includes the concept of understanding. God the Father taught Jesus precise doctrine for hours, day and night. Every morning, the Father opened Jesus' ears (Isaiah 50:4). From the time He was a young child, God taught Him categorical truth, and Jesus was able to apply what He learned with great sensitivity.

Manthano reveals that the Father taught Him *precise* light on precise subjects in a precise way so that Christ would be able to stand in a precise provision and have a precise confession. Through that confession He entered into precise obedience all the days of His life.

Just Obey God Today

Christ learned obedience by the pain and the

shame He experienced. Through persecution, lies, and suffering, He learned obedience, and He was always positive toward the Word of God.

A person in our church had been on drugs for eleven years. He would stop for a while then go back to whatever he could find. When he came to me for help, we put him on a "program." The key? *Just obey God today*. Obey Him when you wake up. Obey Him at twelve o'clock. Obey Him at night. Several times a week we talked on the phone. I gave him specific verses to read because "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isaiah 1:19).

In Job 36:11, if we will *obey* and *serve* God, we will spend our days in prosperity and our years in pleasures. This is not as some people think. But to obey and to serve God are two of the greatest things in all the world. We will eat the good of the land, and we will always have a provision for today.

But what happens when a Christian turns from a straight path in his thinking? Remember that long before a person gets "off" in his confession or behavior, the first place he gets off is in his mind. Obedience is an act of the will. It begins with a decision to agree with the truth God imparts by the Word and the Holy Spirit. But

when we allow, because of carelessness, ungodly thoughts or images to be processed in our unconscious and subconscious, we begin down the path of deception.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). In this passage we begin to see the military strategy aligned by Satan. Having come out of the Kingdom of God with its hierarchy of angels, he knows something about perfect order. Now he has an agenda to overthrow that kingdom (Isaiah 14:13-14). There are commanding officers, commissioned officers, noncommissioned officers, and implementors that take Satan's strategic plan and bring it into its tactical application on earth.

"Principalities" speaks of the highest ranking order in the Satanic cosmos.

"Powers" (*exousia* in the Greek) refers to attacking forces that have all the information and extend themselves toward people in "jurisdictions" on a particular subject. Using contact and reaction, this evil table of organization is governed by supernatural minds and forces to defeat the believer.

The "rulers of the darkness of this world" speak of commissioned officers that control the secondary officers. These secondary officers deal with us in those jurisdictions or localities to seduce and entice us into deception.

"Spiritual wickedness in high places" speaks of the infecting demons, as mentioned in Acts 10:38, that bring tremendous oppression to make people periodically depressed. These demons, known as *Kata dunastuo,* cause a person to be self-absorbed and depressed as he thinks of finances, circumstances, and blaming himself or others. He allows cosmic light to control the conscience of his soul.

That is why we need more than cosmic light that comes from knowledge about God. The only way we can stand in this battle is by Psalm 119:130: "The *entrance* of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." God has not left us ignorant of the enemy's devices.

Unmask the Accuser

For instance, particularly in the summer months, there is an army of demons known as *Rhadiourgia* that specialize in inflicting attitudes of passivity. This army is exposed in Acts 13:10, "…O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou

child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?"

Rhadiourgia sets up people when the seasons change. For example, when winter is over, these demons will get people occupied with the "good things" of summer, to love the beach more than they love the Cross. Now, I enjoy summer, but these spirits affect the senses with worldly impulses. They can attack at any time of the year, causing people not to be against anything, but to become careless and spiritually inactive, not redeeming the time, mentally, verbally, or physically. These demons try to invade their victim's personality and take over his identity.

Think of it. Did you ever notice people who were doing great, then they begin to act standoffish? They go to a gathering but stand way back in the corner. They frown. They are not the same now. Often the cause is *Rhadiourgia*. The worldly demons of hell are trying to distract them and make them do four things, according to Zephaniah 3:2: First, they do not hear the voice of God. Second, they will not receive correction. Third, they do not trust in the Lord. And fourth, they do not draw near to Jesus Christ. Four lines of attack—and all because of these in-

visible spirits that affect them with a new attitude and a new mood. But they are not from God.

Because they are an organized army with strategies for offense, they have a goal: to make their victims passive, negative, or reactionary. This sets them up for an invasion from an army known as *Kenologeo*. The root of this name, *logeo,* means "collection" (Isaiah 8:19). These demons take an empty mind and fill it with thoughts collected from the atmosphere—thoughts they project into the unconscious and gradually develop through the subconscious and conscious, giving direction to the previously "empty" mind. These are precise thoughts from the kingdom of darkness, and the deceived one calls it "light." They cloud objectivity with human rationale to infect the senses empirically. The thoughts are projected through the digestion of heavy vibrations in the perceptive area of the central nervous system (in what we have referred to as "channel A"*) and may be transferred into the soul (channel C) without ever being screened by the human spirit (channel B), which is governed by the Holy Spirit because of the Cross.

The next army we will address is *Epaoiden*. Referred to in Deuteronomy 18:11, these are con-

sulting demons that manipulate the projections from *Kenologeo* to consult you in how to be happy in your lifestyle apart from the Cross. This counsel is infection from Satan that we see as reality. We think that we are "beginning to understand ourselves." These demons come with armies of demons called *Agalmata,* which speak softly and gently as they seem to build you up in "where you are at" but not according to Truth. Theirs is a stranger's voice, counterfeiting the gentle call of Christ (Isaiah 42:2-3). *Epaoiden* will cause you to rationalize the Word of God and to humanize *your* decision (while you give credit to God!). You will say, "I've prayed and it's settled," not realizing you are on the road to progressive deception.

Do you understand that we are not talking about a battle with flesh and blood? We do not war against *people,* but against principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12).

After *Epaoiden* we must deal with *Prosphatoi*. These demons are referred to in Deuteronomy 32:17, "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to *new gods that came newly up*, whom your fathers feared not." This army replaces God in your life to give you

pleasure as they offer "reasonable" alternatives to the Cross. They try to make you happy because you have changed your attitude, with the goal that you will withdraw from Christianity. Characterized by fantastic unity in four areas of light (cosmic, satanic, demonic, and adamic), they offer to serve you and even enter into a covenant to "bless" you. But ultimately they deliver you to the king of the children of pride.

Another powerful army is called *Therapsin* (2 Kings 23:24). These demons specialize in attacking the home and the family. They try to break up marriages or make them unhappy. They uncover secrets and sins. Proverbs 17:9 says, "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." By repeating things said in private, these demons not only separate friends but cause suspicion.

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2). Secret things belong to God. But these demons ignore the Blood and ignore the remission of sins, just like it didn't happen. They operate on the emotions through Adam's DNA, causing anger, lust, and making people withdraw from the assembly if they don't get their

own way. These demons are very clever as they instigate disagreements to wound people. A soul will be wounded when it lacks an anointing of light from God's Word. To wound a person, the devil has to get permission from God.

Oruomai (1 Peter 5:8) come on the scene to prey on people's weaknesses and to attack young people. Like a roaring lion, they attack the senses. They attack young people with the glittering lights of the world to destroy right values forever.

Teratoskopos will bring on an affliction, and then influence "healing" ministries by simply withdrawing from the object they damaged. It looks like a miracle when really the cause and the remedy were both demonic. They are never redemptive miracles but only encourage the work of Satan.

Gnostas is the identity of an army of demons that cause people to become familiar with life (2 Kings 21:6). People deceived by this army will not reject their provision, they will just not appropriate it.

Epeseisen is the name given to the demons that provoke people to sin and then flood them with guilt. In 1 Chronicles 21:1 they provoked David to sin by numbering the people when

God specifically told him not to. He received satanic influence to do something that seemed to make sense. This army may provoke missionaries to take on a cultural identity, but a successful missionary does not need to "adjust" to the native culture where he serves. Rather, the Cross wiped out all natural identities so we can take on a supernatural identity in Christ where true oneness is.

Jesus Christ overcomes cultural barriers and Adam's thinking. He crucifies it all and sets us free in a brand-new order as brand-new men. When this life is preached in love and revealed through life, any person in any culture wants it desperately.

In Luke 4:33, 9:42 and Revelation 18:2 we have a description of unclean spirits, *Daimoniou akathartou*. They stir up sensuality in single men and women and attempt to draw them into relationships outside the cross because of a "need to be loved." Ultimately, their assignment is to give people an inner life of pornography. These unclean spirits provoke their targets to take drugs or alcohol, to get them addicted, and then to condemn and cause them to give up on life. These demons taunt the oppressed and say, "Maybe you will commit suicide! Maybe you

will die young."

A most unusual crowd is called *Dienoichthesan* (Genesis 3:5, 7). These are mocking, whispering demons who behave like the serpent in Eden that spoke with Eve: "You don't know all you are missing! He's holding out on you, and you don't have all the facts. Open your eyes!" This is how conspiracies begin, to kill a church or destroy a marriage.

The moment those demons are finished, *Katamartureo,* the accusing demons referred to in Daniel 6:24, enter the scene. They feed you unusual language to tear yourself down and cause you to sublimate.

In John 13:2, we discover *Diabolos paradidomai*. This spirit has unusual cosmic light, and unless the spirit is discerned this individual could appear to be one of the best people. But it is the spirit that took over Judas.

Hupselon (2 Chronicles 11:15) are the demons above the earth, with *Hupsoma* as the head demon of the air (above *Bathos*, the head demon of the dust). *Hupsoma* attacks subjectively to make people self-righteous, hyper spiritual, or presumptuous, using angel of light information. *Bathos* works to activate the old sin nature. This demon is able to hypnotize the unguarded

memory to constantly activate the old sin nature when demons aren't around.

Remember, all of these attacks happen where there is no personal accountability to the Cross. When a believer lives independently without a local assembly or one pastor-teacher sent from God, subjectivity enters in so easily. We need to be accountable. Proverbs 27:17*a* says, "Iron sharpeneth iron." That is how we deal with blind spots. Be accountable to objective men and women of God. Ask them to be straightforward with you, to keep you in check regarding any blind spots.

**Refer to* The Hearing Heart, *Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

SAFETY THROUGH OBEDIENCE: BEYOND THE VAIL

Thank God for the precious Holy Spirit who encourages us to draw near the throne of grace. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh" (Hebrews 10:19-20).

We have a High Priest over the household of God. Let's draw near in the time of temptation! Draw near with true hearts in full assurance of faith, having our conscious sprinkled from evil, our bodies washed with the water of the Word. Let's be faithful because God is faithful. Let us continue in the faith because God is faithful to us.

Do you ever get moody and then take an attitude that says, "I'm just going to do what *I* want to do!"? You might as well just say, "Hi, *Rhadiourgia*! Hi, *Kenologeo*! Hello *Epaoiden* and

Prosphatoi." They will respond to your changes immediately. "We will make you happy this summer. Get with your friends. After all, winter is coming. We want to give you a good time this summer…."

You know, most people don't believe that demons operate this way. But that is exactly what they do. You can't see them, but there they are.

To Obey Is Better

So what do you do when you are suffering? *Obey God*. Just obey Jesus. What do you do when you are going through temptations? Obey God.

Remember what Solomon said in Proverbs 5:12, "I hated instructions. I despised reproof. I did not obey the voice of my teacher, nor would I incline my ear to those who instructed me." Think of that. Solomon testified that he almost became totally infected by the devil *while* in the midst of the congregation and the assembly! "While I was right there, listening to the Word of God, I was almost taken over with those armies of evil, and they *almost* knocked me out of the race!" But then he said, "When I realized what was happening, I corrected it and received instruction."

"When thou art in tribulation, and all these

things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou *turn to the* LORD *thy God,* and shalt *be obedient unto his voice*" (Deuteronomy 4:30).

Recently, a couple in this church were reconciled after being separated for three years. It happened one night when I preached a message upon the love and grace of God. Everyone was so broken, and we had a time of worshipping and praising God in song after the service. He went to where she was on the other side of the church, got right down on his knees and said, "Would you forgive me for being an insensitive husband? I'm not going to ask for you to take me back, but just forgive me."

She held on to him and said, "I *will* take you back!"

That man obeyed what he heard in the message. The Holy Spirit came in when he mixed faith with what he heard and obeyed.

I love what the Word of God says in 1 Peter 1:22: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto *unfeigned love*"—wholehearted love—"…see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

Faith obedience purifies the soul and takes away the contamination. It removes weaknesses, frailties, and the things in the soul that do not

glorify God. Obedience purifies the soul through the Spirit unto unfeigned, wholehearted love as the Spirit of God sheds that love abroad in our hearts. And it is such a precious thing to have our souls purified. The husband was reconciled by obeying the Word that he heard as he mixed it with faith. That act of obedience also broke the relationship to the demons that held him and his wife captive for so long.

It is beautiful when we begin to realize through the Word of God that in *every* situation, the Lord Jesus Christ is there. He has *always* been there for us.

"…Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). I thank God that in Exodus 23:22, the Lord says "But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries." What is God saying? "The key is to obey Me. I don't want burnt offerings and sacrifices. Just obey Me."

The Fruit of Obedience

We need to obey God in our thinking so we

can be filled with the Holy Spirit. We obey so we can properly love one another and be kind to one another. When we obey God, He promises that we will spend our days in prosperity (whatever that means in God's plan) and our years in pleasure with God.

As a result, we are able to take the faith obedience of Romans 1:5 to the nations. Faith obedience in studying, in loving, in Body life, to those who need us. Faith obedience in soul winning. *Faith obedience,* along with humility and meekness. That's the key.

In Matthew 17:5, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples fell prostrate before the Father who declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Jesus Christ's soul body was tremendously glorified beyond His glorified body because He always obeyed. Likewise, with every act of our obedience, mentally and with our speech, there will be a degree of glory added to our soul body in heaven (1 Peter 1:7-8; Revelation 3:3-4*a*)—glory beyond what we would have if we didn't obey.

"And *the word of God increased;* and *the number of the disciples multiplied* in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the *priests were obedient to the faith*" (Acts 6:7). What a combination! Peo-

ple who obey God now are going to be recognized by their exceeding brightness in heaven. And though no one will be sad, there will be different degrees of joy that saved people will experience throughout eternity.*

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalms 27:1). Thank God we don't have to be affected by the demons that bring in moods and negative depression. We don't have to be critical, or in bondage to seasons. We can humble ourselves, obey, glorify God, and be set free!

**Read* The Morning Star Order *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

APPROACH THE ADVERSARY BY RAISING A STANDARD

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your *adversary* the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

This adversary, *antidikos* in the Greek, is our opponent in a lawsuit. He is the devil (*diabolos*)—a false accuser and a slanderer. He takes us to court (*antidikao*) where he vigorously, continually, and consistently attacks us on the offensive, with unbelievable determination. He rigorously cross examines us in the courtroom of heaven—and we don't even know when he is doing it! We just think it's a bad season.

"…*Seeking* whom he may devour." Here we learn that the devil has placed a supernatural system of detectives on the Christian's case, monitoring and keeping files on each one of us. Do you realize that in the latest trial in your marriage, you were in a courtroom scene before

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as well as the elect and fallen angels? And you thought it was only a problem with your spouse. No, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. It is the mystery of the age that Job was being cross-examined by Satan, with God's permission.

Psalm 18:44 says that as soon as they hear, they shall obey. Why is that such an important principle? Because it is the only way to avoid giving a place to the devil. As soon as we hear, we do not "consider" what we will do; we obey. Then it says that "strangers shall submit themselves unto me." That speaks of souls being won all over the world—winning strangers who submit to the Gospel that we preach because we are obedient.

Supernatural Unity

It is so vital that we understand genuine warfare. With all of the demonic armies that come against us, thank God we can know we have the victory. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5). Jesus Christ came not only by water, "but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6).

So in heaven we have the witness of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. The three are perfectly one. And we have three that bear witness on earth in perfect agreement: the Spirit, the water, and the Blood (1 John 5:7-8).

Jesus said to the Father, "I pray for those who will believe in the future, that they will be one even as We are. I in Thee, and Thou in Me, that they may be one so everyone will know that You sent Me." He said, "The glory You gave Me, I give to them" (see John 17:20-22).

This is the unity of God's kingdom versus the unity of Satan's kingdom. Because there are supernatural detectives with supernatural intelligence against us, it is one unbelievable fight unless as soon as we hear, we obey.

Leviathan

Job 41:16 says, "One is so near to another, that no air can come between them." This description of leviathan and his scaly skin is a picture of Satan and his demons and the unity they display in battle. How do we know that "leviathan" is the devil? Because of Isaiah 27:1, which says, "In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan *the piercing serpent*, even leviathan that

crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea."

Picture it: Satan is a piercing, crooked serpent. He has amazing unity in his armies, in his purpose, and in his attacks. There is shocking unity when he goes after the mind, the emotions, the body, relationships, family, friends—unless the Christian chooses to live by every Word of God and uses rebound when he fails.

"Will he [leviathan] make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?" (Job 41:4). Have you entered into his unity and made a pact with the devil without even knowing it? Do you want him to serve you forever? Job 41:34 says, "He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride."

As we begin to understand this battle, the ongoing investigation, and Satan's supernatural "computer" system with all the files and records against us, we can see that his plan is to consume and destroy us as far as our service to the Kingdom of God goes. He can't take away our salvation, but he wants to disable us.

Cast Your Cares on Jesus

When the Word of God tells us to cast our care on Him (1 Peter 5:7), it means to throw

every care, every fear, toward Deity because He cares for us. Then it says in verse 8 to "be sober," which means do not be intoxicated with the problems of the old sin nature and the cares of the world, but be quietly relaxed with precise light. Then, "be vigilant." That means to stay awake, stay alert, stay Spirit filled.

Then it says something unusual that could easily be overlooked. Be sober and vigilant because of "*your* adversary the devil." Notice that this is not generalized as *the* adversary. The original text is actually phrased, "…the adversary *your* devil, walketh about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Devour means to swallow up, to ingest, to destroy by a constant attack, and to wear you down till you have no defenses left. Everybody has the categorical forces of demons that come against you with a personal threat to your life and your family.

So what do victorious Christians do when the attacks come? As soon as they hear, they obey.

The Deceiver

Satan deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9). Here, to deceive means to carry away into his kingdom of darkness *through light*! That is

the work of *Hupsoma*. In 2 Corinthians 11:14, Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, so that it is possible for believers to be led away instead of growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ in the angelic conflict (2 Peter 3:17-18).

Deceived Christians will accuse other believers of being deceived who are *not*. They will uncover private matters. They will lie. They will not pray. They do not love. They do not give grace for the grace they have received (John 1:16). They repeat matters that are stirred up in hell.

First Satan deceives, then he accuses the brethren from morning until night (Revelation 12:10*b*). Then, he blames. "The woman thou gave me did it!" was Adam's plea in the garden (Genesis 3:12). In Genesis 3:13, Eve blamed the serpent. Next, the devil "separateth even friends" (Proverbs 17:9*b*). He divides and puts people on sides so that we cannot love.

When Christians can't love each other, Satan effectively destroys compassion and prayer for one another. The armies of demons operate with such unity that no air can come between them. But the Word of God says we should never allow even one projection against another believer to develop. Another thing Satan does is to get

people to compare themselves with others (2 Corinthians 10:12-14). The point in this attack is to get us thinking with relative righteousness. But the Word clearly instructs us not to let that happen, because it is not wise.

Thank God that the moment we receive the Word of God and mentally obey it, we receive it with meekness and lay aside all "superfluity of naughtiness." As we practice truth, we become doers of the Word, not hearers only, deceiving our own selves (James 1:21-22).

The greatest privilege in the world is to be hid with Christ in God, seated above. We have the King of kings and Lord of lords! Jesus Christ is for us. He is in us. We have the water of the Word, and because our lives are hid with Christ in God, we have His death, burial, and resurrection. We are covered by the new covenant of the Finished Work. We have the Father and Jesus Christ, the living Word. The Spirit bears witness that these things are true.

According to the light of the Word, there is a great contrast between sides. For example, in Matthew 12:30, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." When Paul went against Christians, Jesus Christ said to him in Acts 9:4, "Why per-

secutest thou *me*?" When anyone attacks a man of God, they attack the Church of God. They are attacking the Head, which is Jesus Christ Himself.

In Luke 10:16, Jesus told the disciples as He was sending them out, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and…him that sent me." Those who are not with the Word of God cause division—they scatter and they sow discord among the brethren—one of the worst sins in the Bible, mentioned twice among the seven great sins, in Proverbs 6:16-19.

This is the progression: Iniquity was found in Satan's heart (Ezekiel 28:15). We were conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). Iniquity has three distinct manifestations: It is a negative decision toward God's character; it is wounded emotions; it allows rebellion to come in as a reaction to being hurt. You confess the wounds and the hurt, but the problem is that at some point you rebelled against the character of God, and now you are involved with accusing, separating, blaming, and sowing discord. This progression is often seen in marriages. But whatever relationship is under attack, these things happen because people refuse to be rec-

onciled to God.

Resistance Training

So now that we can see this principle of iniquity with it's source in the devil, what are we to do? We resist him, "…stedfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:9*a*). We resist him in *the* system of faith, believing categories from the Word of God. And as soon as we hear, we obey. As a result, strangers will submit to the truth of the Word that we bring as servants of the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. To effectively resist the devil, we put on the whole armor of God, girding our loins with the truth, putting on the breastplate of righteousness (the love of God protecting the heart) and the helmet of salvation, having our feet shod with the gospel of peace, and taking up the shield of faith.

With that, if I obey God, follow Him, and love Him, then Satan cannot touch me. If, however, I make a wrong decision followed by another bad decision and play games with deliverance because of self-preservation in some area of my flesh, then I open myself up to amazing attack from skillful demon warriors.

Remember that in Zephaniah 3:2, there were

four separate areas the people got wrong. This was because they were distracted by demon armies to the details of life, fleshly cares and responsibilities, and preference for Adam. But God Almighty will cause us to triumph. Thank God we can hear the Word, receive correction, trust the Lord, and draw near by faith.

The Lord's impartations are far greater than Satan's temptations. The measure of our obedience reveals the power of God's availability. The living Word of God always sends Satan to flight when it is applied in our heart and our confession. Victory is not nearly as far away as you think! Jesus simply quoted the Word, and Satan took off.

Thank God that He is here to heal, to forgive, to revive, to love, to reconcile, to give life, and to cleanse—He releases Himself in men and women.

Chapter Four

DON'T GIVE A PLACE TO DARKNESS

"The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single,"—speaking of the soul—"thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is [infected with] evil, thy body also is full of darkness....If thy whole body therefore be full of light, *having no part dark,* the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light" (Luke 11:34-36).

So many people are not full of light. That is why they get offended—why they react and become negative and defensive. But God says we are to have no part dark. *No part dark!* Why is it that people fall into deception in ministries that teach the whole counsel of God and love as Christ loves? First, they did not receive the Word with meekness, and therefore it was not engrafted in their soul. Next, they did not obey as

soon as they heard. James 1:22 says we are to be doers of the Word we have heard. And to "do" the Word of God is to *believe* (John 6:29). If you are a hearer and not a doer, you are deceived.

Unresolved Deception

So many Christians live in partial deception. Some part of their soul is dark, and the only light they have is not of God. In other words, the light they have has turned into darkness. *Many* live in unresolved deception. These are Christians that go against other Christians who may be under attack. The deceived party believes a lie fed by the demonic atmosphere. But when the accused is vindicated, those who were deceived never deal with their deception. Now, instead of being led by the light of the Word, they continue to be misled by light from the world's system.

For a season, they are covered by identities of demons which can include human good and self-righteousness. Now their adversary is the Holy Spirit. If they do not agree quickly when He convicts, these people will eventually take on self-destructive patterns.

No man can serve two masters; he will love one and hate the other. Believers who become

infected with evil because they were not properly guarded in warfare belong to God in their position while they serve Satan in their experience. So here is Christ paying for the sins of the *whole* world, and on the other side is the evil crowd manufacturing differences. Here is Christ forgiving and forgetting, and there is the accusing crowd, having been forgiven for far worse things than they are attacking. Their light has turned to darkness. Jesus said, "How *great* is that darkness." The angel of light distorts the light of the Word of God and interprets that light as darkness; the eye of the soul is not single.

But the eye that is single speaks of the unity of the Spirit. Christ cannot be divided. And as we have studied in 2 Corinthians 10:5-6, we are to be ready to revenge all disobedience with obedience. As soon as they heard, they obeyed. That is one of the greatest verses for our protection. They didn't argue. They didn't resist truth. They didn't question or challenge. They obeyed.

Christians who have been deceived by an angel of light do not know they are deceived. Though they try to justify their position, according to Isaiah 30:1-2, they only add sin to sin. In order to get out of the cycle of disobedience, that person needs to realize it, face it, and confess it,

or he will continue to add sin to sin. Then they will end up going down to "Egypt," or the world, for help, and where, God says, "you have a covering, but it's not of me."

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8). Walk as children of total light, proving what is the acceptable will of God. Have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness.

We must walk in the light to discern the works of darkness. So many of us are connected to people whose souls are partly dark, and they can influence us. It is one thing when a person is entreatable and we can minister to them. If you cannot minister, then have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. It is a shame even to speak of them.

Discern God's Light

Again, how do we discern? "But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Ephesians 5:13). The entrance of God's Word gives light. The Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. In light, we receive more light (Psalm 36:9). When we are filled with

God's light, we will not let in the cosmic light that is really darkness. We must be available to hear the Word of God. We need to receive light—and more light—so that our whole soul is filled. That way, when Satan tries to come in with something that will leave us in partial darkness, we advance in God's light because we hear the messenger bring it.

"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14). Cosmic darkness will put you to sleep so that you don't act on the Word as soon as you hear it. This is *Rhadiourgia* at work. So be alert and stay awake!

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise" (Ephesians 5:15). We are to be simple in our faith so the light of God's Word can rule our hearts, but we are not to be non-thinking fools! "But," you may ask, "how can I walk circumspectly on a divine tightrope?" The answer? By light. By waking up to new light and by receiving that light. We put on new light to get out of cosmic darkness, regardless of what we perceive with our senses. The light of the Word of God always takes precedence over our feelings.

In the angelic conflict, Jesus said that if we

will confess Him before men, He will confess us before the Father. The demons are building their case by a supernatural investigation—but they have no right to accuse. When Satan gathers all of his "facts" against us, as he did against Joshua in Zechariah 3, Jesus tells him to shut up, because those sins have been paid for. The devil has supernatural evidence against us that he gathered from the earth, but because we confess Christ in our low estate, the evidence is thrown out of court.

"In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for *I will pardon them whom I reserve*" (Jeremiah 50:20). Whatever *diabolos*, the false accuser, brings up after it has been dealt with is overruled—even if you are guilty.

Now we learn to deal with the attacks that try to uncover Adam. Because of the Fall, we were created with Satan's emotions. So God gives us grace, love, mercy, lovingkindness, and forgiveness. These filter into our emotions as we make right decisions in how to think. The emotions then become stronger and stronger until they become healthy. The term used in 1 Peter 3:8

is *eusplanchnos*, which means healthy emotions, designed to appreciate love, respond to grace, and receive forgiveness if we fail.

Satan will dispatch armies with commanding officers that possess supreme powers to try to bring down strong Christians. This warfare was illustrated in Daniel 10 where God's angel was hindered for twenty-one days while Daniel prayed. That angel was replaced with one that held a higher rank to bring the answer. The point is that even when there appears to be a mismatch, we still have the awesome privilege to stand in grace and to have access to the throne of mercy. We are quickened by the Word of God in humility, therefore, Satan has to flee!

That is what glorifies God in the angelic conflict. We are little human beings with old sin natures in a mixed-up world in a mixed-up cosmic system. By grace through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to the Word, we cause the devil to run.

Think of it! There is no record of your sins. Regardless of the source of the disclosure, the farthest it can go is in the earth because of Isaiah 43:25: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

Jesus Christ is our Advocate—our defense attorney. In Hebrew 9:4, He is pleading our case in His Father's courtroom. Notice that in Zechariah 3, there is no record of Joshua repenting. But as soon as Satan brought up his sin, the punishment came off of Joshua and onto his accuser. Joshua didn't even have to repent, and his sins were added to Satan's degrees of punishment in hell.

It is the Finished Work! Knowing that doesn't make me want to continue in sin. Rather, it makes me want to continue with Christ in this amazing love life we have.

God Is For Us!

Redeem the time—buy it back—because the days are evil. Understand what the will of God is and be filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit. Walk in light. Walk in the Spirit. Walk in love (1 John 1:7, Ephesians 5:2, Galatians 5:16). That means we are to have every step directed by the words of God, so that iniquity will not have dominion over us.

In our conversations, even in casual meetings, every word should be directed by light. Don't speak unless you have direction from the Word of God in the application of love and wis-

dom.

Even our conversation with ourselves is to be directed with the light that comes from Christ's resurrection. We speak to ourselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, giving thanks always to God for all things in Jesus Christ.

Also, there will always be people whom we will love and minister to, but we must discern the part that is dark. We don't run them down or broadcast it, but it must be discerned. Every relationship must be brought into the light. There are marriages that seem good, but they operate in partial darkness.

If you do not live with God's attitude of forgiveness that includes forgetting (Matthew 6:14)—toward yourself or others—then you are living in partial darkness. Don't think of the issue another moment. You mentally forgive. How? The only remedy is to keep in the light through the Holy Spirit. By light, we receive more light. But except for being Spirit-filled, it is impossible to forgive, forget, and go on!

The entrance of God's Word brings light. It is in the entrance that we see meekness applied (James 1:20) by faith (Hebrews 4). Light enters through the words of a category. The Spirit takes

over the words (so we can enjoy them, even if they are exhortation or rebuke). We enjoy each word because we know they are there so we do not have to live in partial darkness. Remember what was said in Zephaniah 3 about the four steps into darkness. The devil would ultimately have us withdraw from the Body where we receive light.

Thank God that Christ is the great Deliverer! Thank God that love covers! Thank God that we can grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. But we cannot if we are partially deceived.

The greatest thing I have going for me isn't my strength, but my honesty with God. I am so thankful whenever I am lovingly reproved by the Holy Spirit. I don't resist it. I hear it, and I say thank you. Then, trusting the Lord, I draw near in that category. I keep meditating on it, and amazing strength comes in. Why? Because, now I'm equipped. I'm not deceived in that area. I'm no longer weak in that area, because Christ's strength has made me strong in grace.

CONCLUSION

There are two things more enduring than failure. First is the unchanging purpose of God's grace. If sin abounds, grace does much more abound (Romans 5:20). Second is the permanent, priestly intercession of Christ until we are perfected (Hebrews 6:17; 7:24). God *will* perfect us!

Holiness is a body and soul filled up with light. Pitch your tent on the grace of God, and you have a right to who you are in Christ. You have a right to your victory. Pitch your tent with the golden provision of grace. Apply the eye salve of Revelation 3:18 and the white raiment you receive through doctrine. You have a right to mercy, a right to grow, and a right to confess the promises of God. It is your right because of the throne of Grace.

Christ ever lives to make intercession for us. The Holy Spirit groans when we can't pray because of partial darkness. It is in those times—when we are deceived or ignorant or in the

middle of an operation of God—that it seems our prayer doesn't get through. But the Holy Spirit is groaning what we cannot utter!

Plan to be around Spirit-filled believers. Don't be a lone ranger. You need that fellowship because you need the light. You need love. You need to take your place as a member in particular, in the fullness of the Body of Christ. It is how we expand spiritually in our faith, our maturity, and expand our vision with the fullness of Christ—not just our own limited portion. We are in a battle. The enemy has been exposed and he is riled up, but we have unusual protection when we claim what is ours by faith.

Facing the Valleys with God

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD" (1 Kings 20:28).

In this passage, after Israel had defeated the Syrian army, the Syrians said that the God of Israel was the God of the hills but not the God of the valleys. So they set out to battle Israel in the plains, but they were again defeated. Israel, though far out-numbered, won the battle in seven days.

Many dear people are going through valleys right now. Some have already faced many different kinds of valleys. And from the cradle until we are face to face with God, we will encounter many more.

Sometimes it seems that the pressures facing

us will overcome us. But God has not left us alone. As this booklet will show, even if just one person is there to be comforted or to be rescued, no place is too deep or too terrible that the Lord will not go. Our God is the God of every valley.

Chapter One

FORGIVENESS IN THE VALLEY

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Psalm 23:1-6).

Picture King David hiding out in the Judean hills, trying to protect himself from his attackers. His own son Absalom had turned against him (2 Samuel 15) and enlisted David's people to go

against him. Standing at the gate of the city, Absalom had confronted the people: "You don't have anyone to take care of your problems, do you? You should have someone, and I would be that man." So, Absalom was able to gather a large group of people—more than David had—to go against his own father. But as he did so, David said, "I will not fight against him. He is my son."

David, who had failed miserably many times, received forgiveness for himself quickly. Now he was totally free from his past sins. Yes, he had punished Absalom by banishing him from the palace for killing his half brother; but in 2 Samuel 14:21, David was challenged and let Absalom return.

At first, David forgave Absalom for what he had done, but he did not restore him. For two years Absalom lived in the palace but was not allowed to see his father, the King. When David finally forgave Absalom just as God had forgiven him, Absalom was totally restored. Absalom, however, never truly accepted that forgiveness. He had become bitter in his heart against his father, which resulted in a conspiracy against David.

God's forgiveness delivers us from our past

sins. That is why the Word of God says in Psalm 130:4 that there is forgiveness in God, that He might be trusted. He does not hold onto our sin and remind us of how wicked we are. God forgives us so that we can trust His love for us. Furthermore, when we forgive someone else, God personally blesses us beyond our expectation (Matthew 5:23-24; James 2:13).

Freedom: The Fruit of Forgiveness

We do not forgive others for their sake. We forgive them, first, for Christ's sake, and second, for our sake. This way we will not be in bondage because of what others have done against us, harboring bitterness and unforgiveness against them (Matthew 18:33-35).

When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, when He suffered and bled, He died to pay the penalty for our sins. Because we are sinners, there is nothing we can do to remove the judgment against us. We are guilty, and the punishment required is death. But even if we were willing to die, we would still face eternal separation from God and everlasting torment in hell. It took the Just dying for the unjust to set us free, once and for all.

It is vital to understand that true forgiveness

is willing to suffer undue wrong for somebody else. When Jesus Christ died for us, He suffered the punishment for our sins in a terrible way. But through that, He forgave us. And because He paid for our sins, the Father forgave us.

Forgiveness means that someone who has done wrong to me cannot hurt me. By forgiving them, I am setting them free from their past—as far as what they did to me. Therefore, I am willing to go through the consequences of what they did to me without mentally indicting them at all.

Finding Comfort in the Valley

Now, David had fled to the Judean hills. He left his throne. The scepter (representing his authority) was no longer with him. As far as he knew, he would never be king again. He believed his own son would kill him, and he was hiding in the hills. David had no idea how the battle was going, but in the midst of that trial, the Holy Spirit gave him the twenty-third Psalm. He was living in the valley of the shadow of death.

"The valley of the shadow of death" is plural in the original text. Many of us will go through many valleys, and certainly that was true for David. But when he wrote this psalm, the real-

ity of death was very close because of Absalom's numbers against him. So when he said, "The Lord is shepherding me, I shall not want anything," that was a wonderful statement.

And when he wrote, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil"—he was professing an amazing principle.

With the stars out in the Judean hills, his son against him, his throne given up possibly forever, death facing him from his own son, David declared, "God's rod and staff comfort me."

He said, "You prepared a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. You have anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

This man of mercy said, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." In writing the twenty-third Psalm, David experienced the inspiration of an amazing word from God.

Chapter Two

IN THE VALLEY, GOD IS ENOUGH

Every one of us knows people—loved ones and friends—who are facing the shadow of death. But I like what David wrote, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow death, *thou art with me*."

If God is with you, and if He is the source of your supply, that is all you need. If God takes everything from you but He is still with you, that is all you need. If you lose every single thing but you still have the source of life, the source of redemption, and the source of blessings, you have everything you need.

The valley of the shadow of death is something that every person will face. As you face your valley, or as it comes upon you suddenly for whatever reason, you can begin to receive God's mercy and grace in your time of need by going before His throne (Hebrews 4:16). Face to

face with Him, you will start to realize that the power of death is overestimated. You will realize that death for a believer doesn't have the sting that Satan says it has (Hebrews 2:14, 15).

But even with many believers, there is a fear of death because of a fear of the unknown. We haven't been there before, but Jesus has. Though we die physically, we do not die spiritually. If we are born again and we die, our soul and spirit will go immediately to heaven. Therefore, we can enter into the valley of the shadow of death knowing that He is there to bring us through.

Walking through the Valleys

"And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

"…And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up" (2 Samuel 15:23, 30).

The next thing that many have faced is the valley of the shadow of suffering in Kidron.

Kidron is on the east gate near the Mount of Olives. Jesus passed over that brook with his disciples to enter the garden where Judas betrayed Him. Also known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat, it is a valley of suffering.

People who have gone through life in a wheelchair, people who have gone through life with unbelievable diseases in their bodies, parents who have raised a family and had a child who died from an overdose of drugs—all of these have walked through the valley of suffering.

And where is God when we walk through that valley of suffering? "Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they do comfort me."

No matter how much you suffer in the valley, God *is* the God of that valley, and He will be with you. He is the God of your valley.

A person who has tremendous compassion for others will suffer along with them. He will identify with nearly every valley they go through, weeping when they weep and rejoicing when they rejoice (Romans 12:15 and 1 Corinthians 12:26). Whether the valley is for him or for others, he can say without a doubt, "Thou art with me."

Rivers of Comfort

Furthermore, he can say, "Thy rod and thy staff, they do comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies," and he is anointed with oil of the Holy Spirit. His capacity runs over. Goodness and mercy are following him in the situation.

That is what David said. As much as he loved Absalom dearly, he was also concerned for his people, and he wanted to know how the battle was going. But in 2 Samuel 18:33, with the news from his servant that his son was dead and David's army had won, he cried out, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! I would have died for thee!"

Do you know how David would have liked that battle to have come out? He wished that Absalom had won that battle. That is the kind of heart David had. No doubt, God was with him in the valley of suffering.

The Valley of Chastisement

We must not forget another valley. The valley of Achor was the valley of chastisement (Joshua 7:24, 25). When Achan took the silver, the gold, and a coat for his wife, against God's

wishes, he thought that to take the spoils of the enemy was a small thing. But God had plainly commanded them not to take of the "accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed" (Joshua 6:17-18). As a result, he and his entire family were stoned to death, and all of their remains and possessions were destroyed with fire.

Thank God, our punishment was placed on Jesus at Calvary. He suffered our afflictions. He was put to death for our sins. Now, the chastisement God gives us for our disobedience to Him, if we receive it, produces peace (Hebrews 12:11) as it restores us to fellowship with God.

Chapter Three

WE CANNOT ESCAPE THE LOVE OF GOD

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

"Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139:7-10).

In Genesis 14:3-10, the Word of God speaks of another valley—the valley of Siddim, which was full of slime pits. This valley was near Sodom and Gomorrah, the place where, in Genesis 19:29, the Lord remembered Abraham's prayer to save Lot. There, brimstone and fire came down from heaven to destroy all the inhabitants in Sodom and Gomorrah: the valley of sin (Genesis 19:24).

If only they had known, if only they had re-

alized that even in the valley of sin, God was right there waiting for them.

Psalm 139:8 says, "If I make my bed in hell, thou art there." Even in that valley of sin, the grace of God is there. In that valley of sin, there is forgiveness, so you can trust Him. In the valley of sin is the love of God that never changes. In the valley of sin is God's faithfulness, caring and showing compassion without hesitation—right in the valley of sin. It just takes a moment of faith to accept His love and power to overcome the temptations of sin.

The Valley of Decision

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:14).

Another valley we may often face is the valley of decision. In Numbers 13, the Lord commanded Moses to send twelve men—a man from each tribe of Israel—to spy out the promised land of Canaan. These men were to bring a report and a sampling of the fruit. At the brook of Eschol, they cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes. It was so large, they had to carry it out on a staff between two men.

But when they returned to the congregation

of Israel, ten of the spies came back with a negative report. They said, "Surely, the land is flowing with milk and honey. And just look at this fruit! But there are giants in the land, and we are like grasshoppers! We are not able to go up against them" (see Numbers 13:27-29, 33). That is when Caleb spoke up as he made them be quiet, and he said, "Let us go up at once, and possess the land. We are more than able to take it" (see Numbers 13:30).

You may be in a valley of decision. Perhaps it is deciding the geographical will of God for your life, knowing where you are going to serve God, who you will have for a pastor-teacher, what local assembly you will enter into. We are always facing a valley of decision.

You may have to make a decision concerning a relationship. Perhaps you are involved in a relationship that is taking you away from your relationship with God. Whatever it is, remember this: A valley of decision is the most crucial thing, because we live in the consequences of our decisions. God will always give us His Word to guide our feet in His way of peace (Psalm 119:105; Luke 1:79).

Then we also have another valley, and the Word of God calls it the valley of Gehenna.

Gehenna was a valley south of Jerusalem where the garbage was collected. There were always fires burning from all the trash (Mark 9:47-48). It speaks of the sufferings from hell that we experience in our lives—afflictions meant to eternally damage us. This valley is filled with demonic wounds. It is a valley that is filled with evil. It is a valley filled with satanic scars and bruises. And the Bible says that God is there (Psalm 139:8). He is the God of every single valley—even the ones that the devil puts us in. The Lord is our provision against satanic evil.

Finding the Source of Life in Your Suffering

Throughout the Bible, God has made it very clear that we will face many valleys in our lifetime. If it is the valley of suffering you are facing, and if you lose everything, take heart. Many of us have gone through that valley, and God was our Source. And if you have the Source, you can afford to lose anything. He is still the Lord in the valley of suffering.

We even may be in that valley of sin, and everyone can meet God in their valley of sin. That is where we really get to know His faithfulness, His forgiveness, and His lovingkindness.

In the valley of decisions, we learn that to choose God is to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19). We live in the consequences of our choices in the valley of decisions.

In the valley of Gehenna, we may be wounded and bruised, damaged by Satan's plan to destroy our capacity for God. But God is there, even in that valley.

And after all we go through in those valleys, God says there is also the valley of Jezreel (Judges 6:33). In the valley of Jezreel, our enemies are pitched against us. But God will give us a miraculous victory there, just as He did with Gideon.

The Valley of Triumph

Finally, when God comes back with His Bride, the Church, we will see the end of the battle of Armageddon. In that valley, the armies of the antichrist will be defeated. The blood will be up to the horses' bridles, in a river ten miles long filled with blood.

Picture it: the valley of Armageddon, the valley of bloodshed, where the Church will be with her Savior and her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. We will come back with Him in that amazing victory.

Not one shot will be fired. Jesus will speak

the Word, and the battle will be over. We will enter the scene on glorified white horses, and the Lord Jesus Christ will defeat the enemy simply by speaking the Word. The Word of God will be on His forehead in that valley of bloodshed, and the Church will be triumphant.

He Leads Us beside Still Waters

For every valley we face, Jesus is Lord. He is the God of the valleys.

We are all going to go through valleys, I'll guarantee you. And guaranteed, you have already been through valleys. But whatever the valley you go through, remember that God wants you to know He is God of the valleys just as much as He is God of the hills.

You are just as spiritual when you are in the valley as you are on the mountain top. Your maturity is revealed in the valley. When you are in the valley, let your confession be according to the Word of God. Overwhelming victory can be ours. In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us (Romans 8:37).

David was out there that night, and he said, "I don't fear any evil. I have walked with God. Yes, I have failed. I have fallen down. But God

picked me up. God is my Shepherd. God is shepherding me. I don't want a single thing."

Natural thinking would have wanted vengeance against his son. But David said, "I don't want a single thing. Why? Because God is my Shepherd, and He is making me to lie down in green pastures."

When David said, "He leadeth me beside the still waters," his soul was quiet, his heart was peaceful. He was filled with relaxation and faith rest, because he knew that God was the God of the valley.

CONCLUSION

"And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in" (Isaiah 58:12).

David was a repairer of the breach. When he was in a very deep valley, his heart after God was revealed. He didn't criticize the breach—the places that were broken down, that were like a garbage heap. He wanted to repair it.

When you are in a valley, it is easy to be overwhelmed by sight. Your situation may seem impossible. But remember that you are not alone in that valley. God is with you. Remember Jesus' agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Even the joy that was set before Him did not prevent Him from sweating drops of blood as He groaned.

Instead of criticizing situations, be a repairer of the breach, a restorer of the way that you dwell in. Don't criticize people. Repair what is

wrong. And when forgiveness comes into your heart, you will be free, and you will set others free to come alongside as you go on to victory.

Failure Is Not Final

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

During the course of a week, I receive many letters from people across America and throughout the world that say in one way or another, "I feel rejected. I feel like a failure." In all these letters, I consistently see a mystery: people who do not apply the Finished Work and who cannot comprehend what they have in Christ. These are not bad people. They have sincere hearts, and from the standpoint of the flesh, they really want to succeed.

I believe the reason that many of us have the problems we do is because we do not know what we already have in Christ. And because of that, we have difficulty doing what is right when failure comes. This booklet will show how no one in Christ is a *failure*—we only have isolated times of failure. Let the words on these pages instruct and encourage as we leave the past and our failures behind once and for all.

Chapter One

GOD'S PROTECTION FOR US

God asks His people some very crucial questions in Isaiah 5:4-5. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down."

Mark 12:1 says, "A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower…" (see also Matthew 21:33).

The Lord carefully planted a vineyard (speaking of Israel) and put a hedge and a wall around it. That's exactly what He has done for every believer. He saved us, paid for everything, and put a Finished Work wall around our lives. This means that He will not impute iniquity or sin to

us, but He will chastise. He will discipline, first with warnings, then mentally, emotionally, and physically. Chastisement will intensify into scourging, until finally it leads to an early death if the believer refuses to get right.

Yet, every believer has a wall of fire and a hedge around him. The wall of fire speaks of positional truth (the Christian is *in* Christ), and the hedge represents Bible doctrine. As we will see, Job was protected by this hedge (see Job 1:10).

Why God Takes Away the Hedge

Why do people experience rejection? Why can't they handle circumstances when people go against them and do bad things? Why don't they have the ability to immediately handle their own failure? It's because they don't understand that God cannot do any more for them than He has already done: He paid for all our sins; He won't impute sin; He has given us eternal security; He will never leave us or forsake us; His love will follow us through all our days to our new life in heaven; He will go with us to the end of the world—*what more could He do*?

In Psalm 80:12, the psalmist asked God, "Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do *pluck*

her" (Hebrew: *hurt* or *offend* her). It is *God* who breaks down the hedge.

Why did God break down the wall and take away the hedge, in Isaiah 5? Because the vines brought forth wild grapes. The principle of "wild" grapes is derived from what God said about Ishmael in Genesis 16:12, "He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him." Ishmael is a graphic representation of the old sin nature that can't be tamed by any man.

In Genesis 21:9, Ishmael mocked his brother, Isaac, Abraham's promised seed. Ishmael actually found recreation and pleasure in mocking and reacting to his brother.

Today the story is no different. Ishmael—the old sin nature—tries to gain access to the Christian's life. But in order for God to keep the hedge up continually, He would have to take away our free volition.

If we don't take in doctrine daily then our hedge will be broken down. According to Ecclesiastes 10:8, when the hedge is broken, the serpent will bite. We've got to receive the Word of God *daily*—that's what Jesus taught; that's what the apostle Paul taught. I'll guarantee that even if a Christian goes to church services three times

a week but doesn't receive the Word daily through hearing tapes, his spirit will not be as quickened as it could be.

Ordained to Bring Forth Fruit

In Song of Solomon 6:2, we see our "Beloved" going down into His garden of spices to gather the lilies. This is a picture of Jesus inspecting the fruit of His people. He wants to inspect my life to see if I am producing fruit. He tells each of us in John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain…." And in James 3:18, God wants us to have the fruit of *His* righteousness, which is sown in peace.

Think of a marriage that turned bad and ended in divorce. The woman feels rejected. She feels like a failure. And she feels hated. This woman has been taught Bible doctrine. She has had every opportunity to receive truth, yet she has a terrible self-image. She reacts easily, and she's living in self-imposed misery.

Jesus says, "I expect fruit from you, but you have none. Still, you don't have to condemn yourself. What more can I do for you that I haven't already done? I am living inside of you.

Why don't you let Me be released in the circumstances of your life? I will never violate your will or go against the choices you make mentally. I can't do anything more for you. Neither can the pastor of the church, his staff, or the Body. They will love you. They will be available to pray for you, to build you up, and to give you promises. But beyond that, there is not a single thing they can do."

The saddest thing in the world is a Christian who has been in a grace ministry for years, whom no one—not even God—can help. The Lord said to His people in Micah 6:3, "Wherein have I wearied thee?" The answer: in the way you listen to the Word of God. The original Hebrew translates, "Why did you testify against me?" People like this will always say, "We didn't say you wearied us." But God answers, "You should see how disinterested and distracted you look when you're listening to My Word. The truth is, I weary you."

No Remedy

The Bible says in 2 Chronicles 36:15 that over and over, God sent His messengers to His people because He had compassion on them. Sadly, verse 16 reveals that "they mocked the messen-

gers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy." God was saying, "You were distracted from the messengers of God by other things. You failed to utilize My Word, and you misused my preachers until My wrath came upon you. Now there is no remedy for your life. I'm sorry, there is no remedy."

Picture this. You're saved, Jesus is inside you, and you are going to heaven. Your sins are forgiven, forgotten, and will never be imputed. Here you are in your daily life and there is no remedy for your mind, your emotions, your marriage, your situations. *God Almighty is inside you, yet there is no remedy!*

And it's all because you didn't receive the words of God's messengers as being from God Himself. You didn't submit to God's messenger in a spirit of meekness or mix faith with what he said.

Jesus is saying to us, "What more can I do for you that I have not already done? I came to preach the Gospel to the poor (all of us), to heal the brokenhearted, to set the prisoners free, and to set at liberty them that are bruised" (see Luke 4:18). "I came to do all of those things, but don't

you understand that your free volition is between Me and your liberation?" Your free volition is between Jesus Christ and you being blessed beyond anything you ever imagined.

Receive Grace and Live by Faith

"Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" (Jeremiah 2:5). This is another great question that God asked of His people. It is as if God was saying, "They don't seem to like Me. And I can't recall that I have ever committed iniquity. But the way they act, they think they must have found iniquity in me. They just don't seem to get along with Me."

When Christians don't get along with God, they are saying that God isn't enough, and they are failing the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15).

God is not interested in our sins. He paid for them. They will break our fellowship with Him, but He is not interested in *why* we failed. He is just there with us to help us get up (see Micah 7:8-9). God is *very* interested in what we think of His provision for our lives. He wants us to walk by faith—not by sight—so that our volition will not be negative toward the solution. Of course

the Word of God says four times, "The just shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). And Romans 6:17 says that we are to obey doctrine *from the heart:* "Ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

God has ordained us, through His Holy Spirit and His Holy Word, to bring forth the fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22-23a). Jesus Christ walks in the midst of His candlesticks, which represent the Church (Revelation 1:20-2:1), to see how we are doing. He comes into His garden to look for fruit, but sometimes He finds no fruit, only negativity. Then He says, "What more could I have done for this person?" God says, "I'll have to do something else in this believer's life. Because the wall of doctrine isn't up today, I'm going to have to give the devil access to his life. I will allow him to go through a trial by making some wrong choices. Eventually, he will come to a place where he doesn't like what's going on.

This is different than what Job went through. Job's trial involved the angelic conflict. But for the believer whose wall of doctrine has been

broken down, it's a matter of a personal relationship with God that is void of faith, rest, peace, and wisdom to apply knowledge through the power of love.

Ishmael, the old man, will never change nor can he be tamed. But he will cooperate with us in self-imposed misery as he promotes our pity parties. And he will make excuses to defend us and make us think that nobody really cares for us or loves us.

I read in the Bible that in order to have friends, a person must show himself friendly (Proverbs 18:24). Yet, instead of showing themselves friendly, many Christians fail the grace of God that would give them something they don't deserve. Then they receive the grace of God in vain, or in "emptiness" (2 Corinthians 6:1). In other words, grace doesn't have an entrance, and even if it does, the bottle is broken and it goes right out (Jeremiah 2:13). The next thing they do is fall from the grace of God. God catches them, but as far as their experience goes, they have fallen from grace. The whole problem with people like this is that they don't know how to receive grace for everything.

Chapter Two

NO FAILURES IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Finished Work means that we can receive grace for everything—even in suffering (1 Peter 5:10). But because people don't receive the grace of God for everything, they receive grace in vain, and they fall short of it. Then a root of bitterness springs up (Hebrews 12:15), and their tongue defiles many people because those people can't do a thing for them. And the reason people can't do anything for them is that *God* can't do anything for them.

It's a terrible thing to have to look a person in the face and say, "I have to tell you something. I want to help you, but I can't. And what is worse, God can't help you either." If that person came into my office feeling bad, just think how he would feel now!

But then we would get on our knees and begin to pray. The Spirit breaks both of us. I en-

courage him to receive love, and I tell him not to live in failure because there are no failures in the Kingdom of God—just people who fail. They themselves are not *failures*. They just fail, but they don't remain failures.

You can't be a failure in the Finished Work. You can make a lot of mistakes and lose a lot of blessings, but a Finished Work Christian who has a wall of positional truth around him can never be labeled as a failure, though he may fail.

No Rejection in Christ

How can I feel rejected when God has accepted me forever in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6)? How can I feel rejected when I have been forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ to the praise of His glory? How can I feel rejected when I have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4)? How is it possible for me to feel rejected when the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all dwell in me (John 14:23; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:11)? I can't feel rejected when I've got 7,834 promises directed toward me as a son or daughter of God. He has all power, all love, all mercy, all forgiveness, all patience, and it's directed toward me. He calls me by my name. Should I feel rejected

because of my spouse, my friend, or something people are doing to me? Should I feel rejected because people don't like me? Well, Jesus wasn't too well-liked either.

The first thing a Christian should know is that he is never rejected, and never can be, because he is hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). No one can ever take a believer out of that place of total acceptance.

Don't Let the Devil Get at You

One thing I hate is knowing that Satan has a legal right to get at our lives when we don't receive God's provision. We have enough problems without God saying to the devil, "Go after 'so-and-so' today. He's not making right choices. His hedge isn't working because he is not applying doctrine." God allows this so when we are down, we will finally look at Him.

"A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (Song of Solomon 4:12).

In this verse, God is saying, "As far as eternity goes, I have enclosed you. The devil can't ever have you. I have shut up the spring so your resources can come directly from the Word and the Spirit. I have sealed the fountain so you can

have only My resources." But for some, knowing this is not enough.

God will not let the devil have you for eternity, but He may have to turn you over to him in time. You are God's child. Don't let God turn you over to the devil or you'll reap what you and the devil are sowing in your negativity toward the provisions and promises of God.

When we go through the fire and the water, instead of becoming fearful and insecure, it's vital that we confess what the psalmist did: "Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Psalm 66:12*b*). If you do, you'll be able to say, "I went through the fire and water, but look at me now. God brought me through. I didn't stay in. I wasn't defeated. I made mistakes and God had to help me, but I got through."

Job failed six times in his third trial, then he came through and was blessed doubly over what he had before. Perhaps he said, "I'm in a large place now because tribulation has worked patience, and patience experience. Tribulation brought me into a large place where I know more about God's nature and God's promises. More than ever before, I know how to utilize the Word of God."

In Proverbs 15:19*a*, "The way of the slothful

man is as an hedge of thorns." Here is a man who is mentally slothful toward the Word and the Spirit. If he goes to the left or the right he will be pricked by the thorns. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul had a thorn in his flesh—a demon who was sent to buffet him. The thorn is a demon.

Though God may turn a Christian over to demons, the demons cannot have him, but they're sure going to have some fun. Why would God do that? Because of everything He has done for us. He is with us forever. We can never lose our salvation. When we sin, we can rebound and be forgiven. But our old sin nature, circumstances, or people should not control us when God is just waiting to bless us with grace (Isaiah 30:18).

The Test for Mature Believers

"This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden" (Ezekiel 36:35). God takes an old desolate soul and causes it to bud and produce fruit. In a day, He turns the old desolate garden into a garden of Eden as we fellowship with Him through the Word and the Spirit. He comes in to sup with us (Revelation 3:20). This is what God desires in us, for "The fruit of the

Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ephesians 5:9).

When Satan challenged God to touch all that Job had (Job 1:10-11), God said, "Okay, devil, you can have Job, but I'm going to watch him produce fruit in the midst of his trials because of his maturity."

Today, Satan also challenges God to turn mature believers over to him. The devil may say, "I'd like that person for three months."

God might answer, "I'll let you have him for three months, but you can't take his life. My servant is going to show you something about My nature while you're attacking him. Of course I'm not going to tell him that I have turned him over to you. And remember, I'm not turning him over to you because he's being chastised, but because he is mature. A little man on the earth is better than you and all the supernatural angels who went against Me in heaven.

"I'm going to show you, Satan, how a man, made lower than the angels, will make far better choices than you made when you fell. This man will trust in My character and My character will come through."

You may say, "But didn't Job fail six times in his third trial?"

Yes he did, but that's wonderful, because God also forgave him six times. It's not wonderful that he failed, but it *is* wonderful that God forgave him six times, restored him six times, built him up and got him to pray for his friends. And God gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Chapter Three

LEAVE THE PAST BEHIND

When our hedge of doctrine is up, we may fail, but our failure will be isolated. We don't choose the road of failure. Because we are human and have not been perfected yet, we may fail, but we don't have to live in failure. We don't have to stay down. We can rebound and get right out of it. If it happens again, we rebound again—we name it and move on.

I recently spoke to a precious woman of God who could not forgive herself for her past. She's a wonderful Christian. She's been in our ministry for years, but she just cannot forgive herself, even though she has not failed in this area for a long time. Here's what I said to her.

"Just forget your past." Now isn't that deep?

I told her, "You're forgiven. God has forgotten it" (and she knows that). Then I said, "Now just live in it."

She said to me, "I guess it's really quite sim-

ple."

Then we went over some wonderful things from the Word of God, things that were profound, correct, and fresh. And just as sure as you're breathing, this woman has forgotten her past. A hedge of doctrine went up and the protection of the wall of fire became her experience.

And when we can forgive ourselves, it should be easy to forgive others with the same love that forgave us.

God Is Enough

"O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" (Jeremiah 2:31). To some Christians, God's life and His Finished Work have become a wilderness to them. The way they act, you would think God is barren, having nothing to offer. They act as though God isn't enough to supply their need. God is saying, "Has My life been darkness to you though I live inside you?"

If we can't conquer through Him that has conquered, if we can't be in union with His victory and go from victory to victory, then in all honesty we are saying with a tone of sarcasm, "Those promises? Ha! They're really working for me!" But we never dare to say that, or even

think it, because we reverence God.

What happened? God's light became darkness. We did not allow Him to lead us on into victory after victory from faith to faith, glory to glory, and grace to grace.

It is vital that every child of God realizes that "The king's daughter is all glorious within" (Psalm 45:13). We (the Church) are the king's daughter. But how can the king's daughter be all glorious within when she's failing God? It's simple. Because of the needlework of the precious Holy Spirit glorifying Christ in the Finished Work, the failure isn't recorded (see verse 14). The failure only breaks our fellowship with God, but it is not recorded.

Judges 5:12 says, "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song…." When we do this, we are free to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The Fruit of God's Righteousness

Remember that a man in his best state is no better than a man in his worst state as far as their value is concerned. "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (Psalm 39:5*b*). Consider a person who is doing well in Adam. He doesn't curse, drink, smoke, or eat fattening

foods. He holds nothing against anyone. But at best, he is imitating victory through an angel of light. And God says to him, "Your life is just vanity to Me."

On the other end of the spectrum, here is a man like Micah who failed utterly. Micah admitted he was down because of his sin, but he knew Jesus Christ was with him. In Micah 7:8-9, he hadn't gotten up yet, but he was about ready to "arise." In essence, he said, "Jesus and I are going to mock you for persecuting me while I was down" (see Micah 7:10).

In Micah's worst state, Jesus was with him, blessing him, and helping him to get up. But the man in his best state in Adam is only vanity because he lives his life in human good and self-righteousness.

"Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings" (Isaiah 3:10). Glory be to God if you have accepted His righteousness and you refuse to trust in your own. You know you're not perfect experientially, but you're growing. At times, you're down, but you always get up. You rebound quickly and isolate your past. You have determined to pursue Jesus Christ and eat the fruit of trusting in His grace.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, not a tree of good and evil (Proverbs 11:30). By eating from the Tree of Knowledge, we experience something as men that only God should know *as God*. Proverbs 11:30*b* says "he that winneth souls is wise." The one who wins souls is an old-fashioned, God-fearing, Christ-loving, sin-hating believer who builds himself up on his most holy faith, and takes great steps of faith to obey God's great commandment to love and God's great commission to reach the lost.

CONCLUSION

There is nothing better in this world than to be a person who receives grace, experiences grace, thinks in grace, loves in grace, gives in grace, behaves in grace, grows in grace, rebounds in grace, and is purified by grace through faith. There's nothing better than saying, "Whatever happens, I'm going to be God's grace man, or God's grace woman."

Grace will not teach us to sin that grace may abound or to live in antinomianism (professing God, but in our works denying Him, Titus 1:16), but grace will teach us that whatever our weakness may be, we will gain ground little by little until the final day comes when we will be just like Jesus, because He will perfect us.

Find Strength in Praising God

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INTRODUCTION

God loves to hear the praises of His people. Throughout the Word of God, we find verse after verse exhorting us to enter into praise. Praises are a declaration of heaven's glory and of the Lord's sure victory.

As believers, we need to recognize the eternal value of praising God. It is something that leads us into glorious victories. The walls of Jericho fell in response to the praises of God's people.

There are so many things praise will do for us. It releases us from pressure and helps to prepare our hearts for God's communication from His Word. This booklet examines the principle of praise from the Bible's perspective. Through God's Word, believers will see that great strength comes when we praise the Lord.

Chapter One

FINAL JUDGMENT BRINGS THUNDERS OF PRAISE

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

"For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

"And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

"And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and

as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" (Revelation 19:1-9).

Picture what God has watched throughout thousands of years. Consider the account of creation and the history of mankind. Think of all the things that have happened in the world. The God of patience who made man in His image has to deal with a world filled with uncountable idols manufactured by the human race.

The Babylonian system got its start as described in Genesis 9 and entered into its fulfillment in chapters 10 and 11. Eventually, it will culminate with the one-world church, a one-world monetary system, and a one-world dictator. And in Revelation 19, we see that God will judge that system, the antichrist, and Satan.

Romans 11:22 describes the goodness and the severity of God. The psalmist declared that God is angry with the wicked every day (Psalm 76:7-8). According to Hebrews 10:31, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. In Revelation 19, we see the outworking of perfect justice that is yet to come—but it does not come without warning or without multiple opportunities for a way of escape.

You see, this same God who will judge His creation also greatly loves every man and woman in the world (John 3:16). On the Cross, two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ paid for every sin we would ever commit. Yet, millions upon millions have rejected His Word. They have no idea why they were created, and soon they will face judgment.

Because of His justice, judgment will come.* The Lord will judge the Babylonian whore with her false religion. He waited all those years, initiating His love and giving men and women a chance to receive Him. In the last three-and-a-half years of the Great Tribulation, He will let out His wrath on the children of disobedience.

Once those people are thrown into hell, their

lusts will never be satisfied. They will still have a hunger for the things that kept them from receiving Christ. The intellectual will have no theories to contemplate, because the truth about everything will be clearly revealed. The proud person will be tormented by his unveiled helplessness. The molester can no longer molest. The murderer can no longer murder. The fornicator can no longer fornicate. The religious person who relied on his own works will gnash his teeth when he sees that he ignored the simplicity of grace. Judgment will come to everyone who rejected Christ as their Savior.

Shouts of Rejoicing

At that moment when the devil's world system is judged, the cries from heaven will be much different than you would think. You would think that there would be tears. You would think that there would be rivers from all the weeping. But there are none.

God loves justice, and the scene will be that of much rejoicing when His justice is being fulfilled (Psalm 33:5). The day of grace will be over for the unsaved. The day of mercy is done for them. God will mock them with laughter (Proverbs 1:26). He watched them choose to reject

His way with their free volition. He watched them take His Word and add to it or take away from it to meet their own rationalizations. He sent people and situations to reveal Himself to them personally, yet He honored their free volition, allowing them to reap what they sowed.

All of God's justice will be consummated as all the voices around His throne shout, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! Give glory to Jesus Christ for His salvation. Glory and honor to Him." Why? God waited patiently throughout time, and He held back the terrible judgment that unrepentant people had accumulated.

Breathing Praises to God

"Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD" (Psalm 150:6).

"This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord" (Psalm 102:18).

In the Word of God, the phrase "praise the Lord" appears 314 times. Hallelujah means "praise the nature of Yahweh, who is full of mercy, full of longsuffering, full of graciousness, abundant in goodness and doctrine (see Exodus 34:6). Job 38:7 says that when God created the universe, the angels praised Him. When Jesus

was born, the angels praised God. The trees clap their hands and praise Him. All of creation praises the Lord.

We were created to praise God. Every child is created to praise God. Every adult was created to praise Him. Praises should fill our mouths. The Lord Jesus Christ formed us for Himself to show forth His praises (Isaiah 43:7).

* *To begin to understand how God, who is love, can judge those He died for, be sure to read* God's Justice Will Stand, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2003.*

Chapter Two

TRANSFORMED BY PRAISE

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

We have a great family in our church. I can remember how their marriage was ready to fall apart when I began counseling both of them. By their learning to look unto the Lord instead of each other, God was able to work. They each found a reason to praise God. I watched this woman's life—how she prayed and praised God. I watched her husband become a mighty man of God. One by one, the children, who had been living worldly lives, became tremendous Christians. All of them are people I love so much.

That woman would not give up, and now her husband truly loves her. They have a

tremendous family, and even in the midst of trials, they reveal the victory that is theirs as they worship and praise God.

I am so thankful today that God's name reveals His nature: Mercy, Grace, Forgiveness, Longsuffering, Abundant Goodness, and Precise Thinking.

Inhabited by Praise

"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:3).

Let me tell you the story of a lady who was so depressed, she couldn't even look out of her windows. She would never even raise the curtains. This indescribable depression went on for two full years. She didn't want to talk to anyone. She was just miserable. Then she was given our little booklet, "Just Let God Love You." After she finished it, something was released in her. She finally went to a window to look outside, and she said, "Boy, everything looks good today!" She was released to praise God.

It is one of the most beautiful things in all the world for God to inhabit the praises of His people. God inhabits with a special habitation anyone who praises Him according to His nature. They will have a special union and com-

munion with God.

I recently heard the great testimony of two brothers. Their mother prayed and prayed for these boys because they were so rebellious. One night their mother was on her knees and the boys were on their way to rob a convenience store. As the boys planned their crime, a man led by God, bold as can be, knocked on the door to give them a Bible tract.

The younger boy just started crying.

"Why are you crying?" the older boy asked.

"Let's be realistic," said the younger brother. "Mom is praying for us like she always does."

The man led both of them to Jesus right there where they were planning to stage their first robbery.

Think of what it will be like in heaven with all the angels and the souls of just men made perfect worshipping God together. Our soul bodies will be perfect in heaven. All of us who are saved will be there, with no death, no sickness, no disease, no crimes, and no violence. We will be perfect forever, and we will live with each other in this perfect state.

King David appointed four thousand people to praise God with singing and with instruments. In heaven, there will be millions more.

Together, as a heavenly choir, we will begin to praise God all at once.

Praise Brings Victory

"And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

"And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

"And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever" (2 Chronicles 20:19-21).

Singers were appointed to go before the army and praise God. To me, this means that God was asking the nation of Israel if they would trust Him. "Do you trust Me? Do you trust My nature? Do you trust Me enough to send the ones without weapons to lead the army

into battle?"

They did trust God, and they won the war.

I love to watch a congregation stand and clap to honor the Lord Jesus Christ during the worship time. I love to hear the singing and watch as God leads us into a couple of extra choruses. God inhabits our praises. As we assemble ourselves together, Jesus Christ sings in the midst of the congregation. We praise Him. We gather together and our cares are gone. The worries are gone. We sense Jesus Christ in our midst.

Chapter Three

PRAISE THE GOD OF MIRACLES

"But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

"And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

"And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

"And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his

hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

"And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

"Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:24-33).

In the fourth watch of the evening, the disciples were in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. The storm was raging. The waves were high. The wind was severe. Then, Jesus walked across the water, and they thought they were seeing a ghost.

"Be of good cheer. Don't fear," Jesus said to them.

Peter spoke up, "Lord, if it's you, bid me to come."

"Come!" the Lord said.

Peter stepped out, and I believe that James and John were as jealous as they could be.

Jesus Christ called Peter to come out into the storm. The Lord calls us into the storms. He calls us into raging waters. Peter walked out onto the water, looking unto Jesus with proper focus. Then, the wind and the rain distracted him and he began to sink.

But, one little word, "Come," got Peter out

on the water. When we hear the Lord say, "Come," we should say, "Hallelujah, praise God!" When we look at the miracles in the Bible, the Word can get into our souls and fill us up with expectation from God. The testimony of the Word of God can make us realize that everything He does for us is motivated by grace, and every single thing is a miracle.

In Revelation 19, we see people everywhere praising God, shouting and singing, lifting up their voices. The whole earth is full of God's glory (Isaiah 6:3). The whole earth is filled with His praise.

Don't be afraid to shout "Hallelujah." Say it again and again. Praise Him right where you are, whatever you are going through. We are going to see every person in heaven praising God—even the Christians who have always seemed a bit uncomfortable praising God in church. I believe that when heaven is revealed in all of its glory, our first response will be to praise Him. There will be no more funeral homes, no more graveyards, and no crime. Just praise, praise, and more praise.

Words of Praise

Go through the book of Psalms and you will

find praises everywhere. The men who wrote those chapters understood suffering. They knew what it meant to be persecuted by others and to be tormented by the results of their own sin.

But in every case, the writers believed the Word of God and sang praises to the Lord (Psalm 106:12). In Ezra 3:10, the foundation of the temple was completed and the congregation shouted, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. Praise to the Lord." And I love it that Psalm 119:171 says, "I praised God when I learned His doctrine."

Let me say this: When we give thanks *in* everything, when we give thanks *for* everything, when we rejoice and truly praise God from the bottom of our hearts, we are healthier people. Praising God is good for our bones (Psalm 42:11). It is good for our eyes and our ears. It is good for every part of us.

From Praise to Good Health

Praising God could save your life. Let me tell you this story: A seventy-five-year-old lady had a habit of praying three times a day. Someone broke into her house to rob her at knifepoint. She looked the guy right in the eye and said, "You can't touch me because Jesus Christ

is in this room protecting me. If you touch me, the God that I praise would kill you before you could blink an eye. Get him, Lord."

The guy dropped his knife and ran out of the house.

When interviewed by a reporter, the woman said this, "I just based my confession upon 1 John 5:18: 'The wicked one touches us not'. I just made my confession based upon the Word of God."

What can you say to that? Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

CONCLUSION

The great hallelujah choir will be a wonderful attraction in heaven, according to Revelation 7:9-12. But let's not wait until we get to heaven to praise God. Let's praise Him for everything that we have down here.

Imagine the singers who went before the army with praises and brought Jehoshephat an easy victory. What brought down the walls of Jericho? The people of God shouting seven times on the seventh day. They shouted praises again and again and the walls just came right down. That is how powerful praise is.

Let's shout praises to God. People will be healed because we have believed Him to do it. People will be delivered because we stand up and praise God.

Praise the Lord right where you are. Praise Him and be released.

Finding God in Your Darkness

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INTRODUCTION

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me" (Micah 7:8).

Here we have a picture of a man in a dreadful situation: a soul badly bruised and beaten, wedged in the bottom of a hole, his garments torn and filthy, his back against the wall, unable to stand. In a horrible pit of his own making, he appears to be helpless as his enemies surround him, looking down, mocking him with great derision.

But Micah learned how to be liberated in the worst circumstance. When he found himself in that place, he did not blame his enemy, who may have caused him to stumble. He didn't gaze on his own shortcomings or wallow in failure. Micah took stock of his predicament, agreed quickly with his adversary, confessed his sin, accepted the immediate consequence, and became a spokesman of righteousness, 'the mouth of

God', proclaiming to the darkness the light of God.

The message in this booklet was preached with fervency, urgency, and compassion. As you read it, receive it, and consider the work of God. When we find ourselves in darkness, we will be tempted to manufacture our own light. The outcome? "Ye shall lie down in sorrow" (Isaiah 50:11). But the Lord says, "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged" (Isaiah 51:1). God longs to show us this great deliverance.

Chapter 1

WHY GOD ALLOWS DARKNESS

It is so important to focus our thoughts when we prepare to hear from God. Psalm 111:10*a* says that the fear of the Lord is not just the beginning of knowledge, but it is the beginning of *wisdom*. "To fear" means to revere God's presence with profound respect, to be reverent to God's Word, concentrating in a solemn, sacred response to what is said and then mixing faith with what you hear. That is revering, or fearing, the Lord.

In Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way…." Fearing the Lord means we depart from the infections of the evil world system. It means to be absolutely conscious of the presence of God. That is precisely what revering God does: It allows the Word of God to work.

Never forget this: *The issue is never our circumstances; it is always our character.* Regardless

of the situation, I always have a choice: to function with the character of Christ or *as* a character in my sinful flesh. For example, if I allow someone to lean on me in a co-dependent relationship or to manipulate me through sentimentality, I prevent that person from developing a personal value system. I must not be involved in relationships that prevent me from having values of my own. I must never allow a relationship to keep me from having a personal faith in God, "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

If the Word of God is not allowed to reign in me by faith then, when I find myself in darkness, I will react in my emotions. When my emotions refuse to submit to God, they will control my values. When my emotions are in control, they rule my reactions and control my disposition. If I refuse to allow God to control my emotions, I will either end up with damaged emotions or cause damage to someone else.

Sorting Out the Vile and the Precious

"Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth…" (Jeremiah 15:19).

Here the Word of God is saying, "If you can understand the difference between speaking the vile and speaking the precious, then you can be as God's mouth." In other words, "It is possible to be *as My mouth*," says the Lord. But for that to happen, there must be a tremendous difference between speaking the vile and speaking that which is precious. A person who speaks what is precious, who speaks words that have a wealth of eternal value, speaks as God's own mouth.

But Hosea 10:13 says, "Ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way." "Eating the fruit of lies" means accepting projections about yourself and about others, and allowing those projections (along with your feelings) to become your value system.

What Have You Been Eating?

"He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isaiah 44:20).

We have eaten the fruit of lies, and we have trusted in our own way. Now I see this verse in Isaiah 44:20 differently: "He feedeth on *ashes*." Ashes speak of the lower, circumstantial things of life that are created by the dust, the lower part

of our animal nature." Ashes plague a person who cannot make it in life alone. This person always has to depend on or take care of someone else. I'm not speaking of normal interaction but an unnatural drive to cling to people. Unable to trust God, he is feeding on ashes. A "deceived heart" has turned him aside, and *that* is Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44).

People who feed on ashes cannot deliver their own soul, nor can they be delivered *in* their soul. Is there not a lie in their right hand that they approve of? They always approve of a lie.

I hear comments like, "I've got to do this! If I don't, I've let someone down" —that is a lie! People who make statements like that approve of a lie and feed on ashes. They eat the fruit of lies and trust in their own way of doing things.

Israel, in Exodus 20:19, didn't want to hear directly from God. Instead, they wanted to hear through a man. They knew if they heard from God directly, His voice would come to them out of darkness (Deuteronomy 5:23-28), and they feared lest they should die. Theirs was a fear that revealed their condition, and it prevented them from knowing God intimately.

"Then spake Solomon, The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness" (1 Kings 8:12).

In Exodus 20:21, "Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was."

Where is God? He is in *thick darkness*.

Psalm 18:11a, "He made *darkness* his secret place."

I've seen it over and over again. *People do not know how to meet God in thick darkness*.

In Exodus 14:20, the cloud was darkness to Egyptians but light to Israel. If you're having a problem with darkness, it's because you're on the Egyptian side of the Cross!

I received a letter from a pastor in another ministry who loves God deeply and was asking for counsel. After a conspiracy in his church, he had an emotional breakdown and was in an institution for three months. The conspiracy was not caused by adultery or mishandling of finances, but by one elder who had differences with his administration.

After a solid year of hearing our radio broadcast and listening to tapes, the pastor's wife contacted us first, saying, "The turning point in his deliverance was a message you

spoke from Isaiah 45:3—how believers will find treasures in darkness and hidden riches of secret places." At first, he couldn't figure out why, after attending Bible college and working so diligently, that his first ministry, which had grown beautifully, ended up in a conspiracy. But, *he found grace in darkness*. During and after his time in the institution, hearing messages daily on grace and mercy from the Word, he found that God was there in thick darkness. Like Moses, he drew near the thick darkness, God's *secret* place. Today, this man is a full-time servant of God, and he is doing great.

Chapter 2

A CANDLE IN DARKNESS

A family in our ministry was on their way to a Bible study on a Friday evening when a car ran into them. Their daughter in the back seat was killed. Their son had broken legs. The wife received head injuries and spent several days in the hospital. Her husband could not accept this tragedy except by these truths: God is in this; everything will work together for good; and Jesus Christ will bring an eternal blessing out of the darkness. Today, that family is flourishing in one of our churches.

I want you to see what the Word of God says in Psalm 18:28: "For thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." Though the verse doesn't say that the darkness is in the mind, that is the connotation. He will *enlighten* my darkness! Who will fear the Lord and obey the voice of His servant? Who, when he walks in darkness and has no light, will trust

in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God (Isaiah 50:10)? Who, when he has darkness and no light, will fear God and obey the voice of the pastor-teacher? Who, when he has no understanding of his affliction, will still totally trust in the character of God and stay upon Him?

This is the beautiful thing about darkness. Fanny Crosby was totally and permanently blind, yet she wrote verses that painted Finished Work images:

> *Perfect submission, perfect delight,*
> *Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;*
> *Angels descending bring from above*
> *Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.**

Her outer world was dark, and her inner world was dark, yet she wrote over eight hundred hymns that still move us deeply today, because she chose to know God in her thick darkness.

Light to Walk in Darkness

I wish you could see with me that it is so important to discover a faith in the God who dwells in darkness, a faith in the God who allows pain. When there is no light, where there is no apparent reason, where there is no understanding: God is there.

Remember this. Job 29:3 said, "When his candle [the human spirit (Proverbs 20:27)] did shine upon my head [my mind]," then, "by his light…"—and God's Word brings in light (Psalm 119:130)—"…I walked through darkness." By the Word of God that enters into my soul, I am able to walk through the darkness!

When Job 29:6 says, "I washed my steps with butter," that means the milk of the Word is churned into substance by meditating on it day and night. Then the Word of God says, "And the rock poured me out rivers of oil," speaking of a constant filling by the Holy Spirit.

"He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death" (Job 28:3). Here, the Word says that God puts an end to darkness as He seeks the maturity of His Finished Work revelation in us who were in darkness. Psalm 107:14 says, "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder."

In Darkness, Don't Eat the Fruit of Lies

The place where we meet God, the place where God dwells, is the very place where people become familiar. Deceived by the atmos-

phere of the world's system, they feed upon ashes, and their heart is turned aside. They don't even know that they approve of a lie; yet, they eat the fruit of lies and trust in natural, human realities instead of divine propositions.

God wants to instruct us because every one of us will face darkness, and every single individual will face *thick* darkness. In that darkness, God's voice speaks to His people (Deuteronomy 5:23): We hear the voice of His servant, but we fear *God* as we obey the servant's voice.

We have no light; yet, in the angelic contest, we honor God. We *honor* Him. We do not withdraw into negativity. We do not withdraw into reactions. Rather, *we accept the darkness as part of the total plan of Almighty God.*

Job said in chapter 30, verse 26, "When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light, there came darkness." And in that darkness, Job went through nine terrible months of trials.

"Darkness" can mean that God has postponed His answers to our prayer. It may *appear* as though God is procrastinating. We cannot touch Him by our faith. We cannot feel Him. We cannot sense His presence. Not a single thing makes sense—and there, God dwells.

He may seem to be impersonal. He may seem to be abstract. Four times in the Bible, it appears that God is hiding Himself (Psalms 10:11; 104:29, Isaiah 45:15, Habakkuk 3:4). *Where is He?*

The Word of God makes it clear that God is right there, and only faith in the voice of His Word, only faith in what He says—utter faith and total confidence—begins to give us victory. Then, in comes light *while* we're in that darkness. By that pure light, the candle of God through the Word shines upon our mind.

From the hymn "Blessed Assurance," written by Fanny J. Crosby, 1873.

Chapter 3

THERE IS AN END TO DARKNESS

We walk by faith. We have no 'sight', no evidence that God is working. Often, loved ones do not understand us, and they may go against us. There may be serious domestic problems. You may not have what you desire with all your heart: an answer to prayer. Because of love and because of your desire, everything seems dark. But remember this: God, in Job 28:3, puts an end to the darkness! And in Psalm 107:14, I repeat: God brings His people out of darkness.

In darkness, when a person begins to edify with his tongue, his mouth acts as *the* mouth of God. As the mouth of God, he speaks valuable, precious things. He does not speak from the world of ashes nor from the dungeon of despair. Instead, he expresses the promises of God in a living faith, though everything is against him and God seems to slay him.

I think of the dear family in that terrible car

accident. They wept in my arms, and as they wept they said, "Our daughter is home with Jesus, and God was in this darkness. We discovered treasures of intimacy that we never understood, and that we never even remotely knew. At the hospital and in the funeral parlor, we discovered hidden riches in secret places. Secret riches were in darkness that we could never understand until now."

And that pastor, after suffering a nervous breakdown, became a Finished Work man of God. He discovered secret riches in darkness.

The Word of God says in Psalm 139:12 that darkness and light are alike to God. "Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day." They are the same! There is no difference, from God's viewpoint.

In Psalm 18:28, "…the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." That is the verse that says, "Circumstances have not changed, but circumstances do not control me." By the light of God's Word, the character of Christ is being formed in me.

We are in a body of death. We are in a body of sin. We're in a world where every single nation has come into judgment. According to 2 Timothy 3, we are living in perilous times,

where men are "lovers of their own selves" more than of God. We are in a time when people have a form of godliness—but only a form—through knowledge. Those same people deny the very power of faith (2 Timothy 3:5). They deny the power of faith in the thick darkness.

Get to Know God in Darkness

I have gotten to know God more in darkness than I ever did in the light. I have gotten to know God more on my knees, weeping and very near to despair—living in the paradox of faith but trusting God, not situations. Then, as I trust Him, obedient to the light that I have, God imparts His character through His promises.

With the impartation of God's truth comes spiritual reality, and a man's voice becomes, indeed, the mouth of God. Moses' voice became the mouth of God. Abraham and Sarah could not conceive their promised son Isaac, and when God postponed that conception until they were old and past age, Abraham believed God, "who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17). The things that were not, were now the things that were happening!

Their faith said, "Though these things have

not happened, they *are* happening. God is in this time when we have to wait."

God has never let a person down. Jesus Christ will never leave us nor forsake us—not one single time. Not only is God waiting in thick darkness, but also He is waiting to enlighten our darkness. He is waiting to help us walk through it. He's waiting to teach us to go from faith to faith into a new stage of supernatural trust, a new stage of reliance. He is waiting for us to enter a new stage where we are divorced from the things that are by sight, and we enter into intimacy with the things that are strictly from God. We must not forget this, because every single one of us will face the most unusual adversity.

A well-known writer and servant of God who wrote a great theological work heard that he had terminal cancer. When he was told the prognosis, this man said, "I believe God wants me to write more volumes for Him. I'm willing to go home to be with Him, but He wants me to write more."

And so, given up to die within a matter of four or five weeks, the Holy Spirit came and beautifully visited him and brought an end to his darkness. God brought him out of that darkness to complete his work. Healed, he lived for

several more years.

Many of you remember the precious pastor Vernon McGee who lived many years after being told he would die. God delivered him from the darkness of death and gave him eighteen more years, even though he had a terminal cancer.

God is in darkness. Don't withdraw into your flesh. Don't withdraw into despair. Don't eat the fruit of lies, and don't feed on ashes. That is not God's will, it is not God's life, and it is *not* God's light.

Remember this: Your character will overcome your circumstances. Your faith will overcome the world system, and Jesus Christ has already overcome your old sin nature.

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:4). We are married to One who has been raised from the dead. Because we have the Spirit of Resurrection (Romans 6:13; 8:11), we are *married* to Him. And because we are, we have power in darkness, power in pain, power in faith, power that can remove mountains.

God has given us this mystical faith that comes from Himself, and that's why He wants our mouth to be as the mouth of God. Don't speak something vile. Don't speak with words of doubting. Don't speak with words of mistrust. Don't speak with words that uncover your circumstances, and don't energize the plan of the atmosphere to disannul God's *purpose* for the darkness. Instead, remember this:

In that darkness, you will reign in Christ through righteousness and by grace. Reign in reality, not in familiarity. Reign in truth, not in sentimentality. Reign by godly decisions throughout the week. Keep making *godly* decisions.

Then, as the Word of God beautifully says, "…darkness was under his feet" (Psalm 18:9). You are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3); therefore, that darkness is under your feet. You may be *in* it, but it's *under* your feet!

Not only is darkness under your feet, but what is darkness to the world is light to you. You have the light of a living fellowship—a living faith in a living Christ—and you are married to Him.

CONCLUSION

In Isaiah 52:1-2, the Word of God says, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength….Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion." Shake off the dust! Be loosened!

We have an opportunity to gain so much from this message, to drive the stakes into the ground and to establish spiritual gains and spiritual victories. Don't let it pass by, but remember the verses and the words that were given. Ponder and meditate upon them. Wash your steps in the butter of the milk of God's Word as the candle shines upon your mind and as the Rock pours out rivers of oil to make it a reality.

Father, lead us with the presence of truth motivating and manifesting Jesus Christ to us individually, personally. When we are reduced to thick darkness, may we glorify God by the light of faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Fishing for Men

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

We are very much indebted to Dr. Jack Hyles and to the late Dr. John Rice for the tremendous contributions they have made to our ministry. We are especially grateful for Dr. Hyles' booklet, "Let's Go Soul Winning" and for the Spirit-inspired messages these men delivered at a Sword of the Lord Conference many years ago in Maryland.

We praise God for these men, for their challenge, and for their words of encouragement. They have inspired us to be soul-winners, and also to teach soul-winning wherever we go, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The late Dr. Bob Jones Sr., a great man of God, once said: "God is hard up. He can use even *you* to win souls!" Let's take on the chal-

lenge and, trusting the Lord, become skillful in the use of His Word, bringing many to righteousness.

Chapter One

WHY SHOULD WE GO FISHING FOR MEN?

The Bible says "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and that the whole world is guilty before God (Romans 3:19). Men are lost to God as fish in dark waters are hid from men's sight. Why should we go fishing for men? The first reason is that man has inherited a sinful nature (Psalm 51:5); he cannot save himself (Psalm 39:5*b*). All of his righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of a holy and perfect God (Isaiah 64:6); therefore, man is condemned already (John 3:18).

How will they know unless they hear? And how will they hear unless we go?

We should go fishing for men through the Holy Spirit of God because a man is lost until he makes a personal decision for Christ; he is lost until he receives salvation by grace through faith

(Ephesians 2:8) in the form of a new birth (John 3:3-8). He must be born of the incorruptible Word (1 Peter 1:23) and regenerated by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5), so that he can become a child of God (John 1:12-13) and an adult son of the Father (Romans 8:14-15), hid in the family of God (Colossians 1:13).

When we use the word *lost*, we mean that a soul is lost to God, lost to heaven, lost to the very purpose for which the Lord created man; that is, we are to bring glory to God (Isaiah 43:7) by having dominion in life with God's purpose, and to reproduce in others the same life the Holy Spirit wrought in us (Genesis 1:28). It also means that in his experience, the unsaved man is lost to the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Although God's unspeakable gift has been purchased for every man, no one can know true unconditional love, joy unspeakable in the midst of adversity, or the peace that passes understanding, unless he is born again (John 3:7).

Illustration of the Four Lost Things

In Luke 19, God's purpose on earth is made clear: Jesus Christ came to seek and to save *all* manner of lost souls, not regarding the severity of one man's sins over another's. In God's eyes

we are all totally depraved and utterly lost. To illustrate for our limited minds the devastating reality of our condition and to convey the overwhelming desire of His Father's heart, Jesus often spoke in parables. In Luke 15, Jesus relates the parables of lost things: the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost prodigal son, and the lost elder son. Each case reveals God's heart in action to recover that which is lost. With the parables, Jesus illustrates the principle of lost things: the principle of seeking until they are found and rejoicing after they are found.

God neither neglects nor forgets the lost ones. In Luke 15, as the Shepherd, He left the whole flock to go after the *one* who had gone astray. That sheep is a picture of a soul who is lost through ignorance. By nature, sheep will wander through any gap left open for them, even to their own destruction. Many people simply ignore the warning signs on the road of life and are lost because they took a way that *seemed* right, though the end was death (Proverbs 14:12). God has called us to go out to the hedges and the highways and to compel people to come in.

The coin was lost through the carelessness of others. Although it still existed quite nearby, it

had no purchasing power until it was found. Just like the woman with the candle who sought for the coin tirelessly, God sends out a light to shine in dark places, under layers of neglected refuse, seeking the lost (Matthew 5:14). Still, many people are lost through the carelessness of church-going Christians who, knowing how to win people to Christ, do not let their light shine unto men. They do not apply the grace, power, courage, or enthusiasm to go out and accomplish the great commission (Mark 16:15).

The prodigal son was lost through rebellion. Self-centered, he reacted against what he saw as restrictions and demands of his father. Many are lost because of rebellion toward God—judging God's motives without knowing His heart. They know what they *should* do but refuse to do it. His heart broken, the father of the prodigal did not forsake his lost son, but stood waiting—with hope—for his son's return.

Finally, God did not overlook the less obvious category: The prodigal's brother, the elder son, was lost in covetousness and the self-righteousness of good works—works that could never be good enough to satisfy the demands of perfect righteousness. Many in the church have had a pre-salvation experience that never led to

a true conversion. They have smothered the Holy Spirit with the weight of "responsibility." They do all their work in the flesh through a sense of duty with neither the joy of the Holy Spirit as their motivating power and strength (Nehemiah 8:10) nor the perfect peace of God. To this group, God demonstrates the free gift of grace and mercy through the message of the Finished Work (John 4:34; 17:4; 19:30). The father waited patiently for the elder son to realize that he had everything he could ever need, if he would only appropriate his provision.

Why should we go fishing for men? Because mankind is lost. Every adult, every teen-ager, every older person, every young person who has reached the age of accountability—everyone is lost until he comes to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. In order to be saved from the awful torment of hell, each soul must have a specific moment in his life when he makes a definite decision to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, by God's grace and through the faith imparted by the Holy Spirit.

The last words in the book of James exhort: "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

There are tremendous rewards being stored up in heaven for the soul-winner (Daniel 12:3).

The Happy Church

Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost (Luke 19:10). When the lost things were found, the Word of God teaches in Luke 15 that in each case there was rejoicing and celebrating. Similarly, there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth (Luke 15:7).

This should be reason enough to make any church happy. Just think of it. One soul is worth more than all the world (Matthew 16:26)! No wonder churches today are unhappy, morbid, petty, and critical. They are unhappy because they are not winning souls. They do not have the joy of the Holy Spirit (John 15:11). They do not come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves (Psalm 126:6).

In Luke 15:9, when the woman found her lost coin, she called her neighbors together saying, "Rejoice with me!" When the prodigal came home to his father, a great feast was prepared. Is it any wonder that God says in John 13:17, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"?

If you want a happy church—a church that rejoices at all times, a church on fire and filled

with the Holy Spirit—get to know the Savior personally, like never before. Study the Word of God fervently. Ask God to give you His heart for the lost. Pray for souls specifically, then go out sowing the precious seed of the Gospel.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:5-6).

By simply obeying this verse, believers will have a happy, wholesome, vigorous, enthusiastic, spiritual church.

Where Should We Go Fishing for Men?

Matthew 13:38 tells us that the field is the world. God gave His own Son for the sins of the whole world. "… And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). We need a vision for souls at home and abroad, for souls in our neighborhood and in faraway places.

We should cultivate this vision with much prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and with much compassion: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41). When I pray, I love to look at pictures of our

missionaries. I love to think of the precious folks I've met whose lives have been transformed by the Savior—and all because some chose not to live unto themselves, but, as debtors, are giving their lives freely.

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). Everything we have was given to us by God. Faithful stewardship means guarding the gift that is in us, then giving ourselves.

Where should we go? Wherever there are souls. That means anytime, anyplace. Go knowing that Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), and that if we open our mouth, He will fill it (Psalm 81:10). Study the Word daily, always setting the Lord before your face. As you grow in your understanding of categorical doctrine, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, you will have tremendous insight, knowing how to answer and when to speak.

When Should We Go Fishing for Men?

Now is the accepted time, just as it was for the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 6:2). Now is the accepted time for people to receive deliverance. I believe what the Word of God says in Proverbs 27:1, "Boast not thyself of to morrow;

for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Later may be too late.

I believe that we should redeem the time now, because the days are evil. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:16-17). Purpose in your heart to have specific times for soul-winning. Plan to go. Build time for soul-winning into your weekly schedule. And be ready, when it may not be convenient, to give an answer of the hope that is within you (1 Peter 3:15).

Pray for opportunities at home, at the factory, at school, in the office—wherever we can, sow the seed. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). God has promised us that when we give forth His Word, it will not return void, but shall accomplish what pleases God (Isaiah 55:11).

Chapter Two

WHAT SHOULD WE SAY OR DO WHEN WE GO FISHING FOR MEN?

In this chapter, we will discuss the practical aspects of soul-winning. Remember the principles that the great soul-winners of our day have taught us. It is important to be neat and clean. It is good to go out with another person (Mark 6:7). Be prepared to provide scriptural answers by carrying a small Bible. When people read for themselves the answers to their questions in the Word of God, it reinforces the Truth and overcomes false concepts. Avoid confrontational discussions that lead nowhere. Consider what Jesus said: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

Go out, regardless of the clouds, regardless of

the weather, regardless of the pressures and trials of our day (Ecclesiastes 11:4). Be very sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. While one person is talking, the other soul-winner can pray and deal with any distractions that may inhibit the person from receiving the Gospel. Pray for the key that will unlock his soul. The Holy Spirit will reveal the Savior through a yielded vessel who knows how to hear from God.

Practical Approaches in Soul-Winning

Here, we will present some simple methods for people who appear more prepared to hear the Gospel and be saved. God has allowed me to use these approaches in my personal ministry and I have found them effective when employed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Also, make sure you are relaxed as you minister the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. If they ask any questions, write them down. Do not let that cause you to deviate from the plan. Explain that theirs is a good question, and you will answer it later.

The ABCD Plan

First, in the case of a person who has been prayed for and has heard the Gospel, and who

seems ready to receive Christ, it's good to use the "ABCD" plan.

Start with the Scripture, "For *all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Ask the person you are speaking to, "What does the word *all* mean?" Ask him, "Does *all* include you?"

Next, you can say, "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). As Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose again on the third day, and that He went to heaven and is coming back for us soon. *Believe* is a verb that expresses action and means to rely on, depend on, and trust in wholly. A person who believes this way will accept God's Word as Truth and start following Jesus Christ, first in his mental attitude and then in his outward behavior, as he is transformed by the mind of Christ from the inside out.

Ask the person you are witnessing to, "Do you believe this?" If he agrees, go on.

"If thou shalt *confess* with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is

made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10). "For whosoever shall *call* upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). Man's part is to *confess* and to *call*. God's part is to fulfill the promise, "…thou shalt be saved." For how long is one saved? For eternity, because "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36).

After a person has made a profession of faith, teach him the great principle of *depending* on the Lord and not himself, trusting in the Lord with all his heart (Proverbs 3:5-6). Explain the importance of his decision and build him up in his new identity.

The Romans Road Plan

Another plan used by many soul-winners is the Romans Road. The main verses used in this plan are taken from the book of Romans. It is much better for the person to read these verses for himself.

Begin with Romans 3:10, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." Ask him whether this verse includes him, then read Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Proceed to Romans 6:23, "For the wages of

sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." At this point, you can explain the meaning of *death*. Generally speaking, death means to be disconnected from your environment.

Explain that there are three kinds of death. First, there is *spiritual death*. Because of the Fall, every man is spiritually dead, disconnected from God's life, until he accepts Christ. *Physical death* is when a man's body dies and goes into the grave, cut off from loved ones and cherished things (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Finally, there is *eternal death* when a man who is not saved is cast into the Lake of Fire forever and ever, where the conscience never dies (Revelation 14:11; 20:15).

After you have explained death, show him that man's natural condition is that he is lost before God, because he is in sin and because he inherited at birth a sinful nature (Psalm 51:5). It is not the *sins*—the things he does—that make him lost, although he does them because of what he is by nature. It is the *sin nature* he possesses that is governing and controlling his life, whether it controls in a way that seems bad *or* good to him. Any natural goodness we have is only self-righteousness and filthy rags, in God's viewpoint (Isaiah 64:6).

Move on to Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Give an illustration of the manner in which Christ died and paid for our sins. Use the example of paying for groceries for someone with whom you have not had a good relationship. Because he is sick and in need, you bring the groceries, knock at his door, and offer the gift. When he asks why you've done this, you answer, "It's because of love; I care for you." You've paid his bill in full. Now, with his free volition, he can either accept the groceries or reject them. Regardless of his response, it remains a free gift, something he did not earn or deserve.

Then, explain that Jesus Christ is offering us the supreme gift: Salvation by grace through faith, not of ourselves (Ephesians 2:8). To be saved, a person must be willing to accept and to receive the gift of God. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

The fourth point is Romans 10:9-13: If I confess Him with my mouth, *and* believe in my heart, Jesus says that I am saved. We are not saved by our feelings, and we are not saved by

someone's theory. Therefore, if God says we are saved, it is a fact: We are saved, and the Holy Spirit will bear witness of this truth in our hearts (John 16:13).

After a person has made a profession for Christ, the next step is to reinforce what he has done, by reviewing the Scriptures.

The Importance of Discipleship

Discipleship is the key to spiritual growth for the new believer. The Holy Spirit will impart a hunger for the Word, so make sure he has a Bible of his own. Always keep the Word of God as the focus. In our ministry, we are very fortunate to have doctrine booklets and tapes that address specific categories and can be used as a basis for Bible study.

Encourage him in understanding the importance of praying without ceasing, of starting the day by setting the Lord before his face. If he is from your area, you can invite him to attend church with you and introduce him to other members of the church. This will help him to experience the love and the life of the Body of Christ. This exposure to fellowship with other believers will help to cultivate healthy spiritual attitudes, to help him think with God.

Remember, spirituality is not measured according to the amount of time invested. The woman at the well was winning souls the same day she was saved (John 4:3-42)! Don't limit the new believer's expectations of his own potential for growth. Encourage him, pray for him—be a true friend.

Chapter Three

MEETING A CHALLENGE

In Luke 16, the rich man, tormented, lifted up his eyes in hell and begged God to send a messenger to his brothers so they would not suffer the same fate.

As much as we have received a supernatural call from above and a call from the world with all its natural needs, we have also received a call from below. Every person who ever died thinking he had no need for the Savior is calling to us to go and tell. There are more people in hell today who now believe the Truth than those who can be found on earth.

If someone does not believe in the Bible, you must approach him differently. This type of person is not rebellious or openly defiant; he simply does not know, or is not convinced, that the Bible is true because no one has ever taken the time to show him why he should believe in the Bible.

Begin by laying the foundation that every word of God is true (John 7:17) and that every word of God is pure (Proverbs 30:5). We have no right to add anything to God's Word or to remove anything from it (Revelation 22:17-19).

I proceed very tactfully and carefully, by giving my own testimony. Someone who does not happen to have this type of testimony can give the testimony of a person similar to myself. I was a Unitarian before I was saved and, consequently, was very skeptical of God's Word. I was reasonably successful in business and I did not give God any room in my heart. I had false concepts that everyone was going to go to heaven and that there was a heaven but no hell. I did not accept *all* of the Word of God, just parts of it. God spoke to me about receiving the totality of His Word. After a careful study of the whole counsel of God, I was broken—prepared to receive the truth of the Gospel.

When a person is skeptical, and does not wish to use the Bible as a foundation, you can use the five laws of education, principles in the art of learning. This is commonly referred to as the scientific method for objective observation.

First, we have the law of similarities which includes identifying a problem, such as a statement

of belief, that must be tested and proven. For our example, we recognize that one dog is like another dog, enabling us to label him *dog*.

Then there is the law of contrasts, by which we are able to distinguish one dog from another dog as having different qualities. By careful observation and recording data, that information becomes the basis for categorizing its attributes and further distinction from other animals.

Thirdly, we have the law of consistency. This is when the observable data is sifted and correlations, meaningful connections, and regularities are noted and categorized so we are able to arrive at a universally consistent definition of a dog and thus make him a valid subject for our study.

This is followed by the law of logic, by which we can form a hypothesis or generalization to explain existing data. So we are able to infer, through an educated guess, what causes dogs to behave the way they do and how we can use them practically for our own purposes.

Finally, there is the law of understanding, whereby we draw a conclusion and state it as fact, until proven otherwise. In this case we are able to make a statement about dogs in their relationship to the entire scheme of our experience.

Any defense of atheistic or theistic evolution must employ these five principles. A truly impartial jury would listen to the claims and investigate the evidence before reaching its decision on the matter.

Evolution claims that all living organisms evolved from one original cell and that the one cell multiplied and developed into a many-celled organism, which reproduced itself and evolved through chance mutations, natural selection, and survival of the fittest. Finally, there arose a complex being, like man, with many organs, functions, and faculties for life. In other words, that theory suggests that intelligent man evolved by purely unintelligent processes from an originally unintelligent blob of protoplasm.

When analyzed according to these five laws of education, the theory of atheistic evolution does not explain much about man; its flaws become readily apparent. Neither does a theistic variety of evolutionary theory change the picture essentially, for we immediately run up against the objection that God, in His only revelation to us, the Bible, has never told us that He made us this way. To accept a theory about God which is contrary to His own revelation is certainly not very intelligent either.

When witnessing to someone who is skeptical of the Biblical record, it can be useful to draw evidence from the realm of science that bears testimony to the truth of God's Word.

The Stars and the Earth

For example, in Genesis 15:5, God brought Abram outside his tent and said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (See also Psalm 147:4 and Isaiah 40:26). The Bible declared the stars to be numberless long before astronomers became aware of this fact. One astronomer in the third century B.C. counted 675 fixed stars. One hundred years later, 1,028 stars were counted. As late as the 18th century, 3,000 stars had been cataloged. Then, in 1862, with the aid of telescopes, a European observatory cataloged 300,000 stars. Today we know that there are over 200 billion stars *in our galaxy alone*.

In Isaiah 40:22, God claims that the earth is round: "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers."

Though most of the ancients believed the earth to be flat, some daring astronomers, fol-

lowing Aristotle's surmise, believed it to be round.

Columbus, studying early maps—the first depicting a round earth—sailed across the Atlantic to discover the New World in 1492. Following him in 1519-1521, Magellan's crew was the first to circumnavigate the earth.

In Job 26:7, God claims that the earth is suspended in space: "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." Ancient fables and stories commonly pictured the earth as supported on the backs of elephants, turtles, serpents, etc. It was not until modern times that the earth was found to be suspended in its orbit within the sun's gravitational field.

The Weather Patterns

God even tells us about the laws of meteorology: "The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits" (Ecclesiastes 1:6). "He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth" (Psalm 135:7). "For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof" (Job 36:27).

Apart from the Bible, men had not discovered these facts until the basic laws of aerodynamics, thermodynamics, and hydrodynamics were formulated by a German physicist in 1888. Today we know that the air, with its currents affected by the earth's rotation, is cooled in the north and veers along the ground southward toward the equator where it is heated. The air then rises, returning northward through the upper atmosphere, and the water, evaporated from the earth's surface by the heat of the sun, rises upward to be condensed into clouds. It is later precipitated on the earth as rain and snow. Once again, science validated what God had already documented.

On the Human Body

In Leviticus 17:11, God claims that "the life of the flesh is in the blood." The event that marked the beginning of modern medicine was the discovery, in 1611, that the life of the body is carried through the circulation of the blood.

In Leviticus 13, God proclaimed that those afflicted with leprosy should be quarantined, set apart from the healthy congregation, until they could be pronounced "clean" by the priests. Centuries later, after disease spread uncon-

trolled throughout Europe killing millions, the Levitical quarantine principle was rediscovered. The quarantine principle is a medical standard today, and many diseases have virtually disappeared as a result.

Similarly, in Leviticus 15, God instructed Israel to bathe in water and to wash clothing and any contaminated surfaces in order to prevent the spread of infection. In the medical center of Vienna in 1840, one of every six women died in the maternity wards until a young doctor established the principle of sanitation. He ordered those under him to wash their hands in water before examining their patients. Later in 1860, Louis Pasteur demonstrated the bacterial origin of disease. In 1868, Lister developed antiseptic surgery. In 1876, Dr. William Park started the modern surgical practice of washing the hands in running water.

The Bible and Technology

Certain technological advances were also mentioned in the Bible. These prophecies and their fulfillment could also be used when confronting a skeptic.

For example, in Daniel 12:4, God claims that in the time of the end "many shall run to and fro,

and knowledge shall be increased." Modern times are principally characterized by modern travel and the unprecedented explosion of scientific discovery. Today, man's technical knowledge has enabled him to put men on the moon and travel across the ocean in a matter of minutes.

In Isaiah 40:31 and 60:8, God foretells of the invention of the airplane: "They shall mount up with wings as eagles." "Who are these that fly as a cloud?" In the year following the establishment of the independent State of Israel in May, 1948, over 240,000 Jews returned to their homeland—tens of thousands by airplane!

In Nahum 2:4, referring to the Assyrian war chariots, God tells of the automobiles that were to come: "The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings." This is no doubt a picture of the traffic of automobiles along the streets and highways of our modern cities.

If the skeptical person seems to be at all impressed or convinced after you have presented these claims and evidences, ask him, "If God is telling the truth in one part of the Bible, must He not also be telling the truth in the rest of the Book? If His Word, the Bible, is right in all of its

claims about other matters, isn't it also right about man's sin and his need of redemption?"

If the listener seems open, go on to present the plan of salvation: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Lead him to salvation by grace and through faith.

Chapter Four

SOME CONVERSATIONAL APPROACHES TO SOUL-WINNING

"I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt [the unsaved world]: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalm 81:10).

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Be ready. Be willing. Be wise. By continuing to faithfully study the Word of God, falling in

love with its precepts, garnering the treasure it holds, and by continuing fervently in prayer for the lost, God will be faithful to fulfill His great commission through you. Consider the following:

If someone talks of the weather, lead him into the following Scripture: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22).

If someone talks of false doctrine, lead him into 1 Timothy 4:1-2: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

If someone talks about sickness, lead him to Romans 7:24 and Romans 8:22: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

If someone talks about a daughter getting married, bring up John 2:1-2: "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was

called, and his disciples, to the marriage."

If someone talks about the trouble with young people, lead him to 2 Timothy 3:2-3 and Romans 3:10: "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection." "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."

If someone talks about losing a baby, lead him to Mark 10:14 and Matthew 18:10: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

If someone talks about death and dying, tell him that no man alive has ever been through death, so no one can fully identify. But Jesus Christ, who was God in a man, experienced in His humanity the most excruciating death, which included being forsaken and without comfort. Then, beautifully, you can bring in the fact that the One who died for his sins is the One who ever lives. Jesus wants to be his Savior, and promises to never leave him nor forsake him (Hebrews 13:5*b*), even unto death.

CONCLUSION

"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Jesus Christ promises to be our wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:30), our peace (John 20:21), our joy (John 15:11), our strength (Psalm 27:1; Philippians 4:13), and our refuge (Psalm 46:1). He promises to do the convicting through the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11), to draw all men unto Himself if we exalt Him (John 13:32), to do the regenerating (Titus 3:5), to keep us from falling (Jude 24), and to make us stand (Romans 14:4).

His grace is sufficient for us in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). His perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). He will be with our mouth (Exodus 4:12) and His Spirit will speak through us (Luke 12:12; 21:15). His very presence will go with us (Exodus 33:14; Matthew 28:20).

Moreover, it is His Word that will do the work (Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 55:11).

God does not look at people and circumstances from a limited, temporal, earthly point of view, but from a boundless, eternal, heavenly point of view. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). He accomplishes everything, just as He created the universe, by His Spirit (Psalm 104:30; Zechariah 4:6) through His Word (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:3).

Consider Isaiah 55:10-11, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower [the soul-winner], and bread to the eater [the hungry soul]: So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Here, God gives the soul-winner a threefold promise regarding His Word, like three comfortable chairs in which to rest spiritually and emotionally. The first chair represents the fact that the Word of God "shall not return unto me

void"; the second, "it shall accomplish that which I please"; and the third, "it shall prosper in the things whereto I sent it."

In other words, God promises that we can rest in Christ as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). This means I never need to worry, fret, or be disturbed over the thought of soul-winning. God will do what He desires through me if I will trust in Him. The flesh would like to see results in the form of some visible manifestation of success, for the old man cannot trust God by faith (1 Corinthians 2:14), but I must walk by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). The person who walks in the Spirit by faith and not by sight *believes* the promises, *obeys* the command, then *rests* in Christ who is executing the Father's will in the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25; 2 Corinthians 5:7).

"For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 55:12-13).

You will go out, not in your natural ability under pressure of the command, but with the joy of the Lord as your strength. All the time you are out sowing the seed, you will be led by His peace, regardless of the results. God himself will bring the increase! So now, let's obey Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8):

"*Go quickly, and tell*" (Matthew 28:7)!

Focus on Jesus

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INTRODUCTION

At different times and in different ways, Satan confronts Christians with burdens: things to distract us, to keep us from focusing on who God is and what Christ has done. The god of this world knows that we can lose our focus through confusion and wrong priorities, As a result, we will begin to bear the image of Adam, making it difficult to maintain that very personal relationship with the Lord.

Adam's image is inside every one of us, and he has a very definite image. But when we are focused on Jesus Christ and our focal point is His Word, we rest in who we are in Christ, seated far above Adam.

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF LOSING YOUR SIGHT

In the Garden of Eden, before Eve partook of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam was silent. He was right there, but he was silent. He did not express the Word of God at all. He did not speak up. And in his silence, he became passive. As Eve partook of that fruit and offered it to Adam, he did not say a word, though he knew it was wrong. In his passivity, in his silence, he simply took the fruit, "…and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6).

In marriages where one or both partners become passive, they have the wrong focal point. Eve was not focused and Adam was passive and silent; he "went along to get along."

One of the most important things in all the world is to focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me"

(John 6:45).

The apostle Paul said, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Timothy 3:14). In other words, we should do the things that we have learned and continue in the truth.

Eyes Trained to See beyond the Obvious

We have learned so much, and we are always learning something more. Here, the Word of God is emphasizing that we should continue in the truth we have received. That means we are to stay focused, having the Word of God as our focal point, with Jesus Christ at the center. When Eve disobeyed, Adam's silence changed his relationship with God. His passivity destroyed his relationship with his perfect environment.

With that understood, Psalm 25:9 says that God wants us to learn by being taught in meekness: "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." That is, not just knowledge found in words, but the impartation of life itself.

In Psalm 71:17, David said, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." The orig-

inal language implies, "You have taught me, and I have enjoyed learning."

It is such a joy to walk on a pathway illuminated by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God with the resurrection life of God.

Dechomai (translated as "receive," in James 1:21) means "to receive by deliberate preparedness and ready reception by being hungry to learn."

Many Christians have demonstrated a tremendous hunger to learn. The Greek word *prosdechomai* ('receive' in Romans 16:2 and Philippians 2:29) means "to receive with approval."

Occasionally I have preached some rather difficult messages. When people who are having problems receive those messages well, it is a great blessing. They approved of being convicted. Furthermore, they approved upon their conviction. They were convicted because of wrong decisions, but they approved of the messages because the Word released them as it brought them into the light.

The Greek word *didaskolos* (Ephesians 4:11) refers to one who instructs the students so they can continually learn to be like Christ and thus make disciples educated in like manner. This comes from the root word *didasko*, which means

"to educate, to train, to develop mental skills and talents, without jeopardizing your individuality."

Don't Be Weary—Get Rest

"And [the fourth beast] shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws…" (Daniel 7:25*a*).

The Word of God reveals to us in Daniel 7:25 a necessary verse to comprehend. Satan is continually trying to make the saints weary—to wear them out, get them confused, and burn them out. He goes after people who have been on the road for years, trying to wear them out with the details of life, to take away any spiritual skills they have, and to take on the worldly skills of pride, passivity, or silence toward God.

Regarding Satan's attack to make the saints weary, Galatians 6:8 says, "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Then, in verse 9, Paul says, "And let us not be weary in well doing."

Do not get weary in being right with God. Don't become weary in making good decisions. Don't become weary in being a good person in

Christ.

The whole purpose of Satan is first to cause a person to be weary or silent toward God, to hinder an active dialogue mentally or emotionally. Satan would love to have a person become passive toward the Promises, toward obedience, toward being a servant. The devil would love to see a person become passive toward an intimate love relationship. Satan likes to make people strive in their flesh.

Occasionally, Christians become weary. The temptation is to say, "I've been faithful for many years." For them, the Christian life became wearisome, and they did not continue to receive a fresh capacity to be spiritually healthy in their Christian life. That is why the Lord said through the apostle Paul that we should not be weary in our well doing, "for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

Chapter Two

THE ANSWER TO STRIFE: COME UNTO ME

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth [(weighs)] the hearts" (Proverbs 21:2).

According to Galatians 5:17, when we bear the image of Adam, the flesh wrestles against the Spirit, and the Spirit wrestles against the flesh. A person cannot wrestle forever without eventually getting tired. In fact, no one can wrestle without eventually becoming exhausted.

We are living in a time when just to stay in Christianity and feel accepted, many sincere believers feel they must act a certain way to make a good impression. Galatians 6:12 says, they "make a fair show in the flesh…." Why would they do this? "…only lest they should suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ." Instead of having Christ as their focus, their goal is to maintain a good reputation in the eyes of the world. Yet,

while they are making a fair show in the flesh, they grow weary. And though they lack the power or the provision to do what they are doing, they do it anyway, in the energy of the flesh.

When that happens, the self-pity usually comes back, wounds come back, and bitterness comes back. A Christian who is living in the flesh will feel confined, like a prisoner, all because his flesh desires something that it cannot fulfill because of what it knows about God. So this person will then try to do good, but evil will be present, and here we go again.

Listen and Learn so You Can See

But the Lord Jesus Christ puts it in a simple and beautiful way, and He says it so well:

"Come unto me" (Matthew 11:28*a*). That's all. He says, "Come, and learn of Me. There is something about Me that you haven't learned yet, so would you come and learn of Me? And by the way, I am meek and I am lowly in My heart. So you don't have to worry or fear Me in the wrong way."

Then He says, "Here is what you should do. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me. Go ahead—take My yoke. You will find rest unto

your soul, real rest that comes from Me. Not rest that comes from being away from problems. Not rest from getting out of the furnace. But you will find a tremendous release that you'll get from *learning* Me, not learning about Me but *learning Me*. And what are you going to learn? That I am meek, that I am lowly in heart, and that I will give you rest." But that is not all.

Yoke up with Meekness

"I want to tell you something so you will not be disturbed at all. I want to tell you this. My yoke is easy. My burden is light." Then He mentions that word "rest" again.

It is often difficult for pastors, because we always want to identify with people and to be very fair and loving and listen well when people are going through a hard time. A godly pastor desires to give them respect and honor, and to cherish what they are going through—to identify. Matthew 11 says it so simply:

"If you are struggling, *come*. If you have sinned, *come*. If somebody has hurt you, *come*. And as you come, learn of Me. You need to know these two things more than anything else: That I am meek and that I am lowly. That is what you are going to learn. Therefore, take My

yoke upon you, because it is a yoke of meekness and humility. That is the yoke you are taking on. It is not a heavy burden. My burden is very light."

Having lived on a farm, I learned that if you yoke up two animals, there is always one that is more aggressive. They always learn to work together well, as you know. But one is stronger and more aggressive while the other will follow and cooperate. If the load is heavy, the stronger one will always be the leader.

When we are yoked up with Jesus Christ, the test is to trust Him through what we know of Him, having a Spirit-filled heart and the Word of God dwelling richly in us. We yield to those simple words that Jesus said, "Come unto Me." That's all!

Notice that He did not say, "Get right." He didn't say, "By the way, you don't go soul winning." He didn't say, "You don't love your wife or your husband properly." He didn't say, "You watch TV too much." He didn't say that.

He said one thing: "Come unto Me, that's all. And learn of Me, because you are going to learn what I will be like in your situation, in your need right now. I am meek, humble. And during what you thought was such a severe

trial, you will suddenly find rest. You will find that the yoke in your situation is easy, and you will discover that the burden is very light."

Chapter Three

SEEING GOD IN EVERYTHING

"And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

"And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

"And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:15-17).

We do not teach idealism, and we do not try to impart an idealistic response in people. Rather, the Bible teaches us to walk by faith, with a response to the revelation of Christ's ideals through grace.

The Bible explains positional truth in Eph-

esians 2:5-6. As Christians, we who were dead in our sins are now raised up and have already been seated "together in heavenly places in Christ." So now, regardless of our situation, our position is above it all. It is not someday, but right now. While positional truth is idealistic, it is also very realistic. Therefore, it is relevant to any situation because of a revelation in the reality of faith.

There are times when we must assess our goals. We have to assess our schedules to make sure that we are not so overwhelmed with details that the reactive emotions within us are in control. When our emotions rule our thought life, we will become weary trying to preserve something in Adam. We find ourselves saying words that normally we would never say about anything or anybody. They kind of "slip out," and we realize that we really shouldn't have said anything.

It is quite wearisome to try to preserve Adam, since God already took care of him—convicted him, condemned him, and crucified him on the Cross, two thousand years ago. That is an idealistic yet relevant truth in the light of the Resurrection and positional principles. But there we are, trying to preserve Adam, while he just

causes more trouble, more striving, and more burdens.

This is what happens in some marriages. While they may not live in overt sins, when sincere people live in Adam, wounds from the past get in between them and the ones that they love. Sooner or later, they will blame people they love for their problems, when in fact it is past wounds acting up in Adam.

We are not our sin (Romans 7:20), but we do need to be released from the sins that so easily beset us (Hebrews 12:1).

Acting Out the Fall

A Christian who bears Adam's image continually (which is Satan's whole goal) will have days when he is angry, and in two minutes he can destroy someone's trust. He may say something way off, demonstrating the fall of Satan and the fall of man. Then, to cover himself, he tries to bear Adam's image of self-preservation.

God does not want us to control relationships or to make others dependent upon us. If a husband possesses his wife and if she becomes completely dependent upon him, that is not a good marriage. He may feel the need to control her because that gives him a sense of self-worth,

but he leaves her feeling worthless.

Remember that a good relationship does not just happen. A godly relationship comes by having choices, giving people freedom to use God's gift of free volition. If a man sees his wife as a gift from God, he will trust her. People must be free to express themselves and to live unto God in a godly way.

When the Lord Jesus Christ wants to teach us something through our failure, He says, "Come to Me. Yoke up with Me." Commit to Him the area that causes you to suffer. If you have a bad marriage, make a real commitment to God for that marriage.

Whatever problem you are having, make a serious commitment to God and to the Cross. A commitment is something you act upon. It is a decision. It is an act. Make it real.

The Value of a Promise

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee…." Think of that for a moment. Fear not, because I am with you. It's a simple thing. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God" (Isaiah 41:10*a*).

That is a personal promise. "…I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I

will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10*b*)—speaking of our Finished Work approval at the right hand of the Father.

So He is saying, "Do you understand what I want to do for you as you yoke up with Me? Do not fear, do not be dismayed. I will help you. I will uphold you." That is a wonderful promise.

According to Psalm 37:24 and Psalm 145:14, the Lord upholds the godly ones who fall; His hand is underneath so they do not utterly fall. Furthermore, He raises up the heads of those who are bowed down.

Our God is saying, "Do not fear. I am with you. I didn't leave you last night. I didn't leave you when you started to become negative. I wasn't able to help you because you wouldn't focus on Me. But I am right here to help you if you want Me to. So fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God: I will strengthen you, I will help you, and I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness."

How can you possibly get a better promise from the Holy Spirit than that verse? It is a tremendous verse. "I am with you. Don't fear, I'm with you. I am the only God, and I am with you. I am the only One."

"Do not be dismayed…." That means, "Don't become disoriented. Do not be confused. Do not be disturbed. I am thy God, and I will strengthen you. I will help you."

A Breath of Life

That is how I get very close to God, with so many days and hours on this journey. I take up a verse like that, embrace it, and then inhale it. Breathe it in. Without striving, simply accept what the Lord said. He said, "I will help you. Don't be afraid. I will strengthen you. I didn't tell you to change. I told you to let Me in with the yoke. My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. I didn't tell you that you are on trial. I just said *Come*, that's all. Come."

He will uphold us with His right hand. Throughout the Scriptures, "right hand" always speaks of acceptance. Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3). That means that He has been accepted in heaven as a Man, perfected in glory. Deity?—Yes. He is seated. The work is finished. And because it is finished, we can rest just as we are. That is why He is seated at the Father's right hand."

If I have power in my life from the Finished

Work—power that is pertinent, relevant, unchanging, personal, with meekness and lowliness, rooted in my soul (Colossians 2:7, Ephesians 3:17)—then the yoke is what? Easy. Why? Because I am properly focused.

My focus is on Jesus, my focal point is the Word, and my center is the Spirit glorifying Christ. If I lose my focus, I simply come right back and get focused. A person can be sincerely troubled, and he can find sincere people to listen to his story. But whoever listens must look unto Jesus and focus. He can hear everything and be caring and loving, but he must remain focused.

The Lord Jesus Christ has never, ever let down a person who will focus on Him. He upholds us with such divine love, meekness, lowliness, and *rest*!

We can carry on the duties that made us weary in the flesh, and now the yoke is easy and the burden is light. The very things that made us weary now take on a brand-new vitality when we focus on the Lord.

CONCLUSION

The whole goal of this message is to encourage us, with all of our hearts and with all of our minds, to follow God's way, live in God's truth, and experience God's life.

Any time He was in a room (Luke 4:20), all eyes were upon Jesus. Even on the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples saw only Jesus, and Moses and Elijah disappeared (Matthew 17:8).

When Philip witnessed to the Ethiopian eunuch, he turned to the book of Isaiah and said, "I will teach you about Jesus." That's all. Philip just taught the new convert about Jesus.

Someday we will meet the Lord in the clouds. We will become His bride forever with a great celebration at the marriage supper of the Lamb. But for right now, there isn't a more wonderful thing than to fall in love with Jesus Christ and to have a wonderful engagement time, getting to know Him intimately. Focus on Jesus. Let Him be your everything.

Focus on Mercy

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Instead of having to follow the letter of the law of God, Christians are living under an amazing New Covenant. God has written His law on our hearts and minds, and we walk before Him as His children.

As Christians, we have the privilege to make godly decisions daily, purposing to become what Christ wants us to be for that day. Every morning, noon, and night, we reaffirm those decisions.

Do we fail at times? Yes. But we continue to grow because we serve the God of all mercies. He loves it when we draw near to Him in full assurance. It is a worthy goal to develop a lifestyle that is focused on mercy.

As we will see in this booklet, we can go as far with God as we will receive His mercy to grow. We will grow in spiritual dimensions just as much as we understand that grace is for us. God's unconditional love is unchanging. Sooner

or later, it will change men and women who have God living inside of them.

Chapter One

PREPARED VESSELS

"And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart" (Deuteronomy 20:8).

The children of Israel had the Promised Land before them. But God knew that many would fret and be fainthearted, affecting others with their negativity.

So, God told Moses—in so many words—"I want those fainthearted folks to go home. I have given Israel this victory, but there will always be battles. They will have enemies to conquer in Canaan, houses to build, land to cultivate, and agriculture to develop. Everyone must be willing to fight and to work. The fainthearted shouldn't be there."

What caused the people to faint—to be discouraged, disheartened, despondent? They had

already survived years of cruel slavery in Egypt, escaped Pharaoh's army, and crossed the desert. They partook of God's miraculous provisions all along the way. So why would they give up now? The problem had to do with their vision. They were looking at the task instead of God's mercy.

Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory

"And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory" (Romans 9:23).

We were ordained to be vessels of mercy for the glory of God. An entire generation of God's people perished, except for Joshua and Caleb, because they rejected the mercy of God. Instead of accepting mercy (God withholding the judgment they deserved) which would have prepared them to receive His grace (God giving what they didn't deserve at all), they began to evaluate their own ability to take on the task—and they fainted.

As God leads, begin to get in the habit of saying, "Lord, I want to do everything to let Your mercy and Your grace make me what I can be and what I should be when I face You."

The Word of God has made it very clear that because of the mercy of our God on high, our

foot shall not be moved (see Psalm 21:7). Practically speaking, our foot shall not be moved because of the high and holy place of God's mercy.

Mercy Is Above

"I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

"For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens" (Psalm 89:1-2).

God has established His mercies in the heavens. His mercy is higher than anything in this life, greater than any power. He has established His mercy beyond principalities and powers, beyond the strength of the old sin nature of men, women, and young people. God has established mercy forever.

Chapter Two

THE GREAT MEETING OF MERCY AND TRUTH

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

"Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Psalm 85:10-11).

God wants us to understand the great possibilities that we have because of His mercy. It all began when mercy and truth met together. This truth is the truth about God's holiness, God's justice, God's sinlessness—the truth about God's perfection. It is the truth that God cannot look upon sin (Habakkuk 1:13), the truth that God hates unrighteousness and iniquity (Psalm 45:7).

So, in eternity past, Mercy said, "God, I want a meeting with You about Your holiness." And during a meeting known as the determinate counsel of the Trinity (Acts 2:23), Jesus Christ appealed to the Father and said,

"Father, you are the Father of mercies (2 Corinthians 1:3). If I become a man and die after living a perfect life in a hypostatic union (absolutely God and yet completely human), will You meet everyone who believes and receives Me, and give them Our righteousness?"

The Father said, "Yes, I will do it, Son, if You will die on the Cross of Calvary and become sin for the world. Then, as the Father of all mercies, I will meet the truth of holiness and perfect righteousness with mercy. My peace will come through that Cross and kiss My righteousness."

Because of that agreement in eternity past, sinners today can have peace and righteousness just by believing. Truth springs up from the earth, righteousness looks down from heaven, and we receive the truth about our new identity in Christ. We became brand-new the moment we were saved because of mercy.

We Obtain Mercy for Others

The Mercy Seat, in Exodus 25:22, was above the tables of stone—the written law we call the Ten Commandments. Because of this amazing mercy, we can say to God every morning: "You have given me mercy. It endures forever (Psalm 136), and it shall follow me all the days of my

life. Mercy rejoices against judgment (James 2:13), and because You have given me mercy through the riches of Your glory, You want to make me a vessel of mercy."

What does God want to accomplish in His Church, in a family, in a husband, in a wife, in a teenager or child? He wants to start in, through the riches of His mercy, by making us vessels of mercy. Each of us has been foreordained unto that reflection of God's nature.

The first thing the Word of God says about this is that He delivers us according to His mercy (Psalm 109:26). It is so important that we understand this: God delivers according to His mercy, not according to His Law, not according to His precious holiness, and not according to our frailties. Deliverance is always accompanied by mercy.

"Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore" (Psalm 18:50).

Christ is glorified when I can trust Him. My way is established by believing (2 Chronicles 20:20). I do not become established by worrying and fearing but by accepting what God has given. The issue is not what I do wrong but what Jesus Christ did right.

The whole key to our lives with Christ is found in Psalm 89, where David wrote, "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

"For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens."

Then, God declared: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,

"Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah." (Psalm 89:1-4).

King David—of all people—has a throne that is established in heaven; he will be on that throne during the Millennial Reign. As sinners saved by grace, we have received mercy not only for the future resurrection of our mortal bodies, but also to enjoy the sure mercies of David right now (Acts 13:34). And by that same mercy, we obtain mercy for others (Romans 11:31).

Mercy's Justification

Someone called me recently, crying because he is sick and he thinks he is going to die. I

prayed about what to say, and God gave me Philippians 2:27, concerning Epaphroditus: "For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

Epaphroditus was saved from physical death by mercy. The Bible doesn't mention why he was sick. It only says that mercy healed him.

In Psalm 6:2, Psalm 27:7, Psalm 51:1, David prayed, "Have mercy on me." Twice in Psalm 59, he referred to God as "the God of my mercy" (v. 10, 17).

In Luke 18:10-14, two men went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee boasted to God that he wasn't an adulterer and that he paid tithes and fasted. But the publican stood afar off, beating his breast, and prayed, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." He was saying, "God, I can't go near You—I can't even look up to heaven. Be merciful to me. I am a sinner." That is all he said. Jesus said the publican went home justified, but the Pharisee did not.

A New and Living Way

God wants us to understand that we have been given a fantastic new and living way. The Holy Spirit is a witness, in Hebrews 10:15. He

confirms that our sins and iniquities are remembered no more (Hebrews 10:17). Furthermore, he says that where there is remission of sins, there is no need for an offering (Hebrews 10:18). Instead, we have boldness to enter into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19), "by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Hebrews 10:20).

The veil in the holy place was torn from top to bottom, so the priests could look in. There was no longer a wall—no barriers to keep us from fellowship with God at the Mercy Seat. We have Jesus Christ, who is our High Priest, always pleading our case before the Father in heaven (Hebrews 9:24). God the Father will hear our every prayer because mercy met with truth, and mercy rejoices against judgment. Mercy is always waiting for us to receive its value, its capacity, its motivation, its presence of manifestation, its purity, and its integrity, because of His death for us which purchased our redemption.

Chapter Three

DRAW NEAR TO THE MERCY SEAT

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

"Let us hold fast to the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised;

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:22-25).

God never leaves out a single promise that grace and mercy ask Him to fulfill. And as the day of His return approaches, we should be fellowshipping around this mercy more and more.

We are saved by mercy through grace and

by faith. Mercy delivers us. In Psalm 90:14, mercy satisfies. It satisfied the publican who could only cry out, "Be merciful to me, a sinner." He went home justified, and he was satisfied with God's provision. For those who were living in adultery or in deceitfulness, when we ask for mercy in true repentance, just as David did, we will go away with amazing mercy.

Someone asked, "Do you think there is any hope for me? I went so far away from God, and I have done so much that has hurt my body."

God will deliver people from death, as He did Epaphroditus, because of mercy. Don't look for something else. Look for mercy, which is built up forever and established in heaven.

Mercy's Motivation

The psalmist said he would sing about the Lord's mercy (Psalm 59:16-17). Throughout all generations, the story of God's mercy is recorded in His Word, and it is there for us to read about today.

The Bible teaches us that grace has never at any time failed a sinner. And when a sinner understands grace, he doesn't want to continue in sin (Titus 2:11-12). He doesn't want to be faint-hearted or fearful. A sinner who understands

grace and mercy desires to go into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world with this message.

Grace and mercy motivate us to establish outreaches in our cities and to do all that we can to reach the lost, to help the poor, to bring joy and peace to the brokenhearted and to those who have failed. God wants to inspire prayers for the sick, and He wants to help the weak with His strength.

Exodus 15:13 tells us that God led Israel, whom He redeemed, with mercy. They went on in God's strength to His habitation because He guided them.

In Genesis 19:19, after he had failed miserably in Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot could say, "Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast [shown] unto me in saving my life…."

The angels pulled Lot and his family out of Sodom and told him, "Get out, and don't look back." Lot found grace and mercy in the sight of God.

There is no limit to what God can do in our hearts, in our minds, and in our emotions. Through this process of grace and mercy, we

become great vessels of mercy. Instead of following legalism and the letter of the law, desire to become vessels of mercy and children of grace who trust God. Receive His nature. He not only died for us but also died as us.

Mercy Says, 'Come'

Recently I heard on the news about a wealthy couple who lost everything. The wife had spent millions, and when her husband found out, he planned to take his life. He had left a suicide note, but his wife found him before he could take his life. Then she had a nervous breakdown. Oh, if these people would just taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8)! If only they would taste the love of God and the forgiveness of Christ and start over again. Oh, if they would just begin to understand and focus on the mercy of God.

No child of God has to be a second-rate citizen. A child of God doesn't have to be a casualty, even in failure. A child of God can run to the Holy of Holies. We can enter in boldly through the blood of Christ, through a way that was consecrated for us. It is a new way.

This new way doesn't say, "Stay out, sinner." It doesn't say, "You are bad—stay away." This

new way says, “Come boldly to the throne of grace and find mercy and grace to help in your time of need” (see Hebrews 4:16).

Don’t withdraw. Don’t withdraw when your marriage is going badly. Don’t withdraw when things in your business or in your family are not going well. Draw near, and focus on God’s mercy.

CONCLUSION

God writes His Word in the hearts and minds of believers (Hebrews 10:16). As a result, we have a great privilege to draw near. This is the new way. It is the key to victory, to power, to fellowship, to overcoming, to joy, and to prayer.

No matter how terrible you feel, draw near with a true heart and a true understanding of this new way with Jesus Christ. He will sprinkle your heart from evil and wash your body with the pure water of the living Word. How does God do this? He does it by the new and living way of mercy that rejoices against judgment.

God has already won the victory over sin and over death. He has already judged everything that we could be judged for. We are now candidates for faith, for grace, and for love. We have no reason to withdraw. God is for us, and He always will be for us. And when God is for us, who can be against us? (See Romans 8:31-39).

Dear Father, thank You for Your provision of

mercy. Teach us to stay focused on mercy and not on ourselves. Remind us to draw near instead of withdrawing. We are so glad for this new and living way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

For a Worm Such As I

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INTRODUCTION

In Scripture, the depiction of people as worms is so clear. God formed the first man, Adam, out of the dust of the earth. Worms spend most of their time in the dust and dirt, slithering through the debris the world drops on them—such an accurate of picture of what we are apart from God.

In Psalm 103, God is addressing all of us when He says, "Do not fear. I know everything about you. I know your frame; I know that you came from the dust. I understand this. And I love you."

All men are worms, and Jesus identified with all of us when He referred to Himself as a worm, in Psalm 22:6. This booklet reveals that even as worms, we are precious in God's sight. He chose to redeem us and to make us become like Him. So now, by His righteousness, we can produce fruit that others may partake of and enjoy.

Chapter One

RAISED OUT OF THE DIRT

"I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister" (Job 17:14).

"Behold, even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in God's sight.

"How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm? (Job 25:5-6).

"But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people" (Psalm 22:6).

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:13-14).

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 41:14).

Was it kind for our precious, compassionate Savior to address His people as worms? I mean, if someone were to come up to you and say,

"You worm!" would you be offended?

"Fear not, thou worm, Jacob—I will help thee!" says the Lord. This is a favorite passage for some people, and it is easy to see why. There are few seasoned Christians who would not embrace these words. And though God was making reference to Israel here, the sentiment extends to all of His people.

Really, it is quite a statement for God to make, since worms are considered by most as worthless at best.

The only individual God directly referred to as a worm was Jacob. He stole his brother's birthright. Then, after spending twenty years backslidden and in fear, the Lord called Jacob a worm. Why? Because he was very much like a worm.

The truth of the matter is that God addressed Jacob as a worm because worms spend all of their time in the dirt and they eat garbage. They also spread disease. Jacob ate garbage in the sense that he focused his life on fulfilling his flesh. Unsatisfied with his wife Leah, Jacob desired to have her sister Rachel instead. He spent fourteen years of hard labor to win her, and then she died while giving birth.

Any time people try to satisfy their flesh,

they take on the "worm" nature, to the point that they start to thrive on the dirt and the darkness. The garbage of pornography, of drugs, and of an inordinate desire for wealth have driven good people to unimaginable depravity. But do you know that, as God sees it, Christians who eat the garbage of bitterness, self-righteousness, slothfulness, or envy are just as depraved as those who eat the dust of the world?

In the end, Jacob became the father of twelve sons who became the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. That is a perfect example of the promotion of a worm. Jacob wound up being a very precious son of God.

God Knows Our Frame

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

God takes curses and turns them into blessings, and these blessings cannot be reversed. What a precious thing it is to realize that Jesus Christ said He was a worm because He was identifying with us. He numbered Himself with the transgressors. That was a part of the plan—

the plan that would find us numbered with the saints in glory, for all of eternity.

Chapter Two

ESTABLISH STRONG ROOTS

There can be no fruit in a Christian's life unless he has established roots in each category of the Word of God. Every fruit has to have a root. If I have the fruit of love, the fruit of kindness, the fruit of compassion, the fruit of forgiveness, these only come because the roots of God's love have been established in my life. We establish the roots, and the fruit will follow. What's more, every place we go we can make into a place of blessing.

A lady walked into her home one day and watched her brother gun down her father. It was such a shock to her that she ended up in a mental institution for a season. There, a pastor led her to the Lord Jesus Christ. After so much torment, at last she was able to embrace the distinct, expressed personality of God, and she was set free.

Personality is the distinct outward expres-

sion of what is on the inside. For example, if you have a caustic personality, which characteristically finds fault with others, you will play the blame game and never take responsibility for yourself.

In Genesis 3, Adam blamed Eve for his fall. "I would have never done that if it wasn't for the woman that you gave me. *She* gave the fruit to me." Eve blamed everything on the serpent. But, she didn't have to cooperate. Today, many Christians enter into the blame game, because they have personalities that are disordered, personalities that have flaws, and they choose to express the essence of those flaws.

How do we deal with the flaws in our personality? We say unto the mountain, "Be removed and cast into the sea." If we do not doubt in our hearts, God absolutely begins to work in our lives, taking care of those flaws. For example, the problem of personality clashes is one area where God can work. Maybe you have a personality that continually clashes with others—someone is always "rubbing you the wrong way." God desires to use situations like that to take away this personality flaw through Calvary.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be

knowledge, it shall vanish away.

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13).

D.L. Moody, one of Christianity's great evangelists, became very discouraged at one point, and it seemed as though he had lost his anointing. Ayounger pastor recognized what was happening and said to him, "You are discouraged and complaining because your anointing is gone. Try reading First Corinthians 13 every morning and night."

Moody did more than that. He read the chapter five times a day and by the thirteenth day the big man was on his knees. The Holy Spirit refreshed his soul and he began to weep

and weep. Once again, he was able to sense the presence of God in his preaching.

Expressing love is a distinct characteristic of a Blood-bought believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit and with the Word of God. A personality filled with God needs to have roots that are deep in doctrine, then it will produce fruit. This personality needs to have a place to go where it can always get blessed and be a blessing. This personality receives life through fellowship in the assembly, where the Word of God is preached. Then, together they go into all the world, pouring out the abundance they have received.

Chapter Three

POSSESS THE PROMISES

"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses" (Joshua 1:3).

"Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly" (Isaiah 6:2).

God loves to give us promises, but even more, He loves to give us the things that He promises! He gave to Israel the Promised Land, but it didn't do the people any good until they possessed it. They had to take possession; they had to put their foot down on the soil to possess that land that God had promised to give them.

In Isaiah 6:2, God wouldn't let the prophet see the faces of the angels about the throne of God. The seraphim had wings that covered their faces, because He wanted the focus to be on Christ. The wings here represent the abundance

of eternal life and having an attitude that says "not I, but Christ" (Galatians 2:20).

I know so many men whose faces are covered with eternal life. I consider their lives and all I can think of is the fruit of God they reveal: meekness, gentleness, quietness, and purity. The ushers who serve during our services, the teachers in our day school and Bible college, the pastors, the receptionists, and so many others—I think, "Oh, how faithful they are." Each name we consider reflects something distinct about the person.

When we start to go down a wrong way, the Holy Spirit is available to deal with our personalities, which can become manipulative and aggressive. He stands ready to control our impulses.

Manipulation and aggression can be dangerous to one's health. Consider Herod. God sent worms to consume Herod. God allowed the worms to feed on his flesh, and he was destroyed after he mocked God (see Acts 12:23).

The Thread of Redemption

The text of Exodus 28:5 speaks of the colors and the fabric used to make Aaron's robe. The scarlet color was made from the dried body of a

female worm (*towleah* in the Hebrew) that was squeezed and crushed to produce the dye. It was also used to color the linen that covered the table of shewbread. This is a beautiful picture of Christ, who was broken and who shed His blood so that we could be robed with His righteousness.

What an amazing truth this is! The scarlet threads come from a worm, but the full value of the worm was not revealed until after its death. The sacrifice, the thoughtfulness, and the victory of love—the scent of Redemption comes out of "worms" who are willing to be crushed for God's purpose.

CONCLUSION

We are no longer worm-like when God is allowed to give us a personality from heaven. The Holy Spirit equips us to reproduce the fruit of our roots in love, peace, joy, longsuffering, gentleness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.

Once worms, we are transformed into saints in His sight. Every believer is a member in particular of the royal family of God. He has made us holy, and He has given us His righteousness.

Perhaps you are thinking, "I am not worthy." Your worthiness depends only upon the integrity of the Finished Work and the integrity of God's imputed righteousness. If you have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb of God, you are a saint.

The fact that you stand before God as a saint and that He calls you holy—this is the evaluation you need, in terms of your self-image. It doesn't matter what your flaws are or what you think your problems are. In Christ, you are a

saint.

Where you are going, friend, is not determined by where you are now. You are headed for perfection in the Finished Work. Your premise for growth is the fact that you are a saint. It was all made possible by Calvary and by the promise of eternal life that you have believed and received.

The moment you are saved, you become perfect positionally, a child of the King. You may not always feel like it, and a lot of the time, you may not act like it. But ultimately, your perfection will be experiential when you go home to be with Jesus Christ, in heaven, forever.

Forever Finished

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

For freedom, we were set free. That is the message of this great verse from the apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians. Jesus Christ died once, for all the sins of the world. That death, with the Blood that He shed, accomplished our redemption and purchased our pardon.

Still, it is very strange how we as Christians quickly fall back into the bondage. We draw conclusions from selfish thinking and natural preferences, and we allow ourselves to become entangled with things God delivered us from at Calvary.

Please consider this carefully. What is the greatest difficulty that God has with His people? It is that many Christians do not understand the message of the Finished Work. Our message is

one hundred percent Finished Work, and nothing else. When understood, the Finished Work message leads to Finished Work fellowship, Finished Work marriages, Finished Work families, Finished Work friendships, and Finished Work businesses.

Christ dealt with our burdens, our strife, and our enemies when He paid for our sins on Calvary. Our part is to believe it and receive it. *That* is the Finished Work.

Chapter One

LIVING IN THE LIGHT

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

"And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:1, 4, 5).

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30).

Do you understand how to experience the Finished Work?

God has shown us the light. Out of this light of God comes positive communication. Out of light comes more light. Negativity comes from the negatives that are allowed to develop in a dark room. People who are negative, who are always talking about things that are not edifying, have a dark room in their soul. Those negatives develop and produce negativity in

exchanges. These negatives are often revealed on their countenance and then come flowing out through the mouth.

Bound by Cords of Love

"God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar" (Psalm 118:27).

In this unique verse, the horns speak of the power of Calvary's love.

Then, in Hosea 11:4*a*, we read: "I drew them with cords of a man, with the bands of love."

Jesus Christ was not held to the Cross by the nails driven through His hands and feet. He was not held to the Cross by Pilate or by the Pharisees or by the mocking voices in the crowd at Calvary. Jesus Christ was held to the Cross, according to Hosea 11:4, by the power of God's love. He was slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8*b*). Amazing bands of love—cords of supernatural love—are what kept Him fastened to the altar. Love kept Him on the Cross.

When He was through, when it was all over, Jesus said to the Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

Then He declared with His last breath, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

A Great Privilege Purchased

There was intense emotion and all kinds of human weariness when Jesus cried with a loud voice, "It is finished!" The penalty for sin has been paid. The great privilege has been purchased. Aperson can believe the promise of God for salvation and have God's righteousness imputed to him in a moment! The fact that in a moment, a sinner can be saved, seated together in Christ and hid with Christ in God has been established in God's Word. The fact that we could be members of His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30) and have one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17) was established on Calvary and revealed by the Holy Spirit.

It is finished!

It is finished!

It is finished!

"I have glorified thee. I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do. It is finished."

These are the words that came from Christ's lips as He fulfilled His purpose on earth. If we hear them enough, it can help us to straighten out some of our relationships that desperately

need to become Finished Work. So many of our relationships, unfortunately, are not grounded on the Finished Work.

A beautiful couple who had not failed, in terms of fornication, came to me. They came to me individually, and then together, to say that they failed one time, just once, and the girl became pregnant. They were so remorseful, and they were so laden with guilt.

May I say here that we do not believe in premarital sex. It is extremely wrong. It is extremely dangerous. The Bible has so many red lights that warn people not to do it; and it says some pretty strong words about fornication: that those who do it shall not go to heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9). The Bible also says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh [his sins] shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

This couple had totally repented, and together in my office they wept. I showed them what the Bible had to say, and I explained to them clearly that now that it had happened, they must have a Finished Work attitude. I said, "See yourselves in the Finished Work, because you are complete. You have repented. You can have a Finished Work fellowship with God. You

can have Finished Work honor, and you could have a Finished Work family. You don't have to live with the scars and shame and guilt now that you have forsaken it."

And by the way, that couple did not kiss until they got married, which was very soon after our meeting. Today, they are so faithful in this ministry because they believe in the Finished Work, and they reveal the fruit of it in their lives.

Chapter Two

IRREVERSABLE BLESSINGS

"Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

"That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:5-7).

The Finished Work means that I receive the Spirit of the living God. It is the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29). It is the Spirit that is new, always new. His compassions never fail, and His mercies are new every morning; therefore, we are not consumed (Lamentations 3:22-23).

If people understood the Finished Work, they would never raise their voices to one another. They would not sow discord. They would not wrestle over problems. Some people strug-

gle with relationships and with details of life because they have not grasped the Finished Work. It is as though they leave Finished Work truth the moment a serious situation comes up.

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

"Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it" (Numbers 23:19-20).

You cannot reverse the blessings! You cannot reverse the blessings of the Finished Work. You cannot reverse the blessings of grace. When God has done something, He has done it forever (Ecclesiastes 3:14). You cannot reverse what He did for us sinners; you cannot reverse that love that held Him on Calvary. You cannot reverse that.

From Curses to Blessings

He turns the curses into blessings (Deuteronomy 23:5). You cannot ever change the blessings that you have in the heavenly places. Your fellowship may go outside of the Finished Work, and your fellowship will not be blessed. God will discipline with perfect love (Hebrews 12:6), but you cannot reverse what God has done.

So many people have so many problems with receiving the Finished Work in relationships, and sometimes I wish I had a tape recorder when people make their comments about others! Then, when they cool off and become sensible, I would have them hear what they had to say.

What do you think it means when the Bible says, "For the love of Christ [motivates] us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

The Word of God says in 2 Corinthians 5:16, to know no man or woman after the flesh, yet some of us probably violated that yesterday or today. We are not even to know Christ after the flesh. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, and all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

God is saying, "Your relationship should be built on the Finished Work."

Picture the Finished Work

I see myself in the Finished Work. I see you in the Finished Work. I see my friends in the Fin-

ished Work. I see failure in the Finished Work, and I will address failure from the standpoint of Finished Work, encouraging the person who has failed to confess and find mercy, and not cover it.

I want you to see that the glory of God is in the Finished Work. He said, "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:22). Do you know what the glory that He gives to us is? It is a Finished Work glory. You see, Jesus was not glorified in His humanity until it was finished. Now, seated on the throne in heaven, He has a glorified humanity, representing men as our Advocate.

It is a finished work, and that is where it should be.

Aman came to the service here recently, and he was right on the edge of suicide. He has had experienced terrible depressions, but he came to services and rap sessions and just enjoyed the messages, and he was released and delivered mentally and spiritually. How did he get delivered? He finally came to understand that there is a Finished Work. He grasped hold of the truth that God has paid for everything, and that God does not charge him with a single thing.

By the way, when the work is finished, God is just waiting to bless His people with blessings. The only thing that holds Him back is when they will not receive it.

Why is it that people have to know one another after the flesh? So often people will say, "What about accountability?" Yes, we have to be accountable, but the accountability is fulfilled in love. Accountability is fulfilled with sacrificial, supernatural, unconditional love. Yes, we go to one another alone. Yes, we have a ministry of restoration in an attitude of meekness. Yes, we do that, but it is alone that we go, not in cars, talking about other people.

I want you to see that when God says, "Let your words on earth be few," He means it, because when you get beyond a few words you get in trouble.

Ayoung girl came into our office crying. She said she was pregnant, and she asked, "Am I going to go to hell?" She was a brand-new Christian. But she said, "Am I going to go to hell?"

"No," I said. "You believe. You have received Christ."

And she said, “This is such a shame. This is a terrible, terrible thing.”

“Yes, it is,” I said to her. “It was wrong. But now that you have done it, I am going to show you what God is going to do for you. He will help you and bless you and give you grace and mercy. He is going to love you. He is going to take you in His arms. You are His precious little girl.”

She wept.

“Because you have confessed it, and you have forsaken it, He will never remember your sin again,” I told her.

“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12).

“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17).

I asked her to quote Hebrews 8:12 and 10:17 several times. I assured her, “The sin has been removed from you. It is not charged to your account. The Son of God has set you free. Now you can go on knowing God and loving Him.”

Chapter Three

THE VICTORY AND THE SHOUT OF THE KING

A Finished Work Christian does not know anyone after the flesh or after what happened yesterday. This is why God said, "I have not beheld the iniquity of Jacob. I have not seen the perverseness of Israel." (See Numbers 23:21.) "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of the king among them."

What is the shout of the king?

The shout of the king is the shout of victory after a defeat, the cry of forgiveness after sin. It is the joy that comes after sorrow. It is the power we receive after weakness. It is to be accepted after feeling rejected. It is to be a new creature when you have been an old one all your life. That is what the King is shouting. The King is shouting, "This is the victory that you have through the Lord Jesus Christ."

But what is an *un*finished work?

An unfinished work is saying, "Do you know what she did?" That is an unfinished viewpoint.

"Did you hear about what that person did? I don't think they have repented."

That is not a Finished Work attitude. How do you know? David understood that his sin, as grievous as it was, was against God only (Psalm 51:4). "Against thee and thee only have I sinned." But an unfinished work is when we always relate to people just as though the work of forgiveness was not finished on Calvary.

A precious couple wrote to me and said, "You will never know what the last six years have done for us individually, for our marriage, and for our health. Just by hearing the Finished Work messages, our lives have been transformed." She said, "I never knew. I never understood that God loved me."

Think with me for just a moment. An unfinished work is quarreling. That means you are in an unfinished relationship. Your memory is unfinished when it can remember something that somebody did. You have an unfinished memory. Your thoughts are unfinished when they are not filled with thoughts of peace. When you do not have peace (Isaiah 26:3), your thoughts are not

Finished Work thoughts.

There is not anything like the Finished Work.

And by the way, it is fresher today than it has ever been. Here is God the Father in heaven saying, "I love you! Forget the fact that I love the world. Of course, I love the world, but I want to talk personally."

He is saying, "I love *you*! I love you, and I call you by name. I have saved you. I have delivered you from the penalty of sin. I will not impute sin to you."

This is the Finished Work, and it is very personal.

The Purpose of Our Ministry

The Word of God gives us the privilege of fully understanding the whole purpose of this ministry. Do you know that other than judicial issues, God took away the law of restitution in the New Testament. Of course, if you steal something, you must repay and restore what you have stolen. That is a judicial penalty. But in the economy of grace, He has replaced the law of restitution with John 1:16, "grace for grace." Now, unless it is something you can return, instead of restitution, we receive grace from God, and in return we give out the same grace that

we have received. We give to others what we have received from God.

Be Merciful as He is Merciful

This is why the Word of God says "Be ye therefore merciful, as your [heavenly] Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). Where did that mercy come from? When mercy and truth met on Calvary, righteousness and peace kissed each other. Now, truth shall spring up from the earth, as God looks down from heaven (Psalm 85:10, 11).

Mercy is behind every good thing you receive, because mercy does not give you what you deserve. Mercy is motivated by love. The moment you were saved, you received sixty-eight gifts of grace that you did not deserve, and that was motivated by love. You get forgiveness that forgets, motivated by love. You are accepted forever and ever in the Beloved, and that is motivated by love. You are in Christ forever. You are a brand-new creature, forever and ever, and that is motivated by love.

He deals with you in love to restore your fellowship in the Finished Work. That is what it means to rebound. He will always deal with you in perfect love, and He is very patient and understanding. When you are down, He goes with

you and stays with you while you are down. He is in you, even while you are down (Micah 7:7-9,18,19).

Micah said, "My God is with me down here, so you better be careful." And he said, "I have sinned, and I'm going to get up shortly."

"Judge not, lest you be judged." That is the Finished Work talking. "Be merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful. Condemn not, lest you be condemned; forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, shaken down, pressed together, running over, where men bring it back unto your heart. And with the measure you give, it shall be measured back to you again" (see Luke 6:36-38).

Do you understand what the Lord is talking about here? Give mercy: That act has all the attributes of the Finished Work behind it. Just give mercy. Give forgiveness. You got it, so give it.

"Just get what I am giving. Then give to everyone My nature," God says. That is the Finished Work—finished forever, once and for all.

CONCLUSION

We need to have a Finished Work attitude. We need Finished Work praise. We need Finished Work security and Finished Work self-confidence. The Finished Work says, "Give and it shall be given unto you," and God will have men give it unto you.

That is how we do it.

We give mercy, we give love, and God said, "I will have people give it back to you, and the supply will be running over." It is given back and running over.

It was the love of God that kept Him in that pain. And because of the love of God He bore our sins. If we understand that, why would we have to know one person after the flesh? I don't mean we should do away with accountability, but even that should be executed in God's love.

Precious Father, we pray for each one reading this. Please protect us in our fellowship and our relationships. Encourage us in Finished Work thoughts

and responses, because it is Your love that does it. We thank You for this day, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Forgive and Forget

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness does not seem like a principle that would be difficult to apply. For many Christians, however, the forgetting part is what plagues them.

Somewhere along the way, some believers have come to think that they can exercise forgiveness and continue to remember what was done to them. Yet, throughout the Bible, the principle of forgiveness is expressed together with the principle of forgetting.

As this booklet will show, these two principles—forgiving that includes forgetting—are forever linked in God's way of dealing with us. The Holy Spirit longs to gain control of our hearts so that we can really forgive and forget and continue to walk in love.

Chapter One

WHY WE MUST FORGET WHAT WE FORGIVE

"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, *neither* will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness" (Colossians 1:9-11).

There is a problem in the Church today. It is a problem with a certain area of sin. Scores of very respectable Christians commit this, and to some degree they are established in this sin. It is hidden in the heart. It is covered up, but it exists. I am talking about the importance of giving to God what belongs to Him.

The First of Everything Belongs to God

From the very beginning in the Garden of Eden, God instituted the principle of giving back to Him of all that He has given us (Genesis 2, Genesis 14, Exodus 13, Leviticus 27, Deuteronomy 26). The purpose was to cover us from self-consciousness and keep us conscious of Him as the source of our provision.

When we are walking according to God's plan, we can sense His presence; and instead of being self-conscious, we are God-conscious. Whatever we give, we are to give freely and with thanksgiving because of all we have received. So whether it is in giving our tithe, giving our time, or giving forgiveness to someone who has done something against us, we are to do it without holding a grudge. And the only way we can do that is to first be occupied with the preeminent Giver, Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, even among faithful believers, our problems with forgetting what we forgive stem from self-occupation—considering the severity of what was done to us instead of considering that God completely blotted out our own sin. But when we are occupied with Christ and make His purpose our priority from moment to moment, we will have more than enough grace to give and forgive and even forget the worst offence we could imagine.

The Possibility of Forgetting

Forgiveness for the believer is not an option; it is a commandment with a blessing (Matthew 6:14). Still, we often overlook the principle of divine forgiveness in the Word of God—forgiveness that also forgets the offense.

We have been forgiven of everything because Jesus Christ satisfied the requirements of justice by paying the price for our sin with His Blood. Now, God's justice has been satisfied, and we can only respond one way. That means, when I hear that someone has maligned or gossiped about me, I mentally forgive that person and forget the offense right on the spot.

On the subject of forgiving, the passive participle contained in the Greek text of Matthew

6:14 is a gnomic aorist tense, which speaks of timelessness. It implies that my reaction to what someone does to me could happen in an instant. In no time at all and with no deliberation as to whether I should or should not, I can forgive. But, the quality of divine forgiveness is preceded by a conscience that has received and believed the Finished Work of Calvary.

When God's thoughts have first priority in my thought life, I am neither self-conscious nor people-conscious. When the forgiveness that comes with the Finished Work is established in my mind, I am not sin-conscious concerning my own or anyone else's failure. Instead, I am conscious of the Finished Work that Jesus accomplished on Calvary, nearly two thousand years ago.

The moment that someone does something to me, I forgive him and I forget it. In cases where I am led to help someone who has a deep-rooted problem, then I go to him alone and handle the situation. Still, I always forgive instantly with the Finished Work. God's forgiveness is complete. Therefore, I must not hold on to the knowledge of anyone's failure. I must turn that knowledge over to the Lord. It belongs to Him.

Transgressions Blotted Out

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isaiah 44:22).

God's declaration when it comes to our sin is this: "I will forgive, and I will not remember." And for us, forgiveness can never be a reality apart from the complete thought of God on the subject.

Isaiah 43:25 shows us that God's forgiveness is never divorced from forgetting. This is the vital part of forgiveness. Forgiveness really isn't forgiveness if it involves remembering the sin that Christ already paid for in the Finished Work atonement.

In Isaiah 44:22, God says that He blotted out

the sins and transgressions of His people as He dissolves a cloud or the mist—so the sins could not be seen, nor could they hide the glory of the Son. He bid His people to return to Him, because they had been redeemed.

Is this true, in relationship to your life and my life? Absolutely! When God forgives us of a sin, He once and for all forgets it in the same instant. Hebrews 8:12 and 10:17 tell us that He will be merciful to our unrighteousness; our sins and our iniquities He will remember no more. *Never* will He remember them! That is His promise. He will not bring up a sin next month or next year. He forgives and forgets.

Chapter Two

THE ATTITUDE OF LOVE

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Colossians 3:13)

"Forgiving" in the above verse is a present middle participle of *charizomai* in the Greek text. The word refers to forgetting, without penalizing the guilty party by inflicting their emotions with bad memories. God's terms always mean that we are to forget instantly what we have forgiven because of the eternal life in us. Before the other person changes or says he is sorry, according to God's standard he is forgiven and the matter has been forgotten.

Under the grace system, what has been done can never be remembered. God does not remember what sin we have done. He doesn't put a "but" in His statements about forgiveness. He never remembers what we have done. He blots

out our sins and totally erases them from His memory and buries them in His sea of forgetfulness.

The Holy Spirit's Mindset

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

"He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18-19).

"But what if someone repents and doesn't really mean it?" you ask.

That is none of my business. Once I forgive, I switch into a 1 Corinthians 13 attitude of love that thinks no evil. I can express a love that will not fail. I become a 1 Corinthians 13 advocate of the Holy Spirit's mindset, which is the mind of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is forgetting; forgetting is more than erasing someone's sins, it is blotting them out forever.

As simple as this principle is, it is not very often preached this way. If we forgive, but then remember what we forgave, we are gravediggers. The grave stinks, and we need to leave what we

have buried *alone*.

Honey in the Rock

"So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.

"He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock" (Deuteronomy 32:12-13).

In counseling sessions, I hear things said such as this, "I forgive him now, just as I forgave him two years ago." Now, why is something that happened two years before still in the memory? It is because there was not real, godly forgiveness at that time. The forgiveness that was offered was done with regard to human merit. It was not done under the grace system. It was a carnal Christian operating in the flesh, so the matter was never really forgiven.

What about someone who continues in sin? The Bible is very clear that there should be no fellowship with that person until he repents and gets right with God. We do not hold anything against him, but neither do we have fellowship with him, except within our prayers.

I don't have to be a gravedigger, and I don't

have to make my home among the tombs. If I do, I will be associating with evil. There is honey in the Rock for me. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. I leave my sins and the sins of others on the altar of the Mercy Seat, for the Blood to cover. He covers us completely.

Chapter Three

BURY THE PAST

"And Joseph called the name of his firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, had made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house" (Genesis 41:51).

Did God make Joseph forgive the sins of his brothers? No, God made him forget all his toil. God can forgive seven times in a day (Proverbs 24:16) because He simply deals with us as sinners. Forgetting the past, He moves on to the future (see Philippians 3:13-14).

In Exodus, when Pharaoh and his army chased Israel into the Red Sea, the water came up and covered them. They died and were buried in the Red Sea. Every sin that has tried to catch up to us, to overcome us with the stench of the past, has been buried in the Red Sea. So let's not be gravediggers. Bury your accusations. Bury your reflections on failure. Bury what someone has said about you or someone else.

Bury what your natural viewpoint is trying to bring back to you. Bury it! Why? All of it has been crucified and buried with Christ. Just agree with God that it is out of your life forever.

Life is too precious to dig up graves and unearth dead corpses, trying to find out what you and others have done wrong. Yet, it happens, even among the seemingly spiritual people. There are Christians who cannot forgive other Christians. They carry something against each other. One didn't like something the other one said or did (or what he *thought* the other one said or did). They cannot forget it. Under certain circumstances, one of these people will open up and say what they really feel. It is simply a matter of personal differences, which they have turned into an offense, and neither one wants to yield.

Overcoming Feelings of Indifference

Differences are okay, and they are not necessarily sin. Rarely do people gossip and complain about honest differences. But indifference to the Finished Work is another matter. When something digs at me, it takes first place—the place that belongs to God—and makes me indifferent to others and to the Word of God. I may not feel comfortable around someone, and I feel as

though I have to fake Christian love. But I cannot afford to be indifferent toward anyone, and especially I can't afford to be indifferent to the Word of God.

These are simply sayings, but they are life changing and potentially world changing. When this truth is settled in your heart, you can always get back in the saddle (just as Gene Autry used to sing!).

Some people just stay lost in their memories of what people did to them. But, how can anyone bear to have a spirit that remembers what someone has done to him?

Two of my old neighbors, back where I grew up, used to love to fight. They even went to court over a tiny piece of land. The one that won the case started bragging about it. But God spoke to him, and he went to the other to ask for forgiveness for causing such a mess. The offended party said, "I forgive you. What's more, I am going to bury the ax. But I am always going to leave the handle showing, just to remember what you are really like!"

That is *not* God's heart, and it is not the way God wants us to live.

Increasing in a Worthy Walk

Remember those verses that we read in the beginning of this booklet:

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:9-10).

"Increasing in the knowledge of God" means that we are to continue expanding the areas where we can allow the Holy Spirit to apply the truth we have appropriated. We are to keep expanding so that we automatically respond in the Finished Work no matter what horrific thing may happen to us.

"Walking worthy" refers to the way that we conduct ourselves as believers in the affairs of life. "Being fruitful" speaks of repeating the action of receiving truth about God's will. As we receive that truth, we experience growth and we enjoy the increase of our progress in doctrine. We begin to develop godly habits, making ad-

vances as we study specific truth: line upon line, precept upon precept, going from grace to grace and from glory to glory.

Doctrine—the mind of God revealed to men specifically and categorically in His Word—is the real instrument of advancement and enlargement as we progress toward maturity. Our priority must be to exercise the Finished Work of Christ in every situation. We must recognize that the first of everything belongs to God. And this must start with a real understanding of forgiveness.

God gave us forgiveness while we were guilty, before we asked, and without our repentance. Therefore, we cannot even presume to withhold forgiveness from anyone—including ourselves. Forgiveness belongs to God. Furthermore, He has forgotten all we have ever done against His will. It is by forgiving just as God has forgiven us that we can forget.

This is what we must learn to experience in the power of the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

We cannot sit still as Christians. The challenges to our faith are always expanding and growing in their intensity, therefore we must expand and grow in our capacity to live in truth. The truth is this: To forgive is also to forget. To experience any other reality is to live apart from the truth.

The next thing someone does to you may be the worst thing anyone has ever done. You may be faced with having to forgive someone of something you never before imagined would have happened.

That is why we have to keep expanding in our knowledge of His will, of His provision, and of His plan. We need to be ready to apply God's system of grace in every situation. Then we will automatically be ready for the next big trial we face in the area of forgiving, forgetting, and loving one another.

Four Spiritual Dimensions

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INTRODUCTION

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:17-21).

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

Paul was saying in Ephesians 3 that if we are

rooted and grounded in love and Christ dwells inside of us by faith, then we have to learn to comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height of love. In these four spiritual dimensions, God wants to fill us with Himself.

There is no breadth to measure by human standards, and there is no length to measure, because God's love is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 90:2). There is no depth, because God's eternal arms are under us. Furthermore, in Psalm 89:2, God declares, "I will build mercies forever into the heavens." His mercies go to immeasurable heights, way beyond the demons of the air and the demons of the dust.

This principle—concerning the breadth, length, depth, and height of God's love—means that in the Finished Work, love passes by knowledge of every single thing. In other words, many people have tried to measure Ephesians 3:18, but it is an eternal breadth, an eternal length, an eternal depth, and eternal height, from everlasting to everlasting. The eternal work of Jesus Christ surrounds every single area in these four spiritual dimensions. It means that the work is completely finished, with a love that passes by knowledge.

In Deuteronomy 33:27, we see that there is

no “bottom” because of eternity. Underneath the “bottom” are His everlasting arms. Below our very lowest place, God’s arms are still there, holding us up. Inasmuch as He holds us when we fall (Psalm 145:14), we are not utterly cast down (Psalm 37:24). I really want you to grasp this picture as you read this booklet. For born-again, blood-bought Christians, there is no dimension where God is not present in our lives.

Chapter One

LOVE THAT GOES BEYOND ALL SIN

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

There is a wonderful song called "He Looked beyond My Faults and Saw My Need". We have sung it in our churches. I am sorry to say that this title is technically untrue. Maybe we should change the words.

Let me show you why. We have faults, and faults come from weakness. These faults can rear up at any time because of the old sin nature that is resident within us.

Sin, however, comes from active rebellion.

Paraptoma is the Greek word for "fault," and it speaks of a lapse or deviation from the truth (see Galatians 6:1). Moses had a tremendous fault before he led Israel out. That fault was a

bad temper, and it was ingrained within him. That kept on being a fault of his until he became meek. Even after he had been good for forty years with God, Moses' fault came back out of the weakness that was ingrained in his nature—human frailty.

In the New Testament, the Greek word for sin is *hamartia*, and it means "to violate God's law" or, to go against God's divine government. Sin is more than a fault. It speaks of a willful choice to do wrong.

The Covenant that Covers

"Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin" (Deuteronomy 9:27).

"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

"For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Hebrews 8:7-8).

We recognize that God saw Israel's faults—the people's inherent weakness—and He would give them a new covenant. For them, that new

covenant does not come until the Millennial Reign. If, however, a Jewish person gets saved today, he comes under the new covenant with the Church. These are two distinct covenants.

So, God *saw* Israel's faults, but He did not look upon their sins.

In Deuteronomy 9, Moses said of the children of Israel, "God, look not upon their stubbornness. Look not upon their wickedness. Look not upon their sin." This is clear: God has forgiven every sin.

The Past Is Not Present

"O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low" (Psalm 79:8).

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

"And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth their iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the Lord

GOD" (Ezekiel 29:16).

The children of Israel remembered their sins and they lacked confidence, because they didn't turn their hearts to God. Ezekiel 21:24 says their sins came back. They remembered them. They discovered their iniquities. As their sins came back in their remembrance, the language of the original text reveals that they were taken into bondage.

Every time you discover your iniquities, your sins come back into your memory and you are taken into bondage. This is so because you did not understand the meaning of love, the meaning of grace, nor the meaning of the Finished Work in its completion. Thousands of Christians do it, leaders do it, people do it. They remember their sins instead of believing that Christ died for them and forgave them.

The Word of God says, "Do not look upon their stubbornness. Don't look upon their wickedness. And do not look upon their sin." Moses had the mind of God.

There are millions of believers who mix grace with everything else. They do not understand this amazing message. The truth is that God saves us to the uttermost, and He will one day save Israel to the uttermost. God's nation

will one day know the eternal length, breadth, height, and depth of His love.

Chapter Two

LET GOD TURN YOU

Israel made the terrible mistake of remembering their sin. Addicts are addicted because they remember their sin all the time. We have drug addicts, alcoholics, sex addicts. Some people have psychological addictions, needing to be counseled all the time. A woman told us that every week, for her whole life, her entire family saw a psychiatrist every single week. She was a psychological addict, and she hated it.

Now, I want you to see the truth: God knows our faults that come out of our inherent weakness, but God looks beyond our sins and sees our needs. So, when a precious lady in our church was in drug addiction, God looked beyond her sin. She has come so far, and we love her so much. She comes to every service, and she is doing great. God looked beyond her sin and saw her need.

One man has been such a help and a servant

to me. At one time, he was homeless, eating from garbage cans. At one point, he was told he would be in an institution forever, but then he got saved. God looked beyond his sins and saw his need, and He has made him a pastor and a real servant of God.

So, folks, don't sing "He Looked Beyond My Faults" any more. He looked beyond our *sins*. Remember, there is a difference between the two: A fault comes out of human frailty and weakness, but sin is a rebellious act of the will. When we live in sin, we are diminished from the full measure of the Finished Work, living in ignorance of what we should know and crossing over the boundary line when we know it is there.

The Father Looks upon the Face of Jesus

Notice this so carefully: The Father looks upon the face of Jesus Christ. "Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed" (Psalm 84:9).

God the Father looks upon the face of His anointed. Today, it is the resurrected, glorified face of Christ in His glorified humanity, making intercession for us in heaven. So the Father is waiting for Jesus to tell Him, to His face, what

we need and for Him to plead our case (Hebrews 9:24).

It is a beautiful thing that the Father looks upon the face of His anointed, and that it is a glorified face in heaven. It is a *Finished Work*. The Son took care of every single one of our sins, so the Father has to answer every single one of His prayers. We are hid with Christ in God forever (Colossians 3:3); therefore, when God looks at us, He sees His Son. When we fail, we must receive the gift of repentance and let God turn us.

"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.

"Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth" (Jeremiah 31:18-19).

Remember the woman who went into Simon the Pharisee's house. Though her sins were many, they were forgiven, for she loved much. But those who are forgiven little, love little (Luke 7:47). God looked beyond her prostitution and saw her need. And Jesus said to her, "Your

faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

Chapter Three

SEATED ABOVE IN CHRIST

"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

"They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

"Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

"This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

"And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

"And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one,

beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

"She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:3-11).

This woman was caught in the very act of adultery, but after her accusers went out, Jesus said, "Is there anyone that condemns thee?" and she said, "No man, Lord." And He said, "Neither do I. Go, and sin no more." He looked beyond her adultery and saw her need to be forgiven and her need to be kept from falling. The Lord's forgiveness covered the length, the breadth, the height, and the depth of her sin. In every dimension of her life, this woman was set free, and she could go forward in the plan and purpose of God.

The Lord is determined to present us faultless before the throne of His glory (Jude 24). Consider the beautiful thing that He did with Peter, in John 21. A backslidden Christian, Peter's fault was fear, and it caused him to deny

Christ (Matthew 26:69-73). But God looked beyond his backsliding, saw his needs, and commissioned him again.

Moses' fault was his anger. David's fault was sensuality. But every time they sinned, God looked beyond their sins and saw their need.

That is not all He saw. He had respect for Israel. According to Exodus 2:23-25, in their bondage, in their state of reaction and rebellion, the children of Israel cried. "And their cry came up to God by reason of their bondage." He heard their groaning, He remembered His covenant, He looked upon them, and He had respect. He saw their affliction, and He came down to do something about it.

God Is Waiting to Forgive

The Word of God says, in Psalm 86:5, that the Lord is waiting to forgive and plenteous in mercy to them that call upon Him—just waiting to forgive, plenteous in mercy.

Please, please understand that if you remember your sins, God does not. If you remember those things, you are not a Finished Work believer. If you remember those things, you have no understanding of this message.

They remembered their sins and had no con-

fidence, and they were taken into bondage. But glory be to God, He remembers them no more, and the past can never affect our present state in any way because of what Christ did at Calvary.

A dad was teaching his son about heaven, and he said, "This is what heaven is like: Beautiful golden streets, no sin, no death, no sorrow—a place of tremendous reunion. And this is what hell is like: A bottomless pit, unsatisfied thirst, a place where you can't forget what you've done."

And he said to his son, "Which place would you rather go?"

The son said, "Wherever you go, Daddy, because I love you."

Sort of sounds like Moses in Exodus 32:32: "If You're going to take their names out of the book of life, take mine out, too." Or, Paul in Romans 9:3: "I'd be willing to go to hell for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

This is a great representation of God's love for us. Christ came down from the heights of heaven. The length of His life was just long enough to fulfill the eternal purpose of God. His arms were wide open, and the breadth of His reach extended to whosoever would come unto Him. He went into the depths of death to be res-

urrected.

Now, Christ sits high above all principalities and powers and the rulers of this world. There He reigns, and we are hid with Him in God. Every dimension of a believer's life is wrapped up in the Son forever. That is the Finished Work of Christ.

CONCLUSION

In Matthew 6:8, God knows our needs before we ask. In Matthew 6:32, He knows the Gentiles' needs in all things—every need. And in Isaiah 65:24, "Before you pray, I will answer, and while you speak, I will hear."

This is how God's attitude is toward us. He knows every need and He answers before we call, because He knew what it was going to be. But while we speak, He hears.

Then the Holy Spirit takes part of our infirmities, because we don't know to pray as we ought (Romans 8:26). He prays with groanings that cannot be uttered. And the Word of God says, "He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the *Spirit*" (with a capital "S"), because He knows and prays and intercedes for all the saints, according to the will of God.

We have the Finished Work. The Father looks upon the Son's face as He intercedes for us. The Holy Spirit prays for us with unspeak-

able groanings. The Father answers before we ask, and still He listens while we pray, to answer us. God knows all our needs, and He desires to meet all of them (Philippians 4:19). But in everything, He desires that we would all come to know every dimension of His love for us—the breadth, the length, the depth, and the height—and that we might be filled with all the fulness of God, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Freely Receive from God

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INTRODUCTION

Paul was sent by God to the Gentiles—among the unbelieving—"to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, *that they may receive* forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18).

Many who love God deeply have serious periods of being off regarding the principle of receiving. "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?" (Job 35:7). The problem of the natural, or carnal, man is found in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

At the Bema Seat, each believer will "*receive* his own reward" (1 Corinthians 3:8). Even in prayer, "Ye ask, and *receive not*, because ye ask

amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3). But "as many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God…" (John 1:12). Clearly, the key is to receive.

Today, however, many pulpits, parents, and professing Christians simply reinforce the value of performing without receiving. *So many Christians sweat, trying to perform so they can receive!* Yet, the Word says plainly that it is by the love of God that we keep His commandments; furthermore, "his commandments *are not grievous*" (1 John 5:3), meaning there is no difficulty in keeping His commandments because it is by receiving that we keep them! It's not something we are, or something we do, or a standard to live up to, or a rule to obey, or a church ordinance to sign: *It is simply receiving*.

Chapter One

RECEIVING IS NOT OF WORKS

"What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will *take the cup* of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD" (Psalm 116:12-13). The "cup" represents my capacity. So how do I deal with all the benefits the Lord is imparting to me? By taking a capacity for the Gospel of grace, which delivers me—it is something I *take*. In John 6:53-58, Jesus said except a man eat His flesh and drink His blood he has no life. When the Lord was ready to offer up His life, Jesus said, "Take, eat; this is my body" (Matthew 26:26). We are simply to receive His life.

During a difficult season, with all the financial and domestic problems we face, if we don't receive God's forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love, we will be bankrupt. Salvation comes by grace through faith, not of ourselves and not of works, because it is a gift of God.

Whatever we receive from the Lord is not of works. I don't have to show you any evidence that I am "better" or doing well. The gift of God doesn't come by demonstrating that I am worthy. It comes by receiving. In Micah 7, when God's man was down, he declared to his enemies, "I am down and I have been living in sin. You may be mocking me, but the Lord is here with me! I am just about to get up, and He is going to help me up." Micah was able to get up because he was determined to receive forgiveness, receive strength, and receive the life of Christ.

Receive a Relationship with Life

We have a relationship with Life. It is so easy to be in a relationship with a church, legalism, or a program of performance instead of being in a relationship that receives life. But *how do I know how to receive*?

"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). In the original text, this passage says that we have received all the fullness of grace, and that it is grace *upon* grace. God has given us the Finished Work. Though the law was given by Moses, God has given us the fullness of grace by Jesus Christ's

shed blood. Now we have to learn to receive grace upon grace (John 1:17). Then, when we are in the valley, such as Micah was, we will be able to go from strength to strength! (Psalm 84:7).

In Joshua 13:33, when the land in Canaan was being parceled out to the tribes of Israel for their inheritance, the Word says, "But unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not any inheritance: *the LORD God of Israel was their inheritance....*" In other words, the Lord said, "*I will be your life!*"

Before the children of Israel went over the Jordan, God said, "go over…unto the land which *I do give* to them" (Joshua 1:2). Later, in Joshua 6:2, the Lord told Joshua, "I have given you Jericho." They hadn't yet taken it, but because of the promise of God, it was a finished work! And according to Joshua 1:3, every place the soles of *our* feet shall touch is ours—because we receive the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Forty-five years after entering the Promised Land, Caleb—now eighty-five years old—confessed, "As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now" (Joshua 14:11). Caleb just kept on receiving, and that is the reward for the Christian today.

Enemies of Receiving

Discouragement and sin are enemies of receiving. Sin is also the enemy of forgiveness—but forgiveness is something we receive. Holding on to a natural disposition is an enemy of receiving God's divine disposition. Likewise, natural emotions become an enemy of God's precious love when we don't receive that love freely. God has given us *all things* freely (Romans 8:32; 1 Timothy 6:17). "For all things are yours, …And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

Many people have left churches with shipwrecked faith, puzzled by sincere efforts to conform to a standard without being received as God receives them. Romans 15:7 says that I am to receive you as Christ received me—and He received me as someone who was unsaved, drinking, cursing, without any hope. Through a simple prayer of faith, Jesus Christ received me when I received Him as my Savior.

Digging Deep in the Scriptures

Receiving is so crucial to our lives as believers. The Greek text offers many words that are translated as "receive," each with a distinction.

Lambano: to accept freely; to receive some-

thing from God freely (1 Timothy 4:4).

Analambano: to take, to receive, and to enjoy something as you lift it up (Ephesians 6:13).

Katalambano: to understand what you have received freely. It is something definitely attained (Romans 9:30), which you are able to perceive (Acts 10:34); and comprehend (Ephesians 3:18).

Metalambano: to keep receiving until you are changed by what you receive (Acts 24:25).

Paralambano: to take over a position by receiving what God gives; for example, receiving knowledge that leads to victory that leads to life (Philippians 4:9).

Proslambano: to take to one's self (Romans 11:15).

Hupolambano: to receive so to have a godly support (3 John 8).

Dechomai: to receive readily and deliberately what is offered freely (James 1:21).

Anadechomai: to be thankful when you receive because it is yours by grace (Hebrews 11:17).

Apodechomai: to receive with no reservation; to simply receive because it is God's unconditional promise (Luke 8:40).

Eisdechomai: to be received into His life

(2 Corinthians 6:17).

Epidechomai: to receive with hospitality (2 John 10).

Paradechomai: to receive with approval (Acts 15:4; Hebrews 12:6).

Prosdechomai: to receive to one's self and to keep waiting, looking for more to come (Luke 15:2).

The Word of God is always fresh, and the more we study a theme, the more we uncover gems. If we were to ponder on just one of those descriptions for the word "receive," we would discover such wealth in our hearts.

For instance, *metalambano* implies that I do not change by what I do nor the way I feel. I could feel miserable, undone, and wretched, but just come to God as I am. I receive forgiveness, grace, love, and peace by being in a relationship to life itself—not with words *about* life, but life that is revealed through words.

The Process of Receiving

How many people have sincerely tried to correct sin in their lives, but instead somebody gave them the law? The law merely served to strengthen the sin, because they tried to "do" something without receiving grace (1 Corinthians

15:56).

Seeing God's hands wide open, seeing His heart of compassion, and understanding that He continually gives, we can begin to comprehend this Christian life. Picture it like this: He gives freely, and we receive freely. He gives, we receive. His life keeps coming to us, and we keep taking it in until we have received so much that it pours forth, and we give what we have received.

He conforms us to His image in one area, then another area, continually filling us with all of His fullness. And now it simply, yet powerfully, flows out. "Out of your [emotions] shall flow rivers of living water....this spake he of the Spirit" (John 7:38-39*a*). This is the process of receiving.

Don't even think about giving! *Giving is the overflow of what you receive*. Rivers of living water are flowing out of your being. What you receive shall be a spring springing up unto eternal life (John 4:14). But the moment you think you must give somebody something that you don't have, you are performing in a works system. *You are not on trial!*

The essence of the Christian life is receiving. Some people may fall seven times a day or

more, ask forgiveness, and get up again (Proverbs 24:16). Still, the Christian life starts out by receiving Christ, and it continues by receiving grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, and peace. It continues by receiving life more abundantly. It all depends on receiving!

It is not what we "think." It is not what we "do." If the Holy Spirit is filling us, we can still receive grace and live in the peace He imparts, even though some days we may not "feel" it because of tiredness or physical pain. But if we walk by what we see or by how we feel, we will never understand that the Christian life is a life of receiving.

As we begin to grasp this doctrine of receiving, we see that it is marked by the absence of works and human performance. *God* performs what He asks us to do (Job 23:14)! "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Whatever we ask, we receive of Him in prayer (1 John 3:22). It is by simple faith and simple grace that we are able to receive.

Remember, grace always depends upon the Giver and never upon the receiver. Unconditional love is always based upon the character of the Lover, not the one being loved. Just receive it!

Our situations have been ordained by God. Whatever the circumstances may be, we are simply learning how to live practically by *faith*! The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). Notice, it is *God's* righteousness, not ours. That is why Paul wrote in Titus 3:5, it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us…."

God is the most amazing, incomparable Giver, and we need to learn how to be amazing receivers. I am what I receive from God, His Word, and His Spirit. By the same token, I become what I receive from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

I became who I am in Adam by receiving from the kingdom of darkness. But, I am going to become what God has already made me to be through what I receive freely from the kingdom of God's dear Son. First Corinthians 2:12 and Romans 8:32 tell us that He has freely given us *all* things. The Bible would not say that if it were not true!

Paul wrote in Galatians 1:6-8 that if any man preach another gospel outside of the Gospel of

grace, let him be accursed! Receiving the Gospel is entering into a relationship of life, a most incredible experience for the Christian. And yet, there are people who always need to work up their emotions to have a "spiritual" experience. This is nothing more than a religious program of works, where people shut their minds off and receive whatever is floating around in the air of religion. But that is not God!

We need to receive the Word of grace that is able to build us up and to give us an inheritance among the saints (Acts 20:32). Philippians 2:16 calls it the Word of life. Receive it! And if we simply keep on receiving without being self-conscious of our performance, we will be liberated from all works. But the moment we step outside of grace, we are on a self-conscious works program. To be God-conscious, you first have to receive with no self-consciousness (or you will feel that you are not worthy).

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6). God's only requirement is to receive! Of course, we all have impulses to live in the predisposition of the old sin nature. We may even be compulsive as we

try to do something to get out of it. The effort to stop becomes strength to do it more, because the strength of sin is in the law (1 Corinthians 15:56).

But thanks be to God! He opens our eyes, turning us from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that we "may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18).

Chapter Two

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE RECEIVE A WOUND

"And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host,

and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

"And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:30-37).

Many people in the world live with unbelievable wounds and yet do not know it! Then, there are those who know it but are helpless to change. These wounds paralyze the potential of individuals. Our impulse may be to feel sorry for those people, and they certainly need our prayerful support; however, many are unaware of the place they have given to Satan and his world system because of the wounds they received.

Even Christians in Bible-believing churches don't know how to be delivered from wounds and may deny that they have been wounded. Too often, however, these same people live in marriages that are merely sustained by human good, but they are not victorious in divine good. Some couples separate and refuse to be reconciled because they have never personally dealt

with their wounds.

So much of the violence in our society—the murders, rapes, and molestation—comes from wounded people who choose to react to their wounds by inflicting others with their pain.

Today we can observe whole segments of society where natural affections have been lost to the effects of sin and self-orientation. Children are being raised in environments of abuse and gross neglect. Though they did not choose their wounds, they will still be responsible for their reactions down the road. This is why the Church is so accountable to minister to the needs in our 'Jerusalem' as well as the uttermost parts of the world. By the grace of God, we go into our cities with Bible clubs and a variety of outreaches to bring a healing balm to whosoever will *receive* it.

When we neither ask of God nor live in His provision, we will have wounds that are self-inflicted. Then the Word of God teaches that if we refuse to accept His solution, *God* will make us sore: "He woundeth, and his hands make whole....hear it, and know thou it for thy good" (Job 5:17-27).

Psalm 38:5 says, "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness." The text implies that the wounds stink because a person has

acted corruptly, making corrupt or morally degenerate decisions without thinking with God. These are the people who are wounded and do not know why!

God's Provision for Wounds

"For God so loved the world, that *he gave his only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, *we have an advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous…"—the One who died not only for our sins but for the sins of the whole world! (1 John 2:1-2).

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us *the word of reconciliation*" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

These verses speak about God's solution, God's provision.

This is the point: God loves the world—everyone in it—just as they are. Not everyone will go to heaven just as they are, but God *loves* each one and will meet them, as they are, with a plan of reconciliation.

Next, God understands that everyone in the world has "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores" (Isaiah 1:5-6).

God knows that because of Satan's attack, every person is mentally ill (according to divine viewpoint). "The whole head is sick…" (Isaiah 1:5).

The Lord knows that our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9), and that though we may be "good" (humanly speaking) and do the best we can, we cannot save ourselves.

Yet with all that He knows of our sick, sinful state, because of His great love, Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world, reconciling us to God. Speaking of Christians, 1 John 5:19 says that "we know we are of God." Then it says, "the whole world lieth in wickedness"—infected by the devil, the infectious one, who is the god of the world's system. That is why God addressed an entire nation in Isaiah 1:5 when He declared, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint."

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is

the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). *What happened? Why, when we have such a glorious provision, are we so easily turned aside?*

Exodus 34:7*b* says that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the third and fourth generation. Psalm 51:5 says, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Then in Romans 6:12, we are told to "let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body," or, "Don't allow the old sin nature to reign in the *cells* of your body."

Through the sin of Adam, the sin nature was imparted to the entire human race. God knew we would eventually choose to sin, so before any one of us *personally* sinned, He imputed sin to our account. We were born guilty, owing an impossible debt with no hope of getting out of it: "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). But because God charged us with sin before we were born, He was also able to impute the gift of perfect righteousness to anyone who would *receive* His provision: "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23*b*).

Satan's Plan for Christ's Life

Satan's desire is not to destroy your marriage. It is to destroy you, *and* your marriage, *and*

your family, *and* your descendants, *because* of you. For example, when Abraham sinned with Hagar (Genesis 16; Galatians 4:22-31), the result was the birth of Ishmael—but the consequences did not end there. Today, an entire nation is against Jesus Christ. The issue was not simply Abraham having a night with Hagar; Satan's plan was to take millions of lives and turn them against Jesus Christ.

If you could sin and only hurt yourself and God, that would be one thing. But you cannot!

Lot sinned with his daughters (Genesis 19:31-38). They made him drunk so that his seed would be preserved through incestuous relations with their father. The Ammonites and the Moabites, two nations born from Lot's sin, are against Jesus Christ to this day—all because of one night of drinking.

In Genesis 9, Noah took too much wine, and the Bible says he was drunk. Then Ham, the father of Canaan, went into his father's tent, saw him naked, and went out to tell his brothers what he saw. With a garment, Shem and Japheth covered Noah (who was their pastor as well as their father) and never saw his sin. But the sin of Ham brought a curse to Canaan and all of his generations.

Does Jesus Christ remove the curse? According to Galatians 3:13-14, Yes! Can anyone be saved and come out from under the curse? Yes! "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). "As many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God…" (John 1:12). Once again, the key is in receiving.

Spiritual Stroke

In many cases, however, people are not aware of what they do (or why) in reaction to their wounds. A woman who was molested as a child has problems in her marriage today. She will not submit to the authority of her husband or her pastor, and she has had problems with authority in every job she has held—all because of a spiritual stroke stemming from an unresolved problem, a wound in her past.

Isaiah 30:26 says, "He healeth the stroke of their wound." A physical stroke is caused by damage in the brain that cuts off the blood supply and often results in a measure of paralysis. A spiritual stroke results in a paralyzed capacity as a direct result from wounds caused by sin. But God said to Israel, "I will restore your health; I will heal your wounds!"

Thousands of Christians in churches everywhere smile and cover up their wounds, but they have the deepest kind of wounds, and their wounds have caused a stroke.

Job 24:12 says, "The soul of the wounded crieth out." Rebellious children often misbehave because of the wounds caused by selfish, uncaring, and inconsistent parents and broken homes. They are deeply wounded.

"My heart is wounded within me" (Psalm 109:22). In Judges 9:40, many were wounded and overthrown. First Samuel 17:52 says that the wounded fell down by the way. But our God wants to restore our health and heal the wounds.

God's Operation for Our Desperation

"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3). "Even to day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning," said Job (Job 23:2).

The Psalmist cried out, "Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand" (Psalm 39:10).

A spiritual stroke means that someone has been beaten repeatedly so that they are left without a capacity to receive love and grace. Much

like a physical stroke, it affects their spiritual hearing, speech, and thinking. Their perception and awareness are impaired, making them an emotional liability as far as their personal growth in Jesus Christ.

Second Chronicles 36:15-16 says that God sent the Word through His messengers because of His compassion; but because the Word was mocked and rejected, there was no remedy.

Though people may go on as though everything is fine, it is possible that they are harboring wounds that have caused a stroke. Spiritually, the energy of God is not able to get to their heart, and the Resurrection power of God's love doesn't reach their soul. They try to hear, but spiritually they are hearing impaired. They do the best they can to receive the Word that was sent to heal, but deep within the soul there has been a stroke.

God desires to heal us completely. In that day, "the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound" (Isaiah 30:26).

Chapter Three

RUN TO THE ROCK AND RECEIVE YOUR HEALING

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), a man was traveling from Jerusalem (which represents peace) down to Jericho (decay, ruin, rebellion). Halfway there, he was robbed, beaten, and left half-dead: physically alive, but spiritually dead.

The priest (representing religion), went by in a hurry, probably on his way to an appointment, and walked by the wounded man. The Levite (representing the law) just looked at him as unclean and walked by. Finally, a Samaritan, who was despised because he was half-Jew and half-Gentile, bound up the man's wounds and took him to a hotel. There, as a picture of Jesus Christ, he told the keeper, "You take care of him, and I will pay for everything."

Mark 12:4 says something so few of us have considered: *The wounded man was shamefully*

handled. Wounded people are not healed through counselors who don't know the love of Christ. Healing comes in the power of God, in the love of a family of compassionate people, in an assembly of believers.

The wounded are healed by just being loved—in season and out of season. Healing comes by communicating with them and building them up until God lifts them out of their wounds. Ultimately, He heals the stroke of their wound. It is the Lord who restores their mental health. He binds up their wounds to heal them.

A Call to Bind Up the Wounds

Do you understand why the Bible says that Jesus came to heal the broken-hearted (Isaiah 61:1)? Do you see why God is against the pastors who are not concerned with healing the wounds of the flock (Ezekiel 34:1-11)? Psalm 107:20 says, "He sent his word, and healed them." He sends healing through the love of individuals, through the compassion of the Body of Christ, through those who really care—those who will send that note, make that call, write that letter, and meet with that person.

But because of self-orientation among pastors and congregations, there are people in

churches everywhere who have been wounded, and those wounds in many cases have caused a stroke.

Jesus Christ said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it *more abundantly*" (John 10:10)!

First, He forgives every sin we have ever committed. Next, He gives us eternal life, a life that has no beginning and no ending but is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90:2*b*). When we live in that precious life, being filled with the Holy Spirit, we have the privilege of not remembering what people have done to us.

Jesus said, "In My eternal life, you won't have to remember the things that have pierced and hurt you nor the stroke that paralyzed you." Though you may have covered it up, deep within your subconscious mind the wound remained. It governed your behavior, your decisions, your self-image, and your responses.

Behind so many sins are wounds that were inflicted by others. Satan uses *people* to wound and to infect the world that Jesus Christ died for. But the Lord came to seek and to save that which is lost and bind up the broken-hearted.

God doesn't want us to be in bondage to a

certain kind of sin that was merely the outworking of old wounds. He doesn't want us to be preoccupied with a bad habit, but He will help us to get rid of it. We don't have to be preoccupied with psychosomatic pain from the unconscious mind. He will give us the victory.

Of course, the consequences of wrong decisions can result in self-inflicted wounds. But the Lord Jesus Christ came to deliver us from those effects, even if we blame ourselves. He came to give us an abundant life, and all we have to do is receive it.

A Sure Foundation: The Rock of Our Salvation

"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4).

"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a *tried* stone, a *precious* corner stone, a *sure* foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16).

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and *that Rock was Christ*" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Often when God begins to lift a person out

of the mystical, undefined wounds that have accumulated through the years, the Word may stimulate, bless, and even sustain him, but not necessarily deliver him from the stroke. The problem is not knowing how to appropriate the Word personally.

The foundation has been laid; it is Jesus Christ, the Rock, and there is no other. It is not simply a dimension of Christianity or a movement—we live by *every* word of God, from Genesis to Revelation. In Exodus 33:21, the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock."

Every Christian is standing in the pure grace of God, depending on *God's* character, not our own (Romans 5:2). The Greek text uses a perfect tense, active voice, and indicative mood: We *are standing*! We have been, we are, and we will be, because we are *cemented* in the grace of God, and we are standing on the Rock. Thanks to God, nobody can move us from that Rock. You can't move your *self* from the Rock! "Shall your unbelief make the [Word] of God without effect?" No (Romans 3:3)! "If we believe not, he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

"The foundation of God standeth sure" (2 Timothy 2:19a). We have a sure foundation.

In Exodus 33:22, the Lord told Moses, "While my glory passeth by, I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by."

First we are standing on the Rock, then we are hid inside the Rock. And what is His glory? Exodus 34:6-7*a* tells us: "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, *merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*…." That is His glory.

We are covered by His hand. In John 10:28-30, Jesus said, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Furthermore, He said, "My Father, which gave them [to] me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." We are one with Him!

Every born-again believer is hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). He has placed us in His wounded side, and He covers us with His wounded hands, with the precious blood that poured out. We are seated in heavenly places

with Jesus Christ, hid inside the Rock.

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for *it was founded upon a rock*" (Matthew 7:24-25).

Now, according to 1 Corinthians 3:12, we build upon the foundation with gold (appropriating the attributes of incarnated deity), silver (redemption of the Word and the Spirit), and precious stones (applying specific categories of doctrine as we walk). Otherwise, we build with wood (works of the flesh), hay (emotionalism), and stubble (hearing the Word but having it aborted because it was not received in meekness, humility, or faith). The trials we go through will reveal the content of the structure being built in our soul.

A Tried Stone

This Stone we build upon is a *tried* stone. When Abraham sinned with Hagar, Jesus Christ came through and fulfilled the promise with the miraculous birth of Isaac. God has been tried and tested.

After Moses murdered a man and spent forty years alone in the desert, God led him out and raised him up to deliver Israel. God was tried with Moses' life, and He gave him grace.

David failed again and again, but when he died, God declared that David fulfilled all of His will. David will reign as prince in the Millennium, and he has *sure* mercies. Jesus Christ bore David's sin, and though he was chastised in the matter of Uriah (1 Kings 15:5), it was never held against him in God's eternal viewpoint.

People hold sins against you, but God Almighty does not. David rebounded and the chastisement was removed—not for a week or a month, but it was removed forever. Jesus Christ is the tried stone.

He was tried in the fiery furnace with the three Hebrew boys. He was tried in the lions' den with Daniel. He was tried when, in John 1:10, He came into the world He created and they didn't know him. He was tried when He came unto His own—the Jewish people—and they received Him not. When His own family of half-brothers and sisters (John 7:5) didn't believe in Him, He was tried.

Jesus was a man of sorrows, wounded, rejected, with no beauty that anyone would desire

Him. When He struggled to carry His cross up Golgotha's hill, He was unable to bear it, and another had to carry it for Him. Nailed to the cross, Jesus appeared to be guilty. Becoming sin for us, even His Father could not look upon Him. But He went into the grave and came out in Resurrection power, the tried and *true* Stone.

A Precious Stone and A Sure Foundation

Jesus Christ is also a *precious* Stone (Isaiah 28:16), meaning very costly. Thank God for His holy life. Thank God that He forgives our sins seventy *times* seven, unfailing in His love. He is longsuffering, forbearing, patient, always leading us to repentance (Romans 2:4). Thank God that His mercy endures forever (Psalm 136).

His *name* is Gracious Merciful Longsuffering Patience! Thank God, His name is Love. *This* is His glory.

He is the precious Stone! His presence is precious. His Word is so precious. Just the fact that He will never leave a believer, ever, and that He will heal the stroke of our wounds makes Him precious.

He is a *sure* foundation. He will never leave us without Resurrection power in any situation if we trust Him with all our heart. For every de-

tail of life, God has a wonderful provision. Psalm 18:30 says His plan is perfect, and *He* will perfect that which concerns us (Psalm 138:8). We do not have to worry about it.

This God will take away the strokes that have paralyzed us and hurt us, that we try to cover up. The precious love of God permeates and penetrates through the Holy Spirit and goes into the unconscious and the subconscious mind. Then, it overflows into the conscious mind, and suddenly there is a supernatural, miraculous healing by the precious Word of God. We stay on that foundation; therefore, we do not yield our bodies as members of unrighteousness unto sin (Romans 6:13). Instead we receive Christ's righteousness; we fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on that eternal life wherein we were called (1 Timothy 6:12).

Receive Your Healing and Walk in It

The Lord Jesus Christ desires that we would have a complete healing as well as an understanding of how to be kept in that healing.

How can we keep our healing once it has happened? The Word of God makes it crystal clear. Read Lamentations 3:22-24 in a way you have never read it:

"My mercies are new every morning; therefore, you will not be consumed with your wounds. My compassions will not fail you for this day, and I, the Lord, will be the portion of your life. Not part of your past. Not the dilemma of the present. Not the fear of the future. *But I will be your life!*"

Jesus Christ calls to us and says, "Now remember, come every morning. Come *all* the time. Come! Run! *Run to Me*. Just run into My arms and you can leap over the wall! (Psalm 18:29). I want you to come to Me continually. My yoke is easy, and My burden is light!"

Before you know it, your identity will no longer be derived from the terrible way you were wounded, for whatever reason you were wounded.

The Lord's purpose in coming was to heal all that were oppressed of the devil. Satan wants to destroy the world by wounds, infections, sores, and bruises. Jesus wants to heal each one with His love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, life joy, peace, and by the riches of His gift of righteousness and the gifts of His promises.

Remember, there are two kingdoms operating in the world, and only God's kingdom will allow you to prosper even as your soul prospers

in the Word (3 John 2). Just run to Him! And if you feel the weight of oppression coming back, *run to Him with all your might*!

Don't take time off. Don't take days off where you forget the love of God, where you don't live in the grace of God. Don't have times when you stop building yourself up in the faith of God, but always keep yourself in the love of God. Every moment, keep looking for God's mercy.

CONCLUSION

I am not skilled to understand
What God has willed, what God has planned,
But this I know, at His right hand
Is One who is my Savior.

That He should leave His home on high
And come for sinful men to die,
You count it strange? Well, so did I,
Until I met the Savior.

Living, loving, let me bring
Strength and solace from this spring,
That He who lives may be my King,
Who died to be my Savior.

—Author Unknown

There is a long story behind every act of sin. Every effect has a cause, and when we ask God what is causing the effect we are living in, the

Word of God reveals it. For every effect, Calvary and Resurrection life will produce a healing.

Healing is right where you are. It is in your soul. Reach out. You receive your healing by grace through faith. Not a partial healing, not stimulation, but a miracle of love to build yourself up (Jude 20-21). Simply receive, then build yourself up in the love of God and abide in the faith-rest of Christ.

Friendship, Fellowship, and Joy

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

True love, true friendship, true joy: My thoughts have been on these things lately.

I recall a very tender letter I received one Christmas season from a little girl in Massachusetts. She was seven years old at the time. It was December, and her dad had died in October. "This is the first Christmas that I will have without my daddy," she wrote. "Please pray for me and for my mother."

Letters such as this one break my heart.

Another letter I remember involved a precious wife who was having much difficulty in her family. As a child, she had been abused in many ways. She married the first man who showed her any attention, but he became a drunkard. He would yell at her, and at times he was physically abusive. Her son grew up and became like his daddy. He, too, cursed his mother. Then, she came to church. An outreach team had visited her neighborhood and she re-

sponded. “I have found a haven,” she wrote of our church. “The love I get from you people is what keeps me going.”

Another heartbreaking situation was with a boy in our high school. He struggled with class work and found it hard to concentrate. His parents railed against him. They pushed and pushed, and he became very discouraged. He felt worthless. He could not see his value as a person. That was a boy headed for deep trouble. Fortunately, as we met together in my office, he found a place of rest. He received God’s love and responded to God’s thoughts about him. Eventually his parents came around, and he is doing marvelously today.

I think you understand that this world we are living in is filled with all kinds of difficult situations. These troubles exist across the nation and around the world. People desire to belong somewhere. They are weary and frustrated in their loneliness, and the sense of separation wears on their hearts.

The world needs true friends, true fellowship, and true joy. This booklet is written to reveal this, and to show that the answer to every need is in Christ.

Chapter One
FRIENDSHIP

"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

A real friend's pure interest is in meeting the needs of others. I may have many acquaintances, but my friends are those who give something without asking for anything in return.

In examining the Hebrew text of Proverbs 18:24, we find an interesting word that is translated as "friendly." Some have taken the Hebrew definition of that word to mean that a man of many friends must be a compromiser, which will show him to be a bad friend who will eventually come to ruin.

However, when we look carefully at the text, we see an interesting bit of wordplay here in the Hebrew. A man who has friends—ra'ah—must show himself friendly—ra'a. The 'h' falls off the second word and this word speaks of losing

something and being broken in some way. The tense structure indicates a form of the verb that shows causative and reflexive action.

Making ourselves available to be a friend will cost us something. We may lose a piece of ourselves, much in the same way the first word loses a piece of itself in the text. Jesus Christ, the Friend who sticks closer than a brother, was very broken for us. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5).

Face it. Having friends means taking risks; it means going out on a limb. Vulnerability is part of the equation. Jesus risked rejection because He so loved the world.

The Unspeakable Gift

Proverbs 17:17 says that a friend loves at all times, and, like a brother, a friend is born for adversity. That should be the way things are between a husband and his wife. The wife loves at all times and she is born for her husband's adversity. The husband loves at all times, and he is born for his wife's adversity.

The Pharisees labeled Jesus as the "friend of publicans and sinners" (Luke 7:34). He was called the friend of Abraham (Isaiah 41:8). He

spoke to Moses as a friend (Exodus 33:11). Yet, He was called the friend of publicans and sinners.

Christ had a deep, motivating, constraining interest in His heart to meet people's needs. He was only interested in meeting the need; He was not interested in getting anything in return.

That is true friendship. What an unspeakable gift! Thank God for it! Words cannot fully explain what God has done for us. His gift toward us is indescribable, inexpressible, and unutterable.

It is impossible to express what that means to me—to be saved forever, to know that I am seated in heavenly places with Him, to realize that I am a new creation and that I am hid with Christ in God. This is the gift of eternal life, and that life abides in me. That goes for everyone who has received Christ as his Savior.

The principle we must realize is that God loves us. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). He made the initiation, and we responded. And now, in receiving His love, we discover how precious we are to Him.

Chapter Two
FELLOWSHIP

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:8-12).

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:35-40).

Loving others is really made so much more complicated than what is revealed in the Scriptures. It really is a very simple process. I love others as Christ has loved me. Many people try to do things in the name of loving others, but they get out of order. I can only love my neighbor as I love myself. And I can only love myself as I recognize the love of God toward me.

Every day I need to think about how much God loves me. I need to see myself as being hid with Christ in God every moment of every day. Having this concept rooted deep in my heart, I have a capacity to love others without any expectations.

This is true friendship that comes from having fellowship with God.

A Partnership in Truth

We are partakers, or partners, in a heavenly calling. We bring all that God has invested in us to the table of grace. There we share what God has given each of us.

One woman in our city went through a terrible stretch. He mother died of cancer and then her father was killed in a car accident. We were knocking on doors, sharing the Gospel, when we met her. This lady opened her home and spilled out her grief.

That was fellowship in suffering. We wept as this woman wept. She was drawn to come to our church because we were able to meet her where she lived—both geographically and emotionally.

When we go soul winning and in our richest times of fellowship, we share the unspeakable gift. We share our thoughts on what is, in reality, indescribable. Maybe the reason we talk so much about Jesus Christ is that we are still trying to find the right combination of words. I believe this exercise will go on throughout eternity.

Words of life, words of truth, words of triumph, words of comfort. We give these out as God gives them to us. We speak as we are spoken to by the Holy Spirit. Our fellowship is holy, and it is centered on the high thoughts that God has of us. We do not compromise by taking the promises of God and referring to them in common ways. The word for that is profanity; it is allowing truth fall in the street (Isaiah 59:14).

There are just so many people out there who do not understand God's unspeakable gift. They cannot comprehend true friendship that loves at all times and is born for adversity. When this kind of fellowship exists among us, people notice. This is the promise of Jesus Christ, who said that our love for one another will reveal that we have been with Him and that we are His disciples (John 13:35).

Every day I hear things about people's lives that are so hard to imagine. I was unaware of what these people have gone through, and I begin to pray as I have never prayed before. I cared for them, but I did not realize the deep needs that existed in their hearts.

Many years ago, God laid upon my heart His desire to love others through me. Through the Word and the Holy Spirit, He said, "Don't even get into the ministry unless you are going to commit yourself to Me and to fellowshipping in the sufferings and joys of others."

God has done it. He has shed His love abroad in my heart (Romans 5:5), and that has made all the difference.

Chapter Three

JOY

"The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

"I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

"I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

"Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:5-11).

Jesus Christ came to bring us joy. Happiness

can change with our circumstances, but joy remains. It stands upon the promises of God. In His presence, we have fullness of joy—an exceeding, abundant, inexhaustible joy.

This tells me that I don't have to be depressed with circumstances because I am always in God's presence. I don't have to talk negatively on the phone because God's presence is with me. Heat? I am in the presence of God, and I don't even see it or feel it when it comes (Jeremiah 17:8). I don't have to react to people who don't understand. Instead, I can ask God to bless them. I give them God's love because of God's presence.

"Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

God has given us a great instruction book: the Bible. Its pages show us how everything works together for divine good in the purpose and plan of God.

I remember some Christmas times when I had to put toys together before the morning would come. Some complicated things came in

boxes with many, many parts and a long list of instructions. I can still hear my wife saying, "Have you got that thing together yet?"

People will sometimes ask us if we have things together yet. The answer is that things go together the way God makes them go together. We need to read the instructions that the Holy Spirit communicates through the pages of the Bible.

When God's joy is my strength, I have something for others. God brings good things into my life, and those are mine so that I can give them to others. Every ingredient that makes up the recipe of my life is vital. If I were to try to bake biscuits and I left out some ingredient, they would not be right. Either the taste, the shape, or texture would be all wrong.

God puts things into our lives. They get mixed together and then put into the oven of our experience. The patience of the Lord and the trials of life are designed to make us a provision for others. This is why we count it all joy when we fall into temptations, because God is perfecting us (James 1:2-4).

Giving Is a Great Gift

There is joy in this reality. Everything that

goes into our lives is there for the purpose of making something that can be given away. God desires that we have pleasure in this life, but He wants it to be the right kind of pleasure—pleasure that is found in His fullness. He gives us all things freely to enjoy.

Throughout the Bible, we learn how to enjoy what God has given us. It is a joy that doesn't change. God says, "I want you to realize that I bring joy into the world, a joy that is unspeakable."

God's joy is because of God's gift of His Son to us. Through God's love, we come to understand His personal, intimate friendship. He expects nothing back from us. We just enjoy what He gives us freely. He meets our needs. He gives us the joy of praising Him, and He really enjoys our praise.

Some people have trouble receiving things. They feel funny about accepting gifts, even from the hand of God. But God has given us all things. They are ours and they are for our joy. So I say, just enjoy them all.

CONCLUSION

The fruit of the Spirit is love, and joy is one aspect of love. The Word of God is a joyful thing to read. When we understand this, we do not have to enter into our funny cycles of mood swings.

It is very easy for us to fall into petty problems and to allow those things to steal our joy. Some people always tend to complain and make demands and get upset when things do not go their way. They feed on the ashes of their differences instead of enjoying and appreciating the diversity God has given us.

Here are some simple rules from the Word of God to live by: Believe the best about everyone. Think no evil (1 Corinthians 13:5). Trust in the Lord and you won't see the heat when it comes (Jeremiah 17:8).

Keep in mind, Jesus did not come to judge the world. Nor did He come to condemn it. He did not come to lay some trip on you or to put

you on trial. He came to die for you. The moment you believe in His death, burial, and resurrection, His Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you. He wants you to have His joy as your strength.

His joy will remain, and we can carry that joy with us everywhere we go, even into eternity.

Friendships Built on Truth

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. That is the message of Proverbs 17:17. Yet, even with that specific knowledge, so many Christians relate to each other in generalities. Few believers ever allow the truth to penetrate their souls and captivate them for the cause of specific obedience in the area of friendships. God wants us to develop friendships that can stand in the midst of affliction and distress—friendships that are built upon a solid foundation.

Paul the apostle understood the cause of Christ to which he was called. His life became rich with the friends who stood with him in the midst of difficulties. Together, great things happened, and the Gospel message spread throughout the Roman Empire.

In this booklet, we will discuss how important it is to build our friendships upon specific truth—categorical doctrine from the Word of

God. Armed with specific truth, a Christian can love at all times and always believe the best, giving mercy and grace in every one of his relationships.

Chapter One

SPECIFICS FOR LIVING BEYOND GENERALITIES

"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word [(rhema)] that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words [*(rhema)*] that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

"And they remembered his words [*(rhema)*]" (Luke 24:8).

"Heaven and earth hall pass away, but my words [*(logos)*] shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

Many born-again believers don't understand the difference between *logos* and *rhema*.

A *rhema* is a personal communication from heaven. It has a specific purpose, and it is usually delivered at a critical time. A *rhema* comes directly from God with no interference and no

hindrances. It is God speaking to an individual's heart in a very personal way.

Logos refers to the inspired Word of God. Every word of Scripture was given to instruct, edify, and equip the believer as he walks with God. Still, *logos* represents Scripture in the generality of teaching.

In Matthew 4:4, Jesus Christ declared that man shall not live by bread alone but by words specifically spoken to the believer personally. This is not subjective thinking based on an emotional response. Rather, a *rhema* is a specific revelation from God's Word. For instance, in a response to prayer, in a time of need I may receive a *rhema*, a specific word from God for what to do at that time. It is not hearing voices. It is a faith-hearer receiving the Word of God in specifics. In Matthew 4:4, God is telling us that man must live by God's specific, personal, intimate, and objective revelation of the Word.

People may not get healed because they do not understand receiving a *rhema* for their situation. Yet, the Bible clearly states that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Specific doctrines are preached from the pulpit, presented to an audience, and they produce a specific illumination, a specific revelation with

an accurate inspiration that enables the soul of the recipient to live in that illumination. That is a *rhema*.

A *rhema* goes beyond generality. Some people in the congregation do not always receive a message from the pulpit. They may not allow the words that come forth to become a *rhema* for them. They sit in the audience and allow the Word of God to be only a general truth to them.

The Word of God preached from the pulpit you are called to sit under can be a *rhema* for your memory center, whether you need the words at that moment or not. You may not be dealing with a situation that applies today, but God knows that you may be dealing with something shortly. Perhaps it will be in a few days or a few months, but right now, God wants to connect with your memory center and have specific truth in your frame of reference so it is there when you need it for a situation.

The Teaching of the Spirit

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

In our Bible College, I want our teachers to be very careful with homework. I am not one who believes in giving a lot of homework. I would rather have my students consider the words spoken in the class and have those words become *rhema*—specific, applicable truth for their lives.

I remember how I learned the Word of God. During the daytime I drove my Cushman's Bakery delivery truck along my bread sales route, and in the evening I concentrated on memorizing passages from the Bible. I didn't have any academic assignments as homework, but I was learning the Book. In learning the Book, I would let God speak as I quoted chapter and verse, walking the floor of my kitchen. God then would reveal the meaning of the words as I meditated and prayerfully reflected upon the words I had just received.

This is how a preacher can learn how to deliver an excellent message extemporaneously. He can serve up something from God with just a moment of reflection. Of course, I absolutely believe in preparation—we must never, ever disregard that aspect of the process of developing messages. Yet, I believe a normal Christian should live a life of preparation in which the

Word of God becomes a day-by-day, moment-by-moment principle for him.

I will put in all kinds of study time, searching out things fervently and diligently. I dig deeply, and then I let the Holy Spirit teach me by inspiration through my memory center. In Ephesians 1:19, the Greek words for mighty (*ischus*) and power (*kratos*) describe this process of thinking. In application, *ischus* speaks of the supernatural memory God has developed in me, and *kratos* speaks of the expression of the truth that has been stored in that memory center. Simply put, the Spirit brings to my immediate memory the manifestation of the truth I have learned so that it can operate in that application in every area of my life.

Chapter Two

CAPTIVITED AND CONNECTED IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth" (Lamentations 3:27).

In obedience to God, the yoke is easy and the burden is light. Many Christians make mountains out of molehills. So many think they have difficult lives. Satan makes them believe they are living a lie.

Jesus' yoke is easy and His burden is light. It is good for us to bear our yokes early in our days of growth. It is good for us to have trouble paying our bills sometimes, because we will

have to pray and maybe even go out and find extra work. We have to learn how to bear our responsibility (Galatians 6:4); therefore, at times, it is good to have problems. Otherwise, we would never know the provisions and resources that come by faith.

God likes to test the various kinds of teaching and the diversity of the Holy Spirit's thoughts we have received. That is why I like to teach without giving homework, to show students how to get the most out of every class. They can get so much out of the classes by developing a capacity for listening for God's *rhema* for them.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:3-6).

A *rhema* involves the Spirit quickening the knowledge that we have received in our human

spirit. Ephesians is a very beautiful book that describes the truth of how God saved us in eternity past. This epistle does not start with sinners being saved, but it starts with God choosing us in eternity past because He, having all knowledge, knew who would come to believe in Him.

Sin is not mentioned until chapter two of Ephesians. The epistle then goes on to describe how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit established the plan of redemption from eternity to eternity—from the foundation in eternity past, to be worked out until time is no more. Christ is always cleansing and sanctifying and restoring us until we grow into complete agreement with God's eternal will (see Ephesians 5:25-27).

A Prisoner to God's Purpose

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)"

(Ephesians 3:1-4).

Here, in an interesting description of himself, Paul was saying, "I am a prisoner, but not because I have committed a crime. I am a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ for the Gentiles, who need to hear the Gospel."

This is a practical, important application for the purpose of spiritual realization. God opened up the mystery of Paul's call to reach the Gentiles, and he considered himself a prisoner to this call on his life.

Called to Reveal Christ at Any Cost

"He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Proverbs 17:9).

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17).

Some of you may consider that your marriage is a prison, but for all the wrong reasons. Believe me, there are a lot of people who feel trapped by their marriages. They are hurting, and the pain and heartache and sadness just keep coming for them.

I know one man who felt like this and then entered into an affair. Yet, I was still a prisoner to my friendship to him. For the sake of love, for

the sake of the Cross, for the sake of the grace of God, I predetermined never to cease being this man's friend. As a prisoner to my friendship to him, I intended to be his friend for the rest of our lives—no matter what happens.

This is what a friend does. His friendship is built on the specific truth he has received from the Word of God. With marriages, this is particularly important. You had better make sure you are friends before you go to the altar. A friend loves at all times; and like a brother, a friend is born for adversity. It would be pretty hard for anyone to pursue the course of divorce if he really believed the truth of Proverbs 17:17.

Satan's Plan Is to Separate and Divide

One thing I really despise is when I hear about someone saying something to one who is weak and that conversation ends up separating friends. That is the beginning of what God calls a conspiracy. A conspiracy comes when a group of people find fault with the leader. Something bothers them. Something happened, and they cannot forgive and forget. This atmosphere breeds whisperers. As a result, friends are separated.

For those of us who have committed to

being friends no matter what happens, we cannot be separated, no matter how many matters are repeated. A great Christian leader has come under attack recently. Vicious articles have been written about him by supposed friends. To some degree, he has had to go on the defensive. Sadly, the people generating these attacks do not recognize the cause to which they were called.

Every effective, productive, fruitful ministry of God that reproduces Christ in people's lives will go through persecution. Satan, the father of all lies, does all he can to attack the truth and to separate friends with his vibrations through the atmosphere and the projections from his world system. So many people buy his lies and they become influenced and infected.

We recognize that our cause will bring us to a place where we are under attack. Yet, we know that in everything, Christ has gone before us.

I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and my commitment is based upon the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. My call is to proclaim the Glorious Gospel and to disciple believers. I understand my cause, and I build my friendships on the truth. Nothing can shake the foundation of this kind of friendship.

Chapter Three

WE HAVE A GREAT, BIG, WONDERFUL GOD

The greeting, "I Paul," in Ephesians 3:1, is a demonstrative declaration of the authority of his office as the apostle to the Gentiles. Just the fact that he used his new name (his given name was Saul) represented his heart attitude as a leader. The word "Paul" literally means less than zero. He thought of himself that way because, as a Pharisee, he was responsible for injuring and killing many believers. Then Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, and he became Paul—less than nothing in his own eyes. "My name was changed because I am little, so little."

Paul used his new name because he recognized the God-given authority of his office. Next, he refers to himself as "the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." This was not the only time Paul referred to himself as a prisoner. In 2 Timothy 1:8 and Philemon 9, he calls him-

self a prisoner. In Philemon 13 and Colossians 4:3, he writes of his bonds. For Paul, preaching the Gospel meant suffering. Yet, he was held captive by God's cause to be a true friend and to share the Gospel to the Gentiles.

When my friendships are built on truth, then my measure of faith becomes something that edifies others and helps them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (see Romans 1:17; Romans 12:3).

Believe the Best for Others

Faith is the substance of the things I hope for, both for myself and for you. As a friend, I trust God for what He will do in your life as well as my own. I believe in His love toward you, I believe in His mercy, I believe in His grace. I believe in His forgiveness, no matter what you have done. The Holy Spirit sheds His love abroad in my heart and flows out of me to other people.

This should be especially true for mature Christians. The older I become, the smaller I should be in my own eyes. The more I learn, the less I know—and I don't mean this in a negative way. I mean this honestly, because Christ consistently and continually becomes a bigger God.

For me, He has become a big, phenomenal, wonderful, gracious God.

"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6).

As a frail sinner, if there is one thing I can do it is that I can please God with faith that serves by love. I can please God as I use faith in my marriage, in my study, in my exchanges with precious friends and members of the Body of Christ. When I am hurting, my faith will fight the doubts.

Quality Faith

"And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

"And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (Luke 17:5-6).

Our measure of faith is enough. We can build friendships upon truth if we will choose to live and abide in the incorruptible seed of 1 Peter 1:23. This gives us the right quality of faith. The measure of my faith is strengthened as I grow and exercise what I have already learned.

One of Jesus' true friends is the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15:21-28. She came asking for the healing of her demon-possessed daughter. First, Jesus was silent. Then, He told her that He was called only to the lost sheep of Israel. She kept on asking Him for help, and the next thing He said was, "I cannot cast Israel's bread to the dogs."

And she said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Matthew 15:27-28).

This woman never reacted. She firmly trusted the love of Jesus Christ. She never became discouraged. She understood that this Man was a friend to sinners, and she trusted that He would answer her prayer. She never trivialized the severity of the situation, but she acknowledged that Christ is a Friend to sinners, and she stood firmly on that foundation. In doing so, she discovered a friendship built on truth.

CONCLUSION

James 2:5 speaks of the riches of our faith manifested in the poor of this world. It is such a precious thing for someone to be rich in faith. It is a great thing for God's people to get on their knees and pray as much as possible. We can call each other and have great prayer times on the phone. Some will get together in their homes and churches to pray.

Faith grows. The Word of God flows. Friendships are made and are strengthened in the purpose and plan of God. People are added unto the Lord as members of His Body and ready to become part of the Bride of Christ.

As true friends in Christ, through specific revelation to our hearts, the truth is the foundation of everything we do. We will learn together the unsearchable, unchanging, indescribable, magnificent, majestic, marvelous grace of God. We will express mercy to each other, which means that we have an attitude that people who

have hurt us will not receive the punishment they deserve. Instead, we minister grace, which means that we express to them what none of us deserves—the perfect love of God.

From Chains to Freedom

through

God's Anointing

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INTRODUCTION

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing" (Isaiah 10:27).

Many Christians understand that the key to growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ is the anointing. A believer who manifests an anointing has the fruit of holiness on his lips; he reveals the fruit of righteousness from the Tree of Life. When God gives an anointing and the Word is preached with power, He breaks the yokes of bondage and people are released.

Yet, while Scripture makes it clear that the Holy Spirit anoints every believer at the point of salvation (2 Corinthians 1:21-22), many remain in their bonds. Nevertheless, when we turn to the Lord we shall see His glory, "and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Chapter One

REVERENCE GOD IN THE ANOINTING

According to 1 Samuel 16:13, 2 Samuel 2:4, and 2 Samuel 5:3, David had three separate anointings regarding his call to become king. First, Samuel anointed David, whom God chose over his brothers to be king. Second, he was anointed to be king over Judah. Third, he was anointed to be king of Israel. Three specific anointings.

When believers gather for worship, their praise and singing prepares the way for God to bring indescribable blessings. Before the service ever begins, when members of the congregation function in their anointing as believer-priests, their attitude of prayer and praise can prepare the way for each singing group and for every speaker in the service.

We have to build up momentum for the presence of God to be manifested. If everyone

comes in with a heart full of worship and a quiet and prayerful spirit, expecting from God, then when we begin to worship, the manifestation of God's presence is beautiful. By the time the message comes, it can just flow.

God wants to anoint each part of the service; therefore, we need to *reverence* God's presence. Filling your seat is not enough. We are to prepare the way of the Lord (Isaiah 40:3). By being on time, with a heart prepared to receive an anointing to worship the Lord in song, you show tremendous honor and high esteem for His presence. The gift of music is not enough. Talent is not enough. The gift of speaking is not enough. A well-prepared message is not enough. For God's presence to be manifested and for burdens to be lifted, the service must have the anointing of God upon it.

The Anointings of an Office

What is an anointing? It is a supernatural act of God that gives a person divine ability to do the task at hand. It means that God has appointed a person to an "office," which Webster's defines as a special position of trust for a specific duty conferred by a governmental authority. God delegates kingdom authority to a believer-

priest according to his call. The office affords the necessary privilege of the anointing, the abiding presence of God.

In Acts 10:38, the Word of God says that the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus Christ to go about "doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; *for God was with him*."

Every Christian who has the Holy Spirit is anointed, but many Christians do not *manifest* the anointing.

King Saul was anointed as captain over God's inheritance (1 Samuel 10:1). Because of that anointing, David refused to lay his hand upon Saul (1 Samuel 24:6; 26:9-11): " The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against God's anointed." Even though Saul was not right, he was still anointed—and David knew it! Saul didn't manifest his anointing, but God anointed him and gave him an office.

A practical way to manifest God's life is revealed in 2 Corinthians 4:10-11. As we are delivered unto death by people and circumstances for Jesus' sake, His eternal life is made manifest in our mortal flesh.

God will never call a person without giving an anointing for the office (1 Thessalonians 5:24). It is the anointing that takes the burden from off

the shoulder and breaks the yoke from off the neck. This is why, in our example of the worship service, the Scripture reading must be anointed; every song must be anointed; and even the reading of announcements must be anointed. You ask, "How can you have anointed announcements?" The speaker manifests the anointing by his physical presence—his eyes, his tone of voice. With fervency, he commits his soul to the presence of God for the purpose at hand.

Seeking God Himself

There's such a difference between seeking God through knowledge and simply seeking God Himself. When we separate knowledge *about* God from God Himself, the knowledge is not anointed. But when the Holy Spirit accompanies knowledge, the knowledge is anointed and helps us to know God more intimately.

In Exodus 28:41, the priests had to be anointed for service, dedicated and set apart. First they were washed with water and clothed in linen and fine garments. Then at the tabernacle they were anointed with blood, first on the right ear, then the right thumb, and finally the right toe (Exodus 29:20).

The ear speaks of hearing—knowing how to

hear and being ready to hear (Isaiah 50:4-5). The thumb refers to the mind—knowing how to think once we have heard (Proverbs 16:3) and being ready to obey (2 Corinthians 8:12*a*). The toe speaks of our walk, or manner of living—that we would know how to walk and where to go (Psalm 16:11).

In Leviticus 14:14-17, the priests anointed those who needed cleansing first with blood, then with oil. As redeemed sinners, we needed a covering by the precious blood of Christ before we could receive the unction of the Holy Spirit. It is interesting that in Exodus 29:7 the anointing oil was poured on the head of the high priest (who represented Jesus Christ) *before* the animal was sacrificed. Because Jesus was perfect in His humanity, he didn't need personal atonement by a blood offering. Yet, because He humbled Himself as a man, He needed the anointing of the Holy Spirit to function in His call (Isaiah 61).

Then, in Exodus 30:26-29, the tabernacle and everything in it had to be anointed with oil "that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy." In Leviticus 16:14-19, however, we see the awesome plan of the most holy God foreshadowed. Because the congregation was unclean and the tabernacle defiled, He rec-

onciled them by sprinkling blood on the mercy seat in the holy of holies. Today, the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, is sprinkled on the mercy seat in heaven, where we can boldly approach His throne (Hebrews 1:8-12; 4:16).

Anointed in Every Detail

There should be an anointing on a father's life to be a father. The application of the Blood is a covering so his past doesn't interfere with his fatherhood. The oil is for divine enablement by the Holy Spirit. A husband needs a special anointing to be a husband. How can he love his wife as Christ loved the Church if he doesn't have Christ's anointing (Ephesians 5:25)? So many saved husbands go to church, but they have never received an anointing to be a husband.

A wife needs an anointing to be the wife of a certain man. She needs an anointing that complements her womanhood. Single men and women need an anointing for God's call on their lives. Because the anointing sets us free, it will break the bands of loneliness and dispel whatever lies the enemy projects.

We need an anointing for each aspect of our lives. Remember that God anointed David for each new phase of his life. The Bible says in

1 John 2:20 that we have an 'unction', or anointing. This is true for all Christians. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any [natural] man teach you…" (1 John 2:27). You do not need a soulish unsaved educator to teach you about God's Book. The anointing manifests the life of Christ so we can apply God's divine medicine for the soul.

Chapter Two

THE FRUIT OF AN ANOINTED LIFE

In Isaiah 61:7, the Word of God says, "they [Israel] shall rejoice in their portion:...everlasting joy shall be unto them." They shouted for joy over their portion! The anointing for joy and gladness is, indeed, strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Throughout history and still today, people have endured unimaginable hardship for the joy set before them (Hebrews 12:2). *The anointing breaks the yoke*.

After seeing the New Jerusalem, John the Apostle wrote, "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Revelation 21:22). There will be no temple in heaven; however, our bodies, temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), will be there, glorified and perfected—God's completed temples with a perfect, eternal anointing.

Have you ever wondered why James says

concerning those who are sick, "Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:14-15). Here is a great principle of God: The anointing will heal the sickness through the prayers of the elders. The oil is a symbol that the Holy Spirit has anointed their office with His power. Therefore, because of their office, they will see some specific healing that otherwise would not happen.

God wants the congregation to have special honor for the office of elder and pastor-teacher. When that happens, those who hold that office can use their gifts as special messengers to anoint the congregation, and the prayer of faith will heal the sick. This is a unique plan of God.

The Flesh Profits Nothing

Few conditions are worse than that of having second-hand knowledge without a first-hand encounter with God. This happens when people do not manifest their anointing. Christian schools and colleges, as precious and sacred as they are, are worth absolutely nothing unless

every class is anointed. It isn't enough for the teachers to get up and write on their blackboards. It is urgent that they live before God, think before God, and pray before God. Teachers must enter their classrooms in the nature of the presence of God.

There should be an anointing on every meeting, whether of a board of directors, deacons and elders, or outreach teams. The ear, the tongue, the thumb, the toe, the mind—each should be anointed. Every word spoken in a meeting should be under the anointing. That is honoring the principle of the presence of God.

Enjoying the presence of God and knowing that holiness is a tree ripe with fruitfulness, we begin to understand the nature of the anointing of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. These are the fruits of an anointed life. These are the fruits of someone whose burden was removed from his shoulder and the yoke taken off his neck. The anointing has broken the yoke.

The Word of God says so beautifully in Psalm 20:6, "The LORD saveth his anointed." With the anointing comes saving strength (Psalm 28:8), and the light of God shines upon

the head of the anointed (Psalm 84:9, 11).

The Anointing and Power

Here's a tremendous principle: When you are about to deal with a serious problem, go to God and receive an anointing for that problem. Whether or not it was your fault, make it right with God, and get an anointing for that problem.

Some people seek answers, while others seek God. Some people ask questions, while others flourish in the fellowship of His presence. I am not saying it's wrong to ask questions, but it's better to thrive in God's presence. We can't have His power and holiness in our lives unless the Holy Spirit anoints us.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). It is more than simply expanding in knowledge or doctrine. In the Kingdom of God we expand in an all-consuming, ever-growing relationship with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Chapter Three

LIVING BEFORE GOD IN THE ANOINTING

"The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6*b*). Jesus made this clear when He said, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Once again, the Word makes it absolutely clear that Jesus Christ would not speak words to the flesh without the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Fear is the result of not being anointed. Thinking of the past is another consequence of not being anointed. Insecurity is the evidence that someone is not manifesting an anointing. Preoccupation with self and self-serving interests in the flesh are marks of someone who lacks evidence of an anointing. A man with an unforgiving spirit reveals that he lives day in and day out without a fresh anointing from God.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit breaks the yoke. It takes the burden from the shoulder, and breaks the yoke off the neck. Luke 9:11 says that, because of His anointing, Jesus healed everyone who had need of healing. He healed Mary Magdalene, a woman who had seven demons (Luke 8:2), because He was anointed to do that.

So He could return to the people the next day with a ministry of power, Jesus continually went to the mountains, to the hills, and to the desert places to pray. When He sensed that the people did not properly receive the manifestation of God's power, Jesus would leave the crowds and go back to be with His Father. He would not minister unless He was ministering with an anointing.

Take Nothing for Granted

One of the greatest sins among believers is to take an anointing for granted. Keeping in mind that the Word of God is unchangeable, we learn and relearn truth. Sometimes we forget, but we are always learning.

When we begin to understand this principle of the anointing, our prayer life will have a brand-new impact. It is no longer fulfilling an obligation, "doing our duty," or an evangelical

practice. It is fulfilling a desire of love. Love takes us way beyond duty and far beyond obligation. Love takes us into an experience of the Holy Spirit's anointing.

Charles Spurgeon, a renowned preacher of the last century, would say before every message, "I'm deeply anointed tonight. I'm going to speak in a ministry of the Holy Spirit. God has anointed me now, and I claim it. I'm going to exercise the anointing in my faith. I'm going to be filled with the fruit of God's power."

He said this each time, reminding himself that he was to speak only in the anointing of God. Why is that so important? It's because only the anointing takes the burden from off the shoulders and breaks the yoke from off the neck. Nothing is more beautiful than that. The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing: the yoke of Adam, the yoke of sin, the yoke of evil—removed, because of an anointing.

Discern the Anointing

Some people come to church overwhelmed and burdened with finances, overwhelmed with domestic problems or by the sudden news of disease in the family. They sit there robbed by Satan of the message and defeated in the flesh

because they did not discern the anointing. It did not break the yoke off their neck. To discern the anointing means to recognize the presence of God (John 14:17). Only an anointing can release the chains of bondage.

Someone recently asked me why I had spoken such a brief message that day. My answer? "Because that's all I was anointed to speak!" I was done when the anointing said 'quit' and brought the message to an abrupt close. I said everything I wanted to say because on that particular night I was anointed for twenty-seven minutes. It was not a conscious decision on my part. I didn't watch the clock. I just knew when to quit.

Every Christian has seen people in broken relationships, with broken hearts, and in bondage to differences. People suffer because they have never allowed the Holy Spirit to anoint their relationships. If people go against a pastor or another believer and do not repent, their relationships in the body of Christ will be strange. Instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to set them free, they grieve Him.

Responsibility and Accountability

Each time we prepare to hear a message, we

must receive an anointing *before* the pastor speaks. We must be anointed before the song leader leads us in singing. Before a musical group comes to sing, we need an anointing to hear that specific group. We need to do this as a practice. My part is to go to God and ask the Holy Spirit to anoint me for a specific purpose. Then, I pray for the singers and each speaker, that nothing would hinder their anointing as they minister.

Imagine what would happen in the offerings if everyone would ask God to anoint their faith to know what to give! Before an offering is taken, the members of the congregation should ask God to anoint their faith.

The point is this: Everyone has a responsibility before God and an accountability to Jesus Christ. Our faith needs to be anointed. Our love must be anointed. Our responses need to be anointed for each specific detail.

Begin to understand "responsibility" and what being responsible means: *response-ability*. We need responsibility to the Cross, to Christ's death, to His burial, to His Resurrection, and to His Ascension. We need a responsibility to His mandates, to His promises, and to communicate His nature faithfully. It is through the anointing

that God gives divine responsibility.

It would be possible for me to grieve the Holy Spirit (so quickly that I wouldn't know it) by simply forgetting to ask for an anointing. As a counselor, if I forget being anointed for a session, I will grieve the Spirit without doing another thing.

You wouldn't have strange feelings around people with whom you differ if your feelings had God's anointing. We need the anointing of God for our emotions. Every moment of life is sacred, and our goal is to live each moment in an anointing.

CONCLUSION

On earth, Jesus Christ was anointed for every part of His life and each thing that He did. That is why He reaped results! He "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38), because He came for that purpose and was anointed for the task.

We need to guard our hearts to prevent becoming familiar with the anointing. Don't rely on your gifts or your call apart from the anointing. Continually go before God's throne of grace and mercy to find strength to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

I desire every detail in my life to be anointed and separated by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Every moment, every hour, every day, I must be sanctified by the Spirit, washed in the precious Blood of the Lamb (1 Peter 1:2-21). It is because He was manifested that we were able to believe. By Jesus Christ, the chains are destroyed.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; be-

cause the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek...to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isaiah 61:1).

There is a purpose beyond ourselves. Let's seek God continually for specific anointings to break the heavy chains of bondage in our own lives. Then we will be able to give to those that mourn "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," as we glorify the Lord.

From Conviction

to Conversion

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

One morning, as I greeted my wife, I thought of something precious to me. I thought of how it was on January 5, many years ago, when she asked me if we would get married, and I said, "I'll pray about it and do my best to give you an answer."

I prayed that whole year, and on February 27 of the next year, I said, "I'd like to meet with you."

She said, "You mean you finally made up your mind?"

I said, "Yes. I will accept your invitation."

That was a wonderful day, and we were just thrilled.

Then up in Vermont, as we sat outdoors at some old antique restaurant, I took out my guitar (she didn't know I had it on the back seat), and I sang to her "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You?"

As I sang with, obviously, a very good voice,

tears came down from her eyes.

I said, "How could anyone shed tears at this kind of a voice?"

She said, "If you had waited as long as I have, you'd cry too."

I had to make a decision, and I made a great decision.

Decisions are so important to our lives.

The first great decision we have to make is to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior. That choice, which we make with our free will, means that we will spend eternity in heaven with Him. After that, however, God desires that we continue to make good decisions in response to His initiations to us.

As this booklet will explain, many people follow after Christ to a certain point, and then they stop. Only a remnant of believers choose to be converted by the power of the Holy Spirit as He works through the truth of the Word of God. We pray that this booklet will inspire others to receive the convictions of the Lord and allow themselves to be converted to follow Jesus every day in His new and living way.

Chapter One

FOLLOW-SHIP: ONLY A BEGINNING

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).

A pastor has a lot of things to do, a lot of details to tend to. It is his calling. But the primary thing that a pastor needs to do is to do a good job of preaching the message of salvation. Why? Because there are two kinds of people in this world: those who are saved and those that are lost. That's it. Either a person is saved or he is lost.

This is what the Word of God says:

"God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through

Him might be saved.

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:17-18).

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

These two classes of people are everywhere you go, and you will meet them with every move you make. There are those who are condemned forever, who will go to a literal hell, and those who are saved forever, who will go to heaven because they received Jesus Christ as their Savior, by grace through faith.

A decision has to be made as to where they will spend eternity.

Once we make a decision to be saved, we have to make another decision and answer this question: Are we going to follow the Lord?

I call that decision "follow-ship."

Our Days are Numbered

"And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

"But hast lifted up thyself against the LORD of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

"Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.

"And this is the writing that was written, *MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.* "This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

"*TEKEL*; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

"*PERES*; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

"Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

"And Darius the Median took the kingdom,

being about threescore and two years old" (Daniel 5:22-31).

Belshazzar and his drunken crowd were having a party, and in the process, they used the utensils from God's temple. In the midst of it came the finger of God to write on the wall, *"MENE, MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN."* "Numbered, Belshazzar! Your days are numbered." That is what the inscription was telling him. "Your life has been weighed, and you have been found wanting." In other words, "Judgment is going to come upon you because you are lost."

I cannot imagine what it means to walk down the streets of any community or any city and not realize that some of those around me are condemned and lost. I repeat: There are only two classes of people in this world. There are the saved and there are the lost.

Most families include people from both of these classes. There are people you love with all your heart, but they are lost. If they were to die today, they would go on forever and ever in a Christless eternity.

Choose Christ Today

So if you are reading this and you have never made a decision to receive Jesus Christ as

your Savior, may I plead with you to get saved? Do you realize that Jesus paid it all, that He shed His own blood for our sins? Do you realize that upon His own body, He took the penalty for every single sin anyone in the world ever committed (Isaiah 53:5, 1 Peter 2:24)? Do you realize that He took all the guilt and shame from us so that we could be free?

I know so many people who are just so thankful that they are saved. They go to bed every night knowing they have the gift of eternal life (John 10:28). They have been sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:14; 4:30), the gift of God given at salvation when they were regenerated and justified by grace through faith, having peace with God (Romans 5:1).

I plead with you today, don't take this gift of salvation for granted. Accept Him today as your Savior and have the assurance that the Word of God says, "That you may know you have eternal life" (1 John 5:12-13). If you have never done so, you can pray right now, as you are reading this. Just say, *"Dear Jesus, thank You for loving me so much that you died on the Cross and shed Your blood for my sins. I receive You as my personal Savior. Thank You for Your Word, and teach me to know You more each day. In Your name, I pray this.*

Amen."

A Know-So Salvation

My salvation isn't "hope so." It isn't something that is "maybe so." My salvation is totally "know so." I *know* that it is so. I also know that it is eternally so, because my Bible tells me that that Jesus Christ will never, no never leave me or forsake me (see Hebrews 13:5). "These things are written unto you, that you may know you have eternal life." It is so crucial to know it.

A lot of people think they got saved when they were baptized as a child. No, they did not. Others think they are saved because they went to church as children and were brought up in good homes. They were not saved because of that. Some of you perhaps believe that you were saved because you became religious. No, you were not saved because you became religious.

The only way any one of us can be saved is to receive the gift of repentance and by faith accept Christ as our Savior. One day we came to God the Father and said, "I believe that Your Son died, was buried, and rose again from the dead." The moment we believed in our hearts and confessed with our mouths, we were saved.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth

the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

Chapter Two

MAKING RIGHT TURNS

"Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

"But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life.

"But many that are first shall be last, and the last first"(Mark 10:28-31).

There is a group of people we can easily recognize in the Scriptures. They were people who lived in follow-ship. In Mark 10, Peter said to Jesus, "We have left all to follow thee." Andrew brought Peter to the Messiah, and Peter believed and he was saved. Now he was willing to do

something else. In John 1:40-42, Peter got saved and began to follow Jesus.

Dear friends, please consider this carefully. Peter was willing to give up all that he had to follow Jesus. How noble. How virtuous. How right. And he said, "We have given up everything." But if you will notice carefully, though Peter had left everything, and was saved, and followed Jesus Christ, he was not converted.

How many of you are converted? Oh, yes, you are saved, and you follow Jesus. But are you converted? That is the question. Many people live in follow-ship, but not conversion.

Glorify God in Your Body

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Conversion happens after a person believes. For example: I am walking down the road without God's direction, and then I have a dominating, convicting thought that I am a follower, but I have never truly been converted in my heart. Then I stop, and I think, "Oh, God wants my

body to be His. His Holy Spirit is inside of me."

You stop, you think, and you turn right around and go the opposite way, following Christ all the way. Now you have been converted.

In John 6:66, because of His "hard" saying about the Cross, many of the disciples followed Him no more. They refused conversion. Many of these disciples had followed Christ, but when He said something that was hard to take, they went back and never followed Him again.

Some of you do not come to church on Sunday nights, and you don't want to hear me say this, but you are not converted. It is in the Bible, but you don't want me to say this. You may think I'm getting too close to home. But just read Hebrews 10:25.

Will you go to heaven? Yes, you will go to heaven if you are saved. Are you following Christ? Yes, you are following Christ. Have you been converted? No, you haven't. You have withdrawn from following Christ with all your heart, in every area of life.

You have made some good decisions. First, a decision for salvation. Secondly, a decision to follow Jesus. But there also needs to be a decision for conversion.

Chapter Three

THE MARKS OF CONVERSION

Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).

Here were the disciples, forsaking Him and fleeing from His presence (Matthew 26:56). And while Jesus was going through the pain of His crucifixion, the disciples stood afar off (Luke 23:49). Why? They had not been converted. Their capacity allowed them to follow all the way to the Cross. But except for John, no disciples were at the Cross.

All that would change. In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit descended, and Peter was converted.

You know, people bring up so many possible problems. "What if this happens?" "What if that happens?" Forget those things. God takes

care of each step. God takes care of the problems. If anything ever happened to a pastor, the people would miss him tremendously, but they would adjust to what they had been taught through conversion. They have already been converted in a hundred different ways, but they would be converted again in those areas of need.

Conversion—it's a beautiful thing.

You say, "I don't go soul winning." Then you need a conversion.

"I don't believe in praying that the sick will be healed."

Then you need a conversion so that the sick will be healed when you pray.

We need a conversion in our faith. We need a conversion in our prayer life. There is one salvation, but many conversions.

Moving Beyond Follow-ship

The disciples began to follow Jesus Christ, and they did follow Him. But after they were converted, the Word of God says, "They turned the world upside down." I like this!

Here was Simon whose name was "Impulsive," and Jesus said, "I'm going to change your name to Peter, which means "A Rock." And what happened? He left his old identity and

took on a new one. Simon was converted.

But you think, "Wait a minute. He followed Jesus."

You see, that's what *you* think. That is why I'm preaching this message. You think follow-ship means conversion. Follow-ship means you are saved. That's all.

You were saved at decision number one. Follow-ship is decision number two. But many people who enter into follow-ship are not consistent after a period of time. They give up things that they have, but sooner or later time wears them down and they back off. Their lives become more family-oriented (as precious as that is) and socially-oriented. As far as they ever go is follow-ship.

But oh, give me somebody who comes to God and reads the Bible and prays and is filled with the Holy Spirit. He will make sure that he is in the geographical will of God. Followers of Christ will make sure they are in the geographical will of God—the place where God has called them. They make sure that they are sitting under the pastor-teacher God has for them, and they receive what that pastor is getting from God for their lives.

Then comes conversion. The words we used

to say we don't say anymore, because we have been converted into kindness and tenderheartedness. Our life is not our own. We have been bought with a price, and we know that we are His—completely.

CONCLUSION

I want you to look at it like this and leave you with this thought, if you are ready for it. Our church building used to be an old grocery store. It had different owners. The ownership changed and the use of the buildings changed. We turned it into a church.

When you get saved, the ownership changes. You become a new creature through Christ, He begins to own you. The ownership changes. The purpose and the use of the building changes. It is no longer used for the old purposes.

I saw a house, and this old house was empty, and it was worthless, and it looked ugly. Then, somebody bought it, fixed it up, and made it look nice. The ownership changed and the house was used for something wonderful, for some good people to live in it and who would keep up the house.

That is what conversion is. Your house changes. The ownership changes.

Please do not put this booklet down and ignore what I preached about the difference between follow-ship and conversion. You have read a message today from the Bible. We gave you Scriptures categorically. Having been convicted of the truth, let's let the Holy Spirit continue to lead us into life-changing conversions as we go forward in God's plan.

Fulfilled Prophecies

from the Bible

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible is the written revelation of God and His plan for the human race. It reveals many things that pertain to life. For example, only the Bible tells us how God, in His great love for us, sacrificed His only Son for our sin so that we could be reconciled to Him (John 3:16). The Bible gives the plan of salvation by grace through faith alone in a personal God and what He has done for us (Ephesians 2:4-10). No wonder, it is the most published book in the world today, with over 2.5 billion copies published in over seven hundred languages.

The Bible is the absolute divine authority in every area in which man needs counsel. It presents scientific facts, which were later discovered by man, as well as a multitude of prophecies which were accurately fulfilled. The chances of one book containing so many proven prophecies are infinitesimal. Yet, the Bible has been proven accurate again and again and again.

We can go through its pages line upon line and find details forecast that were supported centuries later by scientific evidence.

Presented in this booklet are biblical claims and prophecies and the evidences of their fulfillment. It was the veracity of these very facts that caused me to throw aside my pride, get down on my knees, and pray, "Father, forgive me. Come into my heart and live." That day, at age twenty-three, I was saved God's way— by grace through faith in the Finished Work of Jesus Christ at the Cross of Calvary.

I have prepared this summary of biblical claims and researched the evidence for your consideration. I pray that these words would touch your heart as they touched mine. Let them bring you to a place where you can know the depths of God's love through the mastery of His plan revealed to men.

Chapter One

SURE WORDS OF PROPHECY

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,

"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah 46:9-10).

"And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe" (John 14:29).

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy [Spirit]" (2 Peter

1:19-21).

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

"That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

"…It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Every word of God is pure (Proverbs 30:5). We must not add to nor take away from the Word of God deliberately (Revelation 22:19). No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. It didn't come by the will of man, but by holy men who were moved by the Holy Spirit of God.

The Heavens and the Stars

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God head; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

Creation in itself is an amazing revelation of a Creator. Science continually discovers more and more of the complexity of creation and the scientific laws that govern it. It is impossible that

this creation just came out of nothing. The only possible answer is that a Creator authored life.

The Stars

God told Abram in Genesis 15:5 to "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." The book of Genesis was written around 1450 B.C. The Bible declared the stars to be numberless long before observatories and telescopes made men aware of this fact. In 129 B.C., Hipparchus, a Greek astronomer, counted and cataloged 850 stars. Two hundred years later, Ptolemy, another Greek scientist, counted 1,022. In A.D. 1725, John Flamsteed cataloged only 3,000 stars. Friedrich Argelander, a German astronomer, listed more than 324,000 stars by A.D. 1862. Today, we know that there are several billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy alone, and that the stars in all the galaxies combined are innumerable, just as the Bible said. Each of them, however, is known by God: "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names" (Psalm 147:4).

Oxygen

"By what way is the light parted, which scat-

tereth the east wind upon the earth?" (Job 38:24). This is the biblical description of how oxygen is created through the process of photosynthesis. Although we do not know the exact date the book of Job was written, several factors argue for a date before the time of Moses: the absence of Israelite history or law; Job's long life (42:16); Job's role as a priest for his family (1:5), which was prohibited by Mosaic law; and the measurement of Job's wealth in terms of livestock. The book of Job was therefore probably written between 2000 and 1800 B.C.

Joseph Priestley (a British chemist and minister, in 1772) along with Jan Ingenhousz (a Dutch physician, in 1779) and Jean Senebier (a French pastor, in 1796) finally caught up with what was written in the book of Job through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They discovered that the earth's oxygen is created by photosynthesis. In simple terms, during the process of photosynthesis in green plants, the energy in light is captured and used to convert water, carbon dioxide, and minerals into oxygen and energy-rich compounds. In other words, light is changed to oxygen, just as the Bible said almost 4,000 years ago.

Star Constellations

"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?" (Job 38:31).

The Pleiades constellation, especially the seven visible stars, has always had a special place in mankind's history and mythology. The Orion constellation is now being observed and studied by astronomers to unlock the secrets of star birth.

The question God asked Job reveals amazing astronomical insight regarding the complex laws of the universe. He asked whether Job could hold the star clusters together, or if he could alter the configuration of the Orion constellation. The answer is obviously no.

About the Earth

"It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in" (Isaiah 40:22).

The word 'circle' is from the Hebrew word *hûg*, which (according to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Volume 1*, page 266, number 615, by Harris, Archer, and Waltke)

means circle or circuit.

Sitting on top of a circle implies a globe. If it were the flat part of something like a coin, God would not sit on the circle but on the flat part or in the center of it. Therefore, this verse implies the sphericity of the earth.

It was God, not Pythagoras (6th century B.C.) nor Aristotle (born 384 B.C.), who first declared the earth to be round, not flat as many of the ancients believed. Columbus, who had a personal faith in Christ, studied early maps and sailed across the Atlantic to the New World in 1492, and with his four trips opened the way for future exploration. Although he died during his journey, Ferdinand Magellan led his ships on the first circumnavigation of the world from 1519-1521. These men merely verified what God had already proclaimed through Isaiah (740-680 B.C.).

Job 26:10 says more literally that the Creator has made a circle upon the face of the waters (also Proverbs 8:27). The Bible has the oldest written references to a round or spherical earth, years ahead of any Greek references.

"He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). Ancient stories, fables, and myths pictured the earth as resting upon the backs of elephants,

turtles, and serpents. But the Bible declared long ago that the earth was suspended in space. Eventually, the Greek scientists, and later modern science, caught up with the Bible in agreeing that the earth hung upon its orbit in space within the sun's gravitational field.

Meteorological Truths: Jet Streams

"The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits" (Ecclesiastes 1:6).

Ecclesiastes was written around 1000 B.C. This passage refers to the air currents in our atmosphere, called jet streams. Jet streams are long, narrow, high-speed air currents in the stratosphere or upper troposphere. First discovered by pilots in the Second World War, these jet streams have speeds of up to 310 miles per hour along thousands of miles at their centers. Jet streams encircle the earth in meandering paths, shifting position as well as speed with the seasons.

Today we know that by these jet streams, affected by the earth's rotation, the air is cooled in the north and then veers along the ground southward toward the equator where it is

heated and returns north through the upper atmosphere.

The Hydrological Cycle

"He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth" (Psalm 135:7).

"He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them (Job 26:8).

"For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof" (Job 36:27).

"If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth" (Ecclesiastes 11:3*a*).

"He that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name" (Amos 9:6b).

These verses describe the hydrological cycle. This is the cycle of continuous circulation of water through the earth's atmosphere. Evaporation, transpiration, condensation, precipitation, and runoff are some of the most important processes involved in this life-sustaining cycle.

Much later, Aristotle mentions a coherent theory of precipitation in the 4th century B.C. The idea is also mentioned in China in the Lüshih Ch'un Ch'iu (the Spring and Autumn An-

nals of Mr. Lü) written in the 3rd century B.C.

Water evaporates from the earth's surface and rises to condense in the form of clouds. It is later precipitated as rain and snow. Meteorologists have merely validated what God explained many centuries ago.

The Flow of Rivers

"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again" (Ecclesiastes 1:7).

This passage presents the fact that rivers, even though their water flows into the seas, are fed through continuous input. It all happens through the hydrological cycle of evaporation, condensation, and precipitation. (Also see Amos 9:6*b)*. The seas do not overflow with the continued input of the river water because of the hydrological cycle which includes evaporation.

There were many ideas about how rivers were fed. Plato (428-348 B.C.) thought there was a vast subterranean reservoir. But Anaxagoras of Clazomemae (c. 500-428 B.C.), Democritus of Abdera (c. 460-357 B.C.), and Eratosthenes (c. 276-194 B.C.) presented theories that precipitation, like rain or snow, feeds the sources of rivers. The Book of Ecclesiastes, however, which revealed

the basic process, was written around 1000 B.C.

Paths of the Ocean

"The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas" (Psalm 8:8).

While reading his Bible, a United States naval officer, Matthew Maury (1806-1873), took particular notice of Psalm 8:8, which mentions the paths in the seas. This inspired him to set out to chart the winds and the currents of the Atlantic, and he was able to confirm that the seas indeed have paths. Matthew Maury became one of the founders of oceanography because he believed what was written in the Bible many centuries earlier. Psalm 8, which is attributed to David, was written around the 11th century B.C.

Great Scientists Who Believed in Christ Jesus

Many of the great scientists through the ages were believers in Jesus Christ: Johann Kepler, the founder of physical astronomy (1571-1630); Robert Boyle, the father of modern chemistry (1627-1691); Blaise Pascal, one of the great early mathematicians (1623-1662); Isaac Newton, inventor, scientist, and mathematician (1642-1727); Carolus Linnaeus, the father of biological taxon-

omy (1707-1778); Michael Farraday, one of the greatest physicists (1791-1867); Gregory Mendel, the father of genetics (1822-1884); Lord Kelvin (William Thompson), another great physicist (1824-1907); Joseph Clerk Maxwell, one of the fathers of electromagnetic field theory (1831-1879); Werner von Braun, the father of space science (1912-1977); and many others.

Medical Realities: The Blood

Hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, the book of Leviticus was written (around 1405 B.C.). Leviticus 17:11 declares "the life of the flesh is in the blood."

Galen, a Greek physician (A.D. 129-216), and Aristotle did extensive studies on the role of the blood in the human body. Galen demonstrated that the blood was carried through the arteries. His was a great discovery; however, he wrongly deduced that the blood was formed in the liver and then carried by the veins to all parts of the body and would be used up as nutriment or transformed into flesh and other substances.

It was not until 1611 that William Harvey discovered that the human body actually circulates the blood through the heart (although the actual connection—the capillaries—between the

arteries and veins in the heart was not discovered for another century). Through the process of circulation, every part of the body is fed and kept alive. If an organ is not supplied with blood, it will die.

A German professor of physiology, Carl Ludwig (1816-1895), further developed the study of the cardiovascular system and the role of the blood. But God had already declared it more than 3,000 years before.

Black Plague

In Leviticus 13, God said those afflicted with leprosy should be quarantined to prevent its spread until they are pronounced clean by the priests.

Centuries later, the Black Plague spread uncontrolled over the continent of Europe, killing millions. Because the Jews survived the plague in disproportionate numbers, they were accused of poisoning the people. As a result, many Jews died during persecutions at this time.

In 1386, in Italy, in the town of Ferrara, the persecutions included plans to burn the Jewish people at the stake. Among them was the Chief Rabbi of Ferrara, a physician. Thinking there could be a medical clue to their survival rate that

would help the general population, a Christian colleague of the Rabbi requested permission to study the situation before the burning.

He discovered that the Jews did two unique things that might have helped their survival. First, they washed their hands before meals, said a prayer of blessing, and lifted their hands up symbolically. Unwisely, he dismissed this as a medical solution for the Plague.

Secondly, however, the physician noticed that when one became sick with the Plague, the Jews removed him to a building at the edge of the city where he stayed for forty days, if he would recover. They were practicing the policy from Leviticus chapters 13 and 14, which required those who were sick with the plague to be placed in isolation for a period of time. In Ferrara, the sick were removed to a 'house of distance' for a minimum of forty days. Forty in Italian is 'quaranta,' and the quarantine principle was initiated as a health practice. Because their behavior was approved based on biblical grounds, the Jews survived that persecution.

Quarantines are still used today, and millions of lives no doubt have been saved because of it. In fact, some diseases have virtually disappeared as a result of this practice.

Prevention of Infection

In Leviticus 13, 14, and 15, God's instructions to Israel included bathing in water and washing clothing and contaminated surfaces to prevent the spread of infection. They were also instructed to burn contaminated clothing and affected bedding. Those preventive procedures allowed the Jews to avoid contracting deadly diseases and to live longer and healthier lives. It took the general population much longer to learn this life-saving technique.

The Jewish people were practicing this principle of cleansing during the time of the Black Plague in the 14th century, when it was noted but dismissed during the investigation in Ferrara.

Alexander Gordon, a Scottish physician, was the first to proclaim the infectious nature of childbed fever (also called puerperal fever) in 1795. He believed that he had actually carried the disease to his patients.

In 1843, Oliver Wendell Holmes, an American physician, was much more outspoken about the infectious nature of childbed fever. He reported that physicians and nurses frequently carried the disease to patients.

Holmes suggested remedial measures that

would free already contaminated people from the disease-producing microorganisms. He suggested using plenty of soap and water and destroying contaminated clothing, linens, and blankets. He added that doctors and nurses exposed to the disease should not deliver babies until several months after an outbreak in the hospital.

At nearly the same time, a young doctor working in the obstetrics department of the General Hospital in Vienna observed the conditions that prevailed around puerperal fever. As a result, Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis instituted a program of sanitation in 1847. He ordered those under him to wash their hands with chlorinated lime water before examining patients, which prevented infection by inhibiting the action of the microorganisms. The results were astonishing. After instituting this proactive policy of antiseptic washing of hands, the mortality rate of mothers delivering babies dropped from 18.3 percent to 1.3 percent.

Between 1861 and 1864, in the largest maternity hospital in Europe (La Maternité in Paris, France) almost one-fifth of all deliveries ended in the death of the mother because of puerperal fever. During a meeting to discuss this problem

in 1879, the French chemist and microbiologist Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) interrupted and clearly stated that it was the nursing staff and medical staff who carried the microbe from infected women to healthy ones. After being challenged, Pasteur showed what the microbe looked like. Pasteur's discovery that puerperal fever was caused by the streptococcus bacteria began a revolution in the bacteriological field.

Pasteur devoted much of his life to the study of bacteria. He demonstrated the bacterial origin of disease and became the father of bacteriology. He was also a Christian with strong biblical convictions.

The British surgeon and medical scientist Joseph Lister (1827-1912) was the founder of antiseptic medicine and developer of antiseptic surgical methods. He was also a pioneer in preventive medicine.

In August 1861, Lister was appointed surgeon to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, where he was placed in charge of wards in the new surgical block. This hospital was built to prevent the spread of hospital disease, especially puerperal fever.

Lister was inspired to find a preventative treatment for these infections. Based on his be-

lief that a pollen-like dust caused disease, he suggested an antiseptic barrier between the wound and the air. He took measures to protect the site of an operation from infection that could be transmitted by the hands of the surgeon and from the medical instruments. He found an effective antiseptic in carbolic acid, which had already been used to clean sewers and had been empirically advised as a wound dressing in 1863.

Despite much opposition and not being accepted, Lister persisted until finally his methods were accepted worldwide, saving many, many lives. While his method of using carbolic acid as an antiseptic is no longer employed, the principle he proposed, that bacteria must never enter an operation wound, is a fundamental rule of surgery to this day.

Lister was also a Christian who said that he was a believer in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. He was a gentle, shy, unassuming man, firm in his purpose because he humbly believed himself to be directed by God and by God's love for mankind.

The Bible contained these facts about proper health practices long before Lister discovered their use. You see, the book of Leviticus was written 3,400 years ago.

Anesthesia with Chloroform

"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof" (Genesis 2:21).

Along with many other medical discoveries, Sir James Young Simpson (1811-1870) was the first to use chloroform as an anesthetic (in obstetrics) and the first to use ether in Britain. Simpson became one of the founders of modern anesthesiology. He said that his motivation to perform this research was his fascination with the account of God putting Adam to sleep and making Eve from a rib He removed from Adam's side. He said, however, that his greatest discovery was finding Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Childbirth

Genesis 3:16 declares that women will be cursed with pain in childbirth because of Eve's fall in the Garden. This explains why women experience the level of pain they have when giving birth. The Bible provided the answer before any other book could. Should we not, then, give credence to its words and study its principles for life?

Chapter Two

GOD'S HIGHER TECHNOLOGY

Many tremendous technological developments have been made in recent years. But these inventions are nothing new to God. The Bible actually foretold many significant inventions.

In Daniel 12:4, God claims that in the end times "many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased." This prophecy rightly forecast a time when men would travel like never before and an unprecedented explosion of scientific discovery. Television, with cable and satellite access, gives us more TV programs than ever, showing us what is happening around the world as it happens. The Internet makes it possible for computers to access billions of bits of data. As a result, communication and commerce are now 24-hour operations.

Long before the Model T

Nahum 2:4 contains the following descrip-

tion: "Chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, and they shall run like the lightnings."

Anyone who has driven on a highway at rush hour should be able to see what the Lord showed the prophet here. Using isagogics, the prophet described automobiles in terms and images familiar to people at that time.

Although by the mid-15th century the idea of a self-propelled vehicle had been put into practice, Nicolas-Joseph Cugnot of France built the first true automobile in 1769.

In 1876, the German engineer Niklaus August Otto developed the four-stroke gasoline-powered engine. European pioneers of automobile manufacturing were Gottlieb Daimler and Carl Benz of Germany, who began, separately, to make cars in the 1880s. Their companies were later merged.

Ramson Eli Olds and Alexander and James Packard were among the first to build automobiles in the United States. In 1898, there were fifty automobile-manufacturing companies in the U.S., a number that rose to 241 by 1908.

Henry Ford revolutionized the manufacture of automobiles in 1908 with his assembly-line

style of production. His introduction of the Model T transformed the automobile from something only the rich could afford to an item that even people of modest income could buy. By the late 1920s, automobiles were commonplace in modern industrial nations.

God, however, knew from before the foundation of the world that cars would be invented. It was documented in the Book of Nahum, written between 663-654 B.C.

Airplanes

Isaiah 40:31 and 60:8 pictures the children of Israel "mounting up with wings as eagles" and "flying as a cloud." We will later look into how these prophecies correlate to the reestablishment of the Jewish nation, but these verses also describe airplanes. Again, the prophet, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes word pictures that could be effectively related to his audience at the time.

Despite many ideas and efforts, it was not until 1903 that Wilbur and Orville Wright—American brothers, inventors, and aviation pioneers—achieved the first powered, sustained, and controlled airplane flight. They built and flew the first fully practical airplane in 1905. The

verses foretelling the airplane's invention were written during Isaiah's ministry, which was from about 740 to 680 B.C.—over 2,500 years before the first plane took off.

Weapons of War: The Submarine

Amos 9:3 describes men trying to hide themselves at "the bottom of the sea." The Bible revealed that men would be able to survive under water centuries before the invention of the submarine in 1850. The first submarine, Le Plongeur-Marin ("The Marine Diver"), was built by Sebastian Bauer (1822-1875), a German. In February 1851, the submarine sank in 50 feet of water during a test dive in the harbor of Kiel, trapping Bauer and his two crewmen.

Having to do everything he could to prevent his crew from panicking, he realized they could open the hatch when the air pressure inside the submarine equaled the water pressure outside. They had to wait quite some time, and when the pressure was at last equalized, the hatch was opened. After seven-and-a-half hours below, the men swam to the surface, emerging in the midst of their own funeral services.

Bauer built his second submarine and laid the foundation for future submarines, just as the

prophet Amos had written between 760-753 B.C.

The Atomic Bomb

Some 2,100 years before the atomic bomb was dropped upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, Zechariah 14:12 was written: "Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth."

This passage describes a terrible weapon that would have an instant destructive effect. Today, we know of a number of weapons that could do that easily. But at the time of its writing, there were no weapons of warfare with this kind of destructive capability.

The first atomic bombs (also called atom bombs) were built in the United States during World War II. One such atomic bomb, using uranium-235, was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug. 6, 1945. The explosion, which had the force of more than 15,000 tons of TNT, instantly and completely devastated 4 square miles (10 square km) of the heart of this city of 343,000 inhabitants. Of this number, 66,000 were killed immediately and 69,000 were injured. More than 67 percent of the city's structures were destroyed or

damaged. The intense heat produced in the explosion explains the description of flesh being consumed in an instant. Materials vaporized in the fireball condensed to fine particles, carried as radioactive contaminants through the air, having lethal effects for weeks after the explosion.

The next atomic bomb to be exploded was of the plutonium type. It was dropped on Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945, producing a blast equal to 21,000 tons of TNT. The terrain and smaller size of Nagasaki reduced destruction of life and property, killing 39,000 persons and injuring an additional 25,000. Nearly 40 percent of the city's structures were destroyed or seriously damaged. The Japanese initiated surrender negotiations the very next day.

Thermonuclear Bombs

Another bomb, even more destructive, is the thermonuclear bomb also called the hydrogen bomb, or H-Bomb. Thermonuclear bombs can be hundreds or even thousands of times more powerful than atomic bombs. Edward Teller and other American scientists developed the first hydrogen bomb.

A thermonuclear explosion produces blast, light, heat, and varying amounts of fallout. The

explosion releases an enormous amount of thermal energy, or heat, with temperatures of several million degrees in the exploding bombs itself. The explosion's intense light and heat set wood and other combustible materials afire at a range of many miles, creating huge fires that may converge into a firestorm.

The concussive force of the blast itself takes the form of a shock wave that radiates from the point of the explosion at supersonic speeds and that can completely destroy any building within a radius of several miles. The intense white light of the explosion can cause permanent blindness to people gazing at it from a distance of dozens of miles. The radioactive fallout contaminates air, water, and soil and may continue years after the explosion, its distribution virtually worldwide.

The Bible said mankind would use unimaginably powerful weapons, like the ones we mentioned, accurately describing the devastating effects.

Chapter Three

CONCERNING THE NATION OF ISRAEL

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

"And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you" (Deuteronomy 4:26-27).

"And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone.

"And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of

mind" (Deuteronomy 28:64-65).

The Jewish People

The existence and the survival of the Jewish people are miracles that show the truth of the promises of God. God called Abraham over 4,000 years ago out of Ur of the Chaldees with the promise that He would make him a great nation (Genesis 13:14,15).

God created the Jewish nation through Abraham, and greatly blessed them. In Deuteronomy chapters 28-33, however, God warned the Jewish people that if they were disobedient, He would use other nations to remove them from the Promised Land. God predicted that they would be scattered across the whole earth as strangers in unfamiliar lands and that they would find no rest for their wanderings. Yet, God in his faithfulness promised He would return them to Israel.

Over and over again, through His prophets, God warned His people of the military invasions ahead, which would come because of unbelief and outward rebellion against the God who loved them. Eventually, Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was taken into captivity in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians and never did return.

In 606 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar took the Jewish people from the Southern Kingdom captive. Again in 588-536 B.C., he returned for the remnant, and after a long siege, he burned the city and the temple. After seventy years, between 537-536 B.C., those who desired were allowed to return (Ezra 1, see 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 5:13-17). Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1 accurately forecast this return, even to the point of naming the pagan ruler, Cyrus, who would allow it.

After their rejection of Jesus Christ, the Jewish people lost Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when Titus and his Roman armies conquered and destroyed it after a long siege (Daniel 9:26), just as Jesus prophesied in Matthew 23:38 and Luke 21:24. Over one million Jews were killed, and nearly 100,000 were taken into captivity, and the people of Israel were scattered throughout the world.

There has not been one century since then that the Jewish people have not been persecuted. There have been too many persecutions to mention them all, but the following is an outline:

During the Jewish revolts in A.D. 113 and A.D. 132, almost one million Jews died. We know that in 1096, during the first Crusade, 12,000 were murdered in the Rhine Valley alone. In 1180, the

French king, Philip Augustus, seized all Jewish property and expelled the Jews from his country. In 1189, in England, the Crown claimed all Jewish possessions. In 1298, more than 100,000 Jews were killed in Franconia and Bavaria. In 1306, 100,000 Jews were expelled from France. In 1354, 12,000 Jews were executed in Toledo. The Spanish Inquisition drove more than 300,000 Jews from Spain in 1492.

From 1648-1658, Cossacks destroyed numerous Jewish communities throughout Poland and Eastern Europe. The Russian Empire of the late 1800s carried out "pogroms," periodic massacres of Jews that were often financed by the imperial government.

Ultimately, the persecution of Jews culminated in Hitler's holocaust during the 1930s and 1940s. Under Hitler's leadership, the Nazis in Germany and German-controlled Europe systematically killed more than 6 million Jews.

For over 1,900 years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the subsequent Diaspora, the Jewish people have been wandering as strangers, persecuted on every side. Through it all, they have not lost their national identity nor perished as a people (Ezekiel 6:8), despite the indignities and sufferings that are well documented in sec-

ular histories. The hand of God was on the Jewish people to keep them, and they were never utterly destroyed.

Even though the last Holocaust by Hitler was horrible and despicable, it created the determination in many Jewish people (especially the Holocaust survivors) to follow through with the creation of their own state, despite tremendous odds against them.

A Nation is Reborn

"Behold, at that time, I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

"At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord" (Zephaniah 3:19-20).

God did not forget His nation. He reestablished their place in the Promised Land during the Harry Truman administration. On May 14, 1948, the nation of Israel was miraculously reestablished. Since then they have survived many attacks, including the 1967 Six-Day War

and the 1973 Holy Day War.

Jews from around the world had already started to return to Palestine, beginning with the first return (Aliyah) from 1882-1903. Especially after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the Jewish people began flocking to the new nation. In the period after 1948, and after the Law of Return in 1950, which granted every Jewish person the right to return to Israel, hundreds of thousand Jewish people returned. Many thousands returned in one day on airplanes, mounting with wings as eagles and flying as a dove, just as Isaiah had written (Isaiah 40:31; 60:8). And the first group came back from the north, just as it was prophesied in Jeremiah 23:8.

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (Psalm 122:6). God loves His people with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3). Ultimately, God will reestablish Israel, and His people will again serve Him and weep over their rejection of Christ (see Romans 11:26,27; Revelation 1:7; Zechariah 12:10).

Chapter Four

THE RECORD OF JESUS

The Scriptures pointed to Jesus Christ from the beginning. Genesis 3:15 said He would be the seed of the woman and would bruise the head of Satan. Galatians 4:4, Luke 2:7, Ephesians 1:21,22, 4:8, and Luke 10:18,19 describe the fulfillment of this prophecy. Genesis 49:10 declared that He would descend from the tribe of Judah; Luke 3:33 and Matthew 1:2-3 show that Jesus was in fact a member of the tribe of Judah. Isaiah 9:7 said He would be heir to the throne of David. That fulfillment is in Matthew 1:1.

Micah 5:2 prophesied Bethlehem to be the place of Jesus' birth. This passage was written between 735-710 B.C.—the fulfillment is recorded in Matthew 2:1. Herod's chief priests and scribes confirmed that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem when the three wise men came to honor him (Matthew 2:1-6).

"Know therefore and understand, that from

the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times" (Daniel 9:25).

Daniel 9:25-27 (written in the sixth century before Christ) speaks of the seventy weeks of Daniel. The seventy weeks begin with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. On March 5, 444 B.C., Artaxerxes allowed the Jews to rebuild the city walls. The 490 year period is first divided into seven "sevens" (49 years), then into 62 "sevens" (434 years), and finally, one "seven" (7 years).

The first seven-week period refers to the 49 years in which the rebuilding of the city was completed (444-395 B.C.). The second period (434 years) ended when Christ officially presented Himself to the nation of Israel as the Messiah (John 12:12-13) in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9.

If we add the first two periods together (49 years, plus 434 years equal 483 years), this covers the period from March 5, 444 B.C. to March 30, 33 A.D., the day Christ entered Jerusalem. Because the Jews used lunar years, every month had only 30 days. This accounts for the seven year discrepancy between the 483 years prophesied and the 476 year period calculated using

our Gregorian calendar. Using the Jewish calendar, 483 years times 360 days equals 173,880 days. If we use the Gregorian calendar, the period from March 5, 444 B.C. to March 5, 33 A.D. is only 173,740 days. However, we have to add 116 days because of leap years, and 24 days to cover the period from March 5 to March 30. This brings the total number of days to 173,880, just as Daniel prophesied.

Another prophecy fulfilled is Isaiah 7:14, which says, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Matthew 1:18-23 reports that a virgin, Mary, conceived and brought forth a son, Jesus.

Herod reacted to the news of the newborn King by ordering the murder of hundreds of infants (see Matthew 2:16). This was first told in Jeremiah 31:15 (around 605 B.C.). Hosea 11:1, written between 755-710 B.C., described how Jesus would escape the death edict when His family fled to Egypt and stayed there until Herod died. In Matthew 2:14-15, the prophecy is fulfilled.

The Word of God revealed the record of His genealogy (Genesis 18:18; Genesis 17:19; Numbers 24:17), and every jot and tittle of it was fulfilled (Acts 3:25,26; Matthew 1:1-17; Luke

3:23-38). Isaiah 61:1 predicted the content of Jesus' first sermon. We see its fulfillment in Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

The Reality of His Suffering

Isaiah 53:12 said He would be "numbered with the transgressors," and so He was when He was crucified between two thieves (Matthew 27:38). Psalm 22:6 foretold that He would be mocked and hated. Matthew 27:39 describes how the crowd at the Cross wagged their tongues and mocked Him. Isaiah 50:6 declared that He would be spit upon, hated, and rejected; and in Matthew 26:62-67, He was spit upon by His enemies.

Psalm 22:16 and Zechariah 12:10 (480-470 B.C.) said that His hands, feet, and side would be pierced, and so they were, as we see in John 20:27 and John 19:34. Despite all that, as Psalm 34:20 revealed, not a bone of His would be broken: "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs" (John 19:33).

Psalm 16:10 speaks of His resurrection; in Matthew 28:9, He was resurrected.

Psalm 68:18 talks of His ascension; in Luke 24:50-51 and Acts 1:9, Jesus Christ ascended to His Father.

Psalm 110:1 tells us about Jesus' Session, or the time when He takes His seat at the Father's right hand. In Hebrews 1:3, Jesus sat down at the Father's right hand.

Believe His Words

The most beautiful thing to me is that Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words " (John 14:23). They are *His* words. We can't add to them or take away from them (Deuteronomy 4:2). They are not to be privately interpreted (2 Peter 1:20). The preacher has only to preach the Word. All Scripture is profitable (2 Timothy 3:16).

Many times in the New Testament, reference is made to Jesus coming back again. The saved will be caught up in the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:17) and given as the Bride by the Father to the Son (Revelation 19:7-11). He said that He would go to prepare mansions for us. If this were not so, He would have told us (John 14:2).

CONCLUSION

As you have read the truth presented in these pages, the most important fact to consider is that men must be saved by grace through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8). Religion will not save you. Going to a church will not save you. You must be born again to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). So said Jesus, and we have demonstrated just how true Jesus' words have proven to be. Put all the dates and prophecies in their proper setting and you will have to realize that they could never have been fulfilled just by chance.

The greatest evidence of the supreme authority of the Bible is in the lives that have been touched and changed by the power of God, the power of salvation, the power of a new life with Christ through His Word. Drug addicts have become clean, adulterers are living pure, suicidal people have received hope—all because the

words in that Book became life to individuals through a personal faith in Jesus Christ.

If you are not born again, ask Jesus Christ to save you and to come into your heart to live. By doing so, you are establishing a relationship with God by receiving the free gift of grace, the gift of salvation, a gift that once received can never be taken away. Beyond that, it is a gift that can never be returned or forfeited.

God loves you. His desire is that all men might be saved. Whosoever will is invited to come to Him. Take the Lord at His Word.

If you would like to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and receive eternal life as well as everything else He promised to give you at salvation, please pray the following prayer:

"Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner in need of You. Thank You that you died on the Cross, once and for all, to give me eternal life with You forever. I believe in You and Your love for me. Please guide my steps in Your plan for me, so I will get to know You more. In Jesus' name, Amen."

These are prophecies and beliefs about Jesus Christ that are foundational to the Christian faith:

Jesus Christ	*Prophecy*	*Fulfillment*
Jesus Christ was eternal.	Psalm 102:25-27*a*	Colossians 1:17
Jesus Christ was from everlasting.	Proverbs 8:22-23	John 17:5
	Isaiah 9:6*c*	Revelation 1:8
	Isaiah 48:16	John 1:1-2
	Micah 5:2*c*	John 8:58
Jesus Christ was the creator of all.	Psalm 102:25-27*b*	John 1:3
Jesus Christ is Lord.	Psalm 110:1*a*	Matthew 22:41-45
Jesus Christ is holy.	Daniel 9:24*b*	Luke 1:35
Jesus Christ is God.	Psalm 45:6-7*b*	Hebrews 1:8-9
	Isaiah 7:14*c*	John 12:45
	Isaiah 40:3*c*	John 10:30
	Jeremiah 23:5-6*b*	John 13:13
Jesus Christ was both God and man.	Isaiah 9:6*d*	John 10:30
Jesus Christ was the Son of God.	Proverbs 30:4*b*	Matthew 3:16-17
	Psalm 2:7*a*	Luke 1:31-35
	Psalm 2:12*a*	Matthew 17:5
	2 Samuel 7:13-14	Matthew 3:16-17
	1 Chronicles 17:13-14	John 12:28-30
	Isaiah 9:6*b*	Luke 1:35, Galatians 4:4
Jesus Christ called God His Father.	Psalm 89:26	Matthew 11:25-27
Jesus Christ was announced to His people 483 years, to the exact day, after the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem.	Daniel 9:25	John 12:12-13
Jesus Christ was a descendant of Seth.	Genesis 4:25	Luke 3:23-38
Jesus Christ was a descendant of Shem.	Genesis 9:26	Luke 3:23-36
Jesus Christ was a descendant of Abraham.	Genesis 12:3	Matthew 1:1

	Genesis 18:17-18*a*	Matthew 1:1
	Genesis 22:18*a*	Galatians 3:16
Jesus Christ was a descendant of Isaac.	Genesis 17:19	Luke 3:23-34
	Genesis 21:12	Luke 3:23-34
	Genesis 26:4	Luke 3:23-34
	Genesis 28:14	Luke 3:23-34
Jesus Christ was a descendant of Judah.	Genesis 49:10*a*	Luke 3:23-33
	1 Chronicles 5:2	Luke 3:23-33
Jesus Christ was a descendant of Boaz & Ruth.	Ruth 4:12-17	Luke 3:23-32
Jesus Christ was a descendant of Jesse.	Isaiah 11:1*a*	Luke 3:23-32
	Isaiah 11:10*a*	Luke 3:23-32
Jesus Christ was a descendant of David.	2 Samuel 7:12-13	Matthew 1:1
	2 Samuel 7:16	Matthew 1:1
	1 Chronicles 17:11-12	Luke 3:23-31
	Psalm 89:3-4	Matthew 1:1
	Psalm 89:29	Matthew 1:1
	Psalm 89:35-36	Matthew 1:1
	Psalm 132:11	Matthew 1:1
	Psalm 132:17	Matthew 1:1
	Isaiah 7:13-14	Matthew 1:1
	Isaiah 9:7	Matthew 1:1
	Jeremiah 23:5-6*a*	Luke 3:23-31
	Jeremiah 33:14-15	Luke 3:23-31
	Ezekiel 34:23-24	Matthew 1:1
Jesus Christ was a descendant of Zerubbabel.	Haggai 2:23	Luke 3:23-27
Jesus Christ was born of the "seed" of a woman.	Genesis 3:15*a*	Luke 1:34-35
Jesus Christ was born of a virgin.	Isaiah 7:14*a*	Luke 1:34-35
	Isaiah 7:14*a*	Matthew 1:18-20
Jesus Christ was Immanuel, "God with us."	Isaiah 7:14*b*	Matthew 1:21-23

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem.	Micah 5:2*a*	Matthew 2:1-2
The birth of the Messiah.	Isaiah 9:6*a*	Luke 2:11
God protected Jesus Christ.	Isaiah 49:2*b*	Matthew 2:13-15
Jesus Christ grew up in a poor family.	Isaiah 11:1*b*	Luke 2:7
	Isaiah 53:2*a*	Luke 2:7
The forerunner of Jesus Christ:		
lived in the wilderness,	Isaiah 40:3*a*	Matthew 3:1-4
prepared people for Jesus' coming,	Isaiah 40:3*b*	Luke 1:17
came in the spirit of Elijah,	Malachi 4:5	Matthew 3:1-2
turned many to righteousness.	Malachi 4:6	Luke 1:16-17
A messenger prepared the way for Jesus Christ.	Malachi 3:1*a*	Matthew 11:10
Jesus Christ was a Prophet.	Deuteronomy 18:15-19*a*	John 6:14
Jesus Christ was a Priest in the order of Melchisedec.	Psalm 110:4	Hebrews 6:17-20, 7:15-28
Jesus Christ was Priest and King.	Zechariah 6:12-13	Hebrews 8:1
	Genesis 49:10	John 1:49
	Numbers 24:17	John 19:19
	Psalm 2:6	John 12:12-13
Jesus Christ was the "Wonderful Counselor."	Isaiah 9:6*c*	John 7:46
Jesus Christ was the "Prince of Peace."	Isaiah 9:6*f*	Colossians 1:20
Jesus Christ was a witness.	Isaiah 55:4	John 18:37
Jesus Christ was as a shepherd.	Isaiah 40:11	John 10:11
Jesus Christ spoke in parables.	Psalm 78:2	Matthew 13:34-35
	Isaiah 6:9-10*b*	Matthew 13:13-15
Jesus Christ spoke with a message of grace.	Psalm 45:2	Luke 4:22
Jesus Christ's words were as a sharp sword.	Isaiah 49:2*a*	Revelation 2:12-16

Jesus spoke with words of authority given Him by God.	Deuteronomy 18:15-19*b*	John 12:48-50
Jesus Christ ministered in Galilee.	Isaiah 9:1-2a	Matthew 4:12-17
Jesus Christ had the Spirit of God upon Him.	Isaiah 11:2*a*	Matthew 3:16-17
	Isaiah 42:1*b*	Matthew 3:16-17
	Isaiah 61:1-2*a*	Matthew 3:16-17
Jesus Christ had the Spirit of wisdom.	Isaiah 11:2*b*	Luke 2:40
Jesus Christ had the Spirit of understanding.	Isaiah 11:2*c*	Luke 2:40
Jesus Christ had the Spirit of counsel.	Isaiah 11:2*d*	Matthew 7:28-29
Jesus Christ had the Spirit of might.	Isaiah 11:2*e*	Matthew 8:27
Jesus Christ had the Spirit of the knowledge of God.	Isaiah 11:2*f*	John 7:29
Jesus Christ had the Spirit of the fear of God.	Isaiah 11:2*g*	Hebrews 5:7
Jesus Christ had a quick understanding in the fear of God.	Isaiah 11:3*a*	Luke 2:46-47
Jesus Christ placed His trust in God.	Isaiah 50:8-10	John 11:7-10
Jesus Christ was just.	Zechariah 9:9*c*	John 5:30
Jesus did not judge on the basis of external representations.	Isaiah 11:3*b*	John 7:24
Jesus Christ judged the poor with righteousness.	Isaiah 11:4	Mark 12:41-44
Jesus Christ had compassion for the poor and needy.	Isaiah 42:3	Matthew 11:4-5
Jesus Christ acted with righteousness.	Psalm 45:6-7*c*	John 5:30
Jesus Christ did not draw attention to Himself.	Isaiah 42:2	Matthew 12:15-21
Jesus Christ was humble.	Zechariah 9:9*e*	Matthew 11:29
Jesus Christ had the appearance of an ordinary man.	Isaiah 53:2*b*	Philippians 2:7-8
Jesus Christ is the cornerstone.	Isaiah 28:16	1 Peter 2:4-6

	Zechariah 10:4	Ephesians 2:20
Jesus Christ is the "Rock."	2 Samuel 23:2-4	1 Corinthians 10:4
Jesus Christ was as the "light of the morning."	2 Samuel 23:2-4	Revelation 22:16
Jesus Christ said the scriptures were written of Him.	Psalm 40:6-8*b*	Luke 24:44
Jesus Christ gave gifts to men.	Psalm 68:18*b*	Matthew 10:1
Jesus Christ had the key of David.	Isaiah 22:22	Revelation 3:7
Jesus Christ preached the good news.	Isaiah 61:1-2*b*	Luke 4:17-21
Jesus Christ declared that He was the Son of God.	Psalm 2:7*b*	John 9:35-37
Infants gave praise to the Messiah.	Psalm 8:2	Matthew 21:15-16
Jesus Christ was greeted with rejoicing in Jerusalem.	Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 21:8-10
Jesus Christ was honored as King.	Zechariah 9:9*b*	John 12:12-13
Jesus Christ was presented to Jerusalem riding on a donkey.	Zechariah 9:9*f*	Matthew 21:6-9
Jesus Christ visited the second Temple.	Haggai 2:6-9	Luke 2:27-32
Jesus Christ made a sudden appearance at the temple.	Malachi 3:1*b*	Mark 11:15-16
Jesus Christ was angered by disrespect toward the temple.	Psalm 69:9*a*	John 2:13-17
God ministered to Jesus Christ.	Isaiah 42:6	John 8:29
Jesus Christ asked God for His inheritance.	Psalm 2:8*a*	John 17:4-24
Jesus Christ healed the blind.	Isaiah 35:5*a*	Mark 10:51-52
Jesus Christ healed the deaf.	Isaiah 35:5*b*	Mark 7:32-35
Jesus Christ healed the lame.	Isaiah 35:6*a*	Matthew 12:10-13
Jesus Christ healed the dumb.	Isaiah 35:6*b*	Matthew 9:32-33
Jesus Christ healed the blind.	Isaiah 42:7	Matthew 9:27-30
Jesus Christ had a healing ministry (griefs means sickness)	Isaiah 53:4*a*	Luke 6:17-19

Jesus Christ was called to God's

service from the womb.	Psalm 22:10	Luke 1:30-33
	Isaiah 49:1*b*	Matthew 1:20-21
God sent Jesus Christ.	Isaiah 48:16*b*	John 7:29; 3:16
Jesus Christ came to do God's will.	Psalm 40:7-8	John 5:30
Jesus Christ pleased God.	Isaiah 42:1*c*	Matthew 3:16-17
Jesus Christ's work glorified God.	Isaiah 49:3*b*	Matthew 15:30-31
Jesus Christ was not rebellious to God's will.	Isaiah 50:5	John 12:27
Jesus Christ steadfastly set His face toward his mission.	Isaiah 50:7	Luke 9:51-53
Jesus Christ was God's servant.	Isaiah 42:1*a*	John 4:34
	Isaiah 49:3*a*	John 17:4
	Isaiah 49:5	John 6:38
	Isaiah 49:6*a*	John 12:49-50
	Isaiah 52:13*a*	John 9:4
	Isaiah 53:11*b*	Romans 5:18-19
	Zechariah 3:8	John 17:4
Jesus Christ was a reproach, for God's sake.	Psalm 69:7	Matthew 26:65-67
	Psalm 69:9*b*	Romans 15:3
Jesus Christ received guidance from God.	Isaiah 42:6	John 5:19-20
Jesus Christ spoke with knowledge given to Him from God.	Isaiah 50:4	John 12:49
Jesus Christ came in the name of the Lord.	Psalm 118:26	Matthew 21:9
Jesus Christ came for all nations.	Genesis 18:17-18*b*	Acts 3:24-26
	Genesis 22:18*b*	Galatians 3:14
Jesus Christ came for all people.	Genesis 28:14*b*	Galatians 3:26-29
	2 Samuel 22:50	Romans 15:8-9
	Psalm 18:49	Ephesians 3:4-6
	Isaiah 11:10*b*	Acts 13:47-48
	Isaiah 49:1*a*	1 Timothy 2:4-6

Jesus Christ was a light to the Gentiles.	Isaiah 9:1-2*b*	Luke 2:28-32
	Isaiah 42:6*d*	John 8:12
	Isaiah 49:6*b*	Acts 13:47-48
Jesus Christ provided "justice" to the Gentiles.	Isaiah 42:1*d*	Matthew 24:14
Jesus Christ was the messenger of the new covenant.	Malachi 3:1*c*	Luke 4:43
Jesus Christ was the new covenant.	Isaiah 42:6*c*	Matthew 26:28
	Jeremiah 31:31	Matthew 26:28
Jesus Christ came to make an end to sins.	Daniel 9:24*a*	Galatians 1:3-5
Jesus provided freedom from the bondage of sin and death.	Isaiah 61:1-2*c*	John 8:31-32
Jesus Christ proclaimed a period of grace.	Isaiah 61:1-2*d*	John 5:24
It was God's will that Christ was the sin-bearer for mankind.	Isaiah 53:6*b*	1 John 4:10
		Galatians 1:4
It was God's will that Jesus Christ died for all mankind.	Isaiah 53:10*a*	John 18:11
	Zechariah 13:7*a*	John 18:11
God was fully satisfied with the suffering of Christ.	Isaiah 53:11*a*	John 12:27
Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world.	Isaiah 53:8*d*	1 John 2:2
	Daniel 9:26*b*	Hebrews 2:9
Jesus Christ gave up His life to save mankind.	Isaiah 53:12*b*	Luke 23:46
Jesus Christ was as a sacrificial lamb.	Isaiah 53:7*c*	John 1:29
Jesus Christ was an offering for sin.	Isaiah 53:10*b*	Matthew 20:28

Jesus Christ's offering of Himself replaced all sacrifices.	Psalm 40:6-8*a*	Hebrews 10:10-13
Jesus Christ's blood was shed to make atonement for all.	Isaiah 52:15	Revelation 1:5
Jesus Christ was the sin-bearer for all mankind.	Isaiah 53:11*d*	Hebrews 9:28
	Isaiah 53:12*d*	2 Corinthians 5:21
Jesus bore and carried upon himself the sins of the world.	Isaiah 53:4*b*	1 Peter 2:24
Jesus Christ died for mankind's transgressions.	Isaiah 53:5*a*	1 Corinthians 15:3
Jesus Christ's sacrifice provided peace between man and God.	Isaiah 53:5*b*	Colossians 1:20
Jesus Christ justified man before God.	Isaiah 53:11*c*	Romans 5:8-9
Jesus Christ was the intercessor between man and God.	Isaiah 59:15-16*b*	Hebrews 7:25
Jesus Christ interceded to God in behalf of mankind.	Isaiah 53:12*e*	Luke 23:34
Jesus Christ's atonement enabled believers to be His brethren.	Psalm 22:22	Hebrews 2:10-12
Jesus Christ came to provide salvation.	Isaiah 59:15-16*a*	John 6:40
	Zechariah 9:9*d*	Luke 19:10
Jesus had a ministry to the "poor," the believing remnant.	Zechariah 11:7	Matthew 9:35-36
Jesus Christ offered salvation to all mankind.	Joel 2:32	Romans 10:12-13
Jesus Christ came to bring Israel back to God.	Isaiah 49:5*b*	Matthew 15:24
Jesus Christ came to Zion as their Redeemer.	Isaiah 59:20	Luke 2:38
Those who refused to listen to Jesus Christ would be judged.	Deuteronomy 18:15-19*c*	John 12:48-50
Jesus Christ would reject those who did not believe in Him.	Psalm 2:12*b*	John 3:36
Christ's betrayer was a friend with whom He broke bread.	Psalm 41:9	Mark 14:17-18

Jesus Christ was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver.	Zechariah 11:12-13*a*	Matthew 26:14-15
Thirty pieces of silver were thrown into the house of the Lord.	Zechariah 11:12-13*c*	Matthew 27:3-5
The potter's field was uninhabited.	Psalm 69:25	Acts 1:16-20
Jesus Christ's betrayer did not live a long life.	Psalm 109:8*a*	Acts 1:16-18
Jesus Christ's betrayer was replaced.	Psalm 109:8*b*	Acts 1:20-26
The disciples abandoned Jesus Christ.	Psalm 22:11	Mark 14:50
Jesus Christ's disciples failed Him in His time of need.	Psalm 69:20*b*	Mark 14:33-41
Men hid from being associated with Jesus Christ.	Isaiah 53:3*d*	Mark 14:50-52
Jesus Christ was despised.	Isaiah 49:7	John 10:20
	Zechariah 11:8*b*	Matthew 27:20
	Isaiah 53:3*a*	Luke 4:28-29
	Psalm 22:6	Luke 23:21-23
Jesus Christ was hated by many without cause.	Psalm 69:4	Luke 23:13-22
Political and religious leaders conspired against Christ.	Psalm 2:2	Matthew 26:3-4
False witnesses accused Jesus Christ.	Psalm 109:2	John 18:29-30
Jesus Christ was judged.	Isaiah 53:8	John 18:28-40
Jesus Christ was silent before his accusers.	Isaiah 53:7*b*	Matthew 27:12-14
Jesus Christ was innocent and had done no violence.	Isaiah 53:9*b*	Mark 15:3
Jesus Christ had no deceit in His mouth.	Isaiah 53:9*c*	John 18:38
At the time of Messiah's coming, Israel had unfit spiritual leaders.	Zechariah 11:4-6*a*	Matthew 23:1-4
Jesus Christ's brothers did not believe Him.	Psalm 69:8*b*	John 7:3-5
Jesus Christ was the "stone" rejected by the Jews.	Psalm 118:22	Matthew 21:42-43

The Jews had a hardened heart against Christ.	Isaiah 6:9-10*a*	John 12:37-40
Jesus Christ was a "stumbling stone" for the Jews.	Isaiah 8:14	Matthew 21:43-44
The unbelief of Israel's leaders forced Christ to reject them.	Zechariah 11:8*a*	Matthew 23:33
Jesus Christ stopped ministering to those who rejected Him.	Zechariah 11:9	Matthew 13:10-11
Jesus Christ was distressed over the Jews' unbelief.	Isaiah 49:4*a*	Luke 19:41-42
Jesus' own people would not believe He was the Christ.	Isaiah 53:1	John 12:37-38
Jesus Christ was rejected.	Zechariah 11:12-13*b*	*Matthew* 26:14-15
	Isaiah 53:3*b*	Matthew 27:21-23
	Zechariah 11:12-13*b*	Matthew 26:14-15
	Zechariah 12:10*c*	John 1:11
The Jews rejected Jesus Christ.	Isaiah 49:4	John 5:43
	Psalm 69:8*a*	John 1:11
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	Zechariah 11:10-11*a*	Luke 19:41-44
Jesus Christ suffered while reconciling men to God.	Genesis 3:15*c*	1 Peter 3:18
Jesus Christ had great sorrow and grief.	Isaiah 53:3*c*	Luke 19:41-42
Jesus Christ, anguished, prayed without ceasing.	Psalm 22:2	Matthew 26:38-39
Jesus Christ was oppressed and afflicted.	Isaiah 53:7*a*	Matthew 27:27-31
Jesus Christ was confined and persecuted.	Isaiah 53:8*a*	Matthew 26:47-27:31
Christ's face was beaten and spit upon.	Isaiah 50:6*b*	Matthew 26:67

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	Psalm 8:6	Matthew 28:18

Function by Faith

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INTRODUCTION

Sometimes spirits influence people, and they do not even recognize it. They have no idea what spirit they are of. They are very sincere, but they enter into opinions that run contrary to the leading of the Holy Spirit. These are people who have not allowed God to develop in them a capacity to function by faith in the righteousness of God.

God's justice is still very real. He has never altered Himself. He remains holy and can only fellowship with those who have received His righteousness by faith in the Son of God. His righteousness is a free gift that comes to us by faith. Once we have entered into the family of God by grace through faith, we still have a life to function in. The Lord desires that we function in this life by faith.

In this booklet, we examine this principle of living in the operational righteousness of God—that is, the function of faith. It is the Holy Spirit

putting in our hearts a will to do His good pleasure wherever we are and in whatever we do.

Chapter One
GOD IS RIGHT

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

"And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

"That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:25-29).

"If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:29).

"Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful" (Psalm 116:5).

Righteousness means that God is right. When you see this as it is unfolded in these pages, you will be astounded. A person who practices righteousness is a person who is born of God.

The God who is right became a man in the Person of Jesus Christ. Yet, because of the hypostatic union, this Man was also God. For thirty years very little was known of this God-Man. Apparently, His human life was very ordinary, just as yours and mine.

Think of the biography that could be written about you. "He woke up every morning, drank his juice, ate his oatmeal, went to work, and raised his family." On the surface, that record of life would draw very little notice. In the same way, Jesus' early life was the quiet life of living in Nazareth as the oldest son of Joseph the carpenter. He was ordinary, just like us.

The Beloved Son

This all changed the moment Jesus began His ministry. Much was revealed about this Man because He was the Son of God.

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up

straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17).

God is right, and in His righteousness He provided a way for His people to function in faith. The love of God came down and paid for our sins. The Man Christ Jesus lived an impeccable life and offered Himself for us. In doing this, His righteousness, His right-ness, was never compromised. Yet by His righteousness, the door to salvation was opened to whosoever will come unto Him.

Jesus Christ shed His blood on Calvary and paid for everything that we have ever done and paid for everything that we will ever do. This is God Almighty, the only God, making things right in His view by sending Christ. What Christ did satisfied His immutable holiness because Christ had no sin and became sin for us: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

When Christ shed His blood for us, this was

simply God being right. This was just God doing what God would always do, for God is gracious and righteous and merciful.

Jesus' life was not a life of sacrifice. Revelation 13:8 tells us that He was the "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." It seems to us who live in time that Jesus made a great sacrifice. That represents our viewpoint. But Christ actually had laid down His life before the earth was even formed by God.

God forgave the prostitute and told her, "Go and sin no more." That was God being right. When Jesus said to the woman caught in the very act of adultery, "Neither do I condemn thee" (John 8:11), that was God being the way that He has always been and the way He always will be.

Jesus Christ took my place at Calvary. On His way to the Cross, He never listened to one evil report. He did not judge by what He heard and never reproved anyone by what He saw (see Isaiah 11:3).

Chapter Two
PROGRAMMED WITH TRUTH

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:29-31).

Do you realize that your arms have been programmed to operate as your arms? If something happened and your arm was broken, your arm would not operate according to the way it was programmed.

My liver and my kidneys were programmed to process the food and the fluids I take into my body and process a healthy blood flow. In eter-

nity past my legs were programmed so that I could walk. My ears were programmed to receive and process the sounds that I hear. My eyes were programmed to see.

We send our children to school and their capacities are programmed through teaching. They learn reading, writing, and arithmetic. We are so thankful for dedicated teachers who give their lives so that our children might learn and understand these important subjects. And now, through the grace of God, the Holy Spirit, and the love of God, the Bible—the living Word of God—programs us for obedience so we can be like God. Sure, we continue to think for ourselves, but by choosing to receive Truth we allow God's program to determine the output of our lives. By refusing to choose Truth we hinder our capacity and we live under the influence of another spirit, no matter what IQ we possess according to the academic world.

Jesus Christ became a man and came to earth where He was hated, persecuted, rejected, and despised. Because He had never gone that way before, every step Christ took in His humanity required faith from God the Father.

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

"For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:16-20).

We live by the faith of the Son of God in something that has never happened before. This represents our future. As a man, Jesus chose not to be "Number One." He was, is, and always will be number one as Creator (Colossians 1:16). He holds everything together by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). But as a man, Jesus chose

to be the Servant of all. He chose to be the least and the last. The only plan that would work to salvage us was for Christ to have come to be the last.

In Mark 9:34 and in Luke 9:46, the apostles argued and reasoned about who was the greatest among them. Who is the number one follower of Jesus? The number one follower is the one who considers himself to be the last. He came not to be ministered unto but to minister and give His life as a ransom for the many (Matthew 20:28).

Why do you go to church? Of course, we all come to the services to be ministered to. But outside of the church doors, how highly do you think of yourself? Do you want everyone to cater to you? Or, do you understand the principle of Matthew 19:30: "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first"?

The Christian who sees himself as the least shall be the greatest in God's Kingdom. That person is righteous, and his righteousness is from God. This is amazing.

Jesus Christ came to give Himself away. He did not come for Himself. He came to give Himself away to the Father, to the Spirit, and to the Word.

Chapter Three
LIVING THE HIGH WAY

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

"For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:11-14).

"And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is

of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:14-15).

"Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up" (Jeremiah 18:15).

Here the Bible speaks of people who operate in the righteousness of God, and these are considered to be people who are right. These people are on the high and holy way of God. When believers forget about God, they come down from that way. They go down to the lower road and leave God's highway. People who carry critical spirits don't function in faith and they live beneath the high calling God gave them. Spiritually, they are not operating in the righteousness of God.

To Will and to Do

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

"Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (Philippians 2:12-16).

An amazing principle is brought out in these verses: the difference between willing and doing. Many people go to the mission field and work hard for a season, but then they stop cultivating and stop working. They don't choose to finish the course and therefore there is no harvest for them. They live in their potential but never live in the harvest. Potential is not enough. We have to stay with the work until it is finished.

The Holy Spirit works in our desires and in our wishes. The Spirit and the Word of God work into our souls a will. Our response to God's initiation is the content of our faith. He puts in us the will and therefore we do.

In Romans 7, Paul speaks of the wrestling that goes on within us. The things Paul wanted

to do, he did not. The things he did not want to do, he did. He finally just threw up his hands and said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Who delivered Paul? Jesus Christ delivered him.

The apostle Paul was saying that God worked something very wonderful into him. In Romans 7, Paul couldn't do it. God had to do something in him and God did, for in Romans 8:1 the apostle wrote, "No condemnation." Paul had come to the place where the Holy Spirit had taken over and therefore he could do what God called him to do.

Faithful is the Lord who calls you who also will do it. Whatever God asks you to do, He performs in you. Never become discouraged between the willing and the doing. This is not to teach anyone that he may continue in sin. God forbid. No, this teaches you how to continue in God. This teaches you how to function in faith and to live in operational righteousness.

God is right, and His righteousness is foremost. He commended His love toward us in sending Jesus to die for us while we were yet sinners. When we fail, He keeps on forgiving us. He forgives us not so that we can continue in

sin, but so that He can reveal to us what righteousness is.

God loves justice and righteousness (Psalm 33:5). Justice precedes love. People do go to hell because God is righteous and His righteousness cannot be compromised when people refuse to function in faith. Those who go to hell are sent there because they did not receive His love and enter into the function of faith that comes by His great grace.

But to those who do choose to function in a faith that works by His love, God put them on His high way and leads them into a tremendous process of willing and doing His good pleasure.

CONCLUSION

God works in every believer a great will to respond to Him. When we respond, we begin to experience His righteousness. Through our faculties, the Lord moves with His living Word.

By functioning properly in our free volition, we choose to make decisions to live by every Word of God. By the grace of God, we become oriented toward divine viewpoint for every situation. This makes us some of the happiest and most joyful people on earth. Through the Holy Spirit and precise Light from the Bible, God can bring out all the possibilities that we possess in our individuality as we learn to function by faith.

Genuine Identification

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

Certain believers distance themselves from anyone found to have sinned. They don't want to be seen as being soft on sin or as a friend to one who is a failure, and yet they are missing the fundamental message of the glorious Gospel.

Jesus Christ made Himself of no reputation. In fact, He went out of His way to be a friend of sinners (John 4:3-26). He came to fulfill the law, given in Leviticus 19:18 and 34—a law that put a premium on loving our neighbors and even our enemies. The Lord told us to treat others as we would want to be treated (Matthew 5:38-48).

What does it mean to treat others as you would want to be treated? (See Matthew 7:12.) What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18)? What does it mean to heal instead of wound? What does it mean to give grace instead of smiting?

This booklet tackles these questions and provides the answers from God's Word.

Chapter One

DRAWN TO A DEEPER FAITH

"I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

"I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

"I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?

"My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.

"I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of

the lock.

"I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

"The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me" (Song of Solomon 5:1-7).

"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

In Song of Solomon, we have a picture of the bridegroom coming to see his bride, who was still a maiden. Resting peacefully, she had turned in for the night; so when the bridegroom called for her, she hesitated and did not get up to greet him. But when she realized that her delayed response was a missed opportunity, she opened her door, only to find that her beloved had withdrawn himself. He was gone, and though she sought him, she could not find him.

The picture of the maiden resting typifies a believer who knows and understands the Finished Work of Jesus Christ but also one whom

God wants to draw into a deeper walk of faith. Spiritually, we see that this maiden, the bride-to-be, was being tested to go on to a deeper faith. Apparently, she knew the bridegroom's pattern of initiation. Therefore, because she had become familiar with a pattern, she did not respond immediately to that initiation. Yet, though she hesitated in her opportunity, she did recover and rebound and began to seek after him.

When the maiden called to the bridegroom, he gave no answer. This scene shows us that God wants to draw us out into a much deeper walk of faith than we have ever experienced. Those whom God calls into such situations are potential leaders in spiritual warfare.

Think of children. They ask for everything, "Mommy, can I have this? Daddy, I want that." Early on, the children get what they want. But as they grow, there are times when they must learn discipline. A child that is trained up properly does not mentally react. He trusts the love of his parents.

In the same way, God at times may not seem to answer us because He wants to teach something new about His character, to lead us into a deeper degree of faith. Remember that, according to Hebrews 11:6, it is our faith that pleases

God, and great faith pleases Him greatly (Matthew 8:10, 15:28; Acts 6:8; 1Timothy 3:13).

Progressive Degrees of Faith

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35-36).

In His Word, God has given a promise for every circumstance, but sometimes He holds back His answers to keep our faith alive. Faith is the substantiation of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). When an answer is held back, it is designed to take us from faith to *patient* faith. We need patient faith to make *powerful* faith possible (2 Thessalonians 1:11). Romans 1:5 speaks of *obedient* faith; Romans 1:17 refers to *progressive* faith. God is teaching us degrees of progressive faith.

In effect, God is saying this: "You need to have faith in Me. If I were to make everything happen today just the way you have asked for it, then you would never develop godly character. You would begin to think of Me as something less than your faithful provider."

In Song of Solomon, the bridegroom drew

the bride out of her passivity and her familiarity. As a result, he could be more pleased with her life, she would get to know him more intimately, and their relationship would become more fulfilling.

The sad part of this story concerns the watchmen who smote the bride and took away her veil. They were supposed to represent the authority of God, but those watchmen were like Christians who do not have God's heart of grace and forgiveness. Here was a woman who was doing all she could do to go after God. Yes, she made a mistake. But she immediately responded and made it right through the process of recovery and rebound. The watchmen should have been loving her and helping her; but instead, they wounded and uncovered her.

Not one of us can stand on our own righteousness. God has already declared it as "filthy rags." Like the Pharisees who sought to punish the woman caught in the act of a terrible sin, not one of us can qualify to cast a judgmental look, never mind a stone (John 8:7-9). Thank God for a Savior who always seeks to identify with our weakest condition, so He can strengthen us when we obey Him by faith.

Chapter Two

THE NEW MEANING OF THE LAW

Only God knows who repents completely by coming clean, forsaking his sin, and making things right. Certainly, there are those who make only a surface repentance. Their hearts never change. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit will never fill someone who treats recovery and rebound lightly. However, the rest of us must recognize that whatever the sin was, it was nailed to the Cross.

Yes, we should hate sin and forsake it. Still, each of us must be encouraged to go on with Christ in the filling of the Spirit and the walk of grace. The watchmen represented God, yet they wounded someone who was trying to make a recovery. We cannot afford to do such a thing. Those who have been purchased by the Blood of Jesus Christ are precious to Him. Yet God's own people often wound other Christians who are

seeking Him after a time of failure.

Here is the maiden who failed, who missed an opportunity to follow the bridegroom. She missed the privilege to respond to his initiation. But as soon as she realized it, she got right up in the night and went seeking him in the city. Then, however, the watchmen found her and took away her covering. The disciples did just the same when they told the blind man not to talk to the Lord (see Mark 10:46-52). The same men (who were Jesus' disciples) tried to keep the children away from Him (Matthew 19:13-14). They also tried to keep the prostitute out of the Pharisee's house and away from the feet of Jesus (Luke 7:36-50).

We must be good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). That means we must honor a person's honest, pure desire to live for God after he has failed. True friends are born for adversity (Proverbs 17:17), and love covers a multitude of sins (Proverbs 17:9; 1 Peter 4:8). There are, however, those who separate very friends by repeating a matter and spreading evil reports. This is not about covering up sin; it is about honoring someone who has begun to recover and is seeking after God.

"At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

"But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

"But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;

"How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

"Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

"But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.

"But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

"For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (Matthew 12:1-8).

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it

not robbery to be equal with God:

"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:6-7).

The problem we face in Christianity is very clear to me. It has to do with identification in the Church today. There is a great misunderstanding of the relationship between the Law and God's righteousness. Many use the Law to establish their own righteousness apart from God. But in fact, we can receive God's righteousness because Christ fulfilled the Law!

Jesus Christ's reputation was established in God the Father. On earth, He made Himself of no reputation. Average Christians think that they must be accepted by men. They try to protect and defend Jesus' reputation when He didn't even try to keep it Himself. His reputation was kept before God as His mind stayed focused on the truth and as He lived a sinless life.

Often, believers who try to keep Jesus' reputation will do so by not identifying with sinners. They use or abuse the Law to keep their reputations, and they try to avoid any identification with those who might have failed.

"Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto

them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

"Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them" (John 9:15-16).

The Pharisees declared that Jesus could not be of God because He violated their understanding of the Law. Jesus had fellowship with publicans and sinners, and He didn't go along with the ceremonial washing mandated by religious rules. Therefore, His reputation with them was not good.

Jesus responded to their accusations by telling them how King David ate the shewbread reserved for the priests, which violated the Old Testament law. Along with this illustration, the Lord was introducing a higher law, also found in Hosea 6:6: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice" (Matthew 12:7)—a manifestation of the Royal Law of Love: Love your neighbor as yourself and do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Jesus' interpretation of the law was not a violation of it. Instead, He was taking the law to new heights.

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:13-14).

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

When Jesus introduced the new meaning of the law, He was considered a blasphemer because of who He said He was and what He did against what they thought was *Moses'* law. Yet, because Jesus was the end of the Law (Romans 10:4) and the fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 5:17), He unveiled the summary of the Law as this: "Love the Lord with all your heart and soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself."

And who is our neighbor but everyone in the world.

With this declaration, Jesus disregarded His reputation. The fact that He refused to live according to their interpretation of the Law made Him a blasphemer in men's eyes. He deliberately broke some of their wrong interpretations of the law, and thus He sacrificed being liked by men. He did it to identify with us sinners.

One of the greatest problems Christians face is a lack of understanding genuine, godly identification. Men attempt to preserve their reputations and personal testimonies instead of honoring Christ's testimony. The testimony of God means that we love not our own lives unto the death (Revelation 12:11). Jesus detests any attempt to maintain a reputation by ignoring identification with one another.

Paul was put in prison and no one visited him (2 Timothy 4:16-17). No one wanted to be identified with him. Believers prayed for Peter while he was in prison (Acts 12), but they wouldn't go visit him. Then, they were shocked when God answered their prayers and got him out of jail. Why were they so surprised? They lacked an understanding of genuine, godly identification.

Chapter Three

STAND WITH THE WEAK AND THE WICKED

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto

them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:34-40).

In this passage, Jesus was identifying with those who have nothing. He has always identified with the poor all over the world—whether they are poor regarding possessions or poor in spirit. The beautiful, glorious, and loving Christ demonstrated perfect identification with every man, woman, and child. Reputation meant nothing to Him. He didn't honor men's interpretation of *His* Law. He identified with perfect identification—without insecurity and without fear.

The Lord also identifies Himself with the sick—those in wheelchairs, those battling terminal illnesses. The elderly person in a nursing home—Jesus identifies with him. When we go to his room and minister, we are visiting Jesus. "I identify with this one. Visit him and you visit Me," the Lord declares. That is perfect identification.

The world is so wicked, cold, heartless, thoughtless, and careless. Instead of identifying with others, many people just wound and smite and uncover the needy.

Identification! It is what this world is lacking. I hate immorality, but I love the man or woman who lives in it. I hate robbery, but I love the thief.

Jesus, the One who knew no sin, became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. All of us, like sheep, have gone astray. We all have turned to our own ways. But God laid upon Christ the iniquity of us all.

That is genuine identification.

Removing the Sin Barrier

We must ask ourselves, "Am I identifying with others in perfect identification?" I am not talking about compromising with sin. I am talking about treating your neighbor exactly as you would like to be treated. Christ removed the sin barrier, and He brought in the love barrier.

Yes, repentance is always needed when sin comes in. There should be an absolute change in the mind, the emotions, the will, the attitude, and the heart. But throughout Christianity, we have men cleaving to their rules, cleaving to their understanding of righteousness. They refuse to identify in meekness. They neglect godly identification and substitute it with self-righteous rules that are private interpretations of

holiness and human goodness.

Are we any better than Christ? Of course not. He did not try to keep His own reputation. His reputation was already established with the Father. In His humanity on earth, He could not have kept His reputation even if He had tried—and He doesn't expect us to keep our reputation either. The servant is never greater than his master (John 15:20).

God wants to teach us the principle of redemptive, loving identification. Instead of wounding a person in the midst of his failure or in the process of his recovery, instead of smiting him or uncovering him, we are to identify with him.

Loving Those Who Use You

"But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

"Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you" (Luke 6:27-28).

Genuine identification can be taken even further. Jesus instructed us to love our enemies; therefore, we can identify with the wicked. Remember, Jesus was separate from sinners, but He was still a friend of sinners (Hebrews 7:26; Luke 7:34). He never compromised with sin, but

on the Cross He identified with every kind of sin that the human race committed. In His love, Jesus might have said, "What is it like to be an atheist?" Then, He went to the Cross, where—because He became sin for us—He was separated from the Father for three hours. For those hours, Jesus had to identify with what the atheist feels like when he doesn't know God and cannot get through to heaven. During that time on Calvary, Christ bore every sin in His body. Therefore, He had to identify with the homosexual, the adulterer, the one who gossips, and the murderer when He bore all of those sins and became sin for us (1 Peter 2:24).

Too many Christians refuse to identify because they are afraid of being found on the wrong side. When Watchman Nee was imprisoned by the communists in China, only one pastor stayed in fellowship with him, even after all of Nee's years of ministry. No one wanted to identify with this godly man for fear of losing their own lives. Sadly, there is such self-righteousness in people, and they maintain it in order to keep their reputations.

The watchmen in Song of Solomon were trying to do for God what only God can do for Himself. They wounded the bride, and they un-

veiled her. The watchmen didn't recognize what God would do for her. Jesus Christ planned to die for her while she was His enemy. He purposed to shed His Blood for her while she was still in her sin.

What a contrast of natures!

What a contrast of attitudes!

What a contrast of hearts!

Christ died for the guilty. And, as Christians, we must love those who are seeking God. We cannot afford to wound them. The Spirit of the living God isn't in churches that wound people with legalism. Those who place "justice" and reputation ahead of identification and reclamation dishonor the Finished Work of Christ. They try to manipulate the sovereignty of God by using the law to keep their testimonies. They want to be seen as acceptable and respectable while they water down Bible doctrine.

Many people are hurting, not because of their sins, but because they do not identify with God's people. God is more than able to build His own house. He needs us to recognize what it means to identify with the weak and, yes, even with the wicked. He died for them all and the Lord wants us to pick them up when they fall.

CONCLUSION

The Savior must be released through our lives. This can only happen as death works in us and life then comes through us. Christ can only be released in our lives as we take up our daily cross and as we lay down our lives for the brethren. He is only released as we edify others and minister grace to the hearers. He is only released when we love as He loves. He is only released when we forgive as He forgives. Let us learn to be kind one to another.

Let's help others to get up and heal their wounds. As believers, we ought to be recognized for the love that we have, one for another. The guilty need someone to stand by their sides and see them through.

This is perfect identification.

Surely, it takes the patience and power of faith. And yes, we need to receive unconditional love and the motivation of the Spirit. But with that and the living Word of God in our hearts,

God's love should be pouring out of us to a world that is waiting to see believers practice redemptive, genuine, and godly identification.

Getting to Know God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

Suppose you were driving home from work late one night and happened to come upon a terrible car accident. Suddenly, you realized that the car belonged to your wife or your husband. Imagine what thoughts would go racing through your mind at that moment. Surely, as a Christian, everything you had ever believed about God would be sorely tested.

This situation would push anyone to the edge, trying him to the ultimate degree of faith. A faith system built upon temporal things would fall apart at a moment such as this; however, an eternal value system would stand in spite of the sorrow and sadness. God is able to

bring beauty out of the ashes of tragedy, taking the believer from one degree of faith to the next, from one degree of strength to the next, and from one degree of glory to the next.

As this booklet will show, the real reason we are on earth is to enter into greater degrees of knowing God. Jesus Christ came to give us life, and life more abundantly. The whole purpose for God's people is to reveal how much they know Him and to show His glory to those who don't know Him.

Chapter One

REAL LIFE REQUIRES REAL FAITH

"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified" (Isaiah 61:3).

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

"To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

A man's daughter wanted to come to our Bible College, but he was concerned that she would learn nothing about the "real" world. His definition of the real world included having suc-

cess and money and a long life.

"What happens after you die?" I asked this man. "That is part of the real world, too."

Like that man, many people are confused about what the real world actually is. It is important to live practically and honestly, to work hard and do what you can to provide for yourself and for your family. I thank God for all those who live this way. But we must also recognize God as the Creator and know that He holds all things together by the word of His power. The Bible is God's love letter to us—a love that He expressed on the Cross. Because He is no respecter of persons, whosoever will may come to Him and be saved. When we were saved, we received by grace the sealing of the Holy Spirit, the regeneration of our spirit, baptism into the Body of Christ, and a union with Him that cannot be broken (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

The man I was speaking with contended that Christians do not live in the real world. Yet, the world this man viewed as real was a world that has Satan as its god. That world is lying in darkness, ruled by the prince of the power of the air. Fortunately, this man eventually got saved. He is a great Christian who now understands what it means to live in the real world.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:9-12).

"And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him" (1 John 3:19).

In 1 John 3:19, *aletheia* is the Greek word for "truth." It speaks of progressively coming to know and understand God's whole system of truth. We need to experience what the truth says, and the greatest truth in all the world is the commandment to love each other as God loves us.

The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. The just live by faith. We walk by faith and not by sight. Faith is what pleases God and it is what He rewards. If I am not consistently placed in situations where I need to have faith, then I will stop knowing God as a Person.

There was a time in our ministry when we had no finances. We had no money coming in and the credit cards got full pretty fast.

"What are you going to do now?" God said.

"I am going to trust You with all my heart, lean not on my own understanding, and acknowledge you in all my ways," I answered.

A short time later, a businessman offered to put up my wife and I in a hotel. God honored our faith.

Aman who doesn't please God with his faith, but who depends only upon what he can see, stops growing and stops knowing God as his provider. Whatever I am going through today, God wants me to have faith to please Him.

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Psalm 51:6).

A Christian must learn that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. He has to learn how to trust God for the next thing he needs. He needs to do this if he is sick with a terminal disease, or if his marriage goes bad, or if he loses his job. He must learn how to trust God as he gets to know Him, and he gets to know God by reflecting on His Word and responding to His instructions in the inner man,

through faith (Psalm 51:6). And according to Hebrews 11:6, God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

In 1 John 3:23-24, we must get to know the nature of God and have the love of God in order to reveal the security of our salvation. Then we will learn to trust God and not remember the bad things people do to us or say about us. This is based upon Jeremiah 50:20, which states that neither Israel's iniquities nor Judah's sins can be found. We don't remember a bad thing about anyone because we have God's righteousness. We are hid with Christ in God. We are complete and seated above with the Lord.

Chapter Two

CONFORMED TO CHRIST'S IMAGE

"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Psalm 84:7).

"Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (Hebrews 11:34).

I had just come home from a basketball game one day when my first wife met me at the door crying.

"I saw the doctor today," she sobbed and fell into my arms. "My leukemia came back and I only have one month to live."

My first response was to cry out, "No, no, no!"

I just felt as though I would faint, and the pain got worse and worse.

It was then that God whispered to my heart,

"You had better get to know Me and the power of My resurrection. In the fellowship of My sufferings, let Me conform you to My image."

I had to get to know God in degrees, going from faith to faith to please Him. I had to get to know Him from glory to glory in order to reflect Him. And, I had to get to know Him from strength to strength to grow to be like Him. The only thing that got me through any of my trials was faith in God. It is the same for you. God says, "Only believe."

Only Believe

We must keep right on trusting the Master. He is the Lord over sin. He is the Lord over death. He is the Lord over disease. He is the Lord over the grave. He is Lord over Satan.

"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

"Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very

works' sake" (John 14:9-11).

How many times did Jesus speak of faith? *No* faith, *little* faith, *mighty* faith, *great* faith—the Lord addressed these kinds of faith during His time on earth. I don't know what will happen to us, but I know we can keep right on pleasing God with our faith as we keep growing in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In the sense of God's perfect plan, all of His promises are yea and amen (2 Corinthians 1:20). When we really get to know Him, we will understand that in the final analysis, not one of God's promises will ever fall to the ground (1 Kings 8:56).

Trust God

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him" (Psalm 62:5).

As a young believer, God impressed my heart with a vision of what He was going to do in our ministry. I wasn't a pastor—I wasn't even a Sunday school teacher. But I believed God when He said I would be part of a ministry that would go into all the world to preach the Gospel, a ministry that would pioneer in radio and television ministry.

I told my pastor what God had shown me,

and he just stayed very quiet. He never answered me—never even looked at me. He just kept driving the car. Then, he preached a sermon to our little church of sixteen members, saying, "There are people who get crazy over thinking what they are going to do for God."

Well, I was just crazy enough to believe God. I didn't know enough not to trust God. That's just the way I was and that is the way I am today. When I was in sales, my superintendent told me this: "You are a good salesman because you don't know any better! You don't know enough to be afraid to knock on the next door. You just go and do it anyway. You don't know enough to fail."

There are so many areas in which I may not please God. I am not the strongest Christian in the world, but I can please Him with my faith in what He says, in who He is, and in what He has promised. Every time I love an enemy by praying for him to succeed and by really loving him in spite of what He has done against me, I please God. Every time I can forgive and forget something someone has done to hurt me and I really care about his soul, I please God.

If I can please God with my faith, then I can also, by the grace of God, grow in the midst of

pressures and trials. I can grow and serve others with a faith that serves by love (Galatians 5:6).

Chapter Three

THE POWER OF CORPORATE FAITH

"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Corinthians 12:25-27).

Corporate faith does such great things for us. When we become members in particular of a local assembly, we care for others and not just ourselves. We love each other; we pray for each other. We lay down our lives for each other. It helps us to get to know Jesus Christ by degrees of faith, degrees of glory, and degrees of divine strength—His strength that grows in the midst of our weakness.

We have learned obedience. We do things for

truth's sake (1 John 2:3). We forgive for Christ's sake (Ephesians 4:32). We do things for the sake of the Word and for the sake of love. The motive behind everything we do is the love of the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Word of God. Through God's grace and the Holy Spirit's power, we forgive for Christ's sake and we obey God for truth's sake.

Being There for the Body's Sake

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24).

As Christians, we also learn to do things for the Body's sake. Even if it means suffering, we suffer for the Body's sake. Each of us enters into the corporate body of Christ as a member in particular.

As an international ministry, we schedule conferences and seminars in several countries every year. Many of our friends live in countries where the economy prevents them from being able to travel to the United States. So, when we go to their home churches, everyone plans weeks in advance to be there. They come to every service and rap session, and they do not

take those times for granted. They come for the Body's sake, for the Word's sake, for love's sake.

For the Body's sake and for the sake of obedience, take a stand to assemble yourselves together often. Years ago, some family members visited me on a Sunday afternoon. They did not want to attend church, and I had to tell them, "I am glad to see you, but I am going to church. Right after the service is over, we'll be back to take you out to dinner."

"Fine," they said, and we had a wonderful time together.

What is more, I was a testimony of obedience to Jesus Christ instead of being sentimental.

The Victory of Obedience

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

"But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:

but I will maintain mine own ways before him" (Job 13:15).

The apostles left all to follow Jesus in obedience. If they left all, I think you and I can leave our family for an hour and a half to attend church. Don't be held back by sentimentality and ignorance. Think on the Scriptures and be obedient to God.

Men have given their lives to preserve the Word of God. Many have died to protect our individual freedom so we can read the Bible, study it, and hear it preached. Great men had such a quality of faith that they trusted Christ while they faced death. The apostle Paul could say to Nero (who blamed him and Christians for the burning of Rome), "I wish I had another life to give." Thomas, as he was put to death in India, declared, "I cannot believe He would let me die for His sake." This came from the man who, though he walked with Him, had doubted Jesus' resurrection.

When we begin to grow in faith, God gives a vision, and we trust Him for that vision. We grow and grow, pray and pray. We trust God and see Him honor our faith. He may make us wait a while, but we will see God honoring our faith (Hebrews 10:35).

"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

"For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith" (Mark 11:22-23).

Sometimes we have need of patience to receive His promise. Still, He will bring us to the place where we can completely trust Him for everything. It does take time and there will be moments when we will need to rebound.

Ultimately, we will grow to the place where corporately and individually we just have faith in God and trust Him for whatever we go through.

CONCLUSION

"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest wage a good warfare;

"Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (1 Timothy 1:18-19).

Don't ever let Satan make a shipwreck of your faith. Don't let the devil cause your faith to sink in your marriage. Don't let him destroy your faith as you serve God. Don't let him disrupt your faith to be a godly friend to people.

Walk in obedience, one little step at a time. Obey God about soul winning by just passing out that tract or by knocking on one door in an inner city neighborhood. Obey God as a member in particular by attending all the church services. Go whenever you can get there. Do these things and then watch as God develops the degrees of your faith.

The Lord conforms us to the image of Christ as we grow in degrees of knowing Him by faith. In suffering and in obedience, in His nature and in His truth, in relationships and in conflicts, just get to know God. That is what counts.

I thank God for the strength I have seen in so many believers. I thank God for their believing and obedient hearts. Keep it up! Go from faith to faith, and allow God's righteousness to be revealed through you.

Gifts from the Heart of God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Today there is such a misunderstanding of God's holiness. The Lord said in 1 Peter 1:15-16 that we are to be holy as He, who has called us, is holy, "…in all manner of *conversation*,"—or, in all manner of living. Yet, according to Psalm 51:17, God does not despise any Christian who will be broken and humble before Him.

In a ministry that teaches the pure grace of God, and especially in the context of this message, during these last days it is essential for us to hear what the Lord Jesus Christ says about holiness: "Be ye holy; for I am holy…." Be holy in *all* manner of living. Regarding your habits, where you go, who your friends are: *Be ye holy*.

As we examine the story of the prodigal son and his journey home, we will most likely catch a glimpse of ourselves. Every believer who has a heart after God but who has failed can become an easy target for Satan's attack that he doesn't "measure up" to God's standard.

Without proper understanding, growing in holiness is overwhelming at best; however, we have a provision. The point is to recognize the gift, set our eyes upon the Giver, and become great receivers who sow bountifully and reap abundantly wherever we go.

Chapter One

HOW TO BE HOLY: RECOGNIZE THE GIFT

"And he said, A certain man had two sons:

"And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said,

How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:11-24).

The Gift of Holiness

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: *thou hast received gifts for men;*

yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them" (Psalm 68:18).

One of the great synonyms for "holiness" is "spirituality." In 1 Peter 1:15, the Word of God could say, "Be spiritual, just as the Lord, who has called you, is spiritual; and practice spirituality in all manner of living."

Holiness, the way it should be understood in the Word of God, is so valuable. It means that we sanctify our daily lives by faith, and then the Word of God is sanctified in us (John 17:17).

So, what does the Word of God mean when it says that He ascended on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, and also the rebellious, "that the Lord God might dwell among them"? It means that He overcame our rebellion by inhabiting our soul.

What Is a Good and Perfect Gift?

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

"*Every good and perfect gift….*" What is a good and perfect gift? It is subjective love, given to someone who is unworthy. It is something given without conditions. A good and perfect

gift is one that God will never take back. It is a gift given because of the nature of the Giver. And something else about a good and perfect Giver is this: He never stops giving His gifts.

Every single thing we have from God is a gift. When a baby is born, and the mother holds the baby in her arms, it is a precious, priceless gift.

Many have a place to sleep and something to eat because of a provision from God. And in a world where millions are starving, food and shelter are wonderful gifts.

The Primary Gift: Salvation

The Word of God says in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

If you have never been saved, there is a wonderful gift that God is waiting to give you. It is a gift whereby you can live forever and ever. If you will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that He shed His blood and died to pay for your sins, and was buried and rose again, then that gift is yours. It is a wonderful gift!

By the good and perfect gift of salvation, God saves us apart from the law, apart from our

own works, apart from human merit, but most of all, apart from being worthy.

The Backslider's Problem

The problem with the prodigal son, who was a type of a backslidden Christian, was revealed in Luke 15:19 when he said, "I am no more worthy."

He had taken his inheritance, which he wasn't supposed to have until his father died, yet his father gave it to him. Then the young man went away to a far country and spent it. After wasting his substance on riotous living, he went to work for a citizen of that country. This prodigal son—a Jewish boy, now taking care of pigs (which was a disgrace)—would have been glad to eat the husks that the pigs were fed.

Then he said, "I will arise, and I will go to my father, and I will say 'I have sinned against heaven, and sinned against thee.'"

For the second time, in verse 21, he said, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son."

When he was working for his dad, the son's problem was that he never understood this subject of worthiness. He didn't know that his father had a heart that would break for him at any time.

So, the Word of God says in verse 17, "He came to himself." He was, in a sense, "insane"—beside himself—and he came to himself. "My father has hired servants, and yet, I am perishing without food, while they have plenty to eat." And after living in a far country (verse 13), he is now on his way back home.

Chapter Two

FINDING GRACE IN A FAR COUNTRY

A far country is a condition of the heart. For whatever reason that you might be living in a far country, it is a "heart condition," more than a place. It often begins by secret rebellion, and it results in spiritual poverty, pain, and fear. But we all need to understand that through this wonderful Giver—the One who gives us perfect gifts all because of grace—we "receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness [and] shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:17*b*).

How do we reign? We keep on receiving the inexhaustible gift of grace and the gift of righteousness. Then we need to understand that Jesus Christ is our righteousness. Jeremiah 23:6 says, "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD [JESUS

CHRIST] OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Please remember, the Lord has given us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and "as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

God is saying, "Don't you know that because of the gift of grace and the gift of righteousness, I have made you to be wise, righteous, sanctified, and redeemed? You have been totally and completely set apart for My use."

The gift of grace is given to the unworthy. Just think of it! When his father ran to meet him (in verse 20), the son's worthiness had absolutely nothing to do with anything. Gifts are given for the rebellious that God might work His way in their heart and have fellowship with them (Psalm 68:18).

Not Just Any Robe

Consider this great principle as you fellowship with the Holy Spirit: The father said in Luke 15: 22, "Give him the *best* robe."

When you were saved, you received the "best" robe. Instead of rebuking His child, the Father said, "Give him the *best* robe. Give him the ring. Give him shoes. Kill the fatted calf. We are going to have a great meal and a great cele-

bration, because my son was dead, and now he is alive. He was lost but now he is found."

In this passage is another tremendous principle: All the time the prodigal son was with his dad, he had no idea of what his father's heart was like. His prayer of repentance was interrupted; the father did not want to hear about his sins.

"My son is back! He is alive. He came home." He didn't want to hear about the prodigal's sins because our Father's Son, Jesus Christ, paid for them all.

Unworthy?

As we think of this gift of grace, consider this illustration: A couple came to our church; the woman was saved, but her husband did not receive Christ. After one visit, he stopped coming to church, but she came consistently. Then, she was killed suddenly in a head-on collision.

When I visited his home and offered to pray with him, he broke down and cried, and said, "I am not worthy." He said, "I'm going to be honest with you. Since my wife died, I've gone to pieces. I was not a good husband, and now I look at pornography." And again he said, "I am not worthy!"

So I said to him, "Jesus didn't die for people who are worthy. He died for people who are *un*worthy."

And I said, "Try to see that all of your sins were placed upon His body. Now He wants to give you a gift of forgiveness, then He wants to cleanse your soul. He wants to seal you with the Holy Spirit and regenerate you, then He wants to seat you in heavenly places. He wants to give you the pure Word of God."

The Word Was Sent to Deliver

"He sent his word, and healed them, *and delivered them* from their destructions" (Psalm 107:20). Many people quote the first part of this verse but not the second part. What is that deliverance? It is a gift of grace, a gift from God.

"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry" (Psalm 34:15). Can you see what this is leading up to? God wants to heal people and deliver them through a gift of grace.

You don't have to be "worthy." Your spirituality isn't the issue. The sick man in John 5 had been unsaved for thirty-eight years, and he was healed in a moment. The blind man in John 9 was unsaved, but his eyes were opened. Though

he was unsaved, God healed him so He could dwell with him (Psalm 68:18). The Lord touched him, not just physically but also spiritually, so He might come into his heart to live.

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19). Oh, it is easy to quote that, but I am going to grab that verse, live in that verse, and believe that God will give me the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness for every situation. He will deliver me from any destruction. He will hear my cry! His eyes are upon me, and His ears are open. Why? Because I have His Son's righteousness, and so do you if you are saved and washed in His blood.

The Heart of the Giver

We have God's righteousness. His eyes are upon those who have the righteousness of the Son, and He's looking out for them; His ears are open to their cry. So, instead of being preoccupied with our own thoughts, be preoccupied with the amazing gifts of God. Everything is a gift, and there are gifts He is just waiting to bestow upon us.

The Word of God says in Psalm 34:17 that God delivers us out of all of our troubles—*all* of

them. And if He doesn't deliver us immediately, He will give us grace to glorify Him in the angelic contest and bring us through so we can identify with others and be promoted in the Kingdom. But, He will deliver!

Take these promises. Embrace them. Kiss them. Love them. Know that your heavenly Father will give you the *best* robe. Your heavenly Father will give you the ring to show that you have the authority of a son. He will give you the shoes that you may walk in the Spirit. He will give you the fatted calf that you may eat the Lamb of God.

Chapter Three

LEARN HOW TO RECEIVE GOD'S GIFTS

Jesus Christ is not only waiting to be gracious to us, but He also wants us to learn how to receive His gifts. *Healing* is a gift. *Cleansing* is a gift. *Friends* that God gives us, they are our gifts. All of these things are gifts.

And when we enter in to the spirit of the law of life, we will begin to understand that the gift of a spiritual healing is mystical yet it is so simple. When God delivers us from our troubles and our destructions, He comes in and moves in our lives so He can say, "I want to give them more. I want to bless them with more gifts—the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness."

And what an amazing thing this is, to have this kind of God who loves you in every situation and never could do anything *but* love you. He has established you in His royal family so

that you can keep receiving His gifts. And still, it is a mystery that many Christians settle for second best because they do not feel worthy.

The father of twin girls was a very popular businessman, but he drank excessively. His wife went to our church—a beautiful woman of God. While one daughter came with her mother to church, the other daughter went along with her father, attended a liberal college, and followed in her dad's footsteps. Then, she came down with a very sudden and serious cancer, and she was only twenty-three years old.

People from our church went to visit her, but she did not understand that she could receive Christ and the gift of grace. She said, "I am not worthy. I've been going to bars and parties and nightclubs, and I am not worthy."

Fading in and out of consciousness, she woke up and said, "Tell them, Daddy! Tell them that I'm not worthy." Then she went unconscious.

When she did wake up, her mother called me, and I went to her bedside at two in the morning. Again she said, "I am unworthy."

We gave her the Gospel. We told her it was free, that she could be saved and forgiven in a moment. But in her heart, she didn't understand

the grace of God or the gift of righteousness. This girl died within forty-eight hours after the last time we spoke to her. Do you see what her biggest problem was? Unsaved and in desperate need, she thought she was unworthy of the gift of the Gospel. She would not receive it, yet all she had to do was accept it.

Brokenness: God's Way to Receive

When we launch out on the ship of grace and go deep into the ocean of love, we can see the beauty of God always waiting to take us into that vast, indescribable, inexhaustible, unchanging ocean of grace. It is waiting for every child of God: To save them. To meet their financial needs. To bless their businesses. To bless their marriage. He heals their souls, and in many cases, He heals their bodies.

Because Jesus Christ so loved the world, He came; and the Father so loved us, He *gave*. It is always that way with God—always giving! That is why James 4:6 says, "He giveth [greater] grace to the humble." And He keeps giving *greater* grace to the humble who receive all the grace they need in life. How? They humble themselves before God so they are able to receive the gift of grace and the abundance of righteousness

when they don't deserve it. Their walk before men is broken and anointed. They walk before God in humility and meekness.

We don't hear much from the prodigal once he comes home. He has the best robe; he has the ring (signifying authority over his father's wealth); he has the shoes to walk in the Spirit; and, in principle, he can feast on the Lamb of God in the Spirit (John 6:53). He is a very quiet, humble person. Back at home, for the first time he looks into his father's eyes and says, "I was the one who left, but look at you! You ran to meet me, and you did not stop kissing my neck. You ran to meet me, which means that you were watching, waiting to see me coming. You knew I would come when I became desperate enough."

No Strings

In Acts 11:17, *faith* is a gift. It comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). But faith is a gift. It isn't something I work up. It isn't something I manufacture. When I simply receive the Word and believe it, that faith is a gift from God.

Another gift from God is *patience*. He is the God of patience (Romans 15:5). Think of it! He paid for all we have done wrong, and now He

doesn't impute sin. He will lovingly chastise when we fail, but only to get us back into fellowship with Him (Hebrews 12:11). And, if we will not surrender to His wonderful grace and love, He will take us home early so we can go to heaven rather than live out our life in sin here below.

Think of how wonderful God is. Consider the splendor and beauty of His holiness! It is vital that we learn not to worry about being worthy enough. That was the prodigal's problem. We must learn that our heavenly Father will give us far more than we would ever give our own children. Personally, I would give my children anything I could. But God will give us far more. He is rich, He has all knowledge, He has all wisdom, He is everywhere present, and He has all power. This is our giving God.

Chapter Four

GET CONNECTED TO THE GIVER, AND LIVE!

Now, what we need to learn in a practical way is to be connected to God. Sing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs in your soul whenever you can. If possible, do it throughout the day. Learn to have a continuous attitude of praise and an expectation of faith. Live that way. Have fellowship with Christ by drinking His blood, which is to remember His sacrifice that cleansed us and gave us new life, and eating the Word of God, which is His flesh (John 6:53-58)—and live!

When you do these things, you are building yourself up in the most holy faith and keeping yourself in the love of God (Jude 20, 21). Keep fellowshipping with these gifts, especially the gift of grace. And when you fail—even if it's seven times in a day, God forbid—get up, name your sin, isolate it (Proverbs 24:16), and go on re-

ceiving the gift of grace, the gift of love, the gift of forgiveness, the gift of the Word, and the gift of healing, to be delivered from afflictions, from destructions, and from all your troubles.

Some people seem to flourish living in their troubles, and they need to be delivered from them. They need to get to know the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10). First Peter 4:10 says that as we have received grace, so minister that grace to one another as a free gift, "as good stewards of the manifold [(many-sided)] grace of God."

God said, "When I give you grace, I will give you grace upon grace upon grace (John 1:16), with the desire that you will live in Me, dwell in Me, abide in Me, and that you will live a pure life by faith. But I will forgive you seven times in a day if you will name your sin, isolate it, and go on until you become stronger in Me and weaker in yourself."

God wants us to be good stewards of grace, to minister every side of grace to the people around us. That keeps music going in our soul. It keeps the psalms going and the hymns going, because we are ministering grace, getting grace, giving grace—continuously receiving, giving, and ministering with the rivers of living water.

As we begin to live like this, the Word heals

our bone marrow, our bones, and our body, because it is flowing inside of us like streams through our conscience, cleansing and purging. The Word is a gift, and God gives greater gifts to His children than we give to our own (Luke 11:11-13).

Whose Miracle Is It?

Deuteronomy 18:11 refers to *teratoskopos*, demons that are allowed to perform miracles but they are not redemptive miracles. Let me illustrate.

During healing meetings, Satan can take away symptoms of disease or sickness that *he* is causing. He cannot take away natural causes, but he can take away what he started in the first place. In Revelation 16:14, Satan does that by performing miracles through specific demons.

On the other hand, in Luke 13, a woman had a back problem for eighteen years, and Jesus healed her on the Sabbath. The religious men in the synagogue hated what He did and were angry: in their eyes, He had broken the law. But Jesus said, "You hypocrites! Satan has bound her for eighteen years. Don't you want her healed?"

When you are tuned in to God, and the Word abides in you, and you abide in God's Word,

then your soul will be built up more and more. And just as God saved you, forgives you, and gives you power in your daily life, He will give you the power to be delivered from troubles, destructions, afflictions, and infirmities whether they are by the devil or by natural causes.

God Is the Greatest Giver

We need to understand that God will give the abundance of grace in our need. He will give us gifts—gifts to make us happy, gifts to make us extremely edified in the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

We need to learn that God is forever the greatest Giver! He takes unworthy people, saves them, and makes them princes (1 Samuel 2:6-8). And when you understand the heart of the Father, you will have no problem receiving gifts from the Son.

He ascended on high, and in Ephesians 4:7-11, it is Jesus Christ who led captivity captive. Now, because He is ascended, Jesus Christ is receiving gifts from the Father to give to men.

Do you see that? He received gifts to give to men. These gifts have been multiplied to go into so many areas. Meanwhile, the god of this world will use circumstances, sight, need, and people

to make us see our needs instead of God's gifts.

The prodigal spent all that he had on riotous living, and he was in want of something he needed. When a person is "in want" of something, he doesn't think about the provision at hand. He may think about earning it, but he won't think about receiving something from God as a gift. So, like the prodigal who was in want, our wants keep us from getting what God desires to give us in the abundant grace program through His gifts.

All Things Are New

There is not a reason in the world for any born-again believer to be going around without a provision from God (Psalm 37:25). Whatever church we are in, God has given us a Body of believers. For us, many years later, church is as full as it always has been. Years later, we are still together singing the good old-fashioned hymns we hear in the song service.

The difference now is that we have been in more than 140 countries. The difference now is that we are on over one hundred TV stations. The difference now is that we are on international radio, and we were the first Christian radio program to be broadcast live on the inter-

net. The difference now is that we are growing, with 130 different outreaches that we do in this city as part of a heavenly vision. The difference now is that we keep sending out fantastic teams of people go into all the world with the Gospel, and there they go! The difference now is that as a corporate body, we are one new man.

We have a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26). We have a new mind (1 Corinthians 2:16). We serve in the newness of the spirit (Romans 7:6) and not the oldness of the law.

We have a brand-new beginning every moment. Every week we have the first day. Every month, the first day. Every year, the first day. God loves these first days that take us into new adventures.

In Lamentations 3:22-23, His mercies are new every single morning, lest we be consumed. His compassions fail not; they come to us *daily*—and the Holy Spirit always sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5).

I love God more today than at any time in my life. I keep growing more and more in love with Him, because He is so amazing! He is the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley, and I cannot comprehend what it means to have His abundant grace flowing, coming into my soul.

He is a God of love, of mercy, of patience, of grace, of comfort, of forgiveness, of peace, and of joy—the Lord and Giver of life!

CONCLUSION

This God is just waiting to bless you again, and again, and again (Isaiah 30:18) He wants to keep right on blessing you because you are an heir and a joint heir (Romans 8:17).

You are a king, a queen. You are a child of God. God takes care of His family, and you get the *best* robe. This message is the Glorious Gospel—apart from law, apart from works, apart from being worthy. It will make us worthy. It will bring us from sinners into sainthood.

As we grow together in fields of faith, the more that we hear and believe, the more belief we will have, based upon what we have heard. Then, we will keep getting built up until the supernatural overcomes the natural. This is not accomplished by worthiness or works. It is a gift of grace. That is how we get a new mind, a new heart, and new mercies each morning. Remember, we want to crack the maturity barrier and grow into the place where the supernatural gifts

of life just come, and all because we are abiding and fellowshipping with the living God.

Second Corinthians 9:6 says it, and let's receive this as a spiritual principle: "…He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." Is God lying about that? No. That doesn't say a specific amount, does it? It says, "bountifully," and not sparingly. Receive God's unlimited gifts, and you will have no problem giving out of His immeasurable supply.

Give Me Your Heart

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

God really needs nothing from us. He created all things, He has all power, He has all knowledge. There is nothing we have to offer that would enhance the essence of who He is.

Still, there is one thing in each Christian that the Lord definitely desires to have. That is, our hearts.

The reality of His eternal plan is that He will only take our hearts when we give them to Him. Never has God bullied His way into our lives. Consider what Jesus Christ said: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

God doesn't come barging into the hearts of men. He certainly initiates and does all He can to get our attention. But it is our decisions that determine whether the door to our heart swings open to allow Him to enter in.

This booklet examines the principle of the heart and the importance for every believer to give his heart to God through positive volition and the entrance of truth in the inner man by faith.

Chapter One

GRACE COMMUNICATION

"My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Proverbs 23:26).

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:6-8).

God is the greatest psychologist we could ever know. He determined to give His people patterns for proper thinking and living, according to the Word and the Spirit, and Philippians

4:8 represents a pattern for thinking. I am to consider only those things that are pure, lovely, and of good report. Any other thought is vain and should be cast aside.

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

This verse is God's pattern for speaking: Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth. Corrupt communication is any communication that does not edify and minister grace to the hearer. In the 1800s, Charles Spurgeon preached that anything that did not minister grace was corrupt. Dwight L. Moody preached a sermon in London on the topic, "Get Right Now, and Stop Being Corrupt."

Our mouths are to minister grace to everyone who hears us. You see, no corrupt communication is to proceed from us. I was talking with my secretaries recently and praised them up for their hard work. I just thanked them special for doing such a good job. Those are statements that edify, statements that minister grace to the ones who hear them.

Yet, many Christians do not apply this verse. There is real trouble in many churches that can

be traced back to corrupt communication, to words that do not minister grace.

Why is this so? It is because so few really understand the truth of 2 Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

The simplicity of the Gospel is this: God says it, we do it.

Adam and Eve were distracted from the simplicity of the Gospel. They thought they knew more than God. Why? Because they listened to the liar, the devil. They discussed things with the serpent and came to the conclusion, confirmation, and conviction that they knew more than God.

God said, "Eat from the Tree and you shall surely die."

Satan whispered to Eve, "You shall not surely die."

Adam and Eve ate, and what happened? They surely died—first spiritually and then physically. There are always consequences for thinking and living outside of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two

THE TRIUMPH OF CHARITY

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the

truth;

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

I have conducted several weddings where I only had the bride and groom pronounce vows based on charity. Every single thing in those weddings had to do with charity. And charity has to do with giving God our hearts.

God is saying to each of us, "My child, give

Me your heart. I know you are sincere and I know you have integrity, but I need your heart. Just give me your heart and then you will be able to observe My ways."

Observing God's ways means walking according to categorical doctrine. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). He is also the Word made flesh, according to John 1. Walking in doctrine is walking in Christ. And I cannot walk in Christ without giving Him my heart.

There are ways that seem right to men, but those ways lead only to death (Proverbs 14:12). You see, God cannot do anything with our salvation until He has our hearts. We need to give Him our hearts in order to grow.

The great thing is that Jesus Christ became a man to die for all men. The Creator became the creature. The living water came to know thirst. The Bread of Life became One who hungered. The Door came to do the seeking and open the way for men to go to heaven.

The Benefactor became the petitioner. The great Giver came to be a receiver. The Landlord of the universe became a tenant in an earthly body. The Provider became like a beggar, without a place to call "home" on this earth.

The way of God gropes in our hearts. Our Christianity measures up to nothing without our hearts being in the hand of God.

Still, there is nothing in me that God needs. There is nothing God can use in me that I have apart from His love. He desires my love, my obedience, and my forgiving spirit that is based on His love, His obedience, and His forgiveness.

The most beautiful thing is that God is too rich for me to make Him any richer. He is too glorious for me to add anything to His glory. God is too good for me to make Him any better.

If we were to give Him all of our goodness, it would not make God any better. If we were to give Him all of our strength, it would not make God any stronger. If we were to give God all of our wisdom, it would not make Him any wiser. All of our greatness would not make God any greater than He already is and always has been and always will be.

All God wants from us is our hearts.

Chapter Three

DEFINING THE HEART

Let's say you have wealth (and I pray that all of us would have it); however, to have wealth without giving God your heart would mean that your wealth is worthless.

To work without giving God your heart is ignorance. Consider prayer. To pray without first giving God your heart is mockery. Singing without giving God your heart makes your songs as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. One could have a tremendous voice and be able to bless people with a gift of singing. Yet, unless his heart is given over to God, the song is worthless.

To preach without giving God your heart is hypocrisy. To serve without giving God your heart is fraud. To witness for Christ without giving God your heart is perjury.

Some teach that the heart is the seat of affections. But the heart is so much more than that.

The heart represents the premise for all motivational thinking. It is the storehouse for our norms and standards for living. Furthermore, it is the basis for all of our operational behavior.

Proverbs 23:7 concludes that as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. Therefore, we give God our hearts and we learn to think with Him, according to His Word.

The Channels of Our Thinking

Thinking with God is a process that has to be developed in our lives. Truth must be categorized in our minds as it is communicated through the channels of our thinking and received by faith through the Holy Spirit.*

We have defined it this way: Channel A in our brains is the place of perception and awareness. This is the place of first impressions, the place where we first discover the reality of what we can be and what we should be as Christians.

As we meditate and reflect on the truth we hear, what we perceived in channel A is transferred to channel B, the human spirit with its God-consciousness. This is where the Holy Spirit connects with our human spirit. The more of the Word we receive, the more God-consciousness we have.

Then, through the choices we make in positive volition toward the truth, these thoughts move to channel C, the soul. There, the five parts of the soul reflect the human spirit as it is filled with God-consciousness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Problems develop when we grieve the Holy Spirit, and this affects our human spirit. Then we are left with living in channels Aand C. Negative energy fields can then manipulate the emotions and eventually disturb what is really just superficial happiness.

Positive volition is based on thinking positively, having the mind of Christ because of God's Word and God's grace, and letting Him be the source of all the things that fill our spirit, soul, and body. This creates godly capacity and motivation. Godly motivation is the energy, the reality, and the defintion that comes from the guidance of God in any situation.

It's a very beautiful thing. This is how we become complete men and women of God. This is what happens when we give God our hearts.

**For more about this, read* The Hearing Heart *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

CONCLUSION

God said, "Give Me your heart."

"Oh, if I could have your heart and with it your voice, that would make such a difference," the Lord is saying to us. "If I could have your heart and with it your ministry of life, what things would happen on earth! If I could have your heart, what a great testimony for the world to see.

"All I am after is your heart. If you would just give Me your heart then I would have all that you could really give to Me."

There have been times when I have had such pain. Yet, I could still receive and give God's deep love through that pain. Why? Because I have given Him my heart. I can sit for long periods of time just thinking about His graciousness and how wonderful, how glorious, and how precious He is.

It is such a great thing to sense God's purpose—even in pain. Because, when He has our

hearts, He can reveal and minister His special reasons for every single thing we go through.

Glorify God in Your Valleys

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

Valleys are very difficult for anyone to go through.

For example, when someone loses a loved one for whatever reason, be it by cancer or by accident, that is certainly a deep and dark valley. In facing those situations as a pastor, I have had to pray, "Lord Jesus, help me. How do I comfort these hurting ones?" And God's answer had always been, "Don't try to comfort them. Just love them. Be quiet. Pray with them and let your heart show its deep expression of compassion."

When I do that, I find that God makes Himself real in their valleys.

I would be lying to you if I said there were never times when I become discouraged in the valley. The children of Israel became discouraged in the valley (see Numbers 32:9). At those times, however, the only place I can go is to the God of the valleys. At those times, the only thing

you or I can do is run to our precious Lord Jesus Christ. He is in the midst of the valley with us.

As you will see in this booklet, the valleys bring hidden riches and secret treasures out of us. We really discover what we are in the valleys.

"And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel" (Isaiah 45:3).

Chapter One

THE SWEET THINGS IN THE VALLEY

"And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Ben-hadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel.

"And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country.

"And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

"And they pitched one over against the other seven days. And so it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of

Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day" (1 Kings 20:26-29).

The Syrians came up against Israel and made this declaration: "God is the God of the hills, but He is not the God of the valleys." In other words, "When things are going well, God is doing it." But the Syrians mistakenly assumed that God was not God of the valleys for Israel.

Unfortunately, many believers emotionally refuse to recognize God in their valleys. He is God when they are in the hills, but they do not see Him in their valleys.

"The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him, and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him" (Job 21:33). What are the clods? These are the earthly things, the vileness of bad things on the earth. But for the believer, no matter what comes against him, it is sweet, because God is the God of the valley by Jesus Christ.

I can remember a family that suffered a devastating accident up in Northern Maine. Two daughters and their father went into eternity when a trailer truck crashed into their car. The mother, who was home at the time, made this statement: "I have no idea why God did that." And I agree with her. I have no idea either as to

why God allows these things. But even when we don't understand things, there is one truth we cling to: Our God is the God of the valleys, and the clods are sweet for us.

How can this be, realistically? According to the inspired, sure Word of God, this reality is forever settled in heaven.

Choice Places

"And it shall come to pass, that thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate" (Isaiah 22:7).

As a pastor for all of these years, I have seen a lot of sad things happen in relationships—in marriages, in friendships, in businesses. But still we have come to understand one thing thoroughly, and that is that God is the God of our valleys.

Recently, I received a call from New England. A wife was on the line telling me, "My husband has terminal cancer, and I have to tell my daughters." She is a very beautiful Christian, a person I led to Christ myself. As I listened to the sadness in her voice, a sadness that each of us could understand, all I could think of was to assure her that God is the God of her valley.

I recall another time when a mother phoned to tell me, "Pastor, my daughter has leukemia." The girl was only 15, and the mom was in such tears that she could hardly get the words out. That can seem like a very, very lonely place when the doctor tells you something such as that. Yet, the Word of God tells me that our valleys are *choice* valleys, filled with His divine provision and protection.

It can be very difficult at times to find a way to comfort precious, hurting people. Still, there is one thing I cleave to, and that is this truth, that man is to live by every word of God. If I understand this, then one thing I can do is to glorify God during my span on the earth. I can glorify God in my valley.

Chapter Two

SPRINGS OF LIFE RUN TO THE HILLS

"They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.

"Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

"He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.

"They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst.

"By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.

"He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works" (Psalm 104:8-13).

We are taken to the mountains, to great and amazing experiences with God. Then, God allows us to be brought down to the valleys. There,

what we learned on the mountain is tested.

Look at Psalm 104. The springs, the water of the Word of life, are sent into the valleys for us. That river runs right through the valley and takes us to the hills. Oh, it is such a precious thing for someone to get to know God in the valley of cancer, to draw near to Him in the valley of heartache, to find the Friend who sticks closer than a brother in the valley of loneliness.

You have grown old, and it seems as if no one is there to take care of you, and no one is there to love you. But I'm here to tell you that God is there, and you can get to know Him day by day in that valley.

Doors of Hope, Flourishing Vines

"And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt" (Hosea 2:15).

In the valley, there is a door of hope.

"I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded" (Song of Solomon 6:11).

In the valley, there is much fruit.

God is looking to see the fruit of our lives revealed in our valleys. Every time we are placed into the valley, it is as if God were saying, "Now, I have taught you a lot through the years. I live inside of you. I have inspired you. Now I want to see what grows in the midst of this valley."

What will you do in the valley? Will you complain to others? Or, will you heed the message of Psalm 142:1-3?

"I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

"I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.

"When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me."

You can come through because God has been, and will be, the God of your valleys.

Chapter Three

REST, PROSPERITY, FOUNTAINS, AND FRIENDS

"And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes" (Isaiah 7:19).

"And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

"And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

"And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water" (Genesis 26:17-19).

Consider these fantastic truths. God causes us to find rest and prosperity in the midst of desolate valleys. Isaac did a little digging in his val-

ley and found springs of water.

I don't know how many times it seemed as if we were washed up, as far as prospering as a church goes. And yet, when it was all over, we had lost nothing. The crowds were still coming out, the finances were still sound. God has been the God of every valley that seemed to hurt us so deeply.

By the grace of God, we are brought through. I guarantee you He will do it–just ask some of the dear folks who have been with me for all of these years. We have discovered something. We have discovered that it is really not crazy to trust in God. We have discovered that when all is said and done, we have been right where we belong. We have discovered that God is faithful, even in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death.

David always knew that God was with him in the valleys. When Saul was hunting him down, and when he was running from Absalom, David understood this: "God, You are with me. Your rod and Your staff comfort me. I am in the valley of the shadow of death, but, Lord, You are weeping with me in that shadow."

Every day, every week, every month, every year, there's a shadow of death following each of us. It doesn't matter what your age is. Man is

bound to die and yet not to die. "Whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25). Yes, Lord! We believe it. Amen.

Rivers from High Places

"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

"I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

"I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together:

"That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it" (Isaiah 41:17-20).

God opens fountains in our valleys. In the valley, there are springs of living water! Here are the fountains! Here are the old and precious words of God. He sends them to us, and the praise ends up in parts of all the world.

God develops our capacity to know that He will never leave us alone in any valley. There is hope, there is sweetness, there is beauty—all there in the valley. God looks for fruit and He finds fruit.

An Army Is With Us

In our valley, God gives us strength (Job 39:21). In Joshua 8, Israel enjoyed a tremendous victory. Where? In the valley. Joshua thought he was helpless, but, really, he had the army of heaven with him, just as the prophet Elisha did in 2 Kings 6:15-17:

"And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

"And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

"And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

For David, there were green pastures in the valley. Israel was discouraged in the valley, yet

God had a provision. For Joshua, there was victory. Abraham met Melchizedek in the valley after leading a mission and battle to rescue his nephew Lot and his family. I am personally convinced that Melchizedek is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, a priest who had no beginning and no end, no father and no mother.

"And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

"And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:17-19).

Are you in the valley? Look for Jesus to meet you there.

CONCLUSION

If you haven't faced any valleys, just wait. You will face some. If you are in a valley, God is the God of that valley.

Don't give up.

Don't get discouraged.

You are loved. God cares for you, and He is in that valley with you.

The Lord Jesus Christ was on the Cross of Calvary, suffering, with stripes upon His back. His back was bloodied; His brow pierced by a crown of thorns. All He said then was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

He was in a terrible valley, paying for the sins of the whole world. He exposed Himself to the wickedness of mankind and carried all of our sin with Him.

Glory to God, He was resurrected from the depths. Now, He is seated above, and we are hid in Him.

Bring the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus Christ into every one of your valleys. Not only are you joined to Christ in His death and burial, but also you are joined to Him in resurrection life.

The valleys are just training grounds, preparing us to reign in heaven with Him forever and ever. I cannot wait to see how many of us will reign with Jesus. We will have glorified bodies and big smiles on our faces! Gone will be the body of death. You will stand triumphant in the power of God.

God Always Causes Us

To Triumph

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INTRODUCTION

As Christians, it is imperative that we realize the victory is ours. God has called us to be witnesses unto this world, and our witness is to be one of triumph. We serve a God who *always* causes us to triumph in every situation.

This is what real Christianity is all about. We are spending far too much time living from beneath and not from above. He purchased us to be His children and to walk as His disciples.

God's plan of redemption was executed so that we would live as the head, not as the tail. Each of us can enjoy and revel in the greatest privilege, which is to overcome negativity and emotional turmoil by being filled with the Spirit.

Chapter One

THE SAVOR OF HIS KNOWLEDGE

"And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man" (1 Samuel 10:6).

"Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? *let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.*

"*Ye are my witnesses,* saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

"I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.

"I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore *ye are my witnesses,* saith the LORD, *that I am God*" (Isaiah 43:9-12).

A couple recently began coming to our church. After struggling through years of drug abuse, alcoholism, and immorality, each of them became gloriously saved. The husband called me and all he could say at first was this: "I just could never have believed it. *I could never have believed it!*"

He went on to say, "The Holy Spirit did something in me. I was a stranger to God, but the grace of God was spoken, and there was a transformation so pure and so complete that it is difficult to believe."

This man's obedience to what he heard produced power in his life, which now manifested the savor of God's life.

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

This is a very beautiful passage when it is understood and faith is executed in it. May each of us grab hold of our potential and the provi-

dential possibilities of what God can do in us individually and uniquely. God will impart something to us whereby we understand that nothing is impossible with Him (Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37).

A fixed heart produces a good, positive, ongoing manifestation of a wonderful viewpoint. Our lives become so relevant to God's provisions. We reach a place where we can pray quickly, ask something in Jesus' name, and believe with all of our hearts that He will do it (John 14:14).

True Success through Mercy

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, India, a magnificent servant of God, took care of many, many poor and diseased children and adults. In her travels, she had audiences with presidents, kings, and statesmen with their crowns, jewels, and fine clothing. One of these dignitaries said to her, "It must be very discouraging to be in a ministry that is not successful. You are always poor, and you always have more and more people to serve. You really have nothing."

Mother Teresa, dressed as she almost always was in a plain Indian sari, simply answered, "God didn't give me a ministry to be successful,

He gave me a ministry of mercy."

Then she said that she never starts out a day without an imparted attitude of faith in Christ. "I know He is always with me and always blessing me in every place, though I am an unworthy servant."

How different that attitude is from the kind referred to by the prophet in Jeremiah 17:5-6: "Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

Oh, how God's people need to be filled with His Spirit, so that whatsoever we do, in word or deed, we would do it heartily to glorify God, giving thanks to Him through Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two

ABIDING IN HIS PROVISIONS

In my morning prayers, I begin by saying, "God, I believe You. I thank You for hearing every word I pray. I know You love to respond to my prayers." There may be cases where after we have done the will of God, we have need of patience before we receive the promise. So, we are told to cast not away our confidence in Him (see Hebrews 10:35-36).

There are so many who just don't see good when it comes. They are born again, and may even be living in stable, prosperous countries. Their lives today are much better than the lives of many of the early Christians, and certainly easier than the experience of many people who are living in third-world countries.

Matthew Henry, the great Bible commentator, was robbed once and made these entries in his diary about the experience: "Number one, I thank God I didn't have much. Number two, I

thank God they didn't take my life. Number three, I thank God that I was the man being robbed and not one of the men doing the robbing. And, number four, I thank God that I believe He allowed it to happen for my good."

Contrast that attitude with that of someone who can't see good when it comes. Surely, you have met these people. All you can do is love them and pray for them. You don't judge them, because you could be walking in their shoes. They do not see good because they do not see God.

A young man I know struggled as he was challenged by Satan and the demons of hell. He failed miserably for a while, but his parents prayed. In an attempt to change the negative trends in his life, he enrolled in a disciplined, military-like school. Students there even had to march in formation on their way to eat their meals.

Through the continued investment of his family and other Christians, this man became gloriously saved and delivered. Now he is an amazing, transformed instrument of Christ, with such a positive attitude as he works in the youth ministry. Recently, he brought *forty* young men and women to church from his old school.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8)

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7-9).

These words bring in a positive spiritual attitude. Real Christianity is an attitude that believes that through joy, abiding, and meditation, God can keep us. In the light of the glorious provisions of His Kingdom within us, we truly can live moment by moment without falling into sin or iniquity, without falling into the temptations of Satan. We have a power within us that will make us witnesses for God in the angelic conflict.*

Christians are cross-examined by Satan in the details of life. He goes to God with our attitudes, trying to disqualify us as Christ's witnesses. Satan, the accuser, will tell God the Father, "This one is disqualified because he witnessed for *me*, not for You, when he was under pressure." But, this does not happen to the spiritual Christians who do not see the heat when it comes. Their leaf is always green, they are not careful in the years of drought, and they will not cease from yielding fruit.

Actions of Love

A woman was going through tremendous suffering, battling diabetes and kidney disease. She needed to have part of her leg amputated but had no money for the operation. Her precious brother sold his house and gave her the money she needed. Later, when she needed a kidney transplant, the brother volunteered and gave her one of his. His body did not recover well, and he was still feeling the effects of losing a kidney two years later.

"How do you feel?" he was asked. "Your home is gone. You've given up a kidney, and now you're sickly."

"I feel wonderful!" he said. "I did something

for the sister I love, and I would do it a thousand times over because of what Christ did for me."

Thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph, for He makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in *every* situation (2 Corinthians 2:14). *That* is Christianity. That is the glorious walk of a disciple. It is the privilege of a lifetime to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to not speak in negativity, and to not enter into emotional rebellion or the inconsistency of a Laodicean spirit (Revelation 3:14-17). This spirit of lukewarmness is imparted through the atmosphere by demons from hell to short-circuit your future and make sure you can't witness for God.

**For more about spiritual warfare, we suggest that you read two booklets by Pastor Stevens,* Dealing Precisely with Demons *and* Exposing Satan's Armies, *Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

OVERCOMING CONTROVERSY BY CHOOSING LIFE

"Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? *ye are even my witnesses*. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any" (Isaiah 44:8).

"Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: *for the LORD hath a controversy* with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1).

"And *I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses,* and weighed him the money in the balances" (Jeremiah 32:10).

The "controversy" refers to a case in a courtroom. It means Satan appears before God to reveal how you respond in the details of life. When the devil has access to your marriage and family, he tests you, trying to mock your testi-

mony and disqualify the evidence of the love of God in your life. Satan wants to make it so you cannot pass the fruit-testing of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.

As in Jeremiah's case, God has sealed the evidence against Satan. We are God's witnesses, and so also is the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32). "Ye are witnesses, and God also," (1 Thessalonians 2:10*a*). Joshua 24:22 says, "Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve Him. And they said, We are witnesses." In time, we have a privilege to face Satan; he cross-examines our testimony to see who we are in Christ and what we believe, to see if the savor and manifestation of God's knowledge comes out of us in every place.

Satan tests us privately and also as a body of believers. When he tests our prayer life and our attitudes, we can come out strong in the Lord, in the power of His might, resisting the devil, and causing him to flee. Just as the man who sold his house and gave up his kidney for his sister, we can say, "I thank God through the glory of Christ I can go through this thing."

"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for *false witnesses* are risen up against

me, and such as breathe out cruelty" (Psalm 27:12). These false witnesses refer to demons. Often, I counsel people who do not recognize that there are forces of hell and forces of heaven battling—armies of demons under Satan and armies of angels under God. God's Kingdom within us is real, and when we learn to abide and decide that in Christ we can overcome anything, then we can be recovered from attitudes, from bondage, from habits, and from wrong relationships. God has placed in us the power to be His witnesses. In Acts 1:8, He said that "ye shall receive power…and ye shall be witnesses unto me."

Our Unequivocal Capacity

If only we understood that we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us, we would have an unequivocal capacity to communicate the savor of His knowledge. We have the capacity to communicate unto those who are saved and to those that perish: life unto life and death unto death (2 Corinthians 2:15-16). We have a privilege to have joy within us. It is an act of free volition—a decision of the will. God gave Adam and Eve free volition, and they ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. As a

result, their consciences came into being. The conscience reflected moral light for their free volition.

In Deuteronomy 30:19, God says, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

Christians have the power of God within—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (John 14:23). When we choose Him, His Kingdom takes over, and miracles can happen.

We can't fully explain what victory is like. A victorious attitude is a way to think, a way to communicate, and a way to act, according to the power that works in us (Philemon 6). Any Christian can begin to blossom wherever he is, if he chooses Christ with a positive attitude.

When something comes against us, we can think it through and, with our free volition, enter a requisition of His power. We can choose to say, "No" to sin, and God's power will enforce that "No." It is not what is in our own ability that brings victory; it is God's power that enforces the decision. This is why Jesus said in Luke 9:23, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily,

and follow me."

"Do you want to drink?"

"No, I deny my right to drink."

"Do you want drugs?"

"No, I deny my right to choose drugs."

"Do you want to lust or look at pornography?"

"No, I deny those things—they have no value and no rights in me."

Then, the Holy Spirit thanks us as He is manifested, and the grace of God flows within. The power of God goes up like a spring of praise to Him and out like a river of life to people. This is how Christians can have abundant lives and victorious attitudes. Prayer lives can be revolutionized. Marriages, families, and friendships can be renewed in the knowledge of the new man (1 Samuel 10:6).

Ephesians 4:23 tells us to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. Colossians 3:10 speaks of being renewed in the knowledge of God. We can be renewed with God's love and life as a force within. Our new inner man can abound, take over, and not allow the habits of the outer man to rule. It is revolutionary to live by grace and faith. This comes by believing, confessing, and acting. It's a glorious thing and it makes a Chris-

tian feel like a spiritual billionaire.

Do you choose life and blessing? Or, do you choose to be negative about things, like the location you are in and the adversities you face? A Philippians 4:8 attitude will always cause us to triumph as "more than" conquerors. There is no striving or straining, only believing and letting Christ live out His life in us in every situation, by the Word of Life (Philippians 2:16).

Chapter Four

LIVING AS THE HEAD WITH RENEWED STRENGTH

"And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day" (Deuteronomy 28:13)

"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:26-31)

We have been given the absolute Word of God with over seven thousand promises and its sixty-six books. God has set it apart and sanctified it for us in our hearts. When a pastor communicates the Word of God, the Word is initiated through the human spirit and the Holy Spirit to the eternal soul of the believer. That soul can choose to be familiar, passive, or asleep. A soul can be occupied with a spirit from the air, or it can be meek, mixing faith with everything it hears, believing utterly in the totality of the Scriptures, growing more equipped to live, and becoming more ready to face Jesus Christ. At every service, we have this privilege of becoming part of an absolute provision from Christ.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Whether eating or drinking, we are to do it all to the glory

of God. The function of God's Kingdom, the participation of God's thinking, the power of God's Spirit, and the grace of God's love—all should be operating in our hearts.

The original Hebrew text in Isaiah 40:26-28 declares, "Have you not experienced the understanding that the Creator of the ends of the earth, [(the Lord Jesus Christ)], thy God, has never become weary? and there is no searching of His understanding." We can readily say that we grow weary because we are human, and it would be easy to think that God also grows weary from watching us, but He doesn't. He can do all things, and not a thing can be withheld from Him (Job 42:2). The God who created all the stars and all the host of heaven never tires and never faints. He gives power to those that faint, and strength to those that have no might.

The average counselor may just see another session with someone who is weary, someone who is fainting spiritually, and who does not know how to wait upon the Lord. But I love to give counsel using the passage that says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." After reading Isaiah 40:31, I might say, "You can choose *not* to wait on Him and just confess how terrible life is; and perhaps, you're

even thinking of moving somewhere to get away from it all. But, you have Christ in you. You can't always feel Him, and though He is speaking, you may have trouble hearing Him. Yet, He is with you, though you don't see Him now."

I was preaching once at a church in North Carolina, saying, "Get on fire for God! Keep your heart on fire! Don't be slothful—renew your strength and realize that life is very short! Make a commitment to God that whatever you do, you will do it with all your heart." Right after I was finished, an older gentleman, about eighty years of age, got up and said, "I am re-enlisting right now."

First, our strength is renewed inwardly. Then, we mount up with wings as eagles—upward strength, which God gives from above. Then, we run and are not weary when we develop outward strength. Finally, with onward strength, we can walk and not faint. Inward, upward, outward, and onward—all of these strengths are ours.

Waiting on the Lord

"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the

LORD" (Psalm 27:14)

"Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day" (Psalm 25:5)

"And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him" (Isaiah 8:17)

Waiting upon God is a very beautiful thing. It is being a "waiter," serving God. What a beautiful thing to know that God does not grow weary, nor does He faint. He created all of the host of heaven; He designed our bodies and minds as well; and He offers us a supernatural impartation when we know how to wait upon Him.

When we look at our circumstances, we may not want to wait upon God. But if we would recognize our need to be renewed inwardly and receive outward and upward strength to carry on our duties with all the energy that God can supply, then we will not become weary or faint. Finally, when we also receive onward strength to continue in God's grace, depression and anxiety have no place, and God is glorified!

In Deuteronomy 28:13, God promised He would make Israel the head and not the tail. God wants to make us the "head," experiencing

His overcoming authority, and not to be like some little tail wagging behind a dog. God wants you to be an overcomer in your business, in your home, in your marriage, in your prayer life. He wants to make you victorious in your relationships and to give you the desires of your heart. God doesn't want you to be the tail. He says, "I want your life to be from above only, not from below."

Who started this idea that Christians should be anything other than triumphant? Satan, that's who. Explain to me why the world should enjoy the benefits of logistical grace while Christians struggle. It is one thing to suffer for righteousness' sake and to learn obedience (Hebrews 5:8). But it is another thing to suffer because you refuse to possess an active faith, a living goal, an eternal purpose, and a renewed mind. We have to do everything with all of our might. Let's believe God dogmatically and dynamically, with all of our hearts. Believe God and refuse anything that distracts from His faith.

A woman who attended one of my first churches had been drinking one evening and was in a terrible accident. At the hospital, she told me she was so ashamed and said, "I want to be saved." We later helped her to complete

high school and college, and she became an executive secretary. When I would see her, she would always say, "Pastor, I'm the head now and not the tail anymore."

Providential Reversals

God wants His people to be the head! He wants you to be the best businessman, the top salesman, the wisest executive; He wants to make you better than the others. He wants you to be above only and not beneath. When we receive God's vision of who we are in Christ, when we receive His provision of what we can do in Christ, when we receive God's power to be all that we are in Christ, then we have divine ability to do everything God Has ordained for our lives (Philippians 4:13). We go forward in the streams of the rivers of life as real men and women of God, believing and confessing Christ. We are not to live in defeat.

When a man or woman discovers that he has Christ's wealth and resources in him, there is not a single thing his mind cannot do. He can have healthy emotions and go forward with power in a vision. Here, in Baltimore, we have had a great providential reversal during the past twelve years. God has revealed something for His glory

and His honor.

Imagine what a Christian can do when the joy of the Lord is His strength. He rejoices and knows how to wait upon God. This believer thinks from above. His affections are set on things above and not on things below. God's thinking is way above this universe. It goes way beyond three dimensions, although He takes over those three dimensions to bring glory to Himself.

Think back to that moment when it really dawned on you that God loves you just as you are. You are saved forever. Every sin was paid for. You are seated above and He quickened you by grace. What did you think when this reality entered into your heart?

You He quickened, when you were dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1-3). What a thrill it was finally to hear someone say, "God loves you; He wants to come inside of you. This is what the Scriptures say." You believed it, and just like that you were going to heaven. You did not doubt it; you were sure of it. You received Christ into your life because you knew it was Good News.

"I, even I, have spoken: yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his

way prosperous. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go" (Isaiah 48:15-17)

God wants to make our way prosperous. He will teach us to profit and show us the way we should go. If we ask, He will gives us wisdom (James 1:5). "Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee" (Hebrews 6:14).

CONCLUSION

God wants His people to live as children of God. If we go through something, we know it is for promotion in eternity. We can be promoted forever by revealing Christ in the angelic contest, and we will reign with Him. God wants to bless His people and have them know how to draw from His blessings and make things happen. In order to do that, we have to wait upon Him.

Israel stopped at Marah, which means bitterness, not realizing they were just seven miles from Elim—a beautiful, tropical place filled with trees and water. They parked at the desert place when another choice would have taken them right into a blessing (see Exodus 15:23-27). God is saying to us, "If you would only realize how I want to teach you which way to go and guide you with Mine eyes (Psalm 32:8), you would understand how much I want you to be blessed."

A businessman I know claimed some verses

from the Bible, and he is prospering. He believed; he prayed; and the blessing is way beyond anything he imagined. The scope of his blessing is incomprehensible.

God knows how to bless us. He knows the way to go and how to make it work. But somehow, some way, some of us have become disconnected. Maybe we feel that if we are lacking now, that we are "more spiritual." But God wants us to triumph—to be the head and not the tail.

Let's take God at His Word. Pray and go forward as though things are going to happen. God is glorified as we wait upon Him. He will honor us and strengthen us. We will run and not be weary, we will walk and not faint. We will go forward with a conversation that is from above and a citizenship that is from heaven. We don't have to live as a second-class citizens. Instead, we will go forward in victory, from glory to glory and from strength to strength (Psalm 84:7).

Go forward! The Bible is presenting the truth when it says that you can be blessed by your God, personally and in everything. Believe God for His providential reversals and His providential blessings. No matter what it is, take a step of faith and go offensively toward Satan's

territory, wearing the whole armor of God—and have fun doing it. Know that God will never leave you nor forsake you. Not one of His promises will fail.

Every promise is yea and not nay (2 Corinthians 1:19-20). Know it, believe it, get excited about it. Run—don't be weary. Walk—don't faint. Wait upon the Lord, and He will renew your strength. You *will* mount up with wings as eagles. You *will* triumph! The Word of God received with transforming power will become life in your inner man.

God Bless America

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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The Star Spangled Banner

by Francis Scott Key

(Written on September 20, 1814 in the aftermath of the battle at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland.)

Oh, say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore, dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, now conceals, now discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream:
'Tis the star-spangled banner! O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
Ahome and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has wiped out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave:
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Oh! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven-rescued land
Praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, for our cause it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."
And the star-spangled banner forever shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

FOREWORD

On September 11, 2001, the United States of America suffered tragedy as she had never known before. Several terrorists hijacked and commandeered four commercial airplanes, purposely crashing two of them into the World Trade Center's twin towers in New York City and one into the Pentagon in Washington D.C. Another crashed in the countryside of Pennsylvania, presumably short of their mission. Thousands of innocent people—office workers, passengers, tourists, policemen, and firefighters—perished in the explosions and the devastation that followed.

The two skyscrapers imploded and became heaps of rubble, forever altering the world's most famous skyline. A gaping hole was left in the building where our nation's top defense personnel including hundreds of civilians plan, prepare, and manage military affairs. Aremote field was scarred when passengers forced their plane

down, thwarting the hijackers' aim to destroy more buildings and more lives.

Humbled and heartbroken, our citizens were asked to observe a national time of remembrance and prayer. A memorial service was held at the National Cathedral in Washington D.C. on September 14. The following is an excerpt from the speech made that day by United States President George W. Bush:

"Our purpose as a nation is firm, yet our wounds as a people are recent and unhealed and lead us to pray. In many of our prayers this week, there's a searching and an honesty. At St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, a woman said, 'I pray to God to give us a sign that he's still here.' Others have prayed for the same, searching hospital to hospital, carrying pictures of those still missing.

"God's signs are not always the ones we look for. We learn in tragedy that His purposes are not always our own. Yet, the prayers of private suffering, whether in our homes or in this great cathedral, are known and heard and understood.

"There are prayers that help us last through the day or endure the night. There are prayers of friends and strangers that give us strength for the journey, and there are prayers that yield our will to a will greater than our own.

"This world He created is of moral design. Grief and tragedy and hatred are only for a time. Goodness, remembrance, and love have no end. And, the Lord of life holds who die and all who mourn.

"It is said that adversity introduces us to our - selves. This is true of a nation as well. In this trial, we have been reminded and the world has seen that our fellow Americans are generous and kind, re - sourceful and brave….

"America is a nation full of good fortune, with so much to be grateful for, but we are not spared from suffering. In every generation, the world has pro - duced enemies of human freedom. They have attacked America because we are freedom's home and defender —the commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time.

"On this national day of prayer and remem - brance, we ask Almighty God to watch over our na - tion and grant us patience and resolve in all that is to come. We pray that He will comfort and console those who now walk in sorrow. We thank Him for each life we now must mourn and the promise of a life to come.

"As we have been assured, neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth can separate us from God's love.

"May He bless the souls of the departed. May He comfort our own. And, may He always guide our country. God Bless America."

INTRODUCTION

"…And the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

The booklet *God Bless America*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, was first released in 1985. This updated edition represents our purpose to reintroduce the reader to the vital issue of national entity as it is outlined in the Word of God. As we understand our eternal purpose and destiny, we can responsibly make individual and corporate decisions to honor God's established government.

Two kingdoms are at war: the kingdom of darkness versus the kingdom of light. The kingdom of darkness oppresses men and rules over their free volition by an organized system of evil. But the kingdom of light, through our Lord Jesus Christ, establishes freedom in our human volition—a freedom that leads to life, blessing,

resurrection power, and truth.

We give thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ for His "…dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom one which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14, Amplified Translation).

Chapter One

STEWARDS OF THE GOSPEL

As Christians, we serve a kingdom not made with hands. According to 2 Timothy 4:18, 1 Corinthians 4:20, John 18:36, and Colossians 1:13, it is an everlasting kingdom that requires no earthly defense. Yet, while we are on this earth, we are citizens of various nations, with national responsibilities. The United States of America, which was established as a Christian nation, still enjoys the blessings of God because of the remnant of believers who pray, study, and obey the Word of God.

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to all eleven disciples, the chosen representatives of His chosen nation Israel. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..." (Matthew 28:18-19*a*).

The Word of God must be taught to all nations. We must show people how to be saved,

and we must teach them objective categories of truth from the Bible. Each believer should be baptized by immersion, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Lord instructed the disciples to observe all things He commanded, and He promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the world. (Matthew 28:20).

Colossians 1:15-17 records the amazing truth concerning the dominion of Christ, "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Heaven's Citizens Must Rally

Some Christians are "rocking-chair" Christians. They do not go into all the world with the Gospel, and they do not know that it is the responsibility of pastors and teachers to teach every word of God (Matthew 28:20*a*). Today, because it is a strategic time in the panorama of human events, we must consider ourselves citizens of heaven as well as of the earth. We are stewards of the Gospel, the Word of God, and

the grace of God. We are also stewards of human freedom, which God has given to this great country of America so that the Gospel might be preserved and proclaimed.

When God created man in the Garden of Eden, the first gift He gave him was free volition (Genesis 2:16-17). Volition allowed man either to believe or not to believe (John 3:36)—it gave him the right of choice (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19). God's first concern was to protect that freedom.

Understanding the divine institution of free will, we must consider our responsibility to respond to what the Word of God says about the institution of marriage (Matthew 19:5; Genesis 2:22-24), the institution of the family (Psalm 68:6; Genesis 4:1), and the institution of nationalism (Genesis 10:5) to promote a sense of belonging, security, and loyalty on many levels, mirroring the believer's citizenship in heaven.

National Entity Established

God's design for government produces individual freedom, free industry, and free enterprise. Individuality and creativity are maximized as each person develops self-discipline in planning, working, and caring for others.

When people do not understand that God

created all things and holds all things together by the Word of His power, they implement other systems of government outside of God's plan.

Socialism is a system in which the government provides for individuals' needs in exchange for control of certain segments of society. Communism is a totalitarian system that takes away the rights of industry, free enterprise, and creative, competitive trade—which take place in a healthy, wholesome market of expansion—are quenched, preventing the development of a unique and wholesome economy.

Humanism, a philosophy created by man, for man, in order to deify man, is used as justification in any totalitarian system. It is deception promoted by Satan. Isaiah 14:12 says that Satan deceives and weakens the nations. Revelation 20:8 says that during the tribulation period, Satan will attack the nations. He goes forth to deceive, seduce, and lead astray the nations in the four corners of the earth.

Still, one of the most powerful tools of the enemy is religion. As we have seen in our nation, when radical religious groups try to force their views and agendas on others in the name of God, then anger and resentment come in to destroy true, godly foundations.

Chapter Two

CITIZENSHIP: ON EARTH AND IN HEAVEN

"Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

"Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.

"Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded; yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God" (Micah 3:5-7).

Citizen Stewards

Prayer is one way of expressing faith in God. Faith is one way of revealing how much we trust

Him. We are responsible to be good stewards of our citizenship on earth and the great heritage of national entity, divine establishment, and human freedom, which God has bestowed upon us through common and universal grace.

We cannot disassociate from politics a ministry that propagates the Gospel on foreign shores and uses evangelism as a tool to make the Gospel known to the lost.

We cannot remain detached. We must work to keep our nation free so the Gospel can go forth. We must be free to serve God through salvation, the filling of the Spirit, and the Word of God. We must never become slaves to the old sin nature and the satanic system; we cannot detach the two.

Advancing Freedom

The early Americans knew how to protect and advance freedom. They introduced an economy that was based upon free enterprise and creative competition in industry. The government and bureaucracy stayed out of the affairs of the individual state, family, and business as much as humanly possible. They kept taxes as low as possible. Through creativity in their thinking, hard work, planning, and cooperation,

they matured, and the principles of teamwork, moral uprightness, justice, and equity for all were established.

Imagine the horrors people endured under the fascist regimes of Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. Book upon book has been written of the ways citizens were tormented and stripped of the freedom to choose, to work, to live, and to pray. Driven by power lust, men brutalized their populations in the name of their cause.

Communism's goal was to eliminate a class system, to eradicate the distinction between the "haves" and the "have-nots," and to allow all to share the centralized wealth of the nation. What it spawned was a diabolical society of deceit and suspicion, where only party bosses and bureaucrats enjoyed privilege and patronage. The rest of the citizens struggled to live day to day. No place was given for entrepreneurs to exist. Those on the bottom had no means to work themselves out of their situation. Those who dared to pursue any measure of freedom were spied out, jailed, or eliminated.

We now see that these paths ultimately led to destruction. Many, many millions died in the process.

This same thing goes on in the name of religion today. Power-hungry leaders of a clerical class rule ruthlessly, invoking "holy" mandates that enable them to abuse and control and kill, all the while believing that they are destined for "paradise." These religionists are the "haves" in these nations because they have taken everything from their followers through satanic deceptions.

Satan's program is to weaken the nations; meanwhile, the Lord Jesus Christ is establishing His dominion. Through His Holy Spirit, He encourages us to pray, serve, and protect our nation, to preserve our freedom, and to exercise stewardship by helping people around the world. We are called to protect them from the menace of satanic governments, which are used to steal away human freedom and usurp human rights and privileges. People should be free to worship God, to go to bed at night, get up in the morning, go to work, and plan their lives without the interference of an illegitimate, authoritarian police state.

Processes of Discipline

What happens when a nation does not foster its heritage, preserve its freedom, live in nation-

alism and protect God's established national entity? God will then begin to discipline that nation. He will do it every time. In Judges 17:6, it is recorded that Israel did what was right in her own eyes. They lost their social, moral, and religious composure. Ultimately, they lost their freedom. They experienced seventy years of captivity under the Babylonian government.

When the Babylonian nation fell, the Medes and the Persians took over, followed by the Greeks, and eventually the Romans. Discipline came upon Israel because she did not preserve her divine establishment as a nation representing God. The nation did not understand the beautiful privilege of freedom established by the Word, which is the banner of God's provision from heaven.

The government in the United States and in much of the free world is a democracy. By definition, citizens in a democracy have the authority to freely elect representatives to rule, based on the will of the majority. God has ordained such a government to establish our freedom. When freedom is taken from us, we can no longer function to our maximum potential as human beings. When our protection is taken away, we cease to prosper. There is one principle that the

Lord wants us to know: God is the King of the nations (Jeremiah 10:7*a*). In Isaiah 40:15-17, the Word of God says, "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. All nations before him are as nothing."

When I meet people who recoil at the name of God, who think that God ought to be kept out of the schools and public places, I am amazed at their attitude. They do not want us to mention the name of the One who is Omniscient! His name offends the ones He has created.

We cannot separate God from any aspect of our lives because He created everything! That is why we have His name on our currency, "In God we trust." Certainly, we separate church and state, and well we should, but we should never separate God from the state.

Keeping God in Our Affairs

Because a democracy allows differences in opinion to be expressed, there has always been a group who want to remove God from the public forum. One example was over the issue of prayer in public schools. The legal decision to remove prayer from most public venues challenged people everywhere to wake up from

idealism that says, "It can't happen here." Who really wants God removed from the affairs of men? It is Satan. The devil wants to weaken, deceive, and seduce the nations so that he can become the god of this world's system (2 Corinthians 4:4). His plan is for nations to come under his darkness by their own choices (1 John 5:19*b*) so that the whole world will be in his control. We are not fighting a philosophy; we are fighting a satanic strategy. We are not differing with men; we are differing with Satan who uses men.

We can see God's philosophy in Proverbs 14:34, saying, "righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." If we lose our freedom, then we lose our right to worship Christ, to study doctrine, to evangelize, and to have Bibles. We lose the right to bring up our children to make godly choices after we have instructed them well and educated them in truth. We will have lost our privilege of nationalism. We will have lost our privilege as a local church to band together to learn, to become disciples, and to obey the Great Commission in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. It is all relevant and it all spells one thing: We must understand the value and importance

of having God bless America.

When you stop and think of it, God has blessed our nation despite our weaknesses, frailties, sins, mistakes, and immorality. But America has experienced an upsurge in pornography, homosexuality, drug abuse, and adultery. All of these defiling sins eventually destroy a society.

When these things go on, Satan takes advantage of situations to destroy the souls of men and women and to destroy their capacities for individual freedom before God. Discipline is implemented by God. But when the soul is darkened, men live selfishly in the embrace of anything that promotes their feeble cause and silences their guilty conscience.

Chapter Three

A BROOK IN THE WAY

Psalm 110:7, speaking of Christ as He went to the Cross, says, "He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head." America is a "brook in the way"—a source of hope and refreshment—to freedom-loving democracies that wish to prevent dictators from taking away their freedom. America is a brook in the way to the oppressed people in Afghanistan. Our country is a brook in the way for all freedom-loving people everywhere.

People of all nationalities have come into this great nation because they seek the possibility of experiencing freedom in marriage, family, and church. Here, they have the privilege of making their own decisions without indictments and without pressure from illegitimate authority. Because of her stand, God has blessed America uniquely.

Jesus was weary and tired. He was hurting.

He went to the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and they were a "brook in the way" for Him. He was tired and He received a drink of love and friendship from this little home. Mary Magdalene had always been a brook in His way; she was a person who ministered refreshment to the Lord. Delivered from seven demons, she loved the Lord deeply. She remained at the Cross until the end.

A ministry that holds up categorical doctrine, whose members are filled with the Spirit, is a "brook in the way." When believers love God, take up the Cross, and obey the Word, they become a source of rest and refreshment to people in their community. They are established in grace and understand Christ's Finished Work as they reveal eternal love to the world.

Ministering Reconciliation

To have a "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) means that we believe Christ died for the sins of the world. The Word of God teaches that every person who believes on Him is saved, born-again, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit *once and for all*. Every ministry of God should teach its members to love one another and to take that love into all nations so

people can be set free from the bondage of Satan's cosmic system and from all the forces of hell. Those nations can be released from tyranny, and from all the powers that attempt to incapacitate men from experiencing real happiness. Such a ministry is a brook in the way for all those who are drawn to fellowship there.

Perhaps you are brokenhearted, fainting, and weary. Maybe a loved one has just died or a tragedy has happened in your home. Receive the love of God; take a drink from the Bible.

"Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1). Jesus said, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst…" (John 4:14*a*).

Every Christian who has a prayer life, believes the Word, learns to rest in faith, and masters the details of life, becomes a "brook in the way."

Refresh Others with the Word

Christians can have God's love, power, grace, mercy, and patience. We can be brooks in the way to the weary travelers from broken

homes and to those who have sinned. Many teenagers have been devastated because of wrong choices and are searching for recovery and refreshment from the Word of God.

Oh, how God wants to raise up a group of believers to be a fresh drink from heaven who will manifest God's Word, His life, and His light as a brook in the way! This is what we ought to be as believers in Jesus Christ.

When we are "free indeed," continuing in God's Word, we can minister to the needs of others. When we are sanctified by God's Word, as it guides us, the Holy Spirit will fill us. As we walk in love as God's children, we can then become a brook in the way to all nations and peoples.

CONCLUSION

With great blessing comes power and great responsibility. The Word of God so beautifully ministers life to every possible human need. It answers every question man has posed throughout the ages, and it creates a fresh capacity to make vital decisions that will shape our nation's destiny.

The Word of God is our life. Therefore, as we go forward committed to live by every Word, we face two very narrow options: By faith, we can design our destiny by making right decisions in the perfect will of God; or, we can relinquish our divine acquisition of freedom by choosing the broad road that leads to destruction.

As our nation makes political and economic decisions on the national level, as well as corporate decisions on a global level, we must remember who is King. Within the seed of human volition lies the destiny of nations. As a man

agrees with the authority of God's Word, he becomes victorious in Christ who has overcome the world!

May God bless this great country with people who are willing to serve one another in love and to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free (Galatians 5:1).

God Calls You His Beloved

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Warm words, comforting embraces, and kind looks can do so much for people. It should come as no surprise to us as Christians that God reveals the warmth of His heart toward us through His Word and His Spirit.

Throughout the Bible, God calls His people "beloved"—a word translated as "darling." Regardless of where we have been or what we have done, God always sees us as His "darlings." Failure doesn't change this truth. He remains faithful and just to forgive us and ready to cleanse us.

In 1 Corinthians 13, the Father declared that "charity suffereth long" and "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (see verses 4, 7). "Charity never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:8). The love of God never fails.

This booklet reveals a measure of the depth of God's love, which prompted Him to send

Jesus Christ to the cross to die for the sins of the world. These words will show us that we are truly beloved, darlings of the King of kings.

Chapter One

DRAWING OUT THE LIFE WITHIN

During the winter, trees can look so bare and lifeless, but inside they have more life than in the spring and summer when they are outwardly beautiful. All they need is a little warmth, and the life that is in them comes out.

The Bible says much about trees. The blessed man who delights and meditates in the words of the LORD day and night "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3).

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither

shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

In Mark 8:23-25, Jesus spat on the eyes of a blind man. At first, the man said, "I see men as trees, walking." Again, Jesus put His hands on his eyes and "he was restored, and saw every man clearly."

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30).

At the center of the Garden is the precious Tree of Life, which speaks of Calvary. God keeps referring to trees and their life within. In the winter, there is life in the tree. That life comes out when the weather becomes warm. A little warmth brings out life in a tree, and that is how it is with people, too. In practically every person, there is something that can be brought out—all they need is warmth.

Warmth Opens Doors

I remember a lady who did not like my preaching, so she stopped coming to church. I set out to draw her back and began knocking on her door.

At first, she just refused to answer. Then, she came to the door, saying, "I am *not* coming to your church."

"That's obvious," I responded. "But can't we come in just to talk with you?"

"No, you can't." And with that she shut the door.

A month later, I went back, and her response was the same. But then, things started to happen. I heard that this woman had become sick, so I went to her home with flowers. This time she let us in, and she started to weep. Soon she came back to church, faithfully attending every service and loving the preaching.

A little warmth was all it took to bring life out of that lady.

Any pastor can build a church if he really loves people and is truly sensitive to their needs. What a pastor really has to do is reveal the warmth of God's love.

Godly Creativity Brings Results

In our town, there was a giant of a carpenter who lived all alone in a house he built himself. He was nearly six and a half feet tall, and most people steered clear of him.

I took our tallest deacon with me and went knocking on this carpenter's door.

"I have been waiting for you," he told me. "I know you have all kinds of people coming to

your church, but I don't like your church—and I don't like you."

I asked him if he had any use for God.

He replied, "I don't have any use for someone who doesn't exist."

This seemed like a tough case. You hope a person at least believes in something. I noticed that he was extremely proud of the house he had built, so I said, "Sir, you did *not* build this house."

"I did so!" the man fired back.

"No, you didn't," I continued. "You woke up one morning and here you were in this great house. It just happened, without the work of any designer or builder. It just happened—the same way those so-called scientists say the mountains sprung up on their own. All the lakes and forests and valleys, I suppose none of them had a Creator either. All of them just appeared one day, just like this house appeared one day."

I had his attention. Even though he was much bigger, and I was somewhat fearful, I boldly told him, "You are going to get saved today. I have made up my mind that you *will* accept Jesus Christ."

He just laughed at me. But then I went on to describe certain certainties in the Bible—claims

God made in His Word thousands of years ago that even science has proven to be true. I joked with him about how obvious it is that we all came from the dust of the earth, as stated in Genesis 2:7. I backed that claim with solid evidence that the elements that comprise common soil are the same elements found in humans. We spent more than two hours with him. After much humor, fun, and creativity—not to mention the prayers of people in the church—this giant of a man came to Jesus Christ.

When he got up before the church to testify of his salvation, everyone stood and clapped. He just needed some good old-fashioned love.

Look at the trees during the spring and summer. There is life going out of them. But while these trees are waiting for their time to flower and bear fruit, the life is all contained inside. The sunshine releases that life for all to enjoy. In the same way, God's love brings life to a lost soul who only needs to receive it.

Chapter Two

SEEING OUR ETERNAL VALUE

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when we shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (John 3:1-2).

"Beloved" is a very special word God often uses for His people. Benjamin was called "beloved" in Deuteronomy 33:12. Paul and Barnabas are called "beloved" in Acts 15:25. Psalm 127:2 says that He "gives his beloved sleep."

"Beloved" means "darling." In other words, God regards us as His tenderhearted ones. He esteems us very highly because of our eternal value. We are precious in His sight.

God sees us and says, "You are my beloved,

I just want to give you some warmth. It doesn't appear yet what you are going to be, but when you see Me, you will be just like Me."

The Father always sees each of us as being inside the Son; therefore, He views us as cleansed, purged, and complete, saying, "You are My beloved, My darling, My tenderhearted ones."

"I really don't feel tenderhearted" you may be tempted to think. But God knows what you will become. He sees what you are becoming through grace and through His warmth and love.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12).

Manifest Mercy and Grace

We are precious and tenderhearted—His darlings. God wants us to put on emotions that manifest His mercy. Mercy is in action when we don't receive the judgment we really deserve. By grace, God freely gives us what we don't deserve. God doesn't want our emotions to endure what we deserve because we are His beloved.

There is a teenager I know who was going

through a hard time. I befriended him, wrote notes to him every week, and made him my friend. He wasn't doing well in school, but all he needed was to be loved. He needed the warmth of God when he did not deserve it. He has come through it all amazingly well.

God calls us "beloved" even though we do not deserve it. Without even realizing it, we are becoming perfect through Christ. We will be like Him when we see Him as He is. He will perfect us (Philippians 1:6). He has begun a good work in us and will perform it, for we are His beloved—His darling—hid with Christ in God. It doesn't matter what you have done or when you did it: God calls you "beloved."

Just thank Him that you are.

Chapter Three

LOVE THAT KNITS SOULS

"And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

"Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle" (1 Samuel 18:1-4).

In 1 Samuel 18:1, Jonathan was knit in friendship to David, and "he loved him as his own soul." God was between these men all the time (1 Samuel 20:23, 42). Jonathan loved David, and his friendship was given as a gift from God. No one could have caused this kind of love in themselves. This was a gift of God.

David needed Jonathan's love because King Saul, Jonathan's father, was after him. David desperately needed someone who would love him. Jonathan's name in Hebrew is *Yownathan*, meaning "God has given." David means "beloved." God declared, "David, you are My darling. You are esteemed, you are precious, you are highly loved by Me." That is the way it was throughout David's life. Jonathan was given to David as a gift, and Jonathan loved David as his own soul.

True Body life is like this when people get to know the Finished Work and walk in the Spirit. Yes, we fail and rebound, but when we fall in love with God and are filled with the Holy Spirit, we can love each other as we love our own souls. We become God's gifts to each other. We can stand with each other.

Esteeming Others

Saul didn't understand this kind of love. He became so crazed that he was about to kill Jonathan because he tasted honey on a day when Saul ordered that no soldier was to eat (1 Samuel 14:24-45). Jonathan was a great military man, very skilled with the bow and arrow. David called him a fighter who was swift "as an eagle"

(2 Samuel 1:23). Jonathan was speedy and strong.

A great part in this story is when Jonathan gave his robe to David and said, "I want you to be king." It was the greatest thing he could have given. The royal robe was now David's. More than that, Jonathan also gave away his sword, his bow, and his girdle (1 Samuel 18:4), lifting up David in military rank and office.

"You are too young right now," Jonathan was telling David. "You don't have the armor you need. So I am giving you everything that I have, and I lift you up in rank, position, and military privilege." Jonathan loved David as his own soul.

"Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee" (1 Samuel 20:4).

Isn't this what Jesus did for us? He gave us eternal life; He forgave us forever, and He came to live inside of us. He did ninety-five things for us at the moment of salvation, before we even finished saying the prayer! He will never forsake us, and He guarantees that we will be perfect when we see Him as He is. Oh, what God's love can do for a person.

The quality of God's love brings deliverance. I have a letter from a woman who heard this

phrase in a message: "Everyone has fantastic value with God." She believed those words and said, "Just like that, the Holy Spirit gave me victory in an area where I never had victory before."

Jonathan put David's welfare and needs ahead of his own. He wanted David to be the hero and to be honored. This was God's plan. Jonathan, a great warrior, loved his father Saul, and fought beside him to the end of the final battle in which both died. As much as he loved his father, however, Jonathan would not surrender truth to stand up for a man who had murder in his mind.

One of the great things children can do is love their parents according to truth. Parents, too, need to love their children and give them God's warmth. Brothers and sisters need to give each other the warmth of God. We are filled with the Holy Spirit, and then by His love, which is shed abroad in our hearts, He does the work and we become gifts to each other through the gift of the Spirit.

Nothing Can Separate Us from Him

God is our light and our salvation, we have nothing to fear (Psalm 27:1). It is a beautiful thing that we have today—forgiveness and

cleansing from God. Each of us has a great potential for victory in areas we thought impossible. All we have to do is listen for the tender voice of God saying, "My darling."

When we see "beloved" in the Scriptures, remember it is God saying "My darling" to us. He esteems us as precious and tenderhearted. We are so special to Him. Oh, how He longs for us to know how much He esteems us.

Go through the Scriptures and look at every verse with "beloved" in it. By the time you are through, you will feel like a spiritual billionaire. God doesn't wait until we are perfect—any child of His is "darling" to Him. He loved the lost so much, He went to the Cross and died on our behalf. We are very, very special to God.

These examples—Jonathan's love for David and Jesus' love for John and for us—clearly reveal that we are beloved, the darlings of God.

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

There isn't a single thing that can separate us from the love of God. This passage mentions

nothing about the past. In heaven's eyes, the past is gone, except for the fragrance of godly memories. Reference is made to the present and the future, but nothing is said of what went on before. God's work is different from some psychiatrists' who search out things in people's pasts to uncover the root of troubles today. The Father doesn't get into the past, He just gets into His love now.

CONCLUSION

We are here in Satan's world as ambassadors of Jesus Christ to reveal His love. He gives us His protection and provision. He gives us love that cannot be separated from us. We have the Finished Work; and by the grace of God, we can become something we never thought we could be, beyond our expectation. Most of us don't realize how great His love for us is. If you are backslidden today, you are just a confession away from coming back and going on with God. The joy of being forgiven as a Christian will be yours.

Thank God that He calls us "beloved." In a world full of hate, robbery, and thievery, we are God's darlings. Stealing, broken vows, immorality, sentimentality, and self-centeredness cannot change the fact that we are highly esteemed and precious to Jesus Christ.

David proclaimed that "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in

their death they were not divided" (2 Samuel 1:23). Even though Saul was backslidden and hunted David to kill him, David still put Saul right beside Jonathan as "lovely." That is God's love, and this same love goes out of each of us. This isn't a love we can work up or earn; this is a love that comes from the Holy Spirit. It is a love that recognizes that we are "beloved."

Father, may each of us understand how You think of us. May we personally believe that we are truly beloved. Let us see what you believe about us and what we are becoming as Your darlings even now. We ask that Your love be manifested in each life. In Christ's name, Amen.

God Cares

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

I want to share with you some calls that have been coming in on the phone recently. A man in his thirties called to say, "I have cancer." Another man about the same age called the office and gave the same news: "I have cancer." This is an amazing scientific age we live in; yet, this disease casts an overwhelming shadow. Such words send great waves of fear through the hearts of many people.

Both of these men took the news as well as could be expected. They really love God and are staying positive about all He could do in their situations.

Heartaches and trials bring people to the end of themselves. They often have great difficulty and questions. Their understanding is clouded in many ways. I remember one woman who lived in constant pain from disease until she finally went home to be with Jesus at the age of thirty-six.

To think of her suffering all of those days is very sobering to me.

But God was in all of it. She revealed Christ in a very deep way. It made so many things in my own life seem so small by comparison. She really revealed the heart of God continually.

Her constant testimony was this: God cares.

Suffering can really be an education for us in the perfect plan of God. It can help us to be conformed to His image. Still, I don't want any of us to become detached from the true attitude of our Savior. And that attitude is this: God cares. He knows. He sees. He has great compassion. He is there for each of us. He longs to show us the depth of His care—even in the most difficult of circumstances.

My prayer is that this booklet will provide a measure of comfort to those in need. He sees your hurts. He has been there. He was wounded, rejected, beaten, bruised, and crucified. All of this was done for us. He cares. He so loved the world and He gave Himself for it. May God encourage you with these thoughts.

Chapter One
COMPASSION IN ACTION

"And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14).

If we study the Gospels carefully, we find that this verse is at the heart of Jesus' attitude toward those in need. He had compassion when He saw the sick, and He healed them. I don't believe His attitude has changed.

"Well, then why does Jesus allow sicknesses to go on?" you ask.

That is a question only He can answer. "As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him" (Psalm 18:30). We cling to the promise that all things will work together for good (Romans 8:28).

Think with me. Jesus did not indict the sick. He did not challenge them. He had compassion. Compassion brings tears. Jesus had tears when

He met sick people.

God help us not to be complacent or familiar when it comes to bearing one another's burdens. We are called to this in order to fulfill the law of love (Galatians 6:2). May God help us to weep when others weep and rejoice when they rejoice (1 Corinthians 12:26). May God help us to be very sensitive to people. We need to intercede for people, whatever the reason.

Jesus had compassion on the sick.

God cares.

Picking Up the Wounded

"And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

"And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

"And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:30-37).

Consider what Jesus communicated in the parable of the Good Samaritan. A man was beaten up, robbed, and left for dead. A priest—representing religion—came by and refused to help and went to the other side of the road. A Levite—representing adherence to the Law—came by and then passed by on the other side. They did not do a thing to help. They were repulsed by the wounded and beaten man and were insensitive to his needs.

But, the Samaritan revealed the compassion of Christ. He picked up the wounded one, com-

forted him, and got him to a place for healing. This is what we do. We reach and stretch to those in need. We speak words of grace, words of mercy, words of love, and then we watch as the Spirit does a work of reconciliation and restoration. It costs time and it sometimes costs money. But we do not count the cost. We know what God has done for us, and we share in that great fellowship and victory.

Two people came to me recently and spoke of their deep periods of depression. The time is just very dark to them. But I trust that God has a word of hope for them. He is going to touch them deeply and revive their spirits.

Jesus does not just walk on by, but He stops and He answers and He heals. God knows and God cares. He sets captives free. He heals the brokenhearted. This is the God I know and love. This is the God who cares for me.

Chapter Two
GOD IS HERE

We are all growing in the practice of the presence of God. This is what Brother Lawrence described in his little book by that title. In practicing His presence, we recognize many opportunities to manifest His compassion. If we practice how we feel, then we are in trouble. In practicing the presence of God, we are safe and secure in the love of God. Concentration on living in God's presence, this is what honestly can heal any wound we may have.

Jesus Christ is so sensitive in this way.

Many of us who love God go through things. There are times when we think, "Does anyone really care?" Those projections come at us. Then, there are the projections that come at those who want to do something but don't know what to do. "What can I do?" is the thought that goes through our minds.

Really, many of us wish we could be om-

nipresent. We feel so helpless because we cannot do all things or be everywhere at once. But we really wish that we could.

This is where the Body of Christ comes in and does its work. Very practically, the different parts of our ministry work to help the members of our assembly. We are a team, and the team's parts go together. We support and love and pick up each other in so many very practical ways.

The Hungry Are Filled, the Sick Are Healed

One great part of our ministry is the Food Bank. It is a community outreach, and it helps feed people in need. Jesus had compassion on the hungry. It is difficult for us to imagine in this day and this age, when people in some places have so much and are so full. Yet, there are people in other places who are starving. Small children go on from day to day malnourished and with much disease. The pictures of them move us and stir us.

God cares for these people.

Jesus lived a life of prayer and His prayers were for people (Luke 6:12, Luke 11:1). His compassion moved Him to get alone with the Father and intercede for them. That is what His compassion did for Him. It moved Him to prayer.

Compassion also moved Christ to serve in ways that perhaps some of us consider too low for us. In John 13, Jesus clothed Himself with a towel, took up a basin, and then washed the disciples' feet. That is how God cares for His people.

It is even more amazing to me when I consider that just before this example of humility, the disciples were arguing among themselves. The essence of their dispute was centered on who among them would be the greatest. The Lord then showed them that the one who cares is the one who will share in His work and, ultimately, in His glory.

God's compassion moved Him to show His love. This is so beautiful. Compassion moved Christ to work.

Because God has put this compassion in our hearts, we try to answer every letter and card that we receive within two days. That is our practice, and we do it if it is at all humanly possible. We pray, and we answer.

In our office, we do our best to send cards to everyone for birthdays, anniversaries, and get-well wishes. I answer the phone at all hours of the night because of the worldwide character of our ministry. Someone needs a word. The Holy

Spirit is sensitive and compassionate, and the heart of Christ is revealed as He moves.

God cares.

Jesus Christ had compassion on the leper in Mark 1:40-41: "And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean."

His compassion made Him the friend of sinners, in Luke 7:34. Christ ate with sinners, still He never compromised with them. He always told them the truth. In His compassion, Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. He took each and every sin upon Himself at the Cross. He showed His love to those such as Peter, a man who failed and failed and failed again. God's gentleness made this man great. Peter was reconciled and restored and was used mightily to establish the early Church.

God really cared for Peter and He really cares for us.

Chapter Three

THE WEEPING SAVIOR

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

"For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we

have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

"He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

"And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgres-

sors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:1-12).

The incarnation of Christ—the fact that He, as God, became a man and became flesh and blood so that He could bleed and die for the world—reveals so much about the compassion of God. Love moved Christ to sacrifice Himself for the world. He came and endured the rejection of men. Beyond this, He put Himself into their hands and allowed them to crucify Him, the Lord of glory. He took those nails into His hands and into His feet. That is real compassion. That compassion continues because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

If we really get to know God's heart, He will comfort us with His compassion. He will impart something from His amazing love toward us. His view of the world was eternal and it reflected His great care. He saw the people of Israel as people scattered, a people needing the leadership of the Shepherd, and He came to them.

These people were without a Shepherd, and Jesus was there for them. They had been scattered. Legalism has deprived them of a relationship with the God who called them out of Egypt and who led them out by Moses. Insensitivity

ruled their activities. They were people who were being used to build a work instead the work being used to build the people.

"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:35-38).

How did Jesus show His care? He gave them words of life. And He wept over them. He saw that people were fainting and had no shepherd. He didn't attack the problem. He didn't accuse them of anything. He was moved with compassion.

In Mark 5, an insane man approached Christ. Jesus did not take the situation lightly. He didn't make jokes about it. He revealed compassion and healed the man, delivering him

from a legion of demons.

Tears for the Lost and for the Dead

In Luke 19:41, we read that Jesus wept as He walked to Jerusalem. These were not tears for the fate that awaited Him. He had always set His face like a flint toward the Cross. He was born to die at Calvary, and He always had that in view.

All of us have some ideas about what Jesus may have had on His mind at that time. When He came to the hill overlooking the city, I believe He was broken hearted over what its rejection of Him and His salvation would mean for the people there. Within a few decades, Jerusalem would be besieged by the Roman Empire and totally flattened. Thousands would perish.

He wept because He was counting the cost that their rejection would bring upon these people. He was weeping for a world that knew Him not. He wept, I believe, because of the hateful, religious system that now eclipsed true spirituality and true intimacy with God. These people were wedded to a system of laws they had no power to keep. They were so confounded that they were constantly manufacturing new rules and new religious concepts. This wicked web of

deceit was strangling the nation.

In John 11:3, Jesus got word from Mary and Martha that their brother, Lazarus, was sick. Jesus didn't move right away, and Lazarus died. Some didn't understand His compassion or His plan, and Mary and Martha were upset when Jesus finally arrived. They knew He had power to heal. Why didn't He come sooner? They thought it was all over for Lazarus. He was dead, and these women were hurt. They knew Jesus but they didn't understand His purpose in this case.

When Jesus arrived on the scene, there was much sorrow. He saw what death had done to this group of people, and He wept. His compassion moved Him. He understood the enemy called death. It was an enemy that only He would be able to defeat at the Cross. But here He revealed His resurrection power, and He called Lazarus back.

This miracle, this great spiritual provision, was given out of amazing compassion. A loved one was given back to a grieving family. He gave them something for their broken hearts.

This is the God who cares.

CONCLUSION

God cares. His compassion moved Him to love, moved Him to die. His compassion moved Him to heal. It moved Him to feed the hungry. It moved Him to lay down His life. It moved Him to sometimes pray all night. It moved Him to eat with sinners.

Sin did not stop Christ's brokenness. Sickness did not interfere with His work. His compassion never fails. His mercies are always new. God cares.

Think of Christ now at the Throne of Grace. He is interceding for us. He is our holy and undefiled High Priest. We can come to Him at any time. We can come to Him boldly in our times of need. No matter the reason, God calls us to come. God cares.

Do not give in to the projections of your feelings and your fears. Let's be so thankful for His care and for His great compassion. It really makes a difference. Have fellowship and com-

mune with God's nature of love. Walk in it. Talk about it. Believe it. This is what heals broken hearts.

God really, really cares.

God Is With Us

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying,

"Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.

"But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

"And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

"Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

"For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

"The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim

departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria" (Isaiah 7:10-18).

The Holy Spirit speaks, and what He says is vital. In Isaiah, the Spirit spoke to the prophet and declared, "…the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

The passage reveals that this One would live on milk and honey. His diet would be like that of the very poor. This was the case, as Jesus grew up in the impoverished town of Nazareth and made Himself subject to Joseph and Mary.

This kind of existence would make men weary, but it would not weary the God-Man. This Son shall come, the prophecy was saying, and He shall not grow weary. Neither shall He become discouraged.

The name Immanuel in the literal Hebrew translation means "With us, God." I was thinking about this for a long time recently. For many, many years, God was not recognized as being with anyone. Between the time the book of Malachi was written until the time of the Gospels, there was only bondage and captivity

for Israel. The people could not sing because of their weeping, and they hung their harps on the willows—trees that have the appearance of weeping.

During those silent years, God was hidden. Then, He came. He was born in a manger. This was God taking on the form of a man. In this divine hypostatic union, the deity of God was incarnated in flesh, becoming fully Man.

Immanuel—with us is God!

The booklet examines this great principle of why Jesus Christ came to be one of us, to die as one of us and for every one of us. And now, resurrected, He makes us one with Him.

Chapter One
THE SEEKING SAVIOR

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 3:1).

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

"And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them

that are bruised,

"To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

"And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

"And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:16-21).

Suddenly, in Luke 4, there was Jesus in the temple at Nazareth. Can you grasp this? For years and years, these things were spoken of and thought about, and suddenly it was a reality. Scripture was fulfilled, and now "with us, God."

Who are we that God should come unto us? Not one of us is righteous. No one is worthy. But He came to be with us. More than that, He came to seek and to save us because we were lost (Luke 19:10).

We were not even ready to respond. The listeners in Nazareth on that day in Luke 4 weren't ready either. They heard Jesus read the Scriptures and they heard His proclamation, but their hearts did not receive His message. Rather, they reacted in anger,

"And rose up, and thrust him out of the city,

and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

"But he passing through the midst of them went his way" (Luke 4:29-30).

His Desire Is Toward Us

The Greek word for seek, zeteo, means to have an earnest desire to execute the process of seeking with an intense fervency. That is a great description of Christ's purpose on earth. Everything in the plan of God was designed to seek the lost.

We need see this about our own lives. Our old sin natures, which bring us into terrible bondage and produce troubling consequences when we make wrong choices, are used by God to draw us to Him. Our worst failures are not God's fault, but they do become part of His process to seek and to save us. He is always seeking after the lost.

The moment Adam and Eve fell, God was about the business of seeking.

"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of

the garden.

"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

"And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:8-10).

We also see that God sought after Abraham, even though Abraham hadn't spoken to God for thirteen years following his folly with Hagar and the birth of Ishmael.

"And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

"And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

"And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

"As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

"Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee" (Genesis 16:16-17:5).

Perhaps the greatest story of the seeking

heart of God is found in the book of Hosea. This prophet of dignity and understanding had a wife, Gomer, who left him and their children to become a prostitute. Yet, God moved Hosea to seek this woman, who was now in a desperate and defeated state. He went to the slave market and bought her back for himself.

I can picture Gomer saying to Hosea, "What do you see in me? I'm filthy."

He went to the market that day, and there she was for sale. So he bought her. The love of his youth had not dimmed. He took her home and loved her as if she had never left him.

Jesus Christ gives us this same picture in Luke 15 where He speaks of the shepherd leaving the ninety-nine and going after the one lost sheep. Once found, that lost little lamb would be carried back to the flock on the shoulders of the shepherd.

This reveals the great heartbeat of Jesus Christ. This shows why God came to be with us.

Chapter Two
THE LOOK OF LOVE

"Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?

"When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

"Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

"And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

"But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

"And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

"And after a little while another saw him,

and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

"And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean.

"And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

"And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

"And Peter went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:52-62).

Peter boasted that he would go with Jesus to the death. But things turned out to be very different. In Gethsemane, Peter took up a sword and cut off the ear of a man who had come to take Jesus away. Jesus healed the man. Then, from a distance, Peter followed the mob that took Jesus to trial. The disciple warmed himself by the fire that the guards had made.

There, by the fire, Peter was confronted by a maid, and he denied knowing Jesus. Two more times, he made denials—the last one included strong curses. Then, the cock crowed and the

Lord, passing by, turned to look upon Peter.

That look touched Peter in a very intense way. I think he saw forgiveness in the eyes of Christ, and that made him weep bitterly. Jesus was seeking Peter in love.

One of the great redemptive reports in the Gospels comes in John 21 when Jesus met His backsliding disciples at the sea of Tiberius. They had all gone back to fishing—at the leading of Peter. After working all night, there were no fish in their nets. Then, they saw someone standing on the shore.

"Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

"And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (John 21:5-6).

There was Jesus looking for those who at that moment were lost to their calling. Later, Jesus and Peter had a walk and a talk. The Lord was leading Peter into a new, more intimate relationship with Him. It was a precious thing for this disciple who became an apostle. He was now following God in a new way. He was changed forever.

God was with Peter, and God is with us.

Several years ago, I counseled a man who had been in the CIA for fifteen years. He had trouble sleeping because of some of the things he had been involved with. He prayed with me and became a Christian. I can still recall that look on his face.

This was very wealthy and very powerful man with many important connections. On the surface, he had it all. He was a strong man, plagued by a terrible guilt complex that he tried to cover with arrogance.

He really was just very, very lonely.

I also recall hearing about an American comedian, in the 1950s, who became a sensation making people laugh. He was tremendously funny on stage. But when he got home, all went dark. He fell into a cosmic loneliness that he could not beat. He covered it up by drinking. The money, the talent, the fame, none of that helped him. He needed to know that God desired to be with him.

King Solomon had great wisdom and more wealth and more wives than anyone on earth during his day. Still, in the book of Ecclesiastes, we read the words of an empty man.

The answer for this loneliness is to draw near to the God who seeks us, the God who is with us. We can get to know the Father's heart, and the Holy Spirit will fill us moment by moment. The Comforter lets His children know that we are never alone.

Chapter Three
THE HEARING HEART

"…I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25-26).

The whole meaning of the Christian life is to win souls, disciple those souls, and bring them into new relationships in the local assembly. The Lord redeems a soul, and the Holy Spirit does the work of regeneration. And from the Word of God, we understand this great principle that he who receives Christ does not taste death.

Death goes on all around us. Things happen suddenly to some folks. Others go through slow and painful processes. In the midst of this death, Jesus Christ wants to speak to the souls of people.

Death is there. It is something each of us will

face. But as believers we will face it the way Stephen faced it when he stoned to death in Acts 7. There, we read that Jesus stood up to receive His servant as Stephen passed into eternity.

This account reveals to me just how close God is to us at that moment.

We Know His Voice

Jesus calls His sheep by name, and His sheep hear His voice. Strangers' voices the sheep will not hear.

By walking and talking with the Lord, we know when He is speaking to us. We know what His voice sounds like. In 1 Kings 19:12, it is a still small voice, and the communication He initiates toward us becomes clearer and clearer. We become so aware that He is with us.

That does not mean that we don't hear wrong communication at times. In Matthew 16:22, Peter told Jesus that the Cross was not the place He should go. Christ quickly and dogmatically answered His disciple and addressed the source of Peter's information:

"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and

be raised again the third day.

"Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

"But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:21-23).

One thing I treasure about walking with God is the sense of His speaking to my heart. He leads us into His fullness, His power, His love, His wisdom, His fellowship, and His provision. He gives us all that we need for life and godliness.

I know that I am on this earth for just one reason: to walk with Him. I am here to have the Holy Spirit live in me, to move me to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. I am here to have a single eye toward the Word of God. I am here to reveal a heart and a mind that thinks positively and properly with the thoughts of heaven.

Knowing the Hour

One famous preacher went to his pulpit with chest pains. He was convinced that he was going to die before his message was finished.

Yet, he felt compelled to preach the message that night.

God was with this preacher.

What came from him that night were words of great fervency and fire. Every word he spoke was touched by the Holy Spirit. His message rang out through the hall that night, and many rushed to the stage at the altar call.

Later that night, as the preacher thanked God for what had happened. He sensed God speaking to him and saying, "I wanted to teach you this great lesson: You are a dying man preaching to dying men. Do not forget this."

From that time on, every single message from this preacher was motivated by the power of love, rooted in the convictions of hell and heaven. He came to a new understanding of the reality of Redemption in the process of time. God was with him, and He let this preacher know that time is short.

CONCLUSION

We must be about our Father's business. We must see that He is with us at all times. We all have unbelievable schedules. But we must see the appointments and meetings and encounters as being before God.

Our days are numbered. The Bible says so in Job 14:5: "Seeing [man's] days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."

At any moment, we could be face to face with Jesus. That is why it is so important that we make choices that are in accord with His Word. We need to choose to live in the purity of faith. Our purpose in Christ should be to go forward with the proper motivation of love in our details of life.

I am pleading with you, reader, to recognize the One who is with us. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Let us manifest the nature of God through our humanity and make an

invisible God visible to this dying world.

Hear the Word of God.

Follow Him.

Thank Him for every Word, for every Word is true.

God Never Changes

Pastor Steven Scibelli is a graduate of Stevens School of the Bible. In 1988, he led a team that included his wife, Linda; their two children, Lysa and Peter; and twelve others to Ghana, West Africa. Today, Greater Grace World Outreach in Africa has expanded to 107 churches in North, South, East and West Africa.

Staying true to the vision to spread the Gospel and to make disciples of men in the uttermost parts of the world, Pastor Scibelli has ministered in more than 20 African countries and 50 other countries over the last 20 years.

In between church planting and his frequent trips to Africa, the Scibellis live in Baltimore where he teaches at Maryland Bible College and Seminary and serves in the Missions and Outreach departments at GGWO.

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INTRODUCTION

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of [all] lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). In other words, God doesn't change.

We derive our peace from an unchanging God. God never changes! Believing that brings peace to my soul. His Word doesn't change. His character doesn't change. His Gospel doesn't change. His mercy endures forever. He is always initiating to us. We are so thankful for an unchanging God.

In James 1:8, we read, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." The Greek word for "double minded" (di-suchos) means "two souled." A two-souled person is unstable in all his ways. These people go back and forth—spiritual today; don't want God tomorrow. Believe God today; don't believe God tomorrow. That's instability. Instead of being

changed from glory to glory, they are given to change.

James 4:8 also refers to the two-souled person, and we see that at times in our own lives and throughout Christianity today. But as we saw in James 1:17 and as this booklet will reveal, the power of the Gospel is in this: God doesn't change.

Chapter One

GIVEN TO CHANGE OR BEING CHANGED?

Many changes have taken place. My hair has changed. Things change. Everywhere, all kinds of changes are going on.

I like what Proverbs 24:21 says: "My son, fear the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change." Have reverence for the Lord and the king: and meddle not—do not be intertwined, do not intermix, do not have intercourse—with someone given to change. Verse 22 says why: The calamity that they have will be yours. So, we do not intertwine ourselves, or intermix ourselves, or hang around people that are given to change, who are always changing, because we know that God is unchanging.

I love Proverbs 22:28: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." We sing a song called "Ancient Words." The word

for ancient is olam, and more than just "old" it means "eternal." Eternal landmarks. "Eternal words ever true, changing me and changing you." That is the right kind of change.

Proverbs 23:10 says, "Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless." Don't ever change the landmarks—the eternal landmarks—that the fathers have set. And by the way, if you change the landmarks that the fathers have set, you enter into the field of the fatherless. Isn't that interesting?

That is why I so much appreciate God's Word, God's doctrine, God's purpose, God's will, and God's life. Dr. Stevens has proclaimed that to us. When I first heard his message, his words, in 1977, it was just twenty-nine years ago. You know something? From that day until I was with him the other day in his house for about four or five hours, nothing has changed. Nothing has changed. "Meddle not with them given to change."

Transformed Without God

Satan is the author of transformation without God. In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, we read that Satan transforms himself as a minister of righteousness. So don't marvel that his ministers, his

people, his ambassadors, his workers, transform themselves, change themselves.

That is why change that is outside of God, outside of the Word of God, the grace of God and the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17-18), is authored by the god of this world—and he's always changing himself. Doesn't the Bible say in 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 4 that we should be aware lest the serpent that beguiled Eve should corrupt you from the simplicity that is in Christ?

If someone comes preaching another Jesus, another spirit, or another gospel, would you receive him? Would you receive it? And you know what? Even in Christianity, there are so many movements that are operating outside of that which is unchanging.

The Unchanging One Has Sent You

Have you traveled a little bit? I don't know how many countries I've been in—a hundred or more. I've ministered in many different places, and I can't believe what is actually going on in Christianity, but things are changing. And do you know what? I thank God that God never changes.

In Exodus 3, when Moses spoke with God in the burning bush, he said, "Who shall I tell them

sent me?" What did God say His name was? He said, " You tell them I AM THAT I AM has sent you."

What does that mean, I AM THAT I AM"? In the Greek and in the Hebrew, it means the Eternal and Personal Unchanging One. This is the very same thing that Jesus said to the disciples when He was launching them into all the world with the Gospel (Matthew 28:18-20). He didn't say, "I am with you always." He said this in the original language: "With you is I AM, the Unchanging One."

"But by the grace of God I am what I am." What do you think Paul meant when he said this in 1 Corinthians 15:10? I'm sure it's connected.

In John 8:58, Jesus said before the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was, I am." I am. What He was saying is, "I don't change." God's character never changes.

Somebody said, "God changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament." Really? That's interesting. Malachi 3:6 says, "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." If God changed, we would be in big trouble. Imagine it! "I used to forgive. I don't anymore. I used to love unconditionally, but I've

got some conditions now. I used to answer your prayers but not these. I used to save people through the Gospel, but I've got something else now."

Are you kidding me? Imagine trying to get to know a changing God! That's what it would be like. Did you ever try to get to know a changing person? You think you know them, and then three days later it's somebody else you're talking to—and it's not schizophrenia. It is a different person. "Who are you?"

God never changes, and I love that. There is no variableness in His life. There is no changing in the life of God. Abraham must have been so thankful for that. After he failed with Hagar and had Ishmael, I'm sure he said, "Praise the Lord, God doesn't change." God said to him, "I am El Shaddai. Walk before Me and be perfect." God didn't just toss him away.

Isn't it good that God didn't toss away Moses after he murdered an Egyptian and hid him in the sand? Regardless of what we do, God never changes.

Chapter Two

LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU

I love Numbers 23:19-21. It says, "God is not a man… ." Isn't that great? God is not man. He became the God-Man, but God is not a man. Then it says He does not lie. Boy, that's good. God doesn't lie. You know what else it says? He cannot repent, meaning He can't change His mind. Then it says He cannot curse. He only blesses. You know what else it says? He cannot behold iniquity. Wow! Look at those five "nots": not a man, does not lie, cannot change, cannot curse, and cannot behold iniquity. This is the One who lives within us. He's the unchanging God, and He is still the same.

Down through the history of Christianity, He has not changed. That is why Paul said in Ephesians 4:14, "Do not be tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine." All kinds of things will come along; therefore, don't meddle with them that are given to change.

By the way, people change their lifestyles, then they change their doctrine. There are some people who used to believe in the Finished Work who are not following God today. Do you know what? They changed their lifestyle, then they said doctrine didn't work anymore. They changed their lifestyle and then developed a set of creeds to solidify their lifestyle. That's what people do. They are children tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

We read in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." He didn't say "tomorrow." He said, "For ever." Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Then in verse 9, "Be not carried about with diverse and strange [teachings]. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace…."

Fickle Hearts, Tossed To and Fro

People are always changing. Can you imagine if you were the apostle Paul, if you walked into Lystra, and you prayed for a man who was a cripple, and suddenly the man got up and started walking? They brought garlands of flowers and all kinds of offerings, and they were throwing them at him, and saying, "He is a god. Paul and Barnabas are Mercury and Jupiter!"

Do you know what happened? Some people trickled up from another city, went to some people in Lystra, and started to create some turmoil. One minute these fickle people were throwing crowns and garlands at Paul, wanting to worship him as a god. The next minute they were throwing stones at him—trying to kill him.

People are interesting, aren't they? I've seen it before. "We love you, Pastor." Then, a week later, "I can't stand him." The same people who said they loved you are asking you to leave. It happened to me. I remember those days. "We love you. You're awesome. What a great man of God." Then I came back and they said, "Would you mind leaving this church?"

Thank God that He never changes, right? Isn't it good? Listen, He is not a man. I like what Hosea 11:9 says, "I am God, and not a man." I'm glad. I'm glad God became a Man, but I'm glad that God doesn't think and operate like humanity separated from God. God never changes. He does not change. And this is what we have to hold on to in our lives, from start to finish. God is eternal, and He never changes.

This is what I love about this ministry. We are still preaching categorical doctrine, not stories, illustrations, newspapers, politics, money,

blessing, miracles, tongues, and a psychological analysis of the congregation. We are preaching doctrine—God's thoughts from the Bible, line upon line, specifically, for every situation—and we haven't changed.

Throughout the whole Bible, God talks about the importance of categorical doctrine. Just read Matthew 7:28, "They were astonished at Jesus' doctrine (teaching)." Paul taught doctrine. Read Philippians 1-4. He uses the word phroneo about six times, and it speaks of having God's mindset. Pastor Stevens preached doctrine. We are still preaching doctrine—God's precise thoughts on a subject from start to finish so we will know how God thinks. Therefore, it's very easy for us to change—to be changed into His likeness—because God is not going to change. Somebody's got to change. I think it's me.

It's still the same. It's not different. It is doctrine. It's Bible college. It's rap sessions. It's the Word of God. It's exegetical teaching. It's strong preaching. It's ministering the Word of life to people.

You know what else it is? It is still the Gospel. Someone from El Salvador goes to the Ukraine. We go from outreach in Baltimore, into

India, Africa, South America, and all around the world. That hasn't changed.

I Shall Not Be Moved

I preached a message one time, and there were seven pastors sitting there on the platform. I said to the assembly, "This is my last message in this city. Don't ever listen to them again. They don't go soul-winning, so they've got nothing to say." I'm sorry if that offended you, but that is just what I said to them, and they asked me to leave immediately, if not sooner. They said, "You could leave right now." I said, lovingly, "I will be leaving right now, but I will finish this exhortation."

They had changed! They had taken on some new strange doctrines. The Gospel wasn't important. Instead, it was, "Let's add believers from other churches who aren't saved by watering down the message."

Oh, really? Do you think you're going to get the leaders of this church to water down the message? That is not going to happen. You know what? The messages are so hot you can't touch it—the pulpit's on fire. This ministry is not changing because God doesn't change. I don't care what goes on out there. I'm not interested

in keeping people if you have to water down the message or break it down into something conventional that is not truth. They come because the enemy sends them. Give me a few people who love God and the Bible, and I'll be happy.

I love the fact that we have a lot of people in our church, and do you want to know something? This ministry is not changing, because God doesn't change. This ministry still believes in Body life—*soma* life—not just church, not just an ecclesiastical organization. But this church is family. This is a Body. These are friendships. This is life. These are friendships and relationships that are eternal, and we're going to be together forever. (So I hope you get to like me. I'd like to say maybe I'll be different there!)

This church is not changing. Body life, prayer meetings, the grace message, the Finished Work—these things are not changing.

Chapter Three

YOU CAN'T CHANGE WHAT IS FINISHED

Somebody said to me recently, "You know, the Finished Work, ah, I don't know. Do you think the Finished Work works?"

This is Finished Work: It's eternal security. It's the blood of Christ. It's the work of the Cross. It's reconciliation. It's not His death alone. It's the Blood. It's the Blood. It's the work of God. It's the Cross. That is not changing. It ain't changing. Nope. Shoot us. Step on us. Kick us. Beat us. Throw us out of Lystra. We'll come back in. It's not changing.

The unity is not changing. Doing things decently and in order—that's not changing. Why? Because God is unchanging. He cannot lie. He doesn't change His mind. God doesn't repent. God doesn't change His mind. I like Romans 11:29, "The gifts"—His gifts for you and me—"and calling of God are without God changing

His mind." The word is not "repentance"; it is ametameleomai, which means God is not changing His mind. God gave you gifts. God called you. Do you think God changed His mind just because people change? God doesn't change.

God didn't change with Peter just because Peter cut a guy's ear off. Whing! Peter was like this revolving door. One minute, he was speaking a revelation from heaven. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The next minute, he said, "Don't go to the cross." He was speaking from darkness. You never know what's going to happen with people. You have no idea.

Peter changed. Lot changed. Demas changed. By the way, Demas was in jail with Paul (Colossians 4:14). Then he left him (2 Timothy 4:11) because he "agaped" the present world system. He was in jail for the Gospel, and then he left Paul because he loved the world. Something happened to Demas. A change took place, and he was receptive to initiations from the world, the flesh, and darkness. His life went in another direction.

Oh, God, help me. I don't want to go in another direction. I'd rather have God take me home early than be a person who becomes an operative for change, because Satan is always

transforming himself and changing himself.

Did you ever try to change yourself? How did it go? You did well? The devil will let you do well for awhile when you operate in self-change, or self-transformation. You can do it for awhile. He backs the demons off, and you think everything is fine because of what you did. Then do you know what happens? You realize after a while that nothing's really changed. God is the only One who can do the work. It's called metamorphoo—change on the inside. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:2a).

Changed by an Unchanging God

Drug addicts can change. Alcoholics can change. A passive person can become active. A person who didn't care about God and the call can, all of a sudden, let the call grab hold of them and be mightily used of God. A person who could never love can receive unconditional love. A person who operated without any strength can receive the strength of God. A change takes place, and it's because of an unchanging God.

I thank God that over thousands of years,

He has never changed. Oh, the churches are changing, and people are changing, and pulpits are changing. Do you see this pulpit? This is sacred. This is a sacred place in this assembly, with this congregation, with this assembly. With Pastor Stevens, Pastor Schaller, all the leadership, and all that has taken place here, this pulpit will remain the same. And I'm sure, because of the convictions of you who have received this message, that you would never allow a change to take place.

Are you with me? Do you want to hear about the latest way to make a change in the soul through some improvised psychological system? By the way, I've been that route, too—that whole psychological thing. I ran a counseling center, handled a thousand clients a year. Do you know what I did when they walked in? I gave them the Bible. "It's the Bible," I'd say. "Let's read the Bible."

"Well, what are you telling me? Do you know anything about Freud?"

"He's lost! That's what I know about him. It's the Bible."

This Book doesn't change. This is an eternal Book. Heaven and earth will pass away, but this Word will not. That's how we counsel people.

What do you want, some new theory? I have a theory for you: "Eternal words ever true, changing me and changing you." God doesn't change.

I can wake up tomorrow and be a mess, but God hasn't changed. He says, "Just come to Me with your burdens and your heavy labor, and I'm going to take them, just like I did yesterday. I paid for your sins—and that is for today just like it was yesterday. I don't lie. I won't curse you. I won't behold iniquity. I'm not a man. I'm not like a human being in My thinking. I love you. That's not changing. I've got truth. I am the truth. You can bank on that for the rest of your life and on into eternity."

Don't you love that? God doesn't change. That gives me peace in my soul—peace like a river. I've got peace, harmony with God, because God doesn't change.

I know I'm not changing Him, so I will let Him change me. Amen? Just let Him change you. Just be available. In Genesis 22:1 and 11, Abraham said to the Lord, "Here I am. Here I am, God." I'm not much but I know You are awesome, and You can change me. I don't think right. I don't feel right. I make wrong decisions, but You, God, are unchanging.

By the way, an unchanging God always

wants to change us. He does it with His grace, His love, His mercy, His truth, His Spirit, His power, His encouragement, and His comfort. Thank God that we have an unchanging God and an unchanging ministry.

CONCLUSION

Maybe there are areas in your life where there's a struggle, where there is warfare. There are things that have been there for a long time. God says, "Just trust Me tonight. I love you. I will change you. I desire to change you." He can remove anything in a moment of time—any area, any problem, any stronghold. Thank Him.

Just ask. Just ask Jesus, in whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. Jesus Christ—the same yesterday, today, and forever. "Thou art the same," (Hebrews 1:12). Thank You—the great I AM living in us. Do a work in us, God, a work that only You can do. A Finished Work word will change us today—the mercy of God, the initiation of His eternal words ever true. Just believe in His ability to change us. It's only an unchanging God that could change us.

Father, thank You that You are God and not a man. You don't lie. You don't curse us. You don't

behold our iniquity. You do not change. Thank You, Jesus. When we don't know, our head is spinning but Your head is still. Our will is running and You're standing still. We pray, God, that You would touch our lives. Ancient words—eternal words—ever true.

I AM THAT I AM—You came into our lives, and You will never change. We thank You, God, for Your character, the Person of who You are, the work that You've done, the life that You have given us, the Body of Christ, the Gospel, and the Finished Work. We thank You so much tonight. May we go forward with such an encouragement and such desire to continually fellowship with an unchanging God. This is what our lives are based upon. Let our hearts be established in grace. In Jesus' name, amen.

God Never Quits On Us

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever considered someone a lost cause?

Perhaps, you know of a family member or a once-close friend who has drifted far away from you and has wound up enmeshed in a web of sin and defeat. On a human level, you cannot see any hope for reclamation.

But God does not see as a man sees. His eternal view is always one that has Redemption in focus. Those who find themselves battered and beaten by life can turn to the Father and run into His loving arms. He never gives up on anyone. Failure is never final with Him.

As we will see in this booklet, the burdens that we carry are to be laid at the feet of Jesus. He is the One who bore our sins upon His body at Calvary. There, at the Cross, He became our substitute, paying the penalty for the sins of the whole world, once and for all. Oh, what a Savior! Oh, what He has done for us. With that in mind,

how can we think that He could ever give up on anyone?

Chapter One

GOD CARES FOR THE BROKEN AND THE BRUISED

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

"Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

"And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad

will go yonder and worship, and come again to you,

"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

"And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together" (Genesis 22:1-11).

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth" (Isaiah 42:3).

Isaiah 42:3 is an amazing verse. Jesus repeats it in Matthew 12:20. It speaks of a person who is at his weakest, one who is weak as weak can be, but one whom the Lord regards with such loving care.

God will not give up on anyone until He sends judgment into victory. This means that a person who is staggering and stagnating in self-defeat, wallowing in a sad state of self-destruction, will not be snuffed out, and he will not be crushed to the point where he cannot be used.

"I will not break what is left of this one," God declares. "There is not much left of him right now. Still, I cannot break what is left. I will stand in my patience and longsuffering. I will not be on your case. I am not going to hurt you prematurely with anything that I do."

The reed was something used by the shepherd boys in the fields. They would take this hollow plant from the marshes and poke holes in the stalk. It was flute-like in the way it produced sounds. The shepherd boys would use these reeds to sound out the call to the animals in their charge. Once the reed was bruised, however, it could not make the right kind of sound, so it was tossed away.

God does not treat His people this way when they have been damaged. A reed pulled up from the ground cannot be repaired, but God does not throw away bruised and hurting people. "I will not break this one," the Lord says.

A Cause for Celebration

The prodigal son, in Luke 15, was wounded and wasted. But, when he turned and headed home, his father ran to meet him. That is how God the Father responds to everyone who turns to Him in brokenness. "I will race to meet him. I

will show My love for him and celebrate his return. I will not, in anyway, consider him as anything less than My son. I will be so proud to have him back. He may want to be treated as a servant, but I will have none of that. He will be My son and serve with me as a son, with all of the family privileges."

Then we have the example of a smoking flax, such as the wick of a candle when it has burnt way down into the puddle of wax. There is just a tiny spark of fire left in it, and its smoke is starting to fill the room. It keeps flickering and flickering. The wax threatens to smother it, and it is almost all the way out. With the image of a smouldering flax, the Word of God reveals that He will not quench the flame in any believer's life—even if there is just a flicker of hope left. Instead, He will make sure that doctrine finds its way to being truth in their heart. God will do all that He can do to get the one who has fallen to discover the truth about forgiveness.

This how God relates to weak people. Believers who are frail and weak are as bruised reeds and smoking flax. We do not have to be worried about people. God will not quench the smoking flax. God will not let the light of the believer go all the way out. The Holy Spirit speaks

to the heart, and all of a sudden, the spark springs back into a flame. Jesus Christ makes sure that we make it.

Chapter Two

GOD'S FORGIVENESS GOES ALL THE WAY

"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

"And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

"And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

"And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (Luke 17:3-6).

Unfortunately, we do not always relate to people in this way. We want others to get what they deserve. We say that the Bible is true and that we agree with every word of it, yet we do not believe that we should forgive someone if

they do the same thing to us seven times in a day. Perhaps you are thinking, "Boy, I don't know if I would want to go to church with people like that. They would be getting away with all kinds of things." Well, I have given you chapter and verse. This is the Bible we are quoting!

Actually, few Christians operate by every word of God. Still, the most beautiful thing in the world is that eternal life is just that—it is eternal. What comes from the life of God is eternal. Forgiveness, therefore, is an eternal state of being forgiven. Grace is an eternal state of reigning with Christ. Love is an eternal state of carrying on the divine program of God until you have grown in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and make it. These precepts are all Scriptural. The sad thing is that, day in and day out, the Scriptures are taken conditionally and not unconditionally.

In Genesis 22, God spoke to Abraham. His instructions were plain: "Take Isaac, the wood, and the beast of burden. Then, go to Mount Moriah and offer Isaac as a burnt offering." In the past, I always considered the wood as standing for humanity. But the truth of Genesis 22:6 is that the wood speaks of our sin.

Every single one of us stands before the Holy

God. We are as beasts of burden and our sin is upon us. Jesus Christ leads us slowly—just as slowly as Abraham led the beast, the wood, and his son to Mount Moriah.

Here they were, traveling along. The beast, burdened down with the wood, saw some water, but he could not go to it to drink because he had to go on, carrying his load. Perhaps he saw some green grass, and he would have liked to stop and graze. He could not stop, however, because of the weight upon him. The burden must be borne.

No Rest for the Burdened

The Christian who is weighed down by his burdens cannot enjoy the still waters. He cannot bring himself to rest in green pastures, which speak of God's mercies. There are so many burdens on his back, and he needs to recognize that he does not need to carry them. They belong to the Lord. David recognized this in the twenty-third Psalm: "He *makes* me to lie down in green pastures."

Closer and closer, Abraham and Isaac drew near to Mount Moriah and the moment of truth. They were going on together all the way.

In the same manner, God the Father and the

Son went all the way to Calvary. They were in total fellowship until the Father had to place all the sins of the world upon His Son. Under the terms set forth in the determinate counsel of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, before the foundation of the world (Acts 2:23), all of the terrible sins of the world became Christ's sins. He bore all of our sins upon that Cross, though He had never committed a sin of His own.

As soon as Abraham and Isaac got to Mount Moriah, the burden of wood was released. This is exactly what happens to us. We struggle along with burden upon burden, problem upon problem. Then, we get to the Cross. We get to the place of supreme sacrifice, and all the burdens of our heart are rolled away. No more are we weighed down. All of the sins are removed from us, and they are place upon the altar of God.

Chapter Three

CALVARY RECONCILES OUR DEBT

"And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

"And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

"And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

"And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

"And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

"And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

"And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:9-18).

Isaac was on the altar, and Abraham lifted the knife. Then, God spoke out. "No, Abraham. Don't touch Isaac. There is a substitute, a ram in the thicket." The ram was offered up in the place of the lad.

This is what Jesus Christ has done for the sins of the world. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Jesus Christ died once for them all. He became the Substitute. Paying the price, He settled the debts He did not owe. He carried those sins away.

Think of it! Think of the adultery and the drunkenness. Think of all the terrible, unnecessary problems that destroy relationships and marriages. Marriages do not make it because couples do not bring their burdens to Calvary to be reconciled.

Calvary is the place of reconciliation. Calvary is the place where our sins were paid for, forever. Every single one of them was nailed to the Tree. Calvary is the place where we were made clean, the place where the burdens of our heart are rolled away. We can go to Calvary and go home, free, with no wood on our backs. We no longer have to live as beasts of burden weighed down by the wood of our failures.

We Walk Home Free

The burden of sin is no longer on us. Jesus took all the burdens and we walk home free! Perhaps you were weak as a smoking flax. Your light was just about to go out. You felt so defeated that you believed you could not make it. But all the sins have been removed from you. Now you can come to Calvary and you can go away without a single thing upon your back.

The love of God takes care of it all. No matter what people may remember, God remembers

none of it. No matter what anyone else does, God forgives and forgets. The Lord Jesus comes on the scene and says, "Instead of legalism and condemnation, I will turn judgment into commendation through the preciousness of Calvary. When you leave the Cross, you will no longer be this, that, or the other thing. You will be set free, and you will be free indeed."

God planned it, the Son accomplished it, the Holy Spirit reveals it, and the Word of God declares it. A bruised reed, He will not break. A smoking flax, He will not quench. God provided the perfect Substitute, and we have been set free and made clean by the Blood of the Lamb.

CONCLUSION

God's work is a work of Redemption. It is a work of cleansing and purging. It is a work of forgiving and a work of forgetting. Christ's work on the Cross is the work of transferring all of those ugly sins and weaknesses onto the Messiah.

The Father takes them directly from us and lays them upon His Son. The wood that was upon Isaac, the wood that speaks of sin, is lifted off. There is no longer any burden. The sacrifice of the Substitute took care of it all, and God determines that He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will not quit on us.

The Blood of Christ made a way for us. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire to God, and they died as a result (Leviticus 10:1-2). There was no blood in their offering. At the Passover, in Exodus, the blood had to be on the doorposts. We look to the Blood that God has applied to the doorposts of our hearts. We look to that and see

nothing but forgiveness and cleansing. We are not forgiven and then left in our old condition, but we are perfectly cleansed, with no stain to mark us.

Backsliders can be reconciled and restored in an instant. God never quits on them. The price of their salvation was much too high for Him to turn away. Praise God that once and for all, in Christ, we are saved, forgiven, and cleansed.

God Our Righteousness

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INTRODUCTION

It appears that America is near the end of the fourth stage of national decline, to be judged with the fourth cycle of discipline by the hand of God. Historically, this stage (which was seen in Israel, Babylon, the Roman Empire, and other powerful nations) is characterized by immorality that is accepted and even praised. In our nation, iniquity abounds in many forms and in many places.

Though the current economic forecast in the United States is very positive, at any time we could face an economic collapse. Then, in that weakened state, the fifth cycle of discipline would mean military invasion and loss of national entity, with another nation taking away our freedoms.

Israel knew this discipline; she lost her freedom and her people were scattered for so many, many years. There were repeated warnings, and God used men like Moses, Joshua, and Caleb

who knew God and did what they could to hold off the discipline that came upon the millions in that nation. Just a few men. They were not perfect, but they kept the nation going.

Who keeps back God's judgments on a nation? People who understand the righteousness of God. God's righteousness isn't revealed by what we do; it is revealed by what is in the heart. This booklet will show that God looks upon the heart; and a heart that has His righteousness continually reveals that God's banner over us is love.

Chapter One

INTRODUCING THE GOD OF JESHURUN

"But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deuteronomy 32:15).

"And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together" (Deuteronomy 33:5).

"There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky" (Deuteronomy 33:26).

In Isaiah 55:8, God declared, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." The people of Israel were in almost total rebellion against Moses and Aaron, in Numbers 20. Moses, who had lived a life as the meekest man on the earth, became angry. In a display of

self-righteousness, he struck the rock and sinned against the Lord.

Until Deuteronomy 32, the word Jeshurun had never been spoken through the Holy Spirit. That term given to Moses by the Holy Spirit meant "the upright one, or the righteous one, because of My name." The Lord said this to Moses *after* Israel had sinned.

"Jeshurun" spoke of Israel, and she was still the righteous one, though she was backslidden. The God of Jeshurun was there when all the tribes of Israel and their leaders were gathered together. He was there to bless them.

"Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen" (Isaiah 44:2).

Here God is calling Jacob "Jeshurun"—the righteous one, the upright one, the one who will be deeply blessed. Why are verses like these in the Word of God? Because, God reveals who He is and His thoughts toward us through His Word. And the Bible says that the Bridegroom brought His Bride to a banqueting table and His banner over her was love.

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:4).

We have many flags and banners in our auditorium that represent the nations and places we have touched with our ministry. But the banner referred to in Song of Solomon 2:4 represents Calvary's love because of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. That is God's banner over us, His Bride.

"Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners" (Song of Solomon 6:4). The beautiful thing about this verse is that the word "terrible" as we understand it does not appear in the Hebrew text. The original says, "Thou art *majestic* as an army of banners." Those banners represent all the victories the Bride won by being a beautiful responder to the Bridegroom.

"We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions" (Psalm 20:5).

The banners also speak of the character of integrity, the virtue of God. The Psalmist is saying to God, "Your character is perfect. Your virtue is

perfect, so we're going to set up banners (plural) in the nature and name of the Lord our God. And, Lord, fulfill our petitions; answer our prayers." The banners reveal the fact that God's nature and God's character can always be trusted, even when we are in our worst state.

Psalm 60:4 says that God gives a banner to those who fear and trust Him, that it may be displayed by their thinking with God. The banner was love.

The Principles of God's Essence

The righteousness of God, the justice of God, and the love of God are three of the major principles of His essence. When Lucifer sinned and said "I will" five times (see Isaiah 14:12-15), he came immediately under the judgment of God's justice. Without hesitation, he fell as lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18).

Was God still the God of love during that time? Yes, He was. But Lucifer had made up his mind that he would never change his plan of wanting to usurp God's authority and to be equal with God. So, he was judged by the righteousness of God's integrity. Though he is out on appeal right now and seeks whom he may devour with his lies and accusations, Lucifer is

condemned forever. His argument was, "Why did God give salvation to Adam and Eve but not to the fallen angels?" It is because God foreknew that Adam and Eve would accept the substitutionary animal sacrifice, which they did in Genesis 3:21, and that pointed to the Cross and Christ's ultimate sacrifice.

Chapter Two

THE GIFT OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there. And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

"And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.

"And Moses and Aaron went from the pres-

ence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them.

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.

"And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them" (Numbers 20:1-13).

Moses was one of the greatest authors of all time and a magnificent engineer. He was a unique person born in a time when the entire nation of Israel was threatened (Exodus 1:22; 2:1-10). As captives in Egypt, every male child was ordered to be killed by Pharaoh. Moses' mother hid him in a basket and placed him among the weeds in the river where she could keep an eye on him.

While bathing in the river, Pharaoh's daughter found Moses, took him to the palace, and without knowing it, miraculously hired his own mother as a servant to take care of him. That became her full-time job! Now, that is an example of Romans 8:28 in action. This boy didn't die as so many others did at that time. He lived in the palace and was well taken care of. That is how God worked it all out.

Numbers 20 gives an interesting picture of Moses. This man of God was the only man who talked with God face-to-face, the only man outside of the high priests who was allowed to enter into the Holy of Holies. God called Moses into the Holy of Holies and talked to him there. Three generations of Israel had gathered against Moses. They were prosperous, possessed all kinds of animals, and were being blessed by

God. But in the midst of their prosperity, they became wicked (Deuteronomy 32:15). And now, as a part of God's plan, three generations were stuck in the desert, desperately needing water, all thinking that they were going to die.

God told Moses to go to the Ark, get Aaron's rod, and take it with him. "I don't want you to use the rod," God told him. "I just want you to speak to the rock and the water will come forth."

Everything was fine up to that point. Imagine this scene: Moses goes into the Holy of Holies, gets the rod, comes out, and something happened to him. For some reason, he became mean and very sarcastic, just as some people can get when they go into emotional complex sins, compounding bitterness, anger, resentment, negative reaction, envy, and jealousy.

For forty years Moses had tolerated these murmuring Israelites. Even now, when reading the accounts, it is very easy for us to speak against these murmurers. But consider how many women must have had children among this nation of two million people living in the desert. Perhaps there was good reason why only Joshua and Caleb became mature citizens with a godly perspective. Yet with all that we have in America, our condition is not so different than

the state of the ungrateful people whom Moses led.

In Numbers 20:10, Moses was overcome with self-righteous indignation, and he failed to honor God's integrity and command. He did not honor God's amazing righteousness, nor did he express that righteousness and justice by love, which is God's way. But even though Moses lashed out in anger and smote the rock twice, God used him to meet the need. It wasn't Moses or Aaron who provided the water anyway. It was God.

Earlier, in Exodus 17:1-8, God told Moses to smite the rock once—a picture of Christ dying on the Cross. This time, however, Moses was told only to speak to the rock—a picture of us addressing Christ our Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4), using the Word of the Finished Work. But instead, Moses rebelled and smote the rock twice—and we are not to crucify Christ all over again (Hebrews 6:6).

Immediately, the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and chastised them for their unbelief (Numbers 20:12).

He Supplies What We Need

This is the beautiful thing about the God of

Jeshurun—*tetelestai* (bringing things into completion in John 19:30) or *pleroma* (the fullness of God given as a grace blessing in Ephesians 1:23), in New Testament terms. In spite of everything the people and the leaders did wrong, the water did come out of the rock. God always sees His children in the Finished Work, and He provides for His people abundantly because of unconditional love. That is why He deserves all the glory, honor, and praise.

Now, those adult children were murmuring, and Moses was as angry as he could be. Yet, the King of Jeshurun said, "They need water, and they are going to get water." So in Exodus 17:6, God told Moses, "I want you to stand upon the rock, and I am going to give them water." Though they were murmuring, He gave them water.

What does the righteousness of God do? It gives a blessing, and for one reason: His banner over us forever and ever is love.

When the righteousness of God put all of our sins upon Jesus, the justice of God condemned them in Him. Imagine it. God turned His back on God; God went against the God-Man for three solid hours (Matthew 27:45-46).

People often become familiar with what

Christ did for us. Way back in the Old Testament, when He gave those unthankful murmurers the water, the Father honored what the Son would do at Calvary. They were saved people, still most of them commited the sin unto physical death. Very few lived to enter into Canaan, the promised land; but when they died, they went into Paradise.

There is none like the God of uprightness, the God of righteousness who gives us the "abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness as a free gift by one, Jesus Christ" so we can reign by Him (Romans 5:17).

Picture Moses utterly rebelling. The murmuring people have all received the water for themselves, their animals, and their children; and Moses says to God, "I wish You would change Your mind—I want to go into the Promised Land."

But God says, "You can go up on the mountain to view it. But I cannot let you go in."

Rebound and Restoration

Over the next nine months, something happened to Moses. First, he rebounded, as you would have expected him to do. Then, he wrote the book of Deuteronomy, the book that was

quoted by Jesus Christ during His time on earth more than any other. Moses wrote Deuteronomy *after* he had sinned.

God said to Moses, "I am going to teach you about Jeshurun." That means God revealed the principle of imputed righteousness to Moses. It is righteousness that depends only on God's integrity, not a man's. After that, a special service was arranged to ordain Joshua in the ministry as the next pastor over Israel. At the end, God gave Moses a funeral like no other man had ever had. And when Satan contested for Moses' body, God sent high-ranking angels to remove the body so the devil could not claim it. Remember, our bodies were created from dust, and to dust they return (Genesis 3:19). This time, Bathos, Satan's commander of the dust Romans 8:39, could not get at that which came from the dust. It was a beautiful victory.

There's more.

Moses' soul and spirit went into Paradise at the moment of his death. In Matthew 17, he appeared to Peter, James, and John at Jesus' transfiguration. Some say Moses was translated before he died, but that is not true. Moses died—he *definitely* died. Yet there he was before the Rapture, appearing in his transfigured body

with the prophet Elijah and Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 4:8-10, before Christ was seated, He descended into Paradise to lead the Old Testament saints into heaven. But Moses' body was already glorified. That is how good God was to Moses.

Our God was the God of the righteousness of Moses and the God of the righteousness of Jacob. The banner over His banqueting table is "love." He cannot charge anyone with sin since Jesus Christ satisfied the holiness, the righteousness, and the justice of God the Father. This is why we are able to stand with the Lord Jesus Christ under the New Covenant. The banner of love has never changed.

Moses had an amazing life with God, and he was used to save the nation, in Exodus 32:9-14. God said, "Get out of the way, I am going to wipe this people out." But Moses intervened, saying, "Wait a minute! You promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that You wouldn't do such a thing."

God said, "You're right, Moses. I did say that."

I love that! Of course, God foreknew what would happen, but God is having some fun. God loves fun, and He said, "Yes, I did."

"Okay, because of your prayer and interces-

sion, I will not wipe out the nation," God said to Moses. "I wanted to start over with a brand-new nation through you. But it seems you don't want me to do that, Moses, and you are becoming very serious about this. So, because you have My righteousness, I will honor you."

In Numbers 14, when the ten spies gave the evil report about the Promised Land, God again threatened to wipe out the nation. Again, Moses said, "You told Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that You would keep them and that You would be faithful. Didn't You tell them that?"

"Yes, I did," God said. "I will honor you, Moses. That's fine. I will honor you."

It is a great thing that one man—a godly man, yes—but one man had power and a marvelous way with God. We can, too.

Chapter Three

HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

As God looks upon us when we're confessed up-to-date and receiving the great fullness of His blessing, we realize that greater is He who is within us than the whole cosmic world system (1 John 4:4). When we receive the great mercies of God and when His Word dwells richly in us, we begin to realize that it is all because of God's love and God's grace.

We can have a vision for the world—for South and Central and North America, for Australia, Africa, Europe, and for Asia. We can have a vision because we have the righteousness of God. God the Father looks upon His righteousness.

Our sins were judged once and for all (Hebrews 10:10). We have been perfected forever, and those who are being sanctified are perfected forever (Hebrews 10:14). The worst Christian in

the world has been perfected on the basis of Jeshurun, *tetelestai*, and *pleroma*.

The key to our experience is to hunger and thirst after God who is our righteousness (Isaiah 44:3; Jeremiah 33:16). Then, we will be constantly filled (Matthew 5:6). The key isn't in being great. The key is in realizing who we are, who He is, and what He has done for us. The key is in understanding that He will pour out water upon the thirsty. The key is that He gives *greater* grace to the humble. He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

A Christian has access to unlimited resources when, through humility, he is broken before God. The presence of God is as the sun that never sets (Isaiah 60:19). When the Word of God says that He gives greater grace to the humble, this takes away the pride of culture, the pride of wealth, the pride of position, the pride of education, the pride of rebellion. Gone are all of the pride complex sins that fill us with with malice, anger, and the exaltation of self above God and His Word.

When we understand this principle, we will realize that a man who comes before God *must* be blessed. He is broken, he is helpless, but he will not give up going to God through Christ.

The righteousness of God approves of his humility, and the justice of God says, "he must be blessed because he has God's righteousness." Then the third attribute of His essence, the precious love of God, comes and says, "I must show the true nature of God to this weak, frail person."

While mercy withholds the judgment we deserve because of the sacrifice of Christ, grace freely gives us everything that we really don't deserve. Grace expresses God's love as it blesses the objects of that love.

We can see it as we picture the banqueting table. Over it is that banner of Calvary's love, revealed by Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. In Psalm 60:4, as sinners, we can display that banner because of the truth of who He is.

Righteousness Expressed in Victories

In Daniel 3, the three Hebrew boys would not bow down before the golden image. "Our God is able to deliver; but even if He doesn't, we will not bow down" (see Daniel 3:17-18). In verse 25, the king looked into the furnace and saw four men instead of three—and they were walking in the midst of the flames. The three boys weren't hurt at all. That was the righteous-

ness of God protecting His children in the face of the enemy as they worshipped Him in that furnace.

The same righteousness was at work in the lions' den of Daniel 6. In verse 22, Daniel was put into a den and slept with many lions and he was not hurt. By the king's order, the 425 people who conspired to put him in there went into the den after Daniel came out. They were consumed in a matter of minutes. Yet one man had gone to sleep in that same den with the angels' protection.

These are not just stories. They are expressions of the righteousness, justice, and integrity of God. The integrity of God can never charge me with a sin. Because of His integrity, He will chasten me, but even that will be done in love.

Chapter Four

GOD'S FINGER OF GRACE

God cannot operate outside of love. Even in our failures, He cannot express Himself outside of grace. That is His integrity, veracity, and honesty at work. For that reason, in John 8:6-10, when the woman taken in adultery was brought before Him, Jesus stooped down and wrote something on the ground. He got up and said, "He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone at her." Then, He stooped down again and wrote something else on the ground.

Those in the crowd were filled with the consciousness of sin, and they began to feel guilty. They went out from His presence—the eldest to the youngest—feeling condemned.

In verse 10, after the crowd had left, Jesus said to the woman, "Has no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." I believe she called Him "Lord" because she was a believer committing adultery.

So she said, "No man, Lord."

And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee: Go and sin no more."

It is important that as we get to know God, we must also get to know His nature and begin to know His heart. Once again, God expressed Himself in the integrity of His Son's death. He loved this woman. He expressed that love through grace, and He restored her life.

The water came through the rock (Exodus 17). Again, the water came from the rock (Numbers 20). He gave them food, and He led them with a cloud by day and a fire by night (Exodus 13). God never failed these murmuring people. Instead, He honored them because of His Son.

Righteousness said, "I am still going to bless them, despite their murmurings."

Justice said, "If Righteousness approves, I will execute the blessing." And Love said, "I will express the blessing." Then Grace said, "I will manifest the love that You have for them, even in their wicked state."

God Develops the Heart

In John 21:15-18, Jesus came to Peter after he had failed and had gone back fishing. He had seen Jesus in His resurrected state twice, but he

still backslid because of guilt. That was when the Lord said to Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" Peter said, "Yeah, I do."

"Feed my lambs," Jesus said.

"Do you love Me more than these?" Jesus asked Peter.

"You know I love you," he answered.

"Feed my sheep," Jesus said.

"Peter, do you love Me with human love?" Jesus said.

Peter had to say, "Lord, You know all that I have for You is human love."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

Again, we have a picture of God as the King of Jeshurun, the God of all grace, the God of forgiveness. His Son paid for every sin Peter had ever committed. Jesus is going to be patient, longsuffering, and forbearing with him.

In John 21:18, Jesus was saying to Peter, "You may be going your own way now, but when you are mature, Peter, you will be different. You can go back to work now, taking care of My sheep, because My love has found a way to use you." God's love found a way to make this young disciple a preacher to the Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans. He found a way to do it through His Son. God has a plan to bless us

through His love and express it through His grace.

There Is Now No Condemnation

In Romans 7, Paul battled in the flesh with the things he should have done and the things he should not have done, saying, "O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?"

Finally, Paul understood: "There is now *no condemnation*!" No condemnation!—those are the only words in the original text. There is no evidence that Paul had changed at this point, except to let the Holy Spirit make the difference—not himself. Now, as one of God's elect, no one can charge Paul with sin. None could condemn. No one could separate him—or us—from the love of God.

Knowing God this way, having that banqueting table prepared for us, we are able to feast upon the Word of Life.

A Covenant of Love

"And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, the LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed

forever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city" (1 Samuel 20:42).

The word for "Lord" here is *Yahweh*, spoken with the verb *hayah*. In Exodus 34:6-7 it means, "merciful, gracious, longsuffering, lovingkindness, forgiveness, and truth (or, doctrine—thinking in God's Word)." When Jonathan and David made this covenant, they agreed to always put the Lord between them. "The Lord's life will be between us. We will think in His nature, and the Lord will be between us wherever we go."

David said this again in Psalm 16:8: "I have set the LORD [(*Yahweh*)] always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." In other words, "I will always set mercy, graciousness, longsuffering, lovingkindness, forgiveness, and doctrine before my face."

David understood how to connect with God. He knew how to be filled, how to be loved, and how to have a love that passes knowledge. It shows us how to be filled with the *pleroma*—the fullness—of God.

God uses so many different words in the Scriptures to convey who He is to the very heart of man. In Deuteronomy 6:4 we read, "The LORD our God is one LORD." Here, the word for "Lord" is *Adonai*, which means "the sovereign

ruler with a sovereign nature." God is the One who is sovereign in His nature of love because judgment has been passed upon sin once and for all; therefore, He is free to express His sovereign love, and He is free in His sovereign might to express that love through His grace as an expression.

Deuteronomy 6:5 says to "love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might"—Love Him because He is Adonai.

Evidence of Real Success

Most people do not know what real success is. It isn't in numbers—having large crowds in the services or even great numbers of souls saved. We thank God for good numbers; but, the only way success is revealed is in the fruit of a man's life. Is he humble before God? Is he thirsting after righteousness? Will he lay down his life for his brethren? Is he free from accusation and sowing discord? Does he compare himself to others? Does he exalt himself above doctrine (2 Corinthians 10:5)? These are the people who, no matter where they are, their lives are fruitful, their lives are kind.

When Moses wrote Deuteronomy (just be-

fore he died), he had a wonderful time preparing Joshua, the next leader of Israel, for his promotion. God gave Moses a word that He had never shown to anyone, and He revealed it after his failure. "I am the God of *Jeshurun*, and I have made you my upright, righteous one because of what My Son Jesus will do in the future."

When Moses died, God took him to heaven immediately. It was as though He said, "You don't have to fool around in Canaan any longer." Moses went straight into the Promised Land instead of going over.

After his tremendous failure, striking the Rock, Moses rebounded and had the greatest nine months of his life. He quoted from the Psalms and the prophets, but Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy the most because it was written after Moses rebounded, and God loved his life. It is an inspired book about love, and the Law, and how to get through anything with the God of Jeshurun.

God Is Grace

In Exodus 31:18 and Deuteronomy 9:10, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on tables of stone. These were written by His own finger. He gave the Law with His finger. In John 8:6-8,

when He wrote on the ground with His finger, I will always believe that He wrote the word for "grace." The New Testament tells us that grace and truth come by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). And just so those accusing the woman taken in adultery wouldn't miss it, I believe Jesus stooped down and wrote "grace" a second time.

"Grace—I am grace." In that scene, Jesus was showing them all just who He is. "In Exodus 31:18 and Deuteronomy 9:10, I wrote the Law with My finger. Now, in front of you hypocritical Pharisees, I am showing who I *really* am—I am grace!"

Jesus said in Luke 11:20, "If I, by the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke 11:20).

His is the finger of grace, the finger of forgiveness, the finger of love, the finger that has the power of conviction over the enemy. The finger of God cast out demons, which means the conviction of the words of grace come to the believer when he is influenced or obsessed by demonic hosts. Jesus told the Pharisees, "With the finger of God, I will get rid of the demons and you will know that the kingdom of God has come unto you."

It is so clear why Jesus said we ought to seek

first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. He will add all things unto us.

CONCLUSION

Isn't it wonderful that we have God's righteousness to take care of the pride complex—the pride of wealth, the pride of having things, the pride of great numbers?

According to 1 Samuel 16:7, God looks upon the heart. He can see the heart when you are alone, with no one else around. And when He sees a heart that is broken, God revives it and quickens it, because it is contrite and humble (Isaiah 57:15).

We misunderstand how God sees His righteousness imparted. When we receive His nature, we enter into divine virtue and walk in divine integrity (Psalm 26:11)—not our own. As Paul said, it is no longer "I" but Christ. It is not our righteousness but God who is our righteousness.

It is so important that we have the integrity of the Finished Work, not the integrity of our own opinions or the integrity of personality.

Knowing that the work was finished on the Cross, we can rebound from failures and go on with a hunger and thirst for God in the humility of His presence, in the faith of His promises, in the grace of His love, in the holiness of His righteousness, and in the justice of His Finished Work.

God Provides a Hedge

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

When we think of hedges, the image that comes to mind is often of the elaborately trimmed greenery surrounding someone's yard. If well-tended, they are very beautiful and defining elements of a piece of property. Nice hedges can do a lot for the appearance of a home.

In the Bible, God uses the word "hedge" to describe His protection and provision surrounding His people. The Lord's hedges are a boundary, protecting those who belong to Him. Satan and his demons are very aware of who belongs to God, and they cannot penetrate those hedges without being given an opening by God.

Psalm 80:12 reveals that where the hedge is torn down, people become vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy. Though we may come under attack, we do not need to succumb. In the midst of the trial, we can rest in the truth of the Finished Work gospel of grace and obey Ephesians 4:27: "Neither give place to the devil." God may

have allowed him access, but we do not have to give him a place.

This booklet defines the ways God protects His people with hedges. As we come to understand the importance of having a hedge about us, we will grow into mature, secure servants who go forward in the Father's plan and purpose, revealing the risen Savior wherever we go.

Chapter One

LIMITS ESTABLISHED BY GOD

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

"Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

"Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

"But put forth thine hand now, and touch all

that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD" (Job 1:6-12).

Satan accused God that Job was only blessed because God had put a hedge around him. So when God removed the hedge from Job's life, Satan was allowed access to Job.

The Word of God clearly teaches that every born-again believer has a hedge around him. There are, however, many things in our lives that can break down the hedges. In Psalm 89:40, the psalmist declared that God had broken down Israel's hedges.

For so long, the people of Israel had rebelled against God's provision. They did not realize what the hedge around them was—the hedge of protection, the hedge of provision, the hedge of the Finished Work. And in verses 30 through 37 of Psalm 89, though there was a price to pay for rebellion, David recalled the promise of God's everlasting covenant:

"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;

"If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments;

"Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

"Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

"Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.

"His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.

"It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah"

The hedge of the Finished Work has salvaged the lives of so many Christians. It demonstrates God's covenant of sure mercies toward David and His faithfulness to everyone who belongs to Him. As children of God through adoption, we have this hedge. It is a hedge of unconditional love, of being complete in Christ, the One who has power over all principalities and powers. We are one with Christ. We were buried with Him in baptism, and now we operate in the reality of Jesus Christ's resurrection and ascension.

No one in the history of Christianity has ever been defeated when he operates on the grounds of the Resurrection and stands in the

communion of the Ascension. But as we saw with Job, God allowed the hedge to be broken. Yet, while He allows His people to experience severe trials, He promises never to forsake His covenant.

Unconditional love is a tremendous hedge. God rested in that love toward Abraham. In Genesis 16, Abraham agreed with his wife, Sarah, to help the plan of God along when he committed adultery with Hagar. Satan caused them to rationalize their situation, but glory to God, Abraham had a hedge of unconditional love around him, and he became the father of our faith through the promised son, Isaac. Though God allowed much suffering to come upon Abraham's decendants, His mercies are still sure and His covenant is forever.

God Cannot Lie

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

"Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nei-

ther hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them" (Numbers 23:19-21).

In Genesis 27, Jacob sinned when he stole his brother's birthright and tricked Isaac, his father, into giving him the blessing of the first-born. Afraid of what his brother might do, Jacob fled to his Uncle Laban's house where he hoped to find a suitable wife. For twenty years, this man worked diligently, serving a crook of a man and yet loving him consistently. To honor an agreement to marry Laban's beautiful daughter, Jacob worked beyond what he should have worked—seven years for the first wife, seven years for the promised wife, and six years for the animals—and he was being trained by God through it all. Some consider Jacob's labors to be a form of discipline, and in a sense it was. Yet, Jacob had a hedge that God had put around him: That hedge was the positional truth that God did not behold any iniquity in his life.

As I think of my life, the great key to my success has not been anything about me. The key has been that God puts His hedges around me. "I will take care of Carl Stevens," God declares.

There is the hedge of rebound when I fail, even when I fall into the same sin many times in a day (see Proverbs 24:16). This hedge provides the forgiveness I need every time I fail.

It is crucial that we do not continue in sin, for there is discipline and chastisement that God must bring, but it is always brought to us in love and grace. We must not be deceived, however, into thinking that our sin will cause grace to abound. That is turning the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude 1:4).

Any attitude that is not derived from operating in the nature of God is probably motivated by wrong choices, rebellion, passivity, depression, or comparison. Satan compared himself to God and he became jealous and full of envy. Iniquity was found in him and it became rooted in his heart. That led to covetousness—a sin that is always associated with evil.

Job responded perfectly in his first trial; he never failed. His attitude was "God giveth, God taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." He was perfect in the same way through his second trial. But then, things kept going downhill and Job's attitude changed. He was hurting. His

health and his wealth were gone. His family was gone.

Eventually, at the end of his trials, Job became right with God, and he received more than he ever had before. Through it all, God kept His hedge around Job's life. Though Satan was allowed to afflict Job, God restricted the devil's influence. Oh, thank God for His hedge.

Chapter Two

THE SERPENT'S VENOM

"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16).

I have wept over dear people who have made wrong decisions and choices, because I know it will cost them down the road. They have made hasty decisions because they were influenced by the air. They can be helped, but only if they will heed the Word of God.

So many couples rush to get married. This doesn't mean that all of these marriages have problems. But a time of dating and courtship will allow the relationship to develop and to be tested, as well as to allow any jealousy or insecurity to come to the surface.

Some women think they never look good enough. You hear them comparing themselves

to every other woman in the room. Other women do not like their husbands to do anything without them. A husband comes home a little late and there are all kinds of questions: "Where were you? What did you do? What happened?" Certainly, it is a good idea for a husband to communicate and to honor his wife. But sometimes the questions come as accusations.

To the same degree, there are husbands who can be overbearing. They won't let their wives talk to anyone else. These men carry a possessiveness that is almost fanatic. They cannot bear it when they are not the center of their wives' attention.

What is wrong in these situations? The hedge of trust has not been built into the relationships. Through prayer and investment in each other, two people can develop a hedge against jealous spirits, selfishness, and possessiveness.

Satan's Poisons

"He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.

"Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood shall be endan-

gered thereby" (Ecclesiastes 10:8-9).

"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

"Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear" (Psalm 58:3-4).

When the hedges are down, this is when the serpent can come in to bite. I think we all know who this serpent is. Satan, like a snake, lurks near the hedges, waiting for us to allow him an opening. Then quickly he springs through the breech and injects his poison into a situation.

Science tells us that poisonous snakes carry one of two types of venom. While the hemotoxic venom infects the bloodstream, causing physical afflictions and pain, the neurotoxic venom attacks the nervous system of a victim. Similarly, hell tries to afflict Christians with poisons that affect the emotions and the mind—the neurotoxic attacks of the devil.*

It is interesting to note that the Bible compares the wicked to a "deaf adder" (possibly a cobra)—not because they have no ability to hear, but because they *will not* hear, according to Fausset's Bible Dictionary. They contort or twist the truth, relying instead on their own wisdom from

below, inflicting their victim's mind and emotions with Satan's poison.

That serpent, Satan, is trying to make us ignore the Word of God in the same way that he does. He does it by trying to get us to bring down the hedges.

Thank God that *He* is the husbandman (John 15:1). He is the keeper of the hedge, and nothing can get through without His permission.

**For more about these venomous attacks of the serpent, Satan, read* Table of Grace *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

SURROUNDED BY THE FIRE OF THE FINISHED WORK

"And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

"And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will" (Acts 13:21-22).

In His Word, God speaks of David as a man after His own heart. This is what the Lord says about David in spite of what happened with Bathsheba. The king did commit adultery with her and then conspired to arrange the death of her husband, a loyal soldier named Uriah. Still, God boasted in His choice of David as His man, even knowing every detail of the choices David

would make. God established David in "sure mercies." That covenant remains toward us today.

Demons Fear God's Fire

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

"For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zechariah 2:5).

The Lord is a wall of fire around us. His Word is the spirit of burning (Isaiah 4:4), and the demons cannot break through it. Demons cannot stand the fire of God. They scatter quickly when God's fire is near. Think about how the demons reacted to Jesus' presence, according to Luke 8:27-31:

"And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.

"When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of

God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

"(For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

"And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

"And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep."

Demons do not like the fire of God because they know their destiny—the lake of fire. They understand where they are going, and they are out to take as many souls with them as they can.

Incidents with demon-possessed people have been recorded where the demons begin to say things such as, "God is not fair! You humans have sinned, but you can get saved, and we cannot be saved. It is just not fair!"

The demons would love to get Christians to pity them. They don't want to be cast out. They would like to be able to feel "at home" and to have a person to dwell in and control. Otherwise, they are just roaming around the atmosphere, seeking people to devour and destroy.

A believer can allow his mind and emotions

to be influenced either by the Holy Spirit or by the spirit of darkness (James 3:13-18; Ephesians 4:27). As Christians, we cannot be possessed by demons (1 John 4:4); however, a Christian can become obsessed, heavily influenced by the demonic atmosphere.

The fact that we have a wall of fire around us is established in the positional truth that we are hid with Christ in God. The work of our salvation has been finished. We have been sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption (see Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 4:30). Jesus Christ dwells in us, and demons cannot dwell where Christ dwells. The power of the Holy Spirit enables us to submit to God and to resist the devil. When we obey God's Word and refuse to give him a place, the devil has to flee from us.

Thank God that He provides such hedges around us. We must not allow ourselves to forget that we are complete in Christ. Our salvation is eternally secure, and we are hid with Christ in God. Ultimately, though he may try, Satan cannot get to us because God protects His people with everlasting hedges of grace and mercy.

CONCLUSION

One of the Hebrew words for "hedge" (*gadar*, in the Old Testament) describes a fence made of stones. Those fences were often topped with thorns. To me, this is a great picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, our ultimate hedge and protector, who wore a crown of thorns.

Here is the beautiful principle: God has hidden us in His place of protection. Christ finished the work of our salvation and has hedged us about as "peculiar people"—prized and favored possessions. The Cross, where our Savior crowned with thorns died, stands between us and judgment, between us and defeat. The Son's victory established God's hedge of protection around us.

The attacks of the enemy have been thwarted by God's hedge of protection. And even when God allows the hedge to come down for a season, we have the awesome provision to be protected by a wall of fire, which speaks of

categorical doctrine: specific truth from God's Word to meet the specific situation in which we find ourselves.* Beyond that, the Lord uses the things Satan throws at us as a testimony of His power. Just as he did with the attacks on Job's life, the serpent will try again and again to poison our experience with God. But the fact remains that the hedges of protection and provision through unconditional love and the Finished Work encompass us, and we are His forever.

**Read* Building Walls of Doctrine*, by Pastor Carl. H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999, for more about our part in spiritual warfare.*

God Speaking to Us

What a Miracle!

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:9-14).

Many Christians today have never had their hearts and ears set apart to hear God's Word. Therefore, they are unable to hear God speak to them personally.

We must not be familiar with our opportunities to hear the Word of God. We should approach each time of listening as serious, sanctified hearers. Allow the Holy Spirit each day to teach you and develop your spiritual faculties so that you will understand spiritual things.

God wants to show us personally where we are in these last days. One thing is certain: we are living in the reality of 1 Peter 4:7, "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." Our best provision and protection for the last days is to have a circumcised heart and ear that will *hear* God's still small voice.

This booklet was created from one of Dr. Stevens' early morning college classes at Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore.

Chapter One

THE SALUTATIONS OF GOD

One of the greatest mysteries in the world is that *God desires to speak to each one of us.* And He *does* speak.

"To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken" (Jeremiah 6:10*a*). To have their ear "uncircumcised" means that God's chosen people had inattentive, wandering minds. They had not been converted in their capacity to listen.

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Isaiah 1:2). I always wondered why God wanted *heaven* to hear, but now I understand that it's because of the angelic conflict. Once again, the problem with Israel in Isaiah 1:2 was an uncircumcised ear.

Throughout the Bible, God addresses indi-

viduals, families, and entire nations on a very personal level revealed by His *salutations*. Like a father calling to his son or a teacher to his students, He begins by saying the name of the people He is speaking to.

In Jeremiah 22:29, God gives the only universal salutation in the entire Bible: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD." Why was that important? When Jesus was on the earth, Matthew 8:20 says that He had no place to lay His head. The earth did not give Jesus Christ—Who was God—a place to sleep.

"Hear the word of the Lord, O ye women" (Jeremiah 9:20) is a domestic salutation. The King James says "women," but in the original Hebrew, God is pleading specifically with mothers to teach their children. In Deuteronomy 6:7, God told parents to teach their children when they got up in the morning, while they walked in the way, and before they went to bed at night. Wherever they went and whatever they were doing, they were to teach their children diligently.

Sadly though, Israel did not obey God's commandment, in Deuteronomy 6. Because they didn't, Hosea 13:16 records that "their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with

child shall be ripped up." According to Jeremiah 9:20-21, the children and the young men would be killed in the streets. Soldiers would invade their houses and rape the women—all this because Israel would not listen to the Word of God.

In Jeremiah 7:17-18, we find an entire family worshipping "the queen of heaven." Instead of worshipping God, they were serving false gods. It is because of these things that God gave the salutations to Israel to hear His Word.

In the Gospel of John, we find the words "verily, verily" thirty-three times from the lips of Jesus. These words meant "What I am about to say is very important. " God used double salutations when speaking directly to people: "Moses, Moses" (Exodus 3:4); "Samuel, Samuel" (1 Samuel 3:10); "Saul, Saul" (Acts 9:4); "Martha, Martha" (Luke 10:41)." In each of these cases, God was about to say something that would change their lives forever.

Too Late to Hear?

In Jeremiah chapter 3:12, 14 and 22, the Lord said three times to Israel "Return." God had warned Israel in 1 Kings 9:6-7 that if they turned from following the LORD, then He would cut

them off from their land and they would become a "byword among all people."

God sent the prophet Jeremiah to King Zedekiah, who sat upon David's throne, saying, "Hear the Word of the LORD, O king of Judah" (Jeremiah 22:2). Refusing to hear, Zedekiah had Jeremiah thrown into the dungeon. Later, Zedekiah took him out of the dungeon and in chapter 37, The king beseeched the prophet, "Speak to us. Speak to us!" And Jeremiah said, "It's too late. The soldiers of Egypt and Pharaoh will go back to their land. The Chaldeans will come and destroy you. *It's too late*."

Stop reading for a moment. Close your eyes for sixty seconds and think of the times in the Bible where it was too late for someone. Think of the millions of people who are in hell today because it's too late for them. This is an eternal reality. Think of the person who says "no" to God. God no longer deals with that person, because he has said "no" so many times that his heart has become hardened beyond capacity, just like Pharaoh's heart.

God is Pleading

The only triple salutation in the Bible was written to Israel in Jeremiah 22:29, "O earth,

earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."

God gave national salutations (Jeremiah 2:4; Isaiah 1:2); He gave a domestic salutations to a families (Jeremiah 9:20-22); and He gave royal salutations (Jeremiah 22:1).

Two times in Hosea 2:2 God used the word, "plead." "Plead with your mother, plead"—"mother" referring to the nation of Israel.

Consider God in heaven, the creator of the universe. He sent His Son to die and shed His blood on the cross. Though Jesus had no place to lay His head, still He did everything possible to give men a way to heaven, to provide a way of escape, and to give them happiness and peace. Then, consider man, who so often does not listen to the Word of God.

I'll never forget the time a friend of mine who was serving jury duty told me that he wasn't sure whether the person on trial was guilty or not. My friend was in the courtroom and watched as the attorney went before the jurors and addressed one woman, saying "If you convict this man, your conscience will trouble you the rest of your life." Then the attorney wept. He went up to a gentleman in the jury and repeated his plea. Then he went back and wept in front of the jurors. Over and over, he pleaded with them.

When the proceedings were over, the jury found his client not guilty.

God is pleading with His people—*pleading*.

It's not a light thing to assemble day and night to hear the Word of God; hearing God speak is such a serious matter. The Lord desires to speak to us, and He *does* speak.

God spoke to Israel through Moses. He spoke to David through the prophet Nathan. Then God spoke to the rebellious, reactionary, hateful people of Judah through Jeremiah. Through John the Baptist, God spoke to the decadent, evil people who ended up cutting off John's head. When Jesus was on trial before Pontius Pilate, the multitude cried out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" (Luke 23:21). It was just as much the decision of the crowd as it was the leader's.

How We Hear

It is so important that when we hear the Word of God, we hear it not as the word of men, but "as it is in truth, the Word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Certainly we are not perfect. I'm a sinner as much as every other teacher. But as long as the message is from the Scriptures, we must hear it as the Word of God. This is why: The first thing we will be judged for at the Bema

Seat will be *how* we listened to the Word.

Romans 15:4 says the things that were "written aforetime were written for our learning." 1 Corinthians 10:11 tells us that all the things that happened to Israel and Judea happened for our example and admonition.

Foolish Jesting

One night years ago, I spoke at a church in another state. In my message, I mentioned how in Revelation 8, all of heaven will be silent for thirty minutes. It will be a time of unbelievable silence. The angels and the saints will stop singing. God showed what He was going to do as He poured out terrible judgments upon the earth (See: Zechariah 13:8). He would destroy one-third of the population along with one third of the oceans, the land, the moon and the stars. People would die, and the wrath of God would begin to take life after life, because people would not hear the Word of God.

During the rap session after the service, someone got up and said, "Well, after hearing that message tonight, I know there's one place where women will be silent."

I was angry. You never make foolish gestures about anything in the Word of God. It's okay to

laugh at the Balaam story (Numbers 22), because it's true, but you should never use the Word of God to make foolish gestures. That's taking something that was sacred and solemn and turning it into foolish jesting, something God tells us not to do.

Warnings and Exhortations

Life has so many sharp curves and steep inclines, so many dangerous precipices and rugged mountains that we must hear the Word of the Lord—hear it in all of its authenticity, in all of its glory, in all of its beauty. We must hear its warnings: "To whom shall I speak, and give warning?" (Jeremiah 6:10). God said they would not hear because their ears were uncircumcised. They didn't have a capacity. Their spiritual faculties and spiritual senses were dull. Therefore, they did not have the ability to retain the Word of God.

Throughout the Scriptures, God asked His people many questions. In Jeremiah 2:5, He asked, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" And in Isaiah 5:4*a*, "What could have been done more to my vineyard [Israel], that I have not done in it?"

Many in the last days will change their doc-

trine. For example, some are changing their view on the Rapture of the Church from the pre-tribulation to the mid-tribulation or the post-tribulation view. In doing so, they spiritualize the book of Revelation, making the entire book an allegory. These people have never had their ears circumcised to hear the Word of God.

"And boast not thyself for tomorrow, because you do not know what a day will bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1). The opportunities we have to hear the Word of God go by so quickly. That's why it is so important to be serious, sanctified hearers. Let the Holy Spirit teach you and develop your spiritual faculties and spiritual senses so that you will understand spiritual things. God will show you privately and personally where we are in these last days. We are living in the reality of 1 Peter 4:7*a*, "The end of all things is at hand."

Hear and Tremble at God's Word

How does God speak? In Revelation 1:15, His voice is as the sound of many waters. In John 7:37-38, Jesus spoke with a loud voice. But in Isaiah 51:12, God spoke with a comfortable voice. To Elijah He spoke with a still small voice (1 Kings 19:12).

Yes, He speaks in many different ways. He says to His people in Isaiah 66:2, I will "*bless*" (says the original Hebrew text) "…him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My word." "Tremble" means "stop being anxious." This speaks of someone who throws away all anxiety and puts aside every wandering thought so he can hear. Put aside every reflection in your soul; lay aside the things in your life that you want to be a certain way. Don't consider another thing because *God is speaking*.

In verse 5 of Isaiah 66, "Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word," because there are many who will not hearken to it.

Jesus Christ is always dealing with His people. Consider what has happened to the Jewish people, how they were buried alive in trenches, and their children killed, just as Hosea 13:16 predicted. The Jewish people are precious. Many are getting saved today. The entire nation will be saved at the end of the Tribulation Period when Jesus Christ returns to earth in His Second Advent. Because they will see His wounds, Israel will recognize that He, indeed, is the Messiah, and once again, they will be the client nation during the Millennial Reign. Please understand that the reason any one of us undergo serious

and continual judgment, is because we do not *hear* the Word of the Lord.

It is no wonder that in Isaiah 55:3, God says, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live." Do not think without hearing from God. That is why God says, "Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). This is so important, I could never emphasize it enough.

In Mark 4:24 and Luke 8:18, the Word of God instructs us to be careful *what* and *how* we hear. And in Ecclesiastes 5, we must be "more ready to hear." In Leviticus 14:13-16, the priest had to have the blood first, then the oil, placed on his right ear, because he had to be set apart and anointed to hear.

Chapter Two

CHOSEN BY GOD

Acts 19 speaks of the great temple of "Diana." It was the most magnificent structure in that part of the world at that time. According to ancient history, Diana worshippers suffered persecution and the original temple was destroyed. Deeply religious, they labored to rebuild the temple where they would bow, weeping and mourning their loss as they worshiped this false goddess. It was to a group of people that were saved and delivered from the worship of Diana that Paul wrote the epistle to the Ephesians.

Likewise, Israel in their captivity still placed Jerusalem—the holy city—ahead of God (See, Psalm 137.). They lost all their possessions, their homes, and their crops; yet, even after going into captivity (because of disobedience to the Word of God), they had the audacity to say, "Oh, we long for our land. We miss our property. We

miss what we had." Depressed, they couldn't play their harps; they couldn't sing in a strange land.

We Are God's Very Own

Verses 1-6 of Ephesians chapter 1 deal with the Father's plan. Verses 7-12 deal with the Son's execution of the Father's plan of redemption, and verses 13-14 deal with the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

In the book of Ephesians, "grace" is mentioned twelve times. "Spiritual" is found three times, and "heavenly" four times. "Mystery" appears six times, "the body" seven times, and "walk" eight times. "In Christ" (or "in Him") is found ninety-three times (eighty-nine times in the Greek).

God is saying to the Ephesians, and to us, "I want you to be My very own."

There's a beautiful song called "His Very Own." It goes like this:

His very own, His very own,
Wonderful grace and His Word is made known.
Chosen by the Father, purchased by the Son,
Sealed by the Spirit, because the work is done—
We are His very own!

Think of that; we are His very own! That's

what Ephesians is all about.

Before Time Began

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4).

"According as he hath chosen us" is *kathos exelexato hemas* in the Greek. "According as" (*kathos*) means that God is going to give the reason we were chosen. "Chosen" is a gnomic aorist middle indicative of *eklego*. The gnomic aorist is a timeless aorist revealing that God chose us before time began! The middle voice means the subject [the Father] produced the action of choosing us and He will receive the final benefits. The indicative mood is an assertion of reality. *Eklego* means "a special choice based upon significant preference." It is God's purpose according to His choice (Acts 13:17); and, God's choice is the result of His own purpose (Romans 9:11). So because of God's choice (Romans 11:28), we have become His friends.

"In him" is *en auto*. *En* is a preposition and *auto* is a masculine pronoun in the dative case of advantage. *En* with the dative denotes static position, or the position in which one has been

made to stand forever. So "According as he has chosen us in him" points to our position in Christ where we have been made to stand, because we were chosen in the plan of grace before the foundation of the world. God knew in His foreknowledge that we would respond with positive volition in time toward the gospel.

Knowing the One Who Knows Us

God is saying, "I know you by name, and I knew you in eternity past. You may think you're unimportant, or that you don't have value to me. You may think that I don't respect you, but I do. I have given you amazing dignity. Because I knew that you would respond to Jesus and the Gospel, I elected you by grace. Billions of years ago, *I knew you*. I knew every single thing about your life, every single sin you would ever commit, and every single decision you would ever make—I knew it all.

"You must never be a stranger to My voice. You must never be a stranger to My Word. I've known you from eternity past. Now I want you to get to know Me in time so that you can spend the future in eternity with Me in intimacy."

People get so troubled about how much money they're going to make, where they're

going to live, and what they're going to do, when these things are not the issue. The issue is, Where can I best get to know God?

I don't want to hear strangers' voices because of materialism, or because I want to be affluent (there's nothing wrong with being affluent if it's God's will). I want to hear Jesus Christ's voice. I want to hear the Word of God from the pulpit. I want to hear in the place where I can grow, and be conformed to Christ's image. I want to be transformed every moment that I live by His Word—the mind of Christ.

Three of the most crucial things on earth is your availability to hear, how you hear, and having the right person to teach you. Don't let the cares and pleasures of this world, and the deceitfulness of materialism take the Word of God out of your heart (Mark 4:18).

Chapter Three

SET APART TO SPEAK TO HIM

God desires so much for His children to speak to Him. He says, "Even if you can't say anything good to Me, say something. I want you to talk to Me often. Even if you don't feel that you know Me, even if you don't want to talk with Me, you're My child, talk to Me! Say something. Say anything, but say *something!* I want to hear you speak!"

Insulting Silence

A wealthy man who was a deacon in a Baptist church had a wonderful wife and three beautiful daughters. I knew this man's pastor who was previously the pastor of large churches in Canada and Philadelphia. We shared the pulpit during a two-week crusade in New York.

One of the deacon's daughters asked the pastor, "Could you come to our house? My father is planning to divorce my mom!" The pastor

agreed, and upon arriving at the house he said to the deacon, "I'm going to get right to the point. I'm your pastor-teacher. You've been such a wonderful man. You have your own radio broadcast. You're a phenomenal giver. You have served the church magnificently. I love you! I love your family. Is it true that you are going to divorce your wife?"

The deacon replied, "Yes sir, it's true. My wife is the most wonderful mother that I could ever have for my children. She is a wonderful housekeeper and a loving person. But please understand. For years I have tried to have fellowship with her, but there is always an insulting silence. We never talk. I come home and try to initiate conversation, but she just won't talk."

Then he told his pastor, "I don't ever plan to get remarried. I'm going to live purely, but I cannot stand the insulting silence any longer."

Do you know that God says to some people, "I cannot stand your insulting silence—Talk to Me! You talk to people, and you're always wondering if people care for you, and if they're going to be close to you forever. You depend on people, so you talk to them. But I want you to talk to Me! And then fellowship with people in *Me*."

This deacon ended up getting the divorce, and it broke his pastor's heart. I do not agree with him. I just told you the story, because it's true.

God's Verily, Verily's

God has chosen each of us before the foundation of the world. He knows us by name. Don't think for a moment that God doesn't use double salutations to address you in His still small voice. He does, but we don't hear Him speak because we don't know how.

If you study the twenty-four "verily, verily's," in the gospel of John, your heart will respond wherever you may be in your life. For example, in John 5:24, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life [right now], and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." As you focus on God's verily, verily's, you will experience an amazing mental and emotional response to truth when the Holy Spirit teaches you, because you have not received the spirit of the world. You are not consumed with details of life. In reality, it's easier to deal with the details of life when you're walking with God.

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should *be holy* and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4).

God is saying to us, "I chose you by my standard of mercy, and by My standard of grace, and I want you to be holy."

The words "be holy" are found thirty-nine times in the Scriptures. The first occurrence is in Exodus 22:31 when God said, "Ye shall be holy men unto me." I can hear His voice saying this to me. He speaks so beautifully. I can hear the compassion in His voice, and yet I hear the urgency and fervency of His voice in Leviticus 11:44, "I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy."

This does not mean that we should be hyper spiritual. None of us is perfect in our experience. But it does mean to be separated unto a thorough commitment to the Cross, to the mandates of God, and to the promises of God. Listen to God's voice as He says to you, "Be separated unto Me, My plan, My Person, My provision, and My peace."

Leviticus 19:2*b* says, "Ye shall be holy: for I

the LORD God am holy." He says it again in Leviticus 20:7, 26, and in Numbers 15:40, "That ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God." In Numbers 16:7*b*, "And it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth choose, he shall be holy."

In 1 Peter 1:15-16, God is saying, "I want you. I'm very jealous over you, and I want you to be separated unto Me. And by being separated unto Me, you will indeed have a life that is incomprehensible. When you face the sharp curves and the rugged mountains, and the dangerous precipices, you will be able to face them with Me. And you will understand what I meant when I said that all the Scriptures are inspired—*all of them*." (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Every word of Scripture is inspired. They are all profitable, and God wants His words to dwell richly in you. You will never be sorry that you took the time to let the Scriptures dwell in you. Your children will not end up like Israel in the Old Testament, and your young men will not have to be killed in the street. And your fathers will not have to lose everything because of God's judgment. Your women will not have to fear soldiers from the Chaldean army coming through locked doors to rape them. (This is

speaking of a nation that was in the fifth cycle of discipline because of their repeated refusal to respond to the Lord's pleading.*)

God is saying to us, "I will prosper and bless you." He said to Israel, "I'll make you a great nation." And Joshua and Caleb's victory in Canaan was followed by forty years of peace. God blessed them because they obeyed. Their confession was, "We can do it," and they were blessed. God does want to bless us, but He wants us to be holy, and He wants us to be without blame.

Without Blame

Ephesians 1:4 goes on to say that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy "and without blame" (*kai amomous*). This means to have no obvious defects or spots; to have no scars in the emotions, no defects in the subconscious mind that would diminish your spiritual beauty.

God is saying, "I don't want you to have wounded emotions. I don't want you to keep confessing your defects. But I want you to know that my blood and my grace cleanses and purges your conscience (Hebrews 9:14), and that rebound results in absolute restoration of fellowship."

Therefore, "without blame" really means that God doesn't want our unconscious mind to be scarred. He doesn't want any defects. He doesn't want our soul to diminish in its spiritual beauty.

Before Him in Love

God Almighty has told us that He wants us to be without blame and to be before Him in love. "Before him," *katenopion auto,* a preposition in the genitive case, means to be "in the presence of, made a participant, having His viewpoint."

Not only that, the Lord defines our position further by saying that we are before Him "in love," *en agape*. "In" (*en*) is a preposition followed by the dative referring to a position without certain limits. It marks a state, or condition.

Because of the Finished Work of Calvary, we are in a place with God that has no limits. That place is called "love." We are living in the presence of love, and God's love has no limits!

The Bible with its doctrine is simply God's highway in time on earth; the Word is God speaking to us—what a miracle!

**For more about God's judgments on nations and the cycles of discipline, read* Dealing with Stressful Times, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. We stand "without blame before him in love."

The Lord says, "I don't want you asking a thousand questions when I've already provided everything that you will ever need—if you will only *talk to Me*. If only you will pray to Me, and believe Me, you won't have to ask people so many questions. Just throw yourself on Me and act in faith; praise Me, worship Me, love Me, and respond to Me. I will provide everything you will ever need for your journey on earth."

Since Adam fell, God has been calling out to His people to turn to Him. The words of the Lord have been given to faithful men throughout time. Without exception, God has chosen to speak through sinners. Still, each one was chosen because of a plan more vast than the universe that contained it, and more intricate and specific than the tiniest particle that participates

in the foundations of the magnificent creation we can see:

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Can you fathom the value God has placed on His words that He speaks to men? Then fathom the depths of His love for souls whom He has chosen for a purpose to participate in His perfect and eternal plan. Are you listening? God is speaking.

God Still Loves to Heal

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

There are many Christians who trust God for their salvation, but they may not trust Him for their health. The Bible is filled with clear descriptions of miraculous healing and deliverance, of common people raised from the dead. Yet the omnipotent God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever is somehow limited by our unbelief. Recently someone remarked, "It is time for believers to confess that Jesus Christ *is* their healer rather than confess they need a healing."

Of course, God allows afflictions to promote His purposes. Great men like the apostle Paul were afflicted without a healing, yet they grew to love God even more. We all know of people who have not been healed, and in their sickness, the Body of Christ is edified and God is glorified. We also know that some people simply need to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Healer who has a plan to make them whole.

The Bible reveals testimonies of arrogant men humbled and wicked men consumed by strange diseases. But for anyone who has a desire to know God, He has a greater desire to reveal His nature, His purpose, and His provision. This booklet explores the healing nature of our God who does not change—who *still* loves to heal.

Chapter One

BORN INTO A BODY OF DEATH

"Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it" (Jeremiah 1:12).

"But Jesus said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

Sickness is a strange thing. One aspect of Satan's kingdom is seen in 2 Chronicles 21:14-19, which reveals an army of demons called *Malakia ponera*. Their entire job is to cause sicknesses of every kind, using the atmosphere, food, negative vibrations, and many other means. God allowed this army to attack and destroy Jehoram, the wicked king of Judah: "And it came to pass, that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases" (2 Chronicles 21:19*a*).

Obviously, there are many natural causes for

sickness, as well as supernatural and multiple causes. Regardless of the source, when sickness comes on, the average person will give it a place. It may begin with the oppression of the mind or with an affliction of the body. But in every case, Satan's goal is to isolate, weaken, and destroy the object of the attack. In Jehoram's case, God used it for His purposes.

In Luke 13:11-13, however, we see an example of someone many of us can identify with. A woman had a back condition. She was bent over with "a spirit of infirmity" (*Pneuma astheneia* in verse 11) for eighteen years, and it was done through Satan. Though she remained faithful going to church, her depressed mental attitude was normal. She had been humped over for eighteen years, but it was *not* a natural cause. And for eighteen years, she walked in a mental attitude of the flesh, not knowing what caused her sickness.

When we were saved, we were placed inside of Christ, positionally. But if we do not actively choose to walk in the Spirit in every situation regarding our health, we may give a place for the government of Satan to cause sicknesses, both mental and physical. *Pneuma astheneia* is a spirit from the demon army that specializes in causing

physical afflictions. They do not touch the mind. That is the job of *Katadunasteuo diabolos*, specialized to oppress the mind and to cause depression (Acts 10:38).

Demons known as *Daimoniou akathartou* (Luke 4:33; 9:42; Revelation 18:2) come in to cause fornication and adultery and to lead people into lust, pornography, and X-rated movies. That is their area of specialization.

So you see, most demons don't have many jobs. They are assigned one task, but they are sent as armies into cities, according to Isaiah 14:17. Often we think of Satan's government as highly reactionary and disorderly. But in fact, though they lack omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, the armies of demons are very skillful and well-organized, with a definite purpose: to destroy the work of God and preserve their right to rule.

What Satan Was Lacking

Before Satan fell, he was part of a perfect government. He wore a covering of sardius, topaz, diamond, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle (Ezekiel 28:13). These nine precious stones, worked into a garment of gold, characterized the fruit of knowing God.*

That was why he could be promoted to be a guardian of God's throne and the only angel to have access to some of the meetings with the determinate counsel of the Trinity (Acts 2:23).

Later, through His people Israel, God established a government to represent His heavenly Kingdom on earth. The high priest had access to the holy of holies in the tabernacle where the presence of God was, and he wore a breastplate of gold covered with twelve precious stones (Exodus 28:17-20). Besides the nine stones worn by Satan, the high priest was given three more: ligure, agate, and amethyst. These stood for justice, righteousness, and integrity, representing God's nature, manifested in us as obedience, faith, and steadfastness. Those stones were not given to Satan even when he was perfect, because God knew through foreknowledge he would fall.

Behind the Scene at the Eternal Convention

When the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit met to discuss the eternal plan of God (Isaiah 46:10 and Acts 2:23), the Father presented the plan, the Son volunteered to execute it, and the Holy Spirit agreed to reveal it and to glorify everything about the Son.

"So now," the Father said, "We are going to

create a human race. They will be made in Our image. We will give them free volition, though the first man, Adam, will use it to choose disobedience (Romans 5:12-15). After sin enters the world because of the fall of Adam and Eve, We will impute sin to every human being *before* they sin (Romans 5:12). We know that with the ability to choose, they will all personally choose to sin. As soon as they are born, they will go astray telling lies (Psalm 51:5; Isaiah 53:6). Therefore, We will impute sin first so We are free to impute righteousness later.**

"Then, My Son, I am going to send You to the world. You will be the God-Man, living in a hypostatic union: both perfect God and perfect Man. You will not use Your deity, though You are God. Instead, You will empty Yourself and live as a man. You will die on the Cross of Calvary to pay for every sin the entire human race will ever commit" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:6; and 1 John 2:2).

"You will pay for everybody's sins. Anyone who rejects Your payment will live in hell forever—not because of their sins, but because of judgment for rejecting Christ.

"As a result of Adam's sin, they will live in bodies of death. Sickness will work its way in

through natural and supernatural causes. Once a person knows You as the Savior, if he becomes occupied with anything else—with himself, with being good, with details of life, or even with growing old—then we may allow trials and sickness that will bring his focus back to Us."

That woman who had the back condition for eighteen years never knew there was a supernatural cause. Specialized demons may bring fear to a person who goes a long time with an unrelenting sickness. If left unchecked, fear leads to psychosomatic illnesses that begin in the mind and have actual physical manifestations in the body.

Medical experts are quick to verify that stress more than any other factor leads to physical diseases, including cancer. Because of the times we are living in, we need to know God's provision for our health.

**For more about this subject, read* Coverings, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

***For more about the doctrine of imputations, read* Choose Whom You Will Serve, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Two

THE KEY TO HEALING: WALK IN THE SPIRIT

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

Satan constantly wants permission from God to test Christians (Job 1:6-12). Therefore, it is vital that we know the key to spiritual and physical health that is found in Galatians 5:16. One of the greatest ways of keeping well is to walk in the Spirit and to live in the Word of God's grace and love.

Satan constantly tries to make people confess how they feel. He knows that our confession reinforces how we feel, so he wants us to confess something apart from faith.

Stop being occupied with yourself! Walk in a living faith through the Holy Spirit. Healing comes by walking in the Spirit.

Healing isn't something God does. Healing

is the nature of who God is, an expression of His essence. God's nature is forgiveness. God's nature is restoration through a gift of grace. God's nature is healing. Everything about God heals.

Tormented with Sickness?

For instance, we can look at the issue of forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-35. Peter said, "Lord, how often should we forgive a brother who sins? Seven times?" And Jesus answered, "Not seven times but *seventy times seven*"—an idiom of speech that means indefinite forgiveness.

Then the Lord told the story of a certain king who was owed money by one of his servants—ten thousand talents, which in today's economy equals several million dollars. When the servant said, "Have patience with me," the king forgave him the entire amount.

Later, the same servant was owed one hundred pence, which equals fifteen dollars. When the man couldn't pay it, the servant took him by the neck and threw him in jail. The king became so angry when he heard what happened, he delivered the wicked servant to the "tormentors" until the last penny of the original debt was paid.

In Matthew 4:23-24 and Matthew 8:6-7, "tor-

ments" describes the terrible spiritual and mental afflictions people suffer when they continue in sin. In the Bible, when people trusted Jesus for healing, often when He healed them He also declared that they were forgiven. We have been forgiven a debt greater than what most of us can ever imagine. When people forget that and refuse to forgive their debtors, they may be turned over to the "tormentors," which may even include sickness.

Receive God's Nature

"For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

"Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:23-25).

Faith should encourage us to always believe God for healing, victory, and power. He has a

perfect plan and a perfect provision for what happens. Early on in his trials, Job confessed his trust in God's sovereignty: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). Job faced many more tests, and sometimes he failed. In the end, God gave him back double of all he ever lost, but the turnabout came when Job prayed for his friends (Job 42:10-12).

God has attached my willingness to forgive as a condition for moving the mountain. When I have an attitude of forgiveness toward another or even myself, I have God's nature, which forgives. It not only forgives others, but it totally forgives me of the hidden things for which I couldn't otherwise forgive myself.

Healing Comes by the Word

God says, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2).

Verse after verse is saying, "Be healed and be saved *God's* way—through the Word!"

"He sent his *word*, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Psalm 107:20).

"Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the

abundance of peace and truth" (Jeremiah 33:6).

In Jeremiah 30:17, God says He will restore health to the nation. How will He do these things? By His Word! The principle here is that hearing God's Word is vital to our health. Everything about the Word of God is pure (Proverbs 30:5).

Chapter Three

EXPECT A MIRACLE

As we walk in what we have heard, the nature of abundant life comes in. Abundant life heals the soul as it begins to work its way through the cells of the body, transmitting godly impulses to the brain, through the spinal column, and to every part of the body. This is the beginning of a process called "a miracle."

Physical birth is a miracle. The New Birth is a miracle. And when God heals a body or a marriage, it is a miracle.

I know of a couple who are both amazing servants of God. For four years, this man was unfaithful to his wife. She believed God as she walked in the spirit of patience and in the spirit of forgiveness. She continued to walk in faith and in the spirit of fellowship, never withdrawing from fellowship in the Body of Christ but always drawing near to God as the provision for her life. After four years, he came back. The chil-

dren have been redeemed, and this couple have a phenomenal marriage and family life.

Do you know why that took place? She walked in the spirit of reconciliation when there was no reconciliation. That is the nature of God!

Can you see it? If a man is saved, he is *in* the Spirit already. But Galatians 5:25 says that if we live in the Spirit—and we do through salvation—let's also walk in the Spirit. Then, our experience will reflect our position. He will perform a miracle of healing—physically, mentally, and spiritually—and it will glorify himself and edify us.

Watch What You Say

God's nature has no problem with our sickness. But too often, the problem is with our confession. Some people go around confessing that they are depressed. But only a small percentage of depression is bona fide, and that is usually due to a physical problem, which may be easily treated, or simply from missing someone we love. It isn't a depression marked by self-absorption, and it is overcome in time.

We can be so thankful that the Scriptures clearly prove God's faithfulness to us. In Deuteronomy 7:9, God is called faithful. In Revelation

1:5, He is a faithful witness. In Revelation 3:14, He is a true and faithful witness. When He comes back on a white horse, in Revelation 19:11, His name shall be called "Faithful and True," and we will follow Him in the Second Advent.

The Word of God says in Psalm 36:5, "Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds."

His faithfulness is established in the heavens (Psalm 89:2). Then in Psalm 89:5, we read that His faithfulness reaches the congregation of the saints. When we pray, Psalm 143:1 says He answers us in faithfulness because of His nature. And no matter what we are facing, we can always confess His faithfulness.

It Is God's Desire to Heal Us

When the Lord Jesus was in Jerusalem looking over the city (Luke 19:41), He wept, and He said, "Oh, if you only knew the things you could have had! But you are not going to have them."

Oh, if we only knew the things that we could have. Our faith is not in healing; our faith is in a *Person*! Not only is our faith in a Person, but the Word of God says in 1 Samuel 26:23 that He gives His righteousness and His faithfulness

to His people.

It is a wonderful thing that Satan has to witness our salvation. Satan also has to witness reconciliation in marriages, and he has to witness complete emotional healing and total forgiveness that holds nothing back from grace. The body of a believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), and Satan hates to see God's temple healthy. He despises the sight of a physical body that is being healed.

Years ago a woman in our church broke her hand. She said, "I think if you'd pray, God would heal me."

I said, "Okay, let's pray."

And we said, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, those bones are all broken, Lord; and we pray in Your name that the mountain of these broken bones would be removed. In our hearts, we are not doubting. And You said, 'You will have whatsoever you saith. And if you desire it in your heart, and you pray, you shall have them.' Okay, Lord. We don't have any grudges against anyone, so we have the nature of God going for us. Therefore, in the nature of Jesus Christ, heal her."

And this is God's honest, documented truth. She took the cast off. (Her faith was much better

than mine. I didn't want her to do that!) But she said, "No. I know it's all right. It's all right."

Again, I encouraged her to go to the doctor and have him take it off—and then he could put it back on!

And she said, "No! I believe *Him*. He made the stars, and the moon, and the sun. He made the world, and He holds everything together by the power of His Word." Then she started wiggling her hand. She was healed. Totally, absolutely, instantly healed.

We heard a testimony recently of a person who was healed of a mass on the liver—totally healed, with two doctors' reports to prove it.

A woman who had been in a wheelchair for nine months and was in the last stages of cancer attended a meeting we held in Boston. Looking pale, she came down to the front when we prayed for the sick, and she was gloriously healed. Do you know what did it? God's nature! God's nature heals the sick.

He Is Waiting to be Gracious

Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost. He came so we could be free from the dominion and habit of sin (Luke 19:10). But He also came to heal the brokenhearted, to heal the

wounds. By healing the wounds, He also often heals the body. Not only that, He also came to open prison doors, to set at liberty those that are captives, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).

This is the point: According to Malachi 3:6 and Hebrews 13:8, God does not change. He is just the same yesterday, today, and forever. But if I become occupied with how long I've had the disease, if I'm occupied with the thought that God probably doesn't love me because He hasn't healed me, then I am occupied with the disease. I may be a nice person, yet I am walking in the flesh regarding the disease and not in the spirit of healing.

It is so important to develop faith fields! James 2:5 says we may be poor in this world but rich in faith. In Acts 6:5, God looks for men who are full of faith. That is what God wants. He wants us to be rich in faith in a Person, full of faith in a Person. And He wants us to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Without faith, it is impossible to please God. And those that come to Him by faith, He will reward and honor. He is a rewarder of them that seek Him.

If you want to, you can exercise faith in Jesus Christ right now. Forget your doubts, forget your worries and your problems, forget your disease. Take your eyes off the fact that you have been depressed off and on for many years. Get your eyes off yourself! Turn your eyes onto Jesus, who is the Healer. In Matthew 8, Jesus Christ healed the leper. In Matthew 9, He healed the blind, the lame, and the diseased; He raised the dead and cast out demons. In Luke 13, He healed. He healed them of *all* their sicknesses (Matthew 9:35). And today, He continues to heal—because that is God's nature!

Very seldom do Christians define the demons that cause sickness, but when we rightly divide the Scriptures, it is evident that they do cause sickness. Therefore, we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. That doesn't only refer to sin. We are to make no provision for the things that could plague the flesh, enter into the flesh, ruin the flesh, or destroy the flesh.

Why did God say that He is just the same yesterday, today, and forever? Why would you think He doesn't love you as much as He loved

the people He has healed? God's compassion *has not changed*. That's right! His compassion has not changed. His power has not changed. God's willingness has not changed, God's love has not changed, and God's ability has not changed.

Chapter Four

KNOW THE NATURE OF THE HEALER

In Luke 8:43-48, when that woman with the issue of blood came to Jesus Christ, she was afraid. Because of the nature of her disease, she was despised by the community, excommunicated, divorced, and ostracized.

But when she grabbed hold of the hem of Jesus' garment, He stopped and said, "Someone has touched Me."

Peter said, "Lord, everybody's around You and thronging about You."

The Lord said, "No, I perceive that virtue has gone out of Me. Somebody has touched Me by faith."

When she saw that she couldn't be hid, she came trembling, and verse 47 says that she was immediately healed.

Jesus said to her, "Daughter…." Daughter!—such a loving word to a woman who was con-

sidered untouchable, until He touched her.

"Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

How was that possible? He could both touch her and heal her because she was available to believe, and He was available to release His nature to heal this woman's condition.

The Battle Is the Lord's

Satan is mentally and emotionally sick. That is his nature. So he likes to make people sick physically, mentally, and emotionally.

God's nature is to restore from sin, to restore people when they are backslidden. God's nature is to take away grudges lodged in the unconscious mind and to remove the effects of what happened in the past. God's nature is to heal your spirit, your soul, your body. God's nature is to forgive and to restore fallen men.

In 2 Corinthians 1:20 we read, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, *unto the glory of God [through] us*." All of His promises are yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God—through us!

It doesn't matter that Satan hates when good things happen to us; God is for us! Who can be against us?

In Genesis 18:14 we read, "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" The answer is no. Jesus said that what is impossible for men is possible with God (Matthew 19:26). "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

The Healing Heart of Compassion

When the Lord saw all the people who were lost, He wept. When He saw the people who were sick, He wept with compassion. He cast out demons. He performed every kind of miracle. And except for the people of Nazareth who didn't have any faith (Matthew 13:54-58), when people went home, they went home healed.

Some people will read this booklet and begin to condemn themselves and become introspective. Don't do it. Let the Lord Jesus Christ purge your conscience. Don't be introspective. Don't analyze yourself and then condemn yourself. Instead, let Him say, "Listen to Me; I love you. Your faith in Me has made you whole."

If that woman with cancer could be healed, if the person with the bad liver was healed, and if broken bones can be healed, as well as many other cases, there is not a reason for you not to be healed also, except for the plan of God.

This is the issue when it comes to healing: Faith cometh by hearing; hearing comes by the Word of God. With the Word of God, we receive the living nature of God. And with the Word of God, we get the power of the nature of God. When we receive the Word of God, the glory of God will be reflected on the inside (2 Corinthians 3:18). When we receive His power and His glory, and as we walk in resurrection life, then love, mercy, and compassion come in, and we walk in the nature of God. By the way, it doesn't have to be a long process. It can happen so quickly that we won't know what happened.

The nature of God says, "I made you, so I can fix what needs fixing. The Bible is like a manual that will show you what you need to know about Me, about yourself, and about how I made you."

Do you want to be happy? Do you want to be free from guilt? Do you want to be wholesome? Do you want to be more healthy than you have ever been in your life? Just believe God and receive your healing.

Believe God for every kind of healing, from your soul to your body—in your marriage, your

emotions, your finances, your business. Believe God for the times you want to withdraw for weeks at a time.

When your soul is healed, you will withdraw from sensuality to walk in the spirit of purity and light. Don't live always remembering what somebody did against you. Later on, you will find that entertaining old wounds will cause you to be sick through the law of sin and death.

What did David mean when he said, "For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall," in Psalm 18:29? He meant, "I am so free that it is a pitiful defeat for the devil." In other words, we can run through demonic troops that come against us and leap over the walls they put up, and we will come out on the other side of the attack and be whole.

The Word of God declares that God still loves to heal. There is not one verse of Scripture where God says otherwise. Yet so many of us do not consider that God's nature is to heal. We think in terms of theology, but we don't think in terms of healing. We think about getting old and accepting sickness as a fact of life. Why should we accept that?

I can't believe *for* you, but I can believe for myself, and then I will believe *with* you—if you

will only believe. God is faithful. His faithfulness reaches to His people (Psalm 89:5), and He answers us in His faithfulness (Psalm 143:1). His faithfulness is revealed in His love toward us.

CONCLUSION

As you walk in Christ, you will desire to know the nature of Christ and to let His nature fill you. If you have a problem that needs a healing touch from God, first be occupied with the healer. Then, put your foot down and claim that territory. Every place the sole of your foot shall touch shall be yours. Wherever you are, just put that foot down, as touching the place that needs to be conquered.

We could get rid of so many doctors' bills. Of course we thank God for doctors and nurses and hospitals. They are often a part of His healing process. But God desires that we would trust Him first. Did God have any problem healing in the Gospels? He certainly didn't. We need to declare what God has done, believe it, confess it, and praise Him for it.

Precious Father, we pray for all manner of afflictions and all manner of diseases. Do a mighty work of healing, just a supernatural provision of grace by love

through the Holy Spirit.

We pray for arthritis, for cancer, for ulcers, for poor eyesight, for any defects in the bones. Lord, whatever it is, heal in the name of Jesus Christ.

We pray You will heal every kind of marital problem. We pray for reconciliation of hearts where there is incompatibility. We pray for hearts of forgiveness that will last forever through the nature of the Holy Spirit.

The nature of God can heal satanic afflictions and oppression. We pray that fear, paranoia, and insecurity will be dispelled through the nature of love.

We pray for a total healing from bulimia and anorexia and problems with self-image. The nature of God can keep people slim while they eat balanced meals.

We pray for victory over promiscuity, drugs, and liquor, and the devastating effects of these sins when they are compounded. The nature of God can deliver people in a moment. The nature of God can heal AIDS and herpes.

We give thanks in the name of Jesus Christ. And what we ask, we will receive. If we believe, we will have what we say because of the nature and impartation of God's Holy Spirit.

Father, again we ask You to bless the Word of God to our hearts. We love You, and praise You, and

ask You to heal souls and bodies and marriages, and heal problems from things in the past. May the Word of God reveal victory, power, and the light of love, in Jesus' name. Amen.

God's Greatest Gift:

The Lamb

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Romans 8:36).

If we behold God's Lamb, Jesus Christ, then being led *daily* as sheep to the slaughter is not a burden; it is a great privilege. But, a believer will never desire to qualify for this privilege until he understands this message. If I am walking in the light, confessed up to date, there is always a wonderful purpose for the next thing God allows in my life—whether it's a blessing, or a blessing in disguise because of suffering.

However, most people do not behold the Lamb. Instead, they behold lust patterns in sick minds. People who complain are not following the Lamb. People who live in negativity or depression are not following the Lamb.

Those who follow the Lamb recognize Him as God's greatest gift to man. I will follow the

Lamb because I behold Him. I become occupied with His nature, gazing upon His meekness and gentleness, which were expressed on my behalf at the Cross and are still expressed as He intercedes for me in heaven. Knowing this gives me the desire to follow the Lamb and lay down my life with a lamb-like spirit.

I cannot behold two things at once. I cannot behold my problems *and* the Lamb; one would interfere with the other. So, I learn to behold the Lamb, placing Jesus Christ before everything in my life, which reveals great honor—a tribute to Him, who alone deserves all the glory.

Chapter One

THE LAMB THAT TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Lambs were made to be used as food and to provide wool for garments. They are gentle creatures. Therefore, the Lord likened Himself unto a lamb.

After thousands and thousands of ceremonial sacrifices through the ages, perhaps we can have some idea of how tremendous that event was when John the Baptist realized who Jesus Christ was and is. Imagine how John must have felt at that moment when he beheld the Lamb of God coming toward him! With his understanding of the Passover and what the lamb represented in the Old Testament sacrifices, this wonderful man of God cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God."

Throughout the Scriptures, the lamb is always included as part of the Passover. In Exodus 12:3-8 God established the Passover: "In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it."

In Numbers 9:2-3, the Lord told Moses concerning the Passover, "Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season

…according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it."

The children of Israel were to eat all of the lamb on the same night it was prepared, so they could go on their journey; nothing was to be left until the morning (Exodus 12:10). "And [Pharaoh] called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said" (Exodus 12:31).

The Two Goats

"And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:7-10).

In Leviticus 16, there were two goats, which picture of the God-ward and man-ward aspects

of the sacrifice of the Lamb—*expiation* and *propitiation*. In expiation, Jesus Christ died, representing all men, to satisfy the demands of the Father's perfect justice and holiness. In propitiation, Christ paid the price of sin for man so that man could have free access to God through mercy. Too often, expiation and propitiation are confused because people think they are interchangeable terms, but they are not. That's why there were two goats—one for God and one for us.

As the lot fell upon the scapegoat of Leviticus 16:8, so the lot of expiation had to fall on Jesus, but He first had to vindicate the holiness, righteousness, and justice of God's majesty by living His life on earth without sin. If the Father's justice had not been vindicated by the Son's sinless life, the lot would never have been able to fall upon Him as the scapegoat, who carried our sins away.

Chapter Two

THE LAMB IN ETERNITY

"And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood the Lamb *as it had been slain*…" (Revelation 5:6).

Think of all the sacrifices that had been made under the law, to meet the needs of so many. Then, finally, the Son of God comes on the scene! I hope when I'm in heaven, God will allow me to see an eternal picture of that moment when John saw Jesus and cried out, "Behold the Lamb." What a moment that must have been.

Consider the gentleness and meekness of Jesus, who was "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7). We will see the effects of that slaughter throughout eternity (Revelation 5:6). This is so significant: Jesus Christ will have *fresh* wounds in His hands, His feet, and His side. He will bear those marks for all eternity.

I have often wondered—even after the former things are passed away and Jesus has wiped away the tears from our eyes—why will those wounds remain fresh forever? It is because God the Father, who will wipe away every remembrance of sin, will not allow one single redeemed person to forget the sacrifice of the Lamb, His only Son, who was wounded and shed His blood for all of our sins.

Reclaiming the Title Deed

"And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon" (Revelation 5:1-3).

This scene in heaven will take place after the Rapture of the Church (Revelation 4:1-2; 3:10). God the Father is there, seated on His throne, with the title deed to the universe in His hand. All born-again believers will be there. Yet, of all the multitudes of the redeemed there in heaven at that moment, *no one* is qualified to take the title deed to the universe from the Father.

Imagine the drama that is going to take place there. Remember, the glorified Lamb, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, has not yet appeared on the stage of this eternal drama. So, we, along with the multitudes of Church-age believers, will weep (Revelation 5:4), because among all of those present, no one will be able to take the title deed to the universe, which Adam, representing all men, forfeited to Satan in the Fall.

Then, in Revelation 5:6, while the multitudes are weeping, the Lamb comes on the stage! This is an eternal scene in the drama of eternal history: The Lamb goes over to the Father and takes the title deed.

A New Song

At that moment, supernaturally—and with all the spontaneous recognition of the reality of redemption—we will all break into a *new* song. No one has ever heard that song. Yet, in all the beauty and perfection of eternal glory, and with the supernatural essence of our new bodies, we will sing about the Lamb and the Blood: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation"

(Revelation 5:9). Supernaturally, we will be given the words without any past knowledge of them.

Picture it! All of us will be there, in perfect bodies, weeping because none can be found to open the book, then singing when our redeemer, the Lamb, makes His entrance. We will behold Him. We will be gazing at the Lamb, totally occupied with Him.

In eternity, we will behold Him in His glorified state. In the billions of years to come, the Father will never let us forget that the Lamb was slain for us. We will *not* have old sin natures nor any remembrance of our sins. Still, the Father will never let us forget the Lamb! That is why praise, honor, and glory will always go to the Lamb. All of us, in our heavenly perfection, with our old sin natures gone, will enter into perfect praise, adoration, and worship as we behold the glorified Lamb of God.

Chapter Three

LED TO THE SLAUGHTER

"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are *virgins*. These are they which follow the Lamb withersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (Revelation 14:4).

This passage, speaking of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (the virgins) who will be commissioned to preach during the Tribulation period, has application for believers in the Church Age. It says that they followed the Lamb wherever He went. In order to follow the Lamb, it is necessary that we, too, live as sheep who are led daily to the slaughter (Romans 8:36). This is what it means to follow the Lamb.

Whatever the plan of God holds, whatever His eternal purpose is, if we are going to follow the Lamb, identify with Him, and experience fellowship with Him, we must be led to the

slaughter every day. A wife who is led to the slaughter doesn't defraud her husband in sex, even if he doesn't deserve it. A man who is led to the slaughter is a great husband to his wife, even if she doesn't deserve his initiations of grace. A single person who is led to the slaughter daily has godliness with contentment, even if God doesn't see fit to bring him someone to marry. They are following the Lamb.

The virgins in Revelation 14 will be in the devastating Tribulation period as saved people; and they follow the Lamb through it. In Revelation 1, the apostle John had been exiled to the isle of Patmos because of the great persecution of the Church, during the reign of the emperor Domitian. During this time of personal tribulation, John continued to behold the Lamb. In our times of tribulation, even as Jesus Christ was a friend to John on Patmos, He is our friend. No matter how dark our circumstances may be, the Lamb is the light of heaven (Revelation 21:23).

Continue Beholding Him

If I continually behold the Lamb, I will be so overcome that I will be humbled in every area of life. As I look at the Lamb, the questions I have about my life will be answered. As I look at the

Lamb, my relationships become very meaningful. As I behold the Lamb, studying is a thrill.

If I behold the Lamb, I will have no problem with people who take advantage of me. As I behold the Lamb in the Gospels, I see God Almighty becoming a man, suffering because of human sin and the satanic government of evil around Him. I can see the Lamb being led, by the Father, to the slaughter.

Chapter Four

FOLLOWING THE LAMB IN DEGREES OF GRACE

There are progressive stages in the Christian life, and there is grace for every stage. First, there is *common grace* for all people, saved or unsaved. God makes the sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends the rain on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45*b*). Everyone gets common grace because of Christ's unlimited atonement—because of the Lamb. *Efficacious grace* is for those who have believed in Jesus Christ as their Savior. They are saved by grace through faith forever (Ephesians 2:8).

We have *grace to grow* in the knowledge and experience of His person, lordship, and nature through doctrine (2 Peter 3:18). As we grow in grace, we are *established in grace* through sound doctrine which produces sound minds (Hebrews 13:9).

Then we enter into *greater grace* (James 4:6), advancing to the stage where we can be used against Satan. God uses greater grace Christians throughout the world, no matter who they are or where they go to church. He allows them to be persecuted, like Job, and despised, like the apostle Paul. They go through trials to prove God's character and vindicate His faithfulness to sinners saved by grace. A greater grace Christian is one who has become a living testimony for Jesus Christ. This believer is unaware that he is a witness for Christ in the invisible battle between Satan and God.

Finally, there is *supreme grace*—the height of grace in the degrees of growing in Christ. In supreme grace, Jesus uses me in the angelic conflict to suffer far beyond what other people might suffer. He can use me to suffer in my marriage, if that's God's design. He can use me to suffer as a pastor, or to suffer in illness if that's His will. He can use me in anything.

Vindication for His Character

When we follow the Lamb, we vindicate the truth about God's character before Lucifer and his demons. We validate the truth that Jesus Christ is indeed the Lamb for us, though we do

not deserve it. Not only did He pay for our sins, but He also gives us the spirit of the Lamb to reveal to the fallen angels what they are missing in their state of rebellion against the Lord.

Satan is always approaching God and His people from a different angle. This is why suffering has to be diverse, so I can receive manifold grace to handle manifold trials and temptations.

I can picture the devil coming before God, asking for permission to make Fanny Crosby blind: "If you let me bring blindness to this saint of God, she will not be as spiritual as she is now." God permitted it so, in turn, she could glorify God through her blindness as she wrote over eight thousand magnificent hymns. She glorified God in a manifold temptation of Satan without ever being told why she was blind.

Amy Carmichael was bed-ridden for the same reason—to bring glory to God in the angelic conflict. It was not because she lacked faith, or because she had done something to deserve it. No, her affliction was allowed because she was a greater grace Christian who went on to the highest honor on earth: she experienced supreme grace through undeserved suffering. At the Bema Seat of Christ, Amy Carmichael and Fanny Crosby will receive tremendous rewards be-

cause they glorified God despite unusually terrible conditions.

This is what it means to follow the Lamb. God places us in situations daily where we must be led to the slaughter; not occasionally, not only when we are feeling spiritual, not just when we are having a good week or month. Romans 8:36 says we are to be led to the slaughter *daily*.

CONCLUSION

Behold the Lamb! If you have a problem in your life, behold Jesus Christ, gaze upon Him, be occupied with Him.

David, in Psalm 16:8, said that he always set the Lord before his face. This means he was beholding the Lord in His victory as the Lamb. David did not set lustful thoughts, problems or sorrow before his face; he set the Lord before him.

We must gaze upon the Lamb. We must behold Him and love what we see so that we will follow Him wherever He goes. Daily, we must be led to the slaughter and take up the spirit of the Lamb.

Following the Lamb will motivate us to lay down our lives. Purified in holiness, living in the quietness of heaven's provisions, we will begin to reveal the gentleness and meekness of the Lamb.

Just as a lamb is used for food, our lives become bread for others. Just as a lamb's wool provides clothing, our edification becomes a covering for others as they are becoming established in Christ. Our lives vindicate the Finished Work victory of the Son, as sinners saved by grace.

God's Justice Will Stand

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest joys for the Christian today is to know that God is love (1 John 4:16). Few people, however, realize all that Love had to do. Justice is not greater than His love. In fact, in fulfilling the demands of justice, God proved how great His love is.

Here is the issue: As much as He is love, God is also holy. His eyes are too pure to behold evil, and according to Habakkuk 1:13, He cannot even look upon sin. Holiness demands that justice be served in order for fallen men, born in iniquity, to be restored in His sight. Therefore, God's justice had to be satisfied before His great love could be freely shed abroad in the hearts of men.

With this in mind, God formulated the plan of Redemption—a plan that would satisfy justice and reconcile man to Himself (Colossians 1:20). At the heart of that plan was the decision to send His only begotten Son to die for the sins

of men. This decision was made in submission to justice.

Justice demanded a price to be paid for our sins. Seeing there was no one righteous in all the earth who could measure up to the standards of justification (Romans 3:10), God sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world to shed His perfect blood on the Cross and die in our place. Thus, the only perfect man became the only perfect sacrifice—a sacrifice to satisfy His justice. At Calvary, God's judgment for sin was exacted and it cannot be judged again (Hebrews 10:10).

But there is a scandal on the earth today. Heaven declares that truth—the truth about Redemption—has fallen in the street. It seems as if there is no justice, and judgment appears to be turned aside. This booklet will show that we need to pick up the truth to understand that justice has been satisfied. Perfect love can now have its way in us because mercy rejoices against judgment (James 2:13). Once we have received Jesus Christ as our Savior, no matter what evil seems to prevail against us for a season, God's justice will stand.

Chapter One

THE GREATEST TRAGEDY

Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

"For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

"None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

"They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.

"Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.

"Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.

"The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

"Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.

"We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men.

"We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us.

"For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them;

"In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

"And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

"Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment" (Isaiah 59:1-15).

Picture it: There was a roadblock in the midst of a perfect creation, at the foot of the Tree of Knowledge (Genesis 3:1-6). Alie collided with the truth, and for a time, the lie prevailed. God said, "Yea, truth faileth…." Oh, the truth is still true. It has not changed. But we need to pick it up. So first we have to know the truth and be sanctified, and the truth will make us free (John 8:32).

Take It Personally

The truth—the sure Word of God—is always personal. Deuteronomy 32:4 says that God is a God of truth and without iniquity. He is the only true God (Jeremiah 10:10; John 3:33); He *does* the truth (John 3:21). The Father is truth (Psalm 31:5,

the Son is truth (John 14:6), and the Holy Spirit is truth (1 John 5:6). Therefore, we desire to function in and receive the truth as we begin to learn about God's justice, how it works, and how it is satisfied.

We have taught through the years that God's justice precedes His love. It is not greater than His love, nor does it contradict His love. Judgment is the expression and the execution of justice. For God's judgment to be righteous and His integrity to be upheld, justice had to be served before love could be shed abroad in our hearts.

Everyone loves to be loved; we love God's love. But you may be facing a situation where justice is standing afar off. Truth has fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

Oh, the Lord is still there, loving the entire world—each husband, each wife, each family member, and yet there is no justice. There is no knitting together in love, because the truth about God's love has fallen in the street. Jeremiah 18:15 says that God's people forgot Him, and they entered into idolatry. They caused themselves and others to stumble and fall from the ancient paths. Proverbs 4:16 says that the wicked do not sleep unless they can cause harm by causing someone to fall.

When people live in sadness and self-pity, they are not receiving the truth about God's love, and that truth falls in the street. The Lord saw it, and it displeased Him because they did not appropriate righteous judgment (Isaiah 59:15).

People condemn themselves for so many things. We *should* be confessed up-to-date, and we *should* walk in the light. Surely we must take the holiness of God seriously. But here we have a picture that there are serious divisions among Christians. Instead of agreeing with God, we let truth fall in the street, and justice—the proper administration of the law—stands afar off.

Certainly, there are innocent victims who suffer unjustly, and God knows they are clean. And there are those who *were* guilty but have repented. They are now cleansed and free, and they cannot be judged again. They are brand-new creatures in Christ. This is why we must judge nothing by what we see or hear. We must have the Word and the mind of Christ controlling every thought.

The Importance of Having Right Thoughts

When people get involved with certain sins, such as pornography, it pollutes their minds, corrupts their capacity, and impairs their think-

ing. In love, God pleads with them, "Repent of your lust for pornography." If they do not receive His admonition, justice stands afar off, and that love is made void. Judgment is turned back, and the equity of forgiveness, God's power, and His loving grace cannot function.

It is so difficult to comprehend that millions and millions of souls are burning in hell because they had an attitude toward God and could not accept His mercy that rejoices against judgment. His grace goes beyond what any of us deserves. His love has paid for our sins in advance. But when people will not be entreated, justice goes afar off. We may try to counsel someone; we may plead with them and reason with them. But none of it does any good.

Some people want the love of God, but they reject it as they try to turn the grace of God into foolishness and lasciviousness (Jude 4). Others continue in the negativity of wounds and heartaches because justice has not taken over the operation of love through the Holy Spirit. As a result, the Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

But God executed His perfect justice when He let His Son take on all the sins of the world. And because God honored Christ's payment,

God has to honor the fact that His justice is satisfied. As a result, we can have forgiveness and receive everlasting life.

The Beauty of Holiness

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26).

When the Father honored the blood of His Son as the payment for our sins, He executed divine justice. The agreement was between the Father and the Son; therefore, the Father had to reveal justice toward the Son. Only after that could the righteousness of God be imputed to us. But He found a way because of the great love wherewith He loved us (Ephesians 2:4).

Let's say, for example, that we don't respond to God's love as we should. In those times when we are insecure toward people, when we don't have confidence, when we have a poor self-image—those are the times when we have to depend upon God's justice, not His love. The love

is there forever, whether people receive it or not. We have to depend upon God's justice to reveal the new creation in us—the very life of the Son of God (1 John 5:12). That is the only basis for Him to reveal His love *in* us.

God loves judgment. He loves justice. When heaven determined that the Father could never condemn us and we received His offer of eternal security, in the beauty of His holiness we entered into the precious justice of the redemptive character and unconditional love of God. Justice precedes the unconditional love of God, yet it must be based on the unconditional love of God. Neither His love nor His justice is exclusive. Both of them must be expressed. But unless God's justice preceded His love, we could never receive His love.

Scores of believers do not have proper relationships because they do not understand justice. They react instead of responding to others through the royal law of love. And when they do not treat others with divine justice that precedes love, they enter into all kinds of bondage, heartache, and sorrow.

God loves me beyond anything I can express, but His justice paid for my sins *before* I understood that He loved me. His justice took all of

my guilt, and He became sin before I understood the quality of His love. Justice was operating toward me so that when I simply believed, I accepted something that had already taken place: I received the forgiveness of my sins.

The Tragedy of Hell

Never forget this: People do not go to hell because of their sins. They go to hell because they reject Jesus Christ. We are not our own. We have been bought and paid for with a great price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), therefore it would be unjust if we took back what was purchased by and belongs to God.

That is why we are not to love the world, in terms of the world's system. We are to hate worldly things. We are to function in justice by responding to God as He demonstrates divine justice that reveals His character of love.

Millions are in hell because God's justice had to precede His love. God loved every individual who is in hell tonight. He died for each one. But they did not accept Him by grace through faith. And because they didn't accept Him, His justice said, "You have to go to hell."

Can you imagine waking up in hell, where the conscience never stops dwelling on all the

possibilities that are no longer possible? Can you imagine being free from the penalty of sin but going to hell because you abused and rejected God's justice?

Think of it! His love paid for everything, but His justice has declared the sentence of hell to those who have rejected His provision. His love doesn't consider one single sin that anyone has ever or will ever commit. But, of those who are unsaved, justice overrules what love has done.

God's justice sends people *who are free from sin* into hell forever. Not one sin is charged to any person's account. But here is the problem: Many people never acknowledge their need to have the righteousness of God imputed to their account. They either rely on their own righteousness, or they wallow in their unrighteousness. In either case, they have never leaned on the precedent of God's justice that judged him "Not guilty."

Chapter Two

THE DIVINE ORDER OF THINGS

"Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

"Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

"Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.

"Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps" (Psalm 85:9-13).

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

Divine Justice and the Royal Law of Love

God *loves* justice, and He *loves* righteousness (Psalm 33:5; Isaiah 61:8). But because so few believers understand this, people go through so

much heartache. Families survive, but there is no intimacy of love. People are busy doing their own thing because divine justice is not active—it is not part of their personal honor code.

Divine justice is best explained in the royal law of love, which is summed up in James 2:8: "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well."

The royal law of love is the dignity of Calvary's love expressed through us by the Holy Spirit. It is not human love, which is based on personality rapport, sentimentality, or mutual concern. God's divine love has everything to do with Him and does not depend on our response.

God loves us because that is who He is (1 John 4:8, 16). When people go to hell, they will go there knowing how much God loved them. Perhaps more than anything, knowing what they rejected will torment them. Justice was served in their favor, but they refused it.

When a believer receives perfect love by believing and receiving the Savior, he also receives divine justice that was executed in his favor. No one has ever been loved with a greater or more glorious manifestation. And now, we are called to love others with that same love (John 15:12).

We are called to let mercy rejoice against judgment in our relationships. That is the royal law of love.

How God's Justice Precedes His Love

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:25-26).

God's love is only revealed in its proper perspective when His justice is understood. When mercy and truth met together, and when righteousness and peace kissed each other, God's justice, now satisfied, looked down from heaven, and truth sprung up from the earth (Psalm 85:10-11). That was the execution of divine justice.

Good people go to hell, and God loved them as much as He loved us. He loved them enough to die for them. He loved them enough to pay for their sins. He loved them enough to be crucified in their place. But, His justice precedes His love, and to receive His love, it must be based on His righteousness and the execution of divine justice.

Divine justice was the Lord Jesus Christ saying to every person in the universe, "I have paid for your sins! You don't have to do any works to be saved, but you do have to believe upon Me by grace and through faith. You must believe that I died, and was buried, and rose again, so you could rest in the *Finished* Work. You must believe that."

When you do believe that, you are saved. But if you do not believe that, you are not saved. Remember that God loves justice, so He made a plan that satisfied His justice. When a man depends on his own way, he is rejecting God's way, and the end of it is death (Proverbs 16:25).

When we say that justice precedes love, we do not mean that it nullifies love. In fact, justice comes ahead of love and prepares the way for love to satisfy justice. All that is required is a response to the truth, then love satisfies justice.

When a man divorces his wife because he feels he isn't in love with her anymore, he violates justice. If he makes a righteous judgment to keep his vow before God because he loves God, he is picking up the truth, which makes a way for mercy and peace to enter. With that kind of submission to God's ways, God can work. But if you say God has led you to get a divorce, the an-

swer is No. He is not leading you. You are leading yourself.

When we are not faithful in church attendance, we are not executing justice. We are to seek the Kingdom of God first. And the minute we do that, we have entered into justice.

As believers, we have already received the love of God. And when we confess our sins, we know that He is faithful and just to forgive us. We understand that the Holy Spirit is in our hearts, and He has shed abroad His love there. With that, the royal law of love is fulfilled in us.

Still, for so many believers, the truth has fallen in the street. They seek to justify themselves, therefore God's justice stands afar off. There is no knitting together, no comfort of love (Colossians 2:2), because the truth about God's love has fallen in the street.

Is That a Fact?

Once we pick up the truth, we must not operate with the facts as man sees them but as God sees them. Justice has gone before, so now we speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), and love can have a full impact. When I make a decision, I am making a judgment. And when I make a decision based on the truth as God sees

it, my judgment is an expression of His justice.

So when the Lord said to you, "I do not charge you with any sin," what He was really saying is, "When My Son died in your place, I had to make a judgment. And because mercy met with truth, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other, My judgment must express the fact that justice is satisfied."

But it doesn't stop there! Truth will spring up from the earth, and God's righteousness will look down from heaven. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father (James 1:17), and now He can give us every good thing, and He will increase the yield of our land (Psalm 85:12).

Now we have His righteousness. And because we have His righteousness, and not our own, we are free forever. That is why God loves righteousness; that is why He loves justice.

Why does God love perfect justice? It is His only basis for not condemning us. If it were left up to human justice, He would have to condemn us. In fact, on that basis, we are condemned already (John 3:18). But glory be to God, He cannot condemn us. Divine justice prepared the way, so mercy could rejoice against judgment in us.

"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13).

Isn't it interesting that human justice has to condemn us, but once we are saved, divine justice cannot condemn us! There again, God's justice preceded His love. Divine judgment has been executed, and we have been set free. Thank God that beyond every accusation, His justice will stand.

Chapter Three

THE PATH OF JUSTICE IS PAVED WITH LOVE

"He executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel" (Deuteronomy 33:21*c*).

"He loved righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD" (Psalm 33:5).

What is justice? Scores of Christians react and enter into the land of the flesh because they do not understand justice. Truth has fallen in the street; and when that happens, there is neither justice nor godly judgment.

Justice is the impartial administration of the law. It is defined by right actions, correctness, righteousness, and conformity to truth. Judgment is the right assessment of the guilty. You cannot presume against anyone—that someone did what you "think" they did. That is not just. A person who operates with justice will not cross over into someone else's jurisdiction. He knows

that he would be way off in his judgment because he does not know the truth about the person.

Of course we realize that every single person will be placed in situations where they need to make judgments. Until we go home with God, we will have to discern many, many times. But in our judgment, justice must precede love. Problems arise because most people are not qualified to judge. If a person does not have the truth of love, if he is not filled with the meekness of love, he does not have the right to judge *anything*; he is disqualified as one who can judge rightly.

Commit Your Ways to God

"And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been *recommended* to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled" (Acts 14:26).

The apostle Paul became a "hostage" to the truth. In Acts 14:18-26, after being stoned and left for dead, he picked up the truth and let the grace of God work him over on every side. He submitted to the elders who prayed for him, ordained him, and sent him out on a team with Barnabas. Through every kind of persecution, he carried the Word of Truth to the world—the truth of the glorious Gospel, which had been

committed to him.

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

We need to give ourselves over to the grace of God. Commitment says, "Let grace do it, no matter what it is." Remember, Jesus did not commit himself to men but to the Father (John 2:24). Commit your cause to the One who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:23). Give yourself over to the One who is in the business of giving righteousness for faith, through grace.

It is more than just having a belief system; it is having a commitment to a belief system, to what you believe. It is the act of delivering yourself up and entrusting yourself for safekeeping to the authority of God.

Commitment always picks up the truth. And remember, it is the truth that makes us free (John 8:32). God promises that through His justice and His judgment, the truth will set us free. When Christ died on the Cross in our place, God's justice was served. His judgment? "No condemnation!" to those who believe.

So now, God executes that justice toward us—justice preceded by the atonement of grace.

That is why our salvation is secure. That is why, through every attack, God's justice will stand.

The Word of God is absolutely clear about the wages of sin (Romans 6:23) and the fact that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). God's justice stands through all the reasoning of vain men. And ultimately, whether He declares a man innocent though the "facts" are stacked against him, or guilty though his only crime was that he rejected the Savior, God's ways are perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 18:30). God's justice will stand.

CONCLUSION

When truth has fallen in the street, there is a traffic jam.

Justice says, "I can't go."

Judgment says "I can't go."

Truth "fails" because no one is executing righteous judgment. We know what is true—we see it lying there in the street. But now we need to pick it up, and that requires a commitment. More than that, it requires surrender to God's plan and purpose.

God loved us so much that He became the perfect sacrifice. He paid the debt His justice demanded. He has paid for every sin—past, present, and future—through the greatest expression of love ever manifested (John 15:13). But love was not enough to keep people out of hell. The truth about Redemption has fallen in the street, and until a person picks it up and embraces it, the effect of Calvary is void. God's justice stands afar off, judgment is turned back, and

the objectivity of equity cannot enter the scene.

When James 2:13 says that mercy rejoices against judgment, it reveals that God's justice is functioning. Justice no longer stands afar off, waiting to be satisfied. God loves judgment, and righteous judgment is the result of divine justice.

Pick up the truth. Stop living in the devil's lies. The price has been paid for every sin. The Savior is risen. The past is all gone. Whosoever will, may come to Him. So now, believe it, receive it, and walk in the light of it. No matter what things look like, God's justice will stand.

God's Love:

A Real Revival

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. If any man loves, the same thing is known of him (see 1 Corinthians 8:1-3).

Can you honestly say that you are filled with God's love? Is God's love the key to everything you do?

First, God's love is the hope of His calling. Second, God's love is the riches of His glory in His saints. Third, it is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. Fourth, God's love is the proof that we are saved. We know we have passed from death unto life if we love the brethren (see 1 John 3:14). What's more, we love our enemies (Luke 6:27). We love them that hate us (Matthew 5:44), and because we love God's Law, we never get offended (Psalm 119:165).

This booklet will show us that we can always bear the fruit of the living Christ who is filling us. As a result, we will have a love that goes way

beyond knowledge, filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19).

Chapter One

UNDERSTANDING PURE LOVE

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:1-5).

Many men and women are wonderful ser-

vants and examples of God's love. But a Christian who is not hospitable does not express God's love. A pastor could build a big ministry, preach the truth, and avoid overt sin—yet without ever really knowing God's love. A missionary could be serving God without being a servant of God. A man could build a great work without being built up in the work of God. He could demand that people treat him a certain way because of his position.

The disciples had a similar problem. "Which one of us is the greatest?" they asked Christ. They were occupied with themselves instead of loving others.

Jesus said, "He that is least among you all, the same shall be great" (Luke 9:48). And again, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matthew 20:28).

Christians must understand the pure love of God. Yes, we must observe the Ten Commandments: We shall not commit adultery. We shall not steal, nor bear false witness, nor lie. But these are not the great commandments. According to Matthew 22:36-40 the greatest commandment is to love.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity"—

God's love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

God desires to do a deep inner work in our minds regarding the importance of having pure love.

We Are Owed Nothing

Even if we have no place to lay our heads, be thankful to God and realize that no one owes us anything—though we do owe them something. The Bible says we are to owe no man anything but love. He who loves his neighbor fulfills the law. Love works no ill toward his neighbor, for love is the fulfillment of the law (see Romans 13:8-10).

To love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and body is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). We can be sure that we are saved when we love others and practice that love moment by moment. When we love, we lay down our lives. We don't expect a thing in return. If God adds to us, we receive it.

The Problem Lies with Us

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of

the glory of God.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulations worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope:

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us" (Romans 5:1-5).

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God because we know that tribulation works in the fruit of the Holy Spirit through love. Love comes before joy and before peace; before longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness; before meekness, faithfulness, and temperance. While all of these things are parts of love, we cannot have one of them without knowing, experiencing, and giving the love of God first.

So, tribulation works in us patience, and patience works in us experience, which gives us hope, and hope makes us not ashamed. Why? Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is in us.

Chapter Two

FOCUS ON SERVING

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:6-10).

This is how we know whether we have the right kind of love twenty-four hours a day. Unless we weep and serve others instead of expecting them to serve us, we don't know the real meaning of these verses.

God reconciled us to Himself through the death of His Son; and if we are reconciled by His death, we will be saved by His life. We joy in God, by whom we have received the atonement—payment in full for all of our sins.

Love Does Not React Negatively

Love does not behave itself unseemly (1 Corinthians 13:5). This means, according to the original Greek text, that when pure love is reigning, no negative reactions or maladjustment will be revealed on our countenance. This is because love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" —and love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:6-8).

God is love. It doesn't matter that we love Him, because He loved us first. Jesus said, "All men will know you are My disciples if you love one another. And, the world will know this: that the Father sent Me and that you are of Me" (see John 13:34-35).

If this love for other believers is missing from any area of your life today, repent and be changed through the grace of Almighty God by receiving the gift of repentance (Jeremiah 31:18*b*).

Chapter Three

GOD'S LOVE BEARS FRUIT

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

"Greater love have no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and

bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

"These things I command you, that ye love one another" (John 15:10-17).

If we abide in Him and His words abide in us, we can ask what we will and it shall be done unto us. Herein is the Father glorified, that we bear much fruit. As the Father loved Jesus, so He loves us: we are to continue in His love. If we love Him, we will keep His commandments and the righteousness of the Law will be fulfilled in us.

Learning to Love

There is no way you can "fall in love," though you can fall into an attraction. You can fall into appreciation. You can fall into a wonderful acquaintance with a desire that it will develop into a relationship.

Love is something the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts. But consider the process of brokenness He uses:

"[The Lord Jesus Christ] in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was

heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:7-8).

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

As redeemed sinners, we must learn how to love one another with the quality of God's love. There is nothing natural about it. And yet, the average couple getting married today does not have God's love for one another—and they know practically nothing about unconditional love. They may *learn* to love with God's love. They may develop God's love for each other. They may be extremely happy and have integrity to recognize that they need to learn how to love with God's love.

Love doesn't just happen. We don't serve God so that He will love us, but in serving God, we learn how to love.

When we begin to serve and invest in other people's lives, we begin to love. God said that by faith we are to "serve one another in love." We will begin to invest in people, and suddenly recognize, "That's my friend." And the more we invest and serve, the more we love.

My mother went to bed at midnight and would get up at four in the morning to serve seven children with her hands crippled by arthritis. Our house had no running hot water—just a pump, no insulation, an old wood stove, and an outhouse. Many of you can identify with this scene. She served us with the most amazing devotion anyone could ever have. Not once did she raise her voice. She would serve poor families in the area, giving them food and making cakes and pies for them.

Do you think she loved us? You bet she did. Do you think we loved her? We adored everything about her. That was my mom. She invested; she served. She already loved, but she learned how to love as a servant.

Jesus said to Peter in his backslidden state: "Do you love Me more than these?"

"Yes, I am very fond of You," Peter replied.

"Then, feed my lambs. Peter, do you really love Me more than these?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well then, feed my sheep. Peter, do you really love Me?"

Peter answered: "Lord, You know how I love

You. I saw You raise the dead, feed the multitude, and cast out demons. Of course, I am drawn to You the best I can be."

And Jesus said, "Okay, then feed my sheep."

What was Jesus saying to Peter? He was saying, "If you get busy in the vineyard, you will start loving Me properly."

Behind every command of God is omnipotence (1 Thessalonians 5:24). And behind every act of obedience, the love of God should be motivating the one who obeys.

Abiding in Obedience

As I serve, I learn to love. As I obey, I love Him. As I keep His commandments, I love Him. As I abide in His Word, I love Him. As I trust Him in prayer, I learn to love Him. This is why Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." The Law is fulfilled, so He was not talking about the Law. God's love fulfills the Law, and the Holy Spirit sheds that love abroad in our hearts.

Love never complains. Love never criticizes, mentally or verbally. Never! Love never finds fault. It doesn't behave itself unseemly; it doesn't seek to have its own way. It is not easily provoked. It thinks no evil. No corrupt commu-

nication proceeds out of its mouth. But love always ministers grace to the listener and speaks words that edify (see Ephesians 4:29).

Love doesn't live with a grieved spirit. All bitterness, malice, and infectious speaking—all of it is removed. Love is kind and tenderhearted, forgiving everyone as Christ has forgiven. And as Christ laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for each other (1 John 3:16).

Chapter Four

GOD'S LOVE: THE TREASURE THAT MEETS EVERY NEED

We receive God's love and therefore enter into God's love when we start giving of ourselves. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Instead of people serving us, we serve them and pay our debt of love.

I have found that people who have invested a lot of money in the stock market are very interested in it. Likewise, the Christians who have their treasure in heaven are very interested in heavenly things. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21).

Think in terms of God's love for you. Speak in the love of God shed abroad in your heart. Serve in the love of God. Don't leave the freshness of having His love preeminent in every detail of your life (Revelation 2:4). There is no fear in love. Furthermore, love never compares itself with others (2 Corinthians 10:12), and it

never thinks evil. I am repeating that because this kind of love is missing from scores of lives. Don't be condemned by these words. Just let love do her perfect work in you.

Imagine serving God on the mission field for years but without charity. Imagine facing God after being on the foreign field for all that time and hearing Him say, "You were filled with negativity—and the trouble wasn't with the people. The trouble was with you."

I appreciate all those who labor for the Lord in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. But imagine being saved and serving in a church without having biblical charity in action. Many need to deal with this issue.

Have a silver tongue, because you have the mind of Christ.

Real Forgiveness

Among the most beautiful things in the world is to realize the love that reclaimed Hosea's wife Gomer (Hosea 3). That love restored Peter after he had failed miserably (John 21).

On the second Sunday after the resurrection, Jesus went to Thomas first because he needed Him most (John 20:27). Love will always go to the one who needs it most.

Love never refuses to forgive. Real love forgives even without going to ask someone if he said something. Not many pastors will teach this. It is in Matthew 6, found in the original text: If I heard that you said something about me, I am to forgive you and forget it without even asking about it. Love covers what you did without even questioning you.*

If I do have to go to someone because of something serious, I go in God's love—not to condemn but to help them stop "chain sinning," because without God's perfect love, we will live in a cycle of "chain sinning" no matter how much we serve God.

Revival is not an emotional display. Revival is loving—loving everyone—because it is in you through the Holy Spirit.

The husband loves his wife with all of his heart. If she becomes ill or changes in some way, he still loves her. She is his baby. They are married; they adore each other. If the wife becomes bedridden, he loves her even more. He just loves her because he is expressing something that has been inside of him for years. Now, her need is greater, and in his expression, his love just comes out.

One of the greatest things I have ever seen

was when a young man was crippled in an accident and remained in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. His wife constantly wheeled him in, and wheeled him out. If he was in pain during a service, she would just gently put her hand on him and look at him with amazing love. She never seemed weary—at least she never showed it—because pure love is so much like that.

If someone were trapped in a burning building, love says, "I am going in!" because love lays down its life.

Love doesn't make human evaluations—love makes love evaluations. When we are going through something, love is expressed to help us through. It is not natural love; it is God's love. And that is how we experience real revival.

**Read* Coverings, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Concerning the homosexual, the prostitute, the drug addict, the immoral person, God said, "I am going to die for them all. If they go to hell, it is not going to be because of anything that they have done. I will never judge them for their sins. Their sins were judged when My Son took them on at the Cross. The only reason anyone will go to hell is because they have refused to receive My gift of Love, and His name is Jesus."

This is the kind of love that God sheds abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

It is God's message for today. Every time I get up to preach, my prayer is this: "God, I have prepared, now You go to it. I am getting out of the way. Use this vessel to communicate Your thoughts."

All of us need to "get out of the way" and let God love others through us.

God's Plan According

to His Integrity

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

The character of integrity is rare these days. At one time, people would honor their promises, keep their word, pay their debts. Business agreements were often confirmed with a handshake. But today, we see people in politics and in businesses openly justifying or flatly denying their less-than-upright behavior and finding sympathy from the public. "After all, they are only human," we say, as if that were a worthy excuse.

There is One, however, who has always maintained His integrity. The God of all grace has never let one of His promises fall to the ground. He is not a man that He should lie, so He has never had to cover His tracks. What He said He would do, He has done and He is doing.

He is the One we can trust.

This booklet reveals how God has been faithful to His plan throughout the ages. His plan is rich in grace and full of mercy—a plan that He will not reverse.

Chapter One

PERFECT KNOWLEDGE, PERFECT JUDGMENT

"He is the Rock, his work is *perfect*: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4).

"Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is *perfect* in knowledge?" (Job 37:16).

"As for God, his way is *perfect*" (Psalm 18:30).

Tamiym is the Hebrew word for "perfect" in these verses. Often translated as "integrity," it describes something that is sound, complete—trustworthy. We say that a well-built structure, such as a bridge or a house, has integrity. It is designed for strength and to endure unusual stress. A person who has integrity is one who makes right decisions based on his convictions and is not easily moved. But only God, who is

perfect in knowledge, is perfect in His integrity. The One who has all knowledge can be trusted absolutely in every situation.

God's thoughts, God's words, and God's ways are completely perfect. Every act of God is done according to His integrity (Deuteronomy 32:4). You may go through many, many serious things in your lifetime, but always remember that God's plan for your life is determined by the integrity of His character and His Word. So, in the perfect plan of God, our ways are to be directed by His integrity, which prevents us from falling.

The Precedence of Justice

"For truly my words shall not be false: he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee" (Job 36:4).

"So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands" (Psalm 78:72).

"The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness" (Proverbs 11:5).

God Almighty is perfectly just and perfectly righteous (Psalm 33:5; Isaiah 61:8). He loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and with re-

gard to sinners, God's justice precedes His love. Since He is perfectly just and holy (1 Peter 1:16), He cannot look upon sin (Habakkuk 1:13). Therefore, as men, we were separated from this perfect God because of our unrighteousness and sin.

But Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, paid for our sins on the Cross of Calvary. Satisfying the Father's justice and the righteousness of God, Christ was anointed above His fellows with the oil of gladness (Psalm 45:7).

God Makes a Way

When Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, became sin for us, He made a way for God to have fellowship with us. His righteousness and justice were not violated but fulfilled. Now His love could be expressed to us through the channel of His grace. Grace is not an attribute of God; it is the channel by which He expresses His love, which is His essence, revealed in His holiness and integrity.

The moment we believed in Christ, we were made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). With perfect holiness, perfect righteousness, and perfect justice, the Father counted our faith as righteousness. The Father

must accept sinners who believe in Christ by faith. He can receive us in perfect justice because Jesus bore all our sins in His body upon the Tree at Calvary (1 Peter 2:24).

"Even if they are ungodly, when they believe, they are justified," the Father says (see Romans 4:5). "They are saved when they believe on Me without works, without a system of religion. It is totally by the channel of grace."

Before we believed, we had no righteousness at all. At the moment we believed on Christ as our Savior, God gave us the robe of His righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). Then, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit began to indwell us.

Fulfilling the Will of God

"Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5).

"And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will" (Acts 13:22).

Everyone who has read the Bible knows

some of the things David did that were wrong. But God's justice could only relate to David from eternal viewpoint. Yes, he was chastised during his days on earth, and he did miss out on times of fellowship with God. Still, God could not judge David's sins apart from eternal viewpoint. According to His integrity, God could only declare that David never turned aside, and that he fulfilled all of God's will.

In His integrity, the Father has declared that because Jesus Christ paid for his sins, He considers David as one who fulfilled *all* of His will.

God delivers us from falling. He may permit us to fall at times, but we are never allowed to fall completely. He upholds those who fall (Psalm 145:14); we cannot utterly be cast down, for God holds us in His hand (Psalm 37:24). Why? It is because of God's integrity toward Christ, who satisfied His justice, and our faithfulness to believe in Christ through God's plan of redemption.

"Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

"Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

"His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:4-7).

The doctrine of God converts our soul. His testimonies are totally pure and they make the simple to be wise. His truth makes us perfect, according to God's integrity.

Chapter Two

GOING FORWARD IN ALL THINGS

Do not be occupied with the things you cannot change, but receive God's provision for the things He allows. A woman moved to America from Kosovo in Eastern Europe. She has been fitted with a pair of wooden legs because of an injury she suffered during the war in her homeland. Her doctors say that they have never seen anyone work so hard during physical therapy. She wants to be able to get around without crutches, so she works and works until she is exhausted.

"I never consider what I have been through," this woman said. "I am thankful for what I have." She refuses to be occupied with the things she cannot change.

Ralph Montanas was an amazing evangelist. Then, one day the doctors told him, "You are losing your sight, and you will be blind in four

months." He prayed. He cried. He kept looking at his children and his wife. He took in every sunrise and sunset that he could. Then, his sight was gone.

He visited faith-healers. He did all that he could do in an attempt to get back his sight. But God told him one day, "Do not consider what you cannot change—just look to the future."

Ralph Montanas now has one of the first Christian Braille ministries in the world. Today, that ministry has gone on to touch more than four million people. Once he accepted God's plan and trusted His integrity, Ralph gave thanks to God every day that he was able to bring salvation and joy to the hearts of so many who are blind.

I knew a beautiful pastor in Maine years ago. He was a great family man; however, he had a son who was melancholic and driven toward perfection. The boy believed he had to be perfect, and he strove for A's in all of his schoolwork. One day, after seeing a report card with two B grades on it, the son killed himself by stepping in front of a moving car.

The father was overwhelmed. He spent days and nights in tears and introspection. Finally, God spoke to his heart: "You cannot change

what has happened. I don't want you to dwell on this any longer. Know that this is for your sake and that this bad thing will work together for good. Now go forward."

This pastor became anointed like never before. He grew into a great soul-winner as a brokenhearted, compassionate man who could identify with others. God's integrity was with him.

Don't dwell on what you cannot change. Don't go there. Don't think about it. Consider God's integrity and how He will use you in His plan.

From Curse to Blessing

"But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.

"Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.

"Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast

and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.

"And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

"But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

"And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him" (2 Samuel 12:19-24).

The child from David's adulterous affair with Bathsheba was dying. David, filled with guilt, fasted and prayed, hoping for a miracle. The king then heard his servants whispering and knew that the child was dead. When he was told that the child was indeed dead, David washed himself, anointed himself, and worshipped in the house of God.

David knew he would see his child in heaven, but that he could not bring back the baby that died. He went to be with Bathsheba, who was now his wife, and she became pregnant. This child was called Solomon, the one

who succeeded David as king of Israel. God's integrity was not compromised. His plan was perfect, and David glorified the Lord by going on in faith.

The Crowns Will Come

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17).

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Philippians 3:13).

How could God say that David was perfect in all his ways? Because of His integrity toward Christ and His integrity toward David's faith. It is God's integrity toward the Blood of Christ, toward grace, and toward mercy that keeps us alive today. God has integrity toward the mercy of His Son and the grace given to us the moment we believed. His plan, according to His integrity, makes every single believer a king and a priest who will reign forever with Him (Revelation 5:10).

One day we will all receive crowns based on our relationship to God's integrity. The policy of grace will see that that happens because justice and righteousness have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ—the Just One who died for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18).

The Patience of Job

"And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

"Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.

"But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? *In all this did not Job sin with his lips*" (Job 2:8-10).

Are you having a bad day? Did someone snub you or say something unkind? You cannot change that. So, instead, live in integrity. Go to God and let God supernaturally work on that person because of your faith in God's integrity toward prayer.

Do not become negative. Don't be critical or judgmental. Walk in integrity, and you will never be offended. You will respond just as Job did when his wife challenged his walk with

God. Job trusted God's integrity, and as a result, he came through as a winner at the end of the trials God permitted.

Chapter Three

THE EVEN PLACE

"A Psalm of David. Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.

"Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

"For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.

"I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.

"I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.

"I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:

"That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

" LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.

"Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men:

"In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.

"But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

"My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD" (Psalm 26:1-12).

The "even place" in Psalm 26:12 refers to the Finished Work of Jesus Christ. Every Blood-bought, born-again Christian—from the worst to the best—stands in an even place in the congregation because of the Finished Work. The self-righteous ones, the recovering drug addicts, each one is the same in God's eyes. Nobody is bigger, better, greater, or smaller. We are all in an even place. God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11).

The moment someone gets saved, he steps onto an even place with the entire congregation of God. It will always be that way. What God does, He does forever (Ecclesiastes 3:14). Every believer is given the gift of eternal life. No one can pluck him out of God's hand (John 10:28). God keeps him even if he falls (Psalm 37:24).

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling

the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

People who do not receive Christ will go to hell because they refused the Lamb of God—God's only provision for their salvation. But Calvary, where Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world, is the even place where whosoever will may come and be saved.

Our Lives Are on Loan, and We Are Accountable

The thing we all must keep in mind is that everything we have here on earth is on loan to us. We are the caretakers of what God has given us. Our friends are on loan. Our health is on loan. Our money is on loan. Your car, your boat, your diamonds are all on loan. Even your precious babies are on loan to you by God. They belong to Him.

Having this kind of attitude establishes personal accountability. Every one of us will stand alone before Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat and be held accountable for the decisions and actions we make here on earth. Our sins will not be an issue; however, there will be an account given of our walk with God, which will determine our eternal rewards and privileges (see Romans

14:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Personal accountability is giving eight hours work for eight hours pay. Personal accountability is paying your bills in full and on time, even if it means taking an extra job to do so. Personal accountability is a husband loving his wife as Christ loved the Church. He bathes her in love, nourishing and cherishing her, laying down his life for her (Ephesians 5:25-29).

Personal accountability is a wife responding to her husband's initiations, being a helpmate, building him up, and understanding him when things go wrong in his life. Personal accountability is a couple looking beyond each other's faults to see their needs and to meet those needs in love.

If we walk in integrity, God will give us the provision for personal accountability in His plan.

Unsearchable Riches, Limitless Grace

"And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21).

"O the depth of the riches both of the wis-

dom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33).

Job understood that his life was on loan by God. Even his nagging wife was on loan to him. So when Satan begged God to remove the hedges of protection from around Job's life, God knew that Job would retain his integrity. Job did, in fact, complain and fail in the midst of his several trials, yet he clung to his integrity because he recognized that God's ways are unsearchable and past finding out.

A woman who started listening to our radio program several months ago had lost her husband and three children in a highway accident. She had to look at the four caskets—a husband she loved and three children she adored. Her husband loved flowers, so every night that week she took a bouquet of roses to bed with her, to hold and remember him.

"It hurts, it hurts so much," this woman said. "But Jesus Christ is with me. He will never fail me. He is going to bless me. It is all going to work together for good."

Everyone reacts this way when a loved one is lost. You trust God, but, oh, how it hurts. This woman knew that her husband and children

were not her own. They were on loan. They went to be with Jesus, and she will see them in heaven one day. God takes away the pain and leaves the Rose of Sharon—Jesus Christ—in our room, because of His integrity.

God is faithful. He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to stand. He will provide the way of escape. He will never put upon us what we cannot bear. Why? Integrity says that He must be true to His Word.

The riches of God's grace are measureless (Ephesians 3:8). No scale exists that can weigh the integrity of God's grace. Sin abounds, but grace does much more abound. Sin reigns unto death, but grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life (see Romans 5:20-21).

No human concept can calculate how much God loves us. No human equation can sum up how much His grace abounds or how great His mercy is, which endures forever in our lives.

God's judgments are unsearchable. Judgment is the result of justice. When Christ died and paid for our sins, God had to make justification available to each of us. He had to apply perfect justice toward us because a just Substitute died for the unjust.

Justice has been satisfied once and for all, and now God's judgment is, "No condemnation!" (Romans 8:1). He does not judge according to appearance, but He judges righteous judgment (John 7:24). His righteous judgment is the Finished Work. It is always the Finished Work! No man is known after the flesh now. God knows each one according to the Finished Work of Christ, who died once for all.

God must operate this way. His perfect integrity is with us in this respect (Job 36:4). His knowledge is perfect (Job 37:16).

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

"Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them" (Numbers 23:19-21).

God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places forever (Ephesians 1:3).

His integrity prevents Him from reversing this. Hallelujah! He has given us eternal life and He cannot reverse it. He loves us forever, and He cannot reverse that love. He has forgiven and forgotten every wrong thing we have even done. He cannot reverse it!

As born-again believers, we are His adopted children. We are members of His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). We are one Spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17). Christ is the Head, and we are His body (Ephesians 1:22); He cannot reverse it. We are going to live forever and ever—throughout all eternity—with Him. He can never reverse it. This is the plan of God, according to His integrity.

CONCLUSION

Speak the Truth in your heart (Psalm 15:2). Be filled with sound doctrine (Proverbs 11:5). God's integrity will guide you. If you ask Him, He will guide you. If you pray, He will give you an answer. If you want to be blessed, He will give you a blessing. He is the God of all blessings. He is waiting to bless you so that His mercy can be exalted (Isaiah 30:18).

The most beautiful thing to remember is that God is not a man, therefore He cannot lie. Furthermore, everything He has promised will come to pass. Every one of His promises shall live forever (1 Kings 8:56).

Many times I thought the load was too heavy for me until I trusted Him. Sometimes I felt I couldn't go on until I just went on. Just as the blind man walked to the pool blind and came back seeing, we walk in faith, and God honors that precious faith.

I am so grateful that there is no limit on eter-

nal life. There is no limit on His love toward us. There is no limit to His mercy toward us, no limit on how much He will forgive us. One day He will take us home and perfect us (Philippians 1:6; Psalm 138:8). He is making us perfect—just as He is.

This is God's promise to us, and He will keep His promise according to His integrity.

God's Promises:

Your Provision

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INTRODUCTION

If someone were to ask me, "How do you know that the Word of God is the Word of God?" I would answer, "Because I know absolutely that it is not the word of man." It cannot be the word of man. The Word of God is an indisputable provision for spiritual warfare, as it reveals the overwhelming authority of God.

Can you imagine any nation going to war without the proper artillery? So many Christians do just that every day. They attempt to face the world's system in the strength of their flesh with carnal weapons (2 Corinthians 10:4). This kind of warfare often results in emotional reactions to justify the flesh.

Thank God that He has given us His promises in the Word as our provision for victory. We do not have to live in the blame game under a policy of evil. We can take up spiritual weapons and initiate to others creatively in the government of God's grace.

In this booklet, we will see that God's promises provide us with all that we need to be complete, thoroughly furnished within. When the Word and the Spirit instruct us, we will develop new thought processes as we become living epistles, "known and read of all men," who manifest God's life wherever we go (2 Corinthians 3:2).

Chapter One

THE PREEMINENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

All Scripture—in its entirety—is given by inspiration of God; that is the basis for its authority. It is not words of a man. The Word of God is profitable, practical, and productive. It is the way of obedience, the way of fellowship, the way of victory, the way of rewards, the way of fruitfulness. The Word is profitable for doctrine, which is the highway of truth. When we are on the highway of truth, we are thinking with God. Also, the Word is also profitable for reproof, correction, and instruction, helping us to confront the evil attacks that come against us.

The "instruction" of the Word speaks of continually going forward with divine illumination,

divine guidance, divine liberation, divine inspiration, divine authority, and divine resources. Beyond that, we can have the fruit of the Holy Spirit within us.

How God Backs His Authority

To be able to boast such authority, the Word of God must possess certain qualities. The first quality is its *excellence*. The Bible is the most excellent Book ever written, surpassing every book known to man. It is also *transcendent*, which means it is above all else, taking us to a level of understanding that no natural mind can comprehend. Also, it is *relevant*.

There is no book as relevant to every aspect of life as the Bible. It is relevant to salvation; without it, we would never have known how to be saved. It is relevant to our eternal security; without it, we would not know how to be secure in Christ. It is relevant to the Rapture; otherwise, we would not know that we will be meeting Him in the air one day. It is relevant to forgiveness; without the instruction of the Word, we would not know we are forgiven (or, what's more, that there are no longer any sins on our record). By the relevant and transcendent authority of the Word of God, we can have good

marriages, strong families, proper friendships, healthy church life, and real vision. Yes, the Bible is extremely relevant, as no other book can be.

After relevance, the Word of God is *permanent*. "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). No other book has been as historically accurate, especially as it concerns Israel. Then, the Word is *didactic*—intended to instruct men in divine ethics regarding every aspect of life.

The Word of God is *prophetically correct*. It is perfect in its prophecy. The Bible accurately forecast the coming of automobiles (see Nahum 2:4) and submarines (see Amos 9:3) to name two. Many Old Testament prophecies alone were fulfilled during the twenty-four hours leading up to the Cross. From human viewpoint, Bible commentators tell us that the chance of one man fulfilling all of those prophecies is one in 35 trillion.

The Bible is a "more sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19), more than any given to mankind in history. It is an amazing manifestation of truth. The organic union of the Bible is *indisputable*. Three self-proclaimed unbelievers working for a major publishing firm were editing a book that described mathematical probabilities and the Bible. The manuscript was so thor-

oughly documented and well-organized by a brilliant man of God, these men could neither refute nor repudiate the material they were editing. As a result, they were gloriously saved.

The Word of God is also structurally beautiful. The Old Testament describes the preparation for Jesus' coming in the first advent. The Gospels describe His manifestation, detailing the life of Jesus as "Emmanuel," God with us. Then, the epistles give the explanation of what His life in us means, with the Holy Spirit teaching us the mind of Christ. Finally, the book of Revelation relates the great consummation of God's plan.

As we think of this indisputable Book, we realize that it is a precious thing to hide in our hearts. Did men write this Book? Yes, godly men of old did write the Bible, but they wrote only what God put within them to write. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the writer of Psalm 19:7 says that the Word of God is *perfect*. During the course of 1,400 years, forty men who hardly knew each other penned the words that are in our Bibles. Though written by men, the Bible is perfect in its organic unity. The Spirit of God made it so.

Chapter Two

PICKING UP PROMISES, ENTERING INTO REST

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

"For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Hebrews 4:1-3).

Every person who is positive toward the Word of God is taught by the Spirit of God. It is important that when we receive the Word, we allow it to be transferred into the five parts of our soul. Otherwise, it will never become a means of self-governing under the providence

of God's will. The whole purpose of the Scriptures is to teach us how to be governed by the Holy Spirit from within, so that the outward adversities do not turn us to stress. As we mature in our walk with God, the Word counsels us daily and brings amazing provisions in every detail of life, controlling our emotions, our volition, our conscience, every part of our soul.

We have an eternal destiny, an eternal portion with Christ forever. When we hear the Word of God, we have to make a decision to listen the way God tells us to listen—in meekness (Psalm 25:9; James 1:21) and in humility (Psalm 34:2), mixing faith with what we hear. Mixing faith with what we hear is a part of the process that brings faith-rest. But there is more.

Psalm 18:44 says that the people of God will obey as soon as they hear. Every time I hear or read the Word of God, I am presented with a divine challenge from divine viewpoint. The minute I perceive it, I must make a decision to receive it and obey; that is my part. If I don't do this, then my unconscious and subconscious mind will bring up the wounds and bruises I have hid in Adam so that my central nervous system feels stress when adversity comes.

Adversity relates to circumstances that I can-

not control. I can, however, control stress, which is an internal reaction to external adverse circumstances. Stress within comes because of decisions against entering into faith-rest.

The key to entering into faith-rest is that we simply claim a promise. Many people do not have faith-rest because they do not have a promise to rest in. Therefore, we need to learn how to receive from God by learning how to think with God.

Developing Proper Thinking Skills

God desires to develop skills for right thinking in the minds of Christians. Perspicacity is the skill or capacity to think in grace. Another skill is the ability to be motivated by love as we rest in faith. Next is the ability to have an attitude of mercy that rejoices against judgment. Then, we learn to forgive as God has forgiven in the power of the Holy Spirit. Another skill is to give subjective love to those who do not deserve it, with the love of God that is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, God desires to develop in us a skill that summarizes all of the others. It is to have wisdom from above for applying the other skills by the leading of the Holy Spirit and the agree-

ment of the human spirit. This means we view everything from the standpoint of grace in the assimilation of truth and the circulation of divine reality because we have "eaten" the Word—we have masticated God's thoughts (Hebrews 5:14).

The Word and the Spirit: Our Necessary Provisions

In addition to these thinking skills, we have two indescribable provisions from God that are absolutely necessary for the believer to prosper. First, there is the filling of the Holy Spirit. When a man is filled with the Holy Spirit, he is not the same man.

Every morning before doing anything else, I go to God alone in prayer. I make sure I am confessed up-to-date, not living in any known sin, and I ask Him to fill me with His Holy Spirit. If I were to neglect being filled, I would not have the provision of divine power to walk in the Spirit that keeps me from fulfilling the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). Then, I pray with my wife for family members, for Christians here and on the foreign field, for local pastors and leaders of different denominations, for the needs of the ministry, for our government, and for the unsaved.

After the filling of the Holy Spirit, God's other amazing provision is the Word of God, which was given to us directly by Him. When the Word is dwelling richly in our souls (Colossians 3:16), the continual entrance of that Word brings in the Kingdom of light—God's Kingdom operating in us.

It is absolutely necessary for the believer to be filled with the Spirit and the Word. Complete sincerity and absolute desire are not enough. If he neglects either of God's provisions, a Christian cannot live a spiritual life.

Chapter Three

EQUIPPED TO FACE ADVERSITY: FROM PROVISION TO SOLUTION

The Bible is so cohesive; its books correlate so perfectly. In any situation I can apply its precepts when they are accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. By these two provisions, we can enter into the great solutions of the Kingdom of God.

The first solution is God's provision for *rebound*. If we were to fail miserably, we can rebound instantly: We get up and go on as we receive divine adequacy, continuing to live in God's nature, in spite of the failure.

Another solution from the Kingdom is to *claim promises* from the Word. In whatever I am doing, I can claim Philippians 4:19: "…My God shall supply *all* your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Many quote that verse casually, without the dynamics of the power of the Word and the Spirit operating in the human

soul. But when we claim a promise in the power of the Holy Spirit, we enter into the six skills of divine thinking.

So many people get upset at little things or big things in life because they leave the promises of God unclaimed. For this reason, the Christian life has no value to them, practically speaking. But 1 Kings 8:56 says that not one word of His promise has failed; not one of His promises will fall to the ground (1 Samuel 3:19). All of God's promises are "Yea, and in him, Amen" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Christians who will not pick up the promises of God cannot enter into faith-rest. Instead, they enter into stress, which can only come from our inward reaction to outward adverse circumstances. Remember, adversity is beyond our control. Stress, on the other hand, is related to our decisions, and those who confess stress are really saying that they are not right within their souls. A man can face all the adversity that comes against him if he meets it with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in his heart (Colossians 3:16). If we meet adversity with that kind of response, God then shares His joy with us. There is a celebration of the Word of God, and we are not "stressed-

out" by circumstances.

Adversity is not optional, but stress is optional. We do not need to have stress. So when adversity comes, we can choose stress or we can choose the filling of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. If we choose God's provisions, we can enter a divine thought process and begin to receive divine solutions.

God provides what we need through the integrity and veracity of His promises. It is important that we pick up the promises of God, personally applying them, and do not just leave them on the pages of the Bible (Hebrews 4:1). Just reading the Word of God doesn't help if we leave behind what we read. Chapter and verse cannot benefit us unless we indeed pick up the promises and have God's powerful provisions functioning in our lives.

Glorify God by Giving Grace for Grace

Another beautiful solution comes as we pick up the promises, and they are placed in categorical order for divine living in the five parts of the human soul: mind, emotions, volition, conscience, and self-consciousness. That provision is the ability to *give grace for grace* (John 1:16). We have received so much grace from God, now we

can give grace to those who need it. We can give grace for grace because God has enabled us by the indwelling Christ.

Satan has specialized demons that promote maligning, malice, and gossip. Our natural thought processes are inadequate to deal with these attacks in the light. When we allow those demons to influence us, instead of picking up a promise, we do not let the past die. But, instead of reacting and gossiping, we can enter into this "grace for grace" solution. With divine thinking, we can give grace for grace.

Many marriages experience serious problems. But if these same people would believe and take up the promises of God, they could have something from God and glorify Jesus Christ by giving grace where it is undeserved.

Now, it is one thing for a wife to give mercy, which means she doesn't say something to her husband that he deserves to have said to him. But giving grace means that she goes beyond mercy to give him what he does *not* deserve. And because of rebound, a husband should freely give grace to his wife, without question, without reservation, and without hesitation. When a couple understands how this works, then the marriage has solutions that go beyond

any human agency. We have grace for grace with wisdom from above (James 3:17).

New Creation Self-Esteem

Another solution that is ours as we apply the promises is the ability to *go from faith to faith*. We believe the best about people and the plan of God, no matter what kind of damaging trial may come into our lives. When we trust God in the trial, we please Him with our faith that goes against sight as He works everything together for good.

God has also given us a provision through His divine solution of *absolute joy*. We are entitled to share the joy of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God dwelling richly within us. Often people will *say* that the joy of the Lord is their strength, quoting Nehemiah 8:10 and John 15:11, but these verses are about God sharing His absolute joy inside the believer no matter what kind of adversity comes on the outside. The Lord shares His joy with us intimately by imparting Himself to us.

God says very clearly in 1 Peter 5:7 that if we cast our cares upon Him, we will experience His care for us. If we trust Him with all of our hearts and lean not on our own understanding, He will

lead us perfectly with His divine understanding. We must understand that God has given us these absolute principles of divine provision, and they can be applied in every realm of life.

When we enter into the practice of making good decisions, allowing the Word and the love of God through the Holy Spirit to enter and fill our souls, we can have a "new creation" self-esteem. We will see that every old thing has passed away. Within, we can be governed by God and free from stress because we keep getting refreshed by the Word.

No adversity nor any person, place, or thing can affect the joy we have in Him. We have counsel from the Word, and we don't have to lean on people, though we recognize the importance of being knit with every member of the Body of Christ. We do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25), because that is where God imparts precious promises. Instead of trusting in the arm of the flesh (Jeremiah 17:5), we take every promise of God as our provision.

CONCLUSION

Stress contradicts the Christian's life and destroys his capacity to apply divine truth and live in spirituality. Understanding this, we must realize our need to take up the amazing shield of faith that quenches the fiery darts of the devil as we put on the whole armor of God (see Ephesians 6).

For faith to be produced, we must hear the Word of God as we bring everything we know into an experience with Jesus Christ. Faith-rest starts with hearing the Word of God and being filled with His Spirit. Then comes godly contentment, and we begin to live godly lives, revenging disobedience with obedience, moment by moment.

When we operate in God's solutions, we are able to rebound, claim God's promises, and go from faith to faith, giving grace for grace, with absolute joy. This is a life that Satan cannot stop or change because of the unchangeable provi-

sions within.

As we develop in our priesthood, God makes us stand. We know with boldness and confidence who we are and why we are here, and we live in the provision of His promises.

God's Purpose

Can't Be Stopped

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Still, He always expects grace to be absolutely established in truth. In other words, grace is not something that gets me off the hook when I have done wrong. Grace is the most beautiful virtue in the world, and it is centered in the truth of the perfect work of God at Calvary —the Finished Work.

The throne of grace was made for sinners. Yet, the only way that anyone can experience its protection and its provision is through the Cross, which bridged the gap between us and the holy throne of grace.

God's purpose is that all men might see the fullness of His glory that was revealed in Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 1:9-10)—that men might recognize His greatness and then receive His goodness. This booklet may challenge your thinking concerning God's purpose in your life. My prayer is that it will reveal the truth, and that the

truth will establish a throne of grace in your heart.

Chapter One

THE PLAN OF A MAN OR THE PURPOSE OF GOD?

"Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?

"In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him" (Ecclesiastes 7:13-14).

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

God brings prosperity into our lives and then, right beside it, adversity. The passage in Ecclesiastes 7:13-14 tells why: so we cannot discover anything that we do not need to know. When a person cannot figure out a situation, he is reduced to faith in the character and nature of God.

But when a person is overwhelmed by circumstances and chooses to follow a more "practical" or "sensible" route, he may indeed be leaning upon his own understanding, thereby missing God's purpose. Since things seem to be going smoothly at first, he presumes that all is well.

Some people leave good churches—not just to find another good church, which would be fine. But often they end up with their lives in bondage, with no spiritual covering. When they leave the perfect will of God, they are apt to say, "God is blessing me more than ever." They say, "I know I'm in God's will because God is blessing me."

But what may seem to be a blessing is not the proof of whether a person is in the will of God. A person might be crucified and be in God's will. The difference is that it is the work of God, not of men.

God's Purpose Produces Holiness

Morality affects how we relate to each other, but holiness reflects our relationship to God. Personal holiness, therefore, is revealed by how we relate to people in the light of Christ. Holiness is also revealed in the way that we relate to

people who have positions of authority in our lives.

When God is working out His purpose, He will use people and circumstances that we may not understand. But holiness is a throne of grace that brings us to our feeble knees and makes us strong in prayer, with a heart that sees God (Hebrews 12:14). And, when a believer recognizes God's purpose above his own concepts, in due season, God will reveal it (1 Corinthians 13:12).

The Purpose of Oneness in Christ

Someone who has cancer came into my office for prayer. She was going in for surgery, and the secretaries gathered with me as we prayed for her. It was a beautiful time of brokenness. Then I told her something that Christians must understand and really grasp the reality of it: "We are absolutely one with you. When you go into that operating room, we are with you in heart, and we will be with you in prayer."

We can understand how Christians should treat each other by understanding holiness. The Word of God says that we are members of one another, (1 Corinthians 12:26-27)—"members in particular." Based upon 1 Corinthians 6:17, Ephesians 2:15, and Ephesians 5:30, we are members

not just of His Body, but of His flesh and His bones—he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, and we are made one new man in Him.

What a great comfort for that person going into surgery for cancer. She is executing faith beautifully, but it was a great blessing to look into her eyes and say, "We are one with you, and we are right there with you." What an amazing principle.

Think of it! We are in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is in us. He is our Head, and we are His body. Therefore we are one.

So many problems and misunderstandings would be nullified by abiding in God's purpose, in the reality of our unity as members of one another in the Body of Christ. When we come to the place where we grasp this and really understand it, we will know the presence and power of God.

Uphold the Authority You Are Under

Whether it is in business or marriage or family or church or school, we need to uphold the authority that we are under. Remember, the way we relate to those in authority will reveal how holy we are in Jesus Christ.

One of the greatest problems in churches

today, generally speaking, is upholding God's authority. When we do, if it is true, godly leadership—not that which manipulates or controls through power lust or approbation lust—then it becomes an umbrella of protection. It is such a beautiful thing to be covered by an umbrella of protection from heaven that God gives when we uphold the authority that we are under.

People in positions of leadership are accountable to God for what He has given them. Proverbs 22:11 says, "He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the King shall be his friend." Those who are pure in heart, who love purity and who are gracious in their speech, they will have the king as their friend.

Chapter Two

GOD'S PURPOSE WILL STAND

"The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand" (Isaiah 14:24).

"For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isaiah 14:27).

God has a purpose in the things that go on in a person's life, and according to Isaiah 14:24, God's purpose will stand. Again, in Romans 9:11, the purpose of God shall stand.

God's purpose cannot be nullified. What a comforting thing to know! And what a thing to believe and understand. "His purpose cannot be ineffective, and it will not disappoint," according to the original text in Jeremiah 51:29. God's purpose shall be performed.

In Jeremiah 4:28, God said, "I have spoken something, I have purposed it, and I will not

change My mind about it. I purposed it, and I will not turn back from it."

Here we are, grasping faith, getting a hold of truth, living in a marriage of promises, and then experiencing and getting hold of God's purpose, knowing that He will not turn back from it. We cleave to Him as members of His body, flesh, and bones.

The Finished Work: Predestined in His Purpose

"…According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11).

"I have purposed it, I will also do it," (Isaiah 46:11*c*).

God said, "I have a purpose in My plan, and I will do it—and not a single thing can stop Me."

Many of us have done different things for God, whether on the mission field, in marriage, in the family, or in business. And when we have grasped the eternal purpose of Ephesians 3:11, we begin to realize that God's purpose is not a normal thing, it is not a common thing. It is a fantastic thing when He predestinates according to His purpose and to the pleasure of His good will (Ephesians 1:9, 11).

We are elect through God's foreknowledge

of our free volitional decisions to accept Christ. We are elect according to His purpose (Romans 9:11).

He sees beforehand every decision we will make. Then He says, "Okay, these people are going to do this. Then, in 2004, they are going to do this. They will make a series of good decisions. Also, I see some bad decisions they will make because they will not hear Me. Therefore, because I do not violate their volition, I must have a purpose while knowing every good decision and every bad decision they will make."

Remember that prosperity and adversity are side by side, for this is the work of God.

A Miracle Cure without the Cross?

Some time ago, I saw a program about synthetic cells. It spoke of a scientific experiment in which scientists were trying to develop rats that do not age. Imagine it! That could mean that the lives of athletes could be enhanced so that nobody would know how long they could play.

It means that when your age catches up with you, the synthetic cells could maintain the newness of physical life inside of you through a miracle revealed by God. If God allowed that discovery to be implemented, maybe we could

get back to 120 years of preaching as in the Old Testament times. Of course, the number of people in hospitals and nursing homes would decrease—but it all would depend on getting those synthetic cells.

You say, "Wouldn't the population of the earth explode? How will anyone die?"

Oh, they will die. You can be sure of that. People will die because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). God has spoken it, still He will follow through with His purpose, which is to offer sinners eternal life that only comes through the sacrifice of His Son.

Chapter Three

NO PRICE IS TOO GREAT

"There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

"But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

"For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

"When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me" (Matthew 26:7-10).

In Matthew 26:7-10, the disciples thought that Jesus Christ was wasting the purpose of money when He let the woman pour the expensive ointment upon Him that filled the room with that beautiful aroma. They said, "What is the purpose of this waste?"

But this is something we must understand:

For *every* part of God's purpose, there is never any waste. Here was a woman, Mary Magdalene, who had been filled demons, and those demons were cast out of her (Luke 8). But think of it! With all the sins that she committed, she ended up loving much. In Luke 7:46-48, Jesus confronted the Pharisees with their sin by saying, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Now, we do not mean that we ought to sin to discover love. Of course not! Sin is terrible. It grieves the Holy Spirit, breaks the heart of God, has consequences, and brings about discipline. Yet, even though that is true, God takes that sin, and if we cooperate with Him, He brings it into His eternal purpose. His eternal provision, His eternal umbrella, is ours because of this: God loves the sinner—so much that He bore all of our sins in His body and took them to Calvary, where He bled and died. That is how much He has done in our behalf in dealing with our sin.

How the Devil's Work Is Destroyed

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8*b*).

Without a manifestation of God's life, Satan's work is not destroyed. If we do not have Easter every morning, if we do not celebrate the Resurrection each day, there is no destruction of Satan's works.

With all of this, a manifestation of the Holy Spirit is given to us (1 Corinthians 12:7). We are living epistles, written in the heart, known and read by all men, "manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God" (see 2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

"But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of *the* truth [(doctrine)], commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

Notice how he uses a definite article, speaking of a manifestation of *the* doctrine. By manifesting the truth, we manifest the knowledge of God's glory, shining in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6), and the works of the devil are destroyed. It is not to go around with visions we devised on our own, with gifts that we don't have, where there is no manifestation of God's glory in our knowledge. But when we have the

manifestation of God's glory in our knowledge, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, we become a reflection of His very essence and His character. We have faith-rest and we function in peace.

Jesus said in John 17:6, "I have manifested Your name—which reveals Your nature—unto the men which You gave Me." And in Titus 1:3, "[God] hath in due times manifested his word through preaching." That manifestation is the very thing that Satan hates, because it is the thing that destroys his work.

In 1 John 1:2, God manifested His life to us. That means *now*, in our daily lives, in friendships and in marriage. It is so much fun when you love your spouse, when you are one. It is so much fun to consistently take care of one another in the details of life.

Lay Down False Burdens

Oh, to have the Word of God dwelling so richly in our hearts, to have psalms and hymns and joy, making a melody in our hearts! I think I can understand what it might be like in heaven, with all the singing, and all the angels, and all the glorified souls there. Once in awhile they may see us cry over losing them, but they say, "I'm not going to look at that. They'll be okay.

But here, there is just too much to rejoice in!"

With all of the music and all of the joy in heaven, God loves when His people experience heaven on earth. He loves to see our souls on fire with joy because we have the manifestation of a Spirit-filled life on the inside. No gloom. No sadness. No negative vibrations. No carrying around false burdens. But when Calvary is excluded, the life of Christ cannot be manifested to take away the false burdens.

False burdens are those burdens which, though they may be real, we refuse to give up by taking up a daily cross. The burdens wear us down, so we try to figure out how to have the kind of a life that can take care of those burdens—when Calvary will take care it all.

Just imagine what God has in store for us beyond what we ask or think. Christ's life manifested in frail, earthen vessels to reach out and to reveal His glory to lost souls: This is God's purpose, and it cannot be stopped.

CONCLUSION

When Christ came to earth as a man, He had one thought and one purpose—to redeem mankind. There was nothing "normal" about His life. His birth was announced to humble men by the voices of angels. Kings from far-off lands sought the Christ child and brought Him gifts. At twelve, He taught the Scriptures to religious men in the temple. In the last years of His ministry, He taught rugged men, who were not known for their ability, spiritual or otherwise. Those men would take the Gospel message into all the world, fulfilling Christ's purpose on earth.

Today, we have the same purpose. Though the methods may be different, the need and the message remain the same. God has not changed, and neither has the devil. The difference is Calvary. There, Satan was defeated, once and for all. Satan may throw out his accusations and try to divert our gaze. But neither the grave nor hell

could hold back our Savior from a glorious resurrection. Crucified, buried, and raised with Him, we too are unstoppable when we have His purpose as our own.

Father, thank You that You have revealed these things to us—weak men and women, sinners at our best. When we are troubled on every side, perplexed by the seeming contradictions of our circumstances, make us constantly aware of your purpose in it all. Thank You that Your plan includes the "all things" (Romans 8:28). Therefore, we shall not be moved! In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

God's Purpose for Suffering

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INTRODUCTION

There are so many reasons why people suffer. In Ecclesiastes 2:22-23, the everyday details of life often bring suffering. Bona fide suffering can come as a guilt-reaction to sin. Wounds and scars in our souls from wrong decisions bring suffering (Ephesians 4:17-19). When people marry the wrong person, they suffer greatly (Ezekiel 16). We suffer when we do not isolate sin and move on, putting it behind us (Hebrews 12:15). Nature groans, the believer groans, and the Holy Spirit groans when we are backslidden and cannot pray as we ought because we are out of fellowship with God (Romans 8:18-27).

Some of the worst suffering comes as a result of rejecting spiritual authority, which is a covering to protect us from the consequences of poor decisions (Judges 19-21; Matthew 7:29-8:13). In that same category is the suffering that comes from rejecting the Word of God. We suffer when our emotions are not kept with God's mind

(John 20:9-18). God will allow natural disasters to bring suffering when there is no pivotal force of believers with godly character to hold back judgment upon nations (Isaiah 59). To stray, even temporarily, from a conscience of godly norms and standards because we lack standards of conviction and grace will cause us to suffer (Jeremiah 3:24-25).

There is, however, suffering that brings positive results for us in eternity and for the furtherance of God's plan here on earth. We may suffer to demonstrate the power and provision of God, to manifest His grace (2 Corinthians 12). Suffering for the body's sake—for Christ's sake — when we are faced with unusual trials enables us to identify with others (1 Corinthians 12:26; Romans 12:16). Our godly responses in those situations speak volumes to the atmosphere. We become witnesses in the invisible angelic contest (1 Peter 1:12, 1 Corinthians 4:9), testimonies of God's power and provision in the midst of suffering, while we store up degrees of glory for all of eternity.

Chapter One

SUFFERING FOR THE BODY'S SAKE

"Even now I rejoice in the midst of my sufferings on your behalf. And in my own person I am making up whatever is still lacking and remains to be completed [on our part] of Christ's afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the Church" (Colossians 1:24, Amplified Translation).

Paul was in a dungeon in Rome. Historical records reveal that the surroundings were horrible beyond our comprehension—dark, cold, filthy, rat-infested. In addition to those conditions, Paul also had a thorn in his flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7)—a messenger sent from Satan to aggravate him. But in a moment, he started rejoicing with a tremendous anointing.

A thorough study of the Greek syntax in Colossians 1:24*a* includes a present active indicative verb in the dative case of advantage. It reveals that even though he was in prison, Paul

rejoiced in his sufferings because he was suffering for others in the Body of Christ. He really said, "Now, regarding my experience in the temporal realm, now being in prison, I rejoice in my sufferings for you." It was a motivation of love that totally occupied his heart.

We don't know what Paul was thinking of prior to that experience, but we know that the anointing came upon him suddenly. Paul was not experiencing "expiatory suffering." That was Christ's suffering on the Cross, having finished the work of redemption once and for all, making a way for every man to be saved. But Paul's suffering was for the sake of the Church, in Christ's stead, to spread the Gospel, to plant churches, and to reproduce disciples.

The Shares of Suffering

Persecution came against Paul from several directions. Devout Jews—men and women—and those in the pagan businesses were among those who attacked him. In Colossians 1:24, by using the Greek word, *antanaplenoo* (to "fill up" or "make up" that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ), Paul was saying, "I am taking a *full share* of suffering."

The way he described it, there are shares of

suffering that have to be met in order to establish ministries and reproduce the work of Christ throughout the world. In other words, a certain amount of suffering is necessary for the furtherance of the Gospel. In fact, through the book of Acts we see that persecution in the early days of the Church caused believers to be scattered across the Roman Empire, which brought the Gospel to places it had never been before.

Christ went through His great share of suffering when He was in His physical body on earth. Then He was buried, resurrected, and now He is in heaven. So Paul was saying that as Christ's servant, he had to continue a share of suffering that Christ could no longer take up in person. But there is also a great mystery mentioned in verse 27: "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ was in Paul, as He is in us, sharing the suffering we allow Him to work into our lives.

The Privileges of Suffering

The Church has been called to suffer, yet many people leave godly churches during periods of persecution. Paul, however, rejoiced in his suffering because it was for *others*. Second Timothy 2:12 explains clearly that if we suffer with

Christ, we will also reign with Him. Those who suffer for the Body's sake—who exhibit a relaxed, positive volition in the midst of their trials—will reign with Jesus. According to 1 Peter 1:6-8, though we be tried with fire, we can *rejoice* (*agalliao*) with unspeakable joy. That means we can literally have a party going on in our souls, as Paul experienced in the dungeon, while our outward man is suffering.

It is important to understand 2 Timothy 3:12, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." That verse doesn't limit persecution in any way. It says *all* who live godly will suffer to a degree. Each of us will experience our share, but we have the privilege of sharing it with Christ.

Satan hates to see us reveal Christ in the midst of trials. Always looking for a way to attack godly believers, he may attack marriages if he can't get at us through any other means. So many believers suffer in the very institution God designed to reveal the intimacy of a believer's union with Christ on earth. But, to suffer for Christ in my marriage means that even if my spouse doesn't deserve it, I have the option of being Christ to her instead of reacting to negative projections. I wouldn't consciously think of

it that way, and I wouldn't take up a martyr's complex. Yet I would rejoice, rather than resort to separation or divorce or becoming depressed, knowing I could suffer for my spouse in my marriage.

Chapter Two

SUFFERING THAT REVEALS A MYSTERY: CHRIST IN YOU

Satan's kingdom is organized into armies of demons that come after believers with strategies of hell.* If he can't get at a believer through the marriage, the devil may attempt to influence a child into rebellion and cause pain that way, or he might attack finances. But to reveal the great mystery of an indwelling Christ is cause for great joy and rejoicing when we are under attack.

Jesus declared, "If you confess Me before men, then I will confess you before the Father in heaven. But if you deny Me before men, I will deny you before the Father" (see Matthew 10:32-33). Certainly, this doesn't mean we can lose our salvation. Yet, if I am the innocent party in a bad marriage, and I will not communicate Christ to the guilty party, then I am denying Christ's nature that lives in me. Jesus Christ is in me, the Holy Spirit is in me, but I grieve and quench the

Holy Spirit because of my reaction to my spouse.

Prepare for His Appearing

If I hold anything against another believer, I deny the love of God, the grace of God, the mercy of God, and the forgiveness of God in the presence of the guilty party. When it comes time for God to evaluate my life at the Bema Seat, Jesus Christ will have to represent me honestly before the Father. Even as my advocate, He must say in effect, "He denied Me before others. This man wouldn't accept My life as a manifestation of grace to flow through him as a channel of communication, as a means of manifesting eternal life through a motive of love."

Of course, we know that even now, Jesus Christ is pleading our case before the Father through intercession (Hebrews 7:25), and we will be forever happy in heaven. Still, we may experience a period of shame in response to this evaluation at the Bema Seat. "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28).**

Denying Christ isn't something that happens

simply by going out into the world and hanging out in barrooms. It is much deeper than that. It is a process of decisions. A woman who defrauds her husband of sex for no biblical reason is denying Jesus Christ to her husband when the Word says to honor him. A husband who defrauds his wife or lives in anger and doesn't communicate Christ to his wife denies the Christ who is in him the opportunity to use his body to express resurrection love to his wife. If we confess Jesus Christ before men and reveal the expression of His thoughts toward others, then He will confess us before the Father.

A View toward Glory

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:6-8).

"But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be

revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:13).

Paul was living in an age when only a remnant of Christians were willing to suffer. When Christ allows the Church to endure tremendous periods of suffering, people will find fault and search out reasons to leave godly assemblies. These people do not want to pay the price of identification with those who suffer. They would rather take the easy way than to go through it; they are not partakers of Christ's sufferings.

But those who are willing to enter into His sufferings receive so much more, according to 1 Peter 1:6-8. Christ's glory is revealed in their glorified bodies. With that understanding, we can boldly confess Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Degrees of Glory

"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's

matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:14-16).

Paul always looked forward and reckoned that his present sufferings were not worthy to be compared with the glory that would be revealed in Him in heaven. Degrees of glory are revealed in a man's glorified soul, which leaves the body if he dies before the Rapture. The human spirit and the soul make up the *soul body*, which goes up to God (Ecclesiastes 3:21) while the physical body perishes.

God reveals His glory in men so that we will have exceeding joy. The words in 1 Peter 4:14-16 amplify this doctrine. If we are put in the place of suffering and remain at rest in the Word of God and in faith, then every detail of suffering (as with our obedience in the details of life, in Matthew 10:42) will add a degree of glory that rests upon us now and will be revealed in eternity. So if a man of God were to go through thirty-five difficulties in a month, then he would receive thirty-five degrees of glory, increasing the brightness of his soul body forever.

**For a detailed look at some of Satan's key strategies and our appropriate offense, read* Dealing Precisely with Demons *and* Exposing Satan's Armies, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

***Read* The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?*, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Three

SUFFERING NOW WILL REVEAL ETERNAL PRAISE

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though *now for a season*…." (1 Peter 1:6). If we are walking with Christ, rest assured that we will suffer seasons of discomfort from time to time. But when we encounter such trials, they will be more precious than gold—more valuable than anything on earth. These trials are recognized in heaven, *forever* precious, as having an eternal weight in glory. The evidence is revealed by thunderous praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Peter 1:7, the word for praise is *epainos*, which speaks of the inaudible applause of the angels. That means that when we suffer persecution, and we choose to glorify God, then degrees of glory are added to our soul body. As we maintain faith-rest in an attitude of love (Zephaniah 3:17), those degrees rest there—they can never be taken away. Though God cannot add

more degrees if we fail to continue on in our walk with Him, He will not subtract from us what He has added.

For every degree of glory added to our soul body, a degree of glory is reserved for us in heaven, to be added to our new glorified bodies. Some people in heaven will have a magnificent white raiment over their glorified bodies (Revelation 3:4b-5*a*). It will appear as an indescribably bright light. And though everyone in heaven will have a glorified body, when we see these people in heaven, we will see that their trials were made precious for all of eternity. This is why 1 Peter 4:13 says we are to rejoice when we partake of Christ's suffering. When His glory shall be revealed, we will be glad with exceeding joy, as the Spirit of glory rests upon us (1 Peter 4:14).

Walls That Protect and Do Not Divide

Too often, when trials press on the outside, Christians will withdraw into emotionalism, sublimation (by taking up a new habit), or human good in the old sin nature. But if the Word of God is dwelling in us richly with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs as a manifestation of His presence, then whatever we do

will be done to the glory of God. Precise categorical doctrine is illuminated by the Holy Spirit and is brought into remembrance in the conscious mind (John 14:26). That doctrine is not merely knowledge, but it circulates and becomes assimilated into each part of the soul, forming a wall that protects our mind and emotions. That way, no matter what happens to us, we will not internalize it—no matter how long, how serious, or how deep the trial.

According to Proverbs 25:28, a man who cannot rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, without walls to protect from the attacks of the enemy. That is why we are to build walls of doctrine in our souls. Furthermore, there is a celebration of doctrine going on during the trials. We can rejoice in tribulations and testing, because we know there is a reason behind the trials. It is not because God does not love me or because I am being chastised for not being confessed up-to-date. We understand that the trials give God opportunities to use us as witnesses against Satan in his appeal case in the angelic contest. Just as it was with Joshua in Zechariah 3 and with Job, our lives are being used to reveal the character of Almighty God, which Satan cannot stand.

As we understand the correlation of 1 Peter 1:6-8 in the doctrine of suffering, we will see the great value and purpose God places on the trials and temptations He allows. So now, for a little while, we may suffer "manifold temptations"—attacks from many sides—yet these times of suffering are precious, stirring applause among the angels on our behalf, though we cannot see them.

"Honour" (1 Peter 1:7) refers to the degrees of glory being added to our soul body from day to day because of our positive decisions, while "glory" speaks of the accumulation of these degrees over a lifetime. Some of the people who have had the most difficult times down here are going to be blessed in the richest way in heaven. We may have watched them go through all kinds of trials that never seemed to stop. Yet, when they take it all in faith-rest, with no anger and with no negative reactions, they are fulfilling a purpose on earth, doing all to the glory of God—*suffering for the Body's sake*. What amazing glory will be revealed when they receive their new bodies in heaven!

Shine as the Morning Star

When Jesus was on the Mount of Transfigu-

ration in Matthew 17, the great light that was in Him was revealed on the outside. Everything He did in His human life honored the Father. His words, His confession, His behavior—every aspect of His life was absolutely perfect, and He accumulated a shocking amount of glory. Seeing this glory, all that Peter, James, and John could do was to fall down on their faces. They couldn't even look at Him because of the brightness of His appearance, but Jesus calmed them (Matthew 17:7).

Jesus Christ always let it be known that the glory He revealed came from making good decisions in His humanity. Everything Jesus did—every word that He spoke, every life that He touched—was all in accordance with the Father's will. He was never discouraged, negative, or depressed, and the glory they saw was the result of His oneness with the Father. Then, in John 17:22, He prayed that we would have the same glory. In fact, during a given day, we could add fifteen, twenty, or thirty degrees of glory to our soul body—degrees of light that will rest upon our spirit now and will be revealed in our glorified body forever.

In eternity, we are not going to have lots of questions. People will walk with a brilliant raiment over their glorified bodies, and we will be overwhelmed with the testimony of their lives. Many who appear with such great light will be members of God's Morning Star Order* (Revelation 2:26-28), enjoying special heavenly privileges as they reign with Christ forever.

We don't need to argue and fight against suffering. People have left churches that were facing persecution because they couldn't handle a time of suffering. In many cases, they would come out and say plainly, "I want to keep my reputation." In Luke 6:26, however, Jesus said, "Beware when men speak well of you." People want to be well-spoken of and, as a result, they may sacrifice identifying with Christ in order to have a good report among men.

Once the foundation, which is Christ, has been established in our heart and the walls of doctrine have gone up, we begin to build the rooms of our soul. In the basement is Love, where the premise for every motive is set. The kitchen is Grace, where a continual feast is prepared. The living room is Mercy, where we can

rest because of a Finished Work. There are three guest rooms upstairs for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When we start to build this spiritual Home for the Lord, we will suffer. But James 1:2-4 says to count it all joy! Patience will have her perfect work so we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

**Read* The Morning Star Order *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

There are reasons for suffering that bring glory to God, so we are never to judge anyone who is going through a trial. Our part is simply to think no evil, to believe the best, and to pray. And, when something comes against us, instead of reacting we can see how to add degrees of glory for now and forever.

A carnal man enters a trial and self-destructs. He suffers because problems in his emotions have never been resolved, and he is angry at every other thing. The Spirit-filled man triumphs in a test, knowing that glory will be his reward; his emotions are kept by God's mind, as he receives and responds to love and grace from the Father.

When pressures come to the Spirit-filled man, he can be very quiet. There is no need for tension. What good does it do to become upset? Has worry every delivered anyone? A relaxed man is one who rejoices in temptation, who fel-

lowships with Christ and rests in God's plan. He knows that God will provide what is necessary to go through the trial, and He makes it most precious.

God's Rest for the Stressed

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

A Christian has two natures—his old sin nature and the new nature given by God. An unsaved person only has one nature. Since the Christian has an option to live in one nature or the other, he is not as predictable as the unsaved man.

Because we have these competing natures, we face a choice every moment of the day: We can live in God's rest, or we can operate in the stress of our self-effort. The latter course is one that always ends up in failure. Sooner or later, the capacity of the flesh is exhausted, which brings about reactions and emotional outbursts in response to situations that are beyond our control.

Internalizing situations causes stress. Stress is a known killer, both spiritually and physically. Doctors have determined that high-stress lifestyles produce short life spans. The mind and the emotions are simply overworked and they

take it out on the body.

Life doesn't have to be that way. This booklet will show you that there is a rest for the people of God. It is a rest centered on and supported by the love of God that never ever fails or forsakes us.

Chapter One

GOD KNOWS OUR FRAME

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

"God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2).

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

"What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Romans 6:14-15).

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth" (Psalm 103:13-15).

I love to read in the Bible about the ways God dealt with the children of Israel. They rejected Him in the wilderness, provoked Him

when they had no water, grieved Him in the desert, and yet He had compassion on them and forgave their iniquity. He did not destroy them because He knew that they were but flesh.

A person who uses a pickup truck knows that the vehicle has limited dimensions; therefore, it can only carry so many pounds. God knows our capacities, how much we can handle. He will not suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able to stand. What's more, with every temptation, He provides a way to escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

We need to remember this in our dealings with each other. I was counseling a teenager who kept saying, "I do not love my mother." He needed to understand that the problem was not with his mother; the problem was with him.

Love Comes from the Subject

This teenager needed to understand that with God's love, the subject performs the action of giving love. It is not up to the object to cause love to happen. Every husband should consider this in the way he treats his wife. She is frail, and she hasn't been perfected yet. He must look at her in terms of compassion, understanding that all of us have weak frames, and in our natural

condition we are prone to mistakes.

Our heavenly Father's love goes so far beyond what we are. He loves us. He pities us. His Son shed His blood and died for us. He doesn't impute sin to us; He doesn't even keep a record of our sins. He understands our frailty. As our heavenly Father understands our frailty, so we as fathers should understand our children's frailties. We must treat them with the heart of God, for we are all but flesh.

All of us are sinners—the pastor, the choir director, the baker, the doctor, the lawyer, the mother, the father, the brother, the sister, the children. When we received Christ as our personal Savior by grace through faith, we became saints (1 Corinthians 1:2; 16:15). No, we are not always saintly, but we are who we are because Jesus Christ made us saints through the Finished Work of Calvary.

Specific Promises for Specific Needs

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in

them that heard it.

"For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

"For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

"And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest" (Hebrews 4:1-5).

This passage in Hebrews 4 tells us to be careful not to leave out a promise for our life, especially for a specific need. Each of God's promises relates to a specific need. If we leave a promise out of our life, then we cannot enter into God's rest. He has a beautiful rest for us—a rest that penetrates the unconscious, the subconscious, and the conscious mind of our souls, a rest that calms self-consciousness in the emotions and the volition.

Faith-rest depends upon who God is, what God did, and what I believe. No one can have faith-rest if he tries to work out the fulfillment of a promise in his flesh. Rest comes when we have a deep trust, loyalty, and faithfulness to God Almighty—when we abide in His promises.

He prepares a rest for us so we can fulfill our

joy (see John 15:11). That joy becomes our strength as God shares His happiness with us on the inside (Nehemiah 8:10). He gives us peace that the world cannot give (John 14:27).

The Essential Word That Is Heard

God does these things for us providing we hear the Word from the pastor-teacher under whom we were called to serve in the local assembly. No Christian is called to have five pastors; God calls each one of us to serve under one pastor-teacher.

When we enter into God's rest, we do so through His integrity and His promises. He has promised to bless our marriages and our families (1 Peter 3:7; Hebrews 6:13; Acts 2:39). He also promises to bless our businesses. Perhaps His blessing doesn't come when we expect it, but He will keep His promise:

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35-36).

Chapter Two

PROMISES THAT OVERPOWER ADVERSITY

The Lord Jesus Christ wants us to understand the difference between adversity and stress. Adversity refers to circumstances on the outside. These are things we cannot control. They are inevitable, and most of them have nothing to do with us. We are not to blame. These are called adversities.

When, however, we refuse God's provision of grace and we react to circumstances, we internalize the adversities. This is what we call "stress." It is something that we allow to control us. Stress impairs the memory and inhibits our ability to receive and learn. Stress takes away our keenness and makes us double-minded, even when we don't intend to be so. It discourages us and causes us to live in degrees of despair. It brings garbage into our minds.

Stress, according to medical and psychologi-

cal studies, causes many physical and emotional problems. Stress is a major cause for problems that lead to divorce, alcohol and drug abuse, overeating, and a number of other unhealthy practices. Why? Unhappiness within brings an inability to resolve, through positive measures, the circumstances without.

Two of the top psychiatrists say that the effects of stress can take fifteen years off a person's life. Stress is the leading cause behind conditions that lead to death.

A person who lives in stress internalizes problems instead of receiving perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3). The Lord says, "I don't want you to be stressful. I love you with an everlasting love, and what I really want to give you is perfect peace."

Receive God's Blessings

When we mix faith with what we hear from the promises of God, we enter into God's rest where the work is finished. There is no condemnation, and we are not put on trial. God wants to bless us, and He does, far beyond what we could even ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

Why does He bless us? We are the objects of the love He expressed at Calvary. He loves us so

much that He died for us—while we were yet sinners. Don't you think He will do much more for us now that we are saved? He is just waiting to bless us so that His mercy can be exalted (Isaiah 30:18).

God wants to cleanse and purge our unconscious and subconscious mind. When we respond to His love and receive His blessings, we will have a single eye, and our whole body will be filled with light (Matthew 6:22). He desires to give us divine guidance by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14-15) through the Word of God (Psalm 119:133).

But when we live in the effects of stress, we let our old sin nature function through our free volition. That causes us to enter into the process of knowing or perceiving people and situations according to self-occupation in one of the six lust patterns: materialism, power, the desire to be praised, pride, sex, and criticism.

But when we let the Word and the Spirit influence our free volition, we become connected with grace, mercy, and love in our conscience. As a result, we become cognizant of Christ and occupied only with who He is (Hebrews 12:2). The stress goes, and we are liberated— not agitated.

Glory to God! We can enter into a rest from strife and struggle. We can enter into a rest from all distress. We can live in the joy of the Lord twenty-four hours a day. He will even give His beloved beautiful sleep (Psalm 127:2).

Profit from His Promises

Stress comes when we do not claim the promises of God. Thus, there is no filling of the Holy Spirit when we let stress take over. The love of God cannot be received and shed abroad in a stressful heart. God's Word declares more than seven thousand promises. There is a promise for every situation we encounter, and not one of those promises will ever fall to the ground (1 Kings 8:56). When a child of God takes hold of a promise, he will mix faith with the character of the One who gave the promise.

Claim God's promises. Confess His promises. Talk about His promises.

God wants to heal our souls. He wants to heal our bodies. He wants to heal our diseases. God wants to bless us and transform the loved ones in our families. He will do it all by grace. How do we know that? Titus 1:2 tells us that God cannot lie. It is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18). All of His promises are yea and

amen (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Don't stagger at the promises of God, but be strong in faith, believing (Romans 4:20). Believe in the things that are not as though they are (Romans 4:17). We have a God who loved us enough to die for us. He has paid for our sins. He remembers that we are very needy because we have this frame of flesh.

The Word of God says in Hebrews 4:1-5 that the Gospel profited us because we believed, but the promises did not profit the children of Israel because they would not enter into His rest in the wilderness. When we believe, we enter into His rest.

Claim God's Promises

Let's take a promise and follow it through. Years ago, God promised us some things. I was not even teaching Sunday School at that point. I was just an available Christian.

"You will be on radio," He told me. There was no such thing as live Christian talk radio back then. But a man in New England started a show and then turned it over to me. We have been on the airwaves nearly forty years now—the second one in America to do it. What happened? I claimed God's promise.

"You will be on TV," God said. Again, I wasn't preaching yet. Here we are, years later, and our program is televised from coast to coast on various cable systems—All because we claimed that promise.

"You will be a pastor after My heart with a ministry that will grow and grow, touching many lives wherever you go. There will be persecution, but I will bless you according to Mark 10:30. And, I will expose the persecutors."

God has done this for me every step along the way because I claimed His promise.

God says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved—you and your house" (see Acts 16:31). If God has given you a promise like that, claim it; and no matter how bad things look, God will save your children. I know it is hard for some parents to believe that one. Believe it, I say, because that promise will not fall to the ground. When you hear that promise, mix faith with it, and you shall profit from the promise.

It doesn't matter what the circumstances are, mix the Word you have heard with faith, and you will profit from the Word of God and enter into His rest.

Chapter Three

MIX FAITH WITH THE REST THAT REMAINS

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his" (Hebrews 4:9-10).

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

"I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

"The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands" (Psalm 138:8).

There remains a rest—a rest from sin, a rest

from judgment, a rest from going to hell. Beyond those things, there remains a rest that comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit, a rest of joy, of peace, of power, and of wisdom. There is a rest in knowing that you are called to serve Him.

We can rest in the promise that He always finishes what He has started (Philippians 1:6).

It is amazing that a man and woman of God can hear directly from the Word (providing they come to church, ready to hear) for their family, their business, and their health. For anything that happens to them in life, they can receive a promise, mix faith with the promise, and watch God go to work.

We didn't get into over 180 countries by accident. The 130 outreaches we oversee in Baltimore, the area of our local church, didn't just happen. We claimed the promises and then starting telling people what God has done. And the people like what they have heard. Our church is constantly growing.

His Rest Never Ends

Throughout the first six days of Creation, God said there was a "morning" and an "evening." But on the seventh day, He didn't say

anything about an "evening" because the sun has never set on His rest. There has been no end to His rest since that seventh day. There is no end to His resting in His love (Zephaniah 3:17).

Wisdom and knowledge are the stability of our times, and the strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is our treasure (see Isaiah 33:6). "Fear" speaks of reverence. We reverence God by entering into His rest, by claiming His promises instead of withdrawing into our emotions and acting emotional. Reverence prompts us to draw near to Him and be spiritual. God blesses His children with faith-rest. There are no strings attached, and no striving or struggling involved.

I won't have a hard week this week because I have entered into His rest. I have ceased from worrying, from stress, from anxiety, from discontentment. No matter what happens, I will—by God's grace—enter into His rest.

Apastor asked his congregation to do something special. He said, "Take time right now and go to the one who blesses you the most." A line formed in front of an eighty-year-old lady. She was a prayer warrior and soul winner, a woman who kept making phone calls, investing in people though she had trouble getting around. She

was a blessing because she had entered into God's rest despite adverse circumstances.

General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was going blind and his son asked him, "What are you going to do?"

"I served God while I had sight, and I will keep serving Him after I'm blind," General Booth said. Why could he respond this way? He had entered into God's rest.

Mixing Faith Is Easy

It is such a great thing to mix faith with what we hear as we respond to God. Mixing faith is as simple as making biscuits. You put certain ingredients together and follow the directions, and you have something good to eat.

Every time we mix faith with a promise from God, we receive a blessing. Say, "God bless me in my business"—and claim 3 John 2: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." He will do it. Of course, the sovereign will of God is the final decision.

Say to God, "Bless my family. Bring out a providential reversal in the lives of my children who have gone far from you." He will do it. Ask Him for healing. He will do big things like that.

Billions of years ago, God foresaw that you would accept Christ. He foreknew it. He predestined you in Christ. He called you, justified you, and glorified you in His heart, in His purpose, in His plan, and in His providence. In the beginning of time on earth, in the eternal counsel of the Trinity, He expressed His unconditional love in the diplomacy of "divine etiquette." This means that with godly manners and godly grace He presented Himself to ungodly people, never violating our free volition. To this day, He rests in His love toward sinners.

The Sacredness of Faith-Rest

In Exodus 15:24, the children of Israel didn't have any water and they began to murmur. They had just witnessed the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea. They watched the great army of Egypt get washed away. Yet, here at the first test of faith, they began to murmur. Moses, however, entered into rest and started talking to God. God told Moses, "Strike the rock and water will come out." God gave water to the children of Israel even though they murmured.

God did things again and again for Israel because Moses practiced faith-rest. One time there were bitter waters. God told Moses to throw a

tree into the pool and the waters were made sweet. I don't know how Moses put up with them for forty years—with all the murmuring and complaining. I do know that without faith-rest, he never would have made it.

In Numbers 20, Israel again needed water, and again the people were speaking against Moses. God told him, "Speak to the rock and water will come out." But Moses, in his anger toward the people, struck the rock twice. Water did come out, but Moses' action went against the Finished Work of Calvary and against the principle of faith-rest. God disciplined him and would not let him cross over the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

The Finished Work and the principle of faith-rest are sacred to God. None should touch these things. God wants us to have His rest internally with meekness and joy on the inside. There is not a reason in the world for us to be upset. There is no reason for us to struggle mentally. No matter what happens, Jesus Christ stands ready to give us contentment with godliness, no matter what state we are in.

CONCLUSION

A note from a listener to our radio program said this:

"Discouraged and depressed, I was not able to function. Then, I started listening to your radio broadcast. Your brokenness and love moved me, and God's love came into my heart. After listening for ten days, I have been totally healed."

That is a beautiful testimony of what resting in God can do for someone who is stressed. God's rest sends us out with the blessings of grace in the edification, hope, joy, and faith of the mercies that He makes new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

This is why the Gospel is so glorious. His grace is so superb. His love is indescribable. As God's people, we are precious in His sight. He has made us what we are because of what He did at Calvary.

Praise Him for giving us the instructions of

His Word and the joy of His Word. Thank Him for faith, hope, and precise expectations in His promises.

Lord, help us to pick up these promises and mix faith with them. May we learn to enter into Your rest for each day. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

God's Way of Escape

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

When we find ourselves in uncomfortable situations, whether we created them ourselves or not, instead of trying to adjust and to work with the conditions, we will usually look for a way out.

Fortunately for Christians, we have a Savior who was tempted in every way that we are tempted. No temptation common to man was withheld from Jesus. Loneliness, rejection, hunger, thirst, He experienced it all.

As this booklet will show, God is faithful to make a way for us to escape. That way is revealed when we receive His Word through the Holy Spirit and allow it to be added to us through a divine transfer of God's power into our human spirits.

Chapter One

THE OBJECTIVE: GROWING IN THE SPIRIT

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Often I have counseled people who were going through difficult times and have heard them make statements such as this: "If only I could get out of this! If only I could escape." I understand what they mean. They really want to run away from their old sin nature and escape into something brand new.

What is this amazing way that God prepares for us so we can escape? That is the question we all want answered. When we know what it is, we can bear anything.

The answer is having that which is of God's Holy Spirit become part of our human spirit.* Once we have heard the Word of God, it is transferred into the soul to be processed and applied. But unless what we hear goes through the Cross and is transferred through the human spirit by the energizing power of the Holy Spirit (*energeia*) (Hebrews 4:12), then it is just knowledge that puffs up. It may be good knowledge, but it lacks an eternal perspective.

If we neglect to have the mind of Christ in the operation of life, particularly in a marriage, then we have no way to escape our sins, our weaknesses, or our personal problems. When we are born again, we are born of the Spirit, not of the flesh. Therefore, we must tend to the spirit man.

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

Before a person is saved or when, as believers, we grieve the Holy Spirit, everything that enters into the perceptive lobe of the brain goes straight into the five parts of the soul: the conscience, self-conscience; emotions, free volition, and mind. Because that knowledge bypassed the filter of Calvary's Blood, the light of truth falls in the street. As a result, a man is left to his own limited ability to make sense of what he sees, hears, and feels. But when the spirit is separated from the soul, the human spirit is regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, and God-consciousness and our capacity for God become the supreme premise for a divine experience in an objective reality. We were saved by grace through a personal or subjective faith, conscious only of our own need for a way of escape. But now, we need to grow in grace and knowledge objectively, through the spirit-man, having heaven's viewpoint for a lost and dying world.

The Triune Life

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

"But God hath revealed them unto us by his

Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

By the spirit of man that is in him, a man begins to know the things of a man. These things make men do what they do, say what they say, become what they become, and live the way that they live.

A saved man is a trichotomous being, having a body, soul, and spirit. Having a place for God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit to indwell, he is now "triune" in his personal subjective experience. Through the indwelling Spirit and the Word of God, he is liberated and, objectively speaking, very free indeed. When it comes to the Word of God, he now has a hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6). The hunger and thirst is there as a result of his subjective experience of regeneration.

Categorical Objectivity

Oh, I love the Word of God in all of its purity (Proverbs 30:5)! This Word is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). A preacher who preaches the whole counsel of God does so line upon line, precept upon precept upon precept (Isaiah 28:10). He studies a passage until he is weary (1 Timothy 5:17) before he dares to get up and preach on it.

People will start to hear a message that they think they know and immediately turn off the message. That is sin. It is crucial that we receive what the Holy Spirit has to say today and let every subject become a brand-new object in our subjective experience of faith in the categorical truth of God's Word.

**For more about the function of the soul and the value of having a divine perspective, be sure to read* The Hearing Heart, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

FROM DEATH TO BURIAL TO RESURRECTION

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

"For he that is dead is freed from sin.

"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Romans 6:6-8).

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

It is so important that we realize that we have been crucified with Christ. Our old man is crucified, dead, and buried. The body of sin is destroyed and therefore we should not serve sin. We have been freed from it.

All the things that trouble us, all the sin and weaknesses passed down genetically through

the old sin nature from our great-great-grandparents, all of those things that seem to so easily beset us—all of it has been dealt with at Calvary, once and for all (Hebrews 10:10). With one tremendous blow, we experienced that crucifixion and were made free from sin.

I am crucified with Christ. *I am.* I am dead and that is it. Whatever is alive in me now is alive by my faith in the Son of God.

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

Thank God for the amazing provision of our co-crucifixion with Christ. To lust, pornography, adultery, criticism, gossip, slander, envy, jealousy, fear, insecurity—to all of these things we are dead forever. The declaration of God through the Cross is that old things have passed away. We are indeed dead. This is a precious, holy, sacred declaration from the pen of the Holy Spirit to the hearts of men.

Co-crucifixion is God's way of escape from our past. Henceforth, we are quickened (Psalm 119:154), and it is the Word that quickens us, separating the spirit from the soul.

Don't Dig Up What's Been Buried

"Therefore we are buried with him by bap-

tism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:4-5).

Now, what if all of our loved ones were dead and we just placed the bodies around inside the homes? In every house, we would find dead bodies because there was no burial. At this house, there's a body in the basement. In that home, there's a body in the backyard. Of course that is ridiculous, because what is dead needs to be buried.

Where is our sin? It is buried in the deepest, deepest sea, never to be seen, never to be discussed (Micah 7:19). We are no longer under the Law, because the Law was fulfilled in Christ, at Calvary. Remember, the wages of sin is death. And now, because He paid our debt, we are under grace, hid with Christ in God.

But, think of an unsaved husband and wife: two unbelievers living in the old sin nature, and all they have to counsel them is the Law. The Law comes in and the husband in his old sin nature says, "She's not doing what she's supposed to be doing." The unbelieving wife answers, "He

is not doing what he is supposed to be doing." This little bit of leaven grows into more leaven and then the argument gets more and more heated. An antagonistic spirit works its way through the whole marriage. Neither one is free, because they are both being counseled by the Law, and they cannot measure up.

Then, suddenly, the husband gets saved and dies to himself, and the old sin nature is instantly crucified. The wife gets saved, too; and now, they have the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as their counselors.

The husband becomes the born-again Christian who develops into his wife's spiritual leader. The wife, now born-again, develops into a beautiful responder. Both are married to Jesus Christ, who indeed was raised from the dead. As individuals, each one personally establishes himself in a brand-new marriage before God. They offer themselves as living sacrifices unto God (Romans 12:1-2). Because of that, they become objects of specific promises revealed by the Holy Spirit, and He takes care of them.

"So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off" (Proverbs 24:14).

This verse speaks of the application of precise truth. Truth goes into the soul by way of the human spirit. It gives life to the soul, revives the body, quickens the heart, and makes the soul new. We enter into a very beautiful relationship of His new creation as members of His body, His flesh, and His bones. We are a very special part of Him and we are one spirit with Him (Ephesians 5:30; 1 Corinthians 6:17).

Chapter Three

MAINTAINING A FRESH CAPACITY

Every single thing about us must pass through death. Did you get your feelings hurt? Then they have not passed through death. Resurrection revives only that which has passed through death.

This is particularly true in marriages. For us to have beautiful marriages, we need to have brand-new counselors: the Holy Spirit and the Word. Because we are married to Christ, we can function in Kingdom marriages.

Kingdom marriages are free and liberated in their communication of what Christ does. These marriages are unusual and unique. They are so real, and they represent people who are going forward in the plan of God.

For this reason, I plead with couples to attend three church services a week. It is crucial for families to come out and support their local

assemblies, to fellowship with the Body of Christ, and to receive the Word of God.

What makes a marriage a Kingdom marriage?

First, there has to be a burial. Everything has to be buried so that it can be resurrected. So many marriages end in divorce because failures are never buried.

I say to couples, "Stop nagging your spouse. Don't keep saying those little critical things. Let your husband be your husband, let your wife be your wife." Couples need to understand that when they were married they became one flesh (Mark 10:8).

In marriage, we go from one heart to one soul, to one spirit, to one flesh (Acts 4:32; Ephesians 5:31). God gives sex for married couples as a beautiful expression of divine love and divine connection. When husbands and wives see themselves as members of one another, the sexual experience becomes magnificent in its beauty, glorious in its feelings, and wonderful in its activity. It truly is making love, a beautiful consummation of two people who now share one spirit, one soul, one heart, and one flesh.

"And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.

"And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

"But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

"No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better" (Luke 5:36-39).

New wine must not go into old bottles that are made of animal skins. The skin bottles will expand but then burst because they deteriorate with use; and the wine, which is developed over time, will be wasted. The new must go into the new. In other words, our capacities for the Word of God must be reestablished moment by moment.

Every time we gather in our local assemblies, God is doing something new. When you listen to your pastor-teacher, have a fresh capacity. He will give you what you may have heard,

but still don't know. Personally, I know nothing as I ought to know it (see 1 Corinthians 8:2). When I study and preach, I learn a little more, I come to understand a little bit better, yet I still don't know any thing as I ought.

So we sit hearing the messages, allowing new wine to go into new bottles. Faith rest is our attitude. We don't have to exercise effort because we are in the New Creation. There is no need to flounder around and get caught up in the dreariness and weariness of trying, striving, stretching, and straining. We simply go forward by the grace of God, receiving what the preacher preaches.

We enjoyed a great marriage seminar recently. The testimonies of some of the couples were so precious to me. Every one of them was about new wine going into a new bottle. The things they said were fresh and real, and they expanded my capacity. The husbands and wives in these marriages have become steppingstones for each other, not stumbling stones.

An Hundredfold Blessing

"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the

poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

"But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

"But many that are first shall be last; and the last first" (Mark 10:21, 29-31).

The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are the adult, grownup children of God. When we are operating in the Holy Spirit, we can receive strong words without being offended. The rich man asked Jesus a question, and Jesus told him, "Sell all that you have and give to the poor." As a pastor, I can say there is a temptation to excuse this passage. It has a far different meaning from what we take it to mean. The principle Jesus is emphasizing is that we are to let go mentally and emotionally of all that we really value as possessions and be ready to give it to another.

That is the way of escape. The beautiful

thing is that God never takes anything from us that He will not restore to us "an hundredfold." He is trying to convince us to surrender some of our serious possessions. In some cases, these are things that we literally need. At times, God will desire that we give up what we desperately need. He does it to give our hearts a brand-new revolutionary expression and divine experience with our spirits and the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

"Listen," God is saying. "Are you willing to give up those treasured and prized possessions? If you are, then I am going to give you an hundredfold back, and I will do it in this lifetime."

CONCLUSION

My wife and I were talking recently and we were rejoicing at how much God has blessed us. We began to weep together. I cannot understand all that He is doing for me. But through everything, God has made a way of escape. The Holy Spirit has established a capacity in my human spirit through the Word of God.

God has restored everything to us an hundredfold. Right in front of my eyes, the Lord has blessed me with friends and with a beautiful church. This is the kind of church I always dreamed of pastoring. It is a church that is full three times a week. God has given me great people—one of the great modern miracles, seeing that we are packed out twice every Sunday and again on Wednesday night. Scores of churches get big crowds on Sunday morning, but we are packed out at all three services.

I am deeply grateful to God for what we have. If it were all taken away from us tomor-

row, there is so much precious fruit that remains, that can never be taken away. Again and again He has given us a way of escape, and He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will always be the truth, the life, and the way.

God's Wisdom

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INTRODUCTION

Most of us, as believers, would be quick to say, "I need wisdom." Wisdom is an area in which we all need to grow. Furthermore, it is clear from the Scriptures that wisdom is something God wants all Christians to have.

Wisdom cries out, seeking to get our attention (Proverbs 8:1). She puts forth her voice, she stands in high places, and she sits in heavenly places. Wisdom is seated together with Christ, and by wisdom, we too are seated in heavenly places. According to Proverbs 8:8, everything spoken from a mouth of wisdom is righteousness.

In this booklet, we will examine God's wisdom and how a Christian can learn to function in it by applying what he has learned, what he has heard, what he has been taught, and what has been implanted in him through the Holy Spirit in the details of life.

Chapter One

LIVING THE LIFE FROM ABOVE

"The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

"The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

"The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words" (Proverbs 15:24-26).

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

"This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:13-18).

Seeing different situations, counseling different relationships, so many individuals today live in self-inflicted wounds. Where is the wisdom in that?

It is possible that someone could mention the name of a person who fell into sin years ago, and you could show a sign of disgust just at the mention of that name. Where is the wisdom in that? Perhaps you have found yourself in relationships with people whom you do not trust. As a result, you never get close enough to ever really know them in Christ. Maybe you have given up on a person, and you have written them off instead of trusting God and believing that He makes all things new. Where is the wisdom in that? Having an unforgiving spirit, holding a grudge against someone for years—there is no wisdom in that.

I think of what anger does to people. We can all get angry very quickly about any number of things. But if we are objective, how can there be wisdom in being angry at anyone? Where is the wisdom in being angry at anyone?

A person who is angry is submitting to a negative spirit that will eventually control his soul. The problem festers in his wounded soul, revealing that his life is incomplete in some way. If he is complete in Christ, needing nothing, he would have nothing to be angry about. So where what is the wisdom in getting angry and saying that you do not love someone? Or perhaps you have a poor self-image, and you build walls that cause you to be isolated. Where is the wisdom in that?

Wisdom is what keeps our lives together; it keeps our relationships together. Wisdom will always bring us to the provision of Christ so that we can abide victoriously, needing nothing. God's wisdom will do that for us.

The Pure and the Earthly

"For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Romans 16:19).

Two different kinds of wisdom are referred to in James 3: that which is earthly and that which is from heaven. Wisdom from above is first pure. It is expressed in good conversation with meekness, as mentioned in Proverbs 15. On

the other hand, to speak evil about any situation or any individual is never wise. It magnifies what Satan is doing and all that he is attempting to do, to destroy and to divide.

Wisdom is expressed in good conversation with meekness. Wisdom does not ever express itself in bad conversation. It it is first *pure*. In other words, it is first innocent and modest. This kind of wisdom is from above, because the only place where we are ever found innocent is in our heavenly position in Christ.

When Christ came as a perfect Man to die for us, He was innocent. That is why He could die for us. If He were guilty, He would not have been the perfect sacrifice. Wisdom is innocent.

And because of God's love, every born-again believer has the right to take his position in Christ, to realize who he is and to say, "I am a citizen of heaven; therefore, I am innocent." This is the first step to being wise. To say anything out of guilt is not wise. To produce guilt in somebody else's life is not wise. In God's wisdom, the Blood of Jesus Christ took care of every trace of sin and guilt, and God's work in us is perfect.

If we are wise, we derive our conversation from heaven so that we have the speech of inno-

cence. Sadly, so many Christians have earthly attachments that constantly attack their own character and the character of those around them. That is not wise. But those who will get up and say words derived from the innocence of truth and the purity of God—that is wisdom from above.

If you love innocence, you will never want to fellowship with anything that is guilty. So if a person brings something up to you about another individual who is your friend, you say, "I am innocent." In other words, "I am ignorant of evil. I don't even know why you would bring that up to me. I cannot do anything about it. I like my friendship with them. I do not want to lose my friendship with that individual. I am innocent. Do you understand that? I am pure toward that person, so don't defile my relationship with them. I am pure toward them, and I like my innocence."

Wisdom does not agree with any successes Satan has had in your life. Wisdom does not magnify faults and failures. Wisdom does not have a poor self-image because of some painful event in life that produced tremendous negativity. Wisdom is first pure, and it is expressed in good conversation with meekness.

The word "meekness" reflects humility and mildness, but it also reveals an inwrought gentleness and tenderness of the heart. So wisdom, when it is spoken forth in good conversation, is tender. That is why we are to forgive one another, to be tenderhearted one to another (Ephesians 4:32). It is wise to be tenderhearted. The first step to reconciliation is tenderness, knowing how to be tender toward people.

Detached from the Sensual

For the wise, their way of life is from above (Proverbs 15:24). It is a way of life that is not attached to the earth, which is sensual. This word "sensual," from the Greek word *psuchikos*, is interesting. Although it is often used to describe things of a sexual nature, in this context it actually refers to that which is produced by nature, springing forth from corrupt desires and affections as it pertains primarily to man (James 3:15). That which is sensual, then, is anything produced by the natural man to fulfill his own desires.

Wisdom is above that. God's wisdom is not sensual. It is not attached to getting things that just pertain to me. It is not devilish (*diabolos*), pertaining to false accusers and slanderers who

produce confusion, disorder, and every evil work (1 Timothy 3:11, 2 Timothy 3:3, Titus 2:3).

The essence of evil originated from Satan's slanderous heart. When Satan turned against God, the first thing Satan did was to slander the Lord. Then he expressed to the other angels how unfair God's plan was. Out of his conspiracy came every evil work. That is why he got the name *diabolos*—slanderer, accuser. God's wisdom is not attached to that spirit in any way, because it produces confusion and disorder.

Do you ever have those times in your life when you say, "I am just confused"? At that moment, you were not living in wisdom, because wisdom is not attached to confusion. Wisdom originates from your citizenship in heaven. It is always from above, and it is first of all pure, innocent.

"The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words" (Proverbs 15:26).

The words of the wise are "pleasant" (*noam* in the Hebrew). They are delightful, suitable, serviceable, and graced with beauty. The wise speak words that are profitable, words spoken at the right time and having the proper motivation. They are not words spoken out of empti-

ness and vanity. The words of the wise are pure, and they truly edify. The words spoken with God's wisdom will reveal the undeserved mercy and grace of God.

First It Is Pure

God's wisdom is a way of life from above (Colossians 3:2). That is why we set our affections on things above. It is a way of life. First, we find the innocence of our position in Christ. This makes us pure in our thought life. Wisdom, then, is first pure. It allows us to have a thought life with no earthly attachments so that we will think no evil. We will know how to abide in a love that thinks no evil, because love in its very essence is innocent.

Chapter Two

PEACEABLE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

James 3 tells us that wisdom is "peaceable." It is peaceable because it is a fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). It is produced in communion with God, through the humility of the Cross, reconciling us with things above. By God's wisdom, we are reconciled to our original design to be sons and daughters of God the Father.

Think about that! God's wisdom is peaceable. Instead of reacting and saying something you will regret, you commune with God before you say a thing. You know how to commune with God first. You are quiet and you are confident. You are built up; therefore, you are silent, knowing He is God. You simply commune with Him before you ever say a word.

Arguments do not need to happen because of something unwise that someone else has said. Instead of reacting in your primary emotional

response, which is natural and sensual, think it through with the mind of Christ. Instead of doing that which pertains to self, when we commune with God, we realize that self was crucified at the Cross. That is wisdom, and it brings forth peaceable fruits of righteousness. Christ's righteousness has been imputed to our account. And because God hath declared us righteous, we have the right to be righteous, to be right with God.

Gentleness

Also, wisdom is "gentle" (*epieikes*). The English word "gentle" does not completely reflect the meaning of the original Greek text. That is why we need to study the Scriptures thoroughly, categorically, and in the original language. In the Greek, "It is gentle" is to say it is fair, it is fitting, it is equitable and forbearing, not insisting on the letter of the law. It expresses considerateness that looks at people and circumstances with insight based upon the truth of the *whole* thought of God. The whole thought of God is always associated with that which is good and gentle.

God's wisdom does not insist on applying the letter of the law. It forbears. It is not conditional, saying, "When you do this, then I will do

this." Instead of revenging disobedience with the letter of the law, wisdom from above is gentle. It sees the need of another individual based upon the whole truth, the whole thought of God, which is always associated with divine goodness.

So when you are entering a situation that is beyond your realm of experience, a situation that may in fact be energized with the reactions of the wisdom that is from below, remember that God's wisdom is gentle, and His wisdom is fair. Thoroughly think the situation through with God. Remember that God's thoughts are always good thoughts, redemptive thoughts, filled with reconciliation. So if you want to be wise, be gentle.

Entreatable

Here is another characteristic of godly wisdom that is not so easy for the natural mind to accept: It is "easy to be entreated." *Eupeithes* is the Greek word for "entreated" here. It means to be compliant to the Holy Spirit, easily obeying His leading (Galatians 5:18, Romans 8:14) as a child of God.

So when you get into a situation, if you are wise you will always be listening to God, and you will be compliant to hear His voice through

the leading of the Holy Spirit. When you hear from God, you will agree with Him quickly, saying, "Is that what I need to do? Then that is what I will do. I am a child of God and I will apply His truth in this circumstance. My Father is speaking, and I will listen."

It is wise to hear the truth for yourself. It is wise to take the Word of God and soak it up, to bathe in it and to wash ourselves with the Word and then to realize that we are children of God. We have the right to hear His voice, to be compliant to His Spirit, and to obey immediately what He says.

Next we realize that wisdom is full of mercy and good fruits. Wisdom is inwardly disposed to everything that is kind and good. It always has a prepared heart. So, to be "full of mercy" means that inwardly, you are waiting to be kind and good whenever the opportunity arises. You have determined that whenever there is an opportunity, you will be kind.

James 3:17 describes wisdom as "full of mercy and good fruits." The Greek word *mestos* means "having a full measure," as a full vessel. In Romans 9:23, we are vessels of mercy—full vessels, complete in mercy. We are complete, and we do not need another thing.

Wisdom from above is also full of good fruits. Good fruit speaks of the inherent energy of a living organism. It is a visible expression of power working inwardly and invisibly. Good fruit is revealed when God is doing a work inside of us, producing it through us, and then it comes out of us, becoming visible to others. That is good fruit.

That is the power that God wants: the character of the fruit being evidence of the character of the power that is producing it (Matthew 7:1). You will know them by their fruit (Matthew 7:16)—that is, the fruit of the Holy Spirit revealed through their lives (Galatians 5:22). These people are brought into a living union with Christ (John 15:2-8, 16) as they produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

There is nothing more rewarding than to see this kind of fruit come forth in your life, because it reveals that you are being led inwardly by the Holy Spirit. You are being transformed, you actually believe it, and you step out in faith and say, "Here it goes! This will bring forth good fruit."

I am beginning to realize who I really am in Christ. I am not an individual who always has to do what the world dictates. My identity is not

my weakness. By manifesting God's mercy to others, I reveal that I am filled with good fruit. And when I let it flow through me and go out to others, I am expressing God's heart, revealing a living organism founded in Christ. Now, that is good fruit!

Chapter Three

A CERTAINTY THAT BRING HARVESTS OF JOY

Wisdom is "without partiality." The Greek term for this is *adiakritos*. It means that God's wisdom is without uncertainty. It is without indecisiveness, doubts, or suspicion, as we are not to let any corrupt or suspicious communication come out of our mouths (Ephesians 4:29). It is without censure, based on God's preference and not my own.

We do what the Word of God says to do simply because God said it, and there is no doubt about it. My Lord said to do it. It is for my sake, and it will deliver me, for He will always cause me to triumph.

Next, we see that wisdom is "without hypocrisy" (*anupokritos*). This means that God's wisdom has no disguises or deceitfulness. Have you ever seen people who use the Word of God and rationalize what God has said to do by doing

what they want to do? "Well, it is not *really* sin, is it?" It might look good, but sin is still sin. If it is not of faith, it is sin (Romans 14:23).

Wisdom does not play deceitful games, saying what somebody wants to hear in order to gain favor. Wisdom has no masks or disguises. Wisdom is what it is. It is very open, very transparent.

Joy in the Midst of Trials

"Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." (Isaiah 9:3).

Godly wisdom will produce the fruits of righteousness and peace, which will result in a harvest of joy. Think about that! God is a Father who wants His children to be happy. He wants us to be wise because He wants us to experience a harvest of joys. He wants us to be happy in the midst of anything Satan ever tries. In the trials and tribulations, the joy of the Lord shall be our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

We can have joy in the midst of trials (James 1:2), because God wants us to be happy at all times. He wants us to experience who we are in Him. Let others reap the fruits of contentions

and all the advantages they can propose to themselves by them. But let us go on peaceably to sow the seeds of righteousness, because there is a promise in this. Our labors will not be lost.

If we can sow peaceable fruits of righteousness, our labor will not be lost. If we can be merciful, if we can listen as a child to the Father's voice, to whatever He has to say, if we can set our minds before Him to find purity—if we can do these things, we are wise, and we will reap a harvest of joy. We will buy back relationships that have suffered because of wounds, and we will remain true friends to those whom God has given us. We will not think evil of ourselves, because our self-image will be restored. We will have no self-inflicted wounds to deal with, no attachments to the world, making our lives revolve around ourselves.

Living with Purpose

It is wisdom when we decide to do whatever our hand finds to do with all of our might (Ecclesiastes 9:10). This level of commitment with such diversity of purpose is possible when we are operating in wisdom from above, having a continual harvest of joy. Whatever situation we find ourselves in, in wisdom we discover God's

purpose, and we do it with all of our strength.

Oh, the meekness of wisdom! Wisdom heals strife that comes when people start taking sides, quarreling, and holding grudges. But in humility and in meekness, wisdom obeys in love.

Wisdom that is not from above is earthly, sensual, and devilish. "Earthly" speaks of demons in the world that transfer projections to our souls and demonize our unconscious minds. Remember that Lucifer was cast down into the earth to eat dust (Genesis 3:14), and his goal is to bring others down to his level causing them to cling to the dust (Psalm 44:25).

Where there is bitterness and strife, there is confusion, and eventually it results in every evil work. But wisdom sown in peace makes peace.

Oh, to hear the Word of God and say, "I love it!" This book is God's Word, and I love every word of it. We need to learn to eat the Word as Jeremiah ate it and let it become a fire in our hearts (Jeremiah 15:16). The Word of God created the universe, and by it He holds everything together (Hebrews 11:3).

It is this Word that saves our souls and cleanses our unconscious and conscious minds. The Holy Spirit in a man brings the Word to life. When we were saved, we received the Holy

Spirit. Each and every Christian has God in him through the miracle of regeneration, the miracle of the new birth. On that basis alone, each one of us can live in God's wisdom.

CONCLUSION

A pastor was in a terrible situation. He had been a well-known Bible teacher who lived under legalism, having been taught that God was watching over him to punish him. In his old age, however, as he began to approach death, he began to worry that he either had not done enough or was not good enough for God's approval. His fears began to overwhelm him, affecting both his physical and mental health. Then, one day, a woman in her 90s set him straight, saying, "God doesn't want to punish you. He watches over you to see how He can love you and how best He can get that across to you."

God's wisdom is not given according to how good or how bad we are. It is based upon how good God is. God's wisdom is not based upon all the sins we have committed. It is based upon the Sin-Bearer who never sinned but instead paid the price for us.

Picture wisdom, in Proverbs 8:3, crying out at the gates of the entrance to the city. The "gates" speak of our human wills. It speaks of God's Word crying out to our human will, to our human volition. What is wisdom saying? It is saying, "Be ye of an understanding heart." Let righteousness be the thing that you allow to come out of your mouth. Speak righteousness, the free gift of God, all because you have wisdom.

Thank God for wisdom. It is always available to us. Thank God, His wisdom never changes. That is why we have eternal security. Wisdom hears the Great Commission and tells us to go out, to seek and to save the lost, bearing the precious seed of the Gospel. Jesus went into hell—not as a prisoner but as the Victor—and He is now in heaven. In His Word, He has told us what heaven and hell are like. Therefore, we must go forth, proclaiming the truth and making disciples. We *must* do it. That is what it means to operate in God's wisdom.

Grace and No Other Gospel

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the first tablet was used to record a story, millions of books have been published. Only a few have survived through the centuries as "classics"—works of enduring excellence. And of those, far above them all, the Holy Bible remains unparalleled in its purpose, potential, and pertinence.

The Bible was written to reveal the heart of God to man. The thread that is woven through every page and ties it all together is the Gospel of Grace. This gospel proclaims that salvation depends on nothing of ourselves; it is the gift of God, paid for by the blood of His Son (Ephesians 2:8). The work is finished! God saves people by grace, through faith. One only needs to believe it and receive Christ into his heart.

This Gospel—the Gospel of Grace—is what we need to be telling the world: *this* Gospel and no other message. It is our prayer that this booklet will help people to see that God waits so that

He may be gracious to us (Isaiah 30:18*a*). He wants to reveal His tender heart of mercy to us through a personal revelation of the glorious Gospel of Grace.

Chapter One

MIXED MESSAGES TROUBLE THE HEARERS

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

"Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-8).

Paul remarked, "I marvel—I am shocked—that some of you are so soon removed from the grace of Christ unto another gospel." Hundreds and thousands of people have no idea that they are hearing another gospel—which is *not* the Gospel. It may be called a gospel message, and it may have Bible verses quoted throughout. But if it requires anything more than believing that

Christ paid for their sins and receiving the gift of grace (which includes the *gift* of repentance), they are hearing a perverted gospel. Any other message will trouble the hearer. It is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God does not take this matter lightly. In verse 8, the apostle Paul wrote that if anyone preaches any message that adds to or takes away from the Gospel of Grace, "…let him be accursed"—*anathema*, doomed for destruction, without hope of being redeemed. Does that sound too strong? Do you think that Paul may have been a little out of line when he said that? Apparently, the Holy Spirit doesn't think so. The admonition is repeated in the next verse.

Certain preachers—and I used to be one of them years ago—can't preach a message without speaking against long hair, short skirts, and smoking cigarettes. They have no other message but to speak against those sins, immoral lifestyles, and all sorts of problems.

Of course, I do have proper godly convictions. Someone once asked me, "Do you think I can smoke and still go to heaven?"

I said, "Yes, and a lot sooner, too."

The point is that except for the sins of self-righteousness, most people are already painfully

aware of their sin. Once the light of the Gospel shines on them, even before it shines in them, the Holy Spirit convicts people of sin. That is His job. Even unsaved, unchurched people have God-consciousness, based on moral light, to tell them what is right and wrong (John 1:9). So to keep harping on sin from the pulpit reveals a lack of Bible doctrine on the part of the speaker.

God Loves Us Just as We Are

Alittle boy in Rochester, N.Y., wrote an essay titled, "A Dog Is Man's Best Friend." This is what the boy wrote: "My mom says, 'Do.' My dad says, 'Don't.' My brother says, 'Stop.' But my little dog just loves me as I am."

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

It is beautiful to understand that God loves us just as we are—to know that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ really loves us.

Think about it. Honestly, how many people do you know who would die for you? If, at this moment, someone had to give his life so you would live, do you know anyone who would do it?

If an alcoholic or drug addict were about to

be hit by a car, would you rush out, knock them out of the way and take the hit so that they could live?

That is exactly what Jesus did for us. He died, the Just for the unjust, bearing all of our sins (1 Peter 3:18, 1 Peter 2:24). It is an amazing story, and I am so grateful to God that He has made it so simple and practical.

Billy Graham told the story of a mother who made the mistake of giving her boy iodine instead of cough syrup. She called after the boy's sister and said, "Quick, give him some cream." That neutralized the iodine and the boy was okay.

The principle is this: Why take poison when we can have the Gospel of Grace? Through a weak eye, it may look similar, and it may sound similar; but it smells bad and the results are terrible. Legalism is poison. Works programs are poison. If the production of your life is of works—following the letter of the law without having the joy of the Lord or the life of the Holy Spirit—it is not of grace (Romans 11:6). Don't take poison. You can't grow on poison, but you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two

MERCIES FOR YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

"They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

Grace can be defined as God giving us what we do not deserve, and mercy as God *not* giving us what we do deserve.

The mercies of God take care of every single thing about your past (Psalm 25:6). The mercies of God take care of everything that is going on in your life right now (Psalm 119:77). According to Psalm 77, the mercies of God take care of everything in your future.

Mercy takes care of every single sin, right now (Luke 1:77-78). The Lord's tender mercies will comfort you in every type of suffering (James 5:11). He has plenty of mercy, according to Psalm 103:8. Nehemiah 9:19 tells us that the

mercies of God are "manifold"—they are on every side. According to Psalm 136, His mercies endure forever, through every kind of trial. They never cease. In Psalm 23, His mercy follows you and will never stop following you. In Psalm 89:14, His mercy is before you.

God's mercy is in front of you, behind you, around you. His great mercy comforts you, taking care of your past, your present, and your future. He has made us vessels of mercy, prepared for glory (Romans 9:23). Oh, this is the glorious Gospel of Grace.

Restored by Mercy: Fresher Than a Child

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah" (Psalm 77:9).

"Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.

"His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth" (Job 33:24-25).

Think about a precious little baby girl. She can do nothing on her own. When she needs to be washed and fed, she depends on her Mommy and Daddy. They love to cuddle her when she is

cleaned up and dressed up. They walk the floor with her, trying to keep her from crying and fussing. They never want to spoil her, yet they can't help but give her their attention.

God's mercies deliver us from the pit and make us feel as we were in our youth, pure and clean. By His Mercy, we are made fresh as children—like little babies all cleaned up.

The Gospel of Grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live quietly in this present evil world (Titus 2:12). Grace brings us to a Person where we have personal fellowship with the Father of all (2 Peter 3:18, 1 Corinthians 1:9).

Justification Brings Life to Bloom

"For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.

"Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground;

"Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant" (Job 14:7).

There is something about God's grace. In Luke 18:10-14, the publican was afraid and guilty, and he endured so much condemnation. He did not dare to come near the altar in the

temple. On the other hand, the Pharisee was just thanking God that he wasn't like the publican. He was telling God about all of his tithes and everything else that he did. The publican just beat his breast and would not look to heaven. He knew he was a crook and an adulterer, and just said, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." The publican went home justified.

This is why every day of my life I am so deeply grateful. I want to always express such gratitude toward God, the Father of all mercies. He is the God of all comfort. None of us can understand it fully. James 2:13 declares that mercy rejoices against judgment. Oh, how I love that. Still, it is such a difficult reality to grasp.

Chapter Three

PROMOTING THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

"Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;

"Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:8-10).

"Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Part of the problem in much of Christianity today has to do with the letter of the law versus the Spirit of grace. The law of the Lord is perfect (Psalm 19:7). But when the Scriptures are read or

when the Word is preached, legalism (which is the letter of the law without the Spirit) becomes the predominant theme. Sometimes it may sound like the New Covenant but it is not. Verses are given that condemn people and legislate to them without a proper balance. The truth is, the Old Covenant was designed to shut *every* mouth (Romans 3:19). No one could live up to it, and God knew it, so He brought in a brand-new covenant (Hebrews 8:6-11).

The New Covenant is an agreement between God the Father and Jesus the Son, that the Son would pay for everyone's sin with His perfect human form. So now those who believe upon the Son come under something brand new. Just by believing on Christ, they become brand-new creatures, and old things pass away.

All things become new under the New Covenant.

The Government of Grace

Certain TV and radio preachers have become quite popular through preaching a message that is 30 to 40 percent law, and they make people think it is grace. People cannot be straightened out by enforcing the law. The minute any of us starts trying to do something apart from the

Holy Spirit of grace, we become self-righteous—and self-righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

We are under the government of God's grace (Romans 6:14). Therefore, God does the keeping. Grace does the teaching. Grace does the ministering. Grace does the giving. We do the abiding. We do the responding. Result: the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts to promote the character of Christ.

Grace is not a license to sin. It is a provision for us *not* to sin, as we reside in a process that keeps us going after God until He finally transforms those areas in our hearts.

Therefore, there is no reason to live in self-condemnation. Every single one of us has a destiny to be perfect. Every Christian will be perfect. And, every Christian *is* perfect in positional truth. Every Christian can rebound if he fails. Every one of us can rejoice because of the Blood of the Lamb. This should be our testimony (see Revelation 12:11).

The Breadth of God's Grace

Let me illustrate the depth of God's grace. Imagine the situation of a woman who had three abortions before she was saved. When she reaches

heaven, she will see and know those children. That reunion will reveal the glory of the Gospel of Grace (Ephesians 2:7).

Based upon what the Bible tells us in Psalm 139:14-17, just like children who were miscarried or stillborn, aborted children go right to heaven. What an example of God revealing His grace throughout eternity:

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

"My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

"Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"

Whatever God starts, He finishes and perfects. Whatever He does, He does forever. The Father sees the substance of every person long before they were conceived. God sees their substance and makes note of it in a book. These are the things that concern God, and He perfects that which concerns Him. The fact that we are

saved in an instant is no greater a miracle than God taking an aborted baby to heaven is. He loves to protect life.

Engraved upon Almighty Hands

"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

"Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" (Isaiah 49:15-16).

God does not forget any of us. Our names are etched into the palms of His hands. And just as He knows intimately every child who was conceived, so He knows us intimately and completely. He cherishes us and keeps us and saves us to the uttermost. He will never leave us or forsake us.

That is the only Gospel. It is the Gospel of grace. It is the Gospel that makes us want to worship Him, to love Him, and to serve Him.

CONCLUSION

Salvation is God's gift, purchased by the blood of His Son at Calvary. The payment was made once and is good for all time. This is the Finished Work of Jesus Christ. He came and lived among us, He was crucified, He died, He was buried, and He rose again. It took all of that to make it possible for us to receive the gift of God's righteousness, by grace through faith.

In Luke 15, the father of the prodigal ran to meet his son, embraced him, and kissed him on the neck again and again. The son, who had gone off on his own, kept trying to make his confession, but the father wouldn't hear it. His son was home. That was all that mattered.

"Get my son the best robe!"

"Get him a ring!"

"Bring him new shoes!"

"Slay the fatted calf and get ready for a celebration! We will have a party for my son tonight!"

That was how the father rejoiced over a son who had gone far out of his will. And this is how God responds to people who go astray and then come home to Him. He is not interested in what they did. His only interest is that one of his children received the Finished Work message of the glorious Gospel of Grace and is back home.

Everything about us was resolved at Calvary through mercy, grace, and love. The Finished Work is the Father's response, and it should be our response toward anyone who has failed. Except for an occasional testimony, there should never be one Word about how they failed to measure up. Let's pick them up. We have *good* news—the Gospel of Grace. Let us speak nothing else. There is no other gospel.

Grace Reversals

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INTRODUCTION

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

"Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

"The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The LORD shall com-

mand the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

"The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.

"And *the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail*; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them: And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods

to serve them" (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

In Deuteronomy 28, God established a covenant with the nation of Israel. The blessings of this covenant, however, were dependent upon Israel's obedience to God's commandments (Deuteronomy 28:1-2).

Even though God addressed this covenant to Israel, it has a relevant application to believers in the Church Age. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 asserts that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 1 Corinthians 10:11 tells us that the things that happened in Israel's history are for our example, "written for our admonition." Finally, Romans 15:4 says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

Ephesians 1:3 is a New Testament commentary on Deuteronomy 28:1-14: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." We can enjoy the same temporal and spiritual blessings that God

promised to Israel.

God promised to reverse Israel's status as the smallest among all nations. He promised to bless their military operations so they could protect their freedom. He promised financial prosperity; everything that their hands would find to do would be blessed—in their cities, in their fields, and in the fruit of their bodies.

Most of all, God said he would bless Israel above all nations by showing the rest of the world that His people were His "peculiar treasure." He said, "I will open up the treasures of heaven and provide for you. You will be the head and not the tail."

God wants the same for His people today. He doesn't want us to be the tails of the world. By grace, He desires to reverse our situations and cause us to reign in order to bring glory to His name. The Lord is here to bless us; He's not out to get us. He wants to honor us, not hurt us. He wants to elevate every part of our lives. God is for our promotion, not our demotion. In a world ignorant of Jesus Christ's Finished Work, where the Kingdom of God is so misunderstood, God wants to promote us.

Chapter One

THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:16-17).

As Christians, we face the danger of not recognizing the visitation of Jesus Christ; though He communicates and ministers to us, often we don't know that it's Him.

In his vision, Jacob saw angels going up and down a ladder to heaven. When he awoke, he cried, "God was here and I did not know it." Mary Magdalene saw Jesus resurrected and "knew not that it was Jesus" (John 20:14). In Luke 24:16, the disciples on the road to Emmaus did not know that Jesus was walking with them. After Peter and the other backslidden disciples spent an unproductive night at their old fishing

trade, they heard a man on the shore calling to them in the early morning light, but, they "knew not that it was Jesus" (John 21:4).

God indwells your body as His temple. Do you know that He's there? How much room have you given Him to operate in your life? Do you reverence His presence? Have you esteemed His promises?

Each of us must enter into communion with Christ and realize the blessing of His provision. We need to wake up every morning and say, "Oh, Holy Spirit, I reverence you today as you glorify Jesus Christ and His Word."

Hearing Whom He Sends

When we hear the Word of God preached, do we recognize God's presence? Regardless of who is speaking, Jesus will give them the precise words to say.

As Jesus sent out the disciples to preach the Gospel, in Luke 10, He told them, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me" (verse 16). In 1 Samuel 8:7, God told Samuel, "Don't be discouraged, they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, because they refused to hear My words that I have spoken through you." The people of Israel

demanded that Samuel give them a king, but they would never have made that request if they had realized that God was there all the time, speaking to them through His prophet.

If the people in this church were to slip into sinful, careless lifestyles, it is possible that this ministry—with all of its outreaches and affiliate churches—could be gone within twenty years. By God's grace, I pray that will never happen. But if people fail to realize that God is here, then God will remove the light of our testimony.

Charles Spurgeon—the "prince of preachers"—once preached to thousands; but, today, the same church, just over a century since his death, has only thirty to forty people. The ministry founded by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones now has just seventy-five to eighty people. Somehow, after these men were gone, the Christians in their churches ceased to recognize the presence of God.

The Gift of Righteousness

Jesus Christ has given us *His* righteousness apart from the law—it doesn't depend on our own works. The moment we first believed in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, He imputed to us "the righteousness which is of faith"

(Romans 10:6) as a gift of grace. Then, we receive imparted righteousness through the Word of God because we believe that He is not only our Savior but also our Healer and our provision for life.

The Holy Spirit wants to take us beyond the veil of our flesh and the awareness of our circumstances. The Lord is saying, "I am already *in* you, but I want you to have so much more!" He wants to carry us beyond subjective reflections of the past into His mighty presence. Together, we are learning to have the right perspective through objective thinking.

God desires fellowship in perfect oneness, with "no air between" (Job 41:16), so that heaven can fill our souls. Thank God! We can be inspired by His presence, knowing that He is *for* us.

Chapter Two

OUR PERSONAL HEALER

"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

"And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

"And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:23-26).

Two and a half million people were in need of water, but the water they found was bitter.

Then, the Lord addressed His people saying, "I am the Lord your personal healer." God showed Moses a tree, and when Moses cast the tree into the water, the water was made sweet. In the same way, when you apply the Cross to your bitter situation, death will enter into resurrection life and the waters of your personal life will be made sweet. Jesus Christ is here to bless, to speak, and to deliver. You can approach God and hear Him say, "I am your personal healer. That's who I am, and I don't care what anyone says about your life."

When a young woman in our ministry was diagnosed with brain cancer, we began to pray and the Lord healed her. Years later, she is still absolutely cancer-free. I could show you documentation on cases of cirrhosis of the liver, emphysema, lung cancer, and liver cancer (just to name a few) that have been healed by the Lord. He's our personal healer who brings into our lives *grace reversals*.

A Lame Man, a Prostitute, and a Publican

John 5:1-9 tells the story of a man who hadn't walked for thirty-eight years. Because he didn't know Jesus, he didn't believe in Him as the Christ, the personal healer. Jesus said to him,

"Take up your bed and walk," and the man took up his bed—the provision he had made for his condition—and walked! His healing was a grace reversal.

A prostitute, lost and on her way to hell, came seeking Jesus when she heard He was in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50). When she found Him, she began to wash Jesus' feet with her tears, wiping them with her long hair. Then, she anointed His feet with ointment from an alabaster box she had brought with her. Answering Simon's silent disapproval of this woman, Jesus said, "Because she has been forgiven much, she loves much." She experienced a grace reversal—a prostitute from the streets, now in the throne room of God's mercy, she became a child of the King in His royal family.

Zaccheus was a publican who lived a deceitful, crooked life. When the Master came through Jericho, the crowds gathered. Because Zaccheus was so small, he climbed a tree to get a better look at this "Jesus." Jesus looked up, saw the little guy, and said, "Come down; I'm coming to your house today."

Why Zaccheus? Everyone hated him. Publicans were crooks who stole money from the people by inflating the Roman tax system and

skimming the profits. But Jesus said to Zaccheus, "Today, salvation has come to your house."

The Creator of the universe, the Redeemer who would shed His blood, gave Zaccheus a grace reversal. No longer would he be crooked and deceitful because Jesus came to his house to bring deliverance. Zaccheus was so transformed by Jesus' presence in his house that he confessed, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8). This, indeed, was a grace reversal.

Chapter Three

THE WORD OF HIS POWER

Proverbs 30:5 tells us that every word of God is pure. Jesus Christ created all things (Colossians 1:16) and upholds them by the Word of His power (Hebrews 1:3).

We, as God's people, have great potential simply because of His character and the provision of His love toward us. Every single word of God is pure and has the power to produce an experience of divine love, eternal productivity, and spiritual awareness of everything that is ours through Him. In the Word, we learn the necessity of being deeply aware of God's presence. Christ wants us to understand that we are colaborers with Him.

Jesus Christ is in you. The Holy Spirit indwells you. If the Word of life and Spirit of grace abide in you, why do you talk about depression and confess negative feelings? If *God* is living in you, why do you act as though He's not able to

deliver you? You behave like a practical atheist while you still go to an evangelical church.

Sanctified and Justified

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

In 1 Corinthians 6:11, the Apostle Paul is saying, "Some of you practiced these things, but you are not that way any more. There has been a reversal in your lives. Your heavenly Father doesn't charge you with your sins because He doesn't see them. He has given you a divine, providential, supernatural reversal. Now you are washed, now you are sanctified, now you are justified."

God declares our sanctification before our justification because He speaks of our positional sanctification through the Finished Work of Christ, in Hebrews 10:10: "By the which will we

are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Our positional sanctification makes it possible for us to accept our progressive sanctification according to Deuteronomy 28:13. As we live within the boundary lines of the pure Word of God, the Holy Spirit reveals the righteousness of faith and our potential to be the 'head', and not the 'tail', in everything we do.

Seek First the Kingdom

Picture it. Jesus Christ is saying so personally to you, "I have laid down my life for you so that I might live inside and be everything you need. I will provide for you, and I give you the abundant life. But, I want you to seek first My Kingdom and My righteousness, and not the 'things' that are all around you. Then, all these other things will be added unto you."

When your eye is single, your whole body will be filled with the light of the Word of faith (Roman 10:8), the Word of grace (Acts 20:32), the Word of life (Philippians 2:16), and the Word of His power (Hebrews 1:3, 4:12).

God wants us to see that as we develop intimacy with Him through obedience to His indwelling Word, He will give us divine

protection and a godly reputation among the nations. We will have special favor as we enter into the unction of prayer power, prayer praise, prayer worship, and prayer provision.

Listen to the still small voice of God as He whispers, "Begin to understand what it means to spend one hour in the morning and one hour at night with Me. Come all alone to My throne of grace and mercy, shut out every distraction, and begin to pray *for* every promise in the Bible."

Pray for your marriage; God wants it to be good. Pray for your children; God wants to bless them. Pray for your job; God wants you to prosper. Pray for your health; God is your healer. Pray for creative ideas, that Jesus Christ will be glorified as He blesses you. Then, pray for your neighbors. Pray for missions. Pray for others who have ailments and problems because they have not heard the Word of life.

As you begin to develop fervency in prayer and an intimacy with the Word of faith, Jesus becomes the object of your communion. You will become one with the Lord as you agree with Him (Amos 3:3). You walk before Him who is Almighty (Genesis 17:1), and you are prepared to meet Him at any moment (Amos 4:12).

Heaven will open up, and you will begin to see the blessings of God poured out. His blessings will flow down the avenues of need and frailty. They will flow where deliverance is sought and in the places where you desire a greater consciousness of His presence.

As God begins to bless us, He calls us by name and leads us into precise light. When we follow the light we have received, He gives us more light, more blessing, more faith, more grace, more mercy, more purity, more hunger, and more thirst.

We are the sons and daughters of God (1 John 3:1). His resurrection power and life are available to work through the righteousness of faith given to us through the abundance of His grace. It is something we receive. God wants to begin bringing grace reversals in our lives—spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, and domestically.

There isn't anything more enjoyable than obeying the Master. Nothing can match the joy that comes from obedience to His Word, fellowship with His Spirit, communion with His life, oneness with His plan, and union with His will.

CONCLUSION

When Jesus Christ reverses something in our lives, we don't earn it—it's a *grace* reversal. Just as He desires us to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Him, He also desires to bless us. He doesn't want one single child of His to be the tail. He doesn't want one marriage to be the tail. Businessmen or whoever you are, Jesus doesn't want you to be the tail.

Christ is the head of His Church (Ephesians 1:22). He's the head over the fallen angels who come against us (Colossians 2:10). He is above all principalities and powers (Ephesians 1:21), and He has seated us above with Him.

The Lord wants to make us the head over our enemies and to crown us with honor, blessing, glory, and joy. He wants us to have peace, purity, effectiveness, and righteousness as we understand the Spirit of life and the Word of faith.

Jesus Christ is the object of every promise. He supports each promise with His integrity

and veracity. God's omnipotence is behind His Word. He blesses us through the power of His omnipresence, and His truth is revealed through His omniscience.

"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now the is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation)" (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).

Now is the accepted time for God to bring deliverence. He wants to do it through His love because we are His children. We are members of His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). We are one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17). He is saying to us, "You are a part of My body, a part of My eternal life, a part of everything about Me." When we begin to accept this without doubting, regardless of what we've done or how we feel, we will begin to have an expectation based upon His character (Psalm 62:5), an expectation that will not be cut off (Proverbs 24:14). As we realize that God is for us, we will experience the power of praise and worship and a tremendous release through the power of His promises.

Guard Thy Heart

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Never before has it been so vital for Christians to understand the importance of guarding one's heart. These thoughts, which were originally published in 1985, ring as true today as they did then. If anything, the satanic assault upon Bible-loving Christians has only grown more intense.

This message is based upon the principle of Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Many Christians have answered the cry of God in Proverbs 23:26, "…give me thine heart," by giving their whole heart, without reservation, to the Lord.

Every believer must learn how to keep, guard, and protect his heart. It is our desire in this booklet to shed light from the Word of God on the subject of guarding our hearts.

Chapter One

THE FUNCTION OF THE HEART

Anything that is placed above the Word of God is a form of idolatry. Whenever you have a problem and it is magnified or exalted over the preeminence of the Word of God, it may become a substitute for doctrine. As we study the principle of guarding the heart, we will see how the mental attitude of idolatry can easily be prevented.

Proverbs 4:23 is a key verse relevant to the subject of the heart, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." The word "heart" in Hebrew is *leb* and in Greek is *kardia*. A few of the most common meanings of the word "heart" imply that it is:

- the seat of the intellect, mind, intentions, and purpose;
- the seat of feelings and affections;
- the seat of intelligent thinking;
- the processor of the entire operation that

goes through the soul;

- the center of our being;
- the frame of reference with the memory center;
- the conscience with vocabulary and experience, which is one part of the mentality of the soul.

Concerning the mentality of the soul, the Word of God first enters into the *nous* or the preparative area of the heart. In the *nous*, the receiver of doctrine becomes aware of the meaning of the doctrine that he is perceiving. He perceives the particular truth and then, by faith's response, truth is channeled into his heart.

"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard" (Hebrews 4:2).

When we have received the Word and mixed it with faith, the Word of God is locked into the frame of reference and ready to be recalled in the conscious mind by way of the Holy Spirit.

"He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:26, 27*b*).

"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of

mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:14).

When we guard our hearts as partakers of His Word (2 Peter 1:4) and are continually filled with His Spirit, the Holy Spirit is then free to execute His office work according to John 14:26.

The Processor of Operations

Understanding these definitions will help the believer to value this subject more intensely. We are defining "the heart" as the center of our intellect, mind, purpose, intentions, motives, feelings, and affections—the processor of all the operations that go on in the activity of the soul. Therefore, it is important to consider the meaning of the words "keep thy heart" (Proverbs 4:23).

The word "keep" in Hebrew means "to guard." In Hebrew grammar, the verb is the most elaborate part of speech, and to understand any sentence it requires our chief attention. In Proverbs 4:23, a thorough study of the verb "to keep" reveals that the believer is to go right on guarding his heart, the place where he derives his very life. He continues to guard his thoughts and his affections in the part of his soul that processes God's life.

"The entrance of God's Word gives light"

(Psalm 119:130). We should consider the importance of this word "keep" and allow what we hear from the Word of God to have entrance into our hearts. The question is, has this doctrine had an entrance? If the truth of God's Word on a particular subject has entered our hearts, then we must guard it.

Chapter Two

PROTECT YOUR HEART WITH A DERIVED LIFE

A philosophical trend in evangelical Christianity today does not accept divine viewpoint as factual. This trend of intellectual independence says, "I will do my own thinking because I am an individualist."

A true individual does his own thinking by thinking with the Word of God as a believer-priest (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6). God has given each believer this freedom and protection. The believer thinks through the Cross. He declares, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live" (Galatians 2:20*a*). The process of his thinking should always be based on a derived life:

"Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20*b*).

Thus, we have the distinction that, unfortu-

nately, it isn't being made today: Do not follow your heart, for it is deceitful and desperately wicked, as defined in the following verses:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19).

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Proverbs 28:26*a*).

Follow the Word

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24).

The believer must follow God's Word; he must follow God's thoughts. He can do nothing of himself without God's thoughts nor can he do anything apart from God (John 15:5). But those who do not continue in God's thoughts always pursue the desires of their own hearts. They do not understand Galatians 5:24. They do not understand the fact that we can do nothing apart from the Cross and the life of Christ we received there.

When a person becomes involved with opin-

ions and thought patterns that are not derived by going humbly to the Cross, he always comes out a loser. But when he goes to the Cross, he begins to derive the life of Christ though the Word of God. As a result, he thinks objectively with divine thoughts, and he is restful and peaceful in his decisions.

In Matthew 11:29, Jesus Christ said, "…learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Every believer must learn of Christ as he learns to guard his heart, keeping his heart "with all diligence…" (Proverbs 4:23).

The expanded picture revealed in the Hebrew text in Proverbs 4:23 is to "keep guard." The meaning is explained in two different contexts: first, as a prisoner behind bars guarded twenty-four hours a day by watchmen outside of his cell; second, as the household of a king also guarded twenty-four hours a day from without and from within. When we guard our hearts, the flesh cannot be let out of jail—it cannot be controlled by jealousy, envy, hostility, or caustic reaction. When we guard our hearts, insecurity will not be allowed to rule our emotions. Bible doctrine is the guard, and the Holy Spirit is the protector and the provision.

The Guardian of Our Souls

In 1 Peter 2:25, Jesus is the Shepherd and Bishop, or Guardian, of our souls. Jesus guards us as the Living Word, and the Holy Spirit guards us as the powerful Provider—Christ's representative in the soul. Our volition gives consent so that we are actively involved in the provision, the protection and the preservation of truth. These are details of doctrine.

We should never say anything that would cause division or sow discord in the Body of Jesus Christ. This would allow something of the flesh into the heart. It would allow something to take place in the thought patterns that should never occur. When that happens, the believer stops guarding his heart; he has taken the emphasis off protecting the heart. When we get up in the morning, we should guard our hearts. We must be very conscious of what we are going to think, say, and do. That is what it means to guard your heart. As we follow this process, we become individuals who live a life honoring the Scriptures.

Chaper Three

KEEP YOUR HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE

The word "diligence" is *mishmar* in the Hebrew. It means to do something "above all things." In other words, the believer keeps what he has already guarded above everything else he does.

"Diligence" also means to watch, protect, and preserve with conscientiousness, to be keenly aware and attentive. Therefore, the believer's attitude should be, "I have learned something specific in the Word of God, and above all else I'm going to keep it.

Having an attitude of diligence goes far beyond the simple phrase "to keep." "Keep" means "to guard," but "with all diligence" means much more. It means, for example, to guard Bible doctrine as our heritage of the Finished Work. "…He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness…" (Psalm 23:3*b*). The diligent believer

wears this path down until he knows it thoroughly. When the believer "keeps" his heart, he "guards" it. He keeps doctrine, and he allows doctrine to have control over every area of his life.

Everything he hears and thinks has to come under the scrutiny of what he knows is right according to the standard of God's Word. He not only keeps what he has, but he diligently guards what he has. Nothing can cause him to rationalize away or lose the value of what has already been added unto his soul. A husband or wife cannot keep it for him. A best friend or the pastor cannot keep it for him. I am to keep what I have. Yet, more than to guard what I have, I am to keep the very details of it. Everything comes under the scrutiny of this protection.

Mentally Living in Truth

"And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying" (Genesis 37:11).

When God revealed certain things to Joseph in a dream, his brothers reacted with jealousy, but his father Jacob "observed the saying." The Bible says that we keep or observe what we have guarded in our mind. The believer "keeps" the Word in his frame of reference, conscience,

and mental perception by mentally choosing to live in truth. The Holy Spirit is then able to bring Bible doctrine to the memory center as we apply our hearts to understanding (Proverbs 2:2).

When doctrine enters our mind and becomes our frame of reference, we must be determined to keep the details of it. We "keep" the specifics of Bible doctrine by deliberately walking in the Word of truth (Matthew 4:4; Psalm 119:133). Jesus Christ is the Bishop of our souls, and the Holy Spirit is our Revealer, Protector, and Comforter. Categorical doctrine is our objective guard; it provides specific definition in details.

The Purpose of Having Categories of Doctrine

We refer to "categories of doctrine" as verses of Scripture divided into specific topics, much like a catalogue, to quickly reference when we face specific situations. If, for example, we are faced with an issue of deception, our hearts have been exercised in verses that speak to that subject. We have mentally worn a path in the part of our mind that processes the truth we have received so we can apply it readily.

Therefore, as our will consents to this process of guarding, we apply the Word, with

understanding, to every situation in our lives. We appropriate the Word of God through the Holy Spirit in practical situations, wherever and whenever it is needed.

Many people have much doctrine in the perceptive area of the mind—the *nous* (the preparational part of the mind)—but they have not learned to apply it to their hearts in faith. Each believer who stands before God must learn to apply and transfer doctrine to every aspect of his life in relationship to other believers, personal decisions, the local church, his spouse and children, and his pastor-teacher, as well as in the duties of his occupation. He applies what he has guarded and kept. When the apostle John wrote in 2 John 8, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things," he was referring to that which the believer has been "keeping and guarding" in his heart.

Chapter Four

WISDOM: THE GREAT PROTECTOR OF THE HEART

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee" (Proverbs 2:10-11).

We define wisdom as the application of doctrine, with understanding, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Proverbs 2:10 says that wisdom enters into the heart. Wisdom is more than simply knowledge or information. It is more than being able to challenge someone with an intelligent argument. Wisdom is more than an ego trip of learning. Rattling off verses and mastering the Hebrew and Greek languages is no indication that a person possesses wisdom.

Original language study is only one of seven principles of hermeneutics (which is the science of studying Scripture). Clear thinking and freshness are also very important. It is vital that

preachers learn this principle. They must not preach with an imbalanced emphasis. Sermons, at times, must be heart-devotional as well as exegetical and expository. In order for a congregation to follow Christ with fervency, they must be motivated by the love of God in their hearts.

Hermeneutics also teaches that a preacher must not practice plagiarism; he should not copy another pastor's style. The pastor must learn to think for himself. The church does not need robots; it needs pastors who can think, who have their own ministry and devotional life with God. Otherwise, secondhand ministries are produced rather than unique portions of the Corporate Body.

One must be careful to avoid plagiarism. It is not wrong to obtain thoughts from great men of God, if those thoughts are meaningful and relevant. But seed thoughts should be used only to the extent that they are relevant. They should never be used beyond this balance. The pastor must develop his own vocabulary and freshness, apart from the resources from which he draws.

Take Heed How You Hear

Listeners need to be careful how they hear

(Luke 8:18), what they hear (Mark 4:24), and when they hear (Ecclesiastes 5:1). When a pastor delivers an amazing presentation with great fluency and intellectuality, will your "intelligence" be stimulated because of his particular style of preaching?

What if a missionary speaker came to your church without all the flowery rhetoric but as a soul-winner who simply serves God? He is someone who has been with Jesus. He has prayed in the middle of the night. He may not be a polished speaker—he may take time between words as he quotes John 3:16 and then simply say, "You know, Jesus loves you." He is so dependent upon God to speak quietly and humbly in the Spirit that he does not care if you had to wait for him to bring the next word. He is not impressed by your wealth or position. He loves you, but you do not impress him. He has a relationship with God that is his own. What would be your response to him?

God wants us to have a heart relationship with Jesus. Of course, we learn and receive truth from many portions in the Body of Christ, but He wants us to develop a very deep heart relationship with Him so that we can constantly live with a divine heart language. When we "guard"

the content of the Word that has already entered our heart and we keep what we have guarded, then wisdom becomes much more than mere knowledge and information.

Mere knowledge is no longer the focal point of a sermon. A preacher's heart must be filled with the spirit of love, compassion, and spontaneity with God for this day. His portfolio may be filled with pages of learning, but if his message does not reflect God's heart for the moment, then he has missed a vital point. He may need to change a sermon topic at the last moment and not say a word concerning the topic he spent hours preparing. Why? It is not God's heart for that moment. He needs to preach what is on the heart of God, the new creation heart of the Spirit, which is doctrine.

This does not mean the studying is wrong. A man of God must be prepared, but that includes living a prepared life. Information must become wisdom. Godly wisdom goes beyond mere human wisdom. The wisdom of categorical doctrine in the power of the Holy Spirit controls the heart, the memory center, and the mind as it saturates the soul, protecting it from ungodly influence by upholding the truth.

Chapter Five

PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

"He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live" (Proverbs 4:4).

How does the heart retain God's Word? Let me illustrate it. I get up in the morning, and I am very tired. I am very thankful, very happy, and very grateful, but very tired. I have class at 8:00 a.m., which means that I have to study at 6:00 a.m. Therefore, since I do not want to be filled with information or communicate because of duty, this is what I do:

I pray, "Lord Jesus, I want to practice Your presence. Holy Spirit, I want to practice Your presence." In my prayer, I kneel at the Cross. I see the nails in His hands, the nails in His feet, the crown of thorns, the disfigured face, the eyes of the heart of Scripture through a man called Jesus, who is dying in my place, piercing me

with love. I will say no more. I will respond to His love and practice His presence. Everything He did, everything He went through, it was all for me. There is no weakness or disturbance or frailty that can come up against His love. I am practicing, simply, the presence of Christ.

God Speaks to Us Throughout the Day

When I have finished studying and praying, I teach the 8:00 a.m. class. It is another morning filled with a busy schedule. During a portion of the class, the Holy Spirit brings to remembrance a very special part of my morning time with Jesus. In an instant, I stand broken before the Lord. I am not interested in information—except as it enhances the Word of God. The Spirit of God recalls doctrine that I retained in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the power of love, and in the power of the Cross. A retention capacity has been established in my mind by practicing the presence of God.

But, what if a pastor gets up in the morning and races to the desk to study, races to get his clothes on, and then races to class? He has lost something valuable. He is doing the best he can, but he has lost something special. He has missed a fresh revelation of the Cross for that day.

The Cross is our ultimate frame of reference and the Holy Spirit of Resurrection is our power. A believer can practice the presence of God ten times a day and become broken each time, while someone else may take God's presence for granted. All believers should be challenged to practice the present reality of the Cross each day. The Holy Spirit will take over each time.

The Savior will break the heart of the pastor afresh. The man of God will not teach something that he has taken directly from a book; rather, he will communicate the revelation of a Person, in the Spirit. So many pastors are anxious to communicate the new heart! We should not compare preachers' capacities, talents, gifts, or knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek. Of greater interest should be our own heart attitude with the Master for this day.

"Guard your heart with all diligence." Let wisdom enter into your heart. Retain the Word in your heart. Proverbs 4:21 instructs us to keep God's words in the midst of our hearts. He is saying to us, "Do not let anything enter into your heart except the Word of life." Do not allow personalities, failure, persecution, accusations, intimidation, emotions, negative thought patterns, or projections to enter your heart. Let only

true words of life enter into the midst of your heart, and keep them there.

Do not allow difficulties, domestic affairs, finances, or business to take over your innermost heart. It is not worth it. Do not become intimidated or condemned. We must do the best we can, and if everything seems to fail, we should put our shoulders back, look unto Jesus, and say, "I gave it my best. I am not condemned because I have guarded and retained God's wisdom in the midst of my heart." This is what it means to practice the presence of God while guarding your heart.

Chapter Six

GATEKEEPING

"Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem" (Jeremiah 17:21).

"Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God" (Joshua 23:11).

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7*a*).

Take heed that you do not begin to love your life so much that you become religious to protect your interpretation of God. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. In this verse, the word for think is *shaar* in Hebrew. *Shaar* in the Old Testament has the preferred meaning of the word "gate." A gate can shut out, keep in, or allow entrance to anything that the gatekeeper desires. The second meaning of "thinketh" speaks of an "estimation," the third meaning speaks of an "evaluation." And the last portion of Proverbs

23:7 says, "…but his heart is not with thee."

Here we have a picture of a gatekeeper. He has the option of closing or opening the gate to his mind. This is the first option of thinking. Every individual can think whatever he wants to think. When he does not want to think, he simply closes off his thought life. The depth of the meaning of the word "think" is unique. A pastor faces it repeatedly with members of his congregation who try to get circumstances and situations and people to counsel them instead of getting their hearts right by having right thought patterns.

Rescuing is not Recovering

Secular psychology implies that a counselor, psychiatrist, psychologist, or pastor must pamper people to rescue them. At the point that a counselor becomes a "rescuer," he also becomes a liability to the person he is counseling. This means that a person may come to a psychologist, and the only relief he receives after twelve months is what he receives from each session. Yet, if his behavior never changes, the counselor is playing the role of the "sole rescuer." The problem is that in every crisis he faces, his counselor becomes the "rescuer." In actuality, he is

hurting the one being counselled.

Through loving compassion, identification, understanding, and proper wisdom, the counselor must become a loving communicator rather than a rescuer. He must know when to back off as the rescuer and lead the person to the Cross. Only Jesus Christ can deliver him.

The counselee, also, must not overly depend upon a growing relationship with his counselor, but simply receive his compassion and concern to the measure it is needed. If the counselor is effective, he will lovingly and progressively communicate to the counselee that Someone is far greater than he is. He will communicate life and truth to his heart. He will introduce a new relationship in the presence of God that will enable a person to embrace God in his own heart, while being thankful for the counselor who helped him to discover Christ.

It is wrong for a pastor to play the role of one who rescues, but it is right for the pastor to be personal, compassionate, and patient in bringing people into a heart relationship with God through love.

The entire purpose for counseling deals with the heart and nothing else. Counseling involves much more than implementing a technique or a

set of instructions; it involves something far greater—which is love, power, practicality, concern, identification, and oneness with God. This is the principle we must communicate through practical truths, in God's wisdom. Then the entire process becomes one of wisdom in its fullness.

Healing Thought Processes

Some people use their capacities for thinking incorrectly, and this causes problems. They bar certain things from entering into their hearts—things that they need—and allow other things into their hearts that they do not need. Over a long period of time they may have lived in patterns of wrong thinking. The godly counselor, therefore, must teach them God's Word progressively and systematically in categories that they can easily apply in the details of life. The counselor must invest in them with a personal love.

"As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." No wonder Jesus said in Proverbs 23:26, "My son, give me thine heart"! Today, He is still speaking to us:

"You may have given Me your talent, but not your heart. You have given Me your educational desires, but not your heart. You have

learned theology, but you have not given Me your heart. You have been a choir member and a Sunday school teacher, but you have not given Me your heart. You can recite Scripture fluently, but you have not given Me your heart. You have been to church faithfully, but you still reserve your rights to yourself. You have not yet given Me your relationship with regard to the local assembly. You have given Me a part of yourself, but you have reserved the pride and independent rights of a fleshly individuality. Therefore, My son, give Me your heart!"

Many Christians say, "God, I will give You this much of myself, but I need to preserve my finances. I need security." They forget that the measure to which they preserve and hold back from God is the measure to which they will not be blessed in other areas of their lives. In this same measure, problems will haunt them. The Creator asks only one thing from man—"My son, give Me your heart." Only then, when it belongs to God Himself, can a man guard his heart.

CONCLUSION

"Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Proverbs 20:9). Such a person follows God with his whole heart; he has a heart after God. In the New Testament, one word for "think" is *enthumeomai*, which is used in Acts 10:19. This word means to consider what you have heard in the deepest thoughts possible —to ponder, deliberate, and to let it revolve in your mind.

Let God's Word become wisdom in your heart. Retain His Words in your mind. Let the Words of God dwell in the midst of your heart. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7*a*). Be careful how, what, and when you hear. Guard truth, keep it, and then guard what you have already attained by faith in the Word of God.

Any man or woman can change in a moment. You have often heard it said, "I need more time to grow in this area of my life," or, "Just

give me more time and I'll love my husband"…or fellow Christian…or lost souls. But the truth is, you do not need more time. You need to give your whole heart to Christ *in* time.

For us, life is a supernatural involvement that leads to a supernatural resurrection. We do not need to wait in order to be changed. Rather, we are changed to the degree that we think with the Word of God (2 Corinthians 3:18). So, let us guard our hearts with all diligence. Continue to allow the Holy Spirit entrance by taking heed to every Word of God. That is how our ways are cleansed, and that is how we bring glory God, which is our purpose for living.

Guarding against Temptation

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Consider the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Peter 1:13-16, grace is brought unto us "at the revelation of Jesus Christ," through the living Word of God. Therefore, we do not follow our former lust patterns as disobedient children through ignorance, because He who has called us is holy. Furthermore, God said, "it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

What are we going to do? Well aware of the temptations we face every day, we know how far short we fall of the standard of perfect righteousness: Our Savior became a man and was tempted in all points, "like as we are, *yet without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15). *What are we going to do?*

His eyes are so pure, He cannot behold evil; He is *that* holy (Habakkuk 1:13). He loves righteousness (Psalm 45:7), and inasmuch as He knew no sin, so our sin separated Him from us.

Since we all have an old sin nature (1 John 1:8), how will we make it? In this booklet, we

will learn that for every temptation, God has a provision. And His desire is to show us the way of escape.

Chapter One

VOLUNTARY FAITH VS. INVOLUNTARY DEMISE

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:13-15).

Anything we truly receive from God comes through voluntary decisions in how we think and what we choose. In other words, when we receive from God, we must volunteer to mix faith with what we hear; we must volunteer our hearts to be God-conscious.

Undone by the Unseen

The other side of it is this: Whatever I receive from Satan is *involuntary*. In other words, when

Satan sends projections, unless we are guarding our hearts (Proverbs 4:23), he is able to get into our unconscious minds, whether we are aware of letting him in or not.

This is such an important principle to learn. Picture a frozen lake. The visible surface layer of ice equals the conscious mind. But what goes into the subconscious and unconscious mind is like the water beneath the surface of the ice. It cannot be seen when ice covers the top, yet the unconscious mind and the subconscious mind are continually receiving information.

That is why we can be so easily influenced by wrongdoing when we are around certain groups of people. The unconscious mind involuntarily receives messages that the activity—whatever it is—is good. It may be a room full of people drinking alcohol. Everyone is smiling, and they appear to be having fun; however, their thought processes are impaired and they are unable to make proper judgments. Much worse than drinking is the attitude that goes with it.

The thoughts that go into your unconscious mind begin to develop and enter into the subconscious mind where there is some understanding, some desire, some relationship to the

truth. But because the information needed for proper reasoning is still below the conscious level, you cannot understand the cause—nor see the end result—of your behavior. If God is involved and the conscious mind is not deceived by the unconscious mind, God can reveal the root cause and effect of behavior that is potentially destructive.

In Psalm 42:7, the Bible says that the deep calls unto the deep. And when I voluntarily choose to hunger and thirst after God (Matthew 5:6), the Word of God enters into my heart, which is now guarded—protected by walls of doctrine. Then, as I think, so am I (Proverbs 23:7*a*).

But if my heart is not guarded, I automatically give a place to Satan (Ephesians 4:27), who goes to work without my volunteering to cooperate with him. If he gets into my unconscious mind, then I have no idea what I'm doing, neither in my subconscious nor in my conscious mind.

In recent days with the increase of violence, public schools have once again recognized the importance of setting standards for behavior to enforce moral restraint. There are cases where many of their standards are higher than some private Christian schools, which have often been criticized for being too rigid. But the principle

remains true: Right behavior comes from right thinking, which must first be taught and then voluntarily applied (Proverbs 1).

Steps in the Path of the Tempter

The Bible says in James 1:13, let no man say when he is tempted, that God is tempting him; God cannot be tempted with evil, and He tempts no man. No, God doesn't do the tempting. But according to Matthew 4:3 and 1 Thessalonians 3:5, Satan is *the* tempter.

A man is tempted when, first, he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. When that lust has conceived, it brings forth sin. When the sin is finished, it brings forth spiritual death. So, the passage concludes, "Do not err, my beloved brethren" (James 1:16).

A person doesn't suddenly enter into spiritual death. There are steps involved. Every Christian is admonished to hide the Word in his heart to keep from sinning (Psalm 119:11). That includes personal Bible study as well as hearing from his pastor-teacher as often as possible. Likewise, the purpose of Christian education is to help young people deal with the things in their lives that could lead down the wrong paths.

Many of us as parents, teachers, and friends

want to help. Many labor sacrificially to provide young people with the right environment so they will not be drawn away by their lusts and enticed; so that lust will not conceive and bring forth sin. Our desire is to help so that sin, when it is finished, doesn't bring forth spiritual death. But if it does, we will be there to love them with God's love.

Before a person is tempted to sin, he is first drawn away by his own lust. The disciples said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (see Acts 4:20). In John 16:13, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit "shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak." Of course, they were referring to godly things. But if you take that principle and apply it to fallen men in the realm of Satan, what we see and what we hear, we will speak. If we give our eyes and ears to things that are not of God, even if they are "good" things, we are making a place for sin.

Recently a drunk driver almost killed two of our teenagers. Now, at some point a long time ago, he was tempted to drink. He didn't plan to get drunk and then drive, but it happened. The temptation to drink eventually led to drinking a little, drinking more, and finally getting drunk.

Then, because his thought processes were impaired and he could no longer make proper judgments, it led to driving drunk. If that man was a Christian, he was definitely in spiritual death, and he nearly caused physical death.

For those who think "a little bit of sin" is harmless, they have already been seduced by the devil. But our God is mighty, and He will use every opportunity to draw men to Himself. That is why Jesus was called the friend of sinners.

Chapter Two

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

God wants to teach us that we can avoid temptation. In Matthew 6:13, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." He was saying, "I want you to stay out of temptation. Just stay out of it. 'Lead us not into temptation'—Pray that way, and you will stay out of temptation."

Then in Matthew 26:41*a*, He said, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." That tells me that if I watch and I pray, then I won't enter into temptation. Watching goes together with praying, and praying goes with keeping a watch. There may be trends in your life, and if you watch and pray, you will be available to hear what the Father has to say through the Holy Spirit.

The world today is filled with every form of perversion—from internet pornographers to molesters to exhibitionists. All of these sick people have allowed temptation in their lives. First they were drawn away unto lust and enticed, and then they *let* Satan come in.

Some people rationalize that looking at pornography and limiting their activity to mental fantasies means they are not hurting anyone else and that no one will ever know. Sooner or later, however, lust conceives. And then, when lust conceives, it brings forth sin. And the end of sin is spiritual death. Those people are in bondage to a power in the unconscious that produces a subconscious reflection, which then brings in a conscious sinful action.

This is so vital for every believer to grasp: If I do not guard my heart, Satan will operate *involuntarily*. In other words, I don't have to volunteer to let him operate; he takes over because there isn't any guardianship by the Holy Spirit or the Great Bishop, Jesus Christ—the Bishop of my heart (1 Peter 2:25).

In 1 Corinthians 10:13, the Word of God says, "There hath no temptation taken you but

such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it."

God is saying, "Listen, you can be kept from temptation. You *can* stay out of it." God has done this for us so often. We all remember times when we have seen the temptation; we have even felt it. Then God provided a way, and we escaped the temptation. Satan wasn't able to get us.

According to 2 Peter 2:9, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." *He* knows how to do it! For example, when it comes to marriage, 1 Corinthians 7:5 says to the husband and wife, "Defraud ye not one the other… that Satan tempt you not," except during a woman's monthly cycle or for a time of fasting and prayer with mutual consent.

If a couple defrauds one another and either one withholds having sex for any reason other than what the Word of God states, the devil will tempt. If there is no compatibility and they do not work out the marital relationship in love, the devil is going to tempt them. But when Christians do what God says and defraud not one another in the marriage relationship, they avoid

temptation.

The Ways of Temptation

Temptation comes in so many different ways. In Genesis 12:10-13, when Abraham left Canaan because of a famine, he was tempted to lie. Because he was outside of the geographical will of God and, therefore, outside of divine guidance, he *did* lie. Later, he brought a little Egyptian slave named Hagar back home, had sex with her, and Ishmael was born. Ever since, there has been fighting between the Israeli and Arab nations.

You see, Abraham was tempted: He did not exercise faith to stay in Canaan when times were bad. He didn't trust God for a way to escape the temptation to leave Canaan. So he left the land God brought him into and went down to Egypt.

It is the same with Elimelech, Naomi's husband, written about in the Book of Ruth. The name Elimelech means "God who is my king." He married Naomi, whose name means "pleasant." They had two sons, Mahlon and Chileon, and their names in the Hebrew meant, "sickness" and "pining away."

Again, because of a famine, they left the land God had given to His people and went down to Moab, which represents the flesh. In Moab, the

two sons married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. While there, all three men died. It was a very bad time.

God had commanded Israel to have nothing to do with the Moabites (Deuteronomy 23:3). But Elimelech forgot who he was and, instead, trusted in the arm of the flesh. In application, "God who is my King" married "pleasure," and ended up with "sickness" and "pining away." The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23*a*). Little did they know what would take place when they left Jerusalem and went down into Moab—and all because they were tempted to go outside of God's will.

Afterward, Naomi heard that something wonderful was happening in Jerusalem. She made the trip back, but changed her name to Mara, which means "bitter," saying, "The almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty" (Ruth 1:20*b*-21). And Ruth, of course, whose name means "beautiful grace" went with her and married the kinsman redeemer Boaz (who was in the line of David)—another chapter in the beautiful story of Redemption.

We are tempted when we are drawn away. And when we are drawn away by lust (which is anything that is outside of the perfect will of God), we end up being enticed to go further into sin.

So Satan says, "If I can draw you away from the Word of God, from the assembly, from fellowship; if I can draw you away through atmospheric projections, through worldliness on TV, or through any number of things that entice Christians today—I will tell you what will happen. There are six lust patterns that could take over a man: a lust for power, approbation, sensuality, pride, pleasure, and materialism. One of these six lust patterns will take over an area of your life. I will use whatever works, because my goal is simply to draw you away."

What happens when a believer is drawn away? He doesn't have to do anything bad. He may not even be sinning yet. He is just drawn away.

In 2 Samuel 11:1-2, David stayed home from the battle. That was when he saw Bathsheba bathing on the roof, called for her, and committed adultery with her. To cover up his sin, David

murdered her husband.

How was that possible for a man of God to do? First he was drawn away. Then his lust conceived when he was enticed by the devil. That brought forth sin, and finished in spiritual (and in this case, physical) death.

That is why we *must* deal with temptation.

Chapter Three

AVOID TEMPTATION: WATCH AND PRAY

The desire of all godly men and women—as leaders, as friends, as parents—is to help people from entering into temptation. When Jesus taught the disciples how to pray, He told them to say, "Lead us not into temptation." *Lead us not*. In the garden of Gethsemane, the night before he was crucified, Jesus told Peter, "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41*a*). If we will do that, then when the tempter comes around, God will provide a way of escape—and He knows how! That is how we avoid entering into temptation. That is what the Word of God says.

Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days and nights (Matthew 4:1-2), and for every temptation, He was led by the Spirit to overthrow the devil. How? By the expressed Word of God. In Matthew 4:11, Jesus spoke the Word,

and the devil had to leave Him.

Temptation comes in so many different ways. A woman at home who watches soap operas wouldn't do what she sees on that soap opera, with all of its immorality. The average Christian woman would not *do* it, and yet if she allows herself to be entertained by it, she will be drawn away in her mind because she didn't keep a watch and pray.

We must guard our hearts. One way is to be careful about what we let our eyes gaze upon. Realize that Samson let his guard down, was careless with Delilah, gave in to his lust, and ended up getting his eyes plucked out (Judges 16:21).

Also we have to remember Solomon. He was so comfortable with money and materialism that he let down his guard and did everything under the sun that was sinful. He was drawn away, gave in to lust, and was enticed. The lust conceived, brought forth sin, and sin brought forth death.

Unload Your Options

God wants to help you realize that you don't have to be tempted. The Word of God along with the filling of the Spirit is your strongest de-

fense. Proverbs 13:20 says, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Purpose to be around men and women who will not tempt you, but who will edify you.

In Psalm 101:2, the Word of God says, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way….I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." And in verse 3, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." In other words, I will not look at anything that could infect me.

Then in the next verse, 4*b*, the psalmist says, "I will not know a wicked person." That means, I will not have wicked friends. I will not be around people who would infect me with the world. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. I will behave perfectly in mine own house, and I will not "know," or relate to, them that are wicked. I can pray for them, but I will not relate to them.

When the Bible says, "If you continue in My word, you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free, and the Son shall set you free indeed," it means that I will be free to know what is going on in my unconscious mind (see John 8:31, 32, 36). I will be free to guard my heart,

to keep Satan from placing evil thoughts in my subconscious and feeding me involuntary suggestions that haven't conceived yet. But if the lust joins with a mental projection in the subconscious and results in conception, it brings forth personal sin. And the sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

We all have come too far and gone too far to live in constant temptation. Why then would we make temptation an option?

For Christ and the Gospel's Sake

The Word of God says in 2 Samuel 7:21, "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them." God has done great things that we may know Him and know that which comes from Him.

In Mark 8:35, Jesus says, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it." But then He says, "but whosoever shall lose his life *for my sake and the gospel's*, the same shall save it." We do it for Christ's sake and the gospel's sake.

Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." I don't want to be tempted because I want to live

for Christ's sake. Everything I have is in Christ, because God provided it—for Christ's sake. For every sin we commit, God has forgiven and paid the price—for Christ's sake.

We are saved forever, because God gave us the Holy Spirit through Jesus for Christ's sake. Everything was for Christ's sake. You and I will be members of the Bride of Christ in heaven at the Rapture. We will marry Him and feast at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb—for Christ's sake.

We were saved for Christ's sake, and now He wants us to forgive one another for Christ's sake and for the Word's sake.

Psalm 115:1 is a precious verse that says, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." For mercy's sake, for truth's sake—not unto us, O Lord! But give glory to Thy name for the sake of mercy and doctrine. That is what the Word of God says.

"*Though Satan Should Buffet…*"

Jesus said to the disciples, "I want you to always pray that you are not led into temptation." Be aware of the choices you make voluntarily. Don't be overcome involuntarily by the devil, who is the tempter.

Many people are in prison who started in this negative pattern. Some of them bore the name of Christ when they started their downward trend. They didn't realize that their souls were being seduced involuntarily by the devil.

If you watch certain things, read certain things, and think certain thoughts without volunteering to think with God, your mind involuntarily takes in more and more that is not of God, and Satan sees it. At some point, you need to have more and then more. And though you don't mean to do it, and you don't want to do it, you are tempted.

Once a person falls into temptation, he ends up in spiritual death and wants to give up. He doesn't think he can make it because it has been going on so long. But God says, "You can get out of temptation. Not only that, you can *stay* out of temptation." God will provide a way out of temptation.

Chapter Four

TOUGH LOVE: ONE WAY OUT

We love our children. As parents and as school teachers and administrators, we would like to make it difficult for young people to be tempted. When discipline is administered to them, it is not to be unkind nor to legislate the letter of the law, but to love. Yet, love has godly standards, and tough love is there to help.

When God chastises a believer, as He did King David, it is to help him, to deliver him, and to make him realize that he can have peace. Though God loved David tremendously, it was tough love.

In Psalm 122:8, David said, "For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee." One Hebrew translation says, "That I might speak peace with my mouth, because that peace is within me."

Though we want to be relaxed and enjoy one another in relationships, we need to keep a

watch on our hearts so we maintain peace within. Certainly there is nothing wrong with doing certain things, but it is what goes on from there. It is having the maturity to understand that if you stop at A, then you will not enter into B, C, and D.

This is the picture: If a person is not drawn away, he won't enter into lust. If he doesn't enter into lust, he will not be enticed. If he is not enticed, the lust doesn't conceive. If lust doesn't conceive, it doesn't bring forth sin. If it doesn't bring forth sin, sin doesn't end in spiritual death.

The steps that lead to spiritual death start with being drawn away. The Lord wants us to choose to be loved by God, choose to love God, and choose to be filled with the Spirit.

Restore One Another

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

If I am involved in a ministry of restoration, loving others purely with God's love, that is going to decrease Satan's opportunities to tempt me. I will be one place with God, filled with the

Holy Spirit and walking in His love, instead of another place, considering my options and being drawn away.

To be drawn away is to experience what happened to Solomon when he became comfortable with his riches (1 Kings 10, 11). It happened to Peter when he was in the wrong place, warming his hands by the wrong fire (John 18:18). It happened to Demas when he went back in the world (2 Timothy 4:10). It happened to Barnabas as well. Barnabas was in a place to be used mightily by God. He was a good man, a great comforter, and he helped Paul. But at some point, Barnabas was drawn away from the perfect plan of God.

During the summer months, at the start of school days in the fall, or when the harshness and sameness of the winter months begin to tempt you, stay miles away from temptation. Make a voluntary decision to hear from God and be filled with His Spirit. You will never be sorry. You will avoid the tempter and his involuntary infections.

How to Rob the Devil

Let God keep you from temptation. Be delivered from it. Avoid it. If you are living in God,

you will not be in a place where the devil can get you. Stay away from the area of your weakness. More than that, don't be around the areas that you *could* be weak in. Listen to God; be discerning. Don't be around the people who make you weak.

Also, do not wear the clothes that will make somebody else weak. A woman who dresses immodestly may cause someone who is weak to stumble. She may think she is just being fashionable, but she needs to understand that man is tempted through the eye gate. Therefore, use wisdom and do not tempt others (1 Corinthians 8:9).

We will never be tempted while reading the Bible. We will not be tempted when we meditate on the Word of God. We are not tempted when we are praying. We will not be tempted with a spirit of lust while soul winning. If something unexpected comes in to tempt us, we can just sing a melody to God in our hearts.

To be successfully tempted by the devil, a person has to be drawn away by the lust in his heart and enticed. The man who never watches an X-rated movie and never has pornography around isn't going to be tempted. It is only if he sees it, and stares at it, and is drawn away that

he gets tempted. And then the devil involuntarily pollutes his soul, just to rob him of fellowship and godliness and peace that comes with experiencing the grace of deliverance.

We can rob Satan of his right to tempt us by not being in the wrong place, not being with the wrong people, not thinking the wrong thoughts, and not exposing ourselves to wickedness. As we rob Satan of tempting us, we go from glory to glory and victory to victory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Satan says, "How am I going to test that guy? All he does is serve God seven days a week. He's always serving God! Get in there and do something to tempt him! Somehow, we've got to tempt him."

Then the devil says, "We've got to draw him away and get him relaxed first, where he isn't thinking of Jesus."

As we are constantly filled with the Holy Spirit, we are protected by a wall of fire (Zechariah 2:5)—a spiritual wall of positional truth, a wall of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Why does a wall of fire protect us? Because God protects people who choose to think with Him and are filled with His Holy Spirit, who will not be led into temptation.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ never once gave in to temptation. Instead, He bore all of our sins in His perfect humanity. When we believed, He gave us a robe, the garment of His righteousness. Is there sin underneath His righteousness in our hearts? Yes, but all He sees is the robe (Isaiah 61:10). Though we will be disciplined by the Holy Spirit, it is so we can have peaceable fruits of righteousness in heaven (Hebrews 12:11).

As we grow in grace and truth, we will hate sin more. Will the grace message make us want to sin? No. It will make us love Jesus more.

We all hate diseases, such as cancer. But as much as we hate cancer, we love the people who have it. Likewise, we hate sin. But when someone we love is in sin, the more we want to love him and do whatever we can to help him out. That is what Jesus did.

As you mature in your walk of faith, the tempter is bound to do everything he can to

cause you to doubt, or to waiver, or, more likely, to become familiar with your position in Christ. But remember, "It is written…." Apply the Word of God in those times when you are tempted, understanding the difference between voluntary thinking (choosing to make right decisions) and involuntary thinking (being tossed about by Satan's projections to the unconscious mind). Draw near instead of being drawn away when you fall into diverse temptations. He has made a way of escape.

Precious Father, we thank You that Satan can't tempt us when he wants to. Thank You that we have a way to prevent temptation and to be ready for the attack if it comes to promote us in the angelic contest.

Thank You that as far as Satan's power goes, it is not as easy for him to entice us if we know how to guard our hearts. Thank You for the provision of your Word and Your presence through the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Guarding the Things

That Are Sacred

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INTRODUCTION

So often we treat the things that are sacred as very common because we become familiar. When we do not discern the subtlety of Satan's influence, familiarity is an easy trap to fall into. His demons work to promote the "common" and discredit the sacred.

As this booklet reveals, seeing sacred things as God sees them is something that only the Holy Spirit can reveal as we humble ourselves and become disciples—"learners"—through the Word of God.

Chapter One

THE PROCESS OF LEARNING: A LOST ART

"And when [Jesus] was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?…

"And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.

"And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:54-58).

"And our adversaries said, They shalt not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease" (Nehemiah 4:11).

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11): Know your enemy.

"And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt

speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust" (Isaiah 29:4).

Ignorance of demons is one of the great problems in Christianity today. Just as ignorance of disease has caused many to lose their lives unnecessarily, many people suffer with spiritual infections because they are ignorant of demonic activity.

The Bible tells us that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness in this world's system (Ephesians 6:12). Yet, few believers understand the specifics of what demons do. Though the Bible offers detailed instructions on waging spiritual warfare and specific knowledge of enemy strategies, many Christians are ignorant of the devil's devices. In Revelation 12:10-11, the devil was defeated by the specific application of the Word of God.

Many have a general understanding of a premise in the Bible, but few Christians know how to derive the proper presuppositions, intense amplifications, and then specific application of the conclusions found in the Word of God.

We are instructed in Isaiah 28:9-10 to study the Scriptures "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." Many believers hear general premises from the Word of God preached from the pulpit. Yet many never go on to understand precise presuppositions because of a lack of study. They leave out learning the intense amplification of a presupposition that brings a practical application of a precise conclusion.

Understanding the Process

When examining a subject, we first look at the *premise*: a proposition supporting or helping to support a conclusion. Next, we consider the *presuppositions*: conditional elements of the premise, such as a preceding event, condition, or cause. This is followed by intense *amplification* of the presuppositions: a broader and deeper understanding of the subject through correlation of information ("line upon line"), which leads to a *conclusion*: a reasoned judgment based on the information gathered. Finally, the subject is ready for *application* based upon the precise conclusion.

Therefore, if salvation of a sinner according to John 3:16 is the subject, and forgiveness

through the shed blood of Jesus Christ is the premise, grace is a presupposition for forgiveness. We find through amplification (by a careful exegesis of the Scriptures) that grace is a multifaceted, undeserved gift, given to cover the multiplication of sins. If we agree, then we must not just acknowledge the subject of salvation as a fact. We must appropriate it personally and extend it to others, since we must conclude that salvation by the Blood is a free gift to any who will receive it.

This is the basic process of learning, of which so many teachers have lost sight. They have lost the process and art of teaching proper educational principles that are meant to give people insight through observation, perception, understanding, and application. This process is so relevant for anyone to be successful and effective in life.

Understanding God's Order

Demons are constantly working to make our minds wander and miss out on the great process of receiving truth. These forces of Satan do everything in their power to get a Christian to take what is sacred and treat it as common.

Consider King Uzziah as an illustration. For

fifty-two years, he was one of the most magnificent kings, "till he was strong" (2 Chronicles 26:15). Then this king took it upon himself to take up the censer with its incense and offer it to the Lord, which only the priests, the sons of Aaron, were commissioned to do. When confronted by Azariah, the high priest, the king became angry. His heart was lifted up with pride to his own destruction (2 Chronicles 26:16).

For fifty-one years, Uzziah served God magnificently. But then he committed this very serious sin. He was not to do something that only certain people were sanctified to do. While Uzziah grew angry against the priests, leprosy broke out upon his head, and he was rushed out of the temple. He had to be removed to the house of the lepers where he lived in loneliness, separated from the temple and from those he had ruled for years and years. After he died, he was buried in a field and not in the place of the kings. What was Uzziah's offense? He had taken the sacred and treated it as something common. King Uzziah had become familiar with the things of God.

We treat the sacred as common when we listen carelessly to a message from the pulpit. The Bible has plenty to say about this. We are to lis-

ten to every word with the attention of a ready servant. They are words of life sent by God to prepare us for the next step. But when we take the sacred and make it common, the Holy Spirit is grieved, the flesh comes in, and the consequences can be devastating.

Chapter Two

THE HONOR CODE OF HEAVEN

Jesus came into Nazareth, His home town, and He taught in the synagogue there. But the people didn't respond. They couldn't understand how He had this wisdom. "Is this not Mary's son?" they said. "We know his brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. Who does he think he is?"

They were offended by Jesus, which prompted Him to declare, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country" (Matthew 13:54-57).

Given the response in Nazareth, it should be easy to understand how so many Christians constantly take what is sacred and turn it into something common. Church attendance ought to be a time to be built up and instructed in the Word as we take our place in the Body of Christ. Yet for many it has become a social and religious activity, with little eternal impact.

"But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

"The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

"And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

"Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:20-25).

On crucifixion day, the chief priests and elders persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be crucified and destroyed. No doubt, demons played a big role in manipulating and controlling the masses gath-

ered there before Pontius Pilate.

What happened after they succeeded in persuading the governor? The chief priests and elders went and watched Jesus die on the Cross. Someone extremely sacred was treated as common as they put nails through His hands and feet and spat upon Him. They disregarded all the glorious things that they had seen and heard from Him and rendered them as common.

The First Offender

Lucifer taught doctrine in heaven and led music for the angels, but iniquity was found in his heart (Isaiah 14:11; Ezekiel 28:12-15). He wanted to become like God; he would not respect the honor code of heaven. Lucifer turned the sacred into something common, and he was cast down to earth as Satan, the devil, the father of lies.

"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:8-9).

God used to come and teach Adam and Eve

in the cool of the day. After their fall, He came to meet them at the regular place and called out, "Where art thou?" They were trying to hide from the Lord; they had taken the sacred and made it common.

The world didn't recognize its Creator (John 1:10). His own people did not receive Him (John 1:11). His brothers and sisters didn't believe on Him until after His resurrection (John 7:5). His disciples forsook Him (Matthew 26:56). Later, they went back to fishing after He had told them not to, even after they had twice seen Him in His resurrection power (John 21). All of this is taking the sacred and treating it as something common.

The Premise for Relationships

Marriage is one area that is very sacred but often is treated as common. Marriage makes two people one flesh, one heart, one soul, and one mind. This oneness comes through the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, the Cross of Calvary, and the Finished Work. In a marriage, each party must understand that we are all sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all. He perfects forever those who are sanctified by that one sacred offering (He-

brews 10:14).

This verse is the premise that brings in a conclusion of every provision possible for us because of intense amplification of the presupposition of what happens when we come to God just as we are, in all of our bankruptcy.

No matter what we have done, no matter what we are, no matter what has happened to us, we can come and receive the treasure of Jesus into the empty vessel of our souls.

When a man comes to Jesus Christ, he enters into the precise, absolute, tactical, practical application of the reality of Christ's initiation. Instantly, he can experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Word of God. Then this fullness can flow over into all the other areas of life, like marriage for example.

The Role of Authority

So many take the sacred and turn it into something common by going against bonafide authority. The boss in a business is the boss. The teachers are the authority in the classrooms. The father and mother are the heads of the family. The president of a country has special leadership over the congress and his cabinet.

A pastor is given a level of authority in the

congregation. He never invades people's privacy, but he is given the right to represent God in the pulpit. He is authorized to do so with the authenticity of a divine premise with its presuppositions and intense amplification in the expression of the amazing application of the reality of relevance in the sequences of life's needs.

Chapter Three

THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Jesus Christ takes the common and makes it sacred. This is what happened when we got saved. We were very common, yet Jesus took us in before we even changed. He made us accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6)

Every believer in the Body of Christ is sacred; every believer is precious; every believer is loved equally by God who is love (1 John 4:8, 16). Every believer is under grace; every believer is sanctified—set apart for God's purpose—through the Blood of Jesus, once and for all.

A Jewish man from New York City became a Christian and returned to his native Germany while the Holocaust was going on. He willfully left America, knowing he was likely to be killed, and went to Germany. He gave the Gospel to as

many people as he could before dying in the gas chambers with his people. Because he guarded the truth of God's Word as sacred, God used him to bring light in the darkness.

God Does Great Things

Let me tell you of a young man from Rome, New York. His parents were not Christians. In the early 1970s, he got saved and became hungry to know more about God. Somehow, he found out about our Bible college and came, totally on fire for God. Late at night when he thought nobody knew it, he was sometimes seen praying outside, on his knees, even in the snow with the winter wind blowing. He eventually married a beautiful lady. They became a tremendous couple and have raised a great family. He has gone on to be one of Europe's most successful missionaries, planting churches from Finland to Hungary and deep into the former Soviet Union. His name is Pastor Thomas Schaller.

Another young man from Springfield, Massachusetts, heard our radio broadcast after he was saved. Though he faced many trials that were designed to take him out of God's plan, that didn't stop this young man from responding to God's call and going to Africa. Today, be-

cause he guarded the call of God as sacred, we can identify eight thousand Christians in many churches, in many countries across the continent of Africa, who are Finished Work believers. He and his beautiful wife have made an unbelievable impact—and all because one man chose to follow the call of God. His name is Pastor Steven Scibelli.

Trials and persecutions cannot stop those who are doing God's work, God's way, based upon God's premises, God's presuppositions, and God's intense amplifications. God's precise absolute wisdom brings a divine conclusion as His original glory produces His image in His body of believers, to do His work and to show His very life. This is taking the common and turning it into the sacred.

Honor in the Body of Christ

One of the great codes established in the Body of Christ is honor. I know teenagers who display such amazing manners and politeness with dignity. The honor they show their leaders, as well as their peers, is touching. They already understand the honor code in the Body of Christ.

As Christians, we are to honor delegated authority wherever it exists (1 Timothy 2:1-3). We

honor one another (1 Peter 2:17). We put great esteem, special value, high honor, and sacred appreciation on the Word of God as we hunger after it (Job 23:12).

To honor is to place a high value upon another person, considering him as very special because he is God's creation. It is to show respect for God's redemption and God's life, having oneness because of the love of God. The result is to have amazing honor for all men—saved or unsaved.

"Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30).

"Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase" (Proverbs 3:9).

Jesus said, "Do not withhold from Me the honor that is due to Me, and do not withhold from others what is due to them. And, if you withhold kindness and love and forgiveness, you dishonor God and dishonor the honor code of grace and mercy."

We have honor for the unsaved, honor for

our families, honor for our bosses, honor for everyone placed in positions of authority, though not at the expense of obedience to the Truth (Acts 5:29). We reveal great esteem according to the instructions of Philippians 2:3: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

By practicing God's honor code, we take what is common and make it sacred. We become true disciples, learning God's ways, hungering after His righteousness, yet remaining perfectly satisfied with the fullness of the life we have in Christ.

CONCLUSION

Recently, a number of high school and college students participated in a great time of evangelism throughout our city. They took what other people would call common—their free time—and turned it into something sacred. They honored Jesus' Great Commission to seek and to save the lost.

When we honor God, He gives us absolute peace (Psalm 29:11). According to the original Hebrew text, this peace is a peace that stands strong even in the midst of raging storms—physical, mental or spiritual. This peace means that God is in control of your life, even when you are under the deepest pressures of life.

That peace can be ours when we keep sacred the things that God considers sacred and allow the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to protect, provide, and bless us. The Lord gives peace and wisdom to help us live in the divine premises and presuppositions that produce the

ultimate conclusion of going forward and reaching our goals and purposes in Christ.

Have a Glorious Confession

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INTRODUCTION

The book of Exodus tells how the entire nation of Israel murmured as they were being led out of the wilderness. God's people were depressed and complaining, and they even wanted to return to the days of their bondage in Egypt. Though they had witnessed a number of astounding miracles of God, the people became so negative at one point that they refused to move forward to possess the land the Lord had promised them. As a result, they were forced to spend another forty years wandering the desert until they were ready to respond in faith.

Even today, the people of God murmur against the truth. They remain bound by things they did years ago, and their confession is one of defeat. Grace is not flowing in their souls, and love is not their motivation.

There is no reason for believers to emphasize the negative. We do not have to live in criticism and self-destruction. Instead, as this booklet will

show, we can allow precise light to illuminate our souls and make us bold edifiers for the Lord Jesus Christ as we speak of His glory and let our lips confess His victory.

Chapter One

PUTTING THE PAST BEHIND

"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,

"Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;

"That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus" (Philemon 4-6).

What you confess reveals what you are made of. Precise-light believers have the throne of mercy established in their hearts. They are the ones who will receive special honor in heaven because of their great confession on earth. Believers who have internalized categories of doctrine and who are oriented to the grace of God will be given special introductions in heaven. Jesus will take them before the Father and confess that they have precise light in their souls.

There are people today who teach that we all have skeletons in our closets. That is a lie from the pit of hell. Our past is gone! All things became new when we came to Jesus. Furthermore, they continue to be made new as we bring everything to Him. For this reason, I don't enjoy people testifying what happened in their past. The other day I heard someone preaching on the radio about remembering your ashes. His point was that you had to remember your sins so that you would never do them again. I had to pull off to the side of the road and yell, "Be quiet!" We do not need to confess anything less than what the Lord confesses about us.

Even the Old Testament believers understood what to do with ashes. After the sin offering, the ashes were carried outside of the camp to a clean place (see Leviticus 6:11). The ashes represent our sins, and they are in a "clean place," which speaks of a place where they are covered, no more to be seen, blotted out by the Blood of Lamb.

Reach Forth to the Things before You

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto

those things which are before" (Philippians 3:13).

This verse tells me I am to forget the things that are behind. My sins are forgiven, forgotten, and gone forever. I cannot dredge them up again—and neither can anyone else. A counselor or my old sin nature might bring those things up again. But God tells us not to feed on our ashes (Isaiah 44:20).

Is that your confession? Is your confession that your past is gone forever? Listen! Now just past passed by, and tomorrow does not exist. We live in the "eternal is" of God. Jesus is, and He is (present tense) living inside of you. This should be your confession.

A wonderful preacher friend of mine failed the first grade, failed the fourth grade, and failed the sixth grade. They kept bringing him back to school, however, because he was good at football. The higher he went in school, they would just automatically pass him to the next grade. Eventually, he decided that he wanted to preach the Gospel, and he began to go to Bible college, where he eventually earned a doctorate. All the way through Bible college, his confession was Philippians 4:19: "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

When you hear this man preach, you will notice that he continually confesses God's favor, God's provision, and God's righteousness. He is not a man who feeds on ashes.

Confess Life

Many years ago, a woman in our ministry was diagnosed with leukemia. The doctors gave her just a few months to live. Yet, she refused to confess that she was dying, because she had an eight-year-old daughter to look after. Every day this woman got up and said, "I am not going to die today." Twenty-eight years later, this lady has watched her daughter graduate from high school and from college and head out to the mission field. She has outlived others who had the same disease. She believed the Word of God, and her confession was, "Saving, He saved me. Because of my child and my prayer of faith, He has been healing me all of these years."

Some of us need to confess that God is going to do a mighty work in our households. There are several verses in the Bible that speak of entire households that were won to God. In Genesis 7:1, Noah and his entire household went into the Ark. In Acts 16:15, Lydia's household was saved. In Acts 16:31, Paul declared to the jailer,

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house."

Maybe your children seem far away from God. Believe what these verses say, no matter how bad things might be. No matter how far off your parents may be into intellectualism, just believe God for your whole house. Believe that when you get to heaven your whole house will be there with you.

Just start confessing the Word of God.

Chapter Two

PRECISE LIGHT BRINGS PRECISE RESULTS

Years ago in our ministry, we were considering the purchase of two properties. Out into the snow we went and we marched around the properties seven times, just as Israel did when they marched around Jericho. We wanted the walls that seemed to prohibit the purchase to fall down.

We got the first property quickly. Two years later, we had the other building as well. The banker vouched for us and got the loan for us and signed as surety for the note. His confession was this: "I have never done this before, and the way churches get in trouble, I have no idea why I am doing this now. But I want to do it."

These remembrances come to me because I am refusing to accept negative confessions. The Word says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." We are to speak only

that which ministers grace to the hearer in edification.

There is so much misunderstanding and misrepresentation and judgment going on in the Body of Christ. Why? Because hearts are not living in precise light from the Word of God.

Men of God have to present the *whole* Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sure, there are some who will not like what the Word of God says about their lives. Paul told the Corinthians that he was praying for a man living in fornication. His prayer was that the man would repent or that his body would be killed so that God could have his soul.

Love Changes Lives

The Bible says in Mark 16:15 that we should go and preach the Gospel to every creature. You don't want to do that? Tell God you don't like it that He put that verse in the Bible. First John 3:16 tells us that Christ laid down His life for us, so we should lay down our lives for each other. You don't like that verse? Tell God. He will listen. He wants us to make our complaints known to *Him*. Then, He can bring in precise light to correct our hearts and minds.

Love suffers long. Love is kind. Love does

not envy. Love thinks no evil. Love bears all things, hopes all things, believes all things, endures all things. Start confessing the truth from 1 Corinthians 13 and see how your life will change.

We are the temple of God. Let us speak of His glory and let us speak of His righteousness. Let us speak of His edification, and let us think no evil.

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:47-48).

We must live by every single word of God. We are sanctified by every word of God, and we will be judged by every word of God. For this reason, I am careful to give chapter and verse from the Bible. This way, anyone who hears my messages can go to the Word and see that I am telling the truth.

Chapter Three

A TESTIMONY TO OUR PERFECT POSITION

In anything we do, the greatest revival comes through what we have in our hearts and what we confess through the Word of God. Remember, "ashes" refers to our sins. Some of the biggest churches in America are telling people to dig up the ashes of their past, and it is just not right. That is not a confession of God's Finished Work.

Look, if you are confessing your sins to someone, then you are not confessing the Finished Work. The ashes were taken out to a clean place. They are gone. Don't feed on them anymore.

We know that David committed some great sins. But his confession was this: "Lord, I remember mercy. I remember lovingkindness. I have forgotten all my sins. I don't have a past. I confess my sins to You, and You are faithful and

just to forgive them and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness."

"…Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Our ashes are gone and so are everyone else's ashes. We don't write down what we did or what other people did in order to bring things up ten years down the road. According to the Word of God, after we repent, these things no longer exist in the mind of God. He has removed them from His omniscience and omnipresence in a demonstration of His omnipotence.

When the Son sets us free, we are free indeed!

Restored through Right Thinking

Down in Atlanta, there was a pastor who failed. Everyone in the community rejected him, and pastors all over the area refused to have anything to do with him. This man ended up in a psychiatric facility because he couldn't handle the rejection.

One pastor, however, went to his room. There he found one of our taped messages on forgiveness. He started to play it and told that pastor, "This will heal you. Listen to this and

you can get out of here."

Soon he was a new man, out of the hospital and back in the pulpit.

Our sins are forgiven, forgotten, and gone forever. We can be restored to our highest position if we are really healed and really mean business with God. Old things are passed away. That is an assertion of dogmatic reality from the Book. All things are new. That is another reality from the Word of God. "New," according to the original Greek definition, speaks of a condition where absolutely not one thing about our past is involved.

Testify of Victory

This is my testimony: I am seated above with Jesus my Lord. I am hid with Christ in God. I am complete, I am perfect, and I am eternally secure in Him.

God lives in my heart. He is going to perfect what isn't yet perfected in me. God is for me, no matter what I go through. Therefore, I can rebound the moment that I fail. He loves me just as much when I am down as when I am up. He is going to keep me up by His grace and His power (1 Peter 1:5). My confession is that I am eternally saved. I am just as righteous as God is

(see Romans 8:34).

With thoughts such as these, there is no way we should be tired or weary. These thoughts leave me feeling like a teenager! I am happy in my soul, I am prospering in my mind, and I am quickened in my spirit. There is love in my heart.

When we get away from feeding on ashes, we are free to live for God. We are energized as we go forward in the righteousness of God. We will be settled in our position and not bogged down by our condition.

Let us receive precise light and confess the truth about what God says about us. Let's have a glorious confession.

CONCLUSION

Can we honestly confess before God that we have no past? Yes, we can. We can believe all things, hope all things, and bear all things. We do not have to be provoked. We do not have to think evil. We can believe the best and minister grace and edification every time we open our mouths.

Our communication and our confession can promote a recognition and realization of precise knowledge with appreciation because Christ is inside of us. Precise light affects us and it becomes a flowing spice of frankincense from our souls.

Old things are passed away—completed. There are no skeletons in our closets. We do not have to fellowship with the things of old. We edify with our mouths, and we make a difference, because the power of Resurrection comes out of us. We don't speak about how bad we were and what we did. Instead, we confess what

we are in Christ and how good He is.

We believe the confession of Christ toward us. The One who raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in us. Oh, this is the glorious reality of our life with God.

Have a Tremendous

Expectation!

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

How big is God to you? Do you see Him as the One who inhabits eternity? As the One who holds the universe together by the power of His Word?

If you do not see Him in this way, then God is small to you. Furthermore, your expectations from Him are probably very small as well. God wants us to expect big things, wonderful things, for our lives. He longs to bless us in ways we never thought possible. He wants to revolutionize our lives, our families, our churches, and our nations with His power.

Many Christians, however, just stumble through one day after the other. There is no urgency in their lives because they think things will just keep going along as they are. What a lie they have received!

We have no idea of what tomorrow will bring. Therefore, as this booklet will discuss, we ought to live in the urgency that this moment

may be our last. With that, let's have a tremendous expectation that God will provide great things to His children no matter what may come.

Chapter One

HAVE AN ETERNAL VIEWPOINT

"For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:15-18).

"My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me" (Psalm 31:15).

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

God is no respecter of persons. He lets the rain come upon the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). When disaster strikes, it affects godly people and ungodly people alike. None of us knows when a storm may interrupt our life.

What causes storms? Sometimes Satan is allowed to do it. Over the Sea of Galilee, the prince of the power of the air was allowed to stir up the weather as Jesus slept in the boat. The disciples woke the Lord, and addressing the demons in the atmosphere, He said, "Be still"—or more accurately interpreted from the original Greek text, "Be muzzled!" Immediately, the storm stopped, which emphasizes the fact that God is always in control (Mark 4:36-41).

Many times, however, God allows storms so that we will draw close to Him. As we do, we realize that we are part of the plan He has had for our lives since eternity past. He gives us just a few short years on earth followed by eternity—the immeasurable, unending ages, when time is no more.

Everyone will live forever either in eternal life or in eternal torment. For this reason, I plead with people to go all the way with God. It is only reasonable and right. God has a perfect plan for each of us. That plan was sealed when

Jesus shed His blood, died on the Cross, was buried, and then rose again.

Boast Not of Tomorrow

We cannot afford to be hasty or proud Christians. A proud Christian will not honor the authority of the Word of God, which is sent from God to protect and to guide us through life.

A proud Christian also does not understand that tomorrow may never come for him. There is a reason why the Bible tells us not to boast of tomorrow. Our lives are like a vapor (James 4:14). Wars, earthquakes, tornadoes, accidents, diseases—any of these things could bring us to eternity in an instant.

A father was at the door of a storm shelter when he saw his three teenage daughters snatched up and killed by a tornado. Their time was up. It didn't matter how much money they had or what status the family held in the community. It was appointed for those girls to die at that moment (Psalm 68:20*b*, Hebrews 9:27). In the same area, there was a couple with two small children. The wife was lifted up but was set down again and not hurt. It was not her appointed time to die.

We must always be prepared to meet God at

any moment. We need to prepare in prayer. We need to prepare by taking up our cross. We need to be prepared with a life that is broken and humble before God.

This is a difficult thing to communicate to people who seem to have so much. It is so important for every Christian to find a church where wisdom (the application of doctrine) is promoted. All of us need a church where the whole counsel of God is communicated. We need pastors who preach and teach, who understand isagogics (the historical frame of reference of the Scriptures) as they communicate the Word of God.

Chapter Two

HUMILITY BRINGS EXPECTATION

"For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off" (Proverbs 23:18).

"So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off" (Proverbs 24:14).

"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Philippians 1:20).

"When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth" (Proverbs 11:7).

Every one of us needs to live and walk with God in such a way that despite what may happen, we will have a wonderful expectation. God has not promised us tomorrow, but if He does

give it to us, it can be wonderful. How? By numbering our days and allowing God to teach us to know wisdom and to apply it.

God wants us to have a great expectation, so that if cancer comes, we will not surrender. Instead, we will fight with faith and with prayer, believing and living as long as we can. Even if we die, we have the tremendous expectation that to be absent from this earthly body is to be present with God. It is a beautiful thing for a servant of God to find in the Scriptures a guarantee that his expectation will be fulfilled.

John Wesley, the great Methodist preacher, was said to have traveled 250,000 miles on horseback to preach some forty thousand messages. He was motivated by a great expectation for God to move and save souls.

Charles Finney was another great man of God who had a tremendous expectation. He was a successful yet unsaved lawyer when he watched several people die as a factory went up in flames. Though he didn't know God, he cried out to heaven, "I do not know why this happened, but I have to find You, God. If it takes studying day and night, I believe You are up there, and I have to know You." Then he found Jesus Christ and received Him as his Savior.

Finney developed an amazing prayer life with Jesus Christ. His faith saw great works accomplished in people's hearts. In his biography, there are accounts of how he would enter into a factory and people who did not know God would literally shake from the conviction of the Holy Spirit. He was often granted permission to preach in factories, where scores of men and women were gloriously saved by the grace of God.

He was still preaching at the age of 84 when he became very ill. In the last months before his death, people would gather around the little piazza at his old farmhouse. They would wait to see if he would come out to preach—and preach he did! He would go out at 7 o'clock in the morning and deliver a twenty-five minute sermon to the people who were there. Then, he would go out again at 9 o'clock and preach for another twenty-five minutes. At 10:30, he would preach again for twenty-five minutes. He gave three sermons a morning when it was all he could do to walk through the door, open his mouth, and preach about Jesus.

"My expectation will never be cut off," he would say, speaking from Proverbs 23:18 and 24:14, "and yours will not be cut off either. When

you are a child of God, your expectation will never be cut off."

What was Charles Finney's secret? What kept John Wesley traveling thousands of miles on horseback to preach the Gospel? They both had a tremendous expectation of what God would do. These men of God said, "I do not know if I have tomorrow, but I do know whom I love and whom I am going to serve today. I will live for Him every day of my life."

The Greatest Grace

"But he giveth *more grace*. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

The Greek words for "more grace"—*meizona charin* (literally, "greater grace")—in this context reflect the superlative degree of the word, so "greater" really means "greatest." In other words, the Holy Spirit is saying that the greatest grace in the world is given to the humble.

How can we define what it means to be humble? An unsaved man can never be humble. He can be kind, he can be good, and he can live in self-effacement. But he cannot be humble. Neither can a carnal Christian.

Humility is something we acquire as we

agree with God and prepare to meet Him (Amos 3:3 and Amos 4:12). Ahumble Christian does not boast himself of tomorrow. For him, to live is truly Christ alone. Filled with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, he is able to receive the greatest promises imaginable through humility.

Humility means that I find a promise from God and I embrace it, knowing it will never fall to the ground (see 1 Kings 8:56). Humility means that I go to the Cross without rationalization, understanding that in me dwells no good thing (see Romans 7:18). Humility means that I receive the provisions God has for me while I concentrate with academic discipline in church services. Without exception, I will be able to hear something that will make a difference in my life forever.

Reception, Retention, Recall

By faith, I can enter into biblical and spiritual reception of God's thoughts. First I receive the Word of God in the perceptive area of the brain (channel A*) and I become aware of a truth. But as I mix what I hear with faith in the living God, the truth that I perceive is transferred through my human spirit (channel B) into my soul (channel C), including my mind, emotions, con-

science, self-consciousness, and volition.

It is vital that God executes this transfer through *energeia*, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, which only operates in people who have been regenerated by the saving grace of God. The Word is effectually worked into my life as I submit to God. Having submitted, the Holy Spirit can establish God's words in my memory where they are retained and ready to be recalled in a moment's notice.

So, first comes reception, then retention, and then "recall" or recollection. At this point, the precious Word of God is dwelling richly in my memory, and it is expressed in my vocabulary and in the consciousness of my soul. At last, this Word of God takes on so much meaning to me, often breaking me, because it is eternal and forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89).

When storms come and destroy property and lives, the Word of God lives on forever and ever (Isaiah 40:8). It is always there, and it will not change. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this precious Book, which is the mind of Christ, shall never pass away (Matthew 24:35).

Expect to Be Uplifted

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,

and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10).

To be in the presence of God, "in the sight of the Lord," indicates a dynamic relationship between God and us. Aware of the angelic contest that is going on unseen around us, we redeem the moments by our humility in the sight of God. When humility comes in and we begin to understand it, we draw near to God and He draws near to us. If we fail and we become broken, we simply need to humble ourselves in the sight of God, and then God can promote us.

Humility allows God to promote the Christian in business, giving him blessings he never had. God promotes his health, his marriage, his heart, and his soul, which includes promoting his memory. Blessings are given to the believer who humbles himself in the sight of God, receives the authority of the Word, and honors the office of his pastor-teacher in the church services. Along with the authority of God's Word, the authority of grace and love are established in the one who receives the protection and provision of the indwelling Christ.

**Refer to* The Hearing Heart, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Three

BLESSED AND QUICKENED FOR THESE DAYS

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).

"Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word" (Psalm 119:154).

The high and lofty One who inhabits eternity also inhabits the believer with a contrite and humble heart. According to the living Word of God, He is there to quicken and to revive the heart of the humble.

In these last days, it is very crucial for every Christian to concentrate upon the Word of God, which some do so well. Others, however, do not have that capacity. Humility brings capacity. When I am humble and broken, living as if I

might meet Jesus Christ today, He quickens me in His lovingkindness. He quickens me in the way of righteousness. He quickens me so I will not feel threatened, so I will not become subjective, and so I will not experience some form of paranoia. When I do not exalt myself against others, God quickens me so that I am revived in a moment, having an expectation from Him. He then can promote me in every area of life.

The Higher the Promotion, the More Humble the Man

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge" (James 4: 11).

"Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

"Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats" (Proverbs 23:5-6).

A Christian who is promoted is one who never speaks evil. According to Zechariah 3, when Satan came to Jesus Christ to report accurate details of the high priest's sins, the Lord re-

fused to listen because it was a family affair. The Father and the Son had taken the high priest into the family of God and they would not let a neighbor or an enemy accuse him (see Zechariah 3:1-10). God had taken care of his problems and had given him clean new garments. He would quicken him and give him another opportunity to experience the loving grace of God in the covenant of compassion.

Redeemed for Revival

"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

Wasted time and wasted hours don't need to be part of our lives. Time is short. Christ's return is nearer than it has ever been. These are days when we must be more serious than we have ever been. I pray for the families who have lost loved ones in recent disasters. I pray for those caught in the midst of wars, whatever the reason. I pray for the refugees especially. I pray for the condition of our nation.

Most of all, I pray that born-again believers will be quickened in a revival of the Word of God and quickened according to God's grace.

Let's prepare to meet our God in prayer. Let's prepare to meet God in meditation. Let's prepare to meet God in study. Let's prepare to meet God today.

Expect the Blessings

"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isaiah 1:19).

God is not one to withhold good things from His people (Psalm 84:11). It is time we have an expectation from God. We must expect our prayers to be answered. It is time we realize that humility means submitting to God, resisting the devil with the whole armor the Lord gives us, and seeing Satan flee.

Don't entertain Satan with subjectivity. Don't entertain him by confessing frailty and weakness with presumptuous remarks from the basement of the unconscious mind. Develop a tremendous expectation by grace through faith, and confess the truth according to the character and nature of God. Trust God to take care of all the details in every situation; He is a God who wants to bless us and to give us grace (Isaiah 30:18).

When are we going to realize that God is the Blesser? Everything about Him from eternity

past was done to find a way to bless the Christian. He is out to bless you. In life or in death, God is out to bless you. In death, angels stand ready to escort you to heaven before you even taste death's pain. God has a way to protect every Christian who trusts and believes His intimate Word.

CONCLUSION

When a Christian becomes broken and humble in the sight of God, he is promoted in his relationship with Christ and in his rank in the Kingdom of God. God provides him with opportunities to redeem the time. Let's enjoy the great gifts and truth the Lord has given us. Let's avoid withdrawing into the negative patterns of our personalities. We need to go before God on our knees and on our faces in praise and thanksgiving. We cannot afford to be satisfied until our souls are filled with truth, which makes us willing and obedient to follow God.

First I am willing, then I become obedient, and God is able to guide me by the skillfulness of His hands (Psalm 78:72). He quickens me, giving me everything I need even in my worst moments. Ultimately, I have Christ, and He is all in all. I love Him and expect Him to bless me.

Cling to the expectation of God's blessing. He will bless and honor us—not because we are

worthy of blessing and honor, but because we are His children, redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb and the grace of God.

Lord, bless each of us with a new expectation and a new urgency in this late hour of human history. Help us to be quickened according to Your Truth. Quicken us moment by moment through the grace and mercy and love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Having a Heavenly Vision

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Many Christians have compromised their vision because they have become children of pride, thereby making Satan their king (Job 41:34). They are not appropriating the operational power of Jesus Christ made available through His resurrection and ascension. Instead, they allow themselves to be carried about by the strange winds stirred up by the prince of the power of the air.

Sadly, so few recognize that God has given us an authority that is far above Satan's authority. We are living in a wicked age. I believe that most Christians are sincere. We love God, we're drawing near, and we worship Him to the best of our ability and capacity. But a person who does not recognize the authority delegated to him cannot operate in that authority. How can we, as Christians, carry out a vision to reach the lost unless we recognize and appropriate the authority the Lord has given us?

We must realize that we are seated above. We need to understand that Jesus said, "I have given you all power, and I will go with you to the end of the world. I want you to go into all the world, discipling people and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to honor Me in whatsoever I have taught you."

My prayer is that this booklet will stir all of us to recognize Christ's authority in these days and cause us to live in His vision.

Chapter One

A VIEW INTO HELL

"That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more" (Job 34:32).

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18).

There are two things that I want to pray for as I begin this message: First, that God would teach us the things that we do not see or experience, and second, that He would open our eyes to behold the wondrous things written in His Word. This should be the attitude of the Christian as he enters into the concentration of divine reverence before God.

The Word of God says that, "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Proverbs 27:20). "He is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied" (Habakkuk 2:5). Men enlarge their de-

sires as hell, and, as death, their desire cannot be satisfied. Ecclesiastes 1:8 says, "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing."

On several occasions when we were visiting skid row in New York, we saw men and women groaning, screaming, miserable, and wretched. They did not have their wine or their liquor and nothing could satisfy their misery. Hell is not satisfied, the grave is not satisfied.

Proverbs 30:16 says that the grave, a barren woman, and earth that is not filled with water are never satisfied. The grave, a woman who cannot bear children, and the parched, fallow ground are never satisfied.

The Root of Dissatisfaction

So many individuals are not satisfied with their marriages. They are not satisfied with their past or their present, so there are all kinds of problems. Why is there so little satisfaction? The psalmist wrote, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15). Many people are satisfied, but I want you to see with me why some are not.

"There was a certain rich man, which was

clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:19-24).

The rich man fared sumptuously every single day. Several years ago, a wealthy and famous comedian hired a team of scholars to disprove the veracity of the Bible because he feared it so. Two weeks before he died, when asked during a television interview if there was one thing he feared, this man answered, "I fear that when I die I will find out that the Bible is right about hell." He knew he was going to die soon. As far as I know, *he never did receive Jesus Christ*.

Jesus Christ saves us by grace through faith, and He gives us a gift of forgiveness and a gift of life whereby we can be satisfied. But I want you to realize that every single child of God will see, face-to-face, what hell is like.

Read carefully what Isaiah 66:24 says: "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

When you read that, understand what the Word of God is saying. Don't receive it as mere knowledge; let the Spirit speak to your heart. This scene will take place at the end of the Millennial Reign, after the White Throne Judgment, before the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven. At that time, according to Revelation 19:20, the beast and the false prophet will have been cast alive into hell, where there is fire and brimstone.

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Reve-

lation 20:10).

Either the Bible is a lie (and of course it isn't) or the devil, the false prophets, and whosoever rejects the grace of God will be cast into hell, where they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Mark 9:43 says, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off." It doesn't mean that literally, but figuratively we are to cut it off, for, "it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell." Then, the passage says this: "*into the fire that never shall be quenched, and the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*" (Mark 9:43*b*-44).

Jesus continues in verse 45, "If thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, *into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*" (Mark 9:45-46). He repeats it just like that.

Next, He says, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast *into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*" (Mark 9:47-48). Those were the words that came from the lips of Jesus.

"God is not a man that he should lie…" (Numbers 23:19). Titus 1:2 says, "God, that cannot lie." Hebrews 6:18 tells us "it is impossible for God to lie." This *is* the truth. It *will* happen.

Looking upon the Carcases

I want you to see the reason we have a vision to plant churches in 220 countries by the year 2000. I want you to see why we have a vision to have one thousand missionaries on the international field by 1999. I know we could do that by 2000, but I want to see it by 1999.

"They shall go forth and look upon the carcases of men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall die not, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (Isaiah 66:24).

Worm means the "conscience." What did man get when he ate the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge (Genesis 2:16-17)? The conscience was the fruit of that Tree—awareness of good and evil apart from the omniscience of God. When Adam ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, he began to have awareness that he never had before. Now he possessed self-knowledge—along with norms and standards established for his natural life—

without God. That's what the Tree of Knowledge produced.

The Word of God says, we shall "look upon the carcases of men." Because of the integrity of God's justice, you, as a believer, will see hell in person. That would be one thing if the men were dead, but the worm (the conscience) and the fire shall not be quenched. When you see into hell, you will be able to understand why God placed you in a local assembly, under a pastor-teacher who taught the whole counsel of God in grace orientation. You are going to see hell for what it really is. You will know why the sermons were preached, why the prayers went up, and you will see why God mandated the love of obedience.

You will see hell as it is, according to Isaiah 66:24. When you read Mark 9:43-48 and Luke 16:19-32, you will know the truth about hell.

The scene in Isaiah 66:24 will take place at the end of the White Throne Judgment for the unsaved. Only after that will God wipe away all the tears from our eyes, for the former things will have passed away (Revelation 21:4). He will not wipe away the tears from our eyes until after we see what hell is like.

It is my belief that this is the reason the

Scriptures are ordered the way they are. I believe we will look into hell and see the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. We will see neighbors and loved ones in a place where their conscience is never satisfied, in a place that Revelation 9:2 says is a bottomless pit.

I believe with all my heart that we will see hell. I imagine that we will shed buckets and buckets of tears. It is my opinion that the scene in Revelation 21:4 will take place *after* we look into hell. It says, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Though this is my opinion, it *does* have a good sequence in scriptural continuity.)

I don't want to go home to be with the Lord because of a stroke, or because of any other reason, without having done everything that I can do as a servant—a sinner saved by grace. And I want our ministry, by the mercy, love, and grace of God, to do every single thing it can do. I want each of us as individuals to love the grace and mercy of God and to get our lives right. If your life isn't right, get right now. If your life *is* right, that's beautiful. Let's keep growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two

POWER TO MEET EVERY NEED

I want you to think of how God satisfies us. There are three words that are most commonly used to describe how God meets every person's needs. In Matthew 9:6-8, Jesus healed a man sick of palsy and, according to the Greek, He did it through *exousia*—in the divine authority of His resurrection, from His supreme position of being seated "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:21). That's where *exousia* comes from. *Exousia* could never have been used if the Resurrection were not an eternal reality. Because He was given the divine authority of that Resurrection, Jesus Christ healed the man of a dreadful disease.

The Word of God says, in Matthew 10:1 and Mark 3:15, that Jesus gave His disciples *exousia* to cast out demons and cure diseases. He gave

them the authority of the Resurrection. They were no longer weak and frail in Adam, but they had the authority of Resurrection.

In Luke 10:1-16, Jesus sent out a company of seventy, and gave them *exousia*, the authority of God which comes from a throne that is above demons. The seventy had Resurrection power over demons that cause diseases and oppression, over demons that cause division, conspiracies, and all manner of evil. Jesus Christ, in the eternal viewpoint of heaven as the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, is seated above all of that.

In Luke 4:35, Jesus cast out a demon by *exousia*, but verse 40 says, "He healed many diseases by *dunamis*—the divine ability of the Word of God being executed in the power of life. Luke 5:17 says Jesus was teaching, and the *dunamis* of the Lord was present to heal. As He was preaching the Word, His divine ability to heal through the Word was there. But only *one man* got saved and only *one man* got healed because the rest did not act upon the activity of the execution of the Word of God in the divine ability of His present authoritative power.

Acts 10:38 tells us that Jesus Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit and with power. He

went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. This is *dunamis*. Jesus used the Word of life with authority because He understood His position above principalities and powers. His position was victorious. His Word was victorious. It was a Word of life in the midst of a dark, crooked, and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15). He executed His *dunamis*.

Another word used to describe the power of God to meet our needs is *megaleiotes*. This word speaks of the majesty, the greatness, and the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ's victory over Satan because of the majesty of the presence of Christ's ascension in us.

The Supremacy of Jesus' Ascension

There is a Hebrew word used in the Old Testament that carries the same meaning as the Greek word *megaleiotes*. It is found in Proverbs 25:28: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." This verse means the one who cannot rule over his own spirit is lacking the majesty and supremacy found in *megaleiotes*. The child of God has been given the majesty, the greatness, and the supremacy of the power of God's ascension to dispel demonic characteristics, demonic

powers, demonic governmental forces, and demonic control over people's souls.

"And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing" (Luke 9:11). When people were anointed with oil, just as in James 5:14, they were healed by *megaleiotes*—the power of the ascended Lord.

We are living in a wicked age. I believe that we are sincere; we love God, and we're drawing near to God. We worship Him to the best of our ability and capacity. But we need to recognize the authority of our position in Christ. If a policeman did not recognize the authority delegated to him, then he would never stop a dangerous driver or arrest a criminal.

We must realize that we are seated above. We must understand that Jesus said, "I have given you all power, and I will go with you to the end of the world. And, I want you to go into all the world, discipling people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to honor Me in whatsoever I have taught you."

When Jesus gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, He used the word *megaleiotes*. He was saying, "I want you to go with majesty, supreme power, and supreme ability, which is now *your* ability."

In Romans 15:19, Paul went out and did "mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God." The word "power" there means that he had divine ability. He was living in the Resurrection, Ascension side of life, and that life was dwelling richly in his body. He used divine ability, not manufactured faith or emergent emotionalism.

"And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" (Acts 3:11-12).

Peter said, "Don't look at *me!—I* didn't heal the lame man. It wasn't by my human ability, it was God's *megaleiotes*." The healing was done by the majesty of the Resurrection, the majesty of

the Ascension, the majesty of the Finished Work, the majesty of positional truth, the majesty of the truth that we are seated above angels and demons.

We've got to know that we have authority. We've got to know we have ability. We need to execute the Word of God. It can't be mere knowledge. The authority of God's Word in us must relieve people of demonic powers, demonic hosts, demonic plagues, and unclean spirits—and it can't be executed in emotionalism or in the flesh.

Jesus Christ delegated this *same* authority to the seventy (Luke 10:17), and they were shocked that demons submitted to them. But in Luke 10:20 Jesus told them, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." These people were shocked that the demons of hell were subject to them. They were not the apostles; they were not the twelve disciples. They were the seventy—men and women who simply believed God.

Chapter Three

EXECUTING GOD'S AUTHORITY

It shouldn't take long for us to be healed when *megaleiotes*, *exousia*, and *dunamis* are at work. We have the authority of the Resurrection, the ability to execute the Word because it's pure and true, and the authority of the Finished Work, which defeated Satan. Think of it: *Megaleiotes*, the majesty of Jesus Christ's victory over Satan. The only "in" Satan has now is to lie. The only access he has to man is through projections, intimidation, seduction, accusation, and insinuation.

Satan works through trying to connect man to the old sin nature through the central nervous system by impulses generated after the fall of Adam. Once the connection is made, Satan says to the Christian, "You've got to keep getting healed. After all, life is a process—right?"

Too many people accept Satan's lie as their authority, preventing them from having a min-

istry of reconciliation. And they accept his lie as a reason for not having a ministry of restoration. We accept his lies about our sins, our failures, and our past. His lies become an authority for the flesh to remain the same and excuse itself with self-defense mechanisms. Our problem is that we *accept* the lie.

Satan is the father of all lies (John 8:44). When he speaks, he speaks of himself because he's a liar. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You are of your father the devil," the father of all lies.

The Authority of Truth

You cannot lie against the truth. The Word of God makes this clear (2 Corinthians 13:8). Put your shoulders back. Confess any area where you are accepting a lie as a supernatural authority coming to you through your central nervous system, through your frame of reference, through your emotions, and through your self-consciousness. If, for example, there is an area that doesn't line up with the Word of God that says "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in good health, even as your soul prospers" (3 John 2), then God says, in Isaiah 48:17, He will *teach* us to profit!

When the Word of God says, "I wish above

all things that you would prosper and be in health," that is the authority of truth. His desire is that you would be blessed. He wants to comfort you with the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

This is the authority of truth through the Word of God: "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise" (Jeremiah 17:14). "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Psalms 107:20). The Word of God is truth (John 17:17), and with it comes the authority of *exousia*—the Finished Work victory over sin, and the ability of Jesus Christ because of His resurrection.

God has *all* power, He is everywhere present, and He has all knowledge: That is God's ability, or *dunamis*. Now we can be partakers of that supernatural ability. If God's Kingdom dwells in a man, and that man surrenders and submits to it, then, knowing he has God's authority, he will realize that everything is under his feet and that every place the sole of his foot touches belongs to him. This man has the same authority that created the world (Hebrews 11:3). It's the same authority that made the heavens (Psalm 33:6). It's the authority that holds all things together. This is the authority of the Word of God (He-

brews 1:3). Why, then, don't God's people execute their authority?

Jesus Christ is weary of people who do not obey as soon as they hear (Psalm 18:44). Mix faith with what you hear! Stop standing on a lie because of your impulses, because of projections, because you fail, or because of things that are going wrong. You have been placed much higher than that. You are seated above. Even in the midst of your failure, you are seated with Christ. Even when you experience terrible feelings, take the Word of God as your authority and tell your feelings off, once and for all. Walk by faith, not by sight or experience.

In Matthew 4:1, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. After fasting and praying for forty days, Jesus was legitimately hungry. He could easily have given into the feelings of His humanity saying, "Well, I *am* hungry. I do feel terrible. I'm almost dying. All the demons are on my case. There's nothing wrong with eating; maybe it would be all right if I turned some stones into bread. After all, I *am* hungry." But He didn't say these things. Instead, Jesus quoted the Word of God. He said, "It is written.…It is written.…It is written." He used the authority and the ability of the Word,

which created the universe. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Jesus is the Living Word; and as the *Living* Word, He used the *written* Word against the devil, and the devil had to flee after three attempts to get Jesus to act outside of the Father's will.

You can have this kind of authority if you want it. You can have it right now—the ability and authority of a Word of God ministry.

The Authority of the Resurrection

There are many Christians who are born again, and washed in the blood of Jesus, but they haven't been converted. Their lives are based on the authority of a lie. They live in their human experiences of impulse and reaction. They are living in the psychological part of their souls instead of through their human spirits.

Make a decision to take up the resurrection side of the Cross and use *exousia*, the authority of the Resurrection, the ability of God's omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. Use *megaleiotes*, the amazing greatness of God's preeminence. Use it as your own. It has been given to you because you're a Christian. It's your

"badge" in a sick, satanic world filled with lies, deceit, and disease caused by demonic powers. You have that authority by the grace of God.

"The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD" (Lamentations 3:24-26).

"The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot" (Psalms 16:5).

With a message where every sentence is the Word—the incorruptible, eternal Word of God—there will be healings. It is not necessary to anoint anyone with oil. Put your hand over your heart and pray. Trust God and go from there. Do it in faith. Don't believe a lie. Don't live in your feelings. Don't live in the past. Don't condemn yourself. Just do it in faith, resting in God's character. Do it in *exousia, dunamis* and *megaleiotes*.

Remember those words. God wants us to execute the Truth instead of executing a lie. Do you believe that? Aren't the Scriptures very clear? There will be healings, glorious healings. The Word of God has said it is so. There will be emotional healings for those who have been sad-

dened by what life has done to them.

No part of this message is meant to condemn us. It is sent to give us hope and deliverance, and to give us direction to act upon truth. Let us act in the truth, with the authority of the Word that has been sent to heal.

Make this your confession: "On this day, God has done a marvelous thing for me. He has healed things in my body and soul that have been there for years. I am going to know how to execute the Word of God now, in the divine authority of Resurrection and the ability of His omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. And I am going to use *megaleiotes*, the majesty of Christ's victory over Satan, by executing the written Word in living, ascended power."

Chapter Four

THE LIGHT BRINGER VS. GOD'S LIGHT

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

It is important to realize that there are two kingdoms warring on earth. We do everything either by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ or by the authority of Satan. The Word of God says we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against "principalities" (*arche*, one who has a great beginning and a supernatural origin), and "powers," (*exousia*, in this case, the authority of Satan's supernatural, delegated order). I'm bringing out the definition of these words as they relate to Satan.

"Rulers [of the darkness of this world]" is *kosmokrator*, the manifestation of his cosmic gov-

ernment in the practicality of human leadership. Spiritual "wickedness [in high places]" is *poneros,* which speaks of demons that invade cities, communities, and families in order to hypnotize or "bewitch," in Galatians 3:1. It also means to demonize or influence (Isaiah 29:4). The demons come in, gain influence, and then leave because they cannot be everywhere present.

Six Words for Power

Remember, *dunamis* refers to the divine ability of omnipotence. Next, *ischus* is the divine supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit transferring the Word of God from the mind in Channel A—the place of awareness—over to Channel B—the memory center. The Word is transferred by the operation of God's power in Colossians 2:12 into the memory center. This is a supernatural transfer of the content of the Word through study and preparation that goes beyond memorization of Scripture.

The third word for power is *exousia*. When it is used of God, it refers to the authority of Christ's resurrection from the dead and His ascension "far above principalities and powers, and mights, and thrones, and dominions" (Ephesians 1:21). Satan and all the demons did every-

thing they could do to stop the Ascension (Colossians 2:15). One commentary brings out that all the demons of hell tried to grab Jesus as He went up, but they could not stop Him—His ascension was absolutely impeccable.

Energeia means God's authority now operates from Channel B—the human spirit—going down into the five parts of the soul, where it operates through the Holy Spirit with our volitional cooperation and consent. So, *energeia* means we operate in the fullness of the Word of God.

Then we have *kratos*, which is the manifestation of the life of Jesus Christ in and through our humanity. *Kratos* is for this purpose: "The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

Megaleiotes speaks of redeemed men and women applying the Word of Life in "the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.… holding forth the word of life" (Philippians 2:15) with dogmatic, dynamic, supernatural effectiveness. Why do we do this? Because God created the world with His Word. The worlds were framed by the Word of God (Hebrews 11:3), and the heavens were made by the Word of God. He holds everything together by His Word (Hebrews 1:3).

When the Christian comes to the place of truly understanding the authority of his position in the operation of every single decision in the details of life, then he cannot be touched with any of the affections and infections delegated by the wicked one.

First, Satan tries to get in through affections (sentimentality), and then he uses infections. Through *megaleiotes*, the believer appropriates God's precise, authoritative Word over the mind influenced by Satan's authority. For example, if Satan brings in sickness, *megaleiotes* brings in the authority of healing. If Satan brings in discord, *megaleiotes* brings in unity. If Satan brings in accusations, God's *megaleiotes* brings in edification. If Satan brings in divorce, God, through *megaleiotes*, brings in reconciliation.

For every precise thing that Satan does, God has a precise victory far above it. When the Christian operates in *energeia*, understanding the authority of the Ascension, knowing how to utilize and appropriate the Word of God, then he has an incredible power that was given by God. According to Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

This power has been given to us. The seventy who were sent out in Luke 10:17 had this power. God never commissions His people without equipping them.

Satan's Original Covering

Before his iniquity was revealed, Satan was known in heaven as Lucifer, "light reflector." Consider the following observations—mobilizing, unifying, divine inspiration for the Christian who studies the Bible:

In Ezekiel 28:13, the Word of God says that every stone was Lucifer's covering: sardius, topaz, diamond, onyx, beryl, jasper, sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald. These nine stones were his covering. How many fruits of the Spirit are there? Nine: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. In ancient isagogics, each stone represented one of the fruits of the Spirit. In his perfection, Lucifer had the fruit of the Trinity as his garment. This was the masterpiece of God.

"Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou was upon the holy mountain of God: thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" (Ezekiel 28:14).

Not only was Lucifer, the head angel, covered by God's attributes, God's fruit, God's nature, and God's production in the essence of His integrity, but also Lucifer *was* a covering over all the angels. He was upon the "holy mountain," meaning he had access to the Trinitarian planning sessions.

"Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (Ezekiel 28:15). Because Lucifer was aware of some of God's eternal planning meetings, he found out certain information about the fall of angels *and* men, and that the human race would have a Savior. Ezekiel 28:15 says *iniquity* was found in Lucifer's heart. The Hebrew word *rakal* indicates that he went from angel to angel to inform them of something they didn't know. His name was Lucifer, which after his fall came to mean "light bringer or knowledge informer." And what did he communicate as light to the angels? "You don't know all the truth about God," he told them. "I'm going to bring you light that I have never taught you, light that the Trinity has never taught you. I am going to be a light bringer, a knowledge informer." What do you think of that setup?

In Job 41, we have a description of levia-

than—a characterization of Satan. There are several questions asked in the passage.

"Will [Satan] make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee?" (Job 41:3). The answer is yes. He's the light bringer, knowledge informer. He will come with soft, affectionate words.

"Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?" (Job 41:4). The answer is in Isaiah 28:15: "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." *Under* falsehood they hide, meaning, under a government of lies. Will he make a covenant with thee? Yes. Will you take him as a servant forever? This one will speak soft words; he will make supplications for you; he will serve you and provide for you. Will you take him as a servant forever?

Satan's Power

Job 41:10 says, "Dare anyone go against him?" That's just the way the words read in the Hebrew text. In verse 12, God says, "I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely

proportion." God will not conceal Satan's manifestation of power. He will not conceal the fact that Satan uses supernatural information. The devil goes as far as to say, "It is written" (Matthew 4:6). But God will not conceal it. He'll let him do it. He will not conceal Satan's comely proportion.

"Who can discover the face of his garment?" (Job 41:13*a*). Believers and unbelievers become Satan's garment. We don't recognize him because he speaks softly; he makes supplications to us. And God doesn't conceal Satan's identity. He lets him loose.

"His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them" (Job 41:15-16). The air doesn't come between his scales. His parts are stuck together, and they cannot be separated. "His heart is firm as a stone" (verse 24). There is none like him on the earth (verse 33), and "he beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride" (verse 34).

Why does it say "high things"? The Word of God says that deceitful workers transform themselves into apostles of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13); therefore, we shouldn't marvel that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light and that his

ministers are transformed as ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

What was Lucifer? The light bringer. What was he? The knowledge informer, regarding God's nature. "God is *not* who He says He is," Satan told the angels. "He has a secret agenda. *I know*. I was the one who walked in the midst of the stones of fire. The Father was the planning stone; the Son was the Chief Cornerstone; and the Holy Spirit was the stone of revelation. God wants to build His Church as a spiritual house of lively stones on earth, redeeming them by His blood. *But He has no program for angels!* He will send angels like us to hell forever. I'm telling you that God is *not* who you think He is. Remember—I am the light bringer!"

In Luke 4, as you have already seen, Jesus Christ fasted for forty days. When He was being tempted, He said to the devil, "It is written.…It is written.…It is said" (verses 4, 8 and 12). What was Jesus doing? He was using *megaleiotes*—the authority of the Word of God that created the universe and holds it together. By His Word, He created the heavens. He made man by the Word of His power. When Jesus Christ comes back to the earth with the Church as His bride at the end of the Tribulation (Revelation 19:11-16), the

Word of God will be upon His forehead. At Armageddon, He will open His mouth and speak the Word to end the battle, leaving blood six feet deep, flowing for more than ten miles in the valley. Jesus Christ will come back, not with weapons, but with *megaleiotes*—the authority of the Word of His mouth.

Chapter Five

THE VEIL SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY

The Pharisees said to Jesus, "We be not born of fornication; we have one father, even God" (John 8:41). They implied that *they* weren't born of fornication, but that Jesus was. Jesus answered, "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me" (John 8:42).

Then, Jesus said, "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. *Ye are of your father the devil,* and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there was no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

In Luke 4:6-7, note the use of the perfect passive indicative verb form. Satan said to Jesus, "All this power will I give thee.…for that is *de-*

livered (perfect passive indicative) unto me.…" The condition: "…If thou therefore wilt worship me." Satan always wanted to be worshiped, and that means to be number one.

"If you bow down and worship me, Jesus, I will make you a ruler. This is the power that has been delivered over to me," Satan said. "In the past, God the Father gave me power to be the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). I was given the power to test the volitions of men and women to see if they would go my way or God's way of grace. God has given me permission to be the ruler (*kosmokrator*) of the cosmic system. I am simply using the authority God gave me."

Satan didn't speak about the difference between his authority to test men and women and the "all authority" of Jesus Christ, because Satan didn't have *all* authority—that is what Jesus had and gave: the majesty of His *megaleiotes*.

Satan has authority to bind up believers. He takes righteous people and draws them into an evil system through the authority of projections, insinuations, accusations, enticements, and seductions. Satan lured Demas into forsaking the will of God for the world system (2 Timothy 4:10). Diotrophes was deceived to the place

where he wanted total preeminence in the church (3 John 9).

Satan wants Christians to function under the authority of his light. For example, I may say to you, "I've got something that you don't have. I have power that's unknown to you, and I pray that you will grow into it." Satan is a light bringer. Instead of the Word of God being the premise and basis for every operational provision in the heart and mouth and confession of the believer, Satan is allowed to come in and say, "That is not correct. I am going to bring you *deeper* information and *deeper* life."

Satan, as an angel of light, transforms pastors into his ministers of righteousness. Many, many divorces are based upon the authority of Satan's word. Hundreds and thousands of sicknesses are based upon the authority of Satan's power.

Jesus Christ, anointed with the Holy Spirit, went about healing all those who were oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:38). In Mark 1:27, He used *megaleiotes* and drove out unclean spirits. In Luke 9:1, all manner of diseases were healed, and it was so in Matthew 4:23, and again, and again, and again. In Matthew 9:35, all manner of evil spirits, unclean spirits, and diseases were

healed by *megaleiotes*. Jesus said to the unclean spirits, "Come out." To a one man He said, "Do you want to be healed? Stretch out your withered hand." This is *megaleiotes*—the word of His authority and power.

Jesus Christ has risen. He has ascended. He is victorious. He comes to dwell in us (Colossians 1:27). He indwells our bodies by His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), and as we begin to receive the Word of God, it dwells in us richly (Colossians 3:16).

Wrestling Against Principalities and Powers

We need to realize that "sowing discord" is one of the seven things that God hates, according to Proverbs 6:12-19 where it is mentioned twice. But Satan brings in division and discord by using knowledge and information to separate believers through accusations, to alienate them and cause mistrust.

In Proverbs 17:9, God's *exousia*—the authority of the Finished Work in ascended victory—gives believers the power to cover those whom they know have failed, and to never repeat a matter. In 1 Peter 4:8, love covers the multitude of sins. The love of Christ begins to motivate the believer in his new life (2 Corinthians 5:14-17),

giving him power over the sin that God has covered. For this very reason, God begins to move inside a believer. You would weep in brokenness if you understood the authority God has given us in the midst of this evil world system.

We don't wrestle against flesh and blood but against the original supernatural source of a power that is fallen, invisible, and inaudible. We wrestle against *powers*—the authority of a supernatural power that we can't see—and against the *rulers of the darkness of this world*—the appropriators of that supernatural power (the *kosmokrators*). We also wrestle against the infectors, the army of demons that bring infection through people to your soul (your mind, will, emotions, conscience, and self-consciousness) trying to make you 'damaged goods'. But the Holy Spirit of the living God brings in a heavenly vision as the Word of God flows in us richly, making way for great emancipation, liberation, and freedom.

Turning to the Lord

"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away" (2 Corinthians 3:15-16).

This passage teaches that when the law of

Moses was read, a veil—representing the flesh—covered the hearts of the people. What was the reason? Moses represented the Law, and the Law represented a system of works. Those who heard the law of Moses being read tried to perform the requirements of the Law in the energy of their flesh; but when they turned to the Lord, the veil was taken away. Their vision was no longer obscured.

Today the veil represents molestation, intimidation, a poor self-image, and wounds from failure, heartache, and rejection. Sometimes, when we read something in the Word of God, we may come under condemnation because of the veil. Every time Moses' law was read, condemnation came in. But the Bible doesn't say that veil was removed through "this process" or "that process." It says that when they shall *turn to the Lord,* the veil shall be taken away.

I couldn't recommend anything more beautiful than turning to the Lord. In my next breath, in my next decision, I can turn to the Lord. When pressures, financial problems, health problems, or unexpected circumstances of adversity come upon us, though we will do what we can to be practical, we turn to the Lord. And what happens? The veil is taken away!

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

I don't have to be talked out of my veil; Calvary takes cares of it. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," liberty to get rid of my veil, with all of its heartaches, all of its failures, and all of its projections. In any area that I don't go to the Cross, Satan's *exousia*—his authority through his words and projections, and his influence through people—have access to my heart. Ephesians 4:27 tells us not to give a "marked off place" (topos) to the devil, because anything that I don't carry *through* the Cross gives him a place of access to trouble and plague me.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). I love this verse. As we behold our faces in the mirror of the Word of God, we are changed from glory to glory. "Glory" means the nature and essence of divine splendor, divine brightness, and divine royalty from God's viewpoint. Proverbs 25:27 says, "for men to search their own glory is not glory." But when we receive the glory that

comes from God, we reflect it. We become a mirror reflecting God's nature.

If someone is anxious, we reflect God's peace. If someone is angry, we reflect God's joy. If a person is impure, we—as mirrors of God's character— reflect purity. If someone is reacting or revolting in his emotions, we reflect emotions that are appreciative and stable, authorized by *megaleiotes,* which exposes Satan's defeat and demise.

Everything is New

I love what Isaiah 28:18 says: "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." In other words, the love of God constrains us. We thus judge if one died, were all dead, and we should henceforth not live unto ourselves (going our own way), but unto God who raised Jesus from the dead. Therefore, we know no man after the flesh, not even Jesus Christ any more. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, and old things are passed away, and every single thing becomes new (2 Corinthians 5:14-17).

I want you to see that "new" means "new in species" and it means new every moment. New at seven o'clock, new at one minute past seven,

and at two minutes past seven—new! continuously. Every single time I choose the grace of God and operate from the authority of my position and from the power that's been delegated to me, then I express not only the newness of my nature but also the newness of my confession, which makes Satan flee. Not only has he been defeated, but he cannot bear to be around the Christian who walks in the Spirit.

"[Satan] beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride"(Job 41:34). Anyone who exalts himself above the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:5) has Satan as his king. If he exalts his life above Christians, above the mandates and promises of God, and above the Word of God that says, we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together—that person has Satan as his king.

Even though I am a Christian, when I live in disobedience I crown Satan as my king. Speaking soft words to me, he will make a covenant with me, and he will utilize logistical blessings to seduce me. Though I am a Christian, he will not deal with me roughly as long as I operate in self-righteousness; Satan would much rather use *me* than a drunkard, drug addict, or pervert. Satan would use me to go against God's people

through relative righteousness (2 Corinthians 10:12). If he can use my faculties, I will become the garment of Satan's faith (Job 41:13).

I am asking Jesus Christ to give us an extraordinary time in His power. He has clothed us with His garment of perfect righteousness. May we execute our responsibilities through mercy and grace in the character of our victory, which is inside of us. In Jesus' name, I want each of us to be blessed spiritually, physically, and financially. I am asking for families to be blessed as they honor sacred values in the home. As we walk in the truth, with a heavenly vision, God is going to bless us in the name of Jesus.

CONCLUSION

One of the greatest problems we have is that we fail to appropriate with understanding what is truly ours (Proverbs 23:12). Problems come into marriages and one party allows Satan to become king. It doesn't matter that a person has been saved for fifteen years; because of pride, Satan has become his operational king, and Jesus Christ is not his operational Lord.

You may say, "Well, I'm working it out." Why not let God work the truth within? Let Him develop a heavenly vision for the situation instead working up a self-defense mechanism through Satan's rationale as you make a covenant with hell and go on doing your own thing.

God can heal the wounds and bind up your broken heart. He can take away the scars and give you the authority of love, the ointment of joy, the power of peace, and the manifestation of His presence. You can have a heavenly vision and enjoy the living God, with a living faith in a

living Church that is taking a living message to a dying world.

Would you rather represent the authority of your feelings, the authority of your experience, and the authority of what you think? Or would you rather represent what God says? Which will it be? The choice is yours.

I pray that you will be built up and use the authority of God's grace, God's mercy, and the filling of the Spirit to operate in His vision.

Having an Identity of Love

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; *yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Our death with Christ on the Cross brings us into a place where only *God* can give us an identity. Adam's identity ended in crucifixion. It's no longer "I" (the old man), but "Christ" (the one new man) who lives in me.

Self-esteem is based upon self-worth. Self-worth ought to be based upon our value to God, and our value to God is revealed by Jesus Christ's supreme sacrifice on the Cross on our behalf.

This message, though very practical, will deal with some things that we are years away from understanding. Our identity will either be an extension of Adam's ego or an extension of the mind of Christ. The key to experiencing our eternal identity is to focus every thought on the

precepts of God's eternal Word: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Chapter One

EXTENDING ADAM'S EGO

When a person's identity is based on a relationship outside of Christ, the relationship becomes a soul-power attachment. Countless people have their identity based upon soul attachments. Take away their attachment, and they have no identity at all. Take away the approval of others, and they are left without an identity.

Social relationships and familiar surroundings—where the flesh operates in measures of co-dependency upon a former lifestyle—bring a degree of security into a person's identity. There are women who consistently base their self-esteem on relationships rather than on their purpose, their value before God, and the eternal meaning of their life. This type of woman never thinks in terms of her personal eternal destiny, which was designed by God in eternity past. She may become involved in relationships that be-

come an extension of her ego.

For some men, their physique and a sense of power become an extension of their ego. With others, it may be money and materialism. A child may be very bright or he may excel in athletic ability, and though he should be appreciated, he should never become an extension of the parent's ego. On the other hand, a wife should never internalize the insensitivity of her husband or she will end up being unhappy and emotionally scarred from projections that bruise the ego.

In reality, so many relationships have no eternal value. They are nothing more than an extension of Adam's ego outside of a relationship with Christ. How many tears have been shed out of fleshly reaction or sentimentality and not because of spiritual compassion? How many bouts of depression have been just an extension of Adam's disappointment in his own purpose on the earth? How many marriages started out great, but because the husband and wife were living in a temporal extension of each other's flesh, the marriage ended up in a divorce court? How many soul-power attachments have resulted in one party growing weary of the attachment and leaving the other behind?

"And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12:11-12).

"Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" (Luke 21:14-15).

When Jesus said in Luke 21:14-15, "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate what ye shall answer," He meant that if you meditate extensively on the Word of God then when you face problems or trials in the details of life, you won't have to meditate on how you should answer, but He will give you "a mouth and wisdom" to answer out of what you have been taught.

What lacks in Christianity today is an understanding of the value of a single thought and the value of every succeeding thought. We can never underestimate the value of a choice that leads to a series of right choices. It is imperative

that we learn the value of godly communication that has its origin in godly thoughts and godly choices. Every godly action has great value because it flows from the springs of right thoughts (Philippians 4:8).

Right thoughts, right choices, and godly communication and action stem from our conditional responses to God's provision for us to think. Luke 12:11-12 and Luke 21:14-15 speak of conditional responses to the Word of God through the Holy Spirit.

The measure that God will reward us at the Bema Seat will be in proportion to the measure of each thought, each confession, and each action on the earth.

Without receiving God's provision to think through His Word, people are left to the conditional responses of their old sin nature. Anger is an extension of self-preservation through the ego; it is the conditional response of a person to something that happened in his past, or to the way he has been treated over the years. Lust is nothing more than the searching of a self-centered person who is trying to be fulfilled in human pleasure without taking responsibility for what the Word of God says in 2 Corinthians 10:5*b*, "Bringing into captivity every thought to

the obedience of Christ."

Carnal Weapons or Captive Thoughts

In 2 Corinthians 10:1-4, Paul said, "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal*, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds)."

Our whole problem lies in our use of *carnal weapons*. A carnal weapon is anything in my flesh that makes me comfortable while I still serve God in partial obedience. But in actuality, I am walking "afar off" from Him.

Remember, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (2 Corinthians 10:4*a*). I don't need anything to give me an extension of my ego so I can have security, false peace, and social success. The Bible says that the last shall be first (Mark 10:31), and that the one who serves shall be the greatest. This eliminates my dependence

on the temporal value system by bringing in the reality of God's eternal value system.

The apostle Paul says to pull down strongholds and get rid of the weapons of carnal warfare, because you will never have an identity in those things. Cast down the imaginations that come through people who don't have established identities, whose hearts are not fixed on God. Cast down every high thing that exalts itself against doctrine. Some people exalt where they want to be, what they want to do, or who they want to have around them against the knowledge of God. Others exalt their need for a relationship.

By bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, a person's decisions are revolutionized. It brings new value to each thought, each choice, each confession, and each act of obedience. He doesn't have to contemplate living in self-preference because his self-life is no longer on his agenda to be preserved.

Chapter Two

WHO AM I?

One of the questions that Moses, the great hero of faith, asked God was "Who am I?"

In searching for the answer to this question, consider the man in Mark 5:1-9 who was filled with six thousand demons. Jesus addressed the demons and said, "What is thy name?" The man answered, "Legion, for we are many." Jesus asked something in the singular: "What is *thy* name?" But the answer came in the plural: "My name is Legion: for *we* are many."

Though Christians cannot be possessed with demons, they are most assuredly troubled, influenced, and obsessed by these spirits. And the one question that needs to be answered in light of our past, our present, and our genetics is, "Who am I?"

Clearing Up Our Personal Identity

It's very easy for a child of God who has

been seasoned in Bible doctrine to say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life I live in my humanity I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (see Galatians 2:20).

That is one of the most frequently quoted verses, and Christians *think* they know it. Certainly, it is a contributing factor to answering the question, "who am I," but it's only the premise.

Often, we meet people who had terrible marriages, and when the marriage fails, they continue to evaluate themselves on the basis of that failure. Others may fail miserably in another area, and after making a great recovery, Satan will tempt them to live in who they *were* instead of who they *are* now.

The Bible tells us that we are not to know anyone after the flesh—not even Christ (2 Corinthians 5:16). We must see Him as the ascended Lord seated on a Finished Work throne if we are to clear up the issue of our personal identity once and for all.

Having been a pastor for over forty years, I have seen that clearing up personal identity is a real problem for many people. Though we teach that every Christian should believe God, regard-

less of his condition, when sickness prevails, Satan would like to project to you that you *are* your sickness. "That's your identity," he says, "Jill the sick girl. You are always going to be sick."

Are You Receiving Projections or Protection?

There are some people who have battles with their emotions. They have made wonderful progress, but they are still in a process of healing. In one sense, they *are* healed but are still being healed, because life is like that; it is a process of right choices. And on given weeks or months, Satan tries to get these people to receive the grace of God in vain (see 2 Corinthians 6). He tells them, "You are an emotional wreck. The pastor was referring to *you* in the message." Of course, a true pastor is simply delivering the message that God wants His people to hear. Even when it stings, the goal is to edify and to set captives free.

Satan whispers to people, "Do you know who you are? You're an emotional vegetable." And providing they really had a deep-rooted problem to begin with, that person may experience a devastating ten or fifteen days as a result of that one projection.

In contrast, consider the wealthy—the multimillionaires. Many of them place their identity in their money. And every time they fail, they still have money to go on a trip, buy a boat, or throw a party. When they consider the answer to the question, "Who am I?" they think, "*I'm a rich person. I'm a wealthy person. That's who I am*"—all the while covering up a very real need.

Then there are those who have been sexually abused and are left with deep-rooted infections. One precious woman told me, "For many years after being abused, every night I could still hear my stepfather coming into my room to take advantage of me. It was so real that his steps seemed audible. This continued to happen every night until I began coming to church and receiving doctrine regularly."

Many others, like this woman, have been either raped or molested, and they cannot honestly answer the question, "Who am I?" Their hearts are after God, yet they have a difficult time knowing who they are. Even with a circle of good friends, they may at times feel downhearted or depressed.

Overcome and Undone, Here Am I!

Thank God that in the Body of Christ we

have so many opportunities to be built up in our spiritual identity. With so many true friends to reflect and draw out who we are in Christ, we only need to be available and to show ourselves friendly (Proverbs 18:24).

Yet, it seems that no matter how much people hear the message of the Finished Work, they are still attacked and troubled by demonic forces. Wrong habits and wrong reflections about life cause their self-image to become distorted.

We need to understand what the prophet Isaiah learned in his vision of Jesus Christ high and lifted up on a throne (see Isaiah 6:1-8). Isaiah saw the seraphim—six-winged high ranking angels—around the throne crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

Overcome in the presence of holiness, the very foundations of Isaiah's life were shaken, and he said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." But at that moment, one of the seraphim took a live coal from the altar and touched his lips, purging him from his sin. Then he heard the voice of the

LORD saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Isaiah was able to respond, “Here am I; send me” because he had cleared up the issue of his personal identity—he finally knew who he was.

Chapter Three

WE ARE THE OBJECTS OF PERFECT LOVE

In order to answer the question "who am I?" I must first realize that God the Father is perfect in righteousness, perfect in veracity—perfect in His entire being. Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are both co-equal with the Father. Together, the Trinity has a divine self-image based upon their essence, their righteousness, their integrity, their perfection. They *like* who they are. They *love* who they are!

One of the hardest things for Christians to understand is that when God says "I love you just the way you are" the emphasis is upon *you*. In other words, you are the object of perfect love.

Perfect love cannot change. Not a single thing can stop its initiation, hinder its quality, or change its value. Even if you die from committing the sin unto physical death, you can't

change the quality of God's love.

My new self-image begins by saying to God in the quietness of my own heart, "I'm the object of Your love." In order for this to work, each believer must do it individually.

God says, "I love you. The source of My love is Me, the subject. I don't love you because of your value as the object. I love you because you have eternal life—and that *gives* you eternal value. You are My son, you are My daughter. I love you because of your eternal value."

Enter into a New Way of Thinking

As I rehearse God's love for me in my heart, I begin to enter into *cognitive self-confidence*. This means to know something thoroughly by experiencing the knowledge of it. That is how I am able to experience the personal knowledge that God loves *me*.

Cognitive self-confidence produces *cognitive invincibility*, meaning that I know without a doubt that nothing can stop this love. Failure cannot stop it. Even death cannot quench the love of God. Death for the believer is just a door into heaven. Therefore, I can stand firmly on the grounds of faith, regardless of what sight dictates.

In order to experience that level of confidence, I must first enter into *objective motivational love* toward God. This means that I know God first loved me (1 John 4:19), that He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell me and fill me, and that according to Romans 5:5, "hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." So His love in me can finally be expressed toward an object—Jesus Christ.

Then the Holy Spirit fills me with subjective love that comes from God; I become the subject and I can love all of mankind—not because of the value of the object who is to receive that love, but because of my value as the subject who will give that love to a lost or needy soul. I am walking in the Spirit, walking in love (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:2).

In a marriage where the husband is unfaithful to his wife again and again, the woman can choose to stay with her husband, not because of him, but because of what is in her as the subject—the love of God shed abroad by the Holy Spirit.

It's the same for the husband whose wife goes out on him. By grace he reigns with Jesus Christ over his circumstances, and he enters into

the stewardship of grace, the stewardship of mercy, and the stewardship of love.

One of the greatest things we could ever understand is what Jesus said in John 13:12-17, "Love one another as I love you." This is not talking about *personal* love, because there isn't anything in certain people that you can love. You may have a moral love for others based upon your nature as a kind person with a good temperament, but you can't have *objective* love toward them. The Lord said we are to love others the same way He loves us, and He loved us *while* we were yet sinners. Therefore, our *subjective* love for others is based upon God's love controlling us.

Finished Work Rehabilitation

How do we maintain this kind of love and end up with cognitive self-esteem? We do it by first receiving the Word of God, then by being filled with the Holy Spirit. As we listen in the Spirit with discipline, we receive the impartation of the Word of God. After that comes application—the work of the Spirit through our faith in the words of Christ.

This is called *epistemological rehabilitation*, receiving the Word of God. As we listen to our

pastor-teacher, study the Word, and worship and praise God with thanksgiving as the gauge of our value system, God rehabilitates us in a grace process.

Now we can finally enter into the mystery of the Church Age as believer-priests. We can have a new self-image because of the New Covenant. We are part of a new "species" in the New Creation: the one new man (Ephesians 2:15). We have a new purpose, and the stability and mobilization of love toward self is magnificent. *I love my self. You love your self.*

What do you love about yourself? God's grace, love, forgiveness, mercy, and having the Word dwell in you richly. You love yourself because you are loving the New Creation! You're loving the object of God's love—*you*. You love yourself and there is nothing wrong with that. It revolutionizes your self-image. It totally transforms you. The Holy Spirit is loving you through *your* faculties.

Now you can recognize projections toward yourself from the air. You recognize reflections from your old sin nature. You discern the people who are around you. And in spite of all these things, you love yourself. How? With the same love by which you love God.

By the grace and love of God, I enter into cognitive invincibility toward myself. I also enter into a New Covenant love toward myself through theantric action, which means the Kingdom of God is now in control of my spirit, soul, and body, and I am now able to love myself. My past is gone forever, "now" just passed by, and the eternal God is my life as I walk in Him from faith to faith and glory to glory. (Do not just read over this paragraph, but *meditate* upon it.)

Loving Others

If my self-image is derived from the New Covenant and New Creation, and I am a new species, how does that help me relate to others? In the same way I have learned to relate to myself: The Holy Spirit sheds love abroad in my heart for them.

I must ask myself, "Do I love others because they are good or because they have been transformed? Even if they are good now, they will fail sometime in the future.

So many people base their relationships on the object. Is the object kind? Is the object good? Is the object my friend? If so, I am his friend. But if I understand Matthew 5:43-46 correctly, I know that even the publicans treat each other on

the basis of conditional love. Those in the world love people that love them. And so often this same thing goes on in the churches of Jesus Christ—conditional love exists although there is the knowledge of how unconditional love should operate.

When our self-image will not allow us to love ourselves properly, then we cannot love others properly. Because you are a Christian, your conscience will not reflect a good self-image unless it reflects *God's* image in you. This is the problem that we see over and over again among precious people. Many believers are mature and live in spiritual adulthood. But more often, Christians have deep problems with self-image.

Chapter Four

DERIVING OUR IDENTITY FROM CHRIST

How many people blame others for disappointments all because they derive their identity from the wrong source? We don't need to have an extension of our ego in a relationship to make us feel secure. We don't need attachments to make us feel peaceful or measures of success to give us a new self-image. Rather, our identity is derived from our death, burial, resurrection, and position of rest in Christ. Our identity is found in the Word of God through the Spirit of the living God.

People have made wrong choices for years because they have never learned how to derive their identity from Christ. They put natural preference, security, and geographical location in place of the Cross. Years are wasted while they wait for a time when everything will be "comfortable," thinking they won't need faith to enter

into the will of God.

They say, "Well maybe next year things will be easier."

But that's not the way it is. God wants to reduce us to the place where we need to have faith in Jesus Christ, go to Him in prayer, and derive our identity outside of the security system of self-preference.

In the last days, as believers face the possibility of persecution, we must determine once and for all to have personal identities that are based on Jesus Christ and our obedience to the Word of God. *Our value and our purpose is realized in each thought we think with God.* Only in this way can we have a godly self-esteem in our conscience and a true sense of our eternal value before God.

Our confession now becomes an extension of our thoughts and a reinforcement for our eternal identity. All behavior that comes from our confession is derived from an identity that has been established in the newness of life through a constant renewal of the mind.

Discovering Our Identity in the Right Local Assembly

Divine viewpoint directs our path (Psalm

32:8). But if we choose to live in human viewpoint we will always hesitate to make sure we are secure in our decision to walk on a certain pathway. Therefore, we need to revenge disobedience with immediate obedience and not procrastination. We don't revenge disobedience by waiting for a better season. It was King Agrippa who said, "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). Some Christians have said, "I will fulfill the will of God in a more convenient season."

The value of my Christianity will be determined by the ministry I'm in, the Word I receive there, and the fruitfulness of that ministry. Choosing to live my life in an extension of my ego just to survive in no-man's land reveals that my identity is self-centered and self-oriented.

For this reason, the Word of God tells us to always seek those things which are above and to abide in the local assembly God chooses for us on earth. This way, we can consistently receive a fresh supply of the substance of the information of categorical doctrine that gives us the mind of Christ.

Listening to a taped message can never compare with being in the presence of God in the Body of Christ during a service. When the Body

hears and receives the Word, every member is worshipping God together. The angels are present, and there is a special unction. But listening to a tape will only provide the speaker's voice without the experience of the fullness of Body life.

Of course, there are rare cases when there is no other option, and booklets and tapes have proven to be extremely uplifting. The precious missionaries who are serving God in every corner of the world as well as people who are isolated by illness and unfortunate circumstances need to be fed and built up continually. We receive so many testimonies to the value of booklets, tapes, and other forms of technology that keep the "lifelines" open.

Vocation vs. Occupation

What did Paul mean when he said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live"? What did he really mean when he said, "Yet not I"? He meant that our purpose and our value system should never be based on attachments, relationships, or success as an extension of ourselves. Our purpose and values should always be based on "yet not I."

We can love and serve God anywhere, but

the geographical will of God is important. An occupation is necessary, but it is important to put our vocation first. Following the call of God in a vocation means putting categorical doctrine ahead of everything else. Our call is most crucial because it is God's divine summons for every Christian to come under categorical doctrine in a local assembly. We must be in the place where doctrine is flourishing; we must be in the place where we can find Body life, in a church that bears fruit *daily*. It means that I have settled the issue of "who I am" and recognize that my true identity is in the fact that God loves me and has a plan for my life.

CONCLUSION

Thousands of believers have missed the whole point of the purpose of our life on earth. Let's learn to discern what it really means to live in God's eternal value system, and derive our eternal identity through identification with the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

The measure that I allow God to love me in every area of my life is the measure that I'm going to love people who don't measure up to my expectations.

We can share the same love with these people, all because we have a divine self-image. As long as it is "not I but Christ," I can have a divine self-image. I know my weaknesses, and I know I have an old sin nature, and I know I'm going to use rebound. Still, I can have a divine self-image because Jesus Christ gives me an exchanged life through the Cross. I only need to make sure I keep receiving the exchanged life

through faith, study, and fellowship with Him.

When my expectation is from God, then I can be released in an eternal identity that declares, "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalm 73:26). Amen!

Having God's Heart

for the Lost

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

God loves us so much that He gave His only Son as a ransom for our lives; we are worth that much to Him. While we were still dead in trespasses and sins, Christ died for us. Jesus paid a debt He did not owe when He shed His blood on the cross, taking the penalty for every sin that we would ever commit—past, present, and future. He made a way for us to come to the Father as children of God and joint-heirs with Himself. *This is good news!*

The mystery is that so many Christians keep this news to themselves. Newspapers, magazines, television, and other media are more than willing to broadcast every bit of bad news they can dig up. Our senses are constantly assaulted by gossip and slander and with reports that people really don't need to hear.

Christians possess a message that must be heard. As believers, we have been commissioned by Christ Himself to be witnesses unto

Him (Acts 1:8) and to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The days for the world are numbered. If *we* don't redeem the time, who will? Now is the time for every Christian to get busy seeking the lost. Are you fearful? Worried that no one will respond? God is fully aware of your weakness. That is why He sent the Holy Spirit, to constrain us by His love and give us boldness.

My prayer is that these words will compel us to labor more abundantly and share the Good News of God's great love for mankind. May His compassion motivate us to be sent ones, making a difference.

Chapter One

LOVE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

"And we have *known* and *believed* the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment [at the Bema Seat]: because as he is [in heaven], so are we in this world.

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

"We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:16-19).

When *agape* love takes over a Christian through the Holy Spirit and through conscientious commitment, discipline, trusting, and abiding in Jesus Christ, then we don't "put on" love—we *live* in love, and love lives in us! We in-

habit love, and love becomes our new nature. Then, even though we are not perfect, the love is made perfect in us because it is allowed to control our soul. "Herein is our love made perfect…." There is no fear in love—no anxiety, no discontentment. That love casts out the fear. But he who fears is not made perfect in love.

A young girl who had been arrested a number of times was in court again for more serious charges. She was being counseled by a social worker who asked, "Considering all the problems you have had, what do you think would have made a difference in your life?"

"I don't know," she said. "My parents got divorced, my mother worked two jobs, and I was home alone. Our neighbors were Christians, and they were always going to church. My mother didn't want to go, though I think she would have let *me* go if they had asked. *But they never asked*." Then, the girl made this statement: "I think if I could have had what they had, it would have made a difference in my life."

God's love makes the difference in people's lives. We need to let them know.

A Desperate Soul

An affluent man in New England seemed to

have everything. Yet, though he was healthy and had lots of friends, he took his own life. He left behind a note which said, "I don't know why I'm doing this, but I have to do it. The boredom is intolerable. I have all the money I need. I have achieved success. I have attained the 'good' things in life. But I'm so bored and so unhappy." He pulled the trigger and committed suicide.

Did anyone tell this man that there is hope for those who are weary? Was he aware that Jesus Christ said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden"? As far as society goes, this man had everything the world could offer—and perhaps he did. But his heart was not in it, and he lived a life without hope. He did not value his life.

The Word of God is crystal clear about what a tremendous value system people can have when they receive His love. The love of God would have made a difference for this man.

Witnesses in Every Situation

I receive so many wonderful notes from people every week. Let me share one that I received recently:

"Pastor, it's such a privilege and an honor to be a member of such a wonderful ministry. Each

day, the life I observe in the Christians around me reveals the nature of God. I'm so thankful to be under such precious and real teaching of the Word.

"I was a man living in the world, full of emptiness within my self. From the day I met the Body of Christ and witnessed the lives of some men in an office who were from this church, I knew I had to have what they believed. Each day now, I thank the Lord for that business owner's life, and for the men who work for him. Not that the credit goes to any one man, but I just thank God.

"For more than a year, I've been taught under such a servant of God. That's why I have the heart after God that I have today. I was so broken during the service tonight, as I am in so many of the services. Recently I visited some of our missionaries overseas and other affiliated ministries in the United States. I see the same heart—*God's* heart. Thank you."

It is so beautiful when emptiness is filled by finding the *real* thing. Those businessmen had a testimony to God, and it changed this man's life. Love and integrity in the work place made a difference. Certainly that did more for Christ than the lady who had a bumper sticker that read,

“Honk twice if you love Jesus.” So, a fellow came up behind her at a red light and honked twice. She rolled down her window and hollered at him, “You fool, can’t you see, the light is red!” Then she made a left turn without using her directional light, caused an accident, and then yelled, “What did you do that for?!” Eve all over again. Our testimony is not just what we say but who Christ is in us.

Chapter Two

FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE: HOW TO HAVE 20/20 VISION

God's love came for one purpose. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Then consider what the Bible says in Luke 19:9-10, where the Lord Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "This day is come salvation to this house….For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

God left heaven to seek and to save that which was lost, and this was the day for Zacchaeus. Jesus went to his home because God believes in confrontational evangelism; *He believes in house-to-house visitation*. Jesus went soul-winning, and men and women went with Him. He sent out the twelve disciples to go from house to house. He sent the seventy house to house (Luke 10:1-5). Paul followed God's example and went

from house to house, according to Acts 20:20. (And I've always said that God will give you "20/20" vision any day in your life!)

In a recent survey, out of five hundred American ministries that describe themselves as "born-again," fewer than two percent reported that they did any soul winning house to house. A revealing statistic, it says a lot about why things are the way they are in this Christian nation.

The Business of the Church

The love of Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. Do you know that that's the business of the Church? To seek, to keep right on seeking, and to bring Jesus Christ to those who are lost.

In Luke 15:4, one sheep was lost. The shepherd left behind the other ninety-nine in his fold, went after the lost sheep, found it, and carried it back to the flock on his shoulders. Then he called his friends and neighbors to gather and rejoice with him over the one that had strayed and was found. The Bible says in Luke 15:7 that likewise, there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.

In Luke 15:8-10, a woman lost a coin. She lit a candle and searched diligently until she found

it. Then she called her neighbors, and there was great rejoicing. Again, "Likewise,…there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).

In Luke 15:11-32, we have the parable of the prodigal son, who represents backslidden, rebellious believers. But the same passage reveals his lost elder brother, who represents Christians lost inside the house of God, lost to their call because of anger, resentment, and bitterness. The prodigal was found when he came to himself (verse 17) and ran home to a loving, gracious, waiting father. There was a great celebration. The rational elder brother, however, required a personal revelation of his position in Christ so he could be found rejoicing once again, with a ministry of reconciliation (verses 31-32).

The sheep was lost because of ignorance; people need to see and hear personally about God's love for them. The coin was lost—though it was right inside of the house—because of indifference and carelessness. Some people are lost inside of Christian churches because of ignorance and indifference (a lack of proper teaching by dedicated pastors) and because of carelessness among Christians who have become familiar with the *gift* of salvation. The sons were

saved but lost to the purpose of God. They were lost in rebellion because they didn't know the father's heart and didn't understand the father's plan.

People are lost because of ignorance, indifference, carelessness, and rebellion; but thank God, Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost.

I remember that I was twenty-three years old when a preacher came to our small town. He knocked on my door and gave me a Gospel tract. Nobody *else* did that. God bless him for it, because that tract brought conviction to my life, even though I didn't get saved until later.

I've often wondered why, in twenty-two and a half years, not one single person ever knocked on my door to tell me about Christ. Thank God for the Christians who do go door to door. Thank God for the wonderful servants who are soul winners! But guard against the notion that soul winning is somebody else's call. Every person who has received Christ as his Savior is commissioned to bring the Gospel to the lost.

Overcome Fear with Wisdom and Power

Proverbs 29:25 says, "The fear of man bringeth a snare [a trap, or an allurement]: but

whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe."

The fear of a man is a snare. We have a vision in our church to build a community center with a gymnasium. We want that gym to bless our kids, our neighborhood, and to win souls. We don't fear bringing the vision before people. Why? Because perfect love casts out fear.

When God puts something on your heart, don't just talk about it. Pray. Do something about it! Be constrained by love, because it may be something that could help win the lost. What may seem extravagant to skeptics is a sweet fragrance to God (Matthew 26:6-13). Don't let the fear of man be a snare. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."

Have you visited your neighbors since you got them to come to a special event at your church? Someone you met casually may be thinking about taking his own life because of loneliness and emptiness. Or, like that troubled young woman, there are people waiting for an invitation that will make the difference in their lives. "Herein is our love made perfect…."

Chapter Three

OUR PURPOSE ON EARTH

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and *they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever*" (Daniel 12:3). During these days, let's purpose to redeem the time. Jesus said to Israel in Isaiah 43:10, "*Ye are my witnesses.*" In Acts 1:8, the Lord told the disciples, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy [Spirit] is come upon you: and *ye shall be witnesses* unto me…."

We are on this earth to witness and to make disciples. We are here to seek and to save that which is lost. We are on this earth to reveal the love that sent God—in a Man—down to Calvary. And that Man, Jesus Christ, was crucified and shed His blood for the sins of mankind. We are on this earth to reveal that one soul is worth more to God than all the world. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give

in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37).

Our ministry, along with every ministry that shares God's heart for the lost, is in the soul-winning business. When the wall was being rebuilt in Jerusalem, every tribe had laborers working side by side, every man with a trowel and a sword (Nehemiah 4:17). But Nehemiah 3:5 mentions the indifference of a group who "repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." Too often, we get familiar with God's love and familiar with our purpose, which is to reveal His love to others. Psalm 126:5-6 says, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

On our jobs and in our neighborhoods, we need to ask God for ways to win the lost. Let's speed up the process! Let's do more of it! I thank God for the many Christians who are doing the work, but let's do more of it. We are here to seek and to save that which is lost.

Constrained by Love

Love constrains us to go. We are here because people are weak, frail, sick, and needy. The best of them have nothing. The richest of

them have nothing. The most popular have nothing—they just exist from day to day. Without Christ, they have nothing. They are empty, and they need our message. They need God's love. They need to have a conviction of the reality of eternity—the reality of heaven, and the reality of a place called hell. They need to have Christians witness to them.

Recently, I was speaking at a church in New England where I saw so many old friends who traveled quite a distance on a bus to be there. As I looked at their faces, I recalled that most of them had been won to Christ simply by knocking on their doors. Now, here they were, still going strong for God, some thirty-six years later. They are still faithful to God, and many are amazing servants, all because a handful were constrained by love to pray and believe and go from house to house with the precious seed of the Gospel. Thanks be to God, that's the way Jesus Christ did it. That's the way the Twelve did it. That's the way the seventy did it. We can do many other things, but we can't ever forget old-fashioned house-to-house soul winning.

We're not for all the so-called new methods that are going around in Christianity today, methods that compromise godly values, that

draw in the crowds at the risk of forsaking the call to make real disciples. I want to be a born-again Christian who wins souls the way Jesus did.

Cast Your Cares upon Him

God sees all our ways and counts all our steps (Job 31:4). Think of it. All the hairs on your head are numbered (Matthew 10:30). One well-known preacher tells about a fellow in his choir who said after a morning service, "Pastor, you've only got seventy-six hairs left." That pastor rebuked him and said, "You stop counting my fuzz during the message! Listen to God." Of course they were both teasing (at least, I hope so!). But in fact, he didn't need that guy to count his hairs, because every strand was numbered by God.

"Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?" (Psalm 56:8). That's how close we are to God. He knows how many tears we have shed, how many steps we have taken, and how many hairs we have on our head (even if it is just seventy-six). And knowing that God knows everything about us, we can cast all our care upon him, "for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

In Psalm 41:12, the Word of God says, "Thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face forever." Just consider that. God sets us before His face forever and ever. We are never out of His sight. Can you understand just how personal He is?

He personally went to Calvary's cross. He personally shed His blood and died. He personally was buried, and personally He came forth from the grave. Then He personally ascended to His throne in heaven so we can go to Him at any moment. When Jesus was on earth, He was intimate with each person He met—the woman at the well, the prostitute at Simon's house, Zacchaeus the crook, Nicodemus the Pharisee, just to name a few. And do you know why He came? Only for one reason: to win the lost.

Many people who call themselves Christians never go out to win the lost. To each one I plead, Why don't you get right with God? Bow before Him right now. Repent and ask Him to constrain you with His love to win the lost. We are here to buy up the time to win the lost. One of the businessmen in our ministry goes soul winning with his employees every Thursday. They have a pre-

cise plan with a practical purpose, and God honors their faithfulness. Those Christians understand the value of a soul.

One soul is worth more than all the world, and God cares that much for every single one of us. I believe that we are down here just to win the lost. We are here to make disciples at home and throughout the whole world.

Fear Not

Many people never go soul winning because of fear—fear of being rejected, fear of not saying the right thing. But when we go soul winning, it is crucial that we remember: The Holy Spirit does the work in people's hearts. We are just the messengers. Don't walk by sight. If you go to ten doors in a row with no answer, it doesn't matter. We are simply told to go house to house. It's not our business if people come to the door or not; it is God's business, and He can take care of it.

If the church is to have Spirit-filled ministries, then we need to bring the people we work with. We need to call on our neighbors. We need to go into the highways and the byways seeking the lost. Find a way, through prayer, to go out and sow the seed. Find a way to get people in church to hear the Gospel and to be built

up in the Word, in the fellowship of other believers. Find a way to love them, because they have needs beyond what you can imagine. And you have a Provision that is beyond what they have dreamed!

CONCLUSION

I thank God that for all the years we have been part of a soul-winning ministry. We have never allowed fear to stop us in confrontational evangelism. Never. We have many different ways of drawing people, a variety of "fish-hooks." But we are one church that will never forget the Great Commission to go from house to house.

Please join me in praying for our neighbors. Let's pray for our cities, and pray to get people to church. Follow up on the people who respond even in the smallest way. Be quickened by the Spirit, and really begin to think of ways to honor the Lord Jesus Christ in seeking the lost.

Don't you want to be like the stars that shine forever and ever? He that winneth souls is wise. In these last days, let's go after lost souls like never before.

Having the Mind of Christ

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Christians often have difficulty believing in their identity, that they are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). Satan attacks our identity for one reason: so we will think that God is insufficient or inadequate to direct us and meet our needs.

The believer's identity is based on the fact that we have been accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). As we take on the mind of Christ and begin to understand this reality, we will be transformed into living epistles, and our lives will be constant testimonies to the glory of God.

Satan has a plan to make the mind dull. He tries to infect people with the spirit of criticism. But the Spirit of the living God said through the apostle Paul, "My God shall supply all of your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

In these pages we will see that we can have the mind of Christ with "his riches in glory," and

that regardless of what we can see, every pain we endure will result in gain enabling us to reign with Him right now.

Chapter One

OUR IDENTITY AS LIVING EPISTLES

"Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men" (2 Corinthians 3:1-2).

In Acts 17:11, the Word of God says that the people in Berea "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things [that Paul preached] were so." There are always a few people in every church who think that the process described in Acts 17:11 is supposed to go on forever. They will be in a ministry for years, and still quote this verse. It was, however, the first time Paul had ever preached in Berea, so these people were not even believers yet. But verse 12 says that as a result of searching the Scriptures, "many of them believed." They checked the

Scriptures, found they were true, and got saved.

What Paul was saying to that church in 2 Corinthians 3 is, "You don't have to check us out any more. Your lives are proof of who we are, and what you reveal proves that God is with you and in you."

Notice what he said: "You are our epistle written in our hearts." It would be one thing for them to be epistles, but Paul said, "Ye are *our* epistle written in our hearts." What did he mean?

When Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, there was a choice group of believers in the church who were the visible representation of categorical doctrine. Paul meant that they were in his heart so that he would know what to teach them, how to pray for them, and how to be precise in the corporate body. Every time he went to the pulpit, God gave Paul a precise message for *that* hour, which would correspond to the needs of those who were hungry and thirsty after righteousness (Matthew 5:6).

Lives that Can Be Read

These Christians were "known and read of all men." Paul said, "People know your lifestyle, and they read your life by your habits, your lan-

guage, and your actions. Because they don't know the Bible, they *read* who you are by your life. Each one of you, therefore, is a living epistle, an 'open book'."

The way students react toward their teacher determines the way they are known by their teacher. They are known by what they say and how they behave. If it's good, that is wonderful. Sometimes, however, negative behavior is part of a process of growing, and that can be discerned and dealt with. Occasionally they are deliberately bad, and that must be dealt with too. But they are known and read by others. Likewise, a Christian becomes a marked person by what he reveals about himself.

The Attack on Our Identity

Satan wants us to lose our identity, which was given to us *in Christ* before we were born. In fact, before the foundation of the world, God in His foreknowledge saw us in Christ, knowing we would make a decision in time to be saved. But, until we have the reality of our position as a premise for living in the purpose of God, Satan will be successful at his attempts to rob us of our identity. He does it through people, through unkind circumstances, and through bad decisions.

Beginning in Deuteronomy 28:15, the Lord revealed to Israel the consequences of being lulled away from hearing and obeying His Word. In verse 65, the effects of sin include "sorrow [fainting, languishing] of the mind." God allowed demons to *attack* the mind, causing it to become dull and tired. We have been given a free volition as our provision, and according to James 4:7, the choice is to submit to God, resist the devil, and be quickened or to suffer the consequences of mental and spiritual fatigue.

In Proverbs 21:27, the devil *infects* the mind. The Hebrew word in the phrase "a wicked mind" is *zimmah*. It means that Satan attacks the mind to infect a person with a spirit of indifference and criticism, giving him a critical soul.

On the other hand, the Spirit-filled believer who has differences with someone will go directly to the source to deal with the problem. Whether the differences are resolved or not, this believer reveals God's love and walks away as free as he can be.

So, Satan tries to dull the minds of some while he attacks others by infecting them with the spirit of criticism. But *zimmah* can also mean that he infects the emotions so we live according to "feelings" instead of living in our God-given

identity, which is *in Christ*.

Our identity is in the heavenlies; our identity is that we are accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). Yet, Christians often have difficulty believing that we truly are "hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). Satan attacks that identity by attempting to break up positive faith toward the promises of God, and he does it for one reason: to make us think that God is inadequate to direct us and insufficient to meet our needs.

The Living Word vs. the Letter

2 Corinthians 3:3 says, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ…." Here, Paul was saying, "I'm reading from an epistle. All of the epistles that are written make you *one* epistle because it is the *Person* of Christ that we minister. Therefore, you are the epistle of Christ, because we minister to you." They were epistles of Christ, "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."

Paul's point was this: "If the words I have given you were reduced to 'ink', you would be most miserable. You would probably end up living in lasciviousness, legalism, arrogance, or self-condemnation." Rather, Paul wanted his

teaching to be more than just something that was written in ink; he wanted it to be written on their hearts with the Spirit of the living God.

"And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward" (2 Corinthians 3:4). We are trusting Christ through the Father, whose plan is perfect (Psalm 18:30). Then Paul adds, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but *our sufficiency is of God*; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new [covenant]; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

Have you ever tried to counsel Christians who listen to you in the 'letter'? You tell them, "The Word of God says this…"—and they know it. They *know* what it says. They listen to your counsel in the "letter," but they have no intention of *doing* anything. What's more, they will tell you they *can't* do what you're telling them because they are not living by the Spirit of the living God.

Don't be "inky" Christians. Be people who live by the Spirit of the living God, because the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Instead of asking a hundred questions about your situation, accept Christ's sufficiency.

Satan will tell you, "You're insufficient. Furthermore, God's provision for you is insufficient." But the Spirit of the living God said through the apostle Paul, "My God shall supply *all* of your [present] need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Satan whispers "No, He won't!" and many Christians go around confessing their feelings that come from projections instead of confessing the truth that comes from the Spirit of the living God, and the Bible says that we are "able ministers of the New Covenant."

Chapter Two

THE LIE OF INSUFFICIENCY

Consider Satan's attacks on the mind. Ezekiel 38:10 says that things shall "come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought." Satan attacks the mind by bringing in evil thoughts. According to Ezekiel 23:17, when we accept wrong thoughts from people and from the atmosphere, he alienates our minds from truth and from faith obedience.

In Daniel 5:20, King Nebuchadnezzar's mind was hardened by pride. A pastor may counsel a man by saying, "You ought to love your wife and lay down your life for her," but he may reply, "I'm not going to do it. I've made up my mind." His heart has been hardened by pride.

Satan and his demons are always attacking our minds because if they can get at the mind, they can create ungodly emotional 'complexes.' These complexes are structures that are built in the soul when a person continues in a specific

sin. The sin affects other areas or 'rooms' of his soul that become attached and reinforced as strongholds, weakening the believer's resolve.*

The attack is always on the mind because as a man "thinketh in his heart [mind], so is he" (Proverbs 23:7*a*). Habakkuk 1:11 says, "Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend." In Mark 5, a young man who was possessed with demons was 'out of his mind'. Luke 12:29 addresses the problem of wavering: "Neither be ye of a doubtful mind" because a doubtful mind leads to a double mind (James 1:6-8). Then, in Romans 1:28, those who reject God are given over to a reprobate mind.

Paul understood the law of the mind that came against him to make him captive to his flesh (Romans 7:23). The carnal mind is at enmity against God (Romans 8:7). The unsaved person and the carnal Christian try to fulfill the desires and lusts of their minds (Ephesians 2:3).

We must understand that people who "mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:19) will be shaken in their minds (2 Thessalonians 2:2). The Bible also says in Colossians 1:21 that at one time we were "alienated and enemies in [our] mind."

In the last days, the ten nations that will make up the United States of Europe will have

one mind to give power and strength unto the beast (Revelation 17:13). Titus 1:15 says that those who are defiled and unbelieving have their mind and conscience defiled. The attack, friends, is always against the mind.

Thoughts of Insufficiency

The purpose of Satan's attack is to make the mind insufficient and unable to deal with the problems of the hour, to alienate the mind, to shake up the mind and make it doubtful, and to cause the mind to entertain questions rather than focusing on God's answers. How many times do we ask foolish questions when we already know that God will provide for our needs? Of course we are to ask for our daily bread, and the purpose for that is to never be familiar with our provision or its Source.

Satan's strategy is to project thoughts of insufficiency. He says to the woman, "You're insufficient for your husband. You need to be a better responder." Then he says to the man, "Your wife is insufficient for your needs." Or she may receive projections that her husband is insufficient for her needs. The whole attack is to project insufficiency.

"You are insufficient for your job," says the

devil. To the teacher he says, "You're not sufficient for the twenty-seven children in your classroom. Go ahead, try it. But it won't work!" What is Satan doing? He is coming against the mind and the emotions, using circumstances and sight in his attack.

We Are Complete

The Word of God makes it crystal clear that Jesus Christ is absolutely complete in everything He's done and in everything He says to us. The provision for our lives comes from the Finished Work resurrection side of the Cross. Jesus Christ is sufficient, and His provision is perfect. David said "Mercy shall follow me *all* the days of my life" (Psalm 23:6), but Satan projects accusations like "What about *your* situation? Where is your God now?"

I have counseled people who don't believe that God is merciful. They are godly people, but they accept condemnation. They are not living badly, but they accept accusations from the atmosphere. They have accepted the enemy's attack on their mind.

God says, "[Your] sins and iniquities will I remember *no more*" (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17); and Satan says, "Maybe God won't remember your

sins, but I'll make sure that *you* do."

Think of the insecure Christian who reads in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: *but God is faithful*, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." That verse comes from Jesus Christ, from the living Spirit, from the royal law of love. But though it comes from God directly, this Christian's emotions and circumstances make him confess, "How will I ever get through this? It's not going to work." His confession implies that the provision of God—who is all and in all—is insufficient for his need.

**Read* Severing Attachments to Evil *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Three

RESPONSES FOR SUFFERING: REIGNING THROUGH PAIN

Many people have the type of emotional complex that responds improperly when suffering comes.

First of all, I've always put a name on my pain. Secondly, I make sure that the pain becomes gain. Do you understand this? *Pain for us is gain!* Most Christians don't believe it. Oh, it sounds like a good message, but they don't really believe it.

God says, "All things work together for good to them that love God." But we say, "Why did God do this?" "Why is He allowing that?"

The problem is that there is a whole complex of unbelief that has never been defined. It does no good to answer; only God knows. But rather than trying to rationalize the reality of circumstances and events, we have the privilege of entering into the reality of spirituality and allow-

ing the Holy Spirit of the living God to take over.

When we live in a complex of unbelief, we are saying that in a particular area of our lives, the truth has been written in "ink" but the Spirit of the living God has not taken control.

Pain is Gain

James 1:2 says, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Satan whispers, "Don't listen to that." But God is saying, "When you suffer as a Christian, rejoice (See 1 Peter 4:12-16)." Matthew 5:9-12 tells us to be glad when persecution comes for righteousness' sake. *Pain is gain as long as we look to Jesus Christ*.

Some may ask, "How can you prove that pain is gain?" Consider these verses on suffering: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12*a*). "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). "For even hereunto were ye called [to suffer]: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). 1 Peter 1:11 reveals that the Spirit testified to the prophets of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." "For unto you it is

given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29).

We can conclude from these verses that pain is indeed gain for the believer who has an edifice of faith-rest reliance built up in his soul. Suffering produces reigning power when we are focused on the living Spirit of God.

Answering the Projections

Romans 15:20 teaches us to carry the Gospel to places where no missionary has ever been. But Satan says, "You can't do that! Who do you think you are? Look at your life. You've never been anybody. You're just a follower who can't even follow properly."

Do you see the strategy? Satan tries to enforce our insufficiency by making us think that if we step out in an adventure of faith, we will only uncover our own inadequacy. He projects thoughts against God's provision, that it is inadequate for our great need. Then he attempts to bring feelings of insufficiency into marriage. "Your marriage will not work. You blew it," he says. He may get one party to admit weaknesses, but the lack of humility is revealed in the confession, "Well, I haven't been perfect, *but*…."

Stop that confession right there! The truth is that every one of us has an old sin nature, and there is a devil who attacks our minds and tries to recreate in us his own emotional complex.

When trials come up in people's lives, fear often comes in. The countenance begins to look like something that just came out of the pit. Fear comes in because love is not abounding through the Spirit of the living God (Romans 5:5). If I understand 1 Corinthians 13:7 correctly, then I know that love bears all things, and perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). That's the way of the Spirit of the living God.

We need to understand the work of God. Unless a person lives by the Spirit of the living God, then he can't wait for vacation to come. There is nothing wrong with vacations; however, we don't need a vacation because we're worn out or because we have become insufficient for the job. Jesus said, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while" (Mark 6:31*a*). It is good to "come away" to be refreshed. In fact, we should mentally rest in Him all the time.

Can you see the value of rejecting every projection in a series of thoughts and feelings that come from the one who wants to attack and in-

fect our minds? Don't accept anything that doesn't agree with the Great Provider of your soul. Rest in the mind of Christ.

Chapter Four

LET THE WORD DWELL RICHLY

There have been successful pastors of large churches who have fallen into the sin of adultery and as a result lost their ministry, family, and friends. One pastor wrote a book describing the satanic attack that ultimately caused him to fail. He admitted, "My downfall was in my mind, and I never really received a victory." He has truly repented and now has a wonderful life with God. But, do you see why it is so important to let the Word of God dwell richly in your mind and to have the true spirit of praise, according to Colossians 3:16?

The spirit of praise comes from being taught the Word of God. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). "Set your [mind] on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). "Keep [guard] thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

This is the point: Your thinking process is going to be attacked. If you are doing reasonably well outwardly, you may attack someone sooner or later, because that is Satan's purpose. Especially if you are living a reasonably clean life and though you may be intellectually prepared for life, you could end up attacking others because of an attack of pride in your thought processes. You may *think* you know more than they do, and you may *think* your ideas are better. Instead of esteeming others as better than yourself (Philippians 2:3), you will consider them to be less than you. But the Word of God tells us to be knit together in the knowledge of love (Colossians 2:2).

God says, "*You are complete in Him* who is the head of all principality and power," but Satan says, "You're incomplete, and you know it! Remember the evil thought you had last night? You were angry yesterday, for just a few seconds, but you did get angry. You are incomplete!"

So you begin thinking, "Yes, I am incomplete." Down goes the self-image. You don't love yourself any more. Your countenance looks terrible. You are ready to ask someone all of the questions that God has already answered time and time again.

"Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Psalm 10:1). Do you know what God's answers are to the question "why"? *Have Faith! Trust! Believe! Abide!* Become an epistle of the living Spirit! What more can be said?

When suffering comes, name the pain; make the pain your gain forever, because that is God's monitor of the measure and degree that you will reign with Him. According to Romans 8:18, 2 Timothy 2:12, and Revelation 2:26-28, the measure and degree that you handle pain with the faith-rest of love, abiding in Christ, will determine the measure that you will reign with Him.

May I ask then, what is the problem? Of course, if you don't want to make your pain become gain, then God will do something else. He may allow you to have your portion in this life. You may prosper and have a good marriage (Ecclesiastes 5:18; 9:9). God may even exclude you from suffering and take away pain as much as He can (apart from the process of dying). If you want to pray that He will remove the pain and suffering, then God will probably answer you; but you will also suffer loss of rewards.

Don't misunderstand me—I'm *not* praying for pain. I just know that it's promised in the Book. So when pain comes, you will know that it's given to produce spiritual maturity and growth. This is why it is so crucial to learn, experientially, what God says about *His* sufficiency.

When someone comes to cry on your shoulder, chances are they don't want to hear you say, "My God is able to supply all your needs." That's too simple! Or, if you tell them "You are able to do *all* things through Christ," they probably won't want to hear that either. At that point you must end the conversation by saying, "That's all I've got to say. Let's pray!"

I love that. To say anything else would be to add unto God's omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. If a Christian can't accept the counsel that comes from the all-knowing, all-powerful God who is everywhere present, then the only thing left to give them is an educated guess. Oh, we could talk, because we both know how to communicate with a good vocabulary. But that wouldn't be giving God's counsel.

"My God shall supply all of your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). He may or may not change your circumstances. But I promise you this: God

will supply all of your needs. And I guarantee that He will provide a way of escape so you can bear it. I guarantee that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

If you are married to someone who is unsaved and 1 Corinthians 7:14 comes to you declaring that through your manner of living you can win your mate, then *stay on that promise*. Believe that promise, and don't give up on it! Satan says, "That promise is insufficient." But we declare, "It is sufficient! It came by the Spirit of the living God."

No Excuses

If not one single promise has ever fallen to the ground (1 Kings 8:56), what is my excuse for not having the mind of Christ? It's funny how when God sends the most basic trials—can't get a house, can't keep a job—some people leave the will of God. Trials didn't drive Job away. He said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15a). But some people will not confess that. "I've done everything," they say. My answer to that statement is they have done everything but *believe*.

My God will supply your needs in your marriage. He will supply your needs if you are

not married. He will supply your need because He said He would. And, according to the Bible, God cannot lie (see Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18)! And if He cannot lie, we can conclude that His Word is absolutely pure.

Our light affliction is but for a moment in relationship to eternity. Just for a moment, but it "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). That is the benefit of our affliction. Consider what verse 18 says, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen…." What does Satan get people to do through their minds? He gets them to look at the things that they can *see* and *reason with*, so they can *feel* their way through to a reasonable conclusion.

We must do what we can in the objective reality of responsibility; but beyond that, we must not go by sight, because Satan's purpose is to give us the wrong kind of mind-set. We live by the faith of the Son of God, and what is unseen "works a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory." This is 'pain with gain' instead of feeding on ashes (Isaiah 44:20).

All things do work together for good—God said so! He will go with us all the way, because He said so. I have been forgiven of everything—

because He said so. All of God's promises are yea, and they are never nay (2 Corinthians 1:19-20). God will supply your need. God will bless us in every area of life. And we know we will be perfected some day in heaven *because God said so*. We can respond with, "It is written" in any situation when we have the mind of Christ.

CONCLUSION

After being tempted in the desert for forty days and forty nights, Jesus was legitimately hungry. Still, with every temptation His response to the devil was always, "*It is written*…." Jesus said, "Though my circumstances have not changed, I will not take the stones and turn them into bread because *it is written* that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God." These three words can become a mighty power in every Christian's vocabulary.

"It is written. That is all I have to say to you, Satan."

"Even in these circumstances?" the devil says.

"Absolutely. And, furthermore, Satan, you're trying to condemn me because of my pain, but my pain is bringing me gain—a deposit of equity and interest in heaven that will never be taken away from me."

God won't allow us to have pain all the time.

It's for a moment, it's for a season—sometimes for a long season.

"It is written…." "I can do all things through Christ…." "God will supply all my needs." With these promises operating in our minds in simple faith, Satan is defeated because we are equipped with the mind of Christ. We will experience Christ's sufficiency in every situation and trial as living epistles of the written Word of God.

He Cares for You

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

God takes care of what He plants, and He has planted us—His children—in the midst of a world that needs to be fed from the fruit of our lives. As He cares for us, He cultivates in us a capacity for love and for life that goes beyond anything we could ask or think. He does this so the Body of Christ can grow and flourish.

The Christian life is a victorious experience! But you may be thinking to yourself, "I don't feel that way." Perhaps something has polluted your garden. You may have allowed wrong thinking or runaway subjectivity to cloud your perception of what God is doing in your life.

Certainly, the Word of God teaches us about all that we can be in Him. But the Word also teaches us about the things that every child of God does *not* have to be. Not one of us needs to have defective behavior. Except for righteous indignation, there is not a child of God who needs to get angry. No child of God has to lose his tem-

per with his children. Not one child of God needs to go down in defeat.

This booklet will show you that just as some gardeners enclose a private garden, God has enclosed each of His own in His love and care. Within His walls, He ministers and develops us to think with grace and to live in His mercies, which are new every morning. God cares for us. More specifically, He cares for *you*!

Chapter One

GOD'S GARDEN, GOD'S PARADISE

"A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

"Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,

"Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.

"A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits" (Song of Solomon 4:12-16).

The gardens God mentions in the Bible are unique. For example, in the center of the Garden of Eden, in Genesis 3, God placed the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil along with the

Tree of Life. He forbade Eve and Adam from partaking of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. That tree represents man in his old sin nature whereas the Tree of Life represents man in his new nature. The old nature might be educated, but it is still saddled with the natural good and the bad. Just as God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, the regenerated child of God is forbidden to partake of any part of his old life, even the best part of it.

The garden, therefore, is where God places a man, where a man lives, and where God fellowships with him. You know the story. The Garden was a place where God enjoyed fellowship with Adam and Eve on a daily basis.

Trouble in Paradise

But Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden when they listened to the subtle rationalizations of the devil, and God had to drive them out. Driving them out was more than just punishment. It was part of God's plan to redeem mankind.

God drove them out because of sin, and the Bible says that He put cherubim and a flaming sword east of the garden to guard the way to the Tree of Life. In effect, the Lord said to the cheru-

bim, "I want you to stay there so that man cannot come back into the Garden to partake of the Tree of Life. If he were to eat from the Tree of Life, he would live forever in his fallen state, because he now has a sin nature that he inherited the moment he disobeyed and partook of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil."

So the Garden was open, and then the Garden was closed. In this, we have a picture of how interested God is in gardens.

Paradise: Our Destiny

The Greek word for "paradise" in the New Testament speaks of a grand, shaded, and well-watered park—a pleasure ground, enclosed by walls and furnished with towers.

In Luke 16:22-25, when the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, he was carried by the angels into paradise, into a place that was like a beautiful garden. In Luke 23:43, Jesus told the beggar on the cross next to Him that he would be in paradise that very day.

Second Corinthians 12:4 explains that when Paul was taken out of his body (probably after being stoned at Lystra, in Acts 14), the apostle said he was taken to the third heaven, or to par-

adise. Again we find in Revelation 2:7, the Lord Jesus said, "To him that overcometh I give him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." God's promise "to him that overcometh" is that he will end up in a garden, eating of the Tree of Life.

Chapter Two

ENCLOSED BY HIS LOVE

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:1-2).

Repeatedly, we see that "garden" in the Bible has a very beautiful meaning. We find it in Revelation 22, as the Bible closes with the greatest chapter. It tells us that what happened in Genesis 3 was redeemed and fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Beautifully, it describes that there is a river, clear as a crystal, proceeding from the throne of God. And there is a tree in that river on each side and in the center. Again, in the Greek, that section where the river is, is called a garden. God

started out with a garden, and God ends with a garden.

The Bible says in Song of Solomon 4:16 and 6:2 that God has a garden, with many wonderful fruits and spices in that garden. God is concerned about His garden. When Eve and Adam were driven out of the Garden of Eden, God said to the angels, "I want you to guard it. I do not want anybody to get back in. That garden is closed, because it is a garden of life. It is a garden of the Holy Spirit. It is the garden of the fruit of the Spirit. It is a garden of sacredness, of separation, of holiness, of righteousness, of purity. It is a garden that is separated unto Me. Therefore angels, do not let them go back in. You are to guard it with a flaming sword."

But God came to redeem mankind, to die upon the Cross, to settle the sin question for the entire world. So the issue became not a question of sin but a question of the Son. And according to 1 John 5:12, he who has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son has not life. Whoever receives Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has life.

He Rests in His Love

"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee

with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

Do you know where God rests? He rests in His own love. Therefore, through His love, He established a garden where man could come back into His presence.

In Song of Solomon 4:12, "A garden inclosed is my sister." The sister there speaks of the born-again believer. This is why in Hebrews 2:11, "He sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are one." Therefore, to me, every believer is as my sister, and my sister is as a garden enclosed. In other words, everyone who is sanctified with Jesus Christ is a garden enclosed. Now what does it mean? It simply means that every single Christian is a garden that is separated simply for Jesus Christ Himself.

Every child of God is separated unto Jesus Christ for Jesus Himself (Psalm 4:3). He says, "I've separated the godly for Myself."

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people who have been called out from the darkness into his marvellous light, that you should shine forth as sons of God" (1 Peter 2:9).

In effect, Jesus Christ has said, "I lost what I had in the Garden with Adam and Eve, but I

died on a Cross to get My garden back. I want a garden and I want to enclose it and rest there with My love."

There is something special about a garden. There is something refreshing about a garden. And Jesus is saying, "There is something about My garden. I want it enclosed. I do not want anyone else to get in there. I want it to be separated for Myself. I want it to be My garden. I'm jealous for it (2 Corinthians 11) with a godly jealousy."

And so He said for each of us, "I want this garden so set apart that I can go down and enjoy what is planted and what it produced and what grows in that garden."

Words of Deliverance

One time years ago, I counseled a woman who was so fearful, she did not dare to go anywhere without her husband. She was a young woman gripped by and filled with tremendous fear. When I spoke Jesus Christ's words of love to her, she was delivered.

Jesus Christ so loved her, and that is how He loves you too. Once you have received Him, you can be His particular treasure—a particular garden that will produce a particular fruit. You

count with God. You have great value to Him, and He wants you to produce the fruit of the Spirit. God has set you apart, and He has enclosed you as a garden. He has enclosed you so that the perfume, the fragrance, all the aromatic beauties of God's celestial flowers, through the Spirit of life, can come forth in you as His garden.

You are not a garden with weeds. You are not a garden that has been subject to thorns and thistles. You are a garden that God has made to enjoy for Himself—to plant, to cultivate, to walk in, to appreciate the fragrance, to protect, to provide, to fellowship with, where you can experience His life, once and for all.

Eve and Adam were driven out of the Garden of Eden, and that garden was closed. But Jesus Christ brought man back into His Garden and has enclosed it. This is the garden where man would live, where man would pray, where man would serve Him.

The garden is enclosed because of what Jesus did at Calvary.

When Jesus Christ went into the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36), He went to pray to God. The Son was fellowshipping with God the Father in that beautiful garden, and there He sweat drops of blood. That all happened in an

enclosed garden.

God wants each one of us to be a part of His planting, to be a part of His fruit, to be among His flowers, to be a part of His life, and to experience resurrection. It is a resurrected garden, and God has put you in a place that is enclosed.

Notice this carefully, in Song of Solomon 4:12: "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."

First, when a spring is shut up, it can only receive help from its source. It cannot receive help from an outside source. Then, the fountain is sealed so not a thing from this world can get inside it. We are His garden, enclosed so that no one can get inside. We are a spring shut up, where we have living water—the Holy Spirit—springing up (John 4:14). We are a fountain from which spring the wonderful waters of the Holy Spirit. These waters come through and flow through us. We are shut up and we are sealed so that the pollution and the deceptive power of Satan cannot get into the garden.

You may be thinking, "That doesn't happen to me. I find I have all kinds of problems."

Maybe you do, as you look at things from human viewpoint, but God does not reckon that to be true from His divine viewpoint. You are

complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10). You are perfect in Him (Philippians 3:15*a*). As far as God goes, you are a spring shut up. You are shut up to your Source, and that is the Holy Spirit. As far as God goes, you are a fountain sealed (Ephesians 4:30; 1:13), and you are sealed unto God.

The Lord Jesus Christ wants to keep out the pollution, the sins, the self-condemnation, the heartaches, the griefs, the miseries, the wretchedness, and the blindness of the human heart. He has sealed you until the day of Redemption (Ephesians 4:30). You are a fountain sealed, but you are indeed a fountain. By the grace of God, out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water (John 7:38-39).

Chapter Three

THE RIVER OF LIVING WATERS

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

The Bible says that a spring is bubbling up within you. You are a cup that should be running over. You are "shut up"—accessible only to God. You have His force. You have His life. You have His purpose. You do not have the world. You do not have conflicting interests. You do not have conflicting responsibilities. You are a citizen of heaven, betrothed to Jesus Christ, and He is your Source. Therefore, He has shut you up unto Himself. He has sealed you. He has enclosed you. You are His special treasure.

When you walk down the street, you may not feel special, but think of it! When you walk down the street, you are God's particular treasure. You are one of God's jewels (Malachi 3:17). You are one part of a people who have been cho-

sen—members of God's royal family.

Pay careful attention to this next statement. You are part of God's paradise—a part of God's royal garden. If we would consistently consider what Jesus has done and how He has sealed us and shut up our spring from the sources of the world, then we could enter into a different quality of life.

A marriage counselor and his wife came to me for counseling. They had been in a movement in the past that caused confusion to come into their hearts. As a result, the woman had nearly lost her mind.

God sent a tremendous anointing of His presence for this encounter. God revealed certain things about the kind of life in which this couple had been trapped. Marveling and amazed at the Holy Spirit's perception, they knelt down instantly. Later, this man got up, put his arm around me, and said, "All my life, I was involved with a group, but I never sensed the power of God like this. Can we get more of this life? Seems to me like this is the way it ought to be."

Both of them looked at Jesus Christ by faith, and they put their lives in His hands. Immediately, the woman's countenance was changed. She had a pretty face and pretty eyes, but her

appearance had been disfigured by the pressure of the atmosphere. She came in with a terrible countenance and left with look of joy.

As this marriage counselor and his wife got ready to leave, they said, "Pastor Stevens, I guess the Great Counselor finally caught up with us!"

They knew the Word of God. They came from good teaching. He knew the Scriptures. Yet this counselor said, "Here we are. We know the Bible. We have studied it hard through the years. We have been counseling others, but today, for the first time in all these years, I am sensing the power of God's love and God's life for me."

I raised my hands to heaven and said, "Lord, that is the very purpose of our ministry." Two people were delivered through the Word of God because we loved them enough to show them the power of the Word. Rivers of Living Water flowed out to them and washed away their confusion.

Fragrances of Truth

"Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices"

"A fountain of gardens, a well of living

waters, and streams from Lebanon" (Song of Solomon 4:14-15).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

"Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Here we have the fruit of the Holy Spirit revealed both in the Old and New Testaments. In Song of Solomon, frankincense speaks of God's love. Spikenard speaks of God's grace. The trees of frankincense speak of the Holy Spirit.

All of these spices are in the orchard, and all of them reproduce seeds of life—thousands of gardens, wells of living water, streams from Lebanon. Get the freshness! Get the renewal! Get the life! Get the aroma, the appearance, the wonderful scenery. Get the wonderful, poetic picture of the beauty of royalty.

God says that every believer can be a fountain—first a fountain sealed but now a fountain of gardens. Do you get the picture? We are fruit trees in the hands of God. We have the fruit of love, which is joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.

Here we are, not just having this gift, not just having the fruit of the Holy Spirit, but as foun-

tains we are bubbling up. The streams are bubbling, and our garden simply becomes a fountain.

God wants us to be a spring shut up with *His* power, without the devastating doubting of the enemy. God wants the fountain sealed so we can receive from Him, the Source, and go out in streams to others.

Let the River Flow

This beautiful picture goes along with John 7, "Out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the [Holy] Spirit." In other words, this garden with its fruit now becomes a river, and that river is the purified Spirit of God.

Love goes through you. Joy goes through you. Peace goes through you. Longsuffering flows through you. Gentleness and goodness and faithfulness and meekness and temperance come down from this fountain that is sealed in the enclosed garden. Here it comes, flowing through your body, purifying every place that it goes. It comes from the throne of God (Revelation 22:1).

We who were polluted, we who were like a mud puddle, we who were nothing more than a smelly pond, all of a sudden we have become a

fountain, a garden. We are expressing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The fragrance is beautiful. The life is changed. The character revealed is the character of God. We are a fountain, a garden, bubbling and springing and flowing with the purifying faith of God.

If you get a hold of these truths, you will not be a smelly, stagnant pond any longer. Your old, moody temperament will go. Your old resentment will go. Your old cigarettes will go. Your old social drinking will go. Your cursing will go. Your old discouraged spirit will go. Your old sad countenance will go.

Some of you wake up in the morning, and you have a right to be tired, but you look like somebody who was baptized in vinegar and sauerkraut and sour pickle juice. When you get to know the fountain in the garden enclosed, your life will change. Souls will mean everything. Love will be all for you. You will be trees of frankincense—not a tree but *trees*.

The God of love is in the reproduction business—many trees from the tree which Jesus Christ died upon. God died on a tree so every one of us might accept the Tree. And when every one of us accepts our Cross, the Tree where our sins were paid for, then we have a whole group

of trees that can make a difference.

Another reason that God shuts up these trees, the fountains, and the gardens, is so that everything inside will have to depend upon Him. If you are going to shut something up and seal it, you shut out the world. I am glad that God will not let me enjoy the world. I am glad that when I try it, I get miserable, and I don't want it. I am glad that God has sealed me so that when I go out on Him and try the world, I cannot stand its source.

God says, "I have you enclosed. You can try the world outside, but you will come back to Me. I have sealed you. You can try it but you will be back. I have your spring shut up. You can try it but you will be back. I've got you so alone that you have to depend on Me. If you don't believe it, go outside the enclosed garden and see."

The Spices Flow Out

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out:" (Song of Solomon 4:16).

The "north" speaks of heaven. The wind is the Holy Spirit. I believe that this is speaking of the Holy Spirit coming inside and manifesting the fruit so that the wonderful aromas, the love,

the joy, and the peace can blow all over, everywhere.

Some of you, dear friends, are saved, and you have the Holy Spirit, but you need to have a gust of heavenly wind blow through your lives. You need to have the Holy Spirit blow that wonderful fruit on the inside. Many need to have a windstorm, in a reverent, sacred, wonderful way. We need to say, "Come on, north wind, I have it inside, but I can't get it out. Now blow it all over the place."

When we see one another, we ought to see the love just flowing. When we see you, we ought to see old Mr. Joy flowing. When we see you, we ought see Mrs. Peace flowing. When we see you, we ought to see Mr. Longsuffering flowing through trials and being patient. When we see you, we ought to see kindness and faithfulness and meekness and temperance and self-control. We ought to see the fruit of the Holy Spirit. You can tell me you have it, but I'd like to see the wind get all of it and manifest it all over the devil's backyard.

If I am going to amount to something, the Holy Spirit needs to take the fruit of the Spirit and blow it south—in the world's direction. The world needs to see this fruit! The world needs to

smell this fruit! The world needs to see a resurrected Christ come forth, a resurrection aroma come forth, resurrection power come forth.

"Blow upon my garden; that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

Now, read this carefully and you will be blessed with fantastic continuity: Two things God wanted: First, "Let the north wind blow," and second, "Let the Master come in and eat of his pleasant fruit." Once I give out the fruit of the Spirit, Jesus will come and bring some more. Then He will feast with me through our fellowship as I commune with Him and He with me (Revelation 3:20).

God cares for His garden. God cares for *you*.

CONCLUSION

We can let Jesus come in and feast upon the fruit of our lives. We can enjoy a life that is pleasant. We can have a life where the garden is enclosed. We can have a spring that is shut up. We can have a fountain that is sealed. All we have to do is abide in what He has already done. Let's agree with God and go forth.

We can have a garden where Jesus Christ says, "That is My garden wall. So Devil, keep out, Sin, keep out. Judgment, keep out. Complications, keep out. Habits, keep out. This is *My* garden. Faithlessness, you keep out. That is My garden. Let it go. You cannot have it. It is My garden. And by the way, I have sealed it, I have enclosed it, and it is Mine—so keep out!"

Living the Christian life is entering into something that God has provided. It is experiencing something that God protects, and it is yours. It is saying, "Thank You, Lord, I agree." It is not struggling to keep something out. God

has enclosed it because of what Christ did on Golgotha, and He keeps His own garden.

God loves us, and He will show us where the Holy Spirit will grow His fruit. The spring is shut up. We can say, "Mr. Weed, Mr. Thistle, Mr. Thorn, you have to go too, because you see, the garden has been enclosed, and it is protected by the One who is the Creator."

Oh, I pray that many Christians today will trust God so that they can abide in this wonderful fruit garden of the Holy Spirit. We have a Body that prays. We are a happy church, but we are a serious church, too. We work hard and we work long hours. We weep much over souls, though we laugh and smile and we are happy because of love for each other. We have been forgiven, and we are enjoying this great garden God has given us.

He Is Altogether Lovely

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond perfectness.

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual

songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" Colossians 3:10-17.

I want you to fall in love with Christ as you never have before. In this booklet, I want you to see something very simple. That is, that Jesus Christ is altogether lovely in everything that He does. His mercy, grace, and love have made us victorious. He has also made the Christian part of a great royal family to be honored and enjoyed throughout eternity.

Chapter One

OUR BELOVED, OUR FRIEND

"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

"For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:20-21).

"His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" (Song of Solomon 5:16).

The Apostle Paul came in fear and trembling to Corinth, saying "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). In Luke 4:20, Jesus entered the synagogue and all eyes were fastened upon him. In Matthew 17:8, after Moses and Elijah had visited Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration, the Bible says, "they saw no

man, save Jesus only." In Acts 8:35, Philip ministered to the Ethiopian eunuch by opening the Scriptures and teaching him about Jesus.

Jesus never wrote a song, never wrote a book, was rejected of men, and yet He is the central figure in world history today. It is the most amazing story. God became Man through meekness. He was God though He was Man, Man though He was God. And, here's the great thing about Him who is "all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11)—He is altogether lovely.

The Paradoxes of His Person

He was lonely, yet He comforted people. He was a man of sorrows and yet He brought joy that remained (Isaiah 53:3 ,John 15:11). He was despised, yet He accepted every sinner who would come to Him. Jesus Christ would take those who were divided and unite them if possible. Jesus was hated yet He loved the whole world. He was rejected and yet He received whosoever chose to come to Him.

If you are in darkness, Jesus is Light. If you are a sinner, He is your Savior. If you are guilty, He is your Forgiver. If you are bereaved, He is your resurrection hope. If you are wandering, He is your way. If you are truly ignorant, Jesus is

your knowledge and your wisdom. If you feel like an outcast, accept Him and He becomes your righteousness forever. If you have no hope, come to Him and let Him be your blessed Hope. If you are sick, He is your Great Physician.

He is altogether lovely, a great Friend. Not only was Jesus accused of being a winebibber and gluttonous, but He was also known as "a friend of publicans and sinners" (Luke 7:34). He received them and ate with them (Luke 15:2) because He saw their need and loved them.

Thank God, He is altogether lovely.

Revealing the Father's Heart

Jesus was separate from sinners in that He did not sin (Hebrews 7:26). Consider the story of the prodigal son. Jesus doesn't mention Himself in the story, but He reveals the Father's heart (see Luke 15).

When the prodigal said, "I have come to the end of myself. My father has many hired servants. There is plenty back there, and I'm hungry. I will go home and say that I have sinned against heaven and I have sinned against him." So, he got up and went home. Jesus wanted us to know the Father's heart by showing that when the prodigal's father saw his son afar off,

he ran to the son and kept kissing him on the neck.

The son tried to confess—"I have sinned against heaven; I have sinned against you. I am no more worthy to be called your son. I will just be your servant." The father never heard it, because he was kissing his son's neck. In those days, kissing the neck was a sign of great oneness. When Paul left Ephesus, men and women kept kissing his neck. The meaning of this act was much deeper, because it represented kissing the soul of the person. The neck represented the life of the soul in ancient times. God the Father used the term because He wanted us to know how much He loves us.

"Give my son the robe, the ring, the shoes. Kill the fatted calf," the father said after the prodigal came home. "My son was dead. Lost, but now he is found."

What Jesus was saying in this story is "Don't you ever forget that this is what your Father is like."

Chapter Two

MADE WHOLE BY RESURRECTION LIFE

In Luke 7, the prostitute came into Simon's house and washed Jesus' feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and anointed His feet with precious ointment. Simon was accusing Jesus in his heart. Jesus said, "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head."

He continued, "Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

"My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Then Jesus turned to the prostitute and said, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

What is my message? He is altogether lovely, that's all it is. He is all in all. He's altogether lovely.

An attempt was made to trick Jesus. The woman taken in adultery was brought to Him. He stooped down to write on the ground, got up and said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). He went back to writing on the ground. When He got up the second time, everyone had left but the woman. They had gone out, the eldest to the youngest.

To the woman, Jesus said, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?"

"No man, Lord," she answered.

Then He said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more" (John 8:11).

He is altogether lovely.

He is Resurrection Life Right Now

In John 11, Lazarus died. Jesus was a dear friend of Martha and Mary and He spent much time at their home. When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha were disappointed because Jesus

didn't come when he was sick. Martha said, "I know if You had been here, Lazarus would have been all right." She was really being sarcastic, and she was pouting too. She believed in the God of yesterday, the God of the Old Testament. She believed that at the Last Day He would raise up people—including her brother.

But Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life [right now]: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25-26). Jesus does not see us in spiritual death once we have been saved at the Cross.

In John 11:33, Jesus groaned. In John 11:34 He asked, "Where have you laid him?" In John 11:35, He wept. People who were watching Him said, "Behold, how he loved him!" (John 11:36). In John 11:38, He groaned again.

Why did Jesus groan out loud? He identified with people who did not believe. He knew He was going to resurrect Lazarus, but He was thinking of all of us, as well as the Jews who were living at that time. Identification with our heartache over loss of loved ones made Him groan.

I am telling you He is altogether lovely. No

one ever spoke as He did.

Loving His Own Until The End

The thing that makes Jesus so unique is that He loved His own until the end. After Peter denied Him, Jesus could have looked this way or that way, but His eyes were fixed upon Peter. They must have been precious, tender eyes, because Peter went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:61-62). He wasn't scolding Peter. At this time, Jesus hadn't reminded him of anything, but Peter couldn't handle the tenderness of Jesus' eyes and he knew he had hurt his dear friend.

In John 21:15-19, Peter had gone fishing. Before he ever repented, Jesus gave him the Great Commission, asking him three times, "Lovest thou Me." Jesus wanted to be loved by this backslider. Jesus wants you to love Him. He wants me to love Him. He wanted to be loved by Peter.

"Lovest thou Me? Lovest thou Me? I want you to Love Me, Peter. I am human though I am God. Love Me."

Then Jesus explained Peter's future. "You're not going to make it for a while. Feed My sheep, feed My lambs. When you get older, you will die for Me. But in the meantime, serve Me anyway,

just as you are."

That is altogether lovely.

Unlimited Forgiveness

Think of what Jesus said in Matthew 18:21.

"How many times am I to forgive?" Peter asked. "I think seven times." The priests said four times was enough. But Jesus, with an idiom of speech, said "Seventy times seven—endlessly forgive. Forgiveness is unlimited."

The One who forgives with unlimited forgiveness recommissions Peter to preach, even though Peter has not yet begun to understand forgiveness. He is altogether lovely.

Jesus told Peter, "You're not going to get it right until you are old." He used the word "old." Then, Peter would die for Christ. History tells us that he was crucified upside down. He wanted his feet up and his head down because he did not want to die like Jesus.

Christ's Love for Israel

When I read Matthew 23:37, I see in my heart how much Jesus loves the Jewish people. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem… how often would I have gathered thy child together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye

would not!" Then He went on to prophesy how Jerusalem would be taken and destroyed by Rome and Titus in A.D. 70 (Matthew 23:38-24:2).

I see Jesus' heart in Luke 19:41 as He weeps over this city, and thinks of the sins of not only Jerusalem, but also of those who would bring such pain and persecution to the Jewish people throughout history. He thinks of all that His dear people would have to go through. Israel won't accept Him until His advent according to Zechariah 12:10. This speaks not of the Rapture of the Church, but of Jesus' return to earth at the end of the Great Tribulation. At that moment, the children of Israel will finally see and recognize His wounds and they will mourn and accept Him as Messiah in one day.

But, in Luke 19, Jesus weeps and thinks, "Oh, the pain that this nation is going to go through, and here I am. I am coming to My own, and they receive Me not. I am offering them the free gift of love and they won't accept it."

Chapter Three

MERCY AND GRACE IN OUR TIMES OF NEED

I see Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane with the blood coming out of his pores, asking the Father to remove the cup of separation from Him. He prayed, falling on His face, asking His Father again as the disciples were sleeping. The Son did not want to be separated from the Father for three hours (Matthew 27:46). He had never been separated from the Father before. There is no one like Him. He is altogether lovely.

The Bible says, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

What has your temptation been? Each of us could mention many temptations and failures.

But Jesus knows exactly what it is like to be tempted, so He identifies with us in the most wonderful way. He wants to be our provision to overcome temptation.

He is altogether lovely.

I see Him now with the two thieves running out their tongues at Him. Suddenly, something happens to one of them. "This Man has done nothing," he says. He changes his heart and his mind—that's repentance.

This thief said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

"And Jesus said unto him, Verily, verily, I say to unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43).

At first, this man was mocking Jesus, then he got saved. He never had an opportunity to be baptized and never went to church, yet he was going to be with Jesus in heaven.

Jesus is altogether lovely.

At Rest in the Midst of the Storms

I preached a sermon years ago about the boat in Matthew 8:23-27. Many were with us on our trip to Israel and the Sea of Galilee years ago. This is where the fishermen lived most of the time. That is where their business was.

On the boat in the middle of that same sea, Jesus slept through a storm that was caused by demons. His disciples panicked and awakened Him. Addressing His disciples He asked, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." Jesus was resting in the midst of the storm, aware that the demons could do nothing to them while He was on the boat.

He is altogether lovely.

Incomprehensible Mercy and Grace

Jesus' plan was to give us mercy to rejoice against judgment. It simply means that He was not going to give what we rightly deserve as sinners. When I think of what I really deserve, I can occasionally get a projection of fear.

We don't receive what we truly deserve. Instead, at the point of salvation, God gives us sixty-eight things we don't merit. Grace doesn't judge us, it does sixty-eight things for us while we are yet ungodly (Romans 4:5).

Not only were we saved by grace through faith and not of works, but He was also rich in mercy toward us when we were living in trespasses and sin. Jesus quickened us together by grace when we were saved, and seated us to-

gether with Him in heavenly places. In addition to all of these benefits, He also made it possible for us to receive the fullness of grace—which means grace upon grace upon grace upon grace upon grace.

If you want to study mercy, which means that we do not get the penalty we deserve, you will find it mentioned 26 times in Psalm 136. "…mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," David wrote in Psalm 23:6. Mercy is established forever.

I cannot fully comprehend mercy and grace. I just cannot. I have preached it for nearly fifty years. Still, I cannot fully comprehend it, although I believe in it 100 percent. It is just too wonderful.

Mercy endures forever. It rejoices against judgment. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Sin reigns unto death, but grace reigns by Jesus Christ through righteousness unto eternal life (Romans 5:20-21).

When God placed us under grace (Romans 6:14) and fulfilled the Law (Romans 10:4), He told us not to continue in sin. God forbid that we do. Can't you see that in everything I am telling you, He is altogether lovely?

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the midst of the assembly (Numbers 14:5). Do you see why it is important for us to come in with a tremendous reverence, when we assemble in the congregation with the elders (Psalm 89:7)? Do you see why assembly meetings are so sacred? Jesus walks in the midst of His churches (Revelation 2:1-2), writing down how we listen, taking note of what we received from each service, recording what was preached, and hearing what we say in the car afterwards. He puts it all in a book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16). Do you see how precise He is? Do you understand that He desires a personal relationship with you?

I have always been deeply touched by the story of Jesus touching Blind Bartimaeus when He went from Jerusalem to Jericho (Mark 10:46-52). I don't read of a single thing happening on that trip but the healing of this blind man. Multitudes were following Jesus. He never went beyond two hundred miles at a time in His entire ministry. However, He went that far for Bartimaeus, and He died for everyone all over the world. He is so lovely.

On the Cross in Luke 23:34, Jesus says, "Fa-

ther, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Jesus says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"(Matthew 24:35). His Word is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89).

He loves the assembly meeting because we sing about Him, we pray to Him, and we talk about Him. We reveal a special love for each other when we forgive as He forgives. It is His love that we are revealing.

Song of Solomon says, "His mouth is sweet." It sure is. "He is altogether lovely." He sure is. "He is our beloved." He sure is. "He is our friend." He sure is.

Thomas did not believe that Jesus was alive. So, on the second Sunday after the Resurrection, Jesus came through that closed door. He didn't go to Peter, John, or James. So many people were gathered there, but He went directly to Thomas, saying, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas responded, "My Lord and My God" (see John 20:26-28). Jesus went to the one who didn't believe and just loved him up.

He is altogether lovely. He is all and in all. And we are determined to know nothing except

Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We should honor each other because the royal family of Christ has the highest honor code in all the universe. Some people don't know this and they become so arrogant and independent. The honor code means that I highly esteem others without reservation (1 Timothy 5:21) .

Honor isn't adulation when you are filled with the Spirit. In the Bible, God says, "If you will honor Me, I will honor you" (see 1 Samuel 2:30). "Honor" means you have this value system—the greatest value system—for your fellow believers. You value them highly, because they are going to be a part of the Bride of Christ with you for all eternity.

Honoring someone this way isn't exalting the flesh. Honor is saying, "Boy, I pray for you in the morning; sometimes when I am riding in the car. You don't know this. You never dreamed that I do this. But I dearly honor you and value you highly.

A person who doesn't understand the value system of the royal family's honor code is a person who is a novice—arrogant, judgmental, and critical.

CONCLUSION

I hope that when we see Jesus Christ alone, face to face, in the Supreme Court of Heaven—and we will, by God's grace—that He will say to each of us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." This is my greatest desire.

He is altogether lovely.

At salvation He gives me the Holy Spirit so that I can love just as He loves. He fills me with the Word of God richly so that I can have His wisdom in my mind. He fills me with faith so that I can execute His power in authority. When I fall, He says, "Son, get up. Isolate it, forget it, and move on" (see Philippians 3:13-14).

Unto those of us who believe, Jesus is amazingly precious. When we get up in the morning, He is with us. There is not a thing we can do, not a place we can go, where He is not with us.

"…lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20).

"I will never, [no never] leave thee, nor for-

sake thee," Jesus promises in Hebrews 13:5. He is altogether lovely.

He Is Our Healing Balm

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INTRODUCTION

When He was on earth, Jesus Christ was despised and rejected. He was a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. We hid our faces from Him and esteemed Him not. And though He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him smitten, stricken, and afflicted (see Isaiah 53:3-4). Though foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, the Son of man had no place to lay His head (Matthew 8:20).

Jesus is no longer on the earth in the flesh. Jesus ascended into heaven, but He sent the Comforter to minister to us in His place (John 14:16-17; 16:12-14). He lives within every believer through the Holy Spirit and through the Word of God and the Father.

"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Understand what these good works are.

First of all, they are not works of the flesh. "Good" is *agathos* in the Greek—speaking of divine good. Good works are actions motivated by love (2 Corinthians 5:14), under the government of grace (Romans 6:14), in the action of faith (Hebrews 11:1, 6).

As this booklet will examine, these divine works are given by God to heal and restore those in need, like the healing balm in Gilead. As we receive its unction, we can't help but bring it to those in need.

Chapter One

KNOWING THE GOD WHO GIVES

In my early days as a pastor, a psychiatrist and his wife faithfully attended the services. They always sat down in front. One day, he came to me privately and asked if I would counsel his wife. They were planning to be separated, but after I counseled her for a year, their marriage was saved. Later, I asked him to speak at one of our services on the subject of psychiatry and the Bible, but he politely refused, saying, "With your insight into the Word of God, you know much more than I do about psychiatry!"

At another time, the head counselor for a major mental health institution called me. "My wife just left me. I'm brokenhearted. Can you counsel me?" he said.

The Word of God gives us a picture of the demon armies that attack the human nervous system. Our nerve center responds to feelings, responses, and decisions made in the conscious

mind, which is influenced by the unconscious and subconscious mind.* These psychiatrists didn't understand that their central nervous systems were married to unconscious wounds that had never been healed.

Certain demon armies attack the unconscious mind by the process of hypnosis, affecting so many people. Other demons attack the body through hypnosis of the memory center. This creates cognitive dissonance, which means that actions and behaviors don't line up with the knowledge of the truth we have received. This creates a sense of something being wrong, uneasiness, yet without knowing what it is.

The Hebrew word *shama* for "hear" appears in Deuteronomy 6:4. It means "to hear the Word of God by faith precisely because of the permanent consequences throughout eternity." It speaks of rightly dividing the Word of God precisely to God's divine authoritative standard of thinking and acting. These terms indicate the importance of understanding the permanency of the consequences of hearing the Word of God properly.

The Power of Salt and Light

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt

have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).

The Lord tells us that we are the "light of the world." But first He says, "You are the salt of the earth."

"Salt," which had to be part of every offering according to Leviticus 2:13, speaks of the resurrection grace as a channel of love. We are the salt of the earth. We are the resurrection power of grace, which is the channel for God's love to come through us to others. But, "if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith is it salted? Henceforth it is good for nothing, and men take it and tread it under their feet."

A city that is set on the hill cannot be hid. Neither do men take a candle and put it under the bushel where it will not receive oxygen. Rather, they put it on the candlestick so that the

whole house may have light." So, "Let your good works go before men, be seen before men, that you may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Fire in the Human Spirit

During a number of wedding ceremonies, the couple will individually take lighted candles, and together they light another larger candle, so those three candles remain burning. This reveals an historical aspect of weddings from the Bible. Our human spirit, according to Proverbs 20:27, is the candle of the Lord. With the candles in a Christian marriage ceremony, the husband is saying: "I'm going to live by God's Spirit through my human spirit." Likewise, the wife is saying, "I'm going to live by God's Spirit through my human spirit." Together, they are saying, "We are going to be people who do not live in soul power, but in the Holy Spirit's power of God's grace and His Word through our human spirits."

In reality, many couples who light those candles don't know what it represents. The ceremony speaks of a husband and a wife becoming one in God's provision for their marriage forever.

God is saying, "You are on the earth for My pleasure (Revelation 4:11). I created you for My glory (Isaiah 43:7), and I want you to be the salt of the earth. I want you to be the light of the world. I want all men to see your good works so that your Father can be glorified."

**For more about the influences upon the conscious mind, read* Imaginations of the Heart *and* The War against the Mind*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

OINTMENT FOR THE SOUL

"Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

"For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.

"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" (Jeremiah 8:19-22)

"Balm" is an ointment, an oil that heals wounds. Besides that, it has a beautiful fragrance as it heals. We need to have this balm in our churches.

When Joseph was sold by his brothers, the Ishmaelites who bought him and took him into Egypt were carrying balm and spices (Genesis 37:25). Apparently, balm was an expensive commodity, used for trade. In Genesis 43:11, "balm" is mentioned again—this time, when Jacob sent "a little balm" along with other precious items to gain the favor of "the man" in Egypt (his long lost son, Joseph).

God asked in Jeremiah 8:22, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?" So He is asking today, "Is there balm in each local assembly?" There must be a physician. God knows, because He sent one—and His name is Jesus Christ.

Several years ago, a young woman told me that night after night her stepfather molested her. She would hear his steps approaching and great fear would overcome her. She was terribly wounded and hurt by the abuse she suffered for so long. But there came a time for healing (Ecclesiastes 3:3*b*). It didn't happen overnight, yet through the Word of God she was gloriously healed—I mean *gloriously* healed. Through the investment and love of the Body of Christ, through the Word of God, there was a balm in Gilead. There was a healing of the unconscious

wounds. The Holy Spirit through the human spirit began to control the ganglionic process,* establishing new patterns of response in the nervous system of this young woman.

"Ganglia" are well-defined masses of fibrous nerve tissue throughout the body that transmit sensory messages to and from the brain via the central nervous system. Simply put, the unconscious mind is "married" to whatever is in that system—whether from childhood experiences or from genetic predisposition. So the unconscious mind, which influences the subconscious and conscious mind, is attached or married to those negative, demoralizing things until the cleansing comes. When the blood of the Lamb covers us, the Holy Spirit can come in to cleanse us and anoint us with His healing balm. New thoughts replace old lines of thinking, as God's Word permeates our being.

Works, Work, and the Workman

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

"For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was

a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:34-40).

This passage is so important. It means that Jesus is not on earth physically, and yet every single thing we do through love and grace, we are doing unto Him. When we hear the pastor preach the Word of God, we are hearing *God's* Word. God sent a man to speak His Word.

It is so crucial that we understand that God has ordained these three things: work, works, and the workman.

This is how it goes: We were created for His pleasure, for His glory. We are not our own

(1 Corinthians 6:19). So when we go out and minister to the Bible club children in their neighborhoods, Jesus sees the work and the workmen and says, "There they are ministering to Me today."

When we minister to any man or woman who needs help, Jesus says, "They are ministering to Me today." Furthermore, He writes down that we were ministering to Him. That is what it means to be the salt of the earth. That is what it means to be the light of the world. We were created in the Lord Jesus unto good works, which He foreordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

God has ordained us to be on earth just to bless people. Every time we take the opportunity to redeem the time and accept what is before us, we are doing it unto the Lord Jesus.

If you buy someone a suit of clothes, you bless Jesus. You do it unto God. If you help support some of the young people going to Bible college or Christian high school who otherwise could not afford to go, you are ministering throughout eternity to the Lord Jesus Christ. When you receive the preacher, you receive the preacher's reward. When you receive the righteous man, you receive the righteous man's re-

wards. When you give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, you will always be remembered, because Jesus sees it as you doing it unto Him (Matthew 10:41-42).

Our most recent outreach explosion into the city of Baltimore is bringing many beautiful souls to Christ. Hundreds people go out from our congregation on Saturday mornings while many others are praying. Each one is doing his part unto the Lord.

Whether you are a professional or a laborer —whatever your position is—do everything unto the Lord. When a husband loves his wife, he loves unto the Lord. Parents who love their children do it unto the Lord.

If we love God, we will want to spend time with Him and to respond to His initiations. But He is here only through the Holy Spirit, through the Father and the Son living inside of us (John 14:23; Romans 8:11). That is why we come to be a part of the corporate Body of Christ, as members in particular. And we serve as unto the Lord, not as a duty, nor as an emotional response. We do it as unto the Lord.

Psalm 37:23 tells us that God ordains the steps of those who have His righteousness. If we have something that another person honestly

needs, God may ordain him to be in our path today so that we can do something for Jesus. We do not do it through works but through the motive of love, in the channel of grace, in the communion of mercy, and in the light of God's Word.

We are on earth for His purpose. We are on earth for His pleasure. We are on earth for His honor. Each day Jesus says to us, "I will ordain your steps today. And, if you will let Me, I will bless you with My thoughts today (see 2 Corinthians 10:4)." He says, "You will have My mind. You will walk in My steps."

**Other booklets that define this process are* Breaking Carnal Connections *and* Defining the Warfare against Relationships*, both by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2001.*

Chapter Three

THE FATHER'S PLEASURE, THE FATHER'S GLORY

As Christians, we have the Creator of all things living in us. And spiritually, a Christian who keeps being filled with the Holy Spirit and studies the Word of God is eternally intellectual. That means, he loves Jesus and lets the Word of God dwell richly in him. He teaches and admonishes others with love while he sings with grace in his heart to the Lord. Whatsoever he does, he does in the name of Jesus, unto the Father, by Him. The Holy Spirit teaches him so that he can have a ministry that reaches and goes forward.

In Matthew 15:36, Jesus took seven loaves and gave thanks to the Father, then He gave the bread to the disciples, who gave it to the multitude. The Greek word *eucharisteo* means to "give thanks." In the same passage we see the Greek word *didomi*, which means to give a gift volun-

tarily that will benefit the receiver. Thanking someone is gratitude, but giving him the things he needs is "thanks-giving." God has an amazing plan to heal any unconscious wounds we as Christians may have, through Jesus Christ, who is God's gift of thanksgiving to us through Calvary.

Jesus is not here today for us to thank Him in person, but certainly His presence is here, and He is in every believer. Still, it is precious when we begin to understand that the emphasis in thanksgiving is not in thanks, but in giving. I can give many things without love; but if I have love, I will always give. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Every time we minister, each time we witness, each time we help with someone's physical needs, that is called thanksgiving. Jesus Christ is God's thanksgiving gift to us. Can you see how vital this is? How can we withhold that Gift from a lost and dying world?

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

"I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

"Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

"Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:41-46).

A Very Present Help

A gentleman took care of his wife after she was in a terrible accident. She was twenty-three. They loved each other dearly, and they had a wonderful marriage. One day she asked him to pick up something from the store. While he was in the store, someone broke into the house, shot the woman to death, and robbed the house. Her husband came home to find her.

I went to visit the man and he was sobbing uncontrollably. He said, "We were both Christians. Why did God do this?"

"God didn't. That wicked person did it. God

gives us free volition. God didn't do it," I said. "You need time to be healed. You are going to mourn, and you will have this grieving time. But God will comfort you and love you. He will hold you when you cry, and He will understand in the middle of the night when you miss your wife. He is very tender, and He will—in time—heal you."

This man came through so beautifully. We never forget our loved ones, and we miss them greatly. Yet, in spite of his heartache, He met with me three times a week, always saying, "Just give me some more Scriptures. Give me more Scriptures. Say some of those things that you have told me before. I have got to hear them."

Later, he became a pastor, and he began to serve people in the most gracious way. Inasmuch as we do something unto the least, we do it unto Christ. There is a joy that comes to us when we minister to somebody's needs and somebody's wounds and somebody's hurts. There is a balm inside of us that heals the wounds of people. It comes through the love of God.

Keep this in mind: God is extremely patient. He understands the times when you need to be healed. He understands your wounds and your hurts. Being hurt isn't a sin. God sees that as a need—a time for Him to enter into thanks by giving you what you need.

Jesus had so much joy. It made Him so happy to say to the woman who was a prostitute, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has made you whole" (see Luke 7:47-50).

Consider how happy Jesus was when the woman with the issue of blood received her healing just by touching Him. She had a blood disease that made her an outcast, untouchable. She wasn't supposed to be out in public, but she went to him and touched Him in the midst of the multitude—and He stopped (Luke 8:45-46).

There was God Almighty stopping and asking, "Who touched Me?"

Peter said, "We've all been pressing against You."

But Jesus said, "You don't understand, Peter. Somebody has touched Me because of a need." He knew it because virtue went out of Him.

Trembling, the woman came forward and

said, “I touched You, and I was healed that second.”

Virtue went out of Him because of His life of thanksgiving for the Father.

Jesus said, “He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I always do those things that please Him” (see John 8:29). Romans 15:3 says, “Even Christ pleased not Himself.” He was here for the Father’s pleasure, for the Father’s glory. He is our healing balm.

CONCLUSION

Oh, I hope that we understand these words: *We are not our own!* We are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are here for the Father's glory. We are here for His pleasure (Revelation 4:11). Let us continue to live in a spirit of glorifying God. Bring pleasure to Him with thanksgiving, supplying others with what they need.

Consider this: Jesus Christ bottles our tears (Psalm 56:8), He numbers our steps (Job 14:16), and He numbers the hairs on our head (Matthew 10:30). If Jesus is that intimate with us, certainly He can keep track of the times we have given a cup of cold water. He notices each time we share His healing balm with someone in need. He records the moment, because we did it unto Him, forever.

He Is the God of the Valley

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever found yourself in a conversation or reading a page when, at some point, you were startled to realize that you had no idea what was being said? If someone were to ask you, you would be dumb struck! Though you remember hearing sounds or seeing familiar words on a page, because of a distraction or preoccupation, you were unable to hear the message.

Occasionally, this preoccupation is due to some overwhelming situation you are dealing with. More often, it is simply the result of undisciplined thinking. In either case, when the mind is not quiet, there is no ability to concentrate.

During the trials that every one of us will face, there is no greater need than to hear the words of the Lord.

When you find yourself in a valley, *listen*. Hear Him speak: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10*a*).

Chapter One

HEARING, KNOWING, AND FOLLOWING

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. *To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out*" (John 10:1-3).

I want you to see four things about John 10:3. First, the Holy Spirit (Who is the porter) opens the door. Second, the sheep hear the Shepherd's voice. Third, the Shepherd "calleth his own sheep by name." And fourth, He leads them out.

Verse 16 says, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Then in verse 27: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

Three times in John chapter 10 (verses 3, 16, and 27), the Word of God records that God's sheep hear the Shepherd's voice. In verses 3 and 27, the Greek word for "hear" *(akouo)* is in the present tense, the active voice, and the indicative mood. The *present tense* indicates a continuous action of hearing; the *active voice* means that the sheep produce the action of hearing; and the *indicative mood* points to an assertion of absolute reality.

Be Careful How You Hear

Think of how hearing the Shepherd's voice can change a person's life. *Akouo* means that the believer is to hear with a special pre-planned concentration in the presence of God's revelation through the Holy Spirit. But before this can happen, the Holy Spirit must open up our spiritual capacity. Then *akouo* goes into operation.

Using another present active indicative, John 10:4 says that the sheep "*know* his voice." Jesus is saying, "My sheep know me by continually hearing my voice, and by having an impartation of my presence." Also in verse four we find a third verb: "The sheep *follow* him."

Here is how this process works: The Holy Spirit opens the door of our capacity. God's people hear the Shepherd's voice and faith is produced. "Faith cometh by hearing" (Romans 10:17), but only if we hear with *akouo*. It doesn't matter if you're a pastor, a pastor's wife, or if you have been in the ministry for thirty years. You're hearing has to be *akouo*, or else it is of no value. *Akouo* means to mix faith with what you hear because God has broken you and you have been wasted into humility—which brings you into a divine resource.

Please remember this: God is the source of our will. When we are in God's divine presence, He is in control of our will through inspiration, which comes through the impartation of the substance of His truth.*

The sheep hear, recognize, trust, and know the Source—Jesus Christ—and they follow Him. This is a present *passive* indicative verb which means that instead of the sheep producing the action of following the Shepherd, they receive the action of the Holy Spirit Who enables them to follow.

The Shepherd's voice comes through the open door of the Holy Spirit. I have discovered through my many years of experience that many

people do not know His voice. And because people don't distinguish His inaudible "still small voice," they hear the voice of strangers.

The apostle John wrote in John 10:5, "And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." In the Greek, the "voice of strangers" refers to abstract and impersonal impulses to the central nervous system through a precise word, which is not only initiated from the air, but interpreted by the air, all in the name of a false god called Satan. This means if I am not living in objective truth from the Scriptures, I will pray to God, but I will hear the voice of Satan—a stranger's voice. Then, because of my dependence upon his voice, I will allow Satan to interpret what he is saying to me.

The vast difference between hearing God's voice and hearing the stranger's voice is this: Instead of objective truth feeding the subjective part of my mind, I feed on the subjective part of my mind apart from the objectivity of God's Word. Therefore, it is vital that we learn to hear, know, and follow Jesus Christ, our good Shepherd.

**Read* Living and Inspired Life from the Breath of God, *Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Two

RECEIVING A VISION IN THE VALLEY

Visions come through tragedies, trials, and losses. As an illustration, let's look at Isaiah 6:1, "In the year that king Uzziah died [Isaiah] saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Uzziah had been king for fifty-two years. Isaiah, who was a patriotic prophet, loved and adored the king. But until Uzziah died, Isaiah never had a vision from God.

Oh, that God would not have to bring a crisis into our lives before we finally see *Him* and His vision. My vision is determined by my character, and my character is determined by allowing the Holy Spirit to open my ear so I can listen with concentration in the presence of God. Then, the impartation of the Word becomes the inspiration of my communion with Him. Only in this way can I really hear, know, and follow the

Shepherd into a vision. In order to hear God through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, my character must correspond to something about God's character. But Satan fights the thing that we need most—daily manna. Not yesterday's manna, but manna for *today*.

Called by Name

Throughout the Scriptures, God uses many double salutations in addressing His people. He said, "Samuel, Samuel" (1 Samuel 3:10), "Moses, Moses" (Exodus 3:4), and "Jacob, Jacob" (Genesis 46:2). In Matthew 23:37, Jesus said in brokenness, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem." In Matthew 27:46, as Jesus was hanging on the cross, He cried out to His heavenly Father, "Eli, Eli." (My God, My God).

Every double salutation has a very forceful meaning; it is an intense communication. It would be just like me talking with someone in my office about something very serious, and then saying his name, "John, John!" Without speaking harshly, but by saying a person's name twice, they will hear what I have to say. God does this with us through His still small voice so we will hear what He has to say to us through His Word.

As we have mentioned before, thirty-three times in the Gospel of John, Jesus was quoted as saying, "verily, verily…." Every time, the connotation was, "Pay attention! What I am about to say is very important."*

And, in Jeremiah 22:29, God gives the only *triple* salutation ever used in the Bible, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD." Can you grasp the Creator's desire, beseeching the attention of His creation? "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it" (Jeremiah 6:10).

But a revived heart desires to obey as soon as it hears from God. I have never had so much fun as I have in recent days by going alone, prostrate before God, and saying, "Lord, You are the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. You're the God of the Gentiles, the God of the Church Age. You are the God of the Word, and You're the Lord of Resurrection. But You are also the God of *me*." He loves each one of us so personally.

One of the things most needed in the Church today is for us as God's people to hear the Word and to enter into the most unique personal rela-

tionship with God that we can have. As we hear the Word of Christ with *akouo*, then a personal, living faith is born (Romans 10:17). Then we enter into a personal fellowship of light, and a positive personal confession. This leads to a personal communion that makes us internally strong. Finally, we have a personal relationship with people that is ordained by Christ, who is the source of our will.

I never had a vision for my own life until God brought me into a valley. Although I had thought about having a vision and related to what the Bible says about it, I was never able to *receive* a vision until I was placed in a valley. *Only in the valley do we become broken*. And out of that brokenness comes a life from outside of ourselves, from Christ Who is seated above.

Think of it. Uzziah dies, and Isaiah receives a vision. To Isaiah, Uzziah's death was devastating because Uzziah had a commitment to the Jewish people as a national entity. But God needed Isaiah's attention so that He could impart His vision for the nation of Israel.

Finding Mercy in Deep Valleys

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou

art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalms 23:4). "The valley of the shadow of death" actually reads "the *valleys* of the *shadows*" in the original text.

When David wrote the twenty-third psalm, he was in the Judean hills. He had been exiled from his throne because of a conspiracy organized by his son. In an attempt to take over the kingdom, Absalom had assembled sixty-eight percent of the men of Israel into his army, while David was left with only thirty-two percent.

Still, David was concerned for Absalom. In 2 Samuel 18:5, "The king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom." Verse 9 records that as Absalom rode upon a mule, his hair was caught on the branch of an oak tree and he hung there helplessly. In verse ten, a certain man saw Absalom and went to tell Joab. But when Joab heard that Absalom had not been killed, he disregarded David's desires and thrust three darts through Absalom's heart.

When David heard about Absalom's death, he mourned and said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for

thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33*b*).

David did not mourn because of sentimentality. Absalom did deserve to die, but David was a man of mercy. He had received so much mercy in his life that he knew how to give it. That's why he didn't want Absalom killed.

It looked as though David had already lost his kingdom, and now in that valley, it appeared that he would lose the battle. But in the midst of it all, David had a vision of love for his son. His vision was to bless his enemies. For David, this was a valley of love where he received a vision of compassion for his son Absalom—even while Absalom was trying to kill him.

**Read*, God Speaking to Us—What a Miracle, *Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Three

CONCENTRATING AS YOU GO THROUGH THE VALLEY

The impartation of the Word of God through *akouo,* as it's recorded in 2 Peter 1:3-4, will determine my character before God, and my character determines my vision with God.

1 Corinthians 3:9 says that we are laborers together with God. When we study that passage in the Greek and let the Spirit teach us, we realize that there is so much more to this verse. The original text reveals that "we are co-laborers because we concentrate with God." The Bible teaches that God is in me, expecting me to do His will. But He is the source of my ability to do it (See Philippians 2:12-13).

Levels of Trials

Based upon our hearing *(akouo)*, knowing, and following the Shepherd with special respect for His presence and honor for His revelation,

God has ordained different levels of trials so His character can be formed in us. Paul said in Galatians 4:19, "I travail *in birth* again [the original says, "in pain"] until Christ be formed in you."

"Every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water" (Numbers 31:23). God is saying, "I only want to choose people that can abide in a fiery trial. Choose them first." God chooses people like Moses, Abraham, and David. They are God's first choice for the angelic contest.

Then God says, "But if they can't go through the fire—which is the supreme trial in the angelic contest—then take them out of the supreme trials and put them into the water trial." The water represents the Word (See Ephesians 5:26, John 15:3). The water trial means to be persecuted as a Word of God Christian. This trial is not, however, as intense as the test of fire. It means that though the one who abides in the Word will be persecuted, he does not yet have the maturity, emotional strength, or stability to be put in the front lines. God will not put Christians who are at this level in the heat of the battle

because they wouldn't be able to take it (See 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Think of Isaiah 43:2 in the same context: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." In this verse, God speaks of *three* levels of testing: waters, rivers, and fire.

Consider the Source

God spoke to Israel in Isaiah 1:2-3 and said, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth..." God speaks to His people like a mother speaking to her son whom she loves so dearly, or like parents pleading with their children in love saying, "Please hear this time. *Please* hear me."

"Hear, O heavens [elect angels], and give ear, O [inhabitants of] earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isaiah 1:2-3).

In Isaiah 1:3, the Hebrew word for "consider" is equivalent to the Greek word *akouo*.

God is saying, "They do not know that I am calling them by name. Because they do not listen with concentration and faith, there is no impartation of life. At best, there is an intellectual stimulation for the hour. But they *do not* know My voice, so they cannot follow My leading."

In Isaiah 1:5-6, the Word of God gives the reason that the nation of Israel was unable to hear God's voice: "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

Bringing Forth a Vision through Patience

James 1:4 says, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." A more accurate translation of this verse from the Greek reads as follows: "Let your patience endure that you may be stable, mature, and complete when I speak to you, with no defects in your capacity to listen." We must be 'complete' in our listening habits so we can listen to a *personal* God speak a *personal*

word about our *personal* situations.

Our patience, as it endures, will always bring forth a vision. And if our patience endures the valley, then the vision that God gave us will come forth out of that valley. Isaiah 35:7 is an illustration of what God will do for us in the valley: "I will take the parched ground and make it a pool."

CONCLUSION

The Word of God must never be watered down in our listening habits. We sometimes refer to preachers who "water down" the Word. But the responsibility also rests on the listener to refrain from watering down the message as he hears it. The believer must let Jesus Christ in when Jesus Christ speaks.

When God brings a word to us in a message, He will test us to see whether or not we heard it. The Lord Jesus Christ wants us to understand that there is a price to be paid for having a vision. He will keep bringing us back to the same point over and over again until we have learned the lesson He wanted to teach us in the valley, regardless of how much we have *heard*. But as soon as we learn obedience, then a vision will be imparted and implemented.

Except our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we will never experience God's kingdom. Don't be satisfied with anything less than being totally con-

trolled by God. Don't be satisfied with anything less than total occupation with Christ.

Don't worry about your relationships with people. Just love them. Their response is inconsequential. The only thing that matters is your relationship with God. When I'm rightly related to the God within, then I'll always be rightly related to everyone without. Even if I can't have a relationship with someone because they are living in sin and will not repent, I'll still be rightly related to that person in my mental attitude. So many Christians are occupied with people, when being rightly related to God is the issue.

We will be tested on everything God teaches us from the Scriptures. He will never teach us great lessons without ultimately bringing us into the valley to experience them. And whatever God teaches us He will use in the vision He imparted while we were in the valley.

Father, bless us to know, to hear, and to follow Your voice. We thank You for Who You are, and for Your inspired Word. Thank You for supernatural insight into life that we have, because You have made us and redeemed us. Bless us in Christ's name. Amen.

Healing:

Building Confidence

in God's Power

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Some believers are convinced that we live in a day when sickness and early death must be accepted as the norm. Let's consider what the Bible has to say about this subject. Repeatedly, the Scriptures tell us how we can have a long life (1 Kings 3:14; Job 5:26; Psalm 91:16; Proverbs 10:27; Isaiah 65:22; Zechariah 8:4; 1 Peter 3:10). Throughout the Gospels, Jesus performed many miraculous healings. Even the apostles in the Early Church were used make the lame to walk and the blind to see (Acts 3:11; Acts 14:10).

Just as there are laws, such as gravity, that govern the physical universe, through the Bible we learn that God has ordained spiritual laws that influence both the physical and spiritual parts of man. The law of sin produces a law of death. Everyone has sinned and, as a result, we all experience the progressive death of our bodies (Romans 6:6)—the reason for most of our problems.

There is, however, a law of faith that brings

healing power, which can operate in any assembly of believers. But we need to *exercise* the law of faith and live in it continuously yet without striving.

Jesus Christ is present within each Christian. His presence brings power to heal, restore, and resurrect. In this booklet, we will show from the Bible that God's healing presence is here for us today. At any time, God could, God would, God did, and God will heal people—by His presence, because of His great compassion.

Chapter One

THE POWER OF THE LORD IS PRESENT TO HEAL

"And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: *and the power of the Lord was present to heal them*.

"And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

"And when they could not find by what way they might bring him because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

"And *when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

"And the scribes and the Pharisees began to

reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

"But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

"But *that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth* to forgive sins (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) *I say unto thee*, *Arise*, *and take up thy couch*, and go into thine house" (Luke 5:17-24).

Hindrances to Faith

The power of the Lord was there to heal "them"—that included the unbelieving Pharisees, the doctors of the law, and the others who came from Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. The power of the Lord was present to heal, but only one was healed and saved that day. Something didn't connect with the others who were there; something violated the spiritual law of healing.

So many things can influence the law of faith at work in a congregation. When people live in familiarity and miss church regularly, or come in late as a practice, or are continually distracted during the course of a message, they hinder the law of faith.

Just one was healed that day. Just one was saved. That's all! The presence of the Lord was there to heal them all, but it didn't happen. Not all of them were Pharisees and doctors of the law. Some who were there were probably very humble. Still, healing didn't come for them. Why? They lacked the unity to put the law of faith into action.

Hell's Confederacy

Even the demons of hell recognize God's spiritual laws. They operate in tremendous supernatural unity—a unity unknown in human history—to prevent believers from exercising the law of faith.

Because demon forces are so unified, unity among believers is vital for the law of faith to be effective. Job 41 tells the story of leviathan, "king over all the children of pride." According to Isaiah 27:1, "leviathan" is the devil, "the piercing...crooked serpent"—a dragon that is slain by the Lord. In Job 41:16, leviathan's scales are a picture of demonic pride. These scales were shut up together with a tight seal. They were so near to each other that no air could come between.

Psalm 64:5 speaks of a community of demons that lie in wait to torment Christians.

Proverbs 18:9 calls them "great wasters." Demon forces cannot be separated. Representatives from armies of demons torment people who are overwhelmed with problems (see Psalm 142:3). In absolute oneness and unity, they pursue their special assignments. They operate in a law of supernatural unity to take away any possible capacity for Christians to enter into the law of faith. But, God has promised that believers can overcome demonic unity (1 John 4:4).

Divine Oneness

In many church services there is a unity among some believers who are expecting God to do big things. Too often, however, there isn't enough unity among enough people, so there is a limit to what happens through the law of faith. It isn't that anyone purposely lacks unity, but many don't know how to have it because of distractions in their lives.

Psalm 133 describes the blessing of unity in the Body of Christ:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

"It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of

his garments;

"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

Chapter Two

BUILDING FAITH THROUGH THE WORD

"And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick; and those that had the palsy: and he healed them" (Matthew 4:24).

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus healed people. As believers, we have to make up our minds. Are we part of that crowd who believe that God does not heal *today*? If that were true, then why does the Bible say He changes not (Malachi 3:6)? Why does it say He is the same, "yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8)? Is God a respecter of persons? Could it be that He didn't want people to be sick back then, but that He doesn't care about us today? It would be inconsistent to believe that way and yet say we be-

lieve the Bible.

Wasn't Peter used to heal (Acts 9:34-35)? Didn't Paul pray for the sick and see them made whole (Acts 19:11-12)? The Word of God clearly teaches that God performs miracles by the "hearing of faith" (Galatians 3:5). How could anyone believe that God has decided to withhold His power to heal? He said, "No good thing will I withhold *from them that walk uprightly*" (Psalm 84:11)—from those who have "upper" righteousness that goes beyond the self-righteousness of the Pharisees.

If Christians who believe that God does not heal today are right, then God is changeable. Some even believe that Jesus performed miracles while He was on earth just to prove His deity. But according to Matthew 9:35-36, Matthew 14:14, Mark 1:41, and Luke 7:13-15, Jesus healed out of compassion. And He is still healing men and women today because of the law of faith.

God's Word: The Key to Believing

Here is the important principle: *The law of faith overcomes the law of sin and death*. Yet, some people are afraid that the thing they ask for may not happen. And because little is taught about

the law of faith and healing, few will study the Scriptures enough to build up the law of faith in their souls.

If I were suffering from a condition that kept me home in bed, I would not strive. Instead, I would spend time every day and night reading scriptures that relate to healing. Faith in God's power to heal (which comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God) would then be established in my memory center, ready to be released by the grace of God.

Jesus was not limited in His operation of faith, yet when He visited His home town of Nazareth, no healings there were recorded "because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58).

Today, many Christians express unbelief toward faith-healing. Frankly, few people have faith that the presence of God can still heal. Something has subtly influenced people, because we do not see enough faith at work in healing.

Every Christian who is sick should thoroughly study each verse in the Bible, pertaining to healing. Study these verses for several weeks, or however long it takes, until the Word abides richly, forming a law of faith, which functions in the mind and heart beyond any natural capacity.

To balance that, Christians should not crusade about "healing in the atonement"—which says (according to one group) that if a person is right with God, he is already healed, and that sickness reveals sin or a lack of saving faith. *But if healing came in the atonement, then Christians would never die.* The Bible does not teach that view, though people who believe it claim Isaiah 53:5 ("…by his stripes we are healed") for their position, which also takes away from the importance of the resurrection and the ascension of Christ.

Jesus died for our sins, taking upon Himself our wounds and bruises, yet we reside in bodies of sickness and death. Still, God's Word says that He wants us to be in good health (3 John 2), and we must not surrender this truth.

Stand Fast on His Promises

Many Christians have experienced victory and power over sin. Some are rarely tempted by lustful thoughts because the law of purity is reigning in their minds to prevent temptation to lust. Satan knows that he can no longer tempt them in that area, so he is forced to tell his demons to try something else. "Tempt her with anxiety. Tempt him on whether he can pay his

bills," the devil says. "Tempt them with something, but you can't tempt with lust. We won't get them with that one—*this time*!"

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). It makes no sense for us to pray for the sick until the law of faith toward healing becomes ours, so we can release the presence of God. If His presence was there to heal them during Jesus' time on earth, then the presence of God is here to heal us today. He has not changed! We must do more than talk about it, however. We need to touch the hem of His garment.

Chapter Three

WILT THOU BE MADE WHOLE? TOUCH HIS PRESENCE

"And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

"Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched.

"And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

"And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

"And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

"And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good

comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" (Luke 8:43-48).

The woman's faith touched Jesus, and virtue went out of Him. God could, God would, and God did. Immediately, the woman was healed. No one else in that crowd was healed. One woman, that was all—*even though Jesus was present*. She believed God could. She believed God would, and then she saw that God did.

Every time God heals, it has to do with His presence, which reveals His compassion. This is why I often weep in the midst of my preaching. It doesn't matter what is going on in a person's life. And certainly, the healing anointing may be released through tears *or* laughter in a message. God will do whatever it takes to create a capacity in us to enter into the law of faith.

Jesus was moved with compassion in Matthew 14:14. He wept over Jerusalem in Luke 19:41. Seeing His compassion, we believe that God could, God would, and God will heal.

We Need His Presence

"And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

"When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith

unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

"The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool, but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

"Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

"And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath" (John 5:5-9)

"Wilt thou be made whole?" That is the question Jesus is asking of people today. Many answer, "Yes." But more than that, we need to touch the presence of God. It was the *presence* of God that was there to heal. His presence is needed—not just promises, not just knowledge, not just scriptures. It is necessary that we usher in the manifestation of the presence of God.

Why did the impotent man take up his bed and walk? He didn't even know that Jesus was God, but he believed the words that were spoken to him, and he walked! Now, was that a sensible thing to do—to obey a stranger, after not being able to walk for thirty-eight years? Why did he do it? Because the "stranger" was the Savior—a Man from Galilee who was present to heal. "Rise, take up thy bed and walk" Jesus

said. *Immediately* the man was made whole and took up his bed. God could, God would, and God did.

Expanding Faith

Faith is being built up in some people as they read this, because they are concentrating on the fact that God could, God would, God did, and God will. It is the law of faith in action. Recently, a fifty-one-year-old woman was healed during a sermon. She has been a faithful Christian for thirty years; and though she never was a drinker, she became afflicted with cirrhosis of the liver.

"I don't know how, but something happened when the presence of God was revealed to me that night" she later testified. "The pastor wept as he prayed for people, then something happened inside of me. I was healed."

This woman had been given a short time to live and hadn't slept for weeks. Then, during a sermon, the pain left. Twice, she has had it confirmed by doctors that she has been totally healed.

God could, God would, and God did.

On that same evening, a woman was healed of a terrible back condition that made it impos-

sible for her to lay down. She testified that the effects of a horrible car accident are gone, and they have never come back.

God could, God would, and God did it for these women. He did it all by grace. They experienced the presence of God and His compassion as the Pastor wept, which produced faith as they believed in His presence, and they were healed.

Who can explain it? We cannot explain what happens when someone gets saved. God just does it. How does a drug addict's habit finally go, after years of trying and failing? The presence of God does something out of compassion, that's how. And after going from church to church, year after year, in one night the habit is gone.

God could, God would, and God did.

Chapter Four

SEE WHAT GOD CAN DO

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

"When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

"And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (John 9:1-7).

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." He came to do the works of His Father—in this case, to heal the blind man who had no light. Notice that the man was sent to the pool *while* he was still blind. He had to operate in a law of faith, but he came back seeing! God could, God would, and God did.

What was the key for this blind man to be healed?

It was something Jesus did.

What was the key for the man who hadn't walked for thirty-eight years?

It was something Jesus did.

And the woman with the issue of blood, what was the key for her?

Something Jesus did.

How was the daughter of the Syrophenician woman healed?

It was something that Jesus did.

These weren't the works of a faith-healer. These were things that Jesus did because of Who He is. This is how many of us have experienced healing in the will and grace of God. We keep hearing and reading the Word of God until it controls our memory, our frame of reference, the streams of thinking through our consciousness, our soul, our conscience, our heart, and our

emotions. And finally, we touch God, and God touches us.

Testimonies of Healings

One night I was speaking in Boston's John Hancock Hall when a woman with cancer ran down from the balcony, healed. She had been in a wheelchair for several months, extremely thin because she *was* dying. Still, she came forward that day and was healed. Certainly, it wasn't *my* faith that did it. I simply presented Christ, and scores were healed among the 1,800 who were there that afternoon.

God could, God would, God did.

Recently we received two amazing testimonies of God's compassion and His healing power. One young woman had been diagnosed with cancer of the liver after doctors found three tumors, one being very large. Her brother, a student in our Bible college, told her about our ministry, and she came to visit. As instructed in James 5:14-15, we prayed for her and anointed her with oil during a service. While she was here, she spent time with other believers. She received the Word of God daily and made herself available to be built up in the personal love of God, which added to her faith.

Two months later, she returned to her home in Florida and went through tests to determine how far the cancer had spread. Instead, the tests revealed that all the tumors had disappeared, and *there was no trace of cancer.*

Another woman, who is very active ministering to wives of professional sports figures, was diagnosed with cancer on her face. Her sister had received one hundred stitches for the same cancer only two years earlier. The doctors described the surgical procedure she was facing. They would be removing areas of tissue that could require skin grafts and plastic surgery. Quite shaken, she chose to wait on God, receiving much prayer and calling on the promises of God's healing mercies to build her faith fields.

Because of the messages she was hearing and determined to find peace in whatever God's plan for this might be, she finally underwent the procedure after delaying it several times. The first section of tissue taken proved the cancer was gone! God could. God would. God did.

Furthermore, God has not changed. Now, if you are believing God for a healing, and it does not happen right away, don't strive and do not be anxious—but don't quit either. Faith comes by hearing—and reading—the Word of God.

Every morning, afternoon, and evening, simply believe that God could, God would, and God will.

Loosed from Bondage

"And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in now wise lift up herself.

"And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

"And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

"And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

"The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

"And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo,

these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

"And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him" (Luke 13:10-17)

Satan had afflicted this woman for eighteen years. There is no record that she was a bad woman. She was a daughter of Abraham who went to the synagogue regularly. There was no rebuke on her life. So, why was Satan allowed to inflict her for eighteen years? She didn't know how to get out of it because she didn't know that Satan was doing it. But the presence of Jesus Christ healed her when she went in to the synagogue that day.

This is the value of being in the assembly. Jesus walks in the midst of the congregation during every service (Revelation 1:13). Every time the local assembly meets, He records in a Book of Remembrance who was there and who wasn't (Malachi 3:16). The records show every time I was in church and every time I missed, according to my opportunities. Though the record isn't used to punish me, my attendance is still on the books. This woman, as plagued as she was, went to church. And because she was there

when He was present, God healed her. He could and He would do that for any of us.

Chapter Five

DON'T BE FAMILIAR WITH GOD'S PRESENCE

"And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

"But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

"But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

"Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

"But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

"And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as

thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Matthew 15:22-28).

Not every sickness is from the devil. Of course there are natural causes for illnesses, and there are also multiple causes (which, for instance, can stem from not eating right). But sometimes there are supernatural causes where angelic warfare is involved in disease.

Many illnesses come as a result of the Fall and are passed down through natural laws and genetics. However, I am convinced that Jesus would like to redeem us from the law of the curse so we can have good health to be able to serve Him.

Sadly, many Christians don't believe that God could, would, and does heal people today (though they may believe that He did in the past). Yet, how can they justify that attitude by the Word of God?

Jesus couldn't do much in Nazareth because the law of faith was lacking among the people. They were familiar with who He was and His power to heal. Likewise, thousands are sick today because they refuse to touch the presence of God and become healed by His compassion.

All of us need to guard against familiarity; never presume that you "know" a Bible verse,

just because you can quote it. Concentrate on training to be more skillful in handling the Word of Truth, which teaches us to get to know the heart of God in healing.

Strong, Rich, and Great Faith

Not a single thing hindered the Syrophenician woman from believing that her daughter would be healed. Hers was a prayer of *proxy*. Because her daughter had no capacity to pray for herself, this mother prayed instead. And despite what sounded like discouragement, she was determined that Jesus could heal, that He would heal—and He *did* heal. He could, He would, and He did.

The Syrophenician woman was told she had "great" faith as she prayed for her daughter's healing. Stephen was strong in faith (Acts 6). James writes of being rich in faith (James 2:5). When the four men lowered the man sick with palsy through the roof, Jesus *saw* their faith. They demonstrated their faith by responding to what they believed.

God sees our faith. We cannot work it up in our flesh, but through the Word and solid teaching, our faith can be built up as our capacity to believe is increased. When we pray for the sick,

we ought to begin with worship. By giving thanks to God for all that He is and all He has done, we build up "faith fields," an atmosphere where God is free to do whatever He wants.

In secret, confess any known sin to God. Then, as the law of faith penetrates, praise God and confess that He is present to save, to heal, to deliver, and to restore.

Pray for others by proxy. Once you claim His presence, let your faith touch Him and recognize that He hears and is present to heal the one who is on your heart.

Don't be caught in an attitude of denying that healing is for today. God has never stopped healing people. People were still being healed after His resurrection, according to the Book of Acts. He healed through the apostles, as Paul wrote in Galatians 3:5: "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

The miracles didn't stop; God continued to work in the Galatian church by the Holy Spirit, and the same Spirit is still working. God could, God would, God did, and God will. He continues to heal today.

God is present to heal right now. As we

claim His presence, our faith will touch Him. Unless there is a reason in the sovereign will of God, He will heal—without exception. Do not doubt what God can do, but say to the mountain of sickness, "Be cast into the sea." God is no respecter of persons. Our faith must be based on the irrevocable promise that we can have whatsoever we ask in prayer when we ask believing (Matthew 21:22).

This is a spiritual law of power in the presence of a spiritual provision—a promise from the Person of Jesus Christ, the Lord of our bodies. He is the God of the heart, the head, the eyes, and every other organ within us. He can strengthen muscles, heal from disease, and remove every negative effect of sickness and disease.

Healing comes from Jesus Christ and goes into us. We may or may not sense our healing right away, but we will know by God's grace that we are healed. Believe God. Don't walk by sight or by feelings. Rather, walk in praise and thanksgiving that God could, God would, God did, and God will.

CONCLUSION

Just like the blind man who obeyed and went to the pool, or the man who stretched out his withered arm, we will be asked to take steps of faith. Sometimes Jesus reached out *His* hand, and at other times He simply spoke a word. But so many times, He wants us to be like the man who hadn't walked for thirty-eight years—to take up our bed and walk with a faith that acts toward Jesus Christ.

Let the presence and power of God penetrate with the virtue of the Word and the presence of His grace and love to heal. Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). All of His promises are "Yea." If we ask anything in His name, He will do it. In practical, simple faith, we can ask Him to heal our body, emotions, and mind (conscious, subconscious, and unconscious). He will deliver us from habits and work in our midst like never before.

Touch the place where healing is needed. If it

is your heart, touch your heart. The law of faith is at work. Jesus Christ is in every believer right now. In Nazareth, He was present to heal, but they were not healed because they were familiar with His presence.

Though our theological concepts might be good, many of us do not understand that God Almighty is *in* us. And He is in us to heal. In John 14:17-20, while Jesus was on earth, He said, "I am *with* you, but later on I will be *in* you." Though they had His physical presence with them, God did not indwell men until Pentecost. We are so much better off today! Still, we don't grasp what it means that God is in us, yet it is the law of spiritual life: We *know* it, but it needs to become our experience.

We are alive at the most unusual time in Church history. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are in us. Grace and power are in us. Let's release that power continually and go forward. God could. God would. God did. And God will! Just touch His presence and let Him heal you.

Health for the Bones

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The Word of God has so many unusual things to say to us, and I have often wondered about how I am to receive some of them. How am I supposed to understand certain principles? If I understand them, then maybe I can understand how to experience them.

One of the areas where my understanding is limited is in the area of healing. I think all of us possess some kind of limitation in our belief system concerning health, sickness, and healing. We can see in the Scriptures just how much God wants His people to be healthy in mind, in heart, and in body. The Bible is full of promises related to this subject.

In these pages, we examine what God means when He speaks to us about how His Word makes us healthy, happy people in the plan of God.

Chapter One

GOD HEALETH THEE

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

"And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

"And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the

LORD that healeth thee.

"And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters" (Exodus 15:22-27).

"And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.

"But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel" (Exodus 11:6-7).

God put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel, and He said that "none of these diseases"—the diseases that plagued Egypt—would be put upon Israel. Was this something that only pertained to Israel and her relationship to Egypt? I search for the answer to this question.

Doctors are great searchers. The medical community explores and researches the anatomy of the human body, looking for answers. These men and women seek answers. Where does this disease come from? How can we counteract its effects? What is the proper way of prevention? These are all legitimate questions from honest minds. Today they use tools such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging to construct a two-dimensional view of the inner workings of

the human body, searching for answers to our problems. By using new technology to look deep into the tissues, they can find causes and effects that previously were unattainable through traditional exams. In some cases, they can identify a problem and deal with it before it has a chance to worsen.

We are people built for searching. God made us fearfully, wonderfully, and curiously (Psalm 139:14-15), and we have a tendency to search out things and to wonder about things. To have questions is a good thing. Think of Solomon. He was a king whose wisdom excelled all wisdom. I believe that when he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, though he was weary of the world, we find the writing of a man who had not lost his sense of wonder and curiosity in the things of the Creator.

Order and Trust

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

"Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

"It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

"Honour the LORD with thy substance, and

with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

"So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Proverbs 3:5-10).

In going to the Word of God, I get something very precious. Health comes to my nerves and sinews. My bones are strengthened from the marrow on out. My approach to the Bible must be as a student of faith. I am a sanctified vessel in which faith is mixed with a meek spirit. It's a beautiful thing for the Word of God to bring health to me. The Word of God came forth, and there was the universe! That same Word of God that created all things now holds all things together. This Word of God also, as Proverbs 3 tells us, brings health to my body.

One of the keys to health is in having an understanding of true love. I must learn that I will never know true love until I really let God love me. Sure, I thank God for people and the love that they have for me. Still, true love only comes to me when I let God love me. Mercy is only true in my life when I let God be merciful to me. True grace is something I can only experience when I understand God's authority of grace.

One of the great problems in the Church today is the lack of true authority, which is given by grace, is exercised *in* grace, and loves mercy. In marriages, true love and true grace will pro-

duce true authority. As a result, there is a healthy atmosphere. Sometimes, the husband does not want God as his authority and the woman doesn't want the man for her authority. Some people love to work on the church's staff as long as there is no concrete authority. They come to work whenever they please, the quit for the day whenever they want, and then they wonder why the atmosphere in their offices is unhealthy. There is not necessarily a rebellious attitude present, but there is a misunderstanding of the authority of grace.

When order is missing, then health decays. Cancer is primarily uncontrolled growth in a cell structure. As these cells multiply outside of their proper order, they begin to suck away strength from healthy cells. The result, as many of us know all too well, can be deadly.

As I live under the authority of grace, then I am doing something that brings health and strength to my bones. My structure is very sound. My nervous system is well-guarded and responds properly to right initiations.

The Apple of God's Eye

The physical eye is so sensitive. Any harm is almost irreparable, therefore it is designed with many protective devices, and it feels any injury very intensely. In its origin, the "apple of the

eye" referred to the very center of the eye where we can see a minute reflection of ourselves when we get very, very close to someone. It almost appears that a little person is sitting on the eyeball. Zechariah 2:8 refers to Israel as the "apple" of God's eye, something cherished above all. God sees each of us this way, and this is the way it should be for every believer of God. We are precious to the Lord, and He wants to keep us and protect us. He made a clear pattern for us to follow. He has secured us in His Son. We are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3).

Chapter Two

THE RIGHT KIND OF MEDICINE

"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones" (Proverbs 12:4).

"A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones" (Proverbs 14:30).

A calm, undisturbed mind brings health to a person's physical body. I have a provision from my nervous system. Once, when I was on a trip out West, I struggled through a nervous time. It was the first time in my life that I could ever remember this happening to me. The answer for the situation was to let my wife talk with me.

"Just talk please—I am not sure what I am feeling right now," I told her. There was no health issue as far as I knew. There were no financial or marital difficulties. I just felt anxious at that moment.

I found that several others were experiencing this same problem. All of us were eating decently and exercising in the right ways. None of us understood the reason behind these sensations.

There was no envy or jealousy that would stir up such thoughts. It was obviously an atmospheric attack of some sort.

My wife was an amazing help at this moment, and she took the opportunity as a great privilege. I just asked her to be with me and to edify me. I would soon feel healthy again. Those things went away from me. God beautifully intervened and brought joy and peace and laughter to the room. This was a Proverbs 15:30 moment in my mind: "The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat."

The Word of God strengthens me. It helps my nervous system to operate in its proper capacity. By God's grace and by the power of the Holy Spirit, my body is going to be made healthy. I have something that is going to help my bones.

Having "fat bones," bones filled with healthy bone marrow, is so vital to our physical bodies. New white and red blood cells, which fight off infections and bring a continual supply of life-giving substance to every cell in the body, are generated from the marrow. Good news from the Word of God does something in the very place where life is really sustained!

Pleasant Words

"Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is

folly.

"The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

"Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (Proverbs 16:22-24).

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

This is the kind of medicine I need every day. I just really need to hear some pleasant words and to laugh a little bit. If these verses are true, and we know that they are, then good, godly conversation and healthy, wholesome laughter builds up my heart and my marrow.

Perhaps the best way to understand pleasant words is to recognize what they are not. All of us have felt or have seen others feel the sting of damaging comments and the hurt of foolish talking. The unexpected slight, a harsh criticism, a mean-spirited curse—these things do offend and they do wound. It is so important for us to be careful with our words. Sticks and stones do break bones, but words can ever hurt some people. Some folks are just fragile. A sharp comment can leave marks and push someone down the road to discouragement or even depression.

Happy hearts and cheerful minds—these are what each one of us wants. A humorous, happy

spirit can bring such healing to a situation, to an office, to a home. Such relaxation comes in so that the bones and marrow rejoice and function in their design.

Chapter Three

LET THE WORD DO THE WORK

"The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

"For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1-4).

In the Word of God, if I discover the categories of doctrine that come through the pages, then I begin to experience health in my bones. It appears, from the Scriptures, that God wants me to be healthy. He wants me to be made whole. I want to impart this reality to myself and to others.

God can remove obstacles; He can smooth the path of pain and failure. This happens when we intimately acknowledge Him in a personal way, by faith. He doesn't want to put upon us

the plagues that Egypt had to endure. The attacks that went upon that worldly society were all in direct relation to the idol gods the nation was bowing before.

We are different, and the Lord wants to exhibit that difference to the world. The world watches how a Christian faces terminal illness and then how an unsaved person faces it. God makes a difference, and it can become a very beautiful thing to witness.

Think with God

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

"For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

"In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Colossians 3:1-10).

Thinking with God has plenty to do with how healthy we feel. Sound hearts have sound bodies. We have tremendous potential to allow faith to make us whole.

I really want to learn all of these great lessons. I think I am growing in my understanding of them, but I still have a long way to go with them. We talk about being more "practical"—and what could be more practical than caring for our health?

If my heart is right with God, then I can get my bones healthy, my skin healthy, and my nerves healthy. I can see better when I am seeing with the eyes of the Spirit. I believe this is true both physically and spiritually. The heart is so very, very precious.

God really wants us to understand this and teach us to care for it. It encompasses all the attributes of God. I believe the Lord is trying to teach us how big a role the Word of God plays in our health. It is very practical, very real, and

very valuable.

CONCLUSION

"The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

"My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

"Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

"For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

"Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

"Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil" (Proverbs 4:19-27).

We have a great advantage over unbelievers. We know at what we stumble. We see the reason for our troubles. It is that the Word of God is not rightly applied in our lives. In choosing not to at-

tend to the words of the Lord, we miss out on the great provision of good health that it can bring .

The effect of the Word on my health is so much bigger a provision than I can even remotely imagine. God tells me that His Word helps my bones. He tells me that His Word helps my nerves. He tells me that His Word helps my heart. I know people who have been totally helped. Such testimonies are so precious and real. His promises are to be claimed. They belong to us. Let's consider the wonderful works of God.

Expect Him to do something every day.

Expect Him to do things in His compassion.

Expect God to do mighty works in us and through us.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith, trusting His character and love for you and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)*.

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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Healthy Emotions

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Emotions are a vital part of being human. We feel things. Our senses stimulate feelings, and it is not wrong to have feelings. God gave us these things so that our praise and worship of Him would bring about a result. When we are rightly related to the Lord and to His Word, our emotions will operate in a healthy way. They will respond, which is what they were created for. Our responses will be true, honest, lovely, and pure (see Philippians 4:8).

The problems that we have with our emotions are really problems of order. What we feel should never take the lead in our decision-making, for we have been equipped with a mind and a heart. Right thinking produces right responses. Our responses are really the result of our choices. God equipped us with volition, which is the power to choose. The information we receive and store in our minds and hearts should provide right counsel for right choices. Right choices will lead to right feelings and healthy emotions.

Right thinking is thinking with God accord-

ing to the Scriptures. But in today's world, emotions and feelings have been exalted above right thinking. This has produced trouble in many hearts. Depression has debilitated so many. So few really know the true love of God, so they follow the guide of their emotions and often wind up defeated and discouraged.

This booklet will examine how emotions must be put in context. It will reveal the God-designed place emotions are to occupy so that they can serve and not rule the believer in his worship and walk with Jesus Christ.

Chapter One

DEPRESSION, REACTION AND RESPONSE

"Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

"For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

"For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

"I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

"Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

"Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me" (Philippians 2:25-30).

In this chapter in Philippians, we get a picture of Epaphroditus and his situation. I believe that this pastor was suffering from a bona fide depression. His depression had nothing to do with anger, self-image, personal sin, or resentment. His feelings at this time were the result of the purity of his love and a broken heart because of a longing to be with people he loved.

Various forms of depression develop from various behaviors, and all behavior is the result of certain choices related to certain causes. I am explaining these categories very generally. Please don't take these definitions in a medical or clinical sense. But I am describing these forms of depression to provide you with a measure of spiritual understanding.

There are natural causes, supernatural causes, and multiple causes for depression. One form of depression represents an inability to function socially. Clinical depression reveals a possibility that something is wrong in the chemical balance of our bodies. A person's body chemistry can be affected when he experiences something tremendous and traumatic.

Any one of us may experience some form of depression because of a wrong focus if we simply center ourselves on something outside of Christ and His Word. This distortion continues until we refocus ourselves on the right object of

our faith.

A poor self-image may spring up in people when they internalize a sense of rejection, and their feelings and emotions are allowed to assume control. Perhaps we feel that we are not as successful as we would like to be. This feeling is very often the result of wrong ambition.

Depression is often caused by wounds—the strokes that hit people in the unconscious and subconscious mind (Isaiah 30:26). When these strokes fester into wounds, they paralyze capacities to function in the receptivity of grace and truth. A person who is easily angered in his emotions is most likely a very wounded person. His wounds probably are very deep, and he does not know how to regulate his responses. This brings feelings of guilt and defeat. These issues must be resolved by the grace and love of Christ.

Corporate Reactions

To leaders, I want to say this: When you begin to be blessed in your ministry, be watchful for momentum tests. Your success is noticed by the enemy, and his program is one of distraction, hindrance, and perversity. The devil wants to get you off track and out of the plan of God. My charge to you is this: Don't get foolish, don't get careless. Watch for momentum tests. After great victories, there can come great temptations.

We need to lead people into decreasing so that Christ may increase by faith. Christ increases in whatever growth He gives us. Our churches should be made up of people who grow together in grace. Success should be a humbling thing. It should prompt us to decrease in the flesh and increase in Christ. Any victory we experience comes by grace through faith. It should be as water upon the soil of our hearts. There should be great growth.

No matter how spiritual I am, I am always very close to deception. My heart is deceitful. It is desperately wicked. Even at my best, I am just a decision away from turning toward evil and being driven along by feelings and emotion. You would be shocked at how circumstances could distract us into betrayal through sight and emotions. We can fall into human evaluations very easily. Therefore, we must learn to guard our hearts and keep them from being deceived.

Think with God and learn to make right decisions in grace and faith.

Chapter Two

THE KEY TO GUARDING YOUR HEART

"Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

"And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

"For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give

you an heart of flesh.

"And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

"And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

"I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.

"And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen" (Ezekiel 36:22-30).

Let me begin this chapter by talking about what the heart is and what it is not. I need to be able to examine my heart without entering into condemnation. I need to allow God to reveal my real motivations, for the heart is the supreme center of all motivation.

The heart is also communicational center for all of my thoughts, all of my responses, and all of my experiences in word and in deed. It is the place where my emotions respond, appreciate, or depreciate. It is the place where my decisions are made.

You may look up some little commentary and find another definition for the heart. Some refer to it as the seat of affections. But that is en-

tirely too narrow a definition. The heart is so important and so vital to all that we are.

When you received Christ, God gave you a new heart and new spirit. It comes in this order because the Word of God produces the substance and abundance in our hearts that will develop the God-consciousness of our human spirits. Therefore, it is very important that we keep our hearts covered and protected.

Clear, Doctrinal Thinking

First of all, a believer must develop a thorough understanding of positional truth and recognize this as the wall of fire that it is for us (see Zechariah 2:1-5). God has purchased us by His blood. He saw us in Himself from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). He will never leave us nor forsake us (Joshua 1:9; Hebrews 13:5).

Next, always remember that Bible doctrine is the mind of Christ on every subject. It is the inspiration and power of God's Kingdom. When I have the mind of Christ and live in the inspiration of God's Kingdom, I am not double-minded. My heart is not divided.

"Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made

goodly images.

"Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images" (Hosea 10:1-2).

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8).

Keeping fear out of the equation is so important. Fear freezes people from going on with their lives. We are human, and we do fail. When we fail, we must not accept thoughts of condemnation and intimidation. Ignore the projection that comes saying, "Surely, you will do this again." The law of fear has been overcome by the law of life and love that comes to us from Christ Himself.

Perfect love casts out fear. If you do find yourself failing again in the same area, refuse the condemning thought and confess it to God. Isolate the failure, rebound, and go on, keeping the truth of your position in Christ in view.

Godly Relationships

Have fellowship with positive people. This is so important. We should avoid negative people unless, of course, we are counseling and ministering in some way. Negative people bring in an atmosphere, a field of influence. Their fields are fields of unbelief or, worse, carnality. We certainly can love negative people. We pray for them and

go as far as God leads in helping them. We never want to hurt them any more than they have already been hurt. Judging them does no good, so we should avoid that. Still, we must not receive the negativity that they project and confess.

Faith-filled people bring in faith-filled fields and atmospheres. These are the people I want to be around. Positive fellowship helps me keep my volition positive. In these circles of friends, I learn to confess positive Christianity with integrity and without rationalization. Humility is present and Christ lifts me out of emotional cycles that come from negative circumstances, sicknesses, or trials.

How Old Are You?

Personally, I need to recognize that God's mercies are new every morning. Every day is brand-new. Purpose never to become familiar with yourself, with Christ, or with the people that you know and love. Cast down the vain imaginations of mid-life crises. Pride is at the root of such an attitude.

People really don't know how old they are so they talk of having a "mid-life crisis" and the problems of getting older. People who are over-occupied with growing old have heart problems, their self-esteem suffers, and their self-evaluation sinks lower and lower. Negative measures

of self-consciousness cause them to withdraw into their emotions and toward diverse forms of sublimation that become available.

Please remember that seemingly young people may be very close to the end of their days on earth. Guard your heart against the wrong estimate of the "now." This moment is all that's guaranteed. Live in it with Christ. Experience the Holy Spirit's joy right here and right now.

Chapter Three

VICTORIOUS LIVING

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:28-30).

God is working His grace into us so that we can deny ungodliness and worldly lust. His design is for our lives to be filled with doctrine so that we can function by faith in this present evil world. The Lord must work grace and peace into me because nothing else will drive out the negative tendencies toward frustration, defeat, and rejection.

Without having a doctrinally oriented heart, it would be very easy for us to be carried away

by the various winds of influence that blow into our lives. Satan, who is a wily and crafty adversary, preys upon our weaknesses. His methods are developing constantly. He keeps attacking believers in their soft spots, promoting lasciviousness and sensual thought patterns. When our emotions latch on to these patterns, our behavior is affected, and we choose to do things in emotionally reactive ways.

God, however, can work into us the right patterns of thinking. We can see His work in us, and we can experience great deliverance.

God is love. We are under an eternal covenant. God is all-grace, all-mercy, and all-patient. He can wait me out. My emotional cries do not move Him. He knows why I am where I am, and He knows what the result of my situation will be.

The Lord works into me grace, mercy, and patience. My right choices to receive His truth regarding these areas establish me in the substance of His attributes. His quality of life now takes the place of what was in me before. Rivers of living water begin springing up in me. Problems are worked out and the characteristics of God's nature are worked in.

The result? I have healthy emotions that respond to truth—and *only* to truth.

I am sorry to say that this is a process. It doesn't happen instantaneously. God leads us in a circumspect walk with Him. Refusing to receive condemnation in this process is the key for my emotional health. Condemnation only strengthens the grip of my weakness upon my emotions.

That's why I follow hard after God and walk in the light of Truth. That is the only way. It is how Christ led the apostle Paul, as we can see from reading Romans 7 as it leads into Romans 8. Paul did not condemn himself while being confronted with his weaknesses. Neither did he accept his weaknesses or let them control him. He hated the wretched old man and the sin nature attached to him. Still, Paul saw that there was no use in self-condemnation.

Our victory starts with grasping this reality: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). My sentence of condemnation was fulfilled at the Cross. The blood of Christ sealed my pardon under the New Covenant. Now the law of the Spirit of Life reigns where once the law of sin and death was in charge.

The righteousness of Christ has been fulfilled

in us, for it could never have been fulfilled *by* us. Our instructions now are to follow after the Spirit and to ignore the initiations of our carnal minds. We must let God lead us in Truth, and the Truth will fill our hearts as we operate in faith.

All Things Work Together

God promised that He will make all things work together for good (Romans 8:28). We may fall into trouble, but the Spirit groans for us, initiates toward us, and attempts to draw us back into full fellowship. Everything that we experience, the Father uses for our sake.

Allow me to close with those great verses from Romans 8. Let these words keep your heart and guard your mind. Let God's Truth speak to your emotions. Let this be the basis for all of your responses in life:

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

"As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:31-39).

CONCLUSION

You have read this booklet. It was put into your hands with an eternal purpose. What these truths from the Bible can do is transform your memory center. Your mind and heart have been renovated in some way. Perhaps the purpose of God has been reemphasized in your heart as never before.

But remember how fickle we can be as hearers. We are so forgetful sometimes. Things can be snatched from us because of moments of indecision and slothfulness. Meditate on what you have read and what you hear from your pulpit and what you get when you read the Bible for yourself. The Living Word stored up inside of you is what will keep your thinking straight and your emotions healthy.

All the communications of the Holy Spirit will make deep changes inside of you. You will grow into a living epistle of truth. Casual and foolish ideas will become very apparent to you. Reflection and meditation shall draw you into fellowship with the Spirit. Renewal and intense

rehearsal of truth will take you beyond yourself. It will give you peace that passes understanding. You will be fitted for all spiritual battles.

When trouble comes, practice the Truth and sing to yourself in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Those melodies will stabilize you and guide you. Joy will be your strength.

Hear Him Gladly

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

There are so many illustrations throughout the Word of God of how the Lord poured out His heart to the common people. Of course, God so loved the world—the *whole* world. And, yes, He did die for the sins of the whole world. But in terms of communication, Jesus Christ was always looking for that common person with a humble and open heart to share His Word with.

Do you see why He used this method? It is because the common people would hear Him gladly. They accepted what Jesus said, for He spoke as one having authority.

It is interesting to me that the people who argued and battled Jesus with religious rhetoric were the people who thought they were something. The Pharisees and Sadducees and the scribes, the "upper crust" of the religious crowd challenged everything He did and said. But those who knew they were nothing opened their ears and their hearts and received what Jesus had to

say.

I will never forget how one visiting preacher gave a great testimony of how he was delivered from being a somebody, became a nobody, and was gloriously saved from what he called "the top of the social manure heap." He was very wealthy and owned many things, but he did not have eternal life. "But then I was bathed in the Blood of the Lamb," he said. The night he spoke at our church, the people heard and responded gladly to the message of the Gospel.

God is looking for those people who are common in their own eyes, but who can be very rich with the Lord. This booklet will show how those who hear Him gladly are transformed through eternal life.

Chapter One

OUR LEARNING SHOULD LEAD TO LOVE

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

"And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

"And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

"And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:29-33).

God never gives us strength for anything but to love God. In a symbolic illustration, the original language brings out that in Greece, in ancient times, a father would instruct his children to use all their strength to build up the land and to take care of the family. The children were taught these principles at a very young age, and they were trained to give all of their strength to their father, who was the head of the home. In correlation, this means that we are to pour out every bit of our strength into loving God. All the energy we have is for this purpose: to love Jesus Christ and to serve Him in all that we do.

I was thinking of the people who do not love God with all of their understanding. With everything we understand in life, we are to love God. The purpose of an education, with each subject and every aspect of discipline and study, is that we would learn to love Him with that knowledge. If you are studying biology, for example, you are learning about how well God's creation works. You may learn about photosynthesis, the chemical process that causes to the grass to be green; or you might learn about mitosis, the process by which cells divide and form a new life. No matter how simple or complex, the purpose of knowing these things is ultimately to

love the One who made the earth.

Many go to college to become schoolteachers. Some Christian schoolteachers learn to teach, but Spirit-filled schoolteachers learn to love God with what they learn. While teaching is their occupation, serving Jesus Christ is their vocation.

If you work in a factory, learn to see God in the thing that you are doing at the factory. Do your job with all your strength. Love God with what you are doing with your hands. God asks us to love Him with all of our hearts. The heart speaks of the center of our existence with all of our understanding. Everything we know about life is to be used to love God. No subject should be detached from loving God. Our quest for knowledge must be motivated by the quality of life that is in the Lord Jesus Christ. He fulfills all of our knowledge with His presence and His wisdom through His science of learning.

Presenting Your Offering

"If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering…."

"And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty;

"Or if his sin, which he hath sinned, come to his knowledge: then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned" (Leviticus 4:3, 27-28).

Notice what these verses tell us. When a priest sinned, a bullock had to be offered. This was an expensive and precious animal in those days. These animals were worth more than any animal in the whole camp. It was the most expensive offering you could offer to God. If a ruler sinned, he had to bring a male goat for his sin offering. That was the second most costly animal.

If, however, a common person sinned, he had a choice to bring either a female goat or a female lamb. These were animals everyone in the camp was to have, and they were inexpensive compared to the offerings made by the priests and the rulers. If anyone lacked one of those animals, he could offer another animal because God made special provisions for the com-

mon people. For this reason, the common people heard Jesus gladly. Though He was rich, yet He became poor, that through His poverty we might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Throughout my ministry, I have been involved with all classes of people. And I'll tell you, the common folks are the ones who listen to the messages. Which people love to pray? The common folks. Who are the ones who go out and witness? The common folks. Those who are common by the world's standards are the ones who hear Him gladly.

Chapter Two

GOD USES THE HUMBLE

"And the LORD said unto Gideon, the people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me…."

"So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with His tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise everyone that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

"And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water" (Judges 7:2, 5-6).

Of Gideon's three hundred, most of them were common people, including many from the poorest tribe in Israel. Thirty-two thousand were

in Israel's army to start with. But God tested the soldiers at the water. Most of them charged after the water, paying no attention to the potential oncoming enemy army. Yet, the three hundred stayed alert. They were more concerned about the enemy than they were about the water. God said to Gideon, "These are the ones I want. They are people who can stand the test."

Receive the Water of the Word

The water refers to the Word and the Holy Spirit. The test speaks of what God brings through the Word and the Holy Spirit upon everyone who fights the good fight of faith. Those who are more concerned about what they can get instead being prepared to face the enemy cannot be used in God's army to bring revival.

God uses common folk who hear Him gladly.

Nehemiah heard about the state of Jerusalem's walls and said, "We've got to rebuild the wall." You know who helped him build? The common people. The only ones who helped Nehemiah build were the common folks. He could not get any help from the wealthy Israelites.

To the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus was too

common. They rejected Him. "He's just a carpenter's son from Nazareth. How can He be the Messiah?" When Jesus went to the Cross, just four common people remained with Him—three women and one disciple. I can picture Him looking down at Calvary, saying to Himself, "The common folks are still with Me. They heard Me gladly. They didn't have the sham and the pretense and the wickedness of a superficial pseudo-culture."

Real Culture, Real Life

Culture? That is only worth something when people are right with God and living clean in the power of the Spirit. Everything else is mere pretense.

A truly cultured person is like the woman who doesn't have much, but she loves God, keeps her house, and lives clean, the best that she knows how. She serves God and keeps the ball rolling in her home, doing all she can to raise her children to be the Abraham Lincolns or the John Wesleys or the Amy Carmichaels or even the George Washingtons of today—to be like men and women who were common people who had character with God, and who made a lasting impact on the world.

Chapter Three

JESUS IDENTIFIES WITH US

"And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean" (Leviticus 12:8).

Of all the families He could have been born into when he came into the world, Jesus Christ was born to Mary and Joseph, a carpenter. When they brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord in His dedication ceremony, all they could afford to offer were pigeons and turtledoves (Luke 2:24).

They could not afford a lamb, so they brought what they could—pigeons or turtledoves, probably caught right in their backyard. And there was Jesus Christ, in that little body, and Mary, a little, humble, sweet mother, holding God Almighty and offering all she could give at that

time. “Lord, I don’t have much, but I offer these pigeons to You for this dedication.”

From the start, Jesus Christ identified Himself with the poor of this world. He was born into the poorest type of family in the world at that time, a family that could only offer turtledoves and pigeons.

When Philip told Nathaniel that he had found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, Nathaniel responded by asking, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46).

Nazareth was on the “wrong side of the tracks” as far as people in Israel were concerned. It was slum area, and that is where He grew up. That is the town He identified Himself with. The Word of God makes it clear that later on, His own community rejected Him (Matthew 13:53-58). Jesus identified Himself with poverty, with ignorance, with slum areas; He identified Himself with the common people and therefore they heard Him gladly.

He did not try to be politically correct to be accepted by certain groups. He identified with the common folks. The disciples whom Jesus chose were all recognized as “ignorant and unlearned men” (Acts 4:13). I can just hear some of

the people of the day criticizing Peter as he spoke. I am sure there were some who didn't appreciate that Peter was chosen to be the first preacher at Pentecost. I am glad that Peter got to do that. God could have used a brilliant, educated man like the apostle Paul. And his time would come. But the first sermon delivered in the power the Holy Spirit came from Peter.

Those Who Are Forgiven Much, Love Much

Think of the harlot who fell at Jesus' feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee, in Luke 7:36-50. She probably traveled three or four miles on foot, during a gloomy and dark time in Palestine. She had been living in sin, but she was tired of it.

She was just a common girl, a common prostitute, who started weeping on Jesus' feet and then wiped His feet with her hair.

Within Simon, a very religious man outwardly, the questions welled up. "What is Jesus doing? This is just a common woman of the street. She has no social value. Why is he letting her do that?"

Yet, Jesus loved her, and she heard Him gladly when He said, "Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace."

I was also thinking of Mary Magdalene, another woman of the street. Delivered from eight demons, she came from the worst part of town. When she got saved, she followed Jesus all the way to the Cross. She was also among the first at the tomb. She had to find her Master.

She heard Him gladly and was overjoyed when He called out to her, "Mary." At that moment, Mary Magdalene realized that her Master was alive.

Jesus Christ is alive. He is seated on His throne in heaven, at the right hand of the Father. the Holy Spirit is communicating to our hearts even today.

Hear Him gladly and rejoice.

CONCLUSION

I was thinking of all the times we go out witnessing and the different people we encounter. When we finally meet someone who is simply honest, sincere, original, and sweet, it is such a blessing. These are the so-called common people and they are the ones who hear Him gladly. They listen and receive the Truth.

Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were simple, uneducated people; yet, this is where Jesus abode at different times. A little, humble home was where Jesus liked to stay during His time on earth. He loved it there because He could have fellowship in honesty and sincerity and love.

When Lazarus died, Jesus wept (John 11). He saw how much His plan affected His friends. Mary and Martha were so hurt, but He allowed that death to happen for their benefit. He allowed it so that they and all the common people could see that Jesus Christ is the Resurrection

and the life.

Oh, I pray God will keep me common, keep me humble, so that I will hear Him gladly. Do you know what stops a revival of God? It is stopped when humble, common people get proud and start thinking that they are something they are not.

When a congregation is filled with common folks, a church made up of humble servants of God, He visits. In His presence, we can fellowship very transparently. Our communication with God and with each other becomes very loving as we develop and enjoy sweet, sweet relationships, all because of people who will hear Him gladly.

Hearing: The Key to Producing Fruit

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INTRODUCTION

"Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

The nature of God is to give. He is always speaking—giving encouragement, direction, and wise counsel. The key for us is to know how to hear Him. In this booklet, we will see that God's words, like seeds, must be received, and only those that fall on the well-prepared soil of a broken and contrite heart will bear fruit.

As we grow in understanding of this principle, we will see that the Father wants to clothe us with the glory of His Son. He may speak with a "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:9-13) or with the "voice of many waters" (Ezekiel 43:2). But when we hear Him, there will be no doubt who is speaking.

Chapter One

WHO WILL HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD?

"A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

"And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

"And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when [Jesus] had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear….

"…Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:5-8, 18).

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

The Word of God is extremely sacred; therefore, be more ready to hear, and let your words on earth be few, as Ecclesiastes 5:2 teaches. At the Bema Seat, the secret will be how you heard the Word of God. That is why, in Leviticus 14:16-17, as part of the cleansing process, the priest first anointed the ear—because of the importance of hearing properly—then the thumb, and, finally, the toe. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

The Wayside Hearer

"And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?"

"And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

"Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke 8:9-12).

Wayside hearers are not pleasant to be around. They easily find fault with others, yet they are not consistent in their walk with God. When they hear the Word of God, they believe. When the Gospel is preached, they profess to be saved. But very often, they are only "pre-salvation" believers, because they are not saved, as they never truly exercised faith in Christ.* The devil takes the seed of God's Word out of their hearts "lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12).

Only God knows who is truly saved. Many people say they are saved, but they are "pre-salvation" believers. The Word was taken out of their hearts before it had a chance to take root, and that is why they have no hunger for righteousness, no reverence for God, and no faith-obedience to the Word that was preached.

No Roots on Rocks, No Life among Thorns

"They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13).

Here we have the person who receives the Word of God on a rock. They hear the Word, and the Bible says they receive it "with joy." The seed

springs up but it never becomes rooted. These hearers believe for a while, but when temptation comes, they fall away.

"And they which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8:14).

The third hearer receives God's Word on thorny soil. These people hear the Word of God and may even go to Bible school and end up preaching. Then comes one of three things to choke out their life: the cares of this world; material riches; and the pleasures of this life.

Some isolated people profess Christ, go to your church, go to Bible school, and you assume they are saved. But the Word is choked by the cares of the world, materialism (either having riches or desiring them to the extent that they eliminate their capacity for the true riches found in Christ), and then the pleasures of this life. They bring forth no fruit to maturity. Anything they appear to have is temporal—not eternal—from a temporal attempt to be saved without Christ. Ultimately, God doesn't even chastise these people because they were never His children (Hebrews 12:6, Matthew 7:23).

The Good Soil

"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).

In the parable, three kinds of hearers never went on with God. Remember, some will hear and go forth with the Gospel. But they that hear the Word of God with an honest and good heart keep the Word that they hear. Oh, they still have to go through a process. They have to use rebound when they fail, but they bring forth fruit with patience.

We as Christians shine as lights to the world (Philippians 2:15-16). Jesus said that if you have a candle, you don't hide it under a bushel (Luke 11:33). It will have no oxygen, and the light will go out. But if you place it high upon a lamp stand, it will light up the whole house and be seen through the whole city.

Please Pay Attention

Then in Luke 8:18 He said, "Take heed…." In other words, "Please pay attention. Take heed how you hear." This will be the whole key to re-

ceiving rewards at the Bema Seat: how you hear, what you hear, when you hear, and what you do with what you hear.

No one can bear fruit without a root, and we are to be rooted and grounded in Christ (Colossians 2:7). Therefore, take heed how you hear. To those who hear, God will give more. And from those who do not hear, God takes away what they *seemed* to have but never truly had (Luke 8:18).

This solemn passage in Luke 8 tells of four listeners. The devil took away the first crowd lest they believe and get saved. He was able to take away the second crowd, because they never had any root. And the third crowd never had any fruit.

Now, contrast those three to another kind of listener. Someone who is ungodly, who may have committed some of the worst sins that you could ever imagine, will be justified. He must only believe that the Lord Jesus Christ shed His blood on Calvary, died, was buried, and rose again to pay for his sins.

**Read* Salvation: Profession or Possession? *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Two

JUSTIFICATION

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

What does it mean to be justified? Justification is a divine decree through divine knowledge —not foreknowledge, but *divine* knowledge.

God knows by divine knowledge that we are saved. He made a divine decree based upon His omniscience.

According to Romans 4, if Abraham were justified by his good works, he could glory in himself but not before God. Yet in spite of his failures, Abraham believed God; therefore, God called him righteous. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). That is justification.

No matter what he is like, a man or woman who is justified by God has exercised a faith that truly believes on Him—a personal faith, not an abstract faith. It is not an impersonal faith as the demons have. They believe and go to hell (James 2:19). What are the results of having this personal, living faith? God justifies those people *while* they are ungodly. Their faith is counted as faith-righteousness, and then they enter into the results of having a life of faith.

The Result of Faith-Righteousness: An Inward Call

"Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

When we yielded to the inward call, there came an inward power and inward peace because of the Holy Spirit that indwells us, Christ inside of us, and the Father inside of us. The Trinity came inside and produced the newness of life.

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also [raised,] in the likeness of his resurrection:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [Christ], that the body of sin might be destroyed…"—and here's the key—"…that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:5-6). Though we fail and rebound, we do not serve the sin, so there is a change in our lives.

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Corinthians 12:27). A person who gets saved isn't the same person he was before he received Christ. He is transformed. According to Romans 5:1, when we were saved we were justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and we entered into union with Christ, the Head, as particular members to function as His body here on earth (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

At salvation we were sanctified by the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). Something happened. We received an inward call, and we honored an inward call.

The Outward Call

Enoch preached to an ungodly generation (Jude 14, 15).

In Hebrews 11:7, while Noah was building the ark, the world was being condemned. Every time he put the hammer to the nail, they were getting an outward call. Except for Noah's im-

mediate family, not one of them got saved. Not one. They never received the gift of repentance (Jeremiah 31:18-19*a*). But they did have an outward call.

When there is only an outward call without yielding to an inward call, there is no hunger for righteousness, no necessity to follow God, no intimacy with Christ. A person may be morally upright while he lacks an inward call.

An Inward Call

When you get an inward call, it burns like a fire (Isaiah 4:4). As in Jeremiah 20:9, when Jeremiah was going through tremendous trials and was ready to give up, the Word of God, like a fire, was burning in his bones.

An inward call keeps a man going and going, trusting and rebounding when he needs to, but always going on, believing. When obstacles try to keep him down, the inward call keeps him redeeming the time (Ephesians 5:16), making plans with an eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:11) through the divine decrees of the counsel of God's will (Ephesians 1:11).

The inward call burns on the inside and keeps a man from practicing sin. He cannot do it. He has an inward conviction, an inward fel-

lowship, and an inward union with God.

Romans 6:1 says, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." With an inward call comes regeneration (Titus 3:5). If we are born again and try to live in sin, we will be lovingly chastised until we come through with the love, peace, and joy of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 12:11).

The inward call results in having a transformation and a renewed mind, and becoming part of a local church with one pastor-teacher, a worldwide vision, a Finished Work message, and a Word of God revival that goes on day in and day out. That is the effect of an inward call.

With an inward call, we don't go to church operating in subjectivity because we don't get offended (Psalm 119:165). Subjectivity without the objectivity of the Word of God is a dangerous thing in a person's life. Subjective listeners are deceived into being the subject without being filled with the Holy Spirit and becoming the object of Christ as the Living Word inside. They imagine that all sorts of things are going on around them. They don't think they are subjective—but they are.

We are quickened according to the Word of God (Psalm 119:154), and His Word becomes

powerful in our lives (Hebrews 4:12), and it is written on the inward parts (Jeremiah 31:33). It is not superficial. It is inward (Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16).

The Outworking of an Inward Call

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

"For whom he did foreknow [because of omniscience], he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

"Moreover whom he did predestinate [plan], them he also called: and whom he called [with an inward call], them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:28-30).

Remember what it means to be justified: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). This person has an inward call. He is willing to be changed and transformed by the Holy Spirit. He is willing to enter into divine viewpoint, using recovery and growing in grace and knowledge of a living Person.

No, Not a Whit of Condemnation!

Often we refer to the original language texts of the Bible to reveal something that English words do not adequately describe. Romans 8:1, for example, uses a double emphasis. It doesn't just say "no condemnation." It says, "No, not a whit."

The letter of the law condemned the apostle Paul, even after he had been an effective and faithful pastor for many years. But in Romans 7:20, he confessed "Now if I do evil, I know it is no longer I, but sin that dwells in me." After going through terrible problems with his flesh, which he referred to several times in Romans 7, Paul came to a divine conclusion by the Holy Spirit. He said, "I thank God! With the mind, I serve the law of God; but with the flesh, I serve the old sin nature" (see Romans 7:25).

Then, in Romans 8:1, he uses the language to express that there was in fact "no, not a whit of condemnation." Why? Because, "…what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3).

Just as the east wind drove back the waters

so the children of Israel could leave Egypt and pass through the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21), so the law of the Spirit of life has overcome the law of sin and death. And just as the law of aerodynamics takes an airplane beyond the limits of the law of gravity, even so the life of Jesus Christ overcomes the law of sin and death. And this is why: "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" who are inside of Christ (Romans 8:4). Can you see the beauty of this correlation of Scriptures? We have been called with an *inward* call.

Many Christians do not demonstrate the inward call to go on with God. But when a believer keeps yielding to the inward call, he can't help but have a fire burning inside, because his purpose is his Redeemer and Creator, God Almighty. It is the Kingdom of God that he seeks (Matthew 6:33). It is the single eye spoken of in Matthew 6:22 that he desires.

The world has no attractions to him, nor pleasures of this life. He casts the cares of this world on Jesus (1 Peter 5:7). The Word that he has received is not choked by the cares of this world, because it was planted in good soil (Matthew 13:7-8). The Word is a living Word, and by it we become living epistles (2 Corinthians 3:2).

Chapter Three

FEAR NOT THOU WORM

"For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 41:13-14).

After we receive the inward call, and we believe, and we are saved, Romans 8:31*b* says, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" God is for us. He has justified us. There is no condemnation. Everything will work together for good for us, because we have responded to an inward call. He doesn't see our faults. He doesn't see disappointments. He doesn't see things in our lives that do not pertain to His life in us. If we fail, we will use the principle of rebound (Proverbs 24:16), and He will lovingly work with us. He will give us grace to help us, as long as we are willing to be helped.

God enters into partnership with worms. Isaiah 41:14 says, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob,… I will help thee."

He said, "Jacob, you are a worm. That is already declared. But I will help you."

Yes, God is in partnership with worms. But if there is an inward call, those "worms" become men of God.

If God is for us, who can be against us? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

Can anyone lay a charge to God's elect (Romans 8:33)? People think they can, but they cannot. It is Christ that justifies us, and He saves *wretched* men (Romans 7:24). Called by God to be an apostle, Paul was in Arabia for three years, studying and being personally discipled by the Holy Spirit. Yet, after he had walked closely with the Lord as God's ambassador to the Gentiles, he was still wretched. But, while Romans 7 reveals the battles Paul faced, Romans 8 reveals God's solution.

Who Do You Think You Are?

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is

even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34). This "who" refers to people, and people cannot undo the Finished Work. People can't condemn us.

The law can't condemn us, because it has been fulfilled (Romans 10:4), and it is fulfilled in us (Romans 8:4). The old sin nature can't condemn us because, in the omniscience of God, it is crucified. Satan cannot effectively be against us because we are inside of Christ (Colossians 3:3), and Satan can't get in there (Revelation 12:10-11).

God is for us, so who will be against us? No one.

The Perfect Tense

Several Bible verses use what is known as a "prophetic tense," which refers to something already accomplished in the future. For example, Isaiah 43:25 says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Though the Crucifixion hadn't happened yet, the Holy Spirit was speaking about its effects as though it had. That is called a prophetic tense.

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return

unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isaiah 44:22). The Lord was saying to Israel, "As a cloud disappears after the rain falls and the sunshine evaporates what remains, the same thing happened to your sins. Therefore, return to Me. I have redeemed thee, and I can't remember your sins." That is a past tense that is accomplished in the future.

We have been called, justified, and glorified. That is a past tense, speaking about our heavenly position, which was accomplished in the past on the Cross. Even though we still sin and live in bodies of death, God sees us as spotless: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4).

And having redemption through the Blood, we have received the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7)—a past tense already accomplished forever—because of the inward call that we accepted by grace through faith and not of ourselves.

Isn't it wonderful that the law can't condemn us? that our sin nature can't condemn us? that the devil can't condemn us, even when he's right? Isn't it wonderful that people can't con-

demn us when we are wrong? They can make us accountable, but they cannot condemn us.

Shall Circumstances Condemn Us?

The next "who" refers to circumstances that cannot condemn us.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35).

No, circumstances won't condemn us if we are living in the inward call.

"As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:36-39).

Nothing that man will ever create can separate us from God's love, including the atomic bomb or some new thrill in sin.

God said, "Listen: The law can't condemn you. Your old sin nature can't do it." God will not let Satan condemn us (Zechariah 3). People can't condemn us because they are not sinless. One would have to be sinless to condemn someone else. In John 8:7, Jesus said "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone…." Circumstances can't do it. And any new thing ever created can't condemn us because of the inward call.

Our salvation is sealed forever. It is an eternal decree. It is a fact, according to God who is omniscient. Therefore, we have the inward call, the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and the Word of God dwelling in us. We belong to God the Father. We are His forever. We belong to Him (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). He belongs to us.

And this is why you need to be sure that you have an inward call.

An Inward Call Goes Outside of Self

In Acts 16:25-33, Paul was in jail with Silas. An earthquake destroyed the prison, and when the jailer knew that the prisoners were free, he planned to kill himself. He had the sword ready, but Paul said, "We're all here. Don't kill yourself."

In verse 30, the jailer said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Paul shared the Gospel to the jailer's whole household, and they believed. They washed the wounds Paul and Silas received in prison, then they all were baptized.

That jailer got baptized by immersion the same night he was saved. His whole family became saved because he responded positively to Jesus Christ with an inward call.

Think of how many people have received an outward call who have never responded to the inward call. They go to churches, they go to Bible college, and they may even become missionaries—yet they never really got to know God. That is why they battle the Bible and living by every word of God. They try to be interested, and they try to go on. They try to become "set apart." They try to go forward, and they try so hard to be faithful, but they can't be. There is nothing there inwardly to make it happen.

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God with the inward call that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. So do all things without murmur-

ings and disputings" (see Philippians 2:12*b*-14).

If people are always easily offended, all they have is an outward call.

The person with an inward call is not easily offended. The inward call is to love as God loves and to believe the best, and to think the best, and to know the best, and to believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things (1 Corinthians 13).

The inward call will make us consider it a privilege to love someone who offends us without needing an explanation, knowing that there must be a reason that we know nothing about that is bound up in the precious life of that person. In a case I am thinking of, after years of total rejection, and now with a disease, this person is in a battle way beyond imagination. But that person will come through because of an inward call.

Having an inward call means that you believe that Jesus Christ shed His blood, died, was buried, and rose again—and you believe it *personally*. When you really believe with all your heart, then He does the regenerating. The Holy Spirit comes in to seal your eternal salvation, to place you in union with Christ.

We respond to the call, and He does the rest.

He comes on the inside, there is a difference, and our lives will begin to change immediately because of an inward call. And we will keep growing with God when we keep yielding to the inward call to go on with God.

CONCLUSION

Some hear the Word and believe, but it is taken away from them by the devil. Some hear the Word of God with joy, but they have no roots. For a while they believe, then temptation comes, and they fall away.

Some hear the Word of God and study and go forth to be pastors and missionaries. But the Word is choked by the cares of life, riches, materialism (either by experience or desire), and the pleasures of this life.

But those who are fruitful hear the Word of God and keep it. We are not perfect, but we bring forth fruit with patience. It takes patience. It requires rebounding when we fail. But with an honest heart, a reverence for God, and an inward call to go forward, nobody can make us quit.

Dear Lord, thank You that You are always speaking to us through the Word we have heard. We are grateful that Your Holy Spirit lives inside of us,

prompting us when we are forgetful hearers. Thank You for keeping us in Your perfect plan. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hearing the Voice of the Lord

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Think of it carefully, study it prayerfully,
Deep in thine heart let its oracles dwell.
Ponder its mysteries, slight not its histories,
None can e'er love it too fondly or well."

Every time I consider the lines of this poem, I am broken. Oh, the Word of God is unfathomable. Yet, so many Christians choose to ignore the voice of God. They just will not make themselves available to hear Him speak to them.

Throughout my years of ministry, I have found that many marriages and relationships do not work well for one reason: The people involved do not choose to hear God speak. They will not receive the Word of God in meekness, therefore they cannot speak for Him to the other party. They do not have His mind.

This is a very important booklet. It details the vital principle of hearing God through the Word, through His Spirit, and through pulpits

that honor His Word. My prayer is that we will let the truth penetrate our hearts and inspire many of us to ask God to give us an ear to hear His voice in these perilous days.

Chapter One

HEARING GOD WITH NO EXCUSE

"And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

"And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

"And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:11-13).

"And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth"

(1 Samuel 3:10).

"Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.

"Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 3:12-13).

"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD" (Jeremiah 22:29).

One of the things God is after more than anything in this world is for His people to hear Him speak. God loves to speak to individuals, and He loves it when individuals love to hear His voice.

Think about it. Suppose you were married and your spouse never said a word. What if he would say things occasionally, but mostly he only initiated insulting silence? Think of children who rebel and run away from home. Often, the first thing that happens is that they stop speaking to their parents.

God loves to have us listen to Him. It is a very solemn thing to have our Creator and Re-

deemer speak to us. What's more, He loves to have us communicate with Him on a personal level. That is a relationship: We hear God speak, we speak to God, and we speak what we hear from God to others.

How Much Do I Let God Speak to Me?

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:36-37).

One of the great issues that will be addressed at the Bema Seat judgment in heaven (where God evaluates the works of every believer) will concern how much I let God love me and speak to me (1 John 4). This is critical, inasmuch as faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Another question will center on how much, through God, I loved myself. He wants us to love ourselves. In Matthew 22:39, God tells me to love others as I love myself. So the next issue will be how much did I love others (1 John 3:16). And, finally, how much did I love the lost (Matthew 28:19).

There are many voices in the world and in

the satanic atmosphere to contend with. In Exodus 32, Moses came down from the mountain after speaking with God face to face, and found that Aaron had made a golden idol. Aaron said, "I only did it because of the voices of the people." Saul made a similar excuse when he presented an offering out of order: "I was listening to what the people said to do."

Hear Am I, Lord

In 1 Samuel 3, the Lord called to Samuel several times before the young man recognized who was speaking. Beautifully, Samuel responded, "Hear am I, Lord, speak to me, thy servant." God helps us to hear Him in this way. He wants to speak to us so definitively. He really wants to get people's attention. "Earth, hear Me speak! I created you. I died for each one of you. Hear Me!"

In Jeremiah 37, the prophet had to tell the king it was too late. "God asked you to hear Him, but you refused. Now, it is too late. Judgment and destruction will come upon the land."

It is so easy to ignore God's voice. That leads to not hearing Him when He speaks to us on serious issues. Then, we won't speak to Him, nor do we speak for Him to the lost on a consis-

tent basis. All these things go together.

God spoke to Israel through her leaders and prophets. He spoke through Moses. He spoke to Israel through Isaiah about her rebellion. He talked to Ezekiel about Israel's backsliding. He spoke to Jeremiah and said, "Israel does not hear Me" (see Jeremiah 13:11). God is always speaking to His people.

From Genesis to Revelation, God established a complete canon of Scripture to speak to us. And yet, through familiarity and busy schedules, precious, godly, sacred Christians often do not hear God speak to them.

Chapter Two

THE PLEADING OF THE FATHER

"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29).

Many people have insulted God. They have heard Him but did not listen, and did despite to the Spirit of Grace by stepping on the blood of the covenant, treating it as an unholy thing.

In Acts 7:51 the people resisted God. They did hear what He said. "That's good, God spoke and we have heard," they said. With their actions, however, they dismissed the voice of God. The Thessalonians listened and proclaimed, "This is what we have been waiting for! This is what we have needed. Now God has spoken; we will do what God has said." But they did not do it, and as a result they quenched

the Spirit (1Thessalonians 5:19).

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:30-32).

This passage provides the solution for preventing improper relationships. It is so crucial that we maintain a pure relationship with the Lord so we can hear Him and be led by His Holy Spirit. If we grieve the Spirit, we will not have proper relationships with other people. We may think that we do, and our relationships may seem very normal and good. But unless we are hearing from God, we can easily fall into familiar, soulish relationships that are not redemptive in nature.

It is essential that we become what God wants us to become and do what He would have us do. We need to make ourselves available to be taught what God wants to teach us and to apply what we receive from Him. For that to

happen, we need to hear the voice of the Lord.

God Reasons in Compassion

"Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead" (Jeremiah 2:9).

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

The word "plead" is very specific in that it relates to compassion and struggle. God was struggling with Israel, trying to impress on them the correct way to raise their children. "You may love and honor them, but you need to instruct them correctly," God was saying. In His compassion, He begged them to follow Him.

Imagine this scene: Awoman was on a ledge on the twelfth floor of a building. She was distraught and ready to jump, to take her life. A police detective kept talking to her, but she threatened to leap if he came closer. Then, her husband showed up and began to plead with her. As he pleaded for her to come down, the detective was able to intervene by grabbing her, and they saved her life. Obviously, she had been listening to the voices of despair and self-de-

struction.

In Jeremiah 30:13, God declares that He will plead for us. He will plead for us to hear Him. "There is none to represent you," Jesus says. "No one will plead for you, so I will plead your case."

God is after us to hear Him, and He is after us to speak for Him. He wants us to speak to the world, that they might hear the voice of the Lord and receive Him as their Savior.

Chapter Three

MEASURED BY WHAT WE HEAR

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:47-48).

At the Bema Seat, Jesus Christ is going to measure our lives according to the spoken Word received and applied by faith. "I did not come to judge the world; I did not come to condemn it," Jesus says. "That wasn't My purpose in coming. This is what will judge you: the Word I have spoken."

Oh, the spoken Word. When the preacher is hearing from God and we choose to listen, his sermons can change us. I cannot begin to tell you how important it is to be careful to hear, to pay attention and to concentrate, when the Bible

is being proclaimed. This is so crucial.

In Revelation 2 and 3, God speaks to the seven churches. The Holy Spirit addresses each church individually, exhorting them to receive, believe, and apply the whole counsel of the Word of God. People who only go to church once every three weeks are going to regret it at the Bema Seat. Why? Because they do not hear God speak to them. They do not purpose to put themselves in the way to receive the Word of God in meekness (Genesis 24:27).

They know that they should be in church, but knowing it is not enough. We need to make ourselves available to hear and then to obey. Death is all around us. Any one of our hearts could stop beating this instant. Let me plead with you: Be faithful to your local assembly. Go to every service you can possibly get to, so that when you are face-to-face with God you can say to Him, "I heard from You."

Hearing God Brings Results

I remember a fire in Buckfield, Maine. A three-story house was ablaze and the father just froze. He couldn't move because his eight-year-old boy was trapped on the third floor. The father could not move. Then, someone shouted, "Third

floor!" The firemen scrambled up their ladders to rescue the boy.

Someone spoke, someone listened, and someone was saved.

The great inventor Thomas Edison lost a decade of work in a fire. His son told him, "You are sixty-seven years old. You must be completely discouraged!"

"I am not," Edison answered. "Scores of mistakes were burnt up in that fire."

Three weeks later, Edison invented the phonograph. When asked how he could do this and remain so quiet in the midst of trouble, Edison responded, "Because God spoke to me."

Obedience Brings Fruit that Lasts

In the midst of our lives, we can become preoccupied with invisible and inaudible stressors. For whatever reason, the Word of God becomes abstract. Even people with sincere, pure hearts can listen but not receive His Word because they are distracted by the wrong things.

The answer to avoiding this is in Psalm 18:44: "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me." By choosing to obey as soon as we hear, the Word becomes substance.

I know of a couple that was separated. Both of them kept coming to church, but they would sit on opposite sides of the sanctuary. One day, they heard a penetrating message—a word from God on reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). They now had a choice to make. Through the pastor, God had spoken His mind on reconciliation, and they could choose to obey it. They also could have chosen to ignore God's voice and treat the truth as an abstraction, something unclear and open to private interpretation. But both were listening and both made the right choice. God's Word became the substance for a brand-new beginning in their lives together.

Oh, it is so vital that as soon as we hear, we obey God's Word. Then, even though we may not "feel" a thing, we will be quickened to live in the fullness of God's life and to experience victory in our lives.

"Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves" (Song of Solomon 7:12).

I have been deeply impressed by this tremendous verse. For every single thing we do in response to hearing Him, God gives us a special

love. In other words, more than giving just a cup of water, God will give us a special love for people and for what we do that brings fruit. Our labor of love will not be forgotten when He checks the vineyard.

Let me say this: for every word spoken, for every smile given, for every thing done in His name, God will give us a special love for all eternity. You cannot even shake someone's hand in the Spirit of God without receiving more of His love. And it all begins with hearing the voice of the Lord (Matthew 25:35-45).

CONCLUSION

"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2).

We must learn to hear the Word of God in meekness. Put yourself in the place where the Word of God is spoken. Mix faith with what you hear. Allow His words to be planted in the soil of your hearts.

Until we learn to do this, we really haven't heard God speak. Sure, we may appreciate the gifts and preaching style of preachers and teachers. We can enjoy what is said, we may like how it is said. We can respect the communication.

But, are we really hearing God speak?

In the integrity of our hearts, we must allow the Word to become substance to us. By hearing Him speak and by responding with obedience, His Word will produce in us a faith that pleases Him.

This obedience to His loving words is the key to receiving eternal rewards at the Bema Seat. Our hearts are quickened according to His word for just this reason: As soon as we hear, we obey.

Heart Conditions

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INTRODUCTION

Some have defined the heart as the "seat of affections"—but it is so much more than that. The heart is the supreme center for all communications, the premise for all motivational thinking, and the center for the thoughts and responses for all of our experiences in word and deed. It is the place where the emotions respond to, appreciate, or depreciate what they receive. The basis for all human operations, including the operations of the soul, the heart is the place where all of our decisions are made.

The Bible tells us that Nehemiah had a faithful heart (Nehemiah 9:8). First Samuel 4:13 speaks of Eli's trembling heart, which was a result of his lifestyle. Hannah rejoiced in her heart when she found out that she would bear a son, whom she named Samuel (1 Samuel 2:1). First Kings 11:9 says that Solomon's heart turned away from the Lord.

The most beautiful thing said about King

David is that he had a perfect heart (1 Kings 11:4). According to 1 Kings 14:8, David followed God with all of his heart. In Acts 13:22, David is described by God as "a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will." Psalm 28:7 says David trusted God with all his heart. He trusted God with every motivation of every operation through divine inspiration made ready for application.

As never before, we have to make sure that we keep the issues of our heart right (see Proverbs 4:23). When we were saved, we were given a new heart and our human spirit came into being. This booklet will explain how conditions of the heart affect its role as the motivator, activator, and operator behind all the things that we do.

Chapter One

NATURAL TENDENCIES

"Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isaiah 1:5-6).

The natural man's heart is sick, according to Isaiah 1:5. This means it is diseased with self-exaltation (see Proverbs 13:12). Wounded, grieved, and weary from mental exhaustion, the natural heart may reveal a kind of schizophrenic testimony at times. This heart is also faint, having no strength because of the affliction from the Fall.

Furthermore, the heart is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). We cannot imagine the scope of its wickedness. The natural man is sick from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head. People

whose hearts are deceitful and diseased have no strength to go on with God. Often, they withdraw into a shell. Proverbs 14:14 speaks of the backslider's heart. It is a faithless heart that has turned from God.

Hard and Corrupt

The Word of God also teaches of the hardened heart that is insensitive and dull (Exodus 9:7). Probably the most destructive thing that can happen in anyone's life is for the heart to begin to harden. A person involved in immorality will either repent and get right with God or maintain his deceit and keep on sinning. The one who keeps living in sin is no longer convicted by the Word of God. He can look someone right in the face and lie because he has no convictions. Why? Because his heart is hardened.

Another characteristic of the natural heart is corruption (Proverbs 17:20). The natural heart is distorted, twisted, perverted, and dishonest. When any characteristic of the natural heart is allowed to enter into a marriage or friendship, the result is indescribable deceit.

For this reason, we must do everything we can to nourish and to build up our new heart by

taking in the Word of God and responding to Jesus Christ.

Think of what a heart in prayer can do. A church recently had a prayer service for their pastor who had a very serious heart condition. He went to the doctor after that and was found to be totally healed. "I will have to call this a miracle," the doctor said. That is what a heart in prayer can do.

The Problem of Self-Discovery

"Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.

"A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself" (Proverbs 18:1-2).

One of the things Satan tries to do is to promote a person's potential in Adam so that he discovers his natural heart with its natural gifts.

The natural heart is haughty, proud, and infected. Oh, the heartaches, problems, and pain that are caused because of infected hearts. So many hearts are infected with self-defense, skillful pride, human rationale, and empiricism.

"Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate" (Psalm

143:4). This verse speaks of a hurting heart. It belongs to someone whose motivation, activation, and energy for life have collapsed. Something has wounded this person, so he lives in his hurt and his wounds. He focuses on his needs, living in whatever the current problem is instead of his new heart.

We have all been with people who have been wounded, who speak and react from the perspective of their pain. The truth is that they are suffering from a heart condition that can be healed. Every one of us is subject to this kind of heart disease, and only God knows how to take care of it.

Chapter Two

WILLING TO BE BROKEN

"Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Psalm 69:20).

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

These verses speak of the broken heart. It is broken because of our need for God, broken because of our Adamic nature, broken because of mistakes, broken because of sin.

It is precious to see a group of Christians gather together in a spirit of brokenness. I love when someone who was the victim goes to the guilty party in brokenness. That doesn't happen often.

When Jesus took our place on Calvary, in His brokenness, He said of those mocking Him, "Father, forgive them." He was broken. He

gladly died for us, but His heart was broken. It was broken because of His love for all sinners.

Sensitivity Is the Key

"Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins" (Psalm 73:21).

Grieved hearts cannot function well. When the Holy Spirit is grieved, He cannot move freely. Churches all over the world have services several times a week, but many grieve the Spirit and stop His operation. A church that does not love soul winning, a church without a vision for missions, a church that does not pray, a church that doesn't love each other grieves the Spirit. We must be so sensitive to Jesus Christ so that we do not grieve the Spirit. His Spirit is so sensitive.

"Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies" (Psalm 119:22).

A heart that is easily wounded isn't looking unto Jesus Christ, it isn't looking unto Calvary. As we care for our hearts, we may say at times, "My heart is overwhelmed" (Psalm 61:2). In saying this, David painted a unique picture of our supreme center for motivation: the place where all the operations of our soul take place, the place where all the motives for human operation

begin, and the place where methods are adapted and established to produce control of the mind. This is the heart—intellectually and experientially the essence of life.

These details of the heart are so crucial. Everything we do comes out of either our new heart or our old heart. Some substitute the word "mind" for heart, but the heart *is* the issue. All of our thinking is the result of what goes on in our hearts.

Established in Convictions

"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering" (Exodus 25:2).

I love when the Word of God speaks of those who have willing hearts. Think of how Jesus taught the disciples to pray: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). I would ask you to ponder on that. "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." That represents a willing heart, a willing heart to lay down our lives, a willing heart to bless our enemies.

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise" (Psalm 57:7).

A "fixed heart" means that I do not have to

"review" my convictions: My convictions are *established*. I had a conviction years ago that I would not practice ungodly behavior or dwell on ungodly thoughts. Those issues are fixed. There is no temptation to do those things. I discovered years ago that my convictions would take care of my future in certain areas of life as I grew. A fixed heart reveals a godly maturity in spiritual adulthood.

Chapter Three

STANDING IN AWE OF GOD

"Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart" (Psalm 119:111).

"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Psalm 84:2).

The word "rejoicing" means being completely happy and peaceful within because we see the power of God, the grace of God, and the wisdom of God in everything.

God loves to see that we are hungry and thirsty and have a heart that longs for Him. There may be times you have to spend away from the Body of Christ, but God loves the fact that your heart longs to be there. Maybe you have to spend time in the world because of work, or perhaps sickness keeps you away, but you still have a longing heart to be there—God loves this. Assembling ourselves together is the

most beautiful thing in the world, and God gives us a heart that longs to be with the Body.

The Right Kind of Fear

"Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

"I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore" (Psalm 86:11-12).

This passage refers to a heart that "fears" God's name or character. This kind of "fear" speaks of holding God in the highest esteem, giving Him the greatest measure of respect. It is a holy reverence. Whenever God's name is mentioned, no matter what condition he is in, this kind of heart responds.

The word "glorify" speaks of reflecting God's nature, to reveal something about His attributes. To have a life that glorifies Christ is to have a life that brings in the Finished Work side of Christ, the victorious, triumphant side of Christ, wherever we go.

If you are teaching someone and you impart your carnal nature to them, and then they reproduce your nature, who is being glorified? You are, of course—not God. You are the one they are responding to.

First Corinthians 11 refers to the woman as the glory of the man. That is the principle of us glorifying Christ. The man reflects the nature of God to his wife, and the woman reflects the godly nature of the man. When we glorify Him, we fulfill His purpose for our lives on earth.

Responding to His Nature

"Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word" (Psalm 119:161).

Years ago, there was an older lady in our church we called Grammy Emery. She really was quite a spiritual person, and she would constantly go to prayer meetings. She broke some bones in her hand one day, and God healed her on the spot.

Once, several of us were riding in a car when she began to say, "Hallelujah, praise God." Then, she asked us to stop the car. She wasn't acting weird or strange, but she got out and just stared at the sky in awe of God. She lived very simply in her own world with God, and she was in awe of Him.

When we see the oceans, the forests, and the stars, or when we see what God does in the regeneration of the New Birth at salvation, we

should stand in awe of God. When we see what He has done in the Church of Jesus Christ, we should stand in awe.

Stirred by His Words

"I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night" (Song of Solomon 5:2).

It is a great thing to have your heart awakened by the sound of God's voice. The Holy Spirit stirs the heart, and when Christ contacts it, the heart is awakened to be what God wants it to be. The power of God and His still, small voice cause the heart to be awakened.

Faith purifies the heart and soul of a Christian who understands the doctrine of the heart. His heart acts in faith toward God and is obedient to the grace of God.

CONCLUSION

"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

God does not look upon the outward man. No, He always examines the heart. He is searching the hidden man for meekness (1 Peter 3:4), and that godly inner man is a pearl of great price.

Whatever we do, we must take care of our hearts. It doesn't do any good to take care of the mind unless the heart is right. When we live in indecision, it is because our heart isn't clear. It does no good to try to have the emotions healed until the heart is right, because they will not be healed until the heart is healed.

We need to have a heart after God, a heart that trusts Him. Thank God that in David, God

saw the motives and desires and accredited it all to his "perfect" heart. God saw that David's heart was right and after Him completely. Because of that, God's benediction on David's life was that he was a man with a perfect heart.

Heart to Heart with God

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

When two or more are gathered together in the name of the Lord, the Holy Spirit comes into their midst. When Jesus entered a room and stood in the midst of the people, that was all He had to do (John 20:26; Acts 2:22). He didn't have to perform in order to capture their attention. Though He was the focus of attention, He never drew attention to Himself, but to His Father. He just came into their midst, and the presence of eternity, love, grace, and mercy was there. Jesus just came and stood in their midst, and many were saved and many delivered.

Have you experienced times like that? Times when the presence of God was so intense that you didn't know if you could go on to the next thing? Perhaps it was just so rich that you could deeply sense the Holy Spirit, the power of His love, and the presence of His grace—a time when you were just so grateful, so thankful to be there.

This booklet was composed from words spoken in a time such as that. Part of it is from a heart-to-heart talk given before a small gathering, and we have done our best to accurately convey the essence of God's presence that we experienced there. As believers, always desiring to become more intimate with the Lord, let's allow Him to lead us into times of refreshing like this.

Chapter One

JESUS COMES INTO OUR MIDST

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you" (John 20:26).

As you look back in your life, consider the time when the Holy Spirit regenerated your soul, when He came into your heart. When the Holy Spirit moves in, He becomes our teacher—and no one can teach us like He does. Those times, when the Holy Spirit is teaching us, are the most tremendous times of growth.

If someone were to ask on a given day, "How was the church service tonight?" we could say with conviction, "Beyond the worship, the music and the message, all I can tell you is

that I met Jesus there through the Holy Spirit. I don't know how to describe it."

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psalm 1:1). What a verse! "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly…."

The Holy Spirit asks God's people to learn to trust in Him, to walk in Him, to move in Him, to breathe in Him, and to respond to Him through the Word of God. That is all He asks. He has one great desire, and that desire is to glorify Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is thrilled when we give Him opportunities to glorify Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we pray and ask something in Jesus' name, and when we believe with all of our hearts that He will do it, the Holy Spirit is delighting in glorifying Jesus Christ. We trust God the best we know how, and the Holy Spirit loves our response of faith.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." That man will be completely happy.

David said, in Psalm 1:2, "But his delight is in the [doctrine] of the LORD; and in His [doctrine]

doth he meditate day and night." I love that! I love to hear from heaven, from the Creator, from the One who simply spoke, and the world came into existence.

I love to hear from the One who breathed into man the breath of life, making him a living soul (Genesis 2:7), the One who speaks a word into the heart of a man and tells that man or that woman, "You are cleansed. Everything about your past is forgiven. You will never have to pay for your sin."

He asks us, "What is the burden on your heart?" and we tell Him, "Oh, it's my marriage." Or, "It's my teenager"—whatever it is.

And God says, "Do you want to tell Me all about it? Just tell Me about it. Let's have a heart-to-heart talk. And as you tell Me all about it, I'll move, and I'll work, and immediately I will come into your environment and begin to serve you."

Our Foundation—The Finished Work

We have the opportunity to walk in the Spirit—the *Holy* Spirit—who glorifies the One who holds everything together (Hebrews 1:2-3). "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17). Think of it!

God breathed, God spoke, and by Him all things consist—and nothing can get out of His hand. The moment that you accepted what Jesus Christ did on the Cross of Calvary, where He shed His blood and was crucified in our place—the moment He came into your heart to live, Jesus said through the Holy Spirit, "I will *never* leave you, and I will not forsake you."

"I want you to know," says Jesus, "that on that certain day, at an exact moment, you accepted Me as your Savior; and from that moment on, I will never, no never, no never leave you. That is a vow." And immediately, you will have a witness of the Holy Spirit that He will never ever leave you.

I can't even begin to describe what is on God's heart toward His people. He loves you beyond your imagination. He loves you beyond anything you can even imagine. His love is true, and genuine, and real, and relevant, and spiritual, and active. What a wonderful Savior!

Something Wonderful

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD;

and in his [doctrine] doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:1, 2).

A woman called the church after the radio program, and she said "That sixty-minutes I listened to radio today has completely changed my life."

When I asked her to tell me why, she said, "I can't explain it. Something wonderful took over. It was the presence of Almighty God that I've never ever had in my personal experience. A newness came in. This newness of life came into my very existence."

She went on, "I know I will never be the same again. Can you tell me more? I've got to hear more!"

When we pray and go to God our Father, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, and we say to Him, "Father, a dear friend of mine is going through hell. He must have Your help. So I'm going to kneel down, and I'm going to plead with You to touch him, to heal him. Would You please do it?"

How awesome it is to know that when that happens, the Holy Spirit begins to groan with groanings that cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26, 27). He is groaning over your prayer. Do not doubt it. He is deeply, richly, fervently, urgently

involved with what you told the Father. He groans with groanings that cannot be uttered.

True Wealth

God has given every single child of God thousands of promises in Scripture. If only we could realize how deep and how rich those promises are, we would begin to realize how rich we are just to be alive. With all the troubles that are happening in the world, we have God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Body of Jesus Christ. We have one another. We have the precious Word of God, the Book of books. I cannot comprehend the beauty of it. Where would we be without it?

And to think that God made the heavens and the earth with His Word (Psalm 33:6)! That Word is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). Think of it: Jesus Christ framed the worlds with the Word of God. In Hebrews 11:3, He framed the worlds—our solar system, the entire universe. Consider that when Jesus Christ spoke the living Word, some magnificent, supernatural, indescribable things happened. How is that possible? It is a *living* Word, the precious Word of Christ.

Let Us Glory in Knowing God

"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:24).

This is not a sermon; it is a message from the heart. With you and with your hearts, we join each other by saying to our Father, "We have no idea where we would be without You." Wandering, waiting, in some cases shipwrecked, weak, failing, in frailty—still, the Holy Spirit comes in to fill us. The Word of God comes in, quickening us in His righteousness (Psalm 119:40), by His Spirit and His grace.

Oh, to know that by the grace of God we are ready to meet Him! It is not because we are good enough; it is because we have His goodness. It is not because we love enough, but it is because He has given us His love. It is not because we forgive enough, but it is because we have in Him all the forgiveness we will ever need.

Hear from the Promisor

"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my

speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

"Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God" (Deuteronomy 32:1-3).

I am so thankful! I am grateful that whether it is sickness, or sorrow, or heartache, or family trials—of all that could happen in a moment of time to us, we have the great Promisor.

The Holy Spirit comes to us and whispers softly, saying, "Listen. I want you to know that I hear every whisper from your heart. There is not a moment when I am not involved with your every thought from afar (Psalm 139:2). I am involved with everything about you."

Trust Him with all of your heart. If you want to experience a plan and a purpose that goes beyond anything you could ever think of, just trust Him with your whole heart. Don't lean on your own understanding. Acknowledge the Lord in all your ways, and I guarantee that He will direct your path. That is a promise (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

Chapter Two

HOW CAN A MAN MEET GOD?

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

"And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

"And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

"And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

"Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and

the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

"And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

"And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites" (Exodus 3:1-8).

I don't know if we thoroughly understand what it means, spiritually, to meet God, with His still, small voice. Yet, something eternal begins to develop the moment a man or a woman or a young person meets God.

I remember when I met God for the first time, I did not hear Him audibly nor did I see Him with my eyes. I can't even begin to explain it to you. I well imagine the same story is true with many of you.

Oh, to meet God! To go through life seeing the curses of heartaches, sickness, disease, needs, pain, division—to see situations that just don't appear able to be changed, though of

course, they can be. And so many situations are sent until, finally, we meet God.

I didn't have any concept of what it would be like to meet God. I didn't understand Him. But one day it happened. I finally met God. And one day many of you met God—the Redeemer, the One who shed His blood for our sins. Never once has there been a time in His eternal history when He has not forgiven sins. For every moment in His plan and purpose, He loves every individual completely. That is His nature.

When Moses Met God

The whole key to having a prosperous, spiritual life is to meet God.

Moses was called by God to deliver Israel out of Egypt. But in anger, Moses killed an Egyptian soldier. Pharaoh found it out immediately, as well as the Jews who didn't like Moses.

Fearful, insecure, resentful, bitter, and hurting, Moses left Pharaoh's courts and escaped into Midian. But how long would he stay in Midian? How long would he be gone? After all, he was God's man. Would he ever come back?

Then, after forty years, Moses happened upon the burning bush. Now it was time for Moses to meet God. An angel was in the bush—

the angel of God, the angel that *was* God. Moses could not fathom it. But as he stood there, God said, "Moses. Moses, take your shoes off. The place where you are standing is very holy."

Why was that place called holy? In this case, a man was meeting God there. The presence of God is always very holy. Whether you are talking with God in the garage, in the car, or in your bedroom, the place where a man meets God is very holy. That is how God sees it.

What made that such an unusual meeting for Moses? The presence of God was in that bush. The fire was burning, trying to teach us about the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 4:4), trying to teach us about the Word of God (Jeremiah 15:16 and 20:9, and Matthew 3:11).

There was that old bush, and there was a man who had been backslidden for forty consecutive years. He was well educated, and Acts 7 says he was brilliant as a military leader. But Moses, now fearful and insecure, met God that day.

Chapter Three

WAITING ON GOD

Remember the times when you have met God—intimate, personal times when you sensed His words and His thoughts. You sensed that He was there to talk with you, to deal with you, to help you. Perhaps it was because of failure or because of a great need; you just couldn't see the answer coming, and you started to faint. Maybe it was because of wounds, because of loving too much and getting hurt. Still, you were waiting on God.

This is a true story about George and Mary. George was in the military, and presumably he had died in combat and was considered missing in action. On a Thursday evening, Mary was reading letters from her dear husband. He had only been gone from her for a year, and as she read them, her mind would ponder and reflect. He had written to her three or four times a week and always spoke of his love for her.

She was reading a particular letter where he described what it was like to talk with her and to hold her, when unbeknownst to Mary, there was a knock at the door, and it was George. He was alive! Her mother said, "Come with me. Let her see you. This is unbelievable!"

So George went upstairs, and there was Mary reading that letter, and George looked into her eyes and grabbed her. They both knelt and just sobbed, holding each other. He had been missing in action, and now he was safe at home. What a talk they had! They didn't stop talking for days. They just talked, and they barely moved.

Your family is so vital. Mom, dad, children, brother, sister, husband, wife—each one is so vital, so sacred. People have board meetings, business meetings—all very important. Likewise, we ought to have family meetings where everyone gathers around the table and shares how much each one means to one another. Gather around the table regularly and share how much you love each other and tell them why. Try it out. You will love it.

But even more importantly, instead of being occupied with all the pressures of life, we need to have meetings with God.

Moses was in the wilderness, backslidden, and God was there too, addressing him from the burning bush: "Moses. Moses! Take off your shoes. The place where you are standing is holy."

Moses repented and recovered, and at last, he was ready to go forward in the plan of God. God would have to continue to convince him that because of mercy and grace, he was worthy. But Moses was now ready to go.

What a meeting that must have been, that day when Moses began to discover that he would still be used mightily by God to lead the entire nation of Israel out of bondage. The backsliding was over. Forgiveness was complete.

Then we have Isaiah, a prophet who didn't know God (Isaiah 6). But after the king whom he loved died, Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, and the glory of God filled the temple. He saw the seraphim with wings that covered their eyes and their feet—wings of obedience, wings of action, ready to obey. The wings were the only visible part of the angels, because they were only used to glorify God in obedience and to speedily execute His will.

Then the smoke filled the temple, and the

temple began to shake. It was time for Isaiah's meeting.

"Woe is me! for I am undone. I am a man with unclean lips in the midst of a people of unclean lips." "Woe is me," Isaiah said, because he was getting ready to meet God.

Then the angel took a coal from off the altar with the tongs, touched his lips, and purged his iniquity. The Lord said, "Who will go for us?" and Isaiah said, "Here am I; send me."

Isaiah had finally met God.

Prepare to Meet God

Get ready. Get ready for the privilege of meeting God. Never mind all the distractions and all the pressures and all the details of your life. Daily, get ready to meet God.

In John 4, there was the woman at the well, and Jesus said, "I thirst."

Immediately she said, "I have water here."

Then He said, "I have water to give you, and if you drink of it, you will never ever thirst again. It will be a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And Jesus said, "Now, go get your husband," to which she replied, "I have no husband."

He said, "You're right. You have had five

husbands, and the man you're living with now is not your husband."

That immoral woman was meeting God. *She was meeting God.*

When a man or a woman or a teenager finds a place and a time to wait on the Lord and the presence of God comes in, there is a meeting with God. You can't explain it. It is so rich. It is so deep. It is so real. Those meetings have meant everything to me.

Recently, before we went on our weekly outreach, the presence of God came in for a solid hour after the prayer meeting. The Spirit of God flooded that place. It was overwhelming, unexplainable.

In John 5, a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years was waiting for someone to place him in the pool of Siloam for healing. But he had no one to put him in the water where, supposedly, an angel stirred up the water and he could get healed. Jesus said to him, "You have been this way for thirty-eight years. Would you like to be made whole?"

The man said, "Yes, I certainly would, but there is no one to put me in the water."

Jesus said, "Will you be healed? If so, just take up your bed and walk."

And he said, “I will.”

There, a man met God for physical healing.

God is waiting to be gracious. Meet with Him. Get to know Him. Get ready for a great blessing when He comes into your midst.

CONCLUSION

In Genesis, we find Moses, a backslider who could not hide from God. In Isaiah, there is a prophet who felt unworthy because he really didn't know God. In John 3, a religious man, who did not know the way, inquired of Jesus, who told him, "Except you be born again, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." In John 4, Jesus met the immoral woman. In John 5, He met with the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years.

Over and over again—whether it was Rebekah, Rachel, Joshua, David, or Peter—we read about people meeting God. In those meetings, He touches their lives and their personal walk with Him.

God said to Moses, "You know, I am with you to deliver you, to lead you, and to guide you" (Exodus 3).

It is beyond our natural ability to comprehend. God is here. We feel so unworthy. Yet,

God is here, and He is calling us by name.

Heavenly Father, Thank You for making a way for us to know You. Thank You for being so willing to come to us as a man, to show us the way. Thank You for giving us Your Holy Spirit to lead us there. Our hearts' desire is to meet with You on purpose each day, to have Your mind and Your thoughts in every situation through Your Word. Continue to draw us to Yourself. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Heed the Warnings of Grace

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

It is not what lies behind us, and it is not what lies ahead of us that really counts. What is important lies within us.

The price of success often comes through failure. As Christians, we all have within us the necessary characteristics to develop into very effective people, to do what we have to do in our lives.

One of the great things in life is God-given ability. What's more, our ability is one of our greatest responsibilities. The average person does not know the extent of his potential ability.

Because these things are true, it is so important that both the water of the Word and the Holy Spirit fertilize the seed of our potential within. That way, it can spiritually germinate to become what God intended: the ability of the Word of God in our thought processes. Then we can fully live in our God-given ability, revealing the nature of God in life.

Chapter One
GOD ALWAYS FINDS A VOICE

The Lord Jesus Christ had no place to lay His head. Because those who dwell in darkness hate the light, people on the earth did everything they could to entrap Him and nail Him to the old rugged Cross.

Even though many Christians may not desire to hear the full counsel of God, God wants to speak to us. When He speaks, we are accountable to hear what He says. Then, once we have heard, we are responsible to speak for God.

It is an amazing story how God speaks through men and women. Many Christians will go into eternity and may never once allow God to speak to them through His precious Book and the Holy Spirit, and they may never allow God to speak through them.

God spoke through Abraham—an amazing thing, considering he was from Ur of the Chaldeans in a heathen religion. God called him,

Abraham heard, and he became the father of our faith, "a friend of God."

God Speaks through Moses

Isn't it wonderful that God would speak to Israel through Moses? God chose a man who had spent eighty years in preparation, in a sense—including forty years hiding in the back of the desert. As far as we know, Moses had no communication with God until the burning bush incident, in Exodus 3.

After killing an Egyptian soldier in a fit of anger, Moses knew that Pharaoh had rejected him. Even his own people rejected him. That is why he stayed away for forty long years. It took the burning bush and God speaking out of the burning bush to finally get Moses' attention.

God said, "I want to speak to My people through a man, and the man that I want to use will be you, Moses! I know that you think you have an impediment in your speech, and I know you don't want to speak to others. You don't think you are qualified, but you are going to speak for Me."

David and Solomon: Hearts after God

One of the sweetest psalmists who ever lived

was King David, and he shared so much with us. It is a glorious thing that God spoke not just to David, but He spoke so beautifully through David.

When David said, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10), God did it. God heard him and God did what David asked of Him. David said, "Give me the joy of life once again so that I can teach transgressors about Your ways and see sinners converted" (Psalm 51:13)—and God did.

God spoke through Solomon—even after Solomon failed miserably. He had poor physical health, his back was permanently bent over, and he had only two or three teeth left. Though he had been extremely handsome and was the wisest man in the Old Testament, now he was suffering tremendously, and he could not sleep at night.

Solomon recognized after all that the most important thing in life is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). After Solomon had failed, God allowed him to write two more books in the Old Testament: Proverbs and the Song of Solomon.

God's Cries for Repentance

God used Ezekiel to speak to a people who had received and rejected repeated warnings from God. Now, as they faced military takeover in the fifth cycle of national discipline, Ezekiel would cry out by the river Chebar and show the people of Israel their future.

God also spoke through Jonah, though Jonah did not want to obey God. Through the years, people have misunderstood this prophet, and many believe that he was simply reluctant and disobedient.

In fact, according to "isagogics," which is a study of the historical frame of reference, Jonah did not want to witness in Nineveh because of the way they had treated their enemies—killing babies by taking knives and flaying their skin, and cheering as they did so.

A great patriarch of Israel, Jonah was not just a godly man but a very patriotic one. Still, he was afraid and could not trust God for His plan, fearing the people would rise up again as enemies to Israel. But when God miraculously won Nineveh, it was through this one man speaking by the Holy Spirit. God spoke through this man, Jonah.

God's Patience: The Mystery of Eternity

Notice how so many of God's spokesmen were not "qualified," in terms of their spirituality. And yet, God would get the glory, God's grace would be sufficient, and God's patience would win out. How patient He is!

The patience of God is the mystery of eternity. I appreciate it deeply, and I have tremendous gratitude for His patience. Yet, I believe that I will never fully understand God's patience.

God spoke through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew with his background as a crooked tax collector, and John Mark, whom Paul did not consider spiritual (Acts 15:37-39). Still, God used them to write two of the Gospels.

God spoke through Saul of Tarsus who became gloriously saved while he was persecuting Christians. Responsible for killing many believers, Saul was picked by God right out of the midst of the Jewish people, and his name was changed to Paul. Much of the New Testament was recorded through this apostle. Though the canon of Scripture is complete, God is speaking until this very hour, continuing to raise up men who will speak faithfully for Him.

Chapter Two

GOD'S CONTROVERSIES WITH HIS PEOPLE

In the book of Jeremiah, God had several major controversies with Israel (Jeremiah 3:12, 13 and 22). He cried out as He said, "Turn ye backsliders. Turn ye backsliders. Your back is toward Me. I want you to turn to Me." After all they had gone through, and after all the ways God ministered His mercy and grace toward them, the people of Israel turned their backs on their God. Once again, God had a controversy with His people.

The Lord said, "Return, My people. Hear the word of the Lord and return." But Israel did not do it.

Then He said, "The day of Jacob's trouble is coming"—the last half of the Tribulation Period when God will pour out His wrath upon the earth (see Jeremiah 30:7)—and He said, "It is coming; turn to Me before it is too late."

Silence in Heaven

I have often thought of the account in Revelation 8:1, when, for thirty solid minutes, heaven will be silent. I cannot imagine what that will be like. Heaven has never been silent; yet, because of the terrible events that will come upon the earth, for thirty consecutive minutes there will not be one sound from heaven. The earth will become the object of God's wrath because of people's wickedness and refusal to accept Christ.

Silence. The voices of ministering angels will be hushed. The voices of the twenty-four elders surrounding the throne will also be hushed. Even the precious Trinity will be totally silent for thirty minutes. I can't begin to imagine what that will be like.

Heaven will be silent because of the people for whom the Savior died. Jesus Christ paid for their sins, to buy them back if they would come. But they would not. As a result, many will die in their sins, terrified and yet rebellious, though they still had to go through the last half of the Tribulation Period.

Consider the hailstones that will weigh over three hundred pounds per stone. Darkness will cover the earth so that no one will be able to see

his hand in front of his face. All the water will turn into blood. Still, people will curse God, and they will continue to curse Him. This is a picture of the terrible results of the fallen human race.

A Terrible Price to Pay

We do not know God's timetable. We have no idea when the Rapture will take place. But in this beautiful national salutation to Israel in Jeremiah 3, God begs people to hear the Word of God. Then, He warns them of the time of "Jacob's trouble," the Great Tribulation.

Not only does God warn Israel as a nation, but in Jeremiah 9:10-21, God talks to mothers and fathers and gives them a tremendous domestic challenge. The Lord said, "I have a controversy with you. I told you to teach your children morning, noon, and night—when you would get up, when you would walk in the way, and when you would lie down. But you did not do it."

"Furthermore," He said, "because you would not do it, your children are rebellious, and they will not hear. Therefore, I will let the enemy come in, and your children will be killed on the streets, in front of your houses," and they were. That happened, all because parents would

not honor the domestic challenge to teach their children.

Then in Hosea 4:1 and 12:2, and Jeremiah 25:31, God addresses individuals, saying, "I have a controversy with every individual in this nation. My controversy is that you do not respect Me. You will not listen to Me. You hear, but you do your own thing."

And they said, "When did we not hear thee?"

"Oh," He said, "you have not heard Me."

And they said, "But we have heard You!"

He said, "No, you haven't. You have not obeyed Me, and that means you have not heard Me." What an amazing principle.

Then the Word of God came to King Zedekiah. This king saw his children killed in cold blood by the enemy, right in front of his eyes. All of them were killed. Not one of them lived. Then the king of Babylon took Zedekiah, bound him in chains, and gouged his eyes out (Jeremiah 39:6-7).

Oh, the terrible price of sin. The price of turning a deaf ear to our Creator, to our Redeemer, to our Lord is so serious. That is why in the thirty-seventh chapter of the book of Jeremiah the people said, "Jeremiah, do you have a

message for us from the Lord?" But God would not change His mind. Captivity was coming for Israel (Jeremiah 37:17).

Close your eyes for one solid minute and consider the souls that are going to hell. Try to imagine their faces. For every second that passes by, say "It's too late!" as another soul falls into eternal darkness. When I did this recently, only thirty-five seconds had gone by when I thought I had been counting for eternity. "Too late!"*

"I have no message for you," said God through Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 38:2-3, God's message did not change. "I have no message because you have renounced Me in your heart, you are not sincere, and it is too late."

It is quite a thing as we begin to see what happened in Jeremiah 7:8-20. God had enough of Israel's wickedness, and, in so many words, He said, "I have had enough, and I am not going to take your rebellion any more."

*Read Don't Wait Until It's Too Late, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.

Chapter Three

HEARKEN AND GIVE HEED TO GOD'S WORD

In Jeremiah 4:3, the Lord said to Israel, "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." Again He says, "You turned a deaf ear and you refused to hear."

Oh, there is such value in hearing about grace, and love, and mercy, and compassion. There is so much value in learning about soul winning, and discipleship, and evangelizing. There is so much value in hearing about God's kindness, patience, peace, confidence, and faith rest. The value of hearing God speak to your heart is absolutely priceless.

And yet, the Word of God says that the children of Israel loved their backslidden condition. They were contented in passivity and contented not to obey God. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so…" (Jeremiah 5:31).

They were contented to be the same.

Still, God pleaded with them and said, "I want you to get back to old paths." But they said, "We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16b). The Lord said, I have sent watchmen over you, and they are sounding out warnings, "…But they said, We will not hearken" (Jeremiah 6:17). Oh, perhaps they did not say it with their lips, but they said it with their lives.

People will never dare to say to Almighty God, "I will not do it." I have never heard a Christian say that. Though Israel did not say it, the Scriptures interpreted their behavior as, "We will not. We will not walk in Your ways." That is how the Holy Spirit interpreted their behavior.

Jeremiah was a man of the Book, a man of conviction, a man of compassion, a man of tears. He was called the weeping prophet. Probably he wept more for his nation, seeing little Ezra go by him in captivity in the fifth cycle of discipline and seeing the one that he loved so deeply, Ezra's father, who was their pastor, killed in cold blood in that fifth cycle of discipline.*

God Still Has a Plan

In spite of our rebellion, God still desires to speak to us. He said, "To whom should I speak?

To whom shall I give a warning?" They didn't want the warning. That is the way much of the world is today. People don't mind hearing God speak, but they do not want to hear a warning.

How many have left a church service murmuring to themselves, "I didn't get edified today. The pastor was legalistic. He gave us a 'warning' today. Can you imagine that?"

And God said, "Oh, who will let Me warn them? Who will let Me speak and heed My warning?" And then He went on to say, "They would not."

Despite all of this, God has a plan. The door of opportunity was still open for Israel, even at that late hour.

God still has a plan, and the plan is this: "I love you. And with lovingkindness I will draw thee. Again I will build thee, O virgin Israel" (see Jeremiah 31:3-4).

The second part of that plan is, "Call upon Me. I will still hear you. Call upon Me, and I will do great and mighty things that you have never seen before" (see Jeremiah 33:3).

The Father Calls for His Children

In spite of all that He said, all the warnings of grace that He gave to His people, and though

so much time had passed, God never stopped loving His children. His heart was broken; all He wanted was for Israel to have faith in who He is and obey His Word from their hearts.

In the book of Revelation, the Spirit speaks seven times to the seven churches and tells us to hear what the Spirit is saying.

In John 7:37-38, Jesus spoke with a loud voice. In Revelation 1:15, His voice was as the sound of "many waters." But in 1 Kings 19:12, He spoke in a "still, small voice." He speaks to His people in so many different ways.

Our failure isn't final with the Father. The door is open (Revelation 3:8), and He holds the keys of death and hell (Revelation 1:18). Today God is still building a New Testament Church and establishing a royal family. We are so grateful for all He is doing in our midst. We are very encouraged, very pleased, and very thankful to God. Let's reveal our gratitude not by giving lip service to His warnings, but by responding to every word of God with our whole hearts.

*For a thorough study of the historical frame of reference connecting Jeremiah with the writer of Psalm 119, read Dealing with Stressful Times, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.

CONCLUSION

A man of God must tell it all. I asked God years ago to help me always to preach the way it is, at any cost. A Spirit-filled pastor in a Finished Work ministry will not have a legalistic message. Though some people are careless and legislate in their messages, it is most likely that legalism is the viewpoint of the one who does not want to heed the warnings of loving grace.

Thank God, the door is open. God wrote those things in Jeremiah for our examples, for our learning (1 Corinthians 10:11). They were "admonitions"—warnings of grace. God has done these things aforetime so that we would take heed (1 Corinthians 10:11-12, Romans 15:4). That is why we can say that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, so that we can be furnished for good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Dear Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for being straight with us, for covering us when we fail yet always keeping us accountable to the truth.

Thank You that You love us so much, You will allow whatever is necessary to draw us to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Highway of Holiness

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INTRODUCTION

"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:8-10).

For many years, I thought that being on the highway of holiness meant following a list of do's and don'ts, and living under rules and regulations. But, I discovered that holiness is receiving God's mercy and lovingkindness. I found out that walking on this highway produces the highest quality of life on earth for me, as God works the truth of His mercy into my life.

Everyone who receives God's holy anointing of lovingkindness and tender mercies can walk on the highway of holiness, crowned as "kings and priests" unto God (Revelation 1:6; 5:10). The "unclean"—those who reject His lovingkindness and mercy—cannot walk on this highway, for God says, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36), and "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Psalm 103:4 tells us that God has crowned us with His "*tender* mercies." It is a great thing to know that we're the objects of the mercy of the Lord, but it is even better to recognize that His tender mercies are with us every day. His mercies are always tender, even when we are not. The highway of holiness is paved with God's love, grace, and truth.

Chapter One

HE IS IN THE HOLY PLACE

If a believer wants to be holy, he must dwell in the Holy of Holies, before the Mercy Seat (Exodus 26:34). When Jesus said "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14), He was saying that most people never find the holy place of God. 1 Peter 1:15-16 tells us, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." The only way a sinner, saved by grace, can discover holiness is by understanding that the presence of mercy fills the holy place. Sadly, most pulpits don't preach about the strait gate and the narrow way with this interpretation.

Cherubim—four-winged angels created by God to guard His holiness—and a flaming sword kept the way to the tree of life, after Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24).

Later, in Exodus 25:17-22, two cherubim with wings outspread were fashioned, one at either end of the Mercy Seat, with the presence of Jesus Christ between them. They were looking at the Mercy Seat, where the blood of Christ was sprinkled. But there was no longer a sword; the cherubim would now judge with mercy, making sure that everyone who would come to the holy place could receive mercy because of the Blood.

Vacationing with Jesus

Many Christians are on the wrong highway. They are walking in a way where Satan can attack them. On this highway, Satan offers people liquor. He offers them jobs that keep them so busy that they don't have time for church. He offers more days at the beach than Carter has liver pills.

There is nothing wrong with taking a vacation. Still, I pity people who are so tired out that they can't wait for their next vacation. The funny thing is that when some people are on vacation, they'll say they can't wait to get home again. They're all tired out trying to be happy away from home, cramped into one little hotel room with one little bathroom that everyone in the family has to share. And they all get weary

trying to be nice to each other—for one little week. Then, they spend too much time on the beach and get sunburned.

When I think of the word *vacation*, I think about Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28-29: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you [a vacation]. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find [a vacation] unto your souls." Hebrews 4:9 says, "There remaineth therefore a [vacation] to the people of God."

A close friend once tried to tell me that I was working too hard. He said, "You're going to drop dead if you keep working like that. You've got to stop it!"

I said, "I'm on vacation with Jesus."

God's people need rest. But it's even better when you can serve God and be on vacation *all* the time. Isaiah 32:18 tells us that there are many resting places for the people of God. The Christian life should be one great big vacation. After all, our sins will never be imputed to us. We have passed from death unto life (John 5:24), and we are at rest in the Finished Work of Jesus Christ.

I'm not against vacations. I hope you have the time of your life on your next one. Read the

Bible, do some witnessing, enjoy some good meals—do whatever God leads you to do. But please learn that life with Jesus Christ can be a vacation all the time.

We are on vacation from judgment, from sin, from nagging, from jealousy, and from fretting. We are on vacation from lust, insecurity, worry, and anxiety. God delivers us from all of these things, so our lives can be one great vacation with Him.

Chapter Two

ANOINTED AND CROWNED

"Great deliverances and triumphs gives He to His king, and shows mercy and steadfast love to His anointed, to David and his offspring for ever" (Psalm 18:50, Amplified Translation).

Isaiah 43:15 says "I am the LORD, your Holy One." His name is *Holy*, and it means lovingkindness, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness. God's mercy and steadfast love are always toward His anointed. All of God's people have an anointing (1 John 2:20, 27), meaning that they are sealed, regenerated, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13; Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:19).

In the Old Testament, every prophet, priest, and king had to be anointed with oil upon entering into their office. David was anointed on three separate occasions (1 Samuel 16:13; 2 Samuel 2:4; 5:3), each time signifying entrance into a new phase of his call. The ingredients that made up the anointing oil (Exodus 30:23-25) reveal the

unconditional love and undying mercy of God for His people. In Exodus 29:20, every priest had to be anointed with blood and oil on the right ear, the right thumb, and the right toe. In other words, his hearing, his service, and his walk had to be consecrated unto the Lord. God wants us to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit on His special highway.

Crowned with Lovingkindness

"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies" (Psalm 103:1-4).

God crowns His people with lovingkindness and tender mercies (Psalm 103:4). A crown is God's heavenly covering for our minds—something we wear all the time when we're "on vacation."

"[In Zion] will I make the horn [power] of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp [the human spirit] for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish" (Psalm 132:17-18). David

was anointed and crowned with God's tender mercies, and those mercies were going to flourish. David will one day reign as prince in the future millennial kingdom, which will flourish on the earth. But more than that, his own *life* would flourish because he was anointed and crowned with God's tender mercies.

In Acts 13:22, the Lord declares, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." David fulfilled all of God's will because God crowned him with lovingkindness and tender mercies from the very beginning (1 Samuel 16:13).

Every child of God has sure mercies. Just as David was crowned, we, too, are crowned—God's tender mercies are over our heads. "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isaiah 55:3).

Psalm 105:15 makes this command: "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." To touch God's anointed is to touch the believer's crown of mercy and lovingkindness—the unfailing love of God that rests in the Finished Work.

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear [trust] him....But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:10-11, 17).

God is telling us something that our natural minds cannot comprehend—the Holy Spirit must reveal it. It is impossible to calculate heaven's height above the earth, because no one knows where heaven is. God knows how we think. In our limited human understanding, the way to God is upwards. We think of heaven as extending light-years beyond our solar system. With all of the great scientific discoveries, no one can fathom the size of the universe, which reaches far beyond the farthest star ever seen: This is how great the measure of God's mercy is toward those who trust Him.

God is saying, "There's no way I can explain to you how great my mercy is." He cannot explain how He crowns us with lovingkindness through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. No one

can figure out God's mercy and He doesn't want us to try. "Just live before the Mercy Seat," He is telling us. "Remember, you are crowned with mercy and lovingkindness."

Chapter Three

FOLLOWING THE WAY ABOVE

"And I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity" (Ecclesiastes 8:10).

The writer of Ecclesiastes "saw the wicked buried." He saw people go in and out of the place of mercy. They went in and came out unchanged, because they never received God's mercy. They died and went to hell.

Today, scores of people go into the holy place—in the presence of mercy—and come out unchanged. They go to church on Sunday morning and hear the preacher say how much God loves them, but they never receive His love. A father, a mother, a brother, or a sister may reveal mercy by showing them the Gospel. A wife may stay with her unsaved husband, consistently revealing the holiness of God, through an expression of His mercy. Yet, so many never respond to

God's mercy. Finally, they die in their wickedness and are buried.

But, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Hebrews 13:10).

God wants every believer to come to His throne, the altar from which the priests in the Old Testament could not eat. And this altar is the Mercy Seat inside the heart of the Church Age believer. This altar is on the inside, because that's where the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are abiding.

According to Hebrews 10:11-12, the Old Testament priests never sat down in the holy place when they offered sacrifices. But after Jesus our High Priest ascended to heaven and poured His blood on the Mercy Seat, He sat down at the right hand of the Father. Ephesians 2:6 reveals that every believer has also been seated there with Christ.

The Highway of Holiness

"And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place,

with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:14-15).

"Cast ye up"—the Hebrew imperative *calal*—refers to "a highway above a highway." There is a highway above the world's highway; a way where there is no danger or violence; a way where there are no thieves. On this highway we can experience our crown of loving-kindness and mercy. We are seated together in heavenly places with Christ (Ephesians 2:6). We're not walking on the devil's highway; we're on a holy highway, not because of *our* holiness, but because we have come to the Mercy Seat, through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and we stay there in fellowship, enjoying the highway above.

1 John 5:18 tells us that the wicked one cannot touch us on this holy highway because Jesus has sealed us with His Spirit. He's indwelling us, and He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Being on the highway of holiness doesn't mean we are always seeking for something great. On God's highway, we have received the greatest gift—the abundant life through personal faith without works.

Unclean spirits and plagues hinder many people. An *unclean spirit* is anything in my life that isn't derived from my access to the Mercy Seat. *Plagues* are unclean spirits that never go away. Satan, as an angel of light, deceives people so they will not recognize a plague and, therefore, never deal with the unclean spirits.

Plagues often develop through a generational (genetic) curse (Exodus 34:7). These plagues can begin to appear in adolescence. Guilt, negativity, insecurity, gossip, slander, fear, relative righteousness, and striving to be good are all examples of the things that plague people's lives. If something goes wrong, they begin to withdraw from fellowship and church. Why? Because they have hit a stumblingblock. They are on the wrong highway. Deliverance will never come as long as they continue to walk on the lower highway.

The highway to victory is in heavenly places, far above all principalities, and powers, and thrones, and dominions, and might (Ephesians 1:21). We are hid with Christ in God, far from all the unclean spirits, far from the plagues, far from the generational curses.

"And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, the truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey. And the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment" (Isaiah 59:14-15).

Judgment is turned away backward, therefore justice stands afar off. Judgment is an expression of justice. If justice says, "Keep the Law, keep the commandments," then judgment would say, "If you don't keep the Sabbath, then you must die." But thank God, that's not the way it is today. The Lord is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). The Sabbath represents our rest—it is no longer an observance of a day, it's a relationship with the Person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, mercy now rejoices over the judgment of condemnation (James 2:13).

From His Finished Work throne, God looks down and sees mercy rejoicing against judgment in the lives of those who trust and reverence Him (Psalm 33:13; James 2:13). But for those who are not fellowshipping at the Mercy Seat, judgment turns backward and justice

stands afar off. Truth is fallen in the street. People are occupied with guilt and the details of their personal lives.

Truth falls in the street when a Christian is on the wrong highway. On this highway, Satan has access to the subconscious mind through projections, and he resists believers by successfully assaulting their emotions.

So many people are damaged, wounded, and bruised; they are plagued with fear, insecurity, heartache, and guilt. The truth about God's mercy has fallen in the street, where it is neither received nor understood. People stumble at mercy rather than walk in it. The problem is that they have never found the narrow way. It isn't the Law. It isn't works. The narrow way is the Mercy Seat road. Only God's mercy and grace can bring the deliverance that's needed.

The best thing any believer can do is take up the truth about mercy. Go up to the highway of holiness—the highway that's above—where the work is finished.

The veil has been rent. Let's go into the holy place. We can gather around the Mercy Seat. He will not reward us after our sins, or deal with us after our iniquities. Instead, He has crowned us with His lovingkindness and tender mercies.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is calling us to walk on His highway. "On this highway, you will not be occupied with your flesh or the devil," He says. "You will be on My precious road. I will protect you from the thief, the robber, and the murderer. The accuser won't be able to bring any charges against you. I will protect you, and you can have a vacation on My highway as you live, work, and serve Me."

Live on the highway of the Mercy Seat. Follow the road where mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, where mercy follows you all the days of your life and His mercy endures forever.

His Burden Is Light

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

When a person receives Christ as his personal Savior, he receives a brand-new life filled with promises of joy unspeakable and a peace that passes understanding. Yet, many Christians are not enjoying that new life. They find it difficult to accept their perfection in Christ as the absolute truth about themselves, and their lives are characterized by a feeble spirit of helplessness and hopelessness. When confronted with the truth of their human depravity in the light of divine perfection, they try desperately to cover up with fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). They fail to recognize the continual cleansing power of the Blood that covers all their sins.

Just as we expect our children to grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, God also desires His children to grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18). Many people have been wounded by personal failure, by others, or by legalism, which is perhaps the most destructive force in

the Church today. The wounds lodge deep within their subconscious and unconscious minds (Jeremiah 4:14*b*), stunting their spiritual growth.

When the Holy Spirit convicts of an area of personal sin, we are apt to react in our emotions to the truth, blaming people and circumstances. It is time that we address this dilemma with a balanced approach to what the Scriptures say about living the Christian life. The title of this booklet expresses what most Christians would like to confess but do not dare because they fear what others might think of them. The truth is, Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

My prayer is that as you read this booklet, a great weight will be lifted off your shoulders so you can finally have fun living the Christian life. As you yoke up with Jesus, you will find rest for your soul and discover that His burden is light.

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF LEARNED BEHAVIOR

"All the words which the LORD hath said will we do" (Exodus 24:3*b*).

"As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ" (Galatians 6:12).

Exodus 24:3 records the words of a sincere people who not only had a desire to keep God's commandments but also felt that they had the power to keep them. Yet, they would soon realize that their good intentions were nothing more than a fair show in the flesh—men in their best state but without the power of God (Psalm 39:5).

Christians today enter into a similar struggle to do what is "right"—what they feel that God and others expect of them. Always occupied with a need to change, they run to every seminar they can find, hoping that *this* will finally be

the one that changes them. They listen to radio programs that are widely accepted, and though some of them are good, many of those programs are not biblically mature because they fail to communicate the transforming power of God.

These Christians are victims of "self-help" programs. Though they study, memorize, and quote Scripture, they live in what I call "learned behavior." They are unaware of the subtle attack on their lives.

If we live in learned behavior, we try to conform to an outward pattern of behavior without experiencing the transforming power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit in our inner-man. God did not save us so we could learn how to behave better. We may be able to learn how to behave better in our Adam nature, but that does not glorify Christ, and it does not change us inwardly. At best, we become educated to "do better".

If you go into any Christian bookstore today, you will find plenty of self-help books—*How to*… or *Ten Steps to*…. Of course, if you fail at step seven, you have to go back to step one. That, friends, is not biblical teaching. All it amounts to is trying to be spiritual. You cannot solve your problems nor change your ways sim-

ply by learning how to behave differently.

Over the years I have counseled hundreds of believers. I have walked with them, read their letters, and talked with them on the phone. I know they love God, and the best they know how they try to apply the Scriptures to their lives. But often, what they are really saying is, "I'm going to change. I am going to learn how to do it."

Self-help seminars are extremely popular in Christian circles today. But herein lies the problem. Often, the focus of the whole seminar is on improving behavior. The seminar speaker may begin by teaching the man to be a good husband, or by teaching the woman how to submit to her husband. He will ask questions such as, "Do you spend time together? Do you communicate? Do you spend enough time with your children?" Certainly these issues are important, but spending more time together is not the solution to the real problems in relationships.

At the end of the session, people will rededicate their life to Christ and make new commitments to their spouse. Sadly, these people will face great frustration in the days ahead, because they will discover that no one can change his flesh. It has never happened before, and it is not

about to happen this time. Still, Christians keep going to the altar. They know how to "put on their best face" and they are sincere about changing. They even go away thinking they have changed, but the seminar only succeeded in getting their attention on what they should do and how to behave better toward each other. It did not change their hearts.

Christians do not need another seminar to teach them how to behave better. Indeed, God can and does do a deep work through seminars. The problem is not the seminar but the approach that is taken at the seminar. Too often, instead of being transformed by the power of the Living God, too often people are being told to conform to a standard that even God doesn't expect them to live up to.

In the home, we expect a lot from our children. We teach them how to behave properly, which is good. But they have the same old sin nature inside of them that we have carried with us for years. When they do something wrong, they hear from us in a hundred different ways how they should change. We say, "This is what you should do," or "You won't do that again will you?" And they answer "no," fearing the consequences if they fail to comply.

See if the following scenarios sound familiar:

Johnny comes home from school with a note from the teacher. It seems he misbehaved again in class. So you ask him, "Why did you do that today, Johnny?"

"I don't know," he replies.

You say, "You do know it was wrong, don't you?"

"Yes."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to change."

The truth is, Johnny is not going to change.

A teenage girl who struggles with rebellion goes to Christian youth camp. She returns home after one week, seemingly a different girl. She kisses her mother on the cheek and whispers, "Mom, will you forgive me for how I have treated you? I am so sorry." But after being back in her familiar environment for a few days, she is back to her old self. She won't pray or read her Bible. Her mother tries to talk to her, but she does not want to be bothered.

We must face the fact that we cannot teach young people how to be spiritual. Yes, we need to teach them the Word of God and impart proper spiritual and moral values. Many times, however, we do to our children the same thing

the seminar leader does to adults—we address their outward behavior while their inner-man languishes. In a sincere effort to please us, children may put on a fair show in the flesh. For a season, they become like models of perfection. Yet, though they may be acting much better, they are still not spiritual.

"I'll Do Better"

God's plan for us has never been that we would "do better" by striving in our flesh. The Word of God says that even if we do our best, it is altogether vanity (see Psalm 39:5*b*). He does not want us to do our best; He wants us to receive His best through an exchanged life in Jesus Christ. We grow in the grace of God's eternal purpose, not because of anything we do to get better, but because we are under grace (see Romans 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Anxious to see God's promise fulfilled, Abraham had sex with Sarah's handmaid, Hagar, and Ishmael the "wild man" was conceived. According to Genesis 16 and 21, Abraham and Sarah had to live in the same house with Hagar. Later, after the promised son, Isaac, was born, they had to put up with Ishmael's mocking rebellious spirit.

No one gets out of a terrible situation like that by trying to "do better" or by learning how to behave. Someone could have said to Abraham, "Don't look at Hagar! And don't blame Sarah, even if it was her suggestion in the first place. What you did was wrong." But that would not do a single thing to change Abraham or the situation. He already knew that what he did was wrong. Similarly, we may "know" a lot of the things we do are wrong, and we "know" that we shouldn't do them. But just knowing doesn't change us.

Apastor cannot teach his people to be moral. He can give them definition from the Scriptures, but once the congregation has definition, it requires a personal response to God to make a man or woman moral, having God's righteousness as his experience. No one should try to make it happen by striving in the flesh.

I hear Christians say, "Oh, that message really spoke to me." But when they try to implement it, they fall flat on their face. What is the problem? They were sincerely trying to change their outward behavior based on the letter of the message they heard without receiving it in their human spirit through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

The truth is, we will go crazy trying to change. If it has not worked for the last ten or twenty years, then why would it work today? We may be sincere, but in our effort to change, we are also very cunning. We quote a few Scriptures hoping that this time, by God's grace, our sincerity will be a little more sincere. Oh, we have such good feelings at first when we start performing for God! We think, "I'm doing so much better now."

But a few days later you turn on the television and see something you shouldn't see and your flesh is stimulated. Your brokenness was only the sincerity of your flesh deceiving you into thinking you could do better.

Consider a Christian who tries to get victory over jealousy. He confesses that he doesn't want to be jealous, and he tries hard in his flesh to stop being jealous. He buys a book in his local Christian bookstore on getting victory over jealousy. He talks to his best friend about his problem.

Do you think he will ever be able to *learn* not to be jealous? Of course not! And he should not even try. He should just look in the mirror, have a big laugh and say, "That's me. And that is going to be me forever, unless I do it God's

way."

We do not have to remain the same in Adam forever. Yet, we have the potential to stay that way for the rest of our lives unless we choose the options God gives us to be changed. If we refuse God's options, we will always struggle with man's options.

The Option of Self-Analysis

The first option a man has in himself is self-analysis. The natural man has a propensity to look within himself to discover what is wrong. This is self-analysis. Not one verse in the Bible tells us to analyze ourselves. To be honest, most of us already know what we are like. Proverbs 18:2 says, "Afool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself." But the Word of God has already told us what the human heart is like: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). You may have been a Christian for thirty years, but if you walk in your flesh on any given day, you will discover that "Adam"—your old sin nature—has not changed one bit in those years. In fact, he is probably worse, because he is more educated. You can analyze him all you want, but he will

not change.

If you think your sin nature has changed, then wait until someone says something to insult you and you get offended. Wait until your best friend acts weird around you with no explanation and see how it affects you. You will discover that you have not really changed at all. Adam has just learned to cover up how he feels and what he is really like. You modify your behavior for a while, but when you fail, you still feel guilty and shameful. Why? Because Adam is a condemned man (see John 3:18, 5:24).

The Option of Legalism

The second option offered to men who want to change themselves is legalism. The Word of God, however, says that legalism is a dead end: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6*b*). "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63).

In an effort to change and do better, many Christians find themselves under the spirit of legalism. They are trying to live the Christian life in the energy of the flesh, trying to "live up" to the letter of the Word of God. It legislates man-

made standards that others must conform to. This does away entirely with grace, unconditional love, and personal communion with God.

Legalism has done more to kill the spirit of Christianity than any movement or false doctrine. Many people mistake legalism for holiness. But legalism has nothing to do with true holiness. Legalistic Christians only pretend to be spiritual while failing to see that in their experience, they cannot even begin to live up to their own standards. Though they may be saved and sincere in their efforts, they are caught in the trap of legalism without even knowing it.

In God's eyes, a legalistic Christian is no better off than a prostitute, because neither one of them knows God. Actually, the prostitute probably has a better chance of getting to know God. At least she knows in her heart that she is doing wrong, but the legalist thinks he already knows God!

The Option of Relative Righteousness

"Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" (Job 40:8*b*).

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring them-

selves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

These verses speak of relative or comparative righteousness—measuring others against our own man-made standards. All of us have done this at one time or another, even if it was in ignorance. Maybe we were frustrated with our own efforts to change or to live up to our own concepts of Christianity. In an attempt to divert our attention from our own shortcomings, we evaluated others, exalting ourselves above them. This attitude is revealed in our dealings with people in the church, at home, or on the job. We might say, "That's not how you do that!" or "What are you doing that for?" Even though that person may be doing something the wrong way, the spirit we approach them with reveals that we are living in relative righteousness.

Sometimes, an entire church will not have anything to do with another Bible-believing church because of a spirit of relative righteousness. One group thinks they are better or more spiritual than the other. From God's divine viewpoint, He sees both groups as the same. One is not better than the other. Some may have learned how to behave better than the others,

but that doesn't make them better. At the Cross, we all stand in an even place (see Psalm 26:12). Furthermore, each one stands or falls before God (Romans 14:4). The only difference in a particular group is how they operate as one new man (Ephesians 2:15).

It is impossible to have any kind of change in our lives apart from the work of the Cross today. We could cry about our failures and make a new commitment every night of the week. But that would not change us. We could live in religious austerity, separated unto ourselves with a "holier than thou" attitude. But that would not make us any better. We might be able to abstain from certain sins for a season, but the change would not be lasting. After coming to the end of ourselves, we will cry out, as so many who have gone before us, "I can't live the Christian life!" And do you know? They are right.

Chapter Two

I CAN'T LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

"Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Corinthians 2:16*b*).

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5).

"For they do not know how to do right" (Amos 3:10*a*, Amplified Translation).

These verses all communicate one basic truth: We cannot live the Christian life, regardless of how much we "know" how to live it. Only God in a man can live the Christian life.

The apostle Paul had a revelation of this when he wrote, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me," in Galatians 2:20. Peter thought he could live the Christian life. He made a bold confession of it in

Luke 22:33—"Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." In Matthew 26:33, he said to Jesus, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended."

Again, in John 13:37, Peter said, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life my life for thy sake." Yet, before the night was over, Peter denied the Lord three times. Twice he said, "I know not the man" (Matthew 26:72, 74). Why did Peter's confession change so quickly under pressure? The answer is simple. The way of a man is not in himself. The way of a man may seem right in his own eyes, but the Lord proves his heart (Proverbs 21:2).

A Revelation of Wretchedness

Peter did not yet understand the truth that was revealed to the apostle Paul in Romans 7:18. "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Paul went on to say, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Moses felt the same way when he said to God, "Let me not see my wretchedness" (Numbers 11:15*b*).

All of us have sensed our own wretchedness. Paul did not say, "O wretched man that I was before I got saved." He said, "O wretched man that I am." Where does this sense of our own wretchedness come from? It comes from something that is innately a part of us all, something that is God's enemy. It is the old sin nature we call "Adam." Adam does not just *have* problems; he *is* the problem. According to Isaiah 1:5-6, Adam's whole head is sick and his whole heart is faint. There is no soundness in him. He is filled with wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores.

Adam is incurable. Jeremiah 30:12-13 tells us that his bruises are incurable and there is no healing medicine for his condition. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked [(sick unto death)]: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). No one knows his own heart. God says that *my* heart is deceitful—not just my neighbor's heart. God is talking to me. Therefore, we need a pastor-teacher who speaks the truth in love. We need true friends in the Body of Christ, because sometimes we do not know when we may be off in an area, and a true friend will not compromise with truth to maintain oneness if they see us going astray in an area.

In Jeremiah 2:23, God addressed the nation of Israel, asking them, "How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Balaam?" None of us can deny that we are polluted, or that we have followed after other gods. Job 14:4 says, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." No wonder Ecclesiastes 5:2 says to let our words on earth be few! We do not know our own hearts. Deuteronomy 29:19 speaks of a man who "blesses himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart." Our hearts can deceive us into thinking everything is okay while we continue to walk in our own imaginations.

In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus spoke a parable to those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." This is the ultimate in the depravity and deception of the heart. This is the spirit behind legalism and relative righteousness. Here was a group of Pharisees who lived and spoke as if their hearts were not deceitful. They trusted in themselves. They thought that the way was in them, and they believed that they could direct their own steps.

At one time in his life, Paul felt this way too. Writing the book of Philippians from prison, he recalled his past:

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

"Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

"Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:4-6).

That illustrates the deception of the human heart.

But Paul's present confession as he wrote this epistle was triumphant: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3).

God's Indictment on the Human Race

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

"Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of

asps is under their lips:

"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

"Their feet are swift to shed blood:

"Destruction and misery are in their ways:

"And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:10-19).

Because of Adam's incurable condition, God indicted him, found him guilty, and condemned him to death. Romans 3:10-18 records God's fourteen-fold indictment. Verse 19 records God's verdict: "Guilty."

This is what God says about every one of us. Need we say any more? No wonder we cannot live the Christian life. There is nothing in us—in our flesh—that can do it.

Chapter Three

I QUIT!

"I quit," This may seem like a strange confession for a Christian to make. On the contrary, it is exactly what God is waiting for us to say to Him. God is waiting to be gracious (Isaiah 30:18). He is waiting for us to give Him an opportunity to live the Christian life in us. A dear friend of mine who has gone home to be with the Lord once quoted 1 Thessalonians 5:24: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it"—and then he added, "God can't do it until we are done." Until we are done with what? Until we are done with trying to live the Christian life, struggling to change, preserving our life in Adam.

Jesus' disciples struggled to live the Christian life but without power. They were with Him for three years. They walked with Him, ate with Him, and saw His miracles and signs. They saw His tears. They saw the dead raised and demons

cast out. And still, there was not a single change in any one of them. In the end, they all forsook Jesus at the Cross (Matthew 26:56).

Even after Jesus was resurrected and had appeared to His disciples twice, they still could not change. Weary of his Christian life, Peter said in John 21:3, "I go a fishing." According to the Greek language used here, in essence Peter was saying, "I quit. I can't live the Christian life." And he was right. The other disciples agreed with him saying, "We also go with thee." John was one of them. Five times in the Gospel of John, he referred to himself as "the one whom Jesus loved." Yet he still followed backslidden Peter into the boat to go fishing. John was also ready to quit. The disciples were not changed until the day of Pentecost, when the resurrection power of Christ would fill them through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Transparency

There are two ways in the Bible: Satan's way and God's way. Satan lies; God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Satan sends an evil spirit; God sends His Holy Spirit. Satan accuses; God edifies. Satan builds up Adam; God crucifies Adam. Satan causes us to have total recall of everything we

are in Adam while blinding us to our provision so that we will eventually give up in despair; God forgives and forgets everything we have ever done in Adam and opens our eyes to a better way. Satan says, "God will never answer your prayer, because you are no good, and God knows you will never change," but God says, "Just keep believing; the answer is on the way." Satan constantly changes his approach to his attack against us so he can bring confusion; God operates in perfect integrity and immutability toward us, no matter what our state.

God has a way for us to be changed and to live a victorious Christian life. God's way begins with transparency and honesty at the Cross, not a sincere desire to do better. An honest heart is one that accepts the provisions of God's Word and then brings forth fruit with patience toward self.

I counseled a young girl one day who is like many other girls her age. She did some things she should not have done. Though she does not have a rebellious heart, she did not have the power to change herself. So instead of speaking harsh words of correction, I spoke soft words from my heart. She needed to be surrounded with the love of Jesus Christ, and I said to her,

"You will make it."

During our counseling session, she made a very mature statement. After being honest about what happened, she said, "I hope I don't do it again." That confession revealed integrity and transparency. She said, "I hope I don't do it again" not, "I won't do it again." People with legalistic backgrounds are more likely to say, "I will never do that again," and then they go out and do it within twenty-four hours. They may sincerely mean what they say, but they do not have any power or strength to make it happen.

The opposite of transparency is self-preservation in the flesh. In the hundreds of hours that I have spent counseling Christians, more than anything else I have seen people trying to preserve their life in Adam. They justify themselves and defend their right to be right. They overreact to what others say about them, and they want me to know it isn't true. My question is, *who cares?* What are we defending? Our right to live in a fallen nature filled with bruises and running sores? But once we become transparent with what God says about our condition in Adam (Romans 3:10-19, Isaiah 1:5-6, Jeremiah 17:9) and honest with what God did to Adam on the Cross (Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20), then

what is there left to preserve? Nothing!

Every Christian stands in an even place—crucified, buried, and resurrected with Christ. Once we accept that truth, self-preservation ceases. The Finished Work means that the Cross took me out and put Christ in. It is wonderful to get up in the morning without a single thing to preserve for that day, no matter how I feel.

Stop Trying

Not one verse in the Bible tells me to try to change or be a better Christian. I could feel sorry for myself and cry a bucket of tears, but that kind of sorrow does not transform me. It just causes more shame, frustration, defeat, and guilt. In my best state, I may be able to do a little better for a season, because of self-righteousness, but that is not transformation.

The more we try to change, the more we will find ourselves going through the same thing the apostle Paul did in Romans 7:

"To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do….when I would do good, evil is present with me." (Romans 7:18*b*,19,21*b*).

Paul was saying, "I have tried to change, but

every time I do, I fall flat on my face, and Satan's government of evil is right there to condemn me."

Paul finally came to the conclusion that he was not going to try anymore, and that was the greatest revelation of his life. It was Paul who later wrote, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

When Job was going through his trial, he said, "For He performs that which He has planned for me, and of many such matters He is mindful" (Job 23:14, Amplified Translation). The prophet Isaiah wrote, "Lord, you will ordain peace for us, for You have also wrought in us and for us all our works" (Isaiah 26:12, Amplified Translation).

As we give up the weight of our own way and yoke up with Christ, we will go places we never dreamed of. He is so willing to be our strength for everything we go through. Cast your cares upon Him; His burden is light.

CONCLUSION

The secret of living the Christian life is this: never strive, never try, and never worry about your last failure. Another counseling session is not the answer if it will only put you in the frame of mind to try again or to conform to another way of behavior—only to fail again and be more frustrated. We must stop trying to conform to anything. Romans 12:2 instructs us, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind…." Many think that being "conformed to the world" means going back to the barroom or into a life of immorality. But conforming to the world means going back to trying to be better, using the Scriptures to reinforce your efforts. This is the most subtle form of worldliness.

This booklet does not suggest a life of antinomianism—of professing to know God but denying Him in our works (Titus 1:16), nor does it encourage carelessness or lawlessness. We

should live with responsibility and accountability. I believe in practical holiness and in living a pure life before God. But I also have a strong conviction that trying to conform to standards and striving to "do better" will not produce holiness. That kind of sincere effort only produces sincerely frustrated, perplexed believers who are ready to quit rather than to keep trying, only to fail again.

God wants us to come to the place where we say, "I can't change, I'm not going to try to change, and I don't even care!" When we can say that, we are finally being honest—with God and with ourselves. We have come to our "wit's end" (Psalm 107:27), or to the place where our human efforts are exhausted. Our confession is no longer, "I'll do better," but, "Faithful is He who calls me, and I know He will do it." Now we are ready to accept God's power to be changed. We finally believe that "with God, all things are possible."

His Lovingkindness

toward You

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Old Testament, the names given to people often described a characteristic of their nature (1 Samuel 1:20), a desired attribute (Ruth 4:14-17), or an inevitable predisposition because of circumstances surrounding their conception (Genesis 16:11-12). Occasionally, God gave new names to people to reflect a work He accomplished in their lives (Genesis 32:28).

Because the measure of His being is inexhaustible, God has many names assigned to Himself that describe His greatness. We could spend hours pondering each name, but one of the most tender expressions of God's nature is in the name "Lovingkindness."

In the last days, more than ever before, God desires to reveal His name—and all that His name proclaims—to His people and to the world.

In His *name*, God chose every believer before the foundation of the world. Because of His fore-

knowledge—knowing everything we would do in time—God prepared a path of righteousness for every one of His people. On that path, God is working every situation together for good (Romans 8:28).

As you walk down the road of lovingkindness, let truth set you apart with a new heart, a new mind, a new purpose, and a new fellowship in the name and nature of God.

Chapter One

HIS NAME—A DIVINE DEFINITION

"And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with [Moses] there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exodus 34:5-7*a*).

In this passage, the Lord proclaimed or described His name by way of a declaration of definition or an infinite description. As He passed before Moses, the Lord proclaimed "the LORD God." He declared that His name is the Lord God, who is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Then He went on to say that He forgives iniquity and transgression and sin but judges those who are not saved.

Twenty-six times in Psalm 136, the Psalmist declared, "His mercy endureth forever." Each time, the definition of "mercy" (Hebrew, *checed*) is equated with the summarization of that declaration, proclamation, and infinite description of God's name: Lovingkindness.

God was saying, "I want you to know My *name,* not just *Yahweh,* but what it describes in its infinite meaning, divine definition, and available provision for every individual. I want you to know Lovingkindness."

On the road of lovingkindness, God was in Christ, not imputing the world's trespasses unto them. Instead, He made reconciliation available—a ministry of reconciliation with words of reconciliation. He removed all the barriers that sin and iniquity had created through wrong choices. This was the act of the name of God—Lovingkindness.

Rooted in Lovingkindness

In Exodus 3:15*b*, God said, "this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." His lovingkindness is to be a memorial throughout all generations. Therefore Jesus said, "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments"

(John 14:14-15). If we ask anything in the name of Lovingkindness, He will do it.

Everything the believer experiences should be rooted in the lovingkindness that comes from God's nature, God's words, and God's life—*through* God's name. When we gather, we do it in the name of the Lord. When we sing, Jesus sings in the midst of the congregation. Administrative details also must be handled in the name of Lovingkindness.

Lovingkindness and Foreknowledge

Consider the depth of God's lovingkindness. Isaiah 46:10 tells us that God knows *all* things before they come to pass—*everything*. Billions of years ago in eternity past, He knew every sin and iniquity that each person would commit. Yet, He called and chose Christians based upon His foreknowledge of the choices we would make through free volition, or self-determination, which was the first gift God gave to man in the Garden of Eden.

God foreknew how I would respond to the Gospel—with either positive or negative volition. Knowing that my choice would be positive, His lovingkindness went to work when I was born, regardless of what He could see in my life.

Furthermore, He guaranteed that when I leave this body of death (or go up in the Rapture), my old sin nature will be gone and I will be perfected (Philippians 1:6, Psalm 138:8).

Now, can you imagine the conversation some of us might have had with God the Father had we been there when He was fashioning the plan for Jacob's life?

"Lord, do You know how deceitful and crooked Jacob will be?"

"Yes."

"Well then, how can You use *him*?"

"By grace. My name is Lovingkindness; My name is Mercy which endures forever (Psalm 136:1-26). My Lovingkindness will endure through everything for those who are saved by the Blood of the Lamb."

In Genesis 32:28, God said to Jacob, "Thou art a prince, and thou shalt have power with God and with men." In a magnificent passage in Jeremiah 51:19, the Lord declared that the God of Jacob is different from the other gods that were in the form of graven and molten images (verse 17). "The portion of Jacob is not like them; for [God] is the former [Creator] of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the Lord of hosts is his name."

God was saying, "Jacob, the God you reveal is not like the other false gods. Through all your battles with the flesh (going away for twenty years because of the way you cheated Esau), and with all your fears because of everything you did, Lovingkindness has decided to use *you*, Jacob, to declare My name throughout all the earth. Your twelve sons will be the heads of the twelve tribes of My people *because of My name*."

His Irreversible Blessings

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it" (Numbers 23:19-20).

Jesus Christ cannot reverse the blessing because of His name—Lovingkindness—and because of what He did at Calvary, bearing all of our sins. His shed blood, His death, His burial, and His resurrection secured the blessing. Therefore, according to Numbers 23:21, God did not behold "iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them."

That is King Jesus, and He shouts that His name is Lovingkindness.

Billions of years ago, Lovingkindness foreknew that Jacob would be positive in his volition but very weak in his transitions. Billions of years ago, God decided to choose Moses, knowing even then that he would murder a man and spend forty years wandering on the backside of the desert. Yet, Lovingkindness said, "I am going to declare and manifest my lovingkindness to the world by Moses. My lovingkindness will make him the meekest man on the face of the earth."

Billions of years ago, Lovingkindness said, "I'm going to choose David, the son of Jesse, who shall fulfill *all* my will (Acts 13:22). Even though he will have some miserable failures, it will be said of David when he dies that 'he *never* turned aside and *never* turned to the left or to the right'" (1 Kings 15:5).

Blessed is David "unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:6-8). Those are the words of God's lovingkindness toward David.

Lovingkindness is lovingkindness, and it endures forever. Even when we believe not, God cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). Our unbelief cannot make the Word of God of none effect. Let God be true and every man a liar (Romans 3:3-4).

Lovingkindness said, "Jeremiah, before I formed thee in the belly, *I knew thee*; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Before you were formed, Jeremiah, Lovingkindness knew you; so don't say you're a child, and don't be afraid to speak what I command you to speak" (see Jeremiah 1:5-7*a*).

Solomon, in Nehemiah 13:26, was called powerful, loved of nations, and beloved of his God who made him king of Israel. Though strange women made him sin, Solomon, when he died, was called beloved of God because the One who called him wanted to demonstrate His characteristics of lovingkindness toward a backslidden son.

Chapter Two

A LIFE OF LOVINGKINDNESS

He who shows lovingkindness shall be preserved (Psalm 97:10). He who shows lovingkindness shall be honored and will execute judgment upon all nations (Psalm 149:9). The person who reveals lovingkindness will show judgment upon the nations by revealing Lovingkindness!—revealing the *name* of the Lord, in place of the Lord, in Christ's stead to make God known on the earth.

David revealed His heart of lovingkindness in 2 Samuel 1:23 when he said "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions." In his thoughts, David put Saul right beside Jonathan, his dearest *dearest* friend, speaking of them as equally beloved by God. How could this be, when Saul—who died in shame at the end of his life—had tried to kill

David so many times? But David didn't see Saul the way he was. David saw Saul the way God looked at him. He said they were "pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided," both of them swifter than eagles and stronger than lions. David revealed God's lovingkindness, which doesn't impute iniquity or sin.

Ephesians 4:32 tells believers to "Be kind one to another," which really means to live in lovingkindness toward one another, just as God for Christ's sake demonstrates lovingkindness toward you.

Each one in a marriage—regardless of his partner—is to live in lovingkindness because he is here in Christ's place to reveal and proclaim His name through the Word of God and the indwelling Spirit under the grace of God. Partners in marriage are here to reveal the nature and characteristics of God's eternal life—eternal love, eternal mercy, eternal long-suffering, and eternal truth; for God, who is abundant in goodness and truth, shows lovingkindness to thousands, forgiving their iniquities and sins.

That's why the name of the Lord is sacred. His name is Lovingkindness.

Jesus' Mission

Reading from Isaiah 61:1-2*a*, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are *bruised*, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

The Greek word for "bruised," *thrauo*, describes a costly vase that has been crushed, broken into tiny fragments, unrecognizable in terms of its original design. Jesus' one mission was to put His lovingkindness into action, not to go into why people are the way they are. In His life on earth, He was interested in doing something about their condition rather than going into what caused it. Jesus was saying in Luke 4, "I'll preach the Good News to them. I'll preach deliverance to the captives, recover sight to the blind, and bring liberty to those who have been broken and smashed to pieces."

His Healing Power

In Hosea 11:3, God said of Ephraim, "they knew not that I healed them." The same is true for Christians. We will accept the Gospel of sal-

vation in the Finished Work, but we won't accept our *healing* in the Finished Work. Yet, even as the Gospel reveals our eternal security in the Finished Work, it reveals that Jesus Christ's healing has already been accomplished for the believer.

Consider Psalm 139:13-18: "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee."

Can you picture that? "According as he hath chosen us *in him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). We were chosen *in Him* because of our positive volition toward the

Gospel, toward salvation, and toward the grace of God. We were chosen *before* the foundation of the world! Therefore, our sins and iniquities were not the issue but rather Lovingkindness, which was available to heal and deliver and set at liberty every person who has been smashed to pieces, unrecognizable except to the One who created them.

When the Lord came to the earth, He came anointed of the Holy Spirit, doing good, and sent by God to heal all who were "oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38).

The moment you accept Christ as Savior, God gives you a position *in Him*, above all principalities and powers, long before your heart is ever circumcised. In Joshua 5:9, Israel crossed over the Jordan River into Canaan long before their hearts were circumcised. The first place they camped was Gilgal, which represents a position that is complete and perfect in Christ. That was a demonstration of lovingkindness toward the people He had created, a people who had fallen by sin into human depravity through wrong choices.

Chapter Three

PUTTING ON LOVINGKINDNESS

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). *Chadash*, the Hebrew word for "renew" has a unique meaning in this verse. It means that David wanted a brand-new garment, an absolute change that only comes from lovingkindness. He was saying, "God, I want to be renewed. I committed iniquity with Bathsheba. I was wrong to hold contempt against my son, Absalom, when he conspired to overthrow the kingdom. O God, I want to be renewed!"

What was God's response? "I cannot refuse a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart that makes a request like this" (see Psalm 51:17).

When we enter glory, we are going to see Jesus Christ, in His glorified body with wounds in His side, hands, and feet. The wounds will be fresh, but there will be no blood. And we will see all the people in heaven perfected with their

glorified bodies. Then He will begin to manifest the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us and this will go on throughout all eternity. Though we will see His wounds, He will wipe away all of our bad memories (Revelation 21:4), meaning we won't ever have to think about where we came from. Even today, God wipes out bad memories for Christians who choose to walk in the Spirit. We always have the option of remembering, but we don't have to choose that option.

God, the Father of all mercies, the God of all grace, the God of all comfort, is just waiting to execute lovingkindness toward the lost, toward Christians, toward *all* who have wounds and bruises. He wants to heal the brokenhearted. Beyond that, He wants to set at liberty those who have been smashed in pieces. He longs to preach deliverance to those who are in some kind of prison. Why? Because *His name is Lovingkindness.*

The Finished Work of Lovingkindness

Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This means when we gather together, we don't gather to talk about just anything. We gather together in His name, in the

nature of His lovingkindness, and not in sentimentality. Sometimes our love may be tough love, but His lovingkindness is still our environment. He is in our midst.

Satan's program is to move us into a system of works; he tries to make us think we will never be good enough. His plan is to make you remember everything you have ever done wrong, to make you feel so guilty and miserable that you have to *do* something to stop remembering the past. The devil's goal is to get you into a religious system—and he does it all to proclaim an "unfinished" work.

Romans 8:28 teaches that all things work together for good to those who love God *positionally* and then respond in a practical way in their life. While we may not even experience God's love for ourselves or others, God still works all things together for good. The truth is, we love God in positional truth even when we have no feelings at all. This is quite different from the view that says we have to love God *enough* in our experience to get Him to work all things together for good. That would make God's work unfinished.

But John 19:30 reveals that "when Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is

finished: and he bowed his head and gave up [his spirit]." His work was *finished*, once and for all (Hebrews 10:10)!

"And now," Jesus is saying to us, "through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, I want to reproduce in you the very nature that finished the work. I want to preserve you as you show lovingkindness. I want to make you rulers over nations *because* you show lovingkindness." Our purpose is to reveal Christ (Galatians 1:16) and to manifest His nature (2 Corinthians 4:10).

Whatever It Takes

It is really quite simple. God will teach us how to have victory and how to live through His grace quietly, soberly, and godly in this present evil world (Titus 2:12). And in this process of growing, He has given us a provision for recovery—seven times a day if we need it (Proverbs 24:16)!

But then the Lord says, "When it's all said and done, I will be merciful unto those who show mercy" (Psalm 18:25). "I'll give special privileges to those who reveal my name, which is Lovingkindness."

Abraham made so many mistakes, yet he became the father of our faith; he declared God's

name and became a winner in the end. God in His lovingkindness never thought of turning His back on Jacob, Samson, David, or Solomon. He never considered turning away from Paul in the midst of his Romans 7 struggles nor from Peter when he denied Christ three times. The Father used each one according to the call. Nothing they could do would hinder the nature and construct of the manifestation of God's lovingkindness.

HIS LOVING KINDNESS
by Ruut Sallinen

What is this amazing thing,
That makes me feel so rich inside?
What will keep me on this road
And never make me want to hide?

Where do I derive my strength
In time of great temptation?
What renews me day by day,
Leads me in the right direction?

His Loving Kindness…that endures forever.

What will fill all of my needs,
Supply divine provision?
What will always guide me through
Each detail and decision?

What will make me want to go
And leave my past behind me?
What will make me want to share
This life that is within me?

His Loving Kindness…that endures forever.

What will make us love each other
The way that He first loved us?
What will make us sacrifice
As selflessly as Jesus?

His Loving Kindness…that endures forever.

CONCLUSION

The words to this song were given to Ruut, a teenager in our Christian high school, after this message was preached on a Sunday morning. She is but one example of the transforming life of Christ and the keeping power of God who is Lovingkindness.

Do you have a broken heart? God's Finished Work is there to heal the brokenhearted. Maybe you are in secret bondage, or perhaps an area of your life has been smashed to pieces. Come to Him. Because of His great love, there is nothing you have done or anything you could ever do to make Him close the door on you.

Come to Lovingkindness and receive healing for whatever has been done. His healing will be a brand-new garment, a brand-new start for single people, married couples, and families.

And as you receive this renewal and this brand-new garment of lovingkindness, He will lead you in "the paths of righteousness for his

name's sake" (Psalm 23:3). Just come to the Father by faith.

Precious Father, we pray that as scores of people read these words, they will be healed because of Jesus Christ being manifested in His infinite name of Lovingkindness. Father, heal our emotions. Deliver from secret sin. Heal every pain and wound as your lovingkindness dwells inside of us. May we breathe, think, speak, and reflect the beauty of lovingkindness. We thank you in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

His Strength

is in

the Clouds

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INTRODUCTION

"Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds" (Psalm 68:34).

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1).

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

What do the clouds mean in the Bible? So often we see a cloud as an obstruction that prevents the light from dispelling the darkness in our circumstances. In this message we will see clouds as the manifestation of God's presence filling His people.

Moses finished the work on the tabernacle according to the pattern given by God (Hebrews

8:5). "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34).

This is a beautiful story. The cloud came upon the tabernacle and, as a result, Moses was not able to enter into the house of God to minister because it was filled with the glory of the Lord.

If the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle Moses built, it is much more important today that the glory of the Lord fill us. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 tells us that we are God's tabernacle: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

God wants so much to fill His people, whom He has made, in the same way He filled the tabernacle, which Moses made. I want every reader of this booklet to understand the doctrine of God's clouds and to experience His presence as never before.

Chapter One

DEDICATED TO GOD

"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever" (2 Chronicles 7:1-2).

In his dedication of the temple, Solomon offered 22,000 of the best oxen and 120,000 of the best sheep. Picture it — 142,000 sacrifices. That's a lot of offerings! The temple was complete. The fire of God came down from heaven when Solo-

mon dedicated the temple, and the glory of the Lord filled it completely. This is a picture of us — believers with an understanding of the doctrine of the clouds — dedicating our bodies as God's temples. We see that we are not our own; we are bought with a price, and therefore we glorify God in our bodies, "which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20*d*).

"And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD" (1 Kings 8:10-11).

The Unveiling of His Character

The fire of God came down and consumed all of the sacrifices, then His glory filled the temple so that the priests could not enter in to minister *because of the cloud.* When God unveils His glory, as He did at the dedication of the temple, it means that He demonstrates His integrity, His essence and His characteristics.

The cloud today means the unveiling of the character of God in our bodies. His cloud comes in and keeps us out. It puts God in control and keeps us from controlling our lives. With our

consent, God fills us and we allow Him to take over our lives.

However, there are many times when we try to enter back into the place of God's cloud to minister in our bodies. We try to control our conversations, our goodness and badness. We always try to use reason to control our lives. We keep meddling with change. But the Word of God says we are to keep our eyes on the cloud. When His cloud moves, we move. When His cloud stops, we stop. We must be led by the cloud, the unveiling of the very presence of God inside our bodies.

The Awesome Place of God

I am asking God, day by day, to help me implement the cloud principle in my life. Consider this, "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:16-17). In the original Hebrew text, this verse speaks of the awesomeness of the place of God. Not only is it an awesome place, it is also the gateway to heaven.

God's temple today — my body and your

body — is an awesome place. Could you come to appreciate your body as an awesome place of God? Your body can be an awesome place and a gateway to Heaven for others, too.

In 2 Chronicles 29:16, everything that cluttered up the holy place of God had to be taken out: "And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron."

Everything relating to the flesh has to be brought out of our temples so that the cloud of God can come in to make each one of us an awesome place.

Chapter Two

LED BY THE CLOUD

"And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (Exodus 40:36-38).

Can you picture 2.5 million Israelites in a place they didn't know anything about? They were confused and perplexed; all looking in the direction of the cloud. At night, the cloud became a pillar of fire. When the cloud was taken up, Israel moved.

"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go

by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (Exodus 13:21-22). Every day they were led by the cloud. They could count on the cloud. We, too, can depend on the cloud; we can depend on the fire at night.

Faith Rest in a Finished Work

The Bible says in Exodus 40:33*b*, "So Moses finished the work." Keep that word *finished* in focus. When the work was finished, the cloud gathered over the tent of the tabernacle. Sometimes, a cloud prevents you from sight. If you look up and there is a thick cloud, you can't see what is behind it. Here, the cloud speaks of faith.

"As long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle [Israel] rested in their tents," (Numbers 9:18). Are you getting this? There it was, 1500 B.C. — that portable tabernacle in the wilderness, and the glory of God filled it! What is the glory of the Lord? It is a manifestation of the presence of God being permitted to work because of our obedience. The children of Israel "kept the charge of the LORD," journeying only when the cloud moved, sometimes in the same day or waiting as long as a year.

What God is after today is that we walk by

the cloud, according to faith. Sometimes it is a suffering faith, but it is faith. Psalm 89 says that there is strength in the clouds. There is strength when you go from faith to faith in suffering, where the righteousness of God is revealed more and more (Romans 1:17). That means some new aspect of His character is revealed to your human spirit, and your soul magnifies the Lord.

So now, according to Romans 12:1-2, you present your body, by the mercies of God, to have your mind renewed, transforming your soul, proving what is the perfect will of God as you rest by faith in Christ's finished work. Thank God for His cloud!

Let No Man Glory

Psalm 119:133 says that we are to have our steps ordered by the Word of God. If the cloud leads us, then we are led by the presence of God's Word through the Spirit. His presence is there to do wonderful things. It's there to love, forgive, reinforce mercy, and impart wisdom.

Is it any wonder that Jeremiah 9:23-24 says, "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this,

that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."

We try so hard to minister to the Lord. We go on for hours instead of letting the Lord minister to us in our bodies. God desires for us to enter into a life of allowing Him to minister to us as we just say, "Thank you."

Getting into your car and coming to church shouldn't be just a fleshly habit, even though it's not bad. God's wants His cloud to lead us beyond all of that. I want you to know that Christianity is real; the life of God in you is real. It is living, active, powerful, and ongoing.

Don't consider how you're going to minister to the Lord. Your body is God's tabernacle. It's filled with His cloud, His presence. He doesn't want your flesh to enter into it. He wants to fill our bodies and unveil His character and glory so that no flesh will be able to stand in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:29).

Chapter Three

HE IS PRESENT TO HEAL

Luke 5:17 speaks of a certain day when the Pharisees and the doctors of the law were seated, listening to Jesus teach. They came out from every town in Galilee and Judea, and from Jerusalem. God's presence was there to heal each one who came from Galilee, each one who came from Judea, and each one who came from Jerusalem.

The purpose of God's presence is to heal even the Pharisees and the doctors of the law. God's purpose that day was to heal every single person in the assembly. But only one man was healed that day — the one "taken with a palsy" who was brought down through the roof (Luke 5:19). He was brought before Jesus by men, and he was healed and saved. "And when [Jesus] saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Only one was healed that day, but God's presence was there to heal them all, not just the one. When Jesus and His disciples went to Jericho, in Mark 10:46-52, the presence of God was there to heal. But only blind Bartimaeus was healed. The presence of the Lord was there to heal all who wanted to be healed, but only one received a healing.

God's Delights

God says to us, "Don't be fearful of what's going on in your life. I am lovingkindness. I am righteousness. I delight in giving you my lovingkindness and my righteousness. I delight in giving you my presence. And I delight in having you be the fulfillment of my purpose and the application of my presence."

God delights to be present in you to do something about your condition. He joys in being the doctor of your body and the surgeon for your physical organs and ills. He enjoys counseling you with His mind from His Word which is Light. God delights to bless you beyond measure. He desires to do it, and He is present to do it.

"I am present in your body," the Lord is telling us. "It's my desire to fulfill every single measure of your being, to expand your capacity

with myself. It's my desire to heal every individual of something."

Fullness of Joy

In God's presence, there is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). Enter into His presence with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise (Psalm 95:2; Psalm 100:4). Here's the principle: the presence of God — through His Word and the Spirit — becomes so strong that my flesh cannot stand.

Every week I talk to people who have no understanding of His presence in their lives. In Job 2:7, Satan had to flee from the presence of God. Job was troubled at the presence of God (Job 23:15). David had lost the realization of the presence of the Lord and, in Psalm 51:11, he wrote, "Cast me not away from thy presence." David had been inspired to write many psalms and yet he was asking that God not take His presence away from him.

A Living God, a Living Faith

If we can grasp this principle of the clouds, then we will understand the meaning of being filled with God's presence, being overwhelmed with His purpose and being saturated with His

lovingkindness. We must understand that God's presence is here to heal! God is here; He's alive and ready to heal. The cloud means I have a living, active faith, because God is present and He will always reward this kind of faith. Being filled with the cloud means that I can go out every day in His presence and purpose. This is the meaning of "strength in the clouds."

Think of how Jesus constantly walked in the presence of God. At the grave of Lazarus, He said, "Father, I know you're listening; but for the people's sake I say thank you for Lazarus, and thank you that you're going to bring him back to life."

Jesus knew that the presence of God could make five loaves and two fishes feed 5,000. He knew that the Father and the Spirit were present in His humanity to minister to the needs of the people. Jesus knew the Father's presence would feed the hungry, heal the sick, and cast out the demons from the oppressed. It's still that way. He's still the Great Physician — the same yesterday, today and forever — and His strength is in the clouds.

Chapter Four

THE LORD WILL BE WITH THEE

"And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD" (1 Chronicles 28:20).

This is a marvelous verse. In the original language, God is saying He will see to it that everything we do will be finished accurately. It tells us not to be frightened at the task because of its size. God will not forsake us; He will not leave us. Don't be afraid of the task!

Don't be frightened by the need. The job isn't too big. The body of the believer is an awesome place. God will be with each of us. He will never forsake us. He will see that the work in our bodies is finished correctly, just as the work

on Solomon's temple was finished exactly as God intended.

Meeting Him in the Clouds

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Where are we going to meet Jesus Christ? In the clouds. Revelation 1:7 says this: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." The angel said in Acts 1:11*b*, "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." He went up into the clouds.

Why will Jesus take us up in the clouds? Because we will have glorified bodies. In the wink of an eye, 11 one-hundredths of a second, He will take us up to be with Him. We shall be like Him and we will see Him as He is (1 John

3:2). In our glorified bodies, we will be with Him forever. We are to comfort each other with these sayings. His strength is in the clouds.

When we return to earth with Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 3:13; Revelation 19:14), we will come back in the clouds, in all the power of His omniscience, omnipotence, veracity, righteousness, justice and mercy. We will come back in the power of all of these attributes; that's what the cloud represents.

The River and the Tree of Life

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:1-2).

In the eternal city of God, there is a river and in the midst thereof is a tree — the Tree of Life, the old, rugged cross of Calvary. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. The river has a purpose in its application for today. It means the river of the Holy Spirit runs through the world and glorifies Jesus Christ. And the

tree, the cross of Christ, is for the healing of all peoples. The one side of the river speaks of the past; the other side refers to the future; the middle speaks of now. God is saying that for the past, present and future there is a river, and on either side is the Tree of Life. The presence of God, represented by that river, is also in His beautiful cloud, and His strength is in the clouds.

CONCLUSION

We need to have a fresh understanding of the reality of God's presence. The fire of God came down when the temple was dedicated. In Leviticus 9, the fire came down when the burnt offerings were made. Today, our burnt offering is to present our bodies to Him by the mercies of God (Romans 12:1). After this dedication, the fire of God will come down and the strength of His cloud will fill us.

Let us dedicate our bodies to him, and let God's fire and His cloud fill us. Let us dedicate our minds and have them sanctified, set apart to think only His thoughts. The presence of God will be there for the purpose of these dedications, and no part of our flesh will be able stand and minister in His presence. God is saying to us today, "If you come to dedicate your bodies to me, I come to bless." He will come in His strength, which is in the clouds.

Hold Fast to Your Convictions

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40:8).

These are days when people are so given to change. Really, it is the spirit of the age, and the American political system serves as a prime example. Polls are taken daily, and one day a president or candidate is up and then the next day he is down. The winds of economy, the winds of war, and the winds of philosophy carry people this way and that way.

Even among Christians, we see the effects of changing convictions. Electronic ministries now beam their messages all across the nation and the world. Though many are good, some promote detached forms of Christianity with watered-down opinions about the Word of God, fellowship, and evangelism.

This preacher maintains an old-fashioned commitment to the Book of books, the Bible.

Furthermore, this preacher is not going to start selling the convictions God established in his heart many, many years ago.

For example, I have a conviction about evangelism. Soul winning still works in our cities and counties, in the nations and across continents. That is my conviction, and it is not something I will let go. I still believe in world missions. I still believe that local assemblies are God's way and that believers should assemble themselves together more and more as our days grow shorter (Hebrews 10:25).

In this booklet, I will communicate the value of having convictions that are based on the Word of God. My prayer is that these words encourage every believer to stand fast on the Truth and to cling to the convictions God has given us through His Word and His provision.

Chapter One

PERMANENT PREMISES

A "premise" is defined as the foundation upon which every related thought in a category stands. Having the proper premise from God is crucial for anyone who communicates the Word of God. A communicator should always consider God's premise, even though his presuppositions and conclusions may complement that premise in different ways through various messages. That is how believers grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

On the other side, problems arise for careless listeners who hear only the premise of a message and then think, "Oh, I've heard that before." Of course they have heard the premise. But through the Holy Spirit, instead of generalizations, the preacher will continue with fresh presuppositions and applications of the premise that will lead the hearers into spiritual light, life, and love in very practical and specific areas.

There may be diverse conclusions of a message even though they are based upon a similar premise. For example, forgiveness ultimately has to be based upon a love that forgets, but forgiveness is not necessarily always based upon forgetfulness in the reality of human reference.

We all have to face reality. For example, the Finished Work will not hide what has not been repented of. There is accountability. Yes, I mentally forgive and forget someone the moment I hear that he has sinned against me. But if the person I forgive does not repent and deal with the issue at work in his life, he will enter into denial and hardness of his heart. Though I may not be able to fellowship with that person, my part is to forgive and forget and give it over to God.

It is so important for us to help damaged souls to heal. We have heard and read the numerous accounts of molestation involving children. These victims have carried wounds for years and, in some cases, decades, while the sex offenders were shielded and very often moved to new places where they committed new crimes.

This level of denial has proved disastrous. There was no accountability in the realm of reality; therefore, the offence was repeated again

and again.

Overcoming Repressions and Suppressions

What is involved in these cases is repression and suppression. Repression represents the unconscious act of forgetting something but without Christ motivating through divine forgiveness. Suppression is the conscious act of turning one's eyes away from events or circumstances that are troubling but without looking to Christ. It is like holding something under the surface, the way a child might sit atop a beach ball and try to hold it under water. The ball cannot be seen, but it takes an enormous amount of energy to hold it down. Eventually, the ball will pop up to the surface, the same way problems will surface after a person grows weary of suppressing them. This resurfacing often occurs without warning.

Through purpose, passion, and strength in the truth, the Word of God is able to deliver us from the issues we have repressed and suppressed in our lives. Many Finished Work Christians really need to have certain areas dealt with in their lives. Whether or not they are guilty of doing something bad, there are issues that need to be resolved, and they need to be resolved in

God's order. This simply involves bringing the problem to God and perhaps to a counselor, if one is needed.

Hiding the past—even under the "Finished Work"—is denial; it is not resolution. There is nothing wrong with pouring your heart out to God and to a godly counselor. All of us have hurtful memories that need to be emptied out of our unconscious minds. When events that caused negative results are brought out in the right place and with the right counselor, then you are on your way to resolving them through Christ and the Cross.

Attempting to forget your personal history is the same as trying to forget yourself. I am not implying that we should live in the memory of our past, but we have a need to resolve those issues honorably by submitting our hearts to God. If necessary, we may speak confidentially with a counselor that we can trust and feel free to tell him anything that needs resolution. In turn, a godly counselor should point us to what Christ has done for us.

Chapter Two

GUARDING OUR INHERITANCE

"And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

"And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

"And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

"And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread" (1 Kings

21:1-4).

Ahab's Complaint

Ahab could not get what he wanted, so he went home with a heavy heart, whining to Jezebel, like a baby.

"Jezebel, I tried to get that vineyard that I told you about, but Naboth won't sell it. I told him I'd give him a better vineyard; I told him I would give him more money than the property is worth. But he won't budge!"

Jezebel answered Ahab by saying, "Well, just leave everything to me. I will get some of my thugs and we will just get rid of Naboth, if you know what I mean. I am in power, you are in power. We can do it and get away with it."

That is just what Jezebel did, as the Bible describes it, in 1 Kings 21:12-15:

"They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

"And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

"Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.

"And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead" (1 Kings 21:12-15).

Stand Fast to the End

The thing I want to focus on in this story is Naboth's stand. He refused to sell his inheritance. He refused to give up what he had received as his possession through his family. This vineyard most likely had passed from Naboth's great-great-grandfather to his great-grandfather, to his grandfather, to his father, and then from his father to him.

"The vineyard is not for sale because my father gave it to me," Naboth said. He had a conviction about it, and he would not move from that conviction. That stand cost him his life in the midst of evil people.

As children of God, we have a great inheritance.

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of

Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Satan wants Christians to sell out the convictions which God has passed to them through the Word in the power of the Spirit. Many things the devil would like to take from us. And whether he takes it from us or convinces us to sell out to him, it is all robbery.

We must learn to stand and say, "You cannot have these things—they are from my Father, and they are not for sale."

Compromises and Curses

"Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.

"Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

"Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.

"Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say, Amen.

"Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.

"Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen.

"Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast. And all the people shall say, Amen.

"Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

"Cursed be he that lieth with his mother in law. And all the people shall say, Amen.

"Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. And all the people shall say, Amen.

"Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen.

"Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:15-26).

These are convictions God communicated to Israel. Israel later sold out those convictions for the false gods they found in the Promised Land. As a result, they ended up losing their land, and they were carried away to captivity and bondage.

God gives us certain convictions, and we must hold fast to them. If we do not, then we will find ourselves in bondage.

This is what Satan does:

He says, "I want you to compromise on some things you believe about the Bible. You believe the Bible is inspired from Genesis to Revelation—that every word of it is inspired. I will reward you if you will turn away your faith from that stand and honor my opinion."

In those situations, we need to say, "The truth is not for sale, Satan. God the Father gave it to me through the Son and through the Holy Spirit, and you cannot have what God has given to me."

For example, someone might come to me and say, "I do not think your teaching on confrontational evangelism is correct. I consider it an invasion of people's privacy."

My answer to them is: "That is my conviction, based on the specific command of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15, and it is not for sale."

Nearly fifty years ago, I believed in confrontational evangelism and I believe in it today. No one can buy that from me. It is not for sale. You can convert to some weak, wimpy form of

evangelism if you want to. Maybe you are afraid to confront someone. But Jesus always confronted people. He confronted the woman at the well in a very creative way. He confronted Nicodemus in John 3. He confronted the Pharisees in Matthew 23. He confronted each person He saw. You are not going to take confrontational evangelism from our church. Our Father gave it to us just as He gave it to the Son, and we are not selling.

Someone will come and say that we should stop teaching eternal security because some people may use that doctrine to live in sin. Well, the Father has given us this doctrine, and we will not sell it, no matter what.

We just happen to believe that the Father will be faithful to keep what He starts in us (see Philippians 1:6). We believe that once we are saved, no one is able to pluck us out of the Father's hand (see John 10:29). We hold fast to the conviction that God will perfect what concerns us (see Psalm 138:8). God the Father gave us eternal security, and we will not sell this doctrine.

Chapter Three

STANDING FIRM AS GOD'S DISCIPLES

"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Proverbs 22:28).

Years ago, God said, "I am going to give you a ministry where each person—spirit, soul, and body—can function practically in the Body of Jesus Christ. Once I have established this, then I want you to start soul-winning."

Now, I started soul-winning more than four decades ago and I still go soul winning. I won't sell that conviction. I won't trade it in for a streamlined, air-conditioned Christianity that ignores the reality of hell.

The lost need to be saved or they will go to hell. Souls need to be won to Christ. You won't ever talk me into stopping soul winning. I will continue to preach the Gospel and set up different programs to reach more people. Furthermore, every program will be dedicated to this

conviction. Soul winning is something I will not sell out.

Soul winning in my life is not for sale—period. And it never will be.

Teach All Nations

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Discipleship is another truth that is not for sale. We always write down the names of those souls we have won, and we visit them until they tell us not to come back. God tells us to teach and make disciples of people from all nations.

What if the people don't want to be disciples? It doesn't matter. I am not selling my conviction on discipleship.

Every summer we have dozens of students and teen-agers who participate in Summer Harvest missions programs. They go overseas and

develop a desire for world missions. Why? They have convictions about growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a calling on their lives.

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

"But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

"But many that are first shall be last; and the last first" (Mark 10:29-31).

Some of our international missionaries leave their families for months at a time in honor of their convictions to seek and save the lost in the uttermost parts of the earth.

I have had some well-meaning folks tell me that this is wrong. They take me aside and ask what will become of these men's families. I have watched them, and those families are as healthy as can be. These pastors are doing a great job as husbands and fathers. And, they are doing amazing works for God in the power of the Spirit.

These are men who hold fast to their convic-

tions on the Great Commission.

We certainly believe in taking care of our families. Perhaps you do not think that these men should go around the world preaching the Gospel. Why don't you go ask the people in those faraway countries what they think? How about considering the mothers and fathers and children in the villages and towns across Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe? My guess is that these people would say, "Thank you, thank you. Thank you for holding to your convictions about the Great Commission."

There are people who cannot understand why we keep going into the inner city of Baltimore. We have been here for more than fifteen years and we have knocked on every door in town. Now, we are hitting all those doors again. Perhaps you think this is unnecessary, that it is an invasion of people's rights.

My conviction is this: People have a right to hear the Gospel. They can turn us away or they can receive us. Either way, my conviction on evangelism in my Jerusalem is not for sale.

The Word and the Church are Still for Today

Let me tell you something. This old Bible is still what I stand on. The precious Word of God

governs my life. Nothing can replace the local assembly with its godly pastor-teacher as the place where I can grow. These are convictions I will not sell.

Sure, there is a lot of excitement about the electronic church. Through television and the internet, preachers get the Gospel out to people. Still, no program can replace a good, old-fashioned, homespun, Bible-believing, God-honoring, Satan-hating ministry. It doesn't matter to me how much they stir up people's emotions and how much excitement they create. In my mind, these ministries just will never replace the local assembly.

I will hold fast to what the Father has given me. The Book is not for sale. The Church is not for sale. Evangelism is not for sale. None of these convictions in my heart are for sale. Long after the last critic is gone, these convictions will remain.

CONCLUSION

The Father gave me these convictions. My heavenly Father gave me purity of vision. My Father gave me the doctrine of eternal security. God the Father gave it to me. My Father taught me grace as the policy of guiding my life into victory. My Father gave me the great commandment to love everyone unconditionally. My Father gave me the Great Commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel.

We are not selling any of it. We are not going to stop doing what we have been doing for the past five decades. Our church is not going to change these convictions next month, next year, or next decade. We have been at this too long. Why would we ever consider selling out now?

Satan, you cannot have the vineyard my Father has given me. Kill me just as Ahab and Jezebel killed Naboth, but my vineyard and all the convictions that have been cultivated are not for sale. The Father gave these things to me and

I am going to hold fast to them. I will hold fast to every single one of them and never sell out the truth.

How Does God

Measure Your Life?

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

"I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand" (Zechariah 2:1).

"And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over" (Ezekiel 47:3-5).

In all the sermons I have preached during the years of my ministry, I have never touched upon the subject of God's measuring line until

now. The Bible says God's ways are past finding out (Romans 11:33). That means I could study and memorize the Word of God and I still would not be able to measure the things of God.

Men establish certain measures: A foot is twelve inches, a yard is three feet, and so on. Science is the measure of causes and effects. But there are measures that go beyond the measures of men. A scientist could make a chemical analysis of a mother's tear, yet the tear of a mother is far more than the phosphates, the sodium, and the other ingredients that comprise it. There is no power on earth to measure such a tear.

How is God measured? What is the measure of salvation, redemption, and the blood shed on Calvary? How do you measure Jesus Christ's payment for our sins? How is faith measured? How is mercy measured? What is the measure of hope and love?

As these pages will reveal, the Word of God should always be our measure. Everything we do revolves around the measure of our character in Jesus Christ. As we learn what God wants us to do and how to receive the power to obey Him, then the measure we take up our cross and follow Him will be revealed.

Chapter One

THE MEASURES OF MEN

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:12-14).

Men always measure themselves by themselves in a process of relative righteousness. Someone declares that he is more righteous than one person and less righteous than another. We measure ourselves by what we have done. We measure ourselves by what we think. We evalu-

ate ourselves based upon what our family would want us to be, especially when we are young. We measure ourselves by our desires and our hopes.

The greatest problem that the human race has is trying to measure Adam. I counseled a pastor who, during our session, repeatedly said, "I don't want to be a pastor." But he is a pastor and a very good one. He said, "I don't even want people to call me 'pastor.' " He didn't want to speak, although he is very gifted. This pastor said, "I just don't think I should do that. I don't like it. I don't feel comfortable doing it."

This dear man was measuring himself by his emotional weaknesses. He wanted to quit. I told him to stop quitting things and to *start* something instead. To anyone who wants to quit something, I say: *Don't quit!* The Christian who starts something will grow stronger and require more faith and more grace to accomplish what's in his heart.

Redeem the Time

We need to make these the greatest days of our lives. Our time must be measured by eternity; our schedules by discipline. Our hearts must be measured by God's mandates, and

mercy by its expression of grace. Abraham's nephew Lot measured his life by money and possessions. The angels literally had to pull him out of Sodom and Gomorrah before the cities were destroyed by fire (Genesis 19).

Others measure their lives by need and not by God's provision. So many measure their lives by details instead of Christ. Often, Christians measure themselves by what is going on inside. They say that Christ is in them, and He is. The Father is in them; the Holy Spirit is in them; and the Word of God is in them. But they don't measure their emotions by the Word. Instead, they let their feelings measure their emotions.

God's ways are past finding out (Romans 11:33). Faith cannot be measured except by the Word of God. Hope is immeasurable. The love of God is limitless. The forgiveness of God is inexhaustible; it cannot be measured. If a person cannot forget a wrong done to him, then he doesn't have the divine ability to forgive; his measure of forgiveness is merely human. I see this kind of human forgiveness expressed every day and every week, even in my church.

Words make people terribly upset. Their emotions are measured by what people say. Their souls are measured by what they are

accused of. Their hearts are measured by the condemnation of Satan. This is not the glorious gospel. This is not the Finished Work.

God's Line from Eternity Past

God has a divine measuring line: it is His superabundant grace, His inexhaustible mercy, and His incomprehensible love.

God's line goes from eternity past to eternity future, and it takes care of the "now" in time. What happened at 9 o'clock this morning is gone forever; what will happen tomorrow does not exist today, and now just passed by. For us, to live is Christ. The uncle who abused you years ago isn't living inside of you; Christ is. The alcoholic mother who went out and did terrible things isn't living there either; it's Christ.

Our lives are not the sins that we commit. Sins cannot control us. We are not measured by our past or by what people did to us. No, God's measuring line extends from eternity past, when the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), to the present where we are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). We are seated above (Ephesians 2:6). For us, to live is Christ and tomorrow only brings hope because Christ is our future.

What kind of measuring line do you use? Is it how many sales you made last week? Is it how much sickness is in your family? Do these things determine your happiness?

Do you measure yourself by how many temptations you have, or by how many times you have failed? These things are to be measured by rebound. Guilt is outweighed by repentance, and condemnation is measured by no condemnation in the economy of God's grace.

Our lives are measured by the filling of the Holy Spirit, God's divine standard. Anything not crucified in our lives will become our enemy. Anything we don't die to will eat at our emotions like a cancer. We must stop feeding on the air and on the old sin nature's ashes. We must have a different measuring line. God has a measuring line, and anything we preserve in our flesh will vie to become our master.

Let's not measure ourselves by ourselves or compare ourselves with ourselves. Let's measure ourselves by the Word that has been distributed unto us. We have to stretch forth that Word and reach unto others in missionary work because our measuring line means to evangelize our city, our state, our nation, and our world. Our measuring line is God's great commission,

His great commandment.

Our measuring line in the Body of Christ is to love without self-preservation, without self-reservation, without self-equivocation, without self-justification, and without self-deception.

If sin abounds, our measuring line is that grace does much more abound (Romans 5:20). The Word of God is our measuring line.

Chapter Two

THE MEASURE OF GOD

Our measuring line today is that God's mercies are new every morning and His compassions fail not (Lamentations 3:22-23). On Monday, I get up, because His mercies are new for that day! I get up Tuesday and Wednesday and every day for the same reason. Every morning I plan to get up in peace and joy, praising God regardless of the circumstances. My measuring line is that Christ is in me. God is for me. Love is motivating me. Mercy is rejoicing against judgment toward me. My measuring line is Christ. He is my advocate, the attorney pleading my case. He is my high priest.

My measuring line is not my weakness, frailty, or vulnerability. It is not the circumstances of sickness, marriage, or finances. We don't measure a relationship by the fact that someone is tall, dark, and handsome. If that had

been the standard in the Old Testament, practically no one would have gotten married! The Jewish prophets were not tall, dark, and handsome, but they were beautiful in the eyes of God. God does not look upon the outward appearance but upon the heart.

Even in the midst of sin, David was seen as a man whose heart was after God. We cannot measure people by what others say against them or about them. We have to measure people by God's love for them. God's desire is to perfect every believer and to make us mature, therefore our measure for one another must be God's redemptive care.

We Are Not Our Weakness

People must not be measured by their present status; they are to be measured by what they will become by the grace of God. They must be seen for what they are becoming, by how they are growing. They are not to be measured by their weaknesses, but by their desire to be like Christ. May God help us to understand this.

Our eternal values are measured by how we function to the glory of Christ in time. Our words are not according to God's measure unless they edify. We cannot measure conviction unless it

stems from the purity of His Word.

A man's measure is determined by his commitment to grace, his obedience to God's mandates, and his response to the free and limitless love of God given in Jesus Christ.

From eternity past to eternity future, God sees us as perfect because of His measuring line of omniscience and foreknowledge. Calvary's Lamb was slain on our behalf from the foundation of the world. That means God knew every sin David would commit; He knew all that Abraham and Solomon would do. Yet, God never measured them by what they were going to do; He measured them by what they would become and who they were in His eyes of mercy. This is a good way to be counseled properly, to be blessed permanently, and to have abundant life fervently.

Prepared for the Call

When a man or woman is prepared, he or she will always get a call that is special. God always goes after prepared people. We are measured to be prepared vessels, meet for our Master's use, vessels of gold and silver in His great house. Prepared people are *sanctified*, which means to be set apart for a precise purpose. Jesus

asked the Father to "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Christ was saying, "Set them apart. Set their voices apart to sing my songs only. Set their tongues apart to speak edifying words. May they have sanctified tongues. Set their minds apart to think with Me, to concentrate and dedicate themselves to discipline."

The Lord Jesus prayed that everything we have will be set apart precisely by His Word — our cars, our schedules, our studies. The microphone at our church's pulpit is sanctified for singing the music of Christ and for preaching and teaching His glorious Gospel.

Chapter Three

THE MOTIVATION IS LOVE

Salvation is receiving the gospel of grace freely. Growing in grace is receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness through the Word of Life. As we begin to grow in grace, we experience it and give it away without performance or works. In the flow of the Holy Spirit, the Word has made it possible for us to be very careful stewards of God's grace and to measure where we are in our Christianity.

Our spirituality is based on the measure of our obedience to God; our faith is measured by believing His Word, and our ability to think by how much we receive the Word of God. We measure grace by what we freely give to those who do not earn it, and mercy by how often we put grace into action by faith. Our forgiveness is measured by the precious inexhaustible blood that Jesus shed on Calvary. We can so readily

measure things as God sees them!

The first way we are measured is by how much we receive God's love and grace. Jesus said if we ask anything in His name He will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:13-14). Ask anything and He will do it! In John 14:15, Christ said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Notice that the motivation for our obedience is love. If the love of God is flowing in our hearts, then we are receiving that measure of God's eternal life which cannot be measured by time.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). We get to know the will of God by His commandments. We learn how we can bless God through what we have received from Him and by what He commands us to do. If we do love Him, we will keep His commandments. We will study to show ourselves approved unto God, as workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15). We will love others as Christ loves us (John 13:34). We will honor the Word of God, and thereby honor our marriages and our families.

The follower makes decisions that determine how strong the leader is going to be. This is true on a team, in a local assembly, or on a job. The principle is this: The follower always leads the way in authority because of free volition.

For a woman, this means she will determine how great her husband's potential will be because she leads the way by submitting to him. God addresses her first, in Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Husbands are addressed later, in Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

In Ephesians 6:1, God addresses children first: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right," then He addresses the Fathers, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

If we want to know what pleases God, we have His commandments clearly revealed through His Word. Those commandments are not grievous because we don't fulfill them in the energy of the flesh in a works program. "For we

are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Chapter Four

COMMANDMENTS, REQUESTS, AND PROMISES

If I want to know how to please God, then I must tune in to the Lord Jesus Christ and read about what He hates. I know He hates Satan. I know He hates sin. He hates rebellion and impurity. He hates the actions of those who pour strong drink into their neighbor's cup. I know He hates the lawlessness and carelessness of evil. He hates pornography and X-rated films. If I love Him, I will hate these things too.

God has commanded that we are not to look upon the wine when it is red and jumps in the cup (Proverbs 23:31). He has commanded us not to lust after the opposite sex, because He hates lust. God said, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" in 2 Corinthians 6:14. Because he said this, the measure of our obedience will reveal the measure of our desire to love

God the best we can. So, we will choose not to marry an unbeliever.

It is a privilege not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever but to love them with God's love. We are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, according to Ephesians 5:11, but we are to minister to unbelievers with reproof. There is no conflict. Yes, God loves sinners, but He hates iniquity and unrighteousness.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," (1 John 2:15). That's a very clear command from the Father. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever," (1 John 2:17).

God has told us to be careful with the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. These are all of the world. He has sent us into the world, but He also keeps us while we are in the world, functioning, working, witnessing, loving, caring, and sharing. Still, we are not to love what the world loves. So if I love God, these commandments are not difficult, and love makes obeying them so easy.

If I don't evangelize, I have not even begun to love God. I should go from house to house the way the Bible tells me to. Otherwise, I haven't begun to love God, because if I love Him, the first thing I will do is obey His commandments.

If a ministry isn't deeply committed and dedicated to missions, then that ministry has not even begun to love God. Each of our churches should be sending out missionaries. It doesn't matter how small the church is. Within three to five years, a church should be able to say it has two missionaries here, two there. That is simply keeping His commandments. It's going out into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. What we keep will be lost, what we give away will come back multiplied.

We must be deeply committed to missions, or we are not loving God. Instead, we are just holding the fort by worshipping God, but we are not loving Him. Loving God is obeying God. It is fulfilling His will to go into all the world and to preach the Gospel.

Just as a pastor works with his comptroller and finance committee to budget money, he should, in his vision, budget how many mis-

sionaries he believes God will raise up and send out by faith. Then, if the pastor does a good job training and his people do a good job discipling, God will go beyond what the pastor asks or thinks for missions.

Our lives become so simple when we begin to agree with God (Amos 3:3), and we agree with God because we are being prepared to meet Him (Amos 4:12). We were saved by receiving His salvation. Now we are being delivered by receiving His power, and we are being blessed by expressing His life.

We learn so much about ourselves by the measure that we love the will of God. The quality of our love will be revealed by the measure of our obedience to the Word of God. What we really believe about the love, grace, and kindness of Jesus Christ determines so many things about our lives. It determines our happiness, inner joy, deliverance, and healing.

God's Requests

God also makes many requests that are not commandments. This is how we measure our obedience, our love, and the power we have in faith. We are commanded to go into all the world, to love one another, and to forgive. But

the Lord *requests* that by His mercies we present our bodies as living sacrifices to Him (Romans 12:1). He asks us to guard our hearts with all diligence (Proverbs 4:23).

We can learn so much about Jesus Christ by reading His requests and His prayers. He prayed that the Father would keep us and make us one, just as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one (John 17:21). Reading this I realize that God wants us to be so one with Him and His body! In 1 Corinthians 1:10, we are asked to have the same mind—even the mind of Jesus Christ. He wants a marriage and the family to be one. He wants the pastors, deacons, and elders to be as one, revealing the unity of the Trinity. The Lord asks us to have the same vision for the lost. I learn that I can please Him if I live in oneness by faith.

The Power of His Promises

There is another way I can please God. I can read His promises and know what He wants. He said to Israel, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee," in Jeremiah 31:3. I get to know the character of His love by that promise. In Hebrews 13:5, God declares, "I will never

leave thee, nor forsake thee." By this promise I come to know His commitment to me, no matter what my condition is.

I get to know so much about the Lord by His promises. I can know by His promises that He wants to deliver me and heal me. "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise," (Jeremiah 17:14). He sent His Word to heal (Psalm 107:20). I get to know what God desires for my life by His promises.

He promises that if we abide in Him and His words abide in us, we can ask what we will and it shall be done unto us (John 15:7). He will answer us so that the Father may be glorified through the Son's precious work on Calvary on our behalf. He says if I sow spiritually, I will reap spiritually. I know that as I sow mercy, forgiveness, and grace, I will reap mercy, forgiveness, and grace, and a multitude of blessings will come back to me. Oh, I learn so much from His promises!

By His promises, I know that if a woman submits to her husband, God will sanctify him and bless her. I know that if a husband will love his wife as Christ loved the church, all of heaven will come down into that marriage.

Something special will happen when we attend to the promises. We must receive these promises in the divine nature that comes with them. These promises can produce a birth in our souls, an expectation in our hearts, and the power of a motivating force for our lives.

Psalm 130 says there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared. How can we measure His forgiveness? We can't, because all the world's sins are paid for. How can we measure the beauty of a believer, in purity and sincerity, rebounding from sin? How can we measure what it means to know that when we name our sins He forgives us? We cannot measure it because His mercy and grace are immeasurable. Our prayers cannot be measured because there is a God of integrity waiting to honor them simply because He said He would.

CONCLUSION

From God's commandments, we learn what pleases God. From His requests and prayers, we discover what He wishes and hopes for us His body. Then, from His promises we learn what He desires for us personally. Can you see how this progresses and develops our character in Him?

Our schedules are measured by how disciplined we are in redeeming time. We measure our hunger for God by our commitment to receive His Word with meekness. By this we begin to discover how much we have fallen in love with Jesus. We hear His mandates and they are not grievous to us. We have been given the privilege to honor His requests in time. We have read the promises of God, and with His promises He has given us an answer that will measure up to any situation.

Sooner or later, the level of our character will

be revealed in our Christian experience. Things will rise or fall according to our character. The principles that we believe in the Word of God should be the basis for our decisions. As we find out *what* God wants us to do, we learn *how* to do what He wants.

But we must always understand this: God is far more interested in who we are than in what we do. He can bring us to the place where we are what we should be, and then we will always do what we should do because there will be an outflowing of the fruit of the Spirit in the measure of our obedience to Him.

Jesus said the chiefest among us would be those who serve. He came to minister, not to be ministered unto; He came to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:27-28). This is how He measured His life, and the greatest people in the world today are those who measure their opportunities by serving others in love.

How God Measures

Greatness

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INTRODUCTION

"…Thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psalm 18:35*b*).

Every Christian filled with the Spirit should want to be considered great in the eyes of God. Heaven's standard for greatness, however, is something far different from the world's standard. Being a good leader doesn't make one great. Building a large, well-known church isn't a measure of greatness.

Greatness is brought to our lives by God's gentleness. It isn't developed by things we do or say. It isn't reflected in where we have been. Grace worked into our lives by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit reveals greatness. Great people are "grace" people. They give what they have received and never demand repayment.

In this booklet, we will consider some of the things that characterize greatness and what such greatness produces.

Chapter One

GREATNESS DEMONSTRATED IN GRACE

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you" (2 Corinthians 10:1).

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

It is so easy to exercise a gift. I have seen many people work very hard in their local assemblies, but who then speak unkindly about others behind their backs. No matter how hard they have worked, no matter how gifted they are, these people are not great. Proverbs 16:32 tells us that it is greater to be able to rule your own spirit than it is to take a city.

There is no victory so empty as revenge, no conversation as deplorable as negativity. Great

courage is in turning the other cheek. A meal is greatest when it is served to an enemy. No power is greater than the power of restraining love. These truths are easy to discuss; however, it takes God to produce their application.

Characteristics of Greatness

The greatness of Jesus Christ was that He considered Himself least among His disciples and became a servant. He said, "The greatest among you shall be the servant of all" (see Luke 22:26-27). Christ did not come to be ministered to, He came to minister (Matthew 20:28). That is greatness in God's eyes.

It is so much better for a Christian to love than to be loved. It is greater to forgive than to be forgiven. It is greater for a Christian to be kind than to have someone be kind to him. A great Christian excels at patience and doesn't expect people to be patient toward him. He lives on the grace side of life.

It is greater for a husband to lay down his life for his wife than to expect her to lay down her life. It is so much better to obey than it is to give a command. It is so much wiser to have compassion than it is to expect compassion. These are the characteristics of God's greatness.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Colossians 3:12-14).

Why are these verses so critical? Because they make a mother and father great. They make children and teenagers great. They make a friend great. God is trying to teach us how to enter into His greatness.

When the woman caught in an act of adultery was brought before Jesus, He did not rebuke her. He forgave her and told her to go and sin no more (John 8:11). When He did this, it revealed His greatness. Forgiveness always demonstrates the grace of greatness. Forgetting the sin illustrates the greatness of God's omniscience (Hebrews 8:12) working in the memory center of a man (Isaiah 55:7-9). And this is how men of God, like David, can know by the Holy Spirit that they are great without being proud.

Chapter Two

GREAT MEN AFTER GOD'S HEART

The Lord Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion. Here is the Creator of the universe in greatness subjecting Himself to His creation: The guilty ones sentenced the only innocent One to death. The Lord Jesus Christ, in the beauty of His holiness, became the greatest sinner by allowing all of the sins of the world to be transferred to Him. That truly was an act of greatness.

When He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), while enduring the pain and shame of their unholy gaze—that was greatness. His compassion still goes out to individuals without imputing sins to them—that is greatness that goes beyond understanding. That is love that goes beyond knowledge. It is mercy that rejoices against judgment, grace that is greater than all our sin (Romans 5:20).

Jesus Christ did not give an answer to the temple rulers, the Roman government, or the religious crowd as they harassed Him after His arrest. In greatness, He opened not His mouth. He could offer no defense because He was going to represent every sinner by paying for the sins of the world. This reveals why Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." He really was and surely is. This shows why He said, "Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." He surely does. His yoke is easy and His burden is light because of His greatness.

God's greatness remembers our sins no more. Jesus is called "gentle" in Isaiah 40:11. *Epios* is a Greek word Paul used for "gentle" in 1 Thessalonians 2:7: "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children." *Epios* means "tenderhearted." A tender heart prompted Paul to write Romans 9:3: "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen [Israelites] according to the flesh." That is greatness. As he lay dying from the stones cast at him, Stephen prayed for those who attacked him: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (see Acts 7:59-60).

We need to be stirred up about what great-

ness really is. It is *not* having a strong physical body. Greatness is an attitude of God's grace and love coming through a person. And when that becomes the means of manifesting Jesus Christ's character, then greatness is truly great.

The Power of His Gentleness

David was an inspired poet, but that did not make him great. In 1 Samuel 17, he took a slingshot and killed Goliath, but that did not make David great. He killed a lion and a bear with his hands in the wilderness—that didn't make him great. He surely ranks among the top military commanders in the history of the world, but even that did not make him great.

David's true greatness was revealed in other ways. In 1 Samuel 24:12, though King Saul was viciously pursuing him, David refused to touch God's anointed. David would not say a negative word about Saul. That was greatness. After cutting just a small piece of Saul's garment while hiding in a cave, David was convicted and repented for the act (1 Samuel 24:5-6). That is greatness.

Shimei threw stones and dirt at David, who was fleeing from Jerusalem (2 Samuel 16:5). To avenge David's honor, his general wanted to cut

off the man's head, but David stopped him, saying, "Who knows? perhaps God has sent him" (2 Samuel 16:10). That is greatness.

When his son Absalom went against him, David stood at the gate and told his army to be "gentle with Absalom for my sake. Be very gentle with Absalom. Yes, he has rebelled against me. And, yes, he wants the kingdom, but please be tenderhearted toward Absalom" (see 2 Samuel 18:5). Oh, it is much better to be tenderhearted toward the guilty than with revenge to pay them back for what they have done. When David learned that Absalom had died, he went to his loft and cried, "O Absalom! Absalom! I would have died for thee."

The secret of David's life is found in how he treated his enemies. The key to David's success was in refusing to act in revenge. David always acted in forgiveness and let God handle every matter.

This is why David was considered a great king. Did he sin? Oh, yes. Did he fail? Miserably at times. Did he have weaknesses? Yes, probably more than we know. But along with his weaknesses, David also possessed great strength from internalizing the character of God.

Greatness condescends to men of low estate.

"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (Romans 12:16). If we really understand greatness and desire the fruit of the Holy Spirit, we will express love, joy, peace, *and* longsuffering. Then will come gentleness, divine goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance: "against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (see Galatians 5:22-24).

Living in Divine Inspiration

"Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side" Psalm (71:21).

"Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip" (Psalm 18:35-36).

Imagine having a chance to interview King David:

"Sir, you were a great king. Did your spears make you great?"

"No, they did not."

"Was it your sword that made you great?"

"No, not at all."

"You killed a bear and a lion with your hands. You slew Goliath with a sling. Again and again, you were successful in battle. You were wealthy, successful, brilliant in administration—just how did you do it?"

"None of those things made me great. It was the Lord and His gentleness that kept my steps and lifted me up continually. His gentleness made me great."

David wrote the divine Word of God in psalm after psalm. But beyond that, he *lived* in the poetry of divine inspiration rather than just speaking or writing it. He lived in the nature of God instead of just talking about it. God's gentleness made David a man after His own heart. That is real greatness.

Chapter Three

THE GREAT GOD WHO KNOWS US

Thank God for each individual in a church body who reaches out to others. It's the people that make a church great—those who love people with God's love and share the Gospel wherever they go, leading lost men and women to Christ. The ushers, the deacons, the elders—every portion is key. All those who pray, all those who are faithful to the assembly—these people bring greatness to a church body.

Do you want to see greatness? Watch the workers in the cafeteria, the folks sweeping the floors, those who care for the grounds, the singers in the choir—in them is where you will find true greatness.

Greatness is revealing humility toward men and meekness toward God. Greatness is showing patience toward those who hurt us while we remain secure in who we are in Christ and in

what He has done on our behalf.

Greatness is receiving grace and mercy from God, giving it to others, and not looking for something in return. Greatness is a husband using restraint and love rather than reaction toward his wife. It is a wife being meek in God even when her husband doesn't minister to her as he should.

The greatness of mercy is explained in the Greek word *epieikes*. This word speaks of mercy that supersedes legal justice. In dealing with us, God considers everything—our genetic code, our circumstances, our upbringing, our pain. He understands us better than we understand ourselves. This mercy opens the way to give us His great grace.

He Knows Our Frame

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:10-14).

Every time we fail, God remembers our frame. That is the greatness of God. He considers our exposure to the world system, the mystery of iniquity, the process of our goings and comings, and the process of our transformation. God does not deal with us after the letter of the law. Instead, He does everything in His progressive grace and mercy.

If we understood greatness, we would see that it is not what is in a man's actions that pleases God, but what is in his desire toward God. It isn't what a man has done; it is what he desires to do that matters. It isn't what a man reveals; it is what he cries out to God to reveal. God sees these things and remembers that we are but dust.

A trailer truck can only carry so much weight because of its design, and God knows that His people can only carry so much because of our frames of dust. He is above, we are below. Our great God understands this. He always considers these things in His plan.

When we fail and get back up, it is because of grace that we get up (Proverbs 24:16). Even if we haven't conquered certain areas, when we cry out in sorrow, revenging our sin, that shows God our greatness in humility.

When church members are faithful and come to church, drawing near to God, doing all that they can, they express divine strength in obedience. They are the greatness of a congregation's life. They may struggle in some ways, but that is when God's greatness takes over. He recognizes strengths, He sees weaknesses. Victories may not come right away. There may be some going back and forth. But God still looks at earnest, fervent rebound in a man, and He calls it greatness.

CONCLUSION

To reveal greatness, we have to look at ourselves in Christ. Let us be occupied with Him and what He has done, and not with where we have been and what we can do. Be occupied with all of His promises, with all He is doing and all that He will do. Become occupied with what He is doing in us right now in grace.

Where sin abounds, God's great grace superabounds. Sin reigns only unto death, but God's grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by One, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:20-21).

Let us see greatness in others, and help them to develop their true greatness. What we share will build people up and keep them from falling back, below their potential. God's gentleness will make us great. He doesn't see any of us "in Adam," which speaks of the nature of the Fall. God's goal is always to get us to live in Christ because He sees us in Him.

It isn't what we have done or what we do.

Our gifts and our successes may matter in the world's eyes, but they do not make us great. It is our character in Jesus Christ that makes us great.

How God Ordains

Our Footsteps

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

As an introduction to this message, please read the following Scriptures carefully. These passages will be quoted throughout this booklet and some of them will be examined in more detail. Read them aloud, if possible. My prayer is that as you see the words and hear them, each word would enter into your heart and trigger powerful results in your life.

"Forsasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us…. And it came to pass, that, while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course…" (Luke 1:1, 8).

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way" (Psalm 37:23).

"Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psalm 119:133).

"Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

As you read this booklet, allow your thoughts to be transferred into proper channels of thinking,* being elevated beyond human forces, seated above, deriving life outside of yourself. It is vital that you receive every word and trust God to transfer His Word into your memory center.

Mix faith with this message, without striving. Receive exhortation as conviction and never as condemnation. You have an opportunity for conversion through communion with Jesus Christ. The measure you receive the Word will determine the measure that you receive deliverance, healing, and an intimate knowledge of Christ's nature.

* For more on this subject, read *The Hearing Heart*, a booklet available from Grace Publications.

Chapter One

GOING GOD'S WAY

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

"Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isaiah 58:13-14).

"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD,

and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:5-10).

The Problem

Without exception, the problem throughout the world, in the Church, in marriages, and in every phase of society is a lack of order.

The Lord Jesus Christ created the universe with a special order. In six days, He made order out of chaos. His creative and redemptive plan has a divine order.

Every sin committed by a Christian is the result of disregarding divine order. Every thought not submitted to God has its roots in iniquity and personal sin, giving rise to man's ways, man's words, and man's pleasures.

Fools without Understanding

Proverbs 18:2 tells us that a fool—someone who doesn't think with God—has no delight in understanding, except that which he discovers in himself. Have you ever heard someone say, "I've just got to go out and find myself"? That may sound good. He may try to discover himself, but there will be consequences. "Desire without knowledge [doctrine] is not good" (Proverbs 19:2a, Amplified Translation).

"Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without [doctrine]?" (Job 38:2). Man must live by every word of God. We must study the Bible line upon line and precept upon precept (Isaiah 28:10), rightly dividing the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15-16).

By trusting in the Lord and refusing to lean on our own understanding, we escape the disorder of iniquity and personal sin. When we function in God's order, we can have power over Satan, personal sin, iniquity, disease, and emotional problems.

Establishing Order

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-

eminence" (Colossians 1:18).

In this verse, the Greek word *proteuon* is translated "holding the first place." Jesus Christ must hold first place in all things. Depression, anxiety, and fear must not come ahead of Him. These things cannot touch us when we reverence God. We have more power in a paragraph of prayer than any religious pharisee has after five days of fasting. A Spirit-filled Christian has a supernatural resource of power, even in the midst of a busy schedule, all because he puts Jesus Christ first.

When you are at work, don't fight your boss or your supervisors. That's iniquity. You have a right to talk things over with them, but you still must submit to them because God placed them over you in authority. Never express an opinion that doesn't reflect the knowledge of God.

Teen-agers, don't try to "discover" yourselves in the world and say things like, "I just want to see how it feels!" If you do that, God calls you a fool (Proverbs 12:15).

And parents, don't adopt an attitude of compromise: "Oh, children have to go through things and try everything out." Repent for that kind of confession. Your children may go their own way, but you do not have to agree with

them. Be godly parents. Establish order in your home. Pray, and God will lovingly discipline your children.

Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree that God made to test man's volition. When Adam and Eve ate from this tree, Satan's iniquity was transferred to them and the old sin nature was established with its self-conscious rights. As a result, man became independent, no longer conscious of God's purpose for his life.

Without order, iniquity has dominion. This is why the Psalmist prayed that God would order his steps (Psalm 119:133). In Luke 1:1, the Greek word for "set forth in order" is *anatassomai*, meaning, to arrange details in order. In writing his account of Jesus' life, Luke wanted to make sure he recorded every detail accurately. The Holy Spirit inspired Luke to use *anatassomai* because God desires every detail in our lives to be in order—down to specific thoughts, words, responses, and steps—through the filling of the Spirit and the application of His Word.

When God orders our steps, we live in His geographical will, His operational will, His organizational will, and His perfect will. We choose the things that will glorify God rather

than those things that will benefit us in our own ways.

A pastor studies, knowing he has a great responsibility to his congregation. He must be right with God and rightly divide the Word from the pulpit. The pastor's congregation, in turn, submits to the delegated authority of the Word. Husbands completely submit to their head, Jesus Christ. Wives submit to their husbands, in the Lord—trusting God to work out any flaws their husbands may have—and children submit to their parents. This is God's order. If a married couple honors God's order in their home, then they will be heirs together of the grace of life and their prayers will not be hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

Godly order provides a capacity for meekness toward God and humility toward truth. In turn, God honors the prayers of His children, empowering them to execute His Word.

Chapter Two

ARMORED AND ADORNED

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18). The wicked one cannot touch us as long as we are wearing the whole armor God (Ephesians 6:13-18).

The helmet, in Ephesians 6, speaks of the hope of salvation. The breastplate of righteousness speaks of faith and love (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Our loins are girded with categories of truth, our feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. The shield of faith quenches the fiery darts of the wicked one, and we are armed with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. When we put on the whole armor and take up our spiritual weapons, Satan cannot touch us. He cannot make us ill, influence us to sublimate, or cause us to worry.

1 Timothy 2:9 instructs women to "adorn" themselves outwardly according to the beauty of their souls. "Adorn"—*kosmeo* in the Greek—means that a lady is to organize her apparel and her appearance in a manner that reflects God's glory and represents His design. A woman's hairstyle, clothing, and makeup should correspond to the order of God's nature within her.

In the Greek syntax, *kosmeo* is a tendential present active infinitive with an imperative force. The tendential present indicates that the women Paul was writing to in this church were not already adorning themselves in a godly fashion. The active voice meant that they were to produce the action of obeying, and the infinitive with the imperative force meant that God had a purpose in telling these women to adorn themselves properly—He designed them to be beautiful.

God is teaching that if a woman is overweight, she can still reflect the beauty of her soul. If she doesn't have a good complexion, the glory of God can still shine through her. Even if she doesn't have the money to afford the most stylish clothing, she can still be beautiful with

her modest wardrobe.

Created by God to bring Him glory, every woman can practice *kosmeo*. She does her very best to glorify her Lord and becomes a precious representation of His life. In the eyes of any godly man, she is beautiful. The emphasis of 1 Timothy 2:9 is on the *inner* beauty of the soul. Inner beauty produces an organized exterior. Her interior qualities determine her exterior decoration, and she lives in the order of God's design for a lady.

Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, testified of her soul's inner beauty in Luke 1:46-47 when she said: "My *soul* doth magnify the Lord, And my *spirit* hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

Cultivating Order

Many people's lives—though they reveal an outward order—lack God's order on the inside. But, God desires order for the inward man, beyond the habits of the outward man.

Every thought must be brought into God's order (2 Corinthians 10:5). My steps are ordered by the Lord so iniquity will not have dominion (Psalm 119:133). When I am filled with the Holy Spirit, I will have the fruit of the Spirit, including temperance, which is self-control through

the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Everything goes wrong when I am outside of God's divine covering. The head of every man is Christ. The head of the woman is the man and the head of Christ is God (1 Corinthians 11:3). If that order is violated, then I give place to something outside of the divine covering of Christ in my thoughts, my emotions, and my purpose on earth. When I don't have mental order, I become anxious and my emotions run wild. I experience the iniquity of Satan's self-will against Jesus Christ in heaven (Isaiah 14:12-15).

Therefore, when I stop loving, I start lusting. When I stop telling the truth, I start lying. When I'm not positive toward God's Word, I start thinking negatively. When I am not edifying with my mouth, I will be cynical and critical. When I am not believing, I start worrying. When I stop obeying, I begin to disobey. When I am not God-conscious, I am self-conscious. When I remain focused on sickness having power over me, I am not healed.

Chapter Three

THE AUTHORITY OF OUR POSITION

Through the exceeding great and precious promises of God, we receive His divine nature and escape all the contamination of the world's system. The devil has no more authority over a believer's life than a private in the army has over a general. Satan has no right to have dominion of any kind over a child of God. In God's order, the devil and all the demons of hell are subject to the nature of God in the Christian. "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name" (Luke 10:17). The devils were subject to the disciples because of God's name (His nature), that was dwelling in them.

In Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Because of our position in Christ, we have been given all authority. Not a single thing

can harm us (Luke 10:19). Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). We have authority over evil, over sin, over hell, over our thoughts and habits. We can take authority over projections, circumstances, and relationships.

The Father gave the Son to be the Head over the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:22-23). Since Satan's defeat, Jesus has placed everything under our feet. We have been raised up and seated in heavenly places. Therefore, we have positional authority.

The captain of a police department has positional authority over his officers. An employer has positional authority over his employees. The father has positional authority in his home. A wife has the right to be protected and covered by the husband's positional authority. If the husband does not exercise his authority in a godly way, the wife's inner beauty directs her to pray. God then goes to work on the husband. In this way, the wife does not violate the husband's position. Instead, she executes her positional authority directly with God in the order of wisdom, joy, and peace (1 Peter 3:1-2; 1 Corinthians 7:14).

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). This verse teaches that every Christian has positional authority. The Kingdom of God within us is greater than anything that is in the world.

In Luke 10:1-16, Jesus sent out seventy disciples—two by two—into the places where He would visit. "I give you all authority and all power—and what's more, you have a responsibility—to cast out demons," Jesus told them. "With my delegated authority, I charge you with responsibility to heal the sick and to deliver people. If they will not receive you, wipe the dust from your feet, and I will curse their houses."

Many Christians do not function in God's order. As a result, God's authority is not released in their lives because they do not live in the objectivity of the Word, having their thoughts and steps ordered by the Holy Spirit. They wake up in the morning and go out and have good days and bad days, good moments and bad moments. Some days, they are barely existing. Satan has deceived them into thinking that *he* has authority over their marriages, businesses,

health, and relationships. The devil has convinced some believers that he has authority over how they look and how much they weigh. But, Satan has absolutely no such authorization. Imagine a buck private in the army ordering a general to work in the kitchen.

Satan has been defeated; he has no rights! In order to do anything, he must unlawfully usurp authority. There isn't one thing Satan can do to a believer who puts on the whole armor of God, applies grace, and uses rebound the moment he fails.

Don't be condemned, be converted. Satan looks for areas where he can usurp authority. He watches for sad countenances (Isaiah 3:9). "That man's countenance testifies against him," Satan says to his demons. "Let's hit him hard today. He looks so morbid; he just wants attention. We'll nurse him and baby him. And we'll offer some "suggestions" to help him get rid of his sadness."

When God says the wicked one cannot touch us, we must believe it. Satan cannot have our salvation. He cannot have a woman's purity. He cannot have a man's self-image. Believe the Word of God! Take authority over sicknesses, problems, needs, personality clashes, and rela-

tionships. Take your authority in the will of God and declare to Satan, "You are under my feet. Every time you try to get up, I am going to crush you again."

Bury the Past

A man came to me once and said, "Pastor, I have had so many losses in my life. Every day I suffer from the pain of my past." He had been moved around to several homes as a foster child. At age 13, he had to take three kinds of medication to control his nerves. Then the doctors prescribed another drug to counteract the side effects of the first three. Ever since that time, he has suffered a chemical imbalance and requires chemical stimulation just to feel happy.

What this man needed to understand is that Jesus conquered death. Through the authority of His death on the cross, all of our losses and the pain from the past were buried with Christ. Those things are no longer a part of our lives. We have authority over the grave because we came out of it spiritually with Christ (Romans 6:13).

We have authority over the pain of abuse and over feelings of inferiority. These things died in Christ and were buried with Him. He

raised us up with Him, and the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is now living in us. We have authority over *all* things, even the demons.

For us to experience deliverance, there must be an order in our lives. Every thought must be brought into subjection to Christ. We must know how to execute the authority of the Word of God.

We can't add one inch to our spiritual stature by being anxious. It is time that we understood that God always causes us to triumph. Not some of the time—*all* the time. It's time we put our shoulders back and understand that we are more than conquerors through the love of God in Jesus Christ.

The evil one cannot touch us. Sin has no dominion. The price for iniquity has been paid. We are *in* Christ; therefore, we have positional authority. Through the filling of the Spirit, we can execute that authority in our words. Let's go out into Satan's world as conquerors and be manifestations of Christ's resurrection.

Make a declaration against Satan. Tell him that he has no power among us.

CONCLUSION

Do you see why it was important to read those verses in the beginning? This was more than a "concordance" study. This message came from the Holy Spirit as He brought into my memory center what I have been taught.

Get angry and tell Satan that he has no right to take advantage of you (2 Corinthians 2:11). Every place the sole of your foot shall touch is yours (Joshua 1:3). You have every right to speak the mandates of God against the devil.

We're not living in a horizontal tug-of-war, but a vertical chain of command. Because of our position in Christ and our place in the Body, we have a right to execute God's authority to deal with the enemy and all of his forces. And when Jesus, the Head, releases His life to go through every member of His Body, we have His authority to take His life to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Sin and iniquity no longer have dominion.

Financial problems have no control. Lustful thoughts can't hinder us. In God's order, we are *more* than conquerors. We have been made to triumph!

How Is Your Relationship

with the Holy Spirit

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him." (Psalm 18:30).

Everything about our lives is measured by the Word of God. The Bible is the yardstick by which all our thoughts and deeds will be measured. The Word will determine what will happen to us in eternity, at the Bema Seat of Christ —the place where our works, as believers, will be evaluated and rewarded.

A major factor that will determine our rewards at the Bema Seat is how we appropriated truth. Receiving and understanding the Word is dependent upon our availability to the initiations of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who penetrates, stirs our hearts, and reveals the truth. The question is, "How did you hear, and what did you do with what you heard?"

In this booklet, we will examine the four things Christians do that limit the Holy Spirit's

work. Not to be confused with blaspheming the Holy Spirit (which happens when an unsaved person refuses to receive Christ as his Savior), these four issues—insulting, resisting, quenching, and grieving the Spirit—are very serious. Each offense can lead to the next one, hindering the Christian's walk with God.

Chapter One

HOW CHRISTIANS GO AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29).

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy [Spirit]: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

"Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Have you ever been insulted? Can you picture yourself talking to someone, only to have him start to do something else while you are still speaking? Hebrews 10:29 speaks of those who have "done despite" unto the Spirit of grace. The

Greek word for the phrase "to do despite" is *enubrizo*, and it means "to insult." It is an insult to Christ when we fail to listen to a message from the Word of God when we are in church. Furthermore, it is an insult when we do not respond to what is being expressed in the message. When we come into the house of God, we are to mix faith with what we hear (Hebrews 4:2). Otherwise, we are insulting the Spirit.

You may have insulted the Holy Spirit today without even knowing it. To illustrate it, imagine you are sitting in a church service. Your eyes gaze upon the speaker, but your mind floats to other things. It wanders and comes back, wanders and comes back again. That is what it means to insult the Holy Spirit. It happens when we do not listen to the precise words that the communicator is expressing, as led by the Holy Spirit.

To take this further, imagine getting godly counsel from a Spirit-filled and trained counselor regarding certain problems in your life. By not listening, you insult the Holy Spirit whom he trusted for wise counsel.

It is one thing to insult one another, but it is quite another thing to insult the Holy Spirit. The pastor may preach from Galatians 5:19 that one

aspect of the lust of the flesh is fornication. Yet, if you decide to enter into an extramarital affair and continue in it, that is an insult. There is forgiveness experienced through the gift of repentance (1 John 1:9). Yet, no one should insult the Holy Spirit by using grace in vain.

Exhortations to Hear

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7*a*).

Let me show you some areas where the Spirit has exhorted us to listen. We have been instructed to listen when we enter into worship, according to Jeremiah 7:2. Rulers and scornful men were told to listen, in Isaiah 1:10 and 28:14. The house of Jacob was told to listen, in Jeremiah 2:4. God declared to the whole world, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord," in Jeremiah 22:29. God felt the need to say these things because of all the people who were insulting the Holy Spirit by not listening to Him.

The Word of God says, "Ye mountains of Israel, hear…" (Ezekiel 36:1), "O harlot, listen…" (Ezekiel 16:35) "Shepherds—pastors—listen…"

(Ezekiel 34:7). "Dry bones, listen …" (Ezekiel 37:4).

Listening to the Holy Spirit is so crucial.

Walking in the garden Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord (Genesis 3:8). Every morning, as His people listen, God brings His judgment to light, and He never fails in doing it (Zephaniah 3:5). People pressed upon Jesus to hear the Word of God (Luke 5:1), and the Lord Jesus only spoke what He heard from the Father (John 12:49-50).

Don't Stop Short of Obedience

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy [Spirit]: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

Next, we want to look at what it means to resist the Holy Spirit. To resist the Holy Spirit means to listen to what the Spirit says and then not to do it. It is hearing the Word, but then making a choice not to accept Him as a part of my nature, a part of my life. James 1:22 makes it clear that we are to hear and to obey. Psalm 18:44 tells us how vital it is that we obey as soon as we hear God speak.

Then, there are people who hear the Word of God, and they consider obeying it, but they do

not follow through. That is what it means to quench the Holy Spirit. First Thessalonians 5:19 says, "Quench not the Spirit." We quench the Spirit when we consider what He says but then make a decision not to do it. It is possible that after a church service, we can get into our cars and be busy talking about something. It is not as if we don't care what was said; however, we might be insensitive and leave the message, occupied with other details and priorities. It is possible at that moment that we have quenched the Spirit. The Holy Spirit brought us something right from heaven itself, according to the will of God, and we left it with no consideration of its impact.

Picture something on fire, then the flame goes out: we say that the flame was quenched, whether by a lack of fuel or by some outside influence. Quenching the Spirit is when people are hearing the Word of God but they stop responding. They consider it and ponder it, but then they begin to leave what the Spirit has told them. They don't follow through, and they quench the work the Spirit has begun.

The Holy Spirit is that part of God who convicts us of the truth and moves in us as He reveals the Father's plan. His message is clear, as

He bears witness of the truth with our spirit (Romans 8:16). That is why it is so crucial that we allow Him to breathe in us the breath of life. Don't insult Him by being inattentive when He speaks. Ponder each precious truth as He reveals it in your heart. Then, keep your heart on fire by never getting familiar with His provision.

Chapter Two

GRIEVING THE SPIRIT THROUGH IMPROPER RELATIONSHIPS

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:29-32).

We grieve the Holy Spirit when we get involved with improper relationships. Improper relationships are behind so many problems: improper relationships with God, with friends,

with co-workers, with your spouse, with the family. When a married man vindicates his immorality and goes out alone with a woman other than his wife, he insults Christ with the action; he resists the Spirit by refusing to hear what the Word said about the situation; he quenches the Spirit by choosing not to make the Word a part of his nature; and then he grieves the Spirit with his improper relationship, which is destructive in all that he does.

Keep Relationships Sacred

All of us have been grieved at times when trying to edify someone with kindness and in love. You sense what it means to be grieved when you see someone in a godly ministry, serving God and going along well; then one thing comes up in his family, and suddenly he starts to withdraw. That person's problems began by insulting, resisting, and quenching what God was trying to do in his life. But ultimately he grieves the Holy Spirit by having an improper relationship to the Body of Christ.

A believer grieves the Holy Spirit by allowing improper relationships to be established through gossip. The mouth is open, the tongue is wagging. Someone says something and he lis-

tens (even though he knows better), and his listening produces an improper relationship. The Bible makes it clear that relationships must be kept very carefully.

There are people everywhere that hold grudges and develop a code of silence against one another. In everything they do they insult the Spirit, resist the Spirit, quench the Spirit, and finally grieve the Spirit because they have an improper relationship.

Another example would be a person sitting in church in the midst of a revival and apparently unaware of the work of God going on around him. On a recent Sunday, sixteen people received Christ at one of our services. "That's nice," he thinks to himself, but his next thought is about his plans for the afternoon. No, it is far more than nice—it is a revival, led by the Spirit of God. But this person has an improper relationship with the Holy Spirit and he is not sensitive to the revival. Heaven and the angels are rejoicing and this person is just trying to make it to the door quickly. When souls are being saved and a person still cannot wait to get to the door, his thinking is wrong. That is extremely sad to me. The invitation is the time when we should be most attentive to the Holy Spirit's work.

Put On God's Provisions

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12).

In the first two chapters of Job, we see this man of God being harassed. Everything under the sun has happened to him. But there was one thing Job understood and that was that Satan's power is limited. Therefore, Job entered into a very beautiful sequence of truth from God's Word in his thought patterns, which revealed grace orientation as the premise for his thinking. He was a good steward of the grace of God as he ministered grace toward others and began to fulfill his eternal destiny, his purpose, and his eternal provision. Positive volition in his consciousness began to move in Job's life.

What did Job do? He put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humility or lowliness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering. All of that led to his victory in his troubled situation.

Every one of the fruits of the Spirit carries a special meaning for us. They begin to work in us through a major decision of our will. We simply must choose to put them on.

See Yourselves as Holy

First, it is most important that we see ourselves as God sees us, "holy and beloved." This means we have been set apart and sanctified by Him to receive His love. In the midst of all the things we go through as God's people, there are always those beautiful times when God calls us "beloved." As we go through our busy schedules and stressful trials and tests, the Spirit whispers to us that we are "beloved."

Oh, if we could only realize how much God enjoys telling us how much He loves us.

Just think of how God addressed Peter in John 21:15-18. He loves us as much now as He loved Peter then. Peter was backslidden; he went back to fishing and he took a group of disciples back with him. He had such an influence on those around him.

Yet, Jesus came to Peter and restored him with love.

Everyone needs to be loved and cared for. Regardless of the weakness we find in ourselves or in others, remember how perfectly God loves us. He died for us while we were sinners, before we received Him as our Savior. Do not insult, resist, quench, or grieve the Holy Spirit when it

comes to loving the unlovely. Allow the Spirit of grace to move in you and through you. The same Spirit will give you the wisdom you need to keep each relationship pure.

Chapter Three

LIVING BY CONVICTION

There is a big difference between opinions and convictions. An opinion is based upon a preference but a conviction is based on truth from God's Word that is rooted in your conscience. A conviction rooted in the conscience motivated by the love of God takes us through proper hearing, proper relationships, proper reception, proper propagation, and proper communication with the very Word of God which we hear.

Martin Luther prayed that God's will would be done in his life. He really didn't want to serve God, but he thought he would like to be religious. One day, a bolt of lightning struck and killed his best friend as they were walking. Within twenty-four hours, Luther made the decision to go into ministry, even going against the wishes of his parents.

A conviction was established in Luther's

heart by the Holy Spirit and he went on to change the world by following God.

Bringing Forth Fruit

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

Imagine if Jesus Christ, the sinless, perfect Son of God, had never fulfilled this Word. He would have gone to heaven because of his own perfection. He could have gone directly to heaven to live forever with His Father, but He would have had to abide there alone. He would have no Bride. He would have no Body. But in order for Him to have a Body and a Bride, Jesus Christ had to die.

Think of this: The life that Jesus Christ lived in his humanity condemned us because it fulfilled the Law (John 3:18-19). That was the life of the Holy Spirit in Him. Not only did Jesus' life condemn us, it also made it possible for Him to die a vicarious death that was perfect and paid for all of our sins. It also made it possible for you and me to receive the Holy Spirit and receive the very same life that was in Jesus Christ. Now, simply by believing and receiving Him as our

Savior, He can live in us with the very same life that He lived in His own body. Henceforth, for those who believe, there is therefore *no* condemnation (Romans 8:1).

The Will to Do of His Good Pleasure

"For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him." (Job 23:14).

"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Once we receive the same life of the Holy Spirit that qualified Jesus to die for us, once we receive Jesus Christ's perfect life, we are justified by His Blood. That life comes into us and stays in us. We are saved from wrath. We are reconciled by His death. But much more than reconciled, we are saved by His life.

What a phenomenal privilege we have in being saved by the same life that was in Jesus. There is now not a single thing He will ask us to do that He will not perform. The very same life that was in Him to keep Him from sinning is now in us to keep us from sinning.

The Law condemned us and the life Jesus Christ lived condemned us. But when we accept Him as our Savior, there is no more condemna-

tion. By grace through faith, we are saved. It is indeed a gift from God. There are no works by which any of us can boast.

CONCLUSION

As Christians, we should be able to identify with people who suffer, whether their suffering is deserved or undeserved. Instead of being critical or judgmental, we can receive the filling of the Holy Spirit and let the words of life live in us and fill our hearts. The life Jesus lived, lives in us.

In the serenity of faith, the purity of truth, and the acknowledgement of God's integrity, we can live as recipients and partakers of the nature that allows us to escape the corruption that is in this world (2 Peter 1:4).

Jesus in all of His holiness comes to us and says, "Can I have your hands? Can I have your eyes? Can I have your ears, your feet, and your mind? I want to borrow your humanity."

Oh, may our response be this: "Yes, Lord, you can have all those things. And please help me rebound if I ever take back these things. By Your grace and Your mercies, I present my body

as a living sacrifice on this day and every day.”

How to Avoid the

Pitfalls of Immaturity

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Perilous times are here. Men are lovers of themselves. People display a form of godliness but in reality deny the power of God. In these days, Satan is trying to establish a lukewarm, ineffective church that will cooperate with his cosmic plan to hinder the spread of the Gospel. More than ever, we must understand how to keep the fire in our hearts burning. Each Christian is called to share the message of true freedom that comes from receiving Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Freedom isn't works or striving or programming myself to be like God. Freedom is liberty to be changed from glory to glory by the mirror of the Word and the Holy Spirit. Freedom is something we stand in, in such a way that we have power and dominion over Satan's cosmic world system.

As this message develops, focus completely on the Lord Jesus Christ. Practice letting the

Holy Spirit manifest the meaning of God's presence to your capacity for life. Let Him work supernaturally. As Christians, we must pray that the Word will come forth with clarity and power. Then, as the Father works in us to glorify His Son, we will avoid the pitfalls of immaturity.

Chapter One

EFFECTIVENESS IN THE CALL

You may hear this said often, but I truly mean it. I am so thankful for every missionary, every pastor, every family, and every believer-priest who has been touched by our ministry and grateful to each of you for being a part of this ministry.

I am trusting God that these words will do more than reward you with stimulation through facts or information. I am trusting Him to operate in us through *ischus*—the supernatural transference of truth by the Holy Spirit into the frame of reference and the memory center (John 14:26; Colossians 2:12). *Ischus* takes place through *energeia*—the power that comes from being taught the whole counsel of God.

Through *ischus* and *energeia,* we then enter into *dunamis*—divine ability in human capacity—and *kratos,* which is the manifestation of truth with the details of precise light.*

Throughout the churches in the world, there are vast differences in the degree of effectiveness of pastors, staff members, deacons in the table of organization, and Christians in the congregations. Where one makes a great impact, another does not. (I'm not dealing with numbers, I'm talking about fruit). God put a difference between Israel and Egypt (Exodus 11:7). Also there is a difference between Christians.

With all the things going on today, there will be some who hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6) and some who are Laodicean (Revelation 3:15-16), even though they seem to be good people who faithfully attend church. The difference is in their ability to discern truth, to participate in God's vision, to fellowship with God's resurrection power, and to enjoy communion because of a union with God's Person.

Job 32:8 says "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration [breath] of the Almighty giveth them understanding." "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4). When God breathed into man the breath of life—the human spirit—man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). That's

what makes the difference.

Novice Traits: Pitfalls of Immaturity

Picture a Christian who gets up in the morning, goes to work, and comes home at night. He may be a good person, but if his human spirit is not functioning in maximum awareness, then he will function with novice traits (1 Timothy 3:6). This is especially true with pastors. The pastor with novice traits is not sensitive to the capacities of his flock. He may be rude to them, and often crude and unkind.

Immaturity in a marriage can be devastating. If a husband has novice traits, he will be verbally abusive toward his wife. A wife with novice traits tends to be independent, reactionary, and frigid. Why? Because the Spirit of God isn't giving inspiration. The Word, the breath of life, isn't coming in. Psalm 43:3 says that we are led by "truth" and "light." Psalm 36:9 tell us, "For with thee [God] is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." What does this mean? It means that in God there is a fountain of objective light, and as we continue in that light, we receive subjective (inward) conversion. Our subjective conversion leads to a supernatural objective revelation of what that conversion

is about.

"For what portion of God is there from above? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high?" (Job 31:2). Think about that for a moment. Proverbs 15:14*a* says, "The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge"—experiential knowledge operating in the human spirit.

Consider these things carefully. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Don't think on words that have no experiential life. Job 38:2 says, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" "Desire without knowledge [doctrine] is not good" (Proverbs 19:2, Amplified Translation).

* *For more about the progressive impartation of God's power, read* Having a Heavenly Vision, *Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Two

INSTRUCTIONS OF THE SPIRIT

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, be-

cause they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? *But we have the mind of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).

Think of it: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." The Holy Spirit is speaking here of the eye of perception in the soul. The eye of the soul has not seen, nor has the ear of the soul heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him.

No man knows the things of God but by the *Spirit* of God (capital "S"). And no man knows the things of a man but by the *spirit* of man (small "s"). The natural man—*psuchikos* in the Greek text—cannot receive that which is spiritual. These things are foolishness to the *psuchikos* man. He cannot discern or understand them because he doesn't have the capacity for spiritual discernment.

But, 1 Corinthians 2:15-16 says, "he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man....But we have the mind of Christ." Through the Word of God, we have the mind of Christ.

The words of 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 are precious because they teach us the only way to be

Spirit taught, Spirit led, and spiritually right. I will never understand my call unless my human spirit communes with the Holy Spirit, unless the Holy Spirit teaches me, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, with constant capacity and continual flow. Unless my human spirit gives entrance to the Holy Spirit, I will never understand submission to God's Cross, the cross of His Son; I will never understand how to function, to work out what God works within; and I'll never be subjectively converted. My wounds will not be healed, and I will not make clear decisions to leave cosmic relationships and the cosmic call of the world.

Battling Soulish Tendencies

"There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8). "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4). We are led by Truth in life and light. That's the difference between the Spirit-led Christian and the soulish Christian.

The soulish Christian never receives a call. He just goes on in his profession. If it is of God, it's beautiful; God uses men and women everywhere, in every facet of life. But the Christian

who lives in his soul is never liberated—by facts, by knowledge, or by inspiration. He never gets healed because he lives in the soulish realm. He doesn't hear what the Spirit is giving as instruction.

Quench Not the Spirit

"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, *even as also ye do*. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thessalonians 5:11-13*a*).

When Paul referred to "them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord," he was speaking of the office of pastor-teacher. In 1 Timothy 5:17, the pastor labors in the Word and doctrine. He labors until he is weary. Paul concludes 1 Thessalonians 5:13 with something very important regarding honor and the office of a pastor: "And be at peace among yourselves."

"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded [those who vacillate because they have small souls], support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man;

but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15)

"Rejoice forevermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-19). "Quench not the Spirit" means do not extinguish the fire. Do not say or do something that would quench the operation of the divine illumination of the Holy Spirit in the corporate cells of God's organism—the Body of Christ. The principle is *don't quench the Spirit*. Whether it's in your car or when you meet with someone—don't quench the Spirit.

"Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:20-22).

The following verse correlates with the principle of the Holy Spirit working in the human spirit with the Word of God: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

God will sanctify your human spirit. How does He do this? By the Word of God (John

17:17). He will sanctify your soul through the Colossians 3:16 process of letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom (*ischus*), teaching and admonishing one another with "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Chapter Three

THE PORTION FROM ABOVE

Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then he said in verse 24, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." I read that often when I'm alone in my study in the morning and I say, "Yes. *He* does it." This is more than just knowledge. These words were written by a man who knew what it was to have God sanctify his spirit, soul, and body.

The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, sanctifies the human spirit. And through the Holy Spirit, the human spirit gets this inspiration, this motivation, this energization. The human spirit becomes overwhelmed with what God is like—His character, His essence. The Word goes down into the five parts of the soul, filling the soul and the members of the body. Those members are yielded as instruments of

righteousness, as those that are alive from the dead (Romans 6:13).

Wisdom from Below: Demonic Influences

Job 32:8-9 says that "there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment." The Bible speaks of "great" men who are "not always wise." In fact, the Hebrew says they "aren't right." Great and aged men are not right unless they have the spiritual insight of God.

In James 3:15, we read of wisdom that is from below. There's so much of it today in Christian vocabularies and Christian marriages, and there is so much of it in pulpits. For example, if on a very hot day I were to stand up and preach a long-winded sermon, disregarding the capacity of the congregation, then I would be in the flesh, practicing wisdom from below. Rather, if I were preaching to a new congregation that I'm trying to disciple, I would speak twenty minutes and use godly wisdom. My prayers would be brief and to the point. I always want to be sensitive to the congregation.

Wisdom from below is earthly (*epigeios*), which speaks of cosmic demons or the cosmic

locusts of Joel 2:25. They are called *hopping demons* in the original Hebrew. The hopping demons come in from all directions, followed by the *crawling demons*. As they crawl into your life, you become self-conscious. You do everything you can do to be approved by God and by people. Experientially, your human spirit is dead.

After the crawling demons come the *gnawing demons*, whose purpose is to gnaw away relationships and gnaw away at your capacity, to make you weak and weary. These demons try to offend you, to make you react and get you into a negative cycle. They gnaw away at your spiritual self-image when you should be crucified, buried, resurrected, and ascended with Christ! But, for that to become your experience, it takes the Holy Spirit to quicken your human spirit. And it takes the Word of God to separate the soul from the spirit. Then the Word, coming in sharper than a two-edged sword, discerns the motives of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

Next, come the *stripping demons* of Joel 2:25, demons that strip away your capacity, strip away your call, strip away your potential. They get you involved in wrong relationships. They get you to listen to the opinions of your peers instead of going directly to the Cross.

When *epigeios*, or wisdom from below, is transferred to the soul, it becomes *psuchikos*, or "soulish" (James 3:15). A cosmic structure is then established, bringing in cosmic thinking, cosmic rationale, and cosmic fashions (established by a crowd that has many lesbians and homosexuals). In *psuchikos*, a cosmic way of life develops, represented by cosmic programs in the entertainment industry. Then this "wisdom" becomes devilish, *daimoniodes*. The hopping, crawling, gnawing, and stripping demons will take over a precious, redeemed soul—oppressing, not possessing—even that one who has been equipped to serve God full time.*

The Privilege of Submitting to Calvary

When you submit to Calvary, you submit to the highest call in life. You submit to the greatest privilege known to man and become a servant of the Most High God. You are only on earth for a short period of time and you realize that you must redeem that time. You realize you must be filled with all the fullness of God and filled with the Spirit in order to please God by faith, serve God by grace, and obey God in love. As soon as you hear something from the Word of God (Psalm 18:44), you enter into faith obedience to

the entire counsel of God (Romans 1:5).

Every morning you can gladly say to the Lord, "Here I am, send me! More than anything in this world, I want to live for you, love you, breathe for you, and represent you. I want to be your voice. I want to be your eyes, ears, tongue, feet, and hands. Oh God, if you can use me and keep on forgiving me, just grant me the power to live in the Spirit, and I will be so thankful!"

Our souls need to be equipped to represent God in 220 countries and right here in our Jerusalem. I would be shocked if God didn't call you to be a disciple and call you to go to Bible college! Don't be surprised if God puts a call upon your heart to be a missionary—a real, living epistle for Jesus Christ. It is very possible that you will hear the Holy Spirit say, "The harvest truly is plenteous but the laborers are few." I'll be surprised if you are not soon convicted to pray the prayer of the Holy Spirit: "Send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:36-38).

**These four categories of demons are discussed in* Uncontrolled Knowledge, *Grace Publications, 1997. The cosmic soul structure is discussed in* Atmospheric Cycles, *Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Four

THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Pastors, are your feelings hurt because you live in your soul? According to some of you, it's always somebody else's fault. Twenty-five people come against you, but it's always their fault, not yours. Your soul can't take it. You've got the knowledge, but you don't have the power. You don't have the unconditional wisdom from above.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:17-18).

The fruit of righteousness is to be a peacemaker. The fruit of righteousness is not wearing problems on your sleeve. The fruit of righteousness is to cast all your cares upon Jesus Christ because He cares for you. The fruit of righteous-

ness is to understand and be sensitive to different capacities. The fruit of righteousness doesn't include manipulation and control.

There are pastors who will not face bona fide problems in the church. Even when they are lovingly confronted and the problem is described in detail, often the pastor just doesn't get it! He reveals his immaturity because he lives in his soul without experiencing the Holy Spirit in control of that area of weakness.

If my preaching and teaching can't keep people coming to my church and they want to go elsewhere, then God bless them, they should go! If I don't have the power and the fire of God in this pulpit to love you beyond yourself and beyond your capacity, then you should go and get to know God somewhere else. If I don't have the power and the fire of God to love you beyond your works and beyond your decisions, then you should leave and find a pastor that does have that power and that love.

The Responsibility of the Flock

Galatians 6:6 says, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."

The Greek word used in the phrase "Let him

that is taught" is the present passive participle of *katecho*, which refers to the act of giving instruction, usually orally. Therefore, the person referred to is one who has received instruction in the Word from his pastor-teacher. He is to *communicate* (a present active participle of *koinoneo*), with the one who teaches him, *in all good things*.

According to the word studies of Kenneth Wuest, a prominent Greek scholar, the same verb, (*katecho*), is used for both the one who *teaches* and the ones *being taught*—the difference being the active voice for the pastor-teacher and the passive voice for the congregation. Wuest notes that at the time Paul wrote this letter, many believers had been led away from their teachers by Judaizers. Paul exhorted them to go back to their true teachers in the word of grace. He knew that going back to the law would hinder their personal growth as well as the growth of the church.

And what are the "good things" the Body is to communicate? It certainly was not material or financial support being alluded to here. (The Judaizers would have jumped on that one!) Although the Body is responsible to support their pastor-teacher (Philippians 4:15), Galatians 6:1-5 reveals that the Church is also responsible

to restore in meekness others who have fallen, bear another's burdens, not think highly of self, prove each man his own work, and each bear his own burden.

Pastors, get rid of every novice trait (1 Timothy 3:6). Don't be lifted up with pride. Ask God to show you your novice traits—we all have had them. But tell the Lord you will gladly turn to Him. Be willing to receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, and let Him transform you by the renewing of your mind. Don't be stiff-necked with categorical understanding in a mind that hasn't been transformed by the Holy Spirit; don't use knowledge to push people according to the way you think they should go.

I want the people in my church to grow legitimately, to have a bona fide relationship with a vertical that enables them to relate to God and to the Cross. I want people to get to know God's voice so that they can hear Him call. I'm not going to "play God," telling people what to do and what not to do. In my messages, I preach the Word of God. It's up to the Holy Spirit to interpret the message to their souls in the creative design of God's divine providential understanding of His perfect will for their lives.

After a few years in the ministry, pastors should be rid of some of their novice traits. If people leave because of a conspiracy, that's one thing. But it's another thing if they leave because they are not getting properly fed.

Keep the Fire Burning

"The spirit of the man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly" (Proverbs 20:27). Let me say something in relationship to 1 Samuel 4. It is possible that part of the reason the glory of God departed was because Eli, the high priest, couldn't control his appetite. He was obese, he didn't have the discipline to stop eating. He was still eating when his children were not being given the Word of God. One day, he was sitting on a stool when he heard that the Ark of God had been captured in battle. Eli fell over, broke his neck and died. The glory of God had departed, the lamp went out. Eli had a name, but he was spiritually dead—just like the church of Sardis in Revelation 3:1.

In Leviticus 6:12, wood had to be placed on the fire every morning. The fire was to burn continually, and the ashes had to be removed to a clean place. The wood had to be put on the fire

constantly. Every single morning they were to keep the fire burning. This is where every Christian should be.

Perilous times have come. Men are lovers of themselves, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. In a day when Satan is building a Laodicean church within the structure of the Body of Christ, it's time to understand how to keep the fire burning. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). If you study the Latin and the Greek thoroughly, you will discover that "deny" is not the best translation here. It would be better to say, "If any man will come after me, let him be *retroactively crucified with me* and take up his cross and follow me for that day...." Or, it could be translated, "*Whosoever shall take up co-crucifixion and co-burial shall find resurrection*." This is the proper translation. Verse 25 goes on to say, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

When a Christian reckons on his co-crucifixion and co-burial, then jealousy and envy are gone; insecurity is gone; negative reactions, worldly lusts, worldly ambition, and inordinate drives and desires are all gone. I don't deny my-

self of them. Do you know why? Galatians 6:14 tells me that by the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." I don't have to deny something that's been crucified! The Cross has crucified my "self" life (Galatians 2:20). And it has crucified the world's system unto me.

The issue now is taking up my cross, not denying myself. Otherwise, I could become a lonely, austere person in a one-room cell, thinking I am glorifying God in a works program of self-denial.

The Essence of True Freedom

Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Freedom isn't works or striving or programming myself to be like God. Freedom is liberty to be changed from glory to glory by the mirror of the Word and the Holy Spirit. Freedom is something we stand in, in such a way that we have power and dominion toward the world system. We've been sent into the world system to reveal God, to reveal godly relationships, to reveal godly marriages, godly obedience, godly visions, godly purity, and godly joy. We are to show the world godly habits and godly gentleness. We have

been sent into the world to reveal absolute, godly convictions.

We're free from immodest dress. We're free from worldly language. We're free from the lust of the flesh. We're free from competition and comparison. We are standing in the grace of God at Calvary, and we have been set free. Knowing that our time is short, we can get up every day as those who have been raised from the dead. Our lives on earth are but a vapor, and we are convinced that the Holy Spirit will teach us the things of God through our human spirit. He who is spiritual "judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" (1 Corinthians 2:15). This is our conviction if we are Spirit-filled and have the mind of Christ.

I'm not interested in defending any kind of preaching style or denominational language. I am interested in the mind of God. I am not interested in convincing you that a certain style of preaching brings superiority in communication. But I want you to know what it means to be quiet before God. I want you to be so quiet before God that as you spend time in prayer, you will be able to hear Him speak to you by name (John 10:3-4).

Let Jesus Christ bring your relationships,

your decisions, and your future to the Cross. Let Him bring you into the presence of His resurrection power by fellowship with His ascended life. Then you will know the portion that is from above and that your inheritance is from the Almighty on high.

CONCLUSION

We are here today to do business with eternity. We are here to be stabilized, to become mature. We're here to make decisions, and those decisions may hurt some people. Oswald Chambers said that taking up your cross will offend the person closest to you. The alternative is to let Jesus Christ bear it alone.

Each time we assemble as the Body of Christ can be a wonderful, glorious experience with God. May we deal with truth and not rationalize it, honor reality and not separate it from tomorrow. May we be a people who will make decisions with our volition and not in our emotions. Don't be forgetful hearers; put into practice what you have heard, because Satan will make a bid to take these things out of your heart.

"Father, our prayer is that you would bless us today in the precious holy name of Jesus Christ. As

You speak to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, may we enjoy Your power and presence. May we enjoy the purity of Your Word. May we honor and esteem Christ above everything else in the universe. May we be kept by the power and glory of God in Jesus' name. Amen."

How to Have a Spiritual Birthday

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Every person born into this world has a physical birthday. At the moment of conception, we begin to function as a living person.

The Bible says that every human being goes astray as soon as he is born, speaking lies (Psalm 58:3). A child does not have to be taught to lie. He will lie to protect himself. He is not taught to steal, yet he steals food that his mother has kept for special occasions. Our sinful nature, inherited from Adam, propels us to do wrong.

Have you ever felt victimized by your desire to do evil? God has provided a beautiful solution for this problem, a permanent eternal solution.

Read on, and see how you can have a spiritual birthday.

Chapter One
MAN'S GREAT NEED

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5).

Every man or woman born into this world was conceived in iniquity. His own feelings, desires, and limited understanding cause him to search for fulfillment outside of God's plan. Inevitably, his search ends in utter frustration, emptiness, and defeat as he realizes that a life without God is a depraved and selfish existence. He continues to execute his free volition to sin as he goes against God and against the moral consciousness of light planted in his heart through the justice of God (John 1:9).

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

God has declared this universal truth: The nature of every human life is sinful. In an attempt to cover his sin, a man puts on defense mechanisms to hide the desperate condition of

his heart, just as Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves with fig leaves and hide from God in the garden of Eden after they had sinned. The nagging convictions of evil desires and attitudes continue to plague him until he becomes so imprisoned with guilt and shame that he either rebels by sinning outwardly or he masks his wicked motives with defense mechanisms as a disguise for his cancerous condition.

The apostle Paul cried out in desperation:

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:18-19).

Paul not only understood the powerful web of sin, but according to Romans 8, he also understood the precious and perfect provision of Jesus Christ, who conquered sin by His death on the cross.

Man's problem is universal. No matter what culture or socio-economic situation we find ourselves in, everyone must deal with this inescapable reality. Either we die in our sins or we accept the perfect provision for sin in the death

of the Lord Jesus Christ, who took our place of judgment on the Cross.

Fear Factors

Many human beings live in fearful insecurity before men and inadequacy before God. Inferiority complexes and self-consciousness keep people in a cloud of confusion and discouragement. In many cases, because of deep moral convictions, an individual may put on religious garments of striving to find temporary peace through self-righteousness, human goodness, or his own code of ethics. He may strive to adjust to the standards that his family and social environment project upon him. As he conforms to the pressures, lifestyle, and expectations of the world, he is accepted by the society in which he lives.

Yet, deep within his soul man longs for a vital and intimate relationship with his Creator. Innately, there is a vacuum; emptiness gnaws at his soul destroying his emotions and dividing his will. Finally, he comes to the realization that self-righteousness and human good can never satisfy his tremendous need to know God. Piercing truths circulate in his mind:

"I am growing old, and soon I must face

death."

"I have never experienced true happiness."

"What is the purpose of human life?"

"What will happen after I die?"

"If heaven is real, how can I be certain that I am going there?"

Such thoughts cause him to become mentally paralyzed at the thought that the sincerity of his human nature is not enough to warrant salvation. Only God can reveal the reality of who He is to us.

Have you ever felt trapped as a victim in a fire you cannot escape? Have you ever felt as though you were plunging into a raging sea without the ability to swim? Have your hopes been drowned in the waters of life? Are you sinking deeper into despair, finding no real peace in this world's system?

If you have tried everything in an attempt to satisfy the real person behind the fig leaves of your own invention, then stop for a moment and consider this:

The greatest hope in all the world is found in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two
DECISION TIME

Dear Reader, I have described the attitudes and thoughts that we have all experienced as we search for the truth. Even now, your heart is crying out, "This is true. Life is futile—but what is the answer?" Only God can satisfy. All this time you have been searching for Him. God's great compassion and love has given us the answer through the Bible, the Word of God. You need to have a spiritual birthday through which you can be born again, into the kingdom of God!

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Jesus Christ was God (2 Peter 1:1). He put on a human body and came from heaven into this world to become sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). He paid the wages of our sin by dying in our place, on the cross. He shed His precious blood

on Calvary's tree, He was buried, and He rose again on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). He ascended into heaven and appeared before His Father's throne. The justice of God the Father was satisfied because "…by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12).

God has sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of all who will humble themselves and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He has removed your guilt and forgiven your sins. God has erased all of your past, present, and future sins.

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

What Does It Mean to "Believe On" Jesus Christ?

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

Many people have asked, "What does it really mean to 'believe on' the Lord Jesus Christ?" The Greek word for "believe" is pisteuo. Strong's Concordance says that "to believe" on Christ

means to have faith in and to entrust one's spiritual well-being to Christ. Vine's Expository Dictionary of the New Testament defines the verb "to believe" as "to be persuaded of, to place confidence in, and to trust wholly." Vine also points out that to "believe" indicates "a total reliance upon the Lord, not mere credence." Faith (pistis in the Greek) is absolute dependence in receptivity to His character, His Word, His work, and His ability. Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon says that this faith is the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, and that He is the provider and giver of salvation through Jesus Christ. Believing by faith, we give up our selves to Jesus Christ.

It is so important for us to understand that to "believe on the Lord" is not just to give lip service. It means to abandon our life to Him. Knowledge about God will never bring salvation. Salvation comes when we receive His life.

Open the Door

Revelation 3:20 says that He is knocking at the door of your heart, waiting to come in. Open the door now and ask Jesus Christ to come into your life. At this very moment He will save your soul and give you the gift of eternal life. The ab-

solute integrity of the Word of God, spoken by Jesus Christ in John 10:28, promises, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." You may come to the Son of God without guilt or condemnation. Consider the amazing truth that Christ died in your place when you were "without strength" (Romans 5:6), while you were dead in your sins. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Remember that Christ died for you while you were His enemy. He will never fail you because through His death He has made you His friend (John 15:15).

God will not place you on probation; you do not have to wait until your behavior is "good enough." You must only accept what Christ has done for you. As a perfect, sinless man and as a perfect, holy, and righteous God, Jesus shed His blood for you. When you place your trust in His eternal redemption, you will be saved.

This very hour, wherever you are, you can have a spiritual birthday. God the Father will welcome you home through the expression of the love of His Son Jesus Christ. He will give you joy in the Holy Spirit, who will enlighten

your understanding of the Bible. He will reveal the nature and character of God to your heart, and you will know who He is. Receive Jesus Christ into your heart by grace through faith. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Ask Him to become your personal Savior. Simply say:

Dear Father, I know that I am a sinner and that there is nothing I can do to save myself. I do not deserve anything, but I am believing by faith that you died for me at Calvary. I now ask you to forgive my sins and come into my heart. Lord, I give you my life, knowing that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. Amen.

Now write down today's date:

_____ .

This is the date of your spiritual birthday.

As you experience the thrill of having Jesus Christ come to dwell in your heart, you will begin a new, dynamic relationship with a living God!

Chapter Three

NOW THAT YOU ARE BORN AGAIN

At the moment you prayed for salvation, the angels in heaven rejoiced (Luke 15:7). The Father has given you a new, divine nature that will now begin to take over your life. He gives you spiritual clothing and covers the nakedness of your soul. He no longer remembers your sins (Hebrews 8:12). You can know for certain that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13), for "… this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John 5:11).

Take your first step in His eternal purpose for your life. Confess to someone that you have received Him as Lord and Savior. God will honor you when you confess Him to others. The Word of God says in Matthew 10:32, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." Make a commitment in your heart to

follow Christ by faith, in obedience to His Word. He will never leave you or forsake you. He will go with you always, even to the end of the world (Hebrews 13:5, Matthew 28:20). These are eternal promises from the Word of God that cannot lie. You can build your spiritual house on a Rock rather than on sand, having confidence that heaven and earth will pass away, but His words shall not pass away (Matthew 24:35). Trust in the integrity of the Word of God, for it is now your hope, which is the anchor of your soul (Hebrews 6:19).

What Happened When I Became Born Again?

The moment that you called upon the Lord, the Holy Spirit regenerated you. You are now a brand-new creature in Christ. "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). God gave you a new heart, a cleansed conscience, and a loving, meaningful purpose for living. You will now be able to understand what it means to be able to come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). Trust Jesus Christ, the living God, to help you. He will teach, guide, and motivate you with His infinite capacity. He

will mobilize you with His divine resources. Remember, God does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever! (Hebrews 13:8).

What Shall I Discover?

You will discover that you can live in His peace. "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

Continually, you can receive the surpassing love of Christ, "which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). Your heart is now purified by faith (Acts 15:9), and your mind is constantly being renewed by the freshness of your obedience to the inspiring promises of His written Word.

No longer will you be victimized by a complex social structure. Now you can freely receive an abundant life through fellowship with a living God, the King of kings who rules and reigns in your heart! The encouragement and comfort of other believers who make up the Body of Christ will inspire your faith, drawing you closer to the Lord through His family on earth.

Imagine that God, Himself, through His faithfulness, "hath chosen us in Him before the

foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). All the promises in the Word of God —more than seven thousand promises—belong to you as His child. Second Peter 1:4 declares, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Not one word of His good promise will fall to the ground (1 Kings 8:56). All the promises of God, in Him, are "Yes!" and in Him "Amen!" (2 Corinthians 1:20). Come and learn of Him—the One who is the God of all promises, who has victoriously ascended into heaven so that you might inherit the treasures of eternal life!

How Can I Grow as a Christian?

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38).

As you follow Jesus Christ, do not hold back. Abandon yourself to Him as you respond to His love. Fill your frame of reference—the memory center of your mind—with the Word of God, and "be transformed by the renewing of

your mind" (Romans 12:2). Respond to the promises of Christ by studying His precious Word. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill your mind with God's thoughts and desires for your life. As you learn to abide in Christ, His life will overflow through you as "rivers of living water" (John 7:38). Others will be blessed as you share the message of His glorious salvation with those who do not yet know Him. Remember Christ's words: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

What Steps Should I Take to Get to Know the Lord?

"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8).

1. Begin by reading the Gospel of John in the New Testament of your Bible. (Before you read, pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten your understanding of the Word of God.)

2. Ask God to lead you to a specific local church, one that teaches the pure Word of God. Begin to serve God by being faithful to Him in the local assembly (Hebrews 10:22-25).

3. Purpose to fellowship with other Chris-

tians so that you can receive the life of Christ through His Corporate Body.

4. Set aside time each day to read the Word of God and to pray. "But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in His law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

5. Pray that God would lead you into His perfect will and that He would increase your capacity to know and serve Him by faith in obedience to His Word.

If you write to us or call, we would be glad to send you a free inspirational packet that will motivate you to grow in Christ.

CONCLUSION

It is our prayer that you will receive all that God wants to bless you with in your new life in Christ. Please write to us soon and tell us of your decision to be saved. We want to pray for you and help you to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, you can never lose your salvation for you have been "bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7:23). The great price for your salvation was the blood of the Son of God who died on Calvary in your place. We rejoice with you and with the angels, for you now have eternal life! Hold fast to this promise:

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

How to Stay Fervent

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way: yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved" (Isaiah 57:10).

Many people grow weary in the greatness of the way. It is possible for the outward man to become weary serving God while the inward man remains fervent (2 Corinthians 4:16). Weariness comes from our human nature, but fervency comes from the treasure within our earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7).

In my studies, I discovered that *fervency* speaks of four things: having an active, intense love through Christ; kindness that stretches out in grace; persevering with a warm, glowing fire in our hearts; and being sensitive and thoughtful in our identification with mankind.

In 2 Corinthians 7:7, Paul made reference to a "fervent mind." Christians are exhorted to

have fervent hearts, in 1 Peter 1:22. Also, 1 Peter 4:8-10 tells believers to "have fervent charity," to "use hospitality"—sweet kindness—"without grudging," and to minister the same grace they have received "one to another."

Think of this subject carefully. Because of the hour in which we live, it is vital for us as believers to be stirred up in Christ so that He might reign in our hearts.

May these words inspire you to be intense in your love for one another; move you to be sweet, kind, and sensitive; and cause you to be careful to persevere with a warm glowing fire in your heart.

Chapter One

A GLORIOUS SALVATION

How can we stay fervent? This was a question I asked myself as I flew home from a trip to New England. Several people had given me letters and notes, which I read when I got home. Some were phenomenal testimonies that caused me to think of the beauty of salvation. One way we can remain fervent is to consider what God does for every person who receives Christ.

One letter was from a woman who at one time was going out on her husband, a weekend alcoholic. Later, when she got saved, God enabled her to clean up her act. Then her husband received Christ and, together, they were baptized in our church. Since that time, they have grown as a beautiful family, living for God and serving the Body of Christ. Thinking about what God did for this couple keeps me fervent.

Another letter came from a lady in Portland, Maine, who now has two daughters in our Bible

college. Fear plagued this woman so much that she couldn't go out of her house for months at a time.

"I had terrible fear," she told me. "Not just one fear, but many. Mentally and emotionally they were tearing me up. But when I got saved, the fear left me, and it has never come back. After all those years, I am finally free."

Jesus Paid It All

Think of what Christ did for us when we received Him. He saved us from the penalty of sin. He separated our sins from us and buried them in the sea of His forgetfulness (Micah 7:19). God cannot remember our sins and He will never impute them to us.

If we habitually sin, God chastises us as a loving Father, without condemnation, to bring us back into the proper family relationship. What a thing it is to be saved!

"Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain—
He washed it white as snow."

Oh, how I love that song! If we are filled with the Holy Spirit, those words will leave us broken every time.

My telephone rang early one morning. It was Jimmy who, at one time, had been a hopeless alcoholic, in jail 30 times and involved in numerous car wrecks. But Jimmy met Jesus. He received Christ into his heart and was delivered.

"I just called to tell you that I have never gone back to drinking, not even secretly," Jimmy told me. "I have had my weaknesses, but I have never touched a drop of liquor since that night you prayed with me in my living room."

Testimonies like this one keep me fervent. What Jesus did for Jimmy, He will do for anyone.

Chapter Two

TWO ETERNAL JUDGMENTS

There will be two distinct future judgments in heaven: the Bema Seat judgment of Christ* for the believer, and the Great White Throne judgment for the unsaved. Thinking about these two judgments always keeps me fervent.

The Bema Seat Judgment

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

At times, I go into my study to consider what the Bible says about the Bema Seat. It is the place in heaven where every believer will stand alone before God. This is not the judgment for the unsaved; no one is condemned to hell here.

**The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?*, a booklet available from Grace Publications, covers this subject in detail.

At the Bema Seat, judgments will be made to determine eternal rewards for each Christian. There will be no support groups—every believer will face Jesus Christ in truth, alone.

As I ponder these things, the thought comes: The Bema Seat is not so far away! Very soon, each of us will have our day before God in heaven.

In my mind, I see the members of my congregation standing before God, one by one. Truth will reign at the Bema Seat—not private or public opinion. The Finished Work of Christ will be the absolute premise for this judgment. I will be evaluated on the basis of the categorical doctrine I received and applied, and the measure I identified with Jesus Christ and honored Him will determine my rewards.

What will determine your rewards? Will it be wood, hay, and stubble because you operate in the energy of the flesh? Or, will it be gold, silver, and precious stones because you are constrained by love, motivated to edify others, loyal to Truth, and inspired to win souls? Without excuses or rationalization, without subjectivity or personal reaction, each of us will stand before God. The truth of our motives will be revealed.

Our hearts and minds must remain fervent

in our compassion toward the lost and in our faithfulness to the local assembly. If my fervency toward the Word of God is consistent and my fervency in the Spirit continues to grow, then the Bema Seat will be a glorious moment.

The Great White Throne Judgment

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death [the grave, where the body is] and hell [where the soul is] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:12-15).

Revelation 20:11-15 tells us of the "great white throne" judgment for the unsaved. Rich and poor, "small and great" will stand before God. Jesus Christ will be seated on this throne of judgment. Dear friends, this will be a judg-

ment without grace. Those who are eternally lost will face God as the Lion and not the Lamb.

Recently, as I pondered this, I wept and wept. Why? Because this is real. No matter what the world says or how much people don't believe it, the White Throne judgment *will* happen. This should keep all of us fervent—it should keep us kind and sweet, intense in our love, with sensitivity and thoughtfulness toward the lost. Thoughts of the Great White Throne should keep us fervent and careful to preserve what we have through the blood atonement of Christ.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and *there was found no place for them*" (Revelation 20:11). That line is so sad: no place was found for them. Grace has no place for those who will come before this throne. Yet, Grace died for them. Grace paid for the sins of the whole world. But, those coming before the White Throne will have rejected Jesus Christ and His Gospel of grace.

In hell, the bodies of the unsaved will never be consumed. The body and the soul will remain alive and will spend eternity tormented in the lake of fire.

The reality of the Great White Throne moti-

vates me to stay fervent. It motivates me to pray. This is why we're trusting God that we will be able to knock on every door in our city and to send missionaries into 220 countries. We're not doing it because of a system of works but because of the fervency of our love toward the lost.

If God leads you to be a missionary here in the United States, be faithful and be fervent. If you are called to serve in Europe or the Third World, be faithful in those places. Wherever you go to church, be fervent. There is no time to waste on pettiness. Don't waste time expressing private opinions. If you are a pastor on the foreign field, don't be petty—don't try to control the people who serve with you. Don't compete with other missionaries. That's vanity.

Millions of lost souls are dying, and for them, the White Throne Judgment will be reality. Oh, may God help us to walk in love and sensitivity so that we will redeem the time, making sure we have fervent minds and hearts.

Chapter Three

HELL AND HEAVEN

The truth about hell keeps me fervent. I find it unusual that the average Christian doesn't understand the doctrine of hell. It is a mystery to me how some Christians can neglect hell as a motive for fervency, compassion, godliness, stewardship, and faithfulness.

Jesus made reference to hell as a literal place. In Luke 16:19-31, He spoke of a certain rich man who lifted up his head in hell "being in torments." The man's body was in the grave, but his soul was self-conscious with unsatisfied thirst in hell. We don't know that he led a bad life, but we do know that the rich man was in hell. He had rejected Jesus Christ.

Consider the reality of the flames of hell with its bottomless pit (Revelation 9:2). It's a place where the fire is not quenched and the conscience does not die (Mark 9:43-46). May this reality constrain us to judge that if One died

then we are all dead, and that henceforth we should not live unto ourselves in any form of misery or self-pity (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Let's live unto God, who raised Jesus from the dead. Let us know no man after the flesh, but understand what it means to be new creatures in Christ. May the truth about hell motivate us to be fervent in grace, mercy, and love.

Thoughts of Heaven

Thinking about heaven should also motivate us to stay fervent. It is there we will be with all of God's precious saints. We will meet our precious loved ones who are saved, and enjoy our families forever. There's not a Christian I know who doesn't get homesick for heaven as he grows older. It's not that we want to leave just to get out of the mess down here. We want to live on earth with Christ; yet, we have a desire for heaven. Once we are saved, our purpose is to reveal Christ on earth, but, by God's design, we were made to reign forever in heaven.

Our new life is from heaven. Right thoughts are from heaven. Our conversation is in heaven. Our prayers are through Christ, who is in heaven. Heaven is our provision. Our faith and hope are from heaven. We have been designed to leave

these bodies of weariness, sickness, disease, and death and be made ready for heaven.

Pressing on the Upward Way

I often think about my father, who died when I was three years old. I don't know if he was saved. I don't think he was. I want to believe that he was a Christian, but I have no reason to think that he was. This stirs me up all the more to witness, to evangelize through the printed page and word of mouth. It motivates me to pray and to be obedient. I simply want to tell the story of the marvelous Gospel so people can believe and be saved.

"I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day—
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
'Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.'"

We're heading to heaven; we're pressing on to higher ground. May God stir us to fervently understand this precious place called heaven.

Chapter Four

ON FIRE WITH A VISION

We never know who we are going to touch with our vision. Just by being Christians, God can use us. We don't know where His seed will go or what He will do with it. Christ does the saving, Christ does the convicting, and Christ does the converting.

I am thinking of Molly, a nurse who went to Africa with one of our missionary groups. She was going just to help with the medical aspect of the trip. But the lives of the people she traveled with touched her so deeply that she got saved when she returned home.

Molly has endured some problems in her domestic situation, but she ministers and receives the Word of God so beautifully. She's hungry and thirsty; she studies, she prays, and she wins souls.

"I don't know how I could have lived without what I have now," Molly said to me. "I just

love God so much, and I feel so good about my life with Christ and the Word of God. I have so much love for everybody."

The folks who went to Africa with Molly were used mightily by God to touch the people there. But their lives did more than that. They touched someone who will live with them forever. Fervency did it. This is what it means to have a vision.

Numbering Your Days

If I died today, I would be absent from my body and present with Jesus. Knowing that keeps my vision fervent. Paul did say that to die is gain (Philippians 1:21). Death is a great coronation for the Christian. It is the glorious consummation of our salvation.

The issues of death belong to the Lord. Death is no longer our enemy. When we die, our souls will not sleep in the grave; the angels will escort us to heaven. If we died today, we would see Jesus Christ face to face and kneel at His feet. Perhaps, Jesus would stand to receive us, as He did when Stephen was being stoned (Acts 7:55-56).

Because death is a physical reality, Satan tries to get people to fear it. Yet, death will come. And when it does, the believer is comforted

with dying mercy. We have a hope unbelievers do not have. For them, the ultimate fear of death must make their hearts tremble.

Our souls can be consistently fervent because with Jesus Christ we know we shall pass through the valley of the shadow of death.

He Will Come For Us

Knowing that Jesus Christ could come back for us in the Rapture at any moment should also keep us fervent. It may happen during our lifetime; His coming is imminent.

Picture what it will be like when our mortality puts on immortality; when corruption puts on incorruption. He will take us up to meet Him in the clouds, forever to be with Him (1 Corinthians 15:53-54; I Thessalonians 4:17).

As Christians, we have so much that gives us hope. Every hour we can experience new faith, new hope, new encouragement, new comfort, new expectation, new hunger, and new thirst. We may grow weary in the greatness of the way, but even in our weariness, we have faith and hope. The Comforter is here. The Living Word is available. The Holy Spirit is present with us. Jesus Christ is here to keep us fervent.

We must stay fervent in our vision because of what Jesus did for us.

"O that old rugged cross,
so despised by the world,
Has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God
left His glory above,
To bear it to dark Calvary."

What a precious hymn that is to me. Because of what happened on the old rugged cross, I can also sing:

"What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!"

These songs have stood the test of time and their words make my heart sing in the power of His fervency.

CONCLUSION

God wants His people to take this message to heart. We cannot pass up any opportunity to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We cannot ignore the presence of God. The Word of God must come alive fervently in our hearts.

Satan takes advantage of anyone who does not operate in God's love. The devil gains influence over those who are not sweet in their kindness or sensitive in their thoughtfulness. We must stay fervent with the wisdom of having a warm, glowing fire in our hearts.

Be fervent in your spirit and in your mind. Be fervent among yourselves with a pure heart, and put charity above everything else.

Join me in asking God to keep us fervent. Continue to stir yourselves up with these great thoughts from the Bible. May each of us grow in fervency, learning how to keep our hearts on fire, glowing with the Holy Spirit's power in the character of Christ.

Humility Quiets the Soul

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Humility is one aspect of God's character that is absolutely contrary to the character of Satan. When he lived in heaven, Lucifer fed a desire within him to become as the Most High. His grand status as one of the chief angels was not enough for him. He sparked a rebellion and convinced a third of the heavenly host to follow him in an adventure of disastrous ambition.

Contrast those actions with the actions of Jesus Christ, who humbled Himself and surrendered the power of His deity for a season to become fully man, to die for the sins of the whole world. The blood Jesus shed at Calvary satisfied the demands of perfect justice. He paid for every sin, once and for all, and now, we can rest in the perfect Finished Work of God.

When the enemy is on the move, he makes noise—inwardly and outwardly—to agitate our souls. He wants to distract us in order to lure us into walking our own way, according to our

own strength. Yet, when we humble ourselves before God and recognize who we are in Him, quietness and peace surround us. As this booklet shows, humility with brokenness releases the eternal treasure within our hearts. God's light shines through to defeat confusion and to lead us in triumph.

Chapter One

STUDY TO BE QUIET

"But the earthen vessel wherein it is sodden shall be broken" (Leviticus 6:28*a*).

"And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass" (Leviticus 26:19).

When we listen carefully to the messages that God gives us, the Holy Spirit will teach us amazing principles about God and about life. God is speaking to *you*, and only you.

In Leviticus, we read that a vessel must be broken. Each of us is a vessel made for God, and we must be broken. Furthermore, any heart that exalts itself is proud, and we are told that God will break this pride of power. Apart from identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, we are nothing. Some people take pride in their attempts to "be in control," and they exalt themselves above the Lord in situations. God, however, delights in our submission as He

controls the details of life.

Romans 12:16 says, "…Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own [opinions]." It is crucial that we live in this truth.

Weaned from Reactions

"LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.

"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalm 131:1-2).

This passage reveals truth that calls unto the deep recesses of our souls. A soul that is as a weaned child is a soul that is weaned from being confused, disturbed, envious, or jealous. It is a soul that has matured beyond being nursed with milk. It receives the meat of the Word of God and puts itself in the place where it can be nourished continually.

The Word of God in our soul becomes a standard against high things. High things are demonic projections transferred in the cosmic atmosphere of the world's system, which is controlled by Satan. He tries to transfer these projections to a man's soul so that demons ultimately

control him.

Studying Pays Off

"And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

Studying to be quiet means more than just learning to make less noise. We are learning to become still before the Lord by refusing to react to circumstances. We must not mind high things, which can result in fretting mentally or verbally for days on end. We may be tempted to demonstrate anger over some silly detail of life because of pride, but God desires instead that we would "condescend to men of low estate."

We must keep ourselves in the "low estate" of being in Christ, filled with the presence of God, broken and honoring and esteeming God's presence as more than our necessary food (Job 23:12).

"But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Galatians 6:4).

Galatians 6:4 is a beautiful verse because it speaks of staying occupied with Christ and not seeking the approval of men. We do not need

human encouragement or approval, because our hearts are so satisfied with Christ in our obedience to Him and His purpose.

Chapter Two

ESTEEM THE THINGS OF OTHERS

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

A man burst into my office and spent nearly an hour in a rage. In his anger, he kept verbally attacking people in the church, making many strong accusations. As I waited to hear from God for wisdom, this is what I got: "Be silent. Do not interrupt or react. He is just taking things out on you because he trusts your life."

After his outburst, I simply said, "I love you and thank you for these moments."

That happened months ago. Today, that man is one of my dearest friends. I made no defense and no reaction. He did it because he had a deep need to be loved unconditionally. Now, he is en-

rolled in Bible college, and he is doing great.

God tells us, in Philippians 2:4, to look not on our own things but on the things of another. Your wife may cry out in the midst of going through something. Her reaction is sudden and difficult. Though you may want to correct her and let her know that she is wrong, she needs the love of God more than ever at that moment. Being ready to give her the love of God is the whole purpose of brokenness.

The Treasure Is What Matters

The treasure God has put into our earthen vessel is the excellence of power that is of God and not of us. Above ourselves, we need to esteem another's freedom to be who he is in Christ. We look not on our own things, but on the things of another.

This is the mind that was in Christ Jesus. Furthermore, the excellency of His power derives all of its strength from heaven. These are the words of Paul, who, writing from prison, could say, "My legs and feet are in stocks and chains. Yet, my soul is not in prison: It is resting in heavenly places."

In Acts 16:25, Paul left prison after singing at midnight, even after having his back whipped

by the Romans. He was delivered from his bonds supernaturally, and he left with many converts. The point is that Paul would not whine, but he chose to shine. His life was in bloom, not in gloom. He expressed total joy, not deep depression. Even though he was a prisoner, his soul was liberated.

Operate with the Mind of Christ

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

"And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the

Father" (Philippians 2:5-11).

The way to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith is to see whether we are behaving ourselves on the inside. Are we quiet and do we humble ourselves with the provision of God? When people live in the natural mind and express it (perhaps, through anger), we can practice humility that quiets our souls in the spirit of grace. We can reveal a sweet countenance, without reacting to them in the anger and accusations they express toward us.

We let them say anything that they want to say, while we ask God to show us a way to meet the real need of their hearts.

When that man came to me in a rage, I just embraced him at the end. He began to weep even though I had not said a word.

Two days later, I spoke with his wife and discovered the reasons behind his anger. For twenty-five years, he had hated himself because of sin. Then, he came into my office and transferred all that hatred onto me.

This man once had an affair and hid it from his wife. He committed adultery and grew angry whenever that sin was dealt with from the pulpit through the Word of God. He began to hate our church because of the depth of his un-

resolved guilt.

After the visit to my office, he went to his car and wept. He was finally free.

I could have defended myself and put up my self-defense mechanism, but what would that have gained?

Chapter Three

COVERED IN THE OVERFLOW OF GRACE

In Ezekiel 47, the prophet wrote of water flowing down from the east side of the altar, which represents resurrection. It flowed to the south, referring to the world. The water reached his ankles. Then it moved up to his knees, his hips, and his neck. Finally, the prophet was completely in the water. Floating in the water, he let the current carry him.

This symbolizes living in understanding, prayer, and doctrine. It overflowed through his life and then out from him came rivers of living water, speaking of the Holy Spirit.

In the midst of this current, the prophet found fish. These are the souls of men brought into his life because of the current of God's power, the guidance of God's Spirit, the wisdom of God's knowledge, the power of God's essence, the gentleness of God's meekness, and the quiet-

ness of God's conviction. In other words, he allowed the current of God's Word to take control of his life, thus he bore much fruit.

When Ezekiel humbled himself before the Lord, everything about him became quiet, reflecting the confidence and calm assurance that comes from being hid in the cleft of the Rock—Jesus Christ.

The Light Shines Forth for Victory

"And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

"And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled" (Judges 7:20-21).

The members of Gideon's army smashed the earthen vessels, and the light shined out in the midst of the darkness and in the midst of the battle. The men stood still and watched the enemy defeat itself. That is what happens when we let God release the treasure within us.

Satan would not give honor to God. He became familiar with the sanctuary of heaven. Therefore, the Lord gave His disciples power

over the forces of the devil, in Luke 10:19-20:

"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

As Christians, we ought always to give God glory, honor, and majesty. We ought to reverence His presence—the strength and beauty of His sanctuary: "Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary" (Psalm 96:6).

Reviving Our Spirits

Every morning, we must purpose to pray and ask God to reveal the treasure within us. God gives wisdom through humility. He will give us sensitivity through love. He will establish power through our weakness. He supplies grace when we are in tears, and He offers forgiveness for our sins.

The Lord, whom we serve, inhabits eternity. He alone has no beginning or ending. He dwells in a high and holy place. Moreover, He dwells in men and women who have contrite hearts.

God allows their hearts to be broken and crushed so He can inhabit them completely. Humility is revealed by brokenness, and it is released in people so the treasure of heaven comes through them and goes out to those in need.

God continually revives the spirit of the humble. His royal love toward us gives us all that we need, moment by moment, through the measuring line of grace.

CONCLUSION

Every believer has indescribable potential to develop a capacity that reveals the character of God to this world. He is faithful to keep us moment by moment. We are surrounded by His walls of fire—doctrine—that guard us (Zechariah 2:5).

The walls of fire represent the positional truth that we belong to God, and we are His forever. Satan can never break through those walls to get to us. Even when we sin, Jesus stands up and rebukes the devil's accusations against us. He did that for the high priest in Zechariah 3. Everything we do is a family affair, and only God can deal with His family. No accusation and no condemnation can come against us—only the loving process of warning and discipline that God Himself controls.

Brokenness and humility before the Lord will release an amazing fragrance of His grace wherever we are. Consider what happened when

Mary poured out an alabaster box filled with expensive ointment—worth one-year's salary—upon the Savior. Those puffed up with pride in themselves criticized her actions, but Jesus declared that her demonstration of love would be remembered forever—and so it is.

When we are broken and spilled out for the Lord, our lives become great testimonies to Him. Our souls are then quieted and quickened to exalt the One who inhabits eternity—and Who also inhabits us.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the things You allow in our lives to break us. When the noise of the enemy tries to disrupt the atmosphere, quicken us to know Your peace in the midst of the storm. Give us understanding to know Your purpose. You allowed it, therefore You will complete the work You have begun in us, and the fruit of it will flow out of us, into the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I Give Thee My Loves

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INTRODUCTION

"Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves" (Song of Solomon 7:12).

Here, the bridegroom (representing Jesus Christ) said to the bride, "Let's go to the vineyard to check out the vine and see if the tender grapes have appeared." In John 15, Jesus declared, "I am the vine, you are the branches." He wants to see if there is fruit. He desires the tender grapes, which have to be squeezed in order to produce the wine that brings joy, "that maketh glad the heart of a man" (Psalm 104:14-15).

What else happens in that vineyard? The pomegranates bud. A pomegranate is fruit that keeps on reproducing itself. It contains scores of seeds and each of these seeds produces another pomegranate with scores of seeds.

Song of Solomon 7:12 concludes with this great statement: "There will I give thee my loves." The verse does not say, "I will give thee my love"—singular. Rather, it says, "I will give thee my loves"—plural. It is so beautiful when we understand this in its context. The vine produces many grapes, the pomegranate produces many seeds, and our lives can reproduce many loves as we follow after God.

When we see someone whom we have not seen for awhile and we embrace, we are sharing love. It is just like giving a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple (Matthew 10:42). It is a moment recorded in eternity, because as God has given us His loves, we give out those loves. This booklet will explain that everything we do in the activity of the fruit of the Holy Spirit reveals a special love from God, in this life and in the life to come.

Chapter One

GOD'S PROCESS OF INSPECTION

"He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none" (Luke 13:6).

Jesus goes to His vineyard to inspect fruit. He looks to see if Christians are living in the unity of the Spirit or in the discomfort of cognitive dissonance. Aperson will experience cognitive dissonance (a psychological phenomenon that has been researched since the 1950s) when his actions do not line up with what he has been taught and what he knows to be true.

As a Christian, one of two things needs to happen for me to avoid mental problems associated with cognitive dissonance. Either my behavior lines up with what I know to be true according to the Word of God, or I need to change my belief system. Sadly, many people choose the latter. A Christian who suffers from

cognitive dissonance becomes indifferent to the opportunities of faith and the promises of divine provisions. Therefore, he cannot experience the reality of resurrection life in a personal way.

Jesus said, "I will give thee my loves." In Song of Solomon 2:6 and 8:3, we have a beautiful picture of the bridegroom embracing the bride: "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." I kiss my wife good-bye in the morning, and that is an exchange of love from God. It is a special love. I don't do it out of duty. It is the fruit of God's love, which He has given and I have received.

"I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:10).

In this passage, the Holy Spirit said that the Lord searches the heart. The heart includes the individual's motivation for communication, for thinking, for planning, and for being. The search uncovers our ways or motives. Then He says, "I try the reins," which refers to the emotions. The word "reins" (or kidneys) was used as a metonym to describe the emotions. (At that time, there was not a specific word for emotions.) Just as the kidneys are vital organs designed to simply re-

spond to what they receive, the emotions were made to appreciate and respond what we receive through our thought processes. Colossians 3:12 speaks of "bowels of mercies"—a metonym that also describes the believer's response to the special love—mercy-love—he has received from God.

Two Sides, Two Emotions

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

The word for emotions is plural because we have two of them—a left emotion and a right emotion—just as we have two ears, two hands, and two feet. The left emotion is connected with the human spirit to appreciate the eternal things of God. The right emotion is connected with the natural man and it responds or reacts to the temporal issues of the world's system.

The Hebrew word for reins is *kilyah*, and it gives a picture of the inner man. When we are

filled with the Word of God and allow it to dwell in us richly, then we are living in our left emotion. There is no depression, no suicidal temptation, and no moods or negativity. Why? It is because the human spirit through the Holy Spirit receives and then feeds the inspiration of the Word of God to the five parts of our soul: the mind, emotions, conscience, self-consciousness, and volition. Our old sin nature is not absent, but it is dormant because of the Cross.

Second Corinthians 4 reveals the battle between the temporal and the eternal. God help us, because there are way too many Christians who live in their right-side, temporal emotions. We need to have our hearts set apart by the Word of God in order to live in the left-side, eternal emotions of Christ (see John 17:17).

"And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26).

So the beautiful principle revealed in Jeremiah 17:10 is that God first searches the heart (the premise and motivation of our thinking in the essence of our being), and then He tests the emotions (the responder and appreciator of what we have received). Those results deter-

mine the fruit of our doings, the special loves that He gives us and that we give out to others.

Chapter Two

LOVING OTHERS WITH GOD'S LOVE

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38).

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

"He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou

knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

What I want you to see is this: God teaches us that He wants to be loved. Then, He teaches us how we want to be loved. After that, He teaches us how to love others the way we want to be loved. That is what Jesus was communicating in John 21. Peter had witnessed two post-resurrection scenes with the Lord. But on that beautiful morning, while Jesus Christ had breakfast with the disciples, Peter was weighed down with all manner of guilt and shame. Then Jesus said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me more than these?"

This passage compares the difference between *phileo* (human love) and *agape* (God's unconditional love) in the Greek text. Twice Jesus asked him, "Do you love Me with the same *agape* love I have for you?" So when Jesus asked him a third time, "Simon do you love me with natural, limited *phileo* love?", Peter was troubled and disturbed. "Yes, Lord," he said. "You know that I love You with *phileo* love," a love that is limited by mutual desires, mutual attractions, and mutual plans and purposes. Peter was not ready to love with divine love, the love of God,

the so-love that died for us while we were yet sinners (John 3:16).

Let's just make this practical and personal for a moment. Jesus was saying, "Peter, love Me."

That is why, in Matthew 22:37, God asks us to love Him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind. He wants to be loved.

Love Brings New Things

"Do you love Me?"

People have a tremendous desire to be loved. A forty-eight-year-old man I know on the West Coast watched his father die. This man had never received love from his dad, and at the casket he could be seen pleading over his father's body, "Daddy, love me, love me, love me!"

Awoman in our ministry had a very serious problem with neurosis and psychosis. She was extremely emotional, and the reason was that she and her husband never had a relationship with intimacy. At her husband's funeral, she cried out, sobbing, "All I ever wanted was for you to love me." What she needed—and what all of us need—is to let the Bridegroom embrace her and to receive His unlimited, unconditional loves.

A couple in Florida just fought all the time. There was separation after separation after separation. But on my most recent trip there, I looked out into the congregation and there they were—holding hands! I told their pastor, "Some couples have a reconciliation and hold hands occasionally, but I never remember seeing this couple hold hands, even when they were on good terms."

"You're right," the pastor said. "This is totally new. It really is." They had started to love each other with God's special loves.

It is a beautiful thing to be loved by the Holy Spirit—to have God's love shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit. All you have to do is let God, who is in you, have the freedom to love you.

God's Love Bears Fruit

As a young pastor, David Wilkerson went to New York City and met gang member Nicky Cruz. Many of you have probably read the book, *The Cross and the Switchblade,* about the encounter between these two men. Wilkerson went to places where even the police would not go. There were such wild gangs that no one would go in to try and help the situation.

As I recall it, Nicky Cruz pulled out his switchblade and told Wilkerson, "I would like to cut you into a thousand pieces. I can do it, and I am not afraid to either."

"You can do that, Nicky," David Wilkerson told him. "But every one of those pieces will haunt you with my love for the rest of your life."

God's love won Nicky Cruz over. He accepted Christ, and later on he became a powerful Christian leader, helping troubled youth to find Christ as their Savior and Friend.

Chapter Three

EIGHT SPECIFIC WORDS THAT DEFINE GOD'S LOVES

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

"Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-25).

"There will I give thee my loves" (Song of Solomon 7:12*b*).

When we see that the Bridegroom's gift of "loves" is plural, it brings us to another understanding of the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love—and that is a noun. But as we see in Galatians 5:25, the reality is that the fruit is expressed as an activity, and the noun becomes a verb. Because we have received the love of God, we can now operate in the activity of love, *agapao,*

in John 4:19: We have the activity of love toward God, because He first loved us.

The eight words that follow the noun "love," in Galatians 5, are feminine nouns in the nominative case. They serve as adjectives of the word "love." So when the Word of God declares that the fruit of the Spirit is love, and when love becomes an action, it also means that joy and peace and six other qualities of love come along, describing the activity and reality of love in specifics.

Love That Passes Knowledge

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

God's love passes knowledge. When I am filled with the love of God, I also have joy that becomes my strength (Nehemiah 8:10). This joy has exactly the same quality of life that comes with the word "love." In other words, I cannot say, "I love you," and be sad. Joy acts as an adjective in the nominative case of equality that comes as a result of the love I have from the Holy Spirit: "joy-love." So when the Word of God says, "love, joy, and peace," the peace I get is dynamically, dogmatically, and realistically

God's unconditional peace. The joy is unconditional joy. And all of it is the fruit of unconditional love. Therefore, the man who is connected to his healthy, godly, left-emotion, which receives and responds to the life of Christ, God says He will reward him "according to the fruit of his doing" (Jeremiah 17:10).

These inward qualities are developed in us through amazing love that produces amazing joy and amazing peace. It all happens when we are filled with the Holy Spirit who sheds God's love abroad in our hearts, and it is a beautiful thing.

Longsuffering, Gentleness, and Divine Goodness

"Longsuffering" is another kind of love. It has an outward quality that goes toward people. Perhaps I am under tremendous pressure. I have been hurt again and again, and I am getting to the place where I cannot cover it up anymore. Longsuffering means that because of the love and the peace that I have, I suffer long with the person who has hurt me. All I am waiting for is for that person to be a responder as he comes into the discovery of my love for him, regardless of what he is doing.

"Gentleness" refers to a disposition of kind-

ness, an expression that is absolutely infallible when it is at work in the operation of God towards another (Colossians 3:12).

Then comes "goodness." This is divine goodness, and it means that I relate to others with the same mercy God has for me (Luke 6:36-37). I become a dispenser of the identical mercy God gives me because this love—"goodness-love"—reveals corresponding fruit of the activity of love that we give out to others.

Upward Qualities

The last three things that represent God's loves are faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.

When I first became a Christian, I was taught that the Bema Seat would be a time of judgment. But it is not like that at all. It will be a time of evaluation for receiving rewards for eternity. It will have nothing to do with sin but with fruit, because sin was judged once and for all at Calvary. But let's look at 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, which speaks of the faithfulness of God's servants as we respond to His initiations of love, calling us out to be stewards of His mysteries: "Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." The degree of faithfulness operating in

our lives will determine our degree of joy or sorrow at the Bema Seat. There, Jesus Christ will determine what motivated each believer's works in time. One by one, we will be face-to-face with God. He will take us aside personally and evaluate what we did on this earth (see 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, Romans 14:10-12), to gain or to suffer loss of rewards for all eternity.

Growing in God-Consciousness

Next, we have meekness. This says that through fellowship with Jesus Christ, we walk in the light over circumstances or adversity, and we grow in God-consciousness. The conscience is lifted up through the activity of love toward God, and we develop amazing convictions. These are not convictions of convenience, but convictions that are holy, unchanging in the face of accusations from the world, the flesh, and the devil. These are not convictions of compromise or circumstance. These are convictions from the Word of God.

Finally, we come to temperance. What is temperance? Much more than "self-control," it is to abide in the truth, under the Holy Spirit's control, in the face of tremendous temptation as Jesus did in His humanity (see Matthew 4). In

the midst of every test from Satan, Jesus responded with "It is written." He had absolute temperance, which found its resource in the tremendous love He had with His Father. Satan could not get Him to step out of that temperance at any time.

The Son of God was under divine control at all times. He woke up morning by morning "to hear as the learned," according to the Word of God (see Isaiah 50:4), and He was led by the Spirit of truth. No one could do anything to break Jesus from that pattern of life. He moved in divine temperance—one expression of the loves that God has shown forth to mankind.

So there we have it—the word love with eight feminine nouns used as adjectives in the nominative case, denoting equal quality and equal possession. These are the loves of God, given to us, His Beloved.

CONCLUSION

One time not too many years ago, we had a special series of meetings in our church that featured one of Elvis Presley's stepbrothers. It was a very interesting time, and we learned some things about famous people that week. Like everyone else, those people just want to be loved.

There has been endless speculation about what happened to Mr. Presley, a man who to some remains an obsession. Some claim the singer died from drug and alcohol problems. The real problem, however, according to his stepbrother, was that the entertainer really was searching for peace in his life, and he had trouble finding it.

From this study of the Word of God, we understand more about where God's peace comes from. It comes from letting His “loves” work themselves out in our lives. The fruit of the Spirit is love, and by allowing that love to be

shed abroad in our hearts, we flourish as tender grapes in a well-tended vineyard. We spread special seeds, just as the pomegranate that buds forth. We enjoy what we are given, receiving everything with gladness, with healthy emotions, and sharing it all in our walk of faith.

I Will Glory in the Cross

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The cross Jesus died upon was the turning point for all human history. At Calvary, Jesus Christ took upon Himself the sins of the entire world, and He gave His life as the sacrifice for every man, woman, and child ever born. That cross is where the battle for our lives was won. This is a fact so many ignore, however, and the result is defeat, even though the victory is ours.

Many believers weigh themselves down, struggling under burdens they were never meant to carry. In their minds, they have to bear a "cross" in order to please God. But that just is not true.

As this booklet will reveal, we are not here to be crucified or to crucify ourselves. Our crucifixion was accomplished for us by Christ on the cross.* The life we now live, we live by Christ through His resurrection power. That is what it means to glory in the Cross.

**In our booklets, the use of the term "the Cross" with a capital 'C' encompasses the literal cross and all the meaning of that event on Calvary two thousand years ago and what it accomplished for mankind. "The cross," with a lowercase 'c', denotes the literal wooden structure used to sacrifice the Lamb of God. It also represents any use of the term that reflects something less than the glorious Cross (such as "my cross to bear").*

Chapter One

KNOWING CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"(1 Corinthians 2:2).

Allow the Holy Spirit to permeate us with the truth of this passage. Scholars give us many reasons why Paul wrote this. In Corinth, there were problems of party spirits. The church lacked order, and in many ways it was out of control. If we consider these words—"I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified"—in the light of other passages, they become very meaningful.

For example, in Galatians 1:3-4: "Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."

On the cross, in His graciousness and mercy, Jesus paid for everything that we would ever do wrong, so those things would not be charged to us. But He also meant for that cross to deliver us from this "present evil world."

Delivered and Separated from the World

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

Think with me about those words. "*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross*…." Only in the Cross should I glory. There is nothing else in which to glory, for by Christ the world is crucified to me, and by Him I am crucified to the world. Whoever I am, whatever my state, whatever status symbols I may possess, God forbid that I glory in any of it. Regardless of how affluent I am, God says, "Don't glory in any of it because you will lose it all when you die. Instead, glory in the Cross of Jesus Christ. That is the only thing you can glory in."

By the Cross of Christ, I am delivered and separated from the world, and the world is delivered and separated from me. God keeps associating the Cross with my separation from the

world system. Consider carefully what it means to go about glorying in the Cross.

Chapter Two

GLORY IN THE FACTS OF THE CROSS

"For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:7).

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:13).

The only way we can glory in the Cross is if we have had a spiritual resurrection at salvation. When we have had a spiritual resurrection, we enter into a brand-new creation, a brand-new life. We glory because every single sin—past, present, and future—has been paid for, forever. All of us can glory in the fact that a sin will never, ever be placed on our record.

Here is another fact we can glory in: As Jesus Christ is in heaven, so are we on the earth (see

1 John 4:17).

Because of the Cross, forever and ever we are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3)—we glory in the Cross.

Because of the Cross, we have been made new creatures. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Galatians 6:15)—we glory in the Cross.

Because of the Cross, through the power of God, we shall never taste death (Hebrews 2:9)—we glory in the Cross.

Because of the Cross, 1 John 2:1 tells us that we have an "advocate"—a lawyer—Jesus Christ, who pleads our case for us before the Father. He is qualified to represent us because He gave Himself in our place. We can glory in the Cross.

Enjoy His New Mercies

We can also glory in knowing that every single moment—not just every morning—God's mercies are new. Glory in the fact that twenty-six times in Psalm 136, the Psalmist declares that God's mercy endures forever. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (Psalm 23:6*a*). Because of the Cross, that too is something to glory in.

Let us glory in the fact that at the cross of Calvary, mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other, and the entire sin issue was dealt with once and for all (see Psalm 85). There, every sin was taken care of—past, present, and future.

It saddens me to think of the many people who glory in their gifts. Others glory in their legalism, their separation by self-righteousness. They glory in being among the "elite" in their circles. I know because I was also legalistic when I first started out as a preacher.

God forbid that we should glory, save in the Cross of Jesus Christ. We must determine to know nothing about each other, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He gave Himself for us, delivering us from this present evil world, according to the will of God the Father.

Chapter Three

THE CROSS AND OUR BLOOD COVERING

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" (Luke 9:23-25).

When we pray we are to glory in the Cross. When we sing and worship, whether it be in the church services or in the melodies of our hearts, let us glory in the Cross.

Satan cannot touch the Cross. The devil hates the fact that Jesus Christ sanctified us through the offering of His body, once for all, and that He perfected forever them that are sanctified (see Hebrews 10:10, 14). Oh how Satan despises the preaching of the Cross of Christ. He

hates the amazing truth that when a soul is led to Jesus Christ, the Cross of Calvary covers them at that instant. Even if the person has done every sinful thing imaginable, those sins are covered by the Cross.

God's Provision for Israel

"And they shall take of the blood [of the lamb], and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses wherein they shall eat it" (Exodus 12:7).

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the house where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you…" (Exodus 12:13).

The Jewish feast of Passover was instituted here, as death came to smite the firstborn in the land of Egypt. In Goshen, the children of Israel put the blood of the sacrificed lambs in three places. That is a wonderful Old Testament picture of the cross of Christ. In three places, the blood was to be applied, and the plague of death did not come upon the Israelites who obeyed God's instructions.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Corinthians 5:14-16).

Warfare by the kingdom of darkness against the Kingdom of light was settled at the cross. Furthermore, personal struggles, conflicts, and poor relationships are settled at the cross. We now live unto God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Therefore, we are to know no one after the flesh, not even Jesus, though His life in the flesh was a perfect expression of the will of God. The cross is behind us. The battle is over, and now Christ is resurrected and glorified. That is how we know Him now.

As we sup with Jesus Christ, enjoying fellowship with Him, we need to remember that "taking up our cross" does not mean suffering.

To take up our cross means to take up liberation and freedom. It means that we glory in the newness of life, walking in the newness of the Spirit.

Chapter Four

THE CROSS: THE KEY TO FREEDOM

When I really want to be broken before God, I go into a room alone and let the Spirit glorify the Son on the subject of the Cross. What a picture this brings to mind! It is a glorious way to fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Once, when I was going through a trial, my wife and I drove to a remote area just to be alone with God. There, we closed our eyes, and the Holy Spirit came in to say, "I want you to picture Jesus Christ on the cross. I want you to hear the nails as they are driven through His hands and feet. See His eyes as He cries out, 'Father, forgive them….'" That time was so precious. We wept and wept, as we simply had fellowship around the Cross.

To glory in the Cross means that we reflect on it, exalt it, and magnify it in our lives. In doing this, think of how we have been made free

forever and ever. No matter what comes, we are free and clean through the Cross. We are in Christ. We are seated in heavenly places with Him (Ephesians 2:6). We are joined to Him. At the precious cross of Christ, we exchanged our identity for His: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Thank God for the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ that is within each of us today. Thank God and glory in the Cross for this. The battle is over. My sins have been paid for, and now I have Christ living inside my heart. Is it any wonder 2 Corinthians 5:16 says we are to know no man after the flesh? He says that we are new creatures in Christ. Old things have passed away and everything is new (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Should temptation come to you, whatever it might be, glory in the Cross. The Spirit will fill us when we glory in the Cross. And when we live in the power of the Resurrection, we overcome temptation.

Taking up His Cross means that the old sin nature no longer has dominion. The new man rules now. In Luke 9:23, the Greek word for deny is *aparneomai*, which means to lose any connection or rights to yourself and your own interests. Don't use your volition to preserve your own life.

In other words, "taking up the Cross" means that the Cross puts away who we are in our old sin nature, and we glory in the Cross of Christ and what He has done for us. We cannot crucify ourselves. So, taking up the Cross is simply to accept what Christ did for us two thousand years ago. Retroactively, we were crucified and buried with Him. And with Him, we are now risen (Ephesians 2:5-6).

Ascetics attempt to deny themselves by an austere lifestyle. In reality, their soulish efforts only serve to strengthen the self-life within. It is such a struggle—and *they glory in the struggle*, *not in the Cross*. Paul tried it, as we read in Romans 7. The problem he found was that every time he tried it, evil was present with him.

The glory of the cross, however, is this: The world cannot touch me. Satan cannot touch me,

though he may come against me with lies, projections, and people. The wicked one touches us not (1 John 5:18).

By Jesus Christ, the world is crucified to me and I am crucified unto the world. Because of the Cross, the world has no dominion over me. That should bring a wonderful, far-reaching manifestation of joy and hope to our hearts. It should cause us to thank our Lord Jesus Christ with every cell that is in us.

Oh, glory in the Cross.

CONCLUSION

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:7-10).

Many people are quick to confess that certain difficulties are their "cross." That is not what the Scriptures reveal. We take up *His* Cross. We glory in *His* Cross. That is how we get to know Him and receive the power of His res-

urrection. Remember, the power of His resurrection comes first, because there is no fellowship with His sufferings unless it is done in the power of His resurrection.

"Being made conformable unto his death" isn't a reference to suffering we must go through. It isn't talking about present sufferings at all. Rather, it speaks of experiencing the retroactive truth that we were crucified with Him. When we are conformed to His death, we are not suffering at all. Instead, we are realizing His resurrection power moment by moment. We are glorying in His Cross.

Imaginations of the Heart

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INTRODUCTION

The human mind is a marvelous creation of God. The "darkroom of the soul," it contains a great capacity to generate powerful visual impressions and what we call 'imagination'. Satan desires to manipulate our imagination by projecting ungodly images to subvert our thought processes. For this reason, the mind is also a battleground.

Christians must understand the power of imaginations and learn how to bring them under the Holy Spirit's control through the Word of God. He is challenging us to enter into godly discipline so we will have discernment.

Remember, we are living in the last days. Make sure that this doctrine is as clear as a bell in your mind. This is *divine* psychology—a study of the mind from God's viewpoint. Do not live in projections, intimidation, or old-sin-nature condemnation. Rather, receive divine healing for your soul and divine inspiration that

produces health to your bones, stability for your mind, and soundness in your heart (2 Timothy 1:7).

Chapter One

REFLECTED IMAGES IN THE SOUL

"For though we walk [live] in the flesh, we are not carrying on our warfare according to the flesh and using mere human weapons. For the weapons of our warfare are not physical (weapons of flesh and blood), but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds,

"[Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the (true) knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One,

"Being in readiness to punish every [insubordinate for his] disobedience, when your own submission and obedience [as a church] are fully secured and complete" (2 Corinthians 10:3-6, Amplified translation).

Every day, the average person is exposed to millions of images that are processed in the mind. Each is a pictorial representation of something reflected from God's Kingdom of light or projected from Satan's kingdom of darkness. What we receive in the darkroom of the soul is the beginning of imagination.

In this process, mental images are formed in the unconscious and subconscious mind and released by the conscious mind. For example, in the world of literary arts, poets envision "pictures" in their mind. By cultivating their gift through the skillful expression of their thoughts, they create poems from these mental impressions by putting them into words. This is a power and function of imagination.

The nature of imagination is based upon the source of the images that form it. When the image is related to Adam, it will produce Adam's likeness as a picture in the soul. This brings to reality images of the past and connects them to those of the present. The result, a composite image from the flesh, directly contributes to some form of demonic injury, human failure, or relationship problem.

We live in an erotic age. When *eros*, one of the Greek words for "love" was used in the Old Testament, it often had a good meaning. But today we live in an erotic age in which sex has become a practice of pleasure, resulting in idolatry for some. *Eros* has triumphed over our civilization through the madness of women who seem to be good yet are, in reality, seducers of the flesh because of the wickedness of their souls, and by men who allow their libido to overrule godly restraint.

But beyond that, this erotic age has produced a "romance" in the emotions that is evident even in some church services. Often, in fact, "worship" becomes a romance, engaged to calm the soul. It allows people to occupy themselves without actually worshipping God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Indeed, it is very possible to go to the house of God and have a romantic experience with *eros* love stimulating and stirring up emotions and arousing the conscience to honor God. But when it is over, the experience did not allow categories of doctrine to be transferred to the right lobe of the brain, which would enable the Christian to be victorious in the meditations

of his heart.*

People may feel fine during church services, but once they leave, the problems reappear because the service was only a time of romantic security and a temporary diversion from what is going on outside. This is not what God wants.

God wants His church to be a place where the communicator (the pastor-teacher) communicates the Word, and the Holy Spirit transfers the Truth deep into believers' hearts. Then we meditate through reflection and constant reiteration of specific truth for divine guidance in specific areas of life.

The believer's meditation with the Father, Son, and Spirit (1 John 1:1-3) is just as powerful as any church service. Of course, church services are essential. But through a personal vertical with God, complemented by the church services, we have a profound ability to enjoy fellowship with the Source of our ammunition for the spiritual weapons we handle in life. And regardless of the situation by sight, we are never alone in the battle.

Demonic Manipulations

Satan knows how to manipulate the process of imaginations. Evil images come in through

wrong reflections, misrepresentation of truth, and impressions, as well as direct satanic stimulation. The shame of the hour among Christians is that many cannot discern the spirit world.

As these pictorial representations enter the natural mind, the images develop as forthcoming thoughts. It all happens in the mind, in the darkroom of the soul, where all sensuality comes from in this sexually charged age of *eros*.

"Thou understandest my thought afar off" (Psalm 139: 2*b*). This means that God knows the imaginations of the unconscious mind. We don't know them, we can't define them, but they are in there, in various stages of formation. For example, God's Word says, "Think no evil." If I get upset at someone, except for righteous indignation, that is an imagination from hell.

If I cannot trust a person's heart to be pure, godly, and loving when he knows the truth, lives in the truth, communicates the truth, and appropriates the truth, then I am living in an unsanctified imagination about that person. And even if there is a factual basis for the accusation, I am to annihilate it, because we are commanded not to know anyone after the flesh, but only after who they are in Christ.

As mentioned, an imagination begins with a pictorial representation or reflected image in the unconscious mind. That image is derived either from the image of Adam or from the image of Christ with the Holy Spirit and categorical doctrine. At this point, the image has not been defined in the subconscious or conscious mind.

From the image of Christ, we derive a new conversation, a new way of living, by the impartation of Truth. An ungodly image, however, is conceived either through ignorance (because of a lack of teaching) or through weariness and being overwhelmed with life, though we may be well taught.

To understand the process, try to picture the mind as the 'darkroom' of the soul with its three parts in layers. The outermost and thinnest layer is the *conscious* where we experience thoughts, sensations, emotions, and spiritual awareness. Just beneath consciousness is the *subconscious* where images take on greater definition as they are developed. The subconscious mind is where we begin to 'sense' something, but we do not yet fully understand it. The deepest layer where images are initially received is the *unconscious*. The

unconscious and subconscious mind together make up the subjective mind.

The principle is not unlike the process that takes place in an old fashioned photographic darkroom. By light reflecting off an object onto a prepared surface through the 'eye' of the camera, in a millisecond of time the image is received. To 'bring up' the image, the film must be *activated* by a catalyst or developer. Once the image reaches its optimum clarity with precision of detail, the process is *stopped*—development of that image is *finished*. But then, to maintain the definition so the image can safely be brought to the light and handled, the image must be *fixed*. Finally, it is *bathed* in water to removed any traces of the corrosive elements used in the process. The result is a picture that represents precisely the image that was initially reflected.

Appreciate the Savor of God's Knowledge

Knowledge must have the spices and fruit of the Holy Spirit, or it isn't godly knowledge (Song of Solomon 4:11-16). Even if it is God's truth, it produces merely a form of godliness that lacks the power and the savor of His spices (see 2 Corinthians 2:14-17).

Vain and impure imaginations come from

many different demons. There are imaginations from drug demons, from unclean spirits, from religious demons, from demons that influence a poor self-image, from demons that make us defensive, and from pleasure demons. They may appear in the form of human good and self-righteousness.

Some imaginations bring spiritual poverty and bankruptcy to the unconscious mind of a man so that he doesn't even know he has been robbed. That person is left with knowledge without power in his conscious mind. Then, in the darkroom of the soul, a forceful, supernatural, communicative power goes to work in the subjective subconscious mind. Just beneath the conscious mind, it is enough to begin to define something. The picture begins to be developed, activated by something someone says, by a circumstance, or by a projection from hell. As the picture develops, the image takes on verbal form. In the end, he has an idea, a comprehension of something that stands against the savor of God's knowledge. It must be cast down.

**As an excellent resource on the subject of how God has ordered the spirit, soul, and body of man to function through a renewed mind, we highly recommend reading* The Hearing Heart, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

SANCTIFIED IMAGES THAT COME AGAINST HIGH THINGS

God wants His people to have sanctified images, Spirit-controlled imaginations. He wants us to be released from imaginations that come from the prisons of the satanic kingdom, the world system, and demon armies.

If I trust you and I know your heart, you can say or do anything and it will not offend me. No imagination could make me change what I think about you. I refuse to receive anything against you, including a projection. How is that possible? I cast down the vain imagination. I bring any thought that is against the savor of divine knowledge into obedience to Jesus Christ, punishing wrong imaginations with obedience to doctrine.

Demons That Attack the Body

There is a class of demons called *Eloces*.

These demons have a system of putting physical marks on our bodies, just as they put impressions into the mind. They are able to introduce infections through bacteria and viruses in the air we breathe as well as through insect bites.

"The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1). When Paul brought up the subject of food, he said that nothing is to be refused for food if it's sanctified with thanksgiving and prayer (1 Timothy 4:4-5). Why do we have to sanctify our food? Because there is a class of demons that infect food beyond the damage already done through the environment and the soil. But when we pray over the food we eat, we are protected from possible infection that can cause illness.

Of course there are natural reasons for food infections, like salmonella bacteria. We need to use wisdom—this is not witch-hunting for demons. But we must recognize our enemy and understand his power. Food must be sanctified by prayer and thanksgiving to protect us from the demon army.

Next, *Valefor* is the demon responsible for

the production of medicines that cause side effects, and his army has an organized system that takes advantage of medical knowledge. Because they know how chemicals interact and can see through the complexities of the human body, they can influence the production of drugs that may cause more harm than good. While a certain drug may help to relieve a person somewhat, the side effects can be devastating because of the demon forces involved.

Certainly I'm not suggesting that anyone stop taking the medication their doctor has prescribed. Still, many people see more than one doctor, and vital information may not always be readily available to make informed decisions. Recent evidence proves that many people have become extremely ill and have even died because of inappropriate use of prescription drugs as well as over-the-counter medicine. Remember, Satan operates through an organized, invisible government. We need to use our heads, ask questions, and better yet, pray for protection as we take care of our physical bodies (as good stewards).

Again, this is not to cause fear. Only through prayer, objectivity, and divine guidance can a person tell when a sickness is caused by demons.

We thank God for the medical profession and their dedication to improve the quality of life. We are simply identifying—by name—the demons that are at work in these areas. They do not advertise their existence and would prefer that we would remain ignorant of their devices.

Demons That Attack Relationships

There are demons that cause people to violate relationships that start out well. They are called "relative demons" that open a gulf between people. For example, in a premarital relationship, one person will fail, then they will both begin to kiss and touch, violating purity because of natural desire. Then they have to break up. It happened because they did not cast down vain imaginations! They did not punish disobedience with obedience.

Song of Solomon 4:12 speaks of a "garden inclosed, a spring shut up and fountain sealed." Sometimes you try to tell a young person, "Don't go out into the world." He or she will say, "Oh, you're just trying to fence me in." That's right. The garden is enclosed, the spring is shut up, and the fountain is sealed. Actually, it is not fencing a person in, but fencing the devil out. Surely, we walk a narrow road, but on that

road we find joy, purity, laughter, power, godly imaginations, godly honor for parents and leaders, and godly respect toward people.

Demons That Attack the Mind

The Word of God refers to an army of demons under the headship of their chief, *Andres*, the lords of destruction that come in through the imagination. Their purpose is to use people who do not hear properly and who, therefore, miscommunicate. They use circumstances and situations to get us to domesticate Satan and get through the darkroom of the soul where they can establish premises for future thoughts.

Andres and his army of demons have orders to influence the psychological realm including the aesthetic quality of man, referring to our ability to appreciate the beauty of the natural world and what is pleasing to the senses. These demons work to control the imaginations. And if a Christian doesn't get his imaginations straight, he will be strange because he is being manipulated.

Many have succumbed to the plot of these armies of demons to make Jesus Christ less than their all and in all. They enter into programs that offer help, yet they remain anxious. They are

looking for a cure, something to calm the weary soul.

Many rely on "Doctor Feel Good" to give them something to quiet them down or pick them up. An alarming report just released indicates that in the United States, 10 percent of women over the age of fifty are dependent on mood altering drugs.

Believers often quote God's Word with such familiarity. We have all heard it. Someone will confess all the negativity in their life, and *then* say "Laughter doeth good like a medicine!" or, "The joy of the Lord is my strength." These are words of life. Yet when God's provision is spoken carelessly, it reveals total ignorance of who God really is and His availability to do what He really can do in situations. But when we speak with the conviction that every word of God is pure and that every promise is yea and amen, then we can believe, relax, and see God move mountains.

Dare to Fail

Faith dares to fail and go on in the grace of God. After the most miserable failure, faith *dares* to get up and walk forth in the love of God and in His provision. Abraham failed. Lot failed.

Jacob. Moses. David. Solomon. Samson. Peter. John and James. *All* of them failed miserably. At the Cross, the disciples failed and fled. Saul of Tarsus—even after he was named Paul and became one of the greatest servants in history—failed (see Romans 7:14-25). But faith dares to risk failure because God meets the Christian in the midst of failure and holds him up. God supplies a process (defined in 2 Corinthians 10:4-6) that motivates us when we acknowledge the way we were made to think.

Our weapons are not carnal; they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down every pictorial representation that isn't from the heart of God, the mind of God, the Word of God, or the fellowship of God. We are to cast down the images that come from Adam and live in the image for which we were created.

Chapter Three

THE PROCESS OF IMAGINATIONS: STRATEGIES TO RENEW THE MIND

Before the Fall of Adam, God created us in His image; now, through the Word of God, we are renewed in that image every day (Ephesians 4:23). But if I don't meet God in freshness every morning, if I don't thank Him and consciously live with Him every day, then there is no way I can avoid being affected by some kind of vain imagination—imaginations against self, against people who love me, and imaginations relating to fears about life. There is not a Christian who can avoid it, regardless of his position, if familiarity finds a place in his life.

There are, however, imaginations from heaven that motivate a vision, to give us a divine dream based upon a promise from God that comes true. Divine imaginations cause us to

overcome and allow us to see something wonderful happening before it is manifested because they come from God's promises, which produce faith. Divine imaginations envision marriages being restored.

Godly imaginations are formed with divine ingredients, namely, the power of God and the indwelling Spirit. They come to pass because their source is the image of God. These images, pictorial representations of a promise, are developed in the mind and are produced through the objectivity, substance, and evidence of faith in the reality of God's perfect timing for our lives.

Cast Down High Things

No one is perfect, but we can live in the process of casting down imaginations and every *high thing* (of the kingdom of darkness) that exalts itself in us against God's thoughts, God's presence, and God's love. The love of God never thinks evil.

When we are thinking God's thoughts and loving His Word, we cannot be offended! It is impossible to offend us. We don't live in the emotional imaginations of the subconscious mind that become a reality in the conscious mind. When they try to come against us, we cast

them down.

"Great peace have they which love thy [Word]: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165). We think no evil. We bear all things, endure all things, hope all things, and believe all things (1 Corinthians 13:5-7). Why? Because when love sponsors our unconscious imaginations (the undeveloped images in the darkroom of the soul), then representational concepts are processed. A composite picture made up of godly images is transferred to the subconscious and is revealed in the conscious mind. It is a pictorial representation of who you are in your new image from God!

Pulling Down Strongholds

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). Our weapons are *spiritual*, not carnal or natural. They do not come out of human reasoning. Strongholds are fortresses, like powerful castles erected within the soul by Satan. And with powerful spiritual weapons from God, we are able to pull down or overthrow those strongholds by possessing our soul in patience, sanctification, and honor. (Luke 21:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:4).

To keep the strongholds from being rebuilt, 2 Corinthians 10:5 says we are to cast down imaginations. "Cast down" is a present active participle pointing to continuous and repeated linear action. Just as we build up the rooms of our soul by receiving categorical doctrine, we need to continually cast down the images of contention Satan tries to throw in.

Exaltation of Self

An imagination is derived from the reflection of something unknown, undefined, immaterial, and inaudible to the human consciousness. We would be shocked if we realized how many ungodly imaginations go through the development stage into the conscious mind. Our communication is based on these imaginations, and we are absolutely convinced that our viewpoint is proper because of the way we feel. Yet, we are not aware that our feelings are coming through inaudible, unknown sources which produce substantial effects.

"What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time" (Nahum 1:9). What are we imagining against grace? against submission? against divine love? What are we imagining

against the doctrine of covering or against purity? What are we imagining against the knowledge of God's wisdom?

Negative imaginations that come from Adam's image progress toward the conscious mind. The image that comes to the surface represents a reflection of a form of light, but it is an understanding through a *human* proposition, a reflection of the ego. These reflections influence the integrity of our motives.

Ungodly imaginations exalt self against truth. Through these imaginations come the blame game, self-defense mechanisms, and denial. Pride, negative reactions, marital separations, broken hearts, broken relationships, and accusations all stem from adamic imaginations.

Wicked Counselors

"There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor" (Nahum 1:11). Imaginations can become our counselors. The word "wicked" speaks of infections from Satan's system. This means that from a satanic image expressed through Adam's image, a person can communicate a human proposition that is real in his soul. Yet, while it is communicated in sincerity, it is deception. (Re-

member, sincerity relates to temperament, never to character.) Suddenly, an evil imagination becomes a "sincere" but wicked counselor.

Proverbs 6:16-18 says that God hates a heart that devises wicked, infectious imaginations. The infection is *devised*—conceived or imagined—because of a relationship to a human proposition and because of where your emotions are in relationship to your circumstances.

Sin, Iniquity, and Transgressions

"…For the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (1 Chronicles 28:9*b*).

God understands what's going in our imaginations. For that reason, He will have nothing to do with them! But, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalm 32:1-2).

When we live in the provision of Psalm 32, we have victory over denial, over sins, over iniquities, and over transgressions. Instead of living in denial of the facts of life and the truth of

God, we start living in the Finished Work. We come out of denial by building ourselves up with God's divine provision, that we are indeed forgiven and that God desires to bless us. Notice it: The divine provision comes first, *then* we can enter into true repentance.

"I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:5). True repentance involves acknowledging our *sin*, the times we fell short of obedience because of weakness, ignorance, and other natural tendencies. We acknowledge the *iniquity* of our sins, how we let sin affect our emotions, causing them to rebel against divine authority. We also confess our *transgressions*, referring to the times we willfully went outside of God's boundaries when we knew better.

Prior to his repentance, David, the author of Psalm 32, had tremendous anger. He couldn't sleep, his bones were drying up, and he was roaring in his natural human temperament. Then he got right. David acknowledged his sin, and after one year of living in denial, he came out of it.

Darkened Hearts

Romans 1:21 refers to people who "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." This is why it is difficult to win back someone who is involved in a conspiracy or satanic deception. This type of person communicates from Satan's kingdom with sincerity based on a human proposition channeled through satanic and adamic images. The pictures in this person's mind have been developed to the point of becoming reality in relation to his self-essence and his surroundings.

According to Genesis 6:5, God saw the wickedness of every human imagination, so He sent the Flood to destroy His own creation. (But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, verse 8.) Even after the Flood, God saw that the imaginations of the heart were evil from man's youth (Genesis 8:21). Now He wants to deal with those imaginations because they are the first stages of the thought process. In Psalm 139:2, God says that He knows our imaginations "afar off"; He knows our subconscious thoughts and what's behind them. He knows the images that enter our unconscious mind, and we don't! That's why we need the integrity of the Cross, the illu-

mination of the Spirit, the inspiration of the Word, and the revelation of Light to bring about the restitution of our souls and minds.

Chapter Four

MOTIVATION TO LIVE BY EVERY WORD OF GOD

"But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward" (Jeremiah 7:24).

"This evil people, which refuse to hear my words…walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them" (Jeremiah 13:10*a*).

These verses speak of the premise which motivates the soul life. The "heart" here refers to an evil heart, not the heart of the human spirit which the Christian has. If confronted with light while living in false (evil or infected) imaginations, many of us would become angry and say things against the Cross. In other words, we would take Satan's side even while we were confessing something about God and Christianity.

Evil imaginations must be dealt with. God

told Israel, "You are walking in the imaginations of your fathers; you are devising ungodly imaginations" (see Jeremiah 16:12; 18:12). Some become proud in their imaginations (Luke 1:51), having received a proposition and reasoning power from the devil. And because the propositions seem so reasonable, those who are deceived become very proud.

Be Not Wise in Your Own Conceits

The Word of God tells us to cast down empty imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. The Psalmist said, "Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me" (Psalm 131:1*b*). Romans 12:16 says, "mind not high things, but [be as] men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." In other words, we must not allow 'high thoughts' (the demonic warfare that comes against the soul) to take us over. They are the substantiation of a human proposition designed to convince us that we are 'right' (according to Adam's image), and we call it God's truth!

You can't tell a person that they are operating in high thoughts; you must simply give them time to realize it. Why? Because at that moment

they are *sincerely* walking by sight, confessing thoughts derived from an image in their unconscious mind that produces feelings. Those feelings enlarge their imagination that is *also* taking in God's doctrine. As a result of their confession, the images of high things exalt themselves above God's doctrine.

If I were to approach someone who was living in that pattern of thinking and started talking to them from the Bible, their attitude would be, "Oh, the Scriptures. Now he's going to preach to me!" That's right, because we must live by *every* Word of God. But they don't see it because they are living by sight that promotes feelings through a human proposition of the natural, rationalistic mind.

Vain or empty imaginations are developed through ten steps: First, there is stress, which becomes pressure, then discontentment, need, anger, fault-finding, accusation, separation, division, and conspiracy. When we react against the Word of God, we exalt our feelings and opinions above the doctrine preached from the pulpit. In the end, there is a manifestation of an internal conspiracy that divides friendships, relationships, marriages, and churches.

This is why it is so vital that *every* thought is

brought into the captivity of Jesus Christ. That is God's method of sorting out the images once they enter the unconscious mind. But people who don't bring their thoughts into captivity use abstract, general knowledge taken out of context of the Scriptures in order to uphold their propositions.

The Way to Contentment

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Arkeo is the word that means "to be content," to be possessed of sufficient strength, having a strong wall or barrier to defend yourself against demons, to ward them off and be totally satisfied because of meekness. Another word for contentment is *autarkes*, which refers to being totally sufficient in yourself with God's help as you are hid in the Body. You could go anywhere in the world and be possessed with godly self-sufficiency because of the indwelling impartation of God's image, God's imagination, and God's communication, developed God's way. You live in a divine proposition from the Word of God through the grace of Christ.

This kind of believer is content in any situation, any circumstance, and in any place. He does not get offended, nor does he judge people. He is not insecure. Life is just one great big time of contentment because his sufficiency is of God (2 Corinthians 3:5). He puts no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3). Paul said, "I have learned to be content in whatever state I am in." He learned self-sufficiency from a derived life through godly imaginations that were processed through his unconscious, subconscious, and conscious mind.

The peace of God that passes understanding keeps or 'guards' the heart (Philippians 4:6-7). It comes from knowing truth, the reality of possessing truth, the fellowship of experiencing truth, and the result of appropriating truth by grace through faith. We guard our hearts with divine truth so there can be no stress, turmoil, or other disturbance springing up from undefined roots in the unconscious mind.

Guard Your Heart by Fixing It

"But take heed to yourselves and be on your guard lest your hearts be overburdened and depressed—weighed down—with the giddiness and headache and nausea of self-indulgence,

drunkenness, and worldly worries and cares pertaining to (the business of) this life" (Luke 21:34*a*, Amplified translation).

As much as we are warned in Scripture not to be drunk with spirits, we are not to be drunk with worldly cares and worries about life. People and circumstances can actually make you drunk because of imaginations. The dictionary defines "cares" as suffering oppression in the mind, to be weighed down by responsibilities or disquieted over anticipated ill. It is characterized by an overwhelming sense of apprehension, fear, tension, and an increased pulse. All of this is brought about by doubt, concerning the reality of a situation and your own capacity to cope. And it is all because the wrong images are being allowed to develop in your mind.

Eventually, empty and ungodly imaginations will produce mental disorders. Incompatibility will enter into every area of life and contribute to failure. If the process goes unchecked, ultimately there comes a full-blown emotional and mental breakdown—all through the devices of the imaginations.

The devil's plot is to rob, steal, kill, and destroy (see John 10:10). He uses interpersonal relationships as a tremendous source of fretting to

the anxious person who feels that the needs of his heart, mind, and emotions are not being met. This gives Satan opportunities to get in, feeding us more images that lead to sublimation, accusation, unhappiness, incompatibility in marriage, serious phobias toward people, and a frustrated capacity to believe the promises of God.

But, Colossians 3:2 instructs us to set our mind—conscious, subconscious, and unconscious—on things above. We need to have a mindset where not a single natural thought can take the place of the principles of truth we have received from the Scriptures. Our minds must be set; our hearts must be fixed (Psalm 57:7). It doesn't have to keep getting fixed—it *is* fixed. And our conversation or manner of living (Philippians 3:20) is from heaven because we do not cast away our confidence as we wait for God's promise. He will reward us for being patient (see Hebrews 10:35, 36).

Celebrate the Word

Can you see why God puts such an emphasis on receiving the Word daily and the importance of having a *continual* feast? The measure that I feast on categorical doctrine is the measure of my capacity to manifest Christ and destroy

the works of the devil.

What happens when we fellowship with God *while* we are under pressure? The stress cannot get through to affect us because of *agalliao*, which literally means to "jump for joy with exceeding gladness, rejoicing greatly." There is a celebration of the Word of God going on. We are having a "party" in our souls, which establishes a wall of contentment to keep out the stress that is right in front of us.

What happens when a projection comes in against another believer? If doctrine is functioning in my soul, truth becomes a filter, discerning the images that try to get through to the subconscious and conscious mind. When the Word dwells in us richly, it defines each projection completely and refuses to accept the attack. We see it for what it is: an accusation from Satan. If we accept the accusation, it means that we have let down our guard and we are on Satan's side. The projections we accept enter into a formation of thoughts afar off, from the imagination derived from Adam's image (Genesis 5:3), which was derived from the Fall and originated in the iniquity of Satan (Ezekiel 28:15).

Knowing what these imaginations can do, we have to cast them down. We can't allow a

single thought to exalt itself against the doctrine of God. Instead of getting angry at the preacher for communicating the Truth, don't allow a single thought to exalt itself. Notice that it's the *thought* that exalts itself. You don't have to exalt it. The thought gets in and starts developing. If the thought isn't stopped and cast down, it exalts itself against thinking precisely with categories in divine propositions.

When we allow these thoughts to exalt themselves, we reinforce strongholds that often come from our parents through our genetics in Adam. We end up strengthening the whole soul and body of Adam's development within us by the decisions we make every day.*

But the victorious Christian studies the Bible, meditates upon the Word of God day and night (Psalm 1:2-3), and hears from his pastor-teacher regularly. Wrong thoughts can't exalt themselves; instead, the Word of God is exalted by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26) who glorifies Christ (John 16:13-14).

As this process continues, we mature into giant Christians through our minds. Satanic imaginations are totally replaced, and we enter into a divine process with a divine proposition through God's divine will and His provision.

Our thoughts follow a scriptural pattern of divine power. We become people transformed into the image of God while we are on earth. Simply put, "as He is [in heaven], so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

Momentum for Right Thinking

Walk as Christ walked (Colossians 2:6). Enter into godly imaginations. God sees a thought in the unconscious, and that thought is from Him. Then the next thought comes from Him. These thoughts become established in the subconscious based upon our conscious decisions to function by the Book. God keeps feeding the unconscious mind, and through it we receive what we call 'revelations', the product of our unconscious submission to Bible doctrine.

The most wonderful result is that we receive healing in the unconscious, healing in the subconscious, and healing in the conscious mind. Then, by the grace of God, we experience healing in our nervous system and the bloodstream and in the bone marrow. Right thinking actually produces health in our bones (Proverbs 16:22-24). Proper sequences govern the body and chemical imbalances could be corrected. Amazing contentment comes in—spiritually, physio-

logically, and mentally—because the right images are developed, established in a fixed heart, and continually bathed by the washing of the water of the Word.

**Read* Re-Gened*, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1995, for more about the importance of having a new mind and how to walk in it.*

CONCLUSION

It is vital that we enter into the divine blueprint of God's purpose for our success through our imaginations. Cast down any negative thought when times are rough. Cast them down all day and all night. Be kind to one another and tender hearted. Always speak faith into circumstances, no matter what happens. Always speak with praise and edification. Speak light into darkness, truth into the projections of lies, purity to impurity. Always confess God in the midst of the devil's dominion in the old sin nature, and go forward from a position of victory.

Bring *every* thought into submission and obedience to Jesus Christ's total, unparalleled Lordship. Then, because you are fellowshipping with the light, you will be ready to revenge any insubordination and disobedience lurking in your soul. How do you 'punish' disobedience? By being obedient. When obedience is fulfilled, you walk forward. The old sin nature is over-

ruled when you operate in the authority of your priesthood through the Kingdom of God within.

Precious Father, what can we say but we love You? We thank You. We worship Your presence and we desire to honor your declaration of absolutes. By faith and in meekness we receive Your thoughts about ourselves and the world where you have placed us. We trust your Holy Spirit to give us a heavenly vision infused with your goodness, grace, and mercy. As we learn to cast down vain imaginations, we will cast out our nets to find the lost and tell them the good news of the Gospel. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In a Moment!

Pastor Steven Scibelli is a graduate of Stevens School of the Bible. In 1988, he led a team that included his wife, Linda; their two children, Lysa and Peter; and twelve others to Ghana, West Africa. Today, Greater Grace World Outreach in Africa has expanded to 107 churches in North, South, East and West Africa.

Staying true to the vision to spread the Gospel and to make disciples of men in the uttermost parts of the world, Pastor Scibelli has ministered in more than 20 African countries and 50 other countries over the last 20 years.

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Think about what can happen in just a moment. The average human being who lives 70 years experiences 2.2 billion seconds. Think about that. The person who reaches eighty years lives 2.5 billion seconds. Do you realize what God can do in just one second? But even a second is made up of moments. Think of what He can do in just one moment.

I remember being at the airport in Ethiopia and spending two days waiting to get out. Because of a cloud covering, no planes could fly. We were at the gate, and the flight was going to three countries, but the airline decided in the last five minutes that it was not going to Cameroon. The Cameroonians threw themselves to the floor at the gate and said, "We are not moving!"

I was sitting there thinking, "This is unbelievable. There are thirty people lying at the gate, piled on top of each other, and they are saying, 'Nobody gets on the plane.'"

I needed to get on that flight, and I was thinking, "God, You need to do something in a moment." Well, I turned around and there was the Ethiopian army. And you know something? That situation cleared up in just a moment.

God is the God of moments. He takes situations and turns them around in an instant. And you know what? He is always on time with His provision. My prayer is that these pages will stir you up to understand that anytime, anywhere, anyhow, the God of all things can make a way for you and change your circumstance—in a moment!

Chapter One

HOW QUICKLY THINGS CHANGE

"And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" (Luke 4:5).

The temptation that Jesus faced was one He faced after being led by the Spirit. In this test of Jesus Christ, Satan took Him up to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. Kenneth Wuest and a few other commentators believe that Satan showed Jesus every kingdom of the world, from beginning to end, in one moment. In one moment, the devil showed Him everything.

The word for "moment" in this verse is derived from the Greek word, *stigma*, which actually speaks of a puncture, like going through something just enough to make a mark. If Jesus had actually submitted to that one moment in time—the smallest particle of time, which can-

not be divided into any smaller parts—He would not be the perfect Son of God. In one moment, everything could have changed.

So often we look at situations in our lives and we think, "This is going to take such a long time." "I don't believe I'll ever get out of this." "Is it ever going to end?" "Where is this going?" "How are we going do this?"

How long did it take to finish the work of salvation? One moment, according to John 19:30:

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

Even though the Greek grammatical construction perfect indicative passive indicates an action that took place in eternity past, the fact that the work was finished in a moment is an absolute truth. Yes, Jesus was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth, but Eternity punctured the limits of time, and the perfect Man became the perfect sacrifice on the Cross. The subject received the action of the verb, grace and the Spirit, and in one moment the work was finished. One moment!

People get caught up in so many situations in life. I know those situations are there, and I know they are real, but do you know what God

can do in a moment?

In Africa, we had four days of outreach, and ninety people came for the first meeting. Ninety people, after just four days! I look at what God did, and in every case, an eternal decision was made in a moment.

I made a decision to go to Bible school in a moment. I received my call from God in a moment and became absolutely assured of the purpose that God has for me. That happened in a moment—in just a moment.

Think of the thief on the cross. It only took a moment, and now he is in heaven, saved forever (Luke 23:42-43).

In a moment, deliverance can come to your life. Less than a second is all that it takes.

All Things Are For Us

"For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:15-

17).

"Get this affliction out of me! I can't take another moment of it. I can't take another moment of this sickness, another moment of this husband, not another moment of this wife, not another moment of these kids! Not another moment!"

But then I read in Romans 8:28 that all things work together for good to them that love God. Is that in the Bible? It is for *your* sake. That is good counseling, isn't it? These things work for you because the Bible says that all things work together for you.

Wait on God. In a moment, He will turn things around.

Chapter Two

FROM DECISION TO DESTINY

"And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage" (Ezra 9:8).

In Ezra 9, the nation was one heck of a mess. If you read it, the nation of Israel was guilty of intermarrying with the people of the land, which is an abomination. Ezra said, "I can't even lift my head up. I am so overcome with trespasses, and evil, and iniquity. I am so ashamed of what's taken place. And the leaders are the chiefs in this sin," he said. "I'm can't even lift my head. We're a mess. We are committing abominations. We are influenced by seven unholy nations. Apostasy is everywhere. Evil. Iniquity. The things—seventeen things—that are going on here are unbelievable."

"And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God…" reads Ezra 9:8 in the King James Version. The translation from the Hebrew goes like this: "But for a brief moment, grace was shown us from the LORD our God." Grace is revealed so that God may lighten our eyes and give us a little reviving while we wait for the ultimate deliverance.

Do you know how long it took for you to get saved? A moment.

What did you go through? Did you labor through some psychological counseling and then get born-again? Did you happen to have somebody explain something for thirteen days and then you finally said "yes" to it? No. It happened in a moment.

Decisions Change Our Course

"And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

"And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

"And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

"And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

"And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus" (Acts 9:3-8).

Just like that, Saul of Tarsus was saved. Saved forever! In just a moment! Just like that. It is really incredible.

We make decisions, and our lives are changed forever.

This is what I think about Mary, the mother of Jesus. I could be wrong, but then I could be right. She said in Luke 1:38, "Be it unto me according to your word." I think the conception may have happened at her reception of the promise from God's Word. I think she conceived the moment she believed. If you trace it chronologically, you will find that the timetable is pretty darn close.

As soon as I believe something, it happens. Are you with me? As soon as I say "yes" to God,

there is a change in me.

We had a missions night in Togo, West Africa, and I preached a message, and then another pastor got up and preached. Then I preached again. I didn't care what people thought about how long it was going, because I don't go there that often. But at the end, we had a mission call, and 150 people came forward to be missionaries. It all happened in a moment.

Just a moment.

All of a sudden, heaven opens up. Somebody gets healed in a moment of time. A marriage is reconciled in a moment of time. Jesus Christ sent His word to heal (Matthew 8), and the servant of that centurion was healed in a moment. It all happened just like that.

In Mark 5, the demoniac came out of the cemetery and was delivered from a legion of hell's forces in a moment. In John 4, the woman at the well was talking to Jesus, and the next moment she was in town evangelizing. In John 8, the woman taken in the very act of adultery was forgiven, forever, in a moment. She looked up, and Jesus said, "Where is everybody? Who is condemning you?"

She said, "No man, Lord."

In a moment, she was translated from the

kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God.

Corrected by Grace in a Moment

Have you ever faced a situation where your first thought was: "Oh, this is going to take time." Sometimes we get this idea based upon all kinds of books we get into. But that is not what *The* Book, the Bible, communicates to us.

Back in 1965, I was walking through a corridor in Holyoke Community College in Massachusetts, and there she was. I thought, "Wow, this one is pretty." So I put my foot up and blocked the doorway. And, she pushed it out of the way. I said to myself, "This one is interesting." All of these years later, my wife is still with me. It all happened in one second. It was one moment, that's all.

People get so overwhelmed with their failure when they could be restored in a moment. The prodigal son, in Luke 15, was restored in a moment. Most of us would look at that guy in the pigpen and say to him, "Now this is going to take a while."

But the Bible says, in Luke 15:17, that "he came to himself." He came to himself—just like that! He said, "You know something? This pigpen stinks. I'm out of here." And he came to

himself and headed home, where his father waited to welcome him with open arms.

One time in Africa, a guy knocked on my door at two o'clock in the morning and said, "I've got to tell you, there are demonic powers among us."

I said, "Really?"

"Yes," he said. "People are trying to take the ministry from me, and we are just starting out. You want me to plant this church, but these other pastors are moving in on me."

I said, "You are right about one thing. There *is* demonic influence among us, and *you* are the influence."

He backed up for a moment. Then he said, "You're right," and now he's doing fine. He's got a church. But you know what? It only took a moment for the correction.

We have a big God who is bigger than any problem. God can do in a moment what human beings cannot do at all.

Chapter Three

MOMENTS MAKE OUR LIVES

You were born in a moment, and you die in a moment, and you will be raptured in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, according to 1 Corinthians 15:52. I love it! Blink, and we are gone. Just gone—in a moment.

I made a three-point basket to win a basketball game one time. It only took a moment. But being quite old at the time, playing with young guys, I said, "Just watch this," and it went in. In a moment, a near loss turned into a win.

Second Timothy 1:9 tells me that I get my purpose in a moment.

Are you with me? I get hope in a moment. I might be discouraged (1 Samuel 30:6), and then hope comes in a moment. God reveals something to me—an expectation in Him—and I get a hope in a moment. I get mercy for my sin in a moment. I get strength for my weakness in a moment (2 Corinthians 12:9, Acts 4:33).

Wow! Look at what God can do! In a moment, He can confound anything the devil, the flesh, or the world does. He does it in just a moment. But Satan wants to convince everybody this is going to take a long time.

"There has to be a long healing process. It's going to take you about twenty or thirty years to get *this* act together."

"You know how many years of negativity you have already sown? You have sown so much flesh and wrong thinking and wrong decisions, why it will take years to get out of it."

Those are lies, lies, *lies*.

No, God can do it for us in a moment. We came out of a destiny in hell and darkness in what? In a moment. Don't let the enemy ever convince you otherwise. I don't care what his argument is.

Immediate Results

Just recently I was thinking about some of the things that are happening overseas. We see these Greater Grace Churches in Africa where 1,700 people have been added in two years, and we don't even know what we're doing! I'm serious. I'm thinking, "What in the heck is going on here?" I scratch my head. It's Ghanians. It's

Ugandans.

Something happened in a moment, and now we have this great move of God.

Get delivered in a moment. Get direction in a moment. Have friendships restored in a moment. Minister reconciliation in a moment.

Do you know what the word "immediately" is in the Bible? It is used about seventeen times in the book of Mark, and the Greek word, *eutheos*, means "well placed." In other words, God is going to make something to be well placed, just in time, so that you can make a decision in a moment.

Think of Matthew, the tax collector (see Matthew 9:9). Jesus walked by and said, "What are you doing?"

"Oh, I'm just collecting money."

"Follow Me," He said, and Matthew got up and went right after Jesus. That all happened in a moment.

Ruth made a decision in a moment (Ruth 1:14). Abraham was in the Ur of the Chaldees, and he decided to come out and go to another country in just a moment (Genesis 11:31; 12:4).

You can make one prayer, and in one moment something happens. God answers your prayer in a moment.

Never buy the lie that this is going to take a lot of time, though we sense the insolence of the enemy. Never forget that even when it seems to be taking a while, our light affliction is working in us for just a moment, and it is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, for which cause we faint not (2 Corinthians 4:16,17).

We are not looking at the things that are seen. We are looking at the eternal through that small puncture in time, and God does that which is eternal in a moment of time.

CONCLUSION

God waters and keeps His vineyard moment by moment (Isaiah 27:2-3). What He did for the people of Israel was astounding. He made a remnant to escape. He lightened their eyes. He gave them revival so they could build the house of God. It was incredible what happened in a moment. Seventeen things were reversed in a moment, according to the book of Ezra.

My life can be reversed in a moment. A life can be transformed right now, or tomorrow on outreach, or any night that we are just ministering to people. It happens in one moment.

Right now, this is one of those moments out of 2.5 billion seconds where somebody can say "yes" to God. Say, "Jesus, I believe, and I receive You as my Savior." It happens in a moment.

In a moment, you are forgiven and your sins are paid for. The Finished Work happened on the Cross in a moment of time, and it was for you.

God cares for you.

God loves you.

He can save you in a moment and deliver you from darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son in just a moment.

We are called in a moment. We are strengthened in a moment. We receive power in a moment. Hope comes in a moment. Joy is ours in a moment. We have patience in a moment, gentleness in a moment, meekness in a moment, humility in a moment.

God is in our moments. Our prayers go to Him in a moment, for Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us, moment by moment. Thank God for what He can do in a moment.

In Due Season

You Will Know Why

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Psalm 10:1).

All of us at one time or another have asked, "Why?"—especially when we have seen things happen in our own lives or in the lives of loved ones. The psalmist's first word in Psalm 10 was "why." Often we ask because of our limited human understanding.

But God knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). He wants the very best for our lives, and He has a perfect plan to bring it to pass. Therefore, we may not always understand why until God has worked some things into our lives over time. In some cases, we will not know the answer to our "whys" until we get to heaven.

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for *in due season*, we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of

the household of faith" (Galatians 6:9-10).

This booklet teaches how we can trust God when we don't know why. We need only know and believe that "all things are for [our] sakes" (2 Corinthians 4:15) and that when it is time, we will know why.

Chapter One

GOD'S PLAN IS PERFECT

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt…" (Hebrews 11:24-26*a*).

Many years after the death of Joseph (who found great favor with the ruler of Egypt for his people), Israel came under the rule of an evil Egyptian king who "knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). To him, the people of Israel represented an ever increasing threat. So the king, bearing the royal Egyptian title of Pharaoh, commanded all male Hebrew babies to be cast into the Nile River in an effort to stop the children of Israel from multiplying. When Moses was born, his mother was able to hide him for three months. Then, fearing he would be discovered, she put

him in a tiny ark and hid him in the tall weeds by the river's edge.

Soon after, the daughter of Pharaoh went down to the river to wash herself and found the infant Moses, whom she recognized as one of the Hebrew children. Moses' sister, watching nearby, offered to find a Hebrew nurse to care for him. Pharaoh's daughter agreed, and the girl took her brother to his own mother, who was hired to nurse him.

When the baby was weaned, his mother brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter who raised Moses as her own son. He was given the best education of that time in Egyptian schools (see Acts 7:22). Historic references reveal that Moses became one of the greatest military leaders in the history of the Egyptian army. He had amazing ability not only because he was brilliant, but also because he had the best opportunities available to him.

One day while Moses was looking upon the burden of his brethren toiling in a field, he saw an Egyptian soldier beating one of the Hebrew slaves. In a moment of anger Moses killed the Egyptian, hid the body in the sand, and fled for his life. For the next forty years Moses lived in the desert in the land of Midian, fearing Pharaoh

and knowing that his own people had lost respect for him (see Exodus 2:11-22).

During all those years, behind the scenes and away from his loved ones in Egypt, Moses would walk through the desert. At night he gazed at the stars. He went by the bitter waters of Marah. He walked to Mount Sinai. He knew every corner of that wilderness: where the most dangerous areas were, where the venomous reptiles were. Because of his intelligence and his keen sense of investigation, he learned everything that was possible to discover about that harsh terrain.

But by his own convictions, he also believed that his life was over—that whatever he might have been able to accomplish for his people would now be impossible. And undoubtedly, many, many times Moses asked, "Why?"

A Perfect Plan for Imperfect People

The Word of God says in Psalm 18:30 that *God's way is perfect*. This means that *God's plan is perfect*. Deuteronomy 32:4 tells us that *God does all things perfectly*, and 2 Corinthians 4:15 says that *all things are for our sakes*, "that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God." Romans 8:28 de-

clares that "*All things work together for good* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," that we might be conformed to the image of the Son (Romans 8:29).

Yet in spite of all that we know, broken hearts are hidden behind many of the faces we see every day. As the psalmist did in Psalm 10:1, there are certain times and situations when each of us will ask God "Why?" And the Bible says that in due season, God will tell us why.

Little did Moses know what God had in store for him at the end of the forty years in the desert. Forty years is a long time. I've preached the Word of God for forty-six years. But Moses, who would live to be one hundred twenty years old, was still middle-aged at eighty! And, as Exodus 3 reveals, God *still* had a plan for him.

In Time, God Speaks

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

"And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I" (Exodus 3:1-4).

Think of it. A worthless bush was not consumed by the fire of God's presence. What was the message? The Lord was saying that Israel, despite her rebellion, would not be consumed by her enemies. "Moses, now you know why I chose *you* to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. I have spent forty years training you in this wilderness. You know where all the water is. You know where the serpents are. You know every nook and cranny. Moses, I have personally trained you to lead My people out. *Now* you know the answer to your 'why'."

God always has a perfect plan that He performs with imperfect people. We make imperfect decisions, and God does not interfere. Yet somehow He makes something good out of it, all through His providential grace, love, and mercy. Time and time again, He allows things to happen. Sometimes it takes forty years. Sometimes it takes a lifetime. But guaranteed, *in due season* God *will* reveal why.

Chapter Two

FOR THOSE WHO ASK WHY

I was only three when my father died. I don't know why that had to happen, but in due season I will know. Our house had a slanted floor and was heated by an old wood stove. We didn't own a washing machine, or even a refrigerator. We used kerosene lamps for light, and my mother used an old washboard for the laundry. Every day she worked from four-thirty in the morning to midnight to earn a meager living while raising seven children. I'm sure there were times when she silently asked, "Why?" Her hands crippled with arthritis and her back bent down, not knowing the answer, she still revealed Jesus Christ to us. And now in heaven—in her due season—she knows why.

I often think of the precious people in our church who are deaf. They have never heard anyone verbally say, "I love you." They have never heard a song. But they don't want self-

pity. They are beautiful people living abundant lives with Jesus Christ. Still I am sure that many have asked God "Why?"

Then I think of those who are blind, who have never seen the smile of a baby or the faces of loved ones. They have never seen a sunrise, a sunset, the glistening of a mountain stream, or the moon and the stars at night. I'm sure they have asked "Why?" But the comfort they have is that *in due season*, they will know why.

I'm sure people who have been confined to wheelchairs have said, "Why am I in a wheelchair? Why is it that others walk, and I will never walk again?" I don't have the answer, but this I know: In due season, they will know why.

First in Heaven

"And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last" (Luke 13:30). God's plan is perfect. His provision is perfect. People who go through certain trials and undeserved suffering will be first in heaven (if they are saved), and in due season, God will show them why.

Throughout my many years of pastoring, I have seen so many situations where parents have asked God "Why?" when their child was

born mentally retarded. I remember a little boy whose brain did not receive enough oxygen at birth. Though he was a precious child, he would never have the same abilities as other people. Growing up, he was loved by all of us, yet I'm sure his parents asked God many times, "Why?" In due season they will know. Maybe it won't be in this lifetime, but in heaven, they *will* find out why.

Then there are those who are diagnosed with cancer. And whether the person is young or middle aged, it is always difficult to hear the news. "Why do I have cancer?" they often say.

Many years ago, a pastor who is a cousin and a dear friend of mine lost four of his children in a terrible fire that destroyed his home. Why would God allow that to happen? I do not know why, but I know the One who knows why. I know that His plan is perfect, and in due season, God will reveal why it happened.

When God Finally Begins to Reveal Why

Whatever our situation or trial may be, we must realize that God has a due season when He will reveal why. He has a perfect plan. In that perfect plan is a perfect provision. God is a perfect God doing a perfect thing, and if it is not re-

vealed down here, in heaven it will be.

Thank God that Moses finally understood "why" as he led the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness for forty more years.

There are probably many reasons why I was reared up in a small town, in a poor family, but one of the reasons why is before my eyes today: It was so I could co-labor with the people in my ministry to win thousands of souls all over the world. But in order for God to bring me to this place, I had to taste the humility of having nothing yet always having the tender love of my mother and family. I had to taste the bankruptcy of not always having everything we needed materially, at the same time I knew the love that comes from an eternal value system.

In due season, I have discovered why. It took those things to produce in me a brokenness and an anointing to preach the Word of God. Why? God knows why, and that's good enough for me.

The "Whys" for Suffering

Asaph, the writer of Psalm 73, wondered why the wicked and ungodly in the world were prospering while he was being persecuted. But as he went into the sanctuary to worship God,

he finally understood their end: The wicked eventually go into hell and perish (see Psalm 73:16-19).

Some of you were abused or molested as children. *Why?* God certainly didn't want it to happen; it wasn't His will. But God does not take away free volition. Because He will not violate a person's free will, God could not stop it from happening. But with all you have gone through, many of you have become broken vessels who love God. Now, because of the Finished Work, the effects of the abuse are gone forever, and now you can know you are as pure as anyone can be, as righteous as Jesus Christ, and no longer a victim of abuse. Yours is a vessel of honor and purity, as much as any virgin in the world would have. The shed blood of Jesus Christ made it possible. The grace of God did it; the love of God did it. And according to Hebrews 10:10 and 14, it was done forever. You have been made perfect in your position in Christ.

Often, I hear people ask, "How about my marriage? Why is my home shipwrecked?" I don't know why. The thing for these people to do in the meantime is to act like men and women of God. They need to act like vessels of honor and meekness, yoked to Jesus Christ.

If Christ is all and in all, then He is *enough* for you. You don't need Jesus Christ's omnipotence *plus* something else. You don't need His omniscience plus something else. You don't need His magnificent omnipresence plus something else. If He does not give you something else or change your situation, then in due season, you will know why! In the meantime, continue in well doing. Do not get weary or familiar in doing what is right. Do not faint.

Chapter Three

CONTINUE IN WELL DOING

Until we find out why, we must continue in well doing. The Word of God tells us to keep on going forward and not to be weary in well doing (Galatians 6:9). Do not be weary in the opportunities you have to love people, especially within the Body of Christ. Don't be one who withdraws, living independent of the Body. Draw near and God will answer your "why" in due season.

Keep right on soul winning. Keep right on working with the children in the inner city. Keep right on teaching Christian education on Sundays. Keep right on serving God in the business world with all your heart, and don't become weary while you're doing it. Don't become familiar. Keep right on being faithful to church services on Wednesday nights, Sunday mornings, and Sunday nights. *For in due season, you shall know why.*

If you are in Bible college, study hard. Do not become weary in studying. Go back for the next semester. Do not get weary in well doing. Work hard, save your money, pay your bills, and finish your course. Two or three years of Bible college may not be enough. There are people who come to our college for a semester or two and then they want to go out on the foreign mission field. Yet Moses was in training for *forty years!*

You need preparation—not only in the classroom, but you need the anointing day in and day out until it gets into your soul. You need the exchange that takes place in fellowship. You need the fullness of being with the Body of Christ. The first century believers in the book of Acts met twice a day, every day for three years in Ephesus. You need a Book-of-Acts church that doesn't reduce its ministry to two or three dimensions but teaches the whole counsel of God. And if you get into that kind of a church, you will be mightily used of God—*in due season*.

Don't Accept Weariness

I refuse to accept getting weary. I will not accept fainting—never have and I never will. I will not settle for being negative. I have learned

never to be negative in any of my trials, and I don't plan to be negative in the future. It is no problem for me to be positive, creative, loving, and kind because Jesus Christ is that way. Through my trials, I have learned that my flesh could not do a thing. Jesus Christ did it all, and I have always discovered why in due season.

I am not going to be a part of raising up Christians who are spiritually weak, who are more concerned with their problems than they are with their provision, more concerned with their flesh than they are with Christ's life, more concerned with their difficulties than with God's love, and with their perplexities than with God's ability to deliver them. I don't want a Sunday morning service where everything is staged well and done according to the letter, yet lacks the anointing of the Holy Spirit. That is called a Laodicean church. It is not cold, but it is not hot. They may preach the Gospel, but when rewards are given at the Bema Seat, they will suffer loss of rewards even if they are saved.

If we do well with Jesus Christ through His Holy Spirit and if we sow with the Word to the Spirit (not out of duty), we shall of the Holy Spirit reap everlasting life as we go through trials. God has given me this conviction, and it is

biblical. But if we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption. (See Galatians 6:7-8.)

A Due Season for the Disobedient

There is a due season for another group of people. In due season, the people who will not repent of immorality, pornography, homosexuality, lesbianism, drug addiction, and alcoholism will find out that the Word of God is true when it says that people who do these things will not go to heaven. Those, however, who are saved will be chastised with the sin unto physical death if they continue.

In due season, the proud who look at others with daggers of criticism and the humanistic liberals who, because of their atheism, will not give God an opportunity—they all will find out that the Word of God is true. Unbelievers will discover that hell is a real place, that judgment is real, and that death is coming upon them. In due season, as they reject the grace of God, they will find out that it is *all* true, every single word.

If you want to live in sin, then be sure your sin will find you out (Numbers 32:23*b*).* In due season, you will find out that you can't get away with committing a homosexual act once every six months and trying to justify it because you

have a weakness. You won't get away with an occasional bout of immorality, or secretly getting drunk in your home. You won't get away with going downtown to solicit a prostitute. You won't get away with it. Be sure your sin will find you out! In due season, it will be revealed.

The Importance of a Positive Confession

Don't confess that your life is miserable. Recounting your misery only reveals that you don't understand where you are or Who is in you. You are hid with Christ in God. You are seated in heavenly places. The Father is in you. The Son is in you. The Holy Spirit is in you. He is not just an impersonal "thing." *God* is in you. The Word of God is in you. The Gospel is in you. God's plan and purpose are in you. Purity is in you. Just release what is already in you and walk by faith through life's situations. Stop confessing, "Everything bad happens to me!" So what if it has! Jesus Christ was a man of sorrows. He was rejected, hated, and crucified. Are you better than He was?

We are blessed just to breathe God's air. So stop going around magnifying the details of your life, for in due season if you keep sowing to your flesh, you will of your own flesh reap

corruption.

A man left his wife eight years ago. This woman is raising three children, and she hasn't heard from him since the day he left. I'm sure it has been a devastating thing for her to go through. But she told me this:

"Jesus Christ and this Body of believers have given me the fullness of joy. I thank you every day of my life after I thank God. I don't go to bed sad. I don't even ask why. I am fulfilled. My husband has a free will. He wanted to leave and he left. But I am happy, and my children are doing well in Christian school. God gave me a provision, I'm sowing to the Spirit, and I continue in well doing with Jesus Christ. And I am not weary!"

In due season, God will reveal why. Meanwhile, this woman is provided for by God. When He does reveal what He was doing through it all, we will be filled with thanksgiving and overwhelmed by the glory of His wisdom and purpose. We will see that God knew just what He wanted to do all along. And we will see that in truth, it was all for our sake.

A positive confession of faith reinforces the trust we have in God's divine ability to work all things together in a plan of divine good. It is not

wrong to wonder why, but we must learn not to live in fear, doubt, or discontentment while we wait for the time when God will reveal the answer.

**Read* The Great Detective: Sin, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

After many years, Moses was in the desert again, this time leading the children of Israel toward the promised land. The people needed water and complained to Moses. God instructed Moses to *speak* to the rock, before the eyes of the congregation, and the rock would give forth water. But Moses, in a moment of anger, made a mistake. According to Numbers 20:11, instead of speaking to the rock, he became angry and *smote* the rock—not once, but twice. Because he did not sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the children of Israel, Moses would not go with them into Canaan.

Well, we know what Numbers 20:1-12 says. Still, Moses was "good" for *forty* years, and God is a good God. This portion of Scripture goes far beyond what meets the eye. In Deuteronomy 34, Moses, nearing the end of his life, was on Mount Nebo looking into the promised land. In so many words God said, "I will not let you go into

the land to drive out the Canaanites, Moses. I know you would win, but there will still be problems and many battles to fight. At least you can see into the land. But I'm going to take you home to be with Me. And that is far better than going into Canaan."

Even though he was rebuked, I don't believe Moses was being chastised when God kept him from going into the promised land of Canaan. Instead, he got something far better—he was taken directly to heaven, with no enemies to conquer or drive out. In the end, Moses knew why.

Dear heavenly Father, help us always to go beyond the immediate situation with all of its questions and fears. Help us to seek Your face during the trials we go through. Your faithfulness reaches to the heavens and your mercy endures to all generations. Our desire is to be in the center of Your will, where You are the answer to "Why." In Jesus' name, Amen.

In the Fire,

But Not Consumed!

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning with His chosen people, Israel, God has allowed the things that belong to Him to be tested by fire. The Word of God, tested and proven through fiery trials, shines brighter as the days grow darker. God's own Son withstood every test and reigns supreme as King of kings. The Church continues to go through fiery trials that bring individual believers to the test.

Throughout history, ungodly men have attacked the Word of God. The Church fathers, having suffered tremendous persecution, hid manuscripts. The enemy thought he did away with it, but he did not. The Word of God remains.

The ungodly media attack men of God and the Word they preach. Television programs mock Jesus Christ and the Church. Yet, no one can stop God's people. As this booklet reveals, whatever has its source in God is eternal. The Word will outlive every attack. When placed in the fire, the truth shall not be diminished. It shall

not change. It shall never pass away. We may be in the fire, but we will not be consumed.

Chapter One

ISRAEL HAS BEEN KEPT THROUGH THE FIRE

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

"And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

"And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

"And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

"Moreover he said, I am the God of thy fa-

ther, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exodus 3:1-6).

History tells us that Moses was a brilliant leader in the Egyptian army when he decided that he wanted neither the pleasures nor the opportunities of Egypt (Hebrews 11:24-27). Adopted as an infant by the Pharaoh's daughter, Moses became a part of Egypt's throne. But, his heart for his own people, Israel, made him sympathetic to their suffering. In anger, Moses murdered an Egyptian for beating a slave. Pharaoh sought to kill him, so Moses ran for his life and escaped into the desert wilderness.

We have here a picture of a man who was a member of Pharaoh's family, well liked, highly educated, highly trained, now living with sheep on the backside of the desert.

Through Her Own Folly

For forty years, Moses was tending sheep on the backside of the desert, and in those forty years of performing this task, he was not discontented. He didn't say, "I want to do something better." He took care of the sheep for forty years on the harsh and lonely backside of the desert.

Then one day he saw the bush and the angel

of the Lord that appeared to him in a flame of fire. The fire was burning in the bush, and yet the bush was not consumed. God was in the bush, and right there He began to unfold His plan to Moses, whom He had chosen to deliver Israel out of bondage.

This part of Moses' life is a picture of the nation of Israel today. Just as Moses made some terrible decisions and became an object of disgrace (even to his own people), Israel rebelled against God's authority, and ever since she has been criticized, ridiculed, and persecuted by men and nations around the world.

Israel—the little nation that gave up Bethlehem in 1993—has been threatened by nations that want Jerusalem. But just as God kept His hand on Moses from the time of his birth, God has His hand on Israel. God kept Moses even when he argued and tried to reject God's provision. Likewise, God raised up that tiny nation. He gave Jerusalem and Bethlehem to Israel—and nobody had better try to take those cities away from her. They might try, but they won't get away with it, because Israel belongs to God.

Israel has suffered persecution throughout her history. "Pogroms," defined as the organized massacre of helpless people, have been carried

out repeatedly in an attempt to annihilate her nation. Most recently, the Holocaust was responsible for the deaths of millions of Jews. But through it all, God has supernaturally protected His chosen people, Israel (Zephaniah 3:19-20).*

In the end, after the Church has been taken out of the earth in the Rapture and we are in heaven, many nations and enemies from the north will come down to try once again to destroy the Jewish people. But in that time of the Tribulation, God will cause a supernatural darkness to cover the land, protecting the Jews until He comes back with His Church for the final conflict (Revelation 16:10).

With all the suffering they will go through in the Great Tribulation—through earthquakes and every affliction that will be poured out because of His wrath—God will protect the people of Israel. In the fire, she will not be consumed.

Through the Ages

Everything the Word of God has said about Israel is true. It was an arid barren land when the Word foretold that the desert would bloom with roses in abundance (Isaiah 35:1-2). Because of an irrigation system that began during the time of Jacob, that has happened, and any visitor

to Israel can see it with his own eyes.

The Word of God says that the Jewish people would rebuild the city of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 31:38-40), and they did rebuild exactly where the Bible says. The Word of God says they would fly as the dove from the window (Isaiah 60:8). Today, thousands have resettled in Israel since 1947, hundreds flying in on airplanes. Zephaniah 3:18-20 says that they would come back. Jeremiah 31:8 said they would come first from the north.*

In one day, Israel became a nation; and in one day, at the time of the Second Advent, seven years after the Rapture, they will all be saved (Romans 11:26). They will see His nail-scarred hands and mourn (Zechariah 12:10).

Indeed, Israel has been placed in the fire but she has not been consumed. Time and again, her enemies have tried to destroy her, to blot her out as an insignificant annoyance. But, God promised that she would never be consumed. He promised it, and though Israel has suffered tremendously, she will never be consumed.

**For more about these events and their relevance in the plan of God, read* Fulfilled Prophecies from the Bible*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

Chapter Two

THE WORD OF GOD SHINES THROUGH THE FIRE

Before God ever created the earth, the Word of God was. Before He ever separated the firmaments, the Word of God was. Before He made vegetation to grow, the Word of God was. Before He made the sun to rise in the morning and the moon to reflect the sun, before He made the stars (Genesis 1:14-16), there was the Word of God. Before the first flower bloomed, before the first tree budded, the Word of God always was. The Word of God has been in the fire, but it has never been consumed.

You can't destroy this Book. The Bible is the Word of God. Jesus said that all of Scripture is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16), not just some of it, and it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, and for righteousness. All of it is inspired so that every man and woman may be thoroughly equipped unto divine good.

Man has to live by *every* word of God. We cannot take away a single word, because it is the Word of God. Every single word was before anything that ever was. God's Word has been forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). Heaven and earth will pass away, but His Book always will be.

Through the Test of Time

Some people have a limited capacity to hear the Word of God. Their minds begin to wander if the pastor preaches more than fifteen minutes. But whatever it takes, we must be sure to read the Word and to hear the Word preached.

Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the Word of God. Men of God have cried out, "Hear the Word" (Romans 10:17). "Study the Word and be approved by rightly dividing it" (2 Timothy 2:15). "Beautiful are the feet of those that preach the Gospel and bring good tidings" (Isaiah 52:7).

The Bible says that people who preach the Gospel have beautiful feet! It doesn't talk about the feet of anyone else being so blessed. The Holy Spirit declares that they have beautiful feet as they walk and proclaim the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

Through the Scrutiny of Men

Many prestigious schools that were founded on the Word of God deny the Word of God today, and they will be judged. And unless a believer has a solid foundation of the Word of God, he may not be able to discern between the truth and a lie. The Word of God is pure, and if anybody adds to it, they are liars (Proverbs 30:5-6).

In Psalm 12:6, we read that the Word of God is tried as silver in the furnace of the earth and purified seven times, signifying the application of the Finished Work. Then it says in verse 7 that the Word of God shall be kept and preserved from this generation forevermore.

Thomas Paine did everything in his power to hurt the Word of God. But after he died, the very printing press that he used to propagate his atheism was used to print Bibles. No one can touch the Word of God. Indeed, it has been in the fire, but God's Word will not be consumed.

Through the Rationalization of the Flesh

In this day and age, Satan comes in with his instincts to take over man's instinctive nature. Through demons and the old sin nature, Satan takes over the emotions. He tries to take over the capacity of men so they have a capacity for

pornography but not a capacity for God.

By the way, anyone who goes after pornography cannot be sure they are going to heaven, because they are living in adultery in the heart (Matthew 5:28), and no adulterer will inherit God's Kingdom. Besides that, no one who fornicates will inherit God's Kingdom (Galatians 5:19-21). Unless they repent, no one who practices these things can be sure they are going to heaven. If they are Christians and they do not get right, God may take them home early.

Do you know why I believe that? The Word of God says it. I am a Christian who believes in the whole counsel of God. I believe in ALL the Word of God (Acts 20:27). I believe it is all inspired, that it is all profitable. Aman who is right with God will teach and preach and minister *every* Word of God and then impart its life to others by the Holy Spirit.

No one can stop it. Governments can forbid it, but no government can stop the Word of God. You can put the Word of God in the fire but it will not be consumed.

Chapter Three

THE LORD JESUS REIGNS THROUGH THE FIRE

Being born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2), growing up as a carpenter's son in Nazareth, Jesus Christ did not come with the appearance of royalty. In fact, because it was known for its poverty, Nathanael said to Philip in John 1:46, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (To which Philip replied, "Come and see!"). The Son of God was constantly placed in the fire, yet He was not consumed.

The Word of God says that when King Herod put out the proclamation to kill all the male babies, the baby Jesus was supernaturally taken out of his way. Many were killed, but He was not consumed.

Jesus came into the world that He created, but nobody knew Him. He came unto His own, and they did not know Him (John 1:10-11). His

half-brothers and sisters didn't believe in Him until the Resurrection (John 7:5). In the town where He grew up, the people barely acknowledged Him and He was not accepted (Matthew 13:53-58). Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, was in the fire all of His life but He was not consumed.

Through Rejection

After He was arrested, Jesus went through six civil trials and six religious trials. He didn't do anything wrong, but He was found guilty of blasphemy. When they said of Jesus, "He is guilty of death" (Matthew 26:66); when they battered His body (Matthew 26:67); when they plucked the hairs from His beard (Isaiah 50:6); when He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and we hid our faces from him and esteemed Him not (Isaiah 53:3)—these were times when Jesus was constantly in the fire. But glory be to God, none of these things could stop Him, and He was never consumed.

Men said "He is guilty," and God said to His own Son, "I too declare You to be guilty of the sins of mankind."

When the Lord Jesus could not carry His

own cross up the hill, a precious man in the crowd carried it for Him. They nailed Jesus to that cross, and for three hours the sky was pitch black.

If we look at Matthew 27:46, it was as if God said, "I can't fellowship with You. I can't have a thing to do with You. I am turning My back on You, because You became sin, though You have never sinned. All the sins of the world are now on You. You are guilty!" So He was crucified. Then He was buried. Then He went into hell—in the fire but not consumed.

Through Death

Then the Word of God says in Matthew 28:1-6, Mark 16:4-6, Luke 24:2-6, and John 20:1-8 that the disciples went to the tomb, but they didn't find His body. The Bible says that an angel removed the stone and then lovingly (and laughingly) sat on the stone that he removed (Matthew 28:2).

The angel just sat there! The tomb was empty and the Savior was resurrected. The glorified Savior walked with men. He walked through closed doors. He was resurrected after He had been in the fire. Men attacked His character. They persecuted Him. They lied. They falsely

accused Him and beat Him up and did everything to mock Him. And yet, all the while He was in the fire, He was never consumed.

That is why my Christianity is such a serious matter. That is why I put God first—before social events, before anything. That is why God is first in my life.

Chapter Four

THE CHURCH REMAINS THROUGH THE FIRE

Throughout the ages, the Church of Jesus Christ, the New Testament Church, has been in the fire. Many today are being persecuted for their faith, and the devil is trying to keep people in fear and prevent them from going forward in Christ. But Jesus said, "I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

The Church has withstood everything under the sun. I am talking about the true Church today. I'm talking about born-again Christians that make up local indigenous assemblies throughout the world. I'm talking about churches that believe the whole Bible, that believe in the Blood that was shed to pay for their sins, that believe that men must be saved. They believe in the White Throne Judgment for the unsaved at the end of time. They believe in the

Bema Seat evaluation for Christians. They believe in hell, that it is real and literal at this very moment. They believe that heaven has golden streets and gates that are made of pearl (Revelation 21:21).

The Church is Christians everywhere who believe in purity and forgiveness and cleansing that comes from having God's righteousness on their record. I'm talking about Christians who, the moment they believed by faith, sixty-eight things happened to them spiritually.* I'm talking about the Church that for all these years has been hated and despised, and yet, she has never been consumed.

The greatest institution on the earth today is the Church of the living God. It is not businesses, though we need businesses and we thank God for them. It is not the school system, though we need schools and the education they provide. But the greatest thing on the earth today, according to the sixty-six books of the Bible, is the Church of the living God, the Church of Jesus Christ.

Through Persecution

When a church is persecuted, the attack is not just against the pastor. The whole church is

persecuted. The leadership may be targeted, but the work, the convictions, and the spiritual prosperity of individual believers comes under attack as well. Although we know that the apostle Paul spent much of his time in prisons, he wrote many passages to honor and encourage the churches that suffered and even risked their lives to stand for the truth of the glorious Gospel. (See Romans 16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Peter 2:19-21, 3:14, 4:16.)

You can put the Church in the fire, and nothing can touch it. Thank God that we are ready to go to heaven, ready to be absent from the body and present with God, never to see death (John 8:51), indeed, never to die (John 11:25-26). Thank God that we have a hope, a joy, a faith, a belief that goes beyond anything in this earth. We are part of the living, loving Church of Jesus Christ, and we have the living, loving Word of God. Put us in the fire and see what happens!

Through Impossible Situations

The three Hebrew boys were put in the fire, and the fire was turned up seven times hotter (Daniel 3:10-27). But looking into the furnace, the king said, "This is strange. They don't seem to have a thing wrong with them. And look—

there's a *fourth* man in there! This is impossible," Then he said. "I had better get to know their God."

When they came out, they had no smell of fire. Their hair wasn't singed. Their clothes were not burned. Notice that only three men came out of the flames. The fourth man stayed right in the furnace. So when you or I get thrown in the fire, He will be there to fellowship with us. We may go through the fires, but as believers, we will not be consumed.

**Be sure to read,* What Happened When You Received Christ? *By Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Five

INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS WILL STAND THROUGH THE FIRE

The last thing that goes through the fire and can never be consumed is each and every born-again Christian. A Christian can fail, but if he is truly saved, then he can never be consumed. Still, he must rebound from his sin by confessing it before God, isolating it, getting up, and going forward, or his sin will consume him.

Along with the principle of rebound, today we must learn to live by every single Word of God. Then, when we fail, we don't have to ask for God's forgiveness. When we confess our sin, He does cleanse us and forgive us. The Bible doesn't say to ask Him. It just says, "Confess your sin and forsake it, and you will find mercy" (see Proverbs 28:13).

It is impossible for a born-again Christian to lose his salvation. Jesus said, "I give unto them eternal life, and no man can pluck them out of

My hand." God, in His mercy, may take a believer home early if he continues to practice a sin and will not repent. He is taken early, but he goes home to heaven, and he is still happy. He will not have the degrees of happiness he could have, but he will never be unhappy.

Please understand that when a believer dies and it seems early, only God knows his age, spiritually speaking. God plucks the corn when it is ripe, and many great servants who lived exemplary lives as Christians have died at what we would call a young age.

The believer might fall into the fire of failure. He may make mistakes, he may fail, and he may sin, but when he rebounds, he comes forth cleansed and he blesses people. Certain people may reject him, but ultimately, you can put the believer in the fire but he can never be consumed.

Through Personal Challenges

In our church, besides services that are held three times a week, we have the privilege of hearing the Word preached every day of the week, both in Bible college and in our fellowship hall at noon. Why is that? It is because the Bible says we are to hear. That doesn't mean you have to come when you are legitimately busy. People

can't come to everything. But as far as the Word goes, we have the opportunity to hear the Word of God daily. You can read it at home. You can hear it on radio. You can hear a tape a day at home. What is important is that you are receiving categorical Bible doctrine every single day.

Aren't you happy that the Church is alive and well and that Satan is fighting mad and angry? Aren't you happy that you can pray and God hears you? If you don't think that's true, look at the lives of believers around you and see for yourself that God is a prayer-answering, miraculous God.

We are going forward with the love of God, the compassion of God, the faithfulness of God, and the steadfastness of God. We are going forward with the whole Word of God hidden in our hearts. We are going forward with spiritual instincts, spiritual emotions, and spiritual minds. We are going forward, because there is more truth in the Word of God than anywhere in the entire world—and you had better believe it, because if you don't, you are living in a false understanding of reality.

Through the Lies from Hell

The devil and the demons of hell were pre-

mature in thinking that the Church would have its demise. They thought that real Christians were not going to make it.

In Acts chapter 5, after Peter and the other apostles were miraculously released from prison, they continued to preach the Word of Life in the temple. The high priest and his council of the Pharisees and Sadducees were outraged and brought them again to be judged for their offense. But Gamaliel, a well-respected member of the council, noted how that several false sects were brought to nothing after a time. Then he went so far as to say, "Let them alone, for if this work is of men, it will come to nought; but if it is of God, no man can overthrow it" (see Acts 5:38-39).

Well, nearly two thousand years have gone by, and though churches can self-destruct, no one can stop a Christian. Therefore no one can stop the Church. So don't try to do it through gossip and slander and digging up what has been covered by the Blood. It won't work. The God of heaven and earth is reigning, and His purpose—to seek and to save the lost—will be accomplished through weak and sinful men who have received Jesus Christ as their Savior.

CONCLUSION

If you could talk with your loved ones and your friends in heaven, what do you think they would say to you? I believe they would say "Draw near to God through the Word, and do not forsake assembling with the local church. Sacrifice to hear the Word preached by a man of God. Love the Word, embrace it, and don't deviate from it."

The Holy Spirit is a spirit of burning (Isaiah 4:4). He convicts us of truth, exposing our sin in the light of His righteousness. Then He comes along side to comfort us, giving us an abundance of hope as we face the fiery trials of our faith.

Father, thank You for Your protection, Your provision, Your power, and Your peace. Help us to stay focused by keeping our eyes on You and not being distracted by the heat of the flames. We pray for those who are experiencing persecution today, and we pray that they will keep their eyes on the Fourth Man in the furnace. In Christ's precious name, Amen.

In Time of Need

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"I have accomplished nothing. I have no hope. I am glad I am going to die." Afamous entertainer made this confession just before taking his last breath. This just reveals the desperation some people live with—even at the end of a life filled with much popularity and material success.

The reason for this is very simple: These people just do not feel loved. They have never recognized just how important they are to God. They do not realize what great lengths Heaven went to in order to redeem lost and dying souls everywhere.

I want you to see your value in and to Jesus Christ—His provision, His protection, and His compassion that never fails. That goes for each one of us. That is my purpose in producing this booklet.

Oh, if only we could understand our value in Jesus Christ! My prayer is that you will read

this very carefully as I trust the Holy Spirit to communicate with your human spirit so that your soul can enjoy being totally loved by God.

Chapter One

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE RIGHT HAND

"With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah" (2 Chronicles 32:8).

"Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees" (Job 4:4).

"My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me" (Psalm 63:8).

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

"Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding

all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:1-3).

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

When people mistreat each other, whether it is through false accusations or plain unkindness, it is because one person doesn't find value in the other person. Some people can attempt to justify their emotional reactions, but it just reveals that they do not recognize the value Christ puts on people.

Recognizing God's honor code reveals the value of another person. By seeing others in Christ, we have a manifestation of God's royalty through loyalty to truth.

Jesus Sat Down

By Himself, Jesus Christ purged our sins and then sat down at the right hand of the Father. Notice it: Jesus completed the work of our salvation, and then He sat down. The word there is "sat." He "sat" down and is "set" at the right hand of the Father because He endured the

Cross, because of the joy "set" before Him. That joy was our value to Him.

Very few churches in the world make an emphasis such as this. Many pastors and leaders communicate a message of grace motivated by love. But too few will thoroughly, fervently, humbly, and meekly relate how important it is that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.

Jesus Christ strengthens us with His right hand. He upholds us with His right hand. He declares that we are seated together with Him, at the Father's right hand. That is how He views us now no matter where we are spiritually, and He will view us that way for all eternity.

It was very important for Jesus to declare, "It is finished," in John 19:30. He finished the work His Father gave Him to do, but that wasn't the end of the story. It was so important that He was crucified. It was so important that He was buried. He committed His spirit into the hands of the Father. His soul entered into the gates of hell, and His lifeless body went into the tomb. All three—spirit, soul, and body—came together again when the Holy Spirit brought Him out of the grave (see Romans 1:4).

That still wasn't the end of the story.

Ascending through the Atmosphere

In Ephesians 4:8, Jesus ascended up on high through the atmosphere, through crowds of demons of the air, passing through and stripping them off as they tried to attach themselves to pull Him back. All of hell tried to keep Him from reaching the right hand of the Father, where He would enter into His Session as our Advocate before the Throne of God. His Session represents the real Finished Work for sinners. He is now in heaven, pleading the Blood against the accusers that come against us when we fail.

Christ came for sinners. He received sinners. He ate with sinners. He wept with sinners. He died for sinners. He was raised for sinners. And now He is in His Session for sinners saved by grace through faith. He has finished the work for sinners.

God upholds us with His right hand even when—God forbid—we fail. To "uphold" is the proper term, because we can never sink below a certain place, for His hands are holding us. Underneath are His everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27).

In every state that we are in, we remain in His Finished Work. Yes, our fellowship will not

be sweet when we are in the midst of failure. We will be disciplined when we continue in failure, but that chastisement is always exercised in His amazing love—the love of the Father toward His Blood-bought child. His Finished Work upholds us forever. Just as He died for us while we were sinners, so He upholds us forever, even while we are sinners on this earth.

Chapter Two

ESTEEMED BY GOD

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

"I and my Father are one" (John 10:27-30).

I want you to understand Christ's present help. He is a *present* help because we have eternal value to Him. Every person who is a Christian has eternal worth. We are worth so much to Him that our names are engraved on the palms of the His hands (see Isaiah 49:16). He is holding us up with the Finished Work scars that mark His glorified body. Those marks, which we will see for eternity, speak of our value to Him.

I can remember when a little child wandered

away from a cookout and fell into the water near our farm. A sixteen-year-old boy rushed to the pond, dived in and brought the child out. He gave the little one mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and saved the child's life. Do you know what that sixteen-year-old was to that little one? A very present help in a time of great need.

I remember another youngster who was abused by his uncle. The experience made the boy feel so ashamed as he told his mom and dad. For six weeks, the boy would wake up screaming in the middle of the night.

Finally, the family called in the pastor. The pastor spent hours with the boy telling him how clean he was. He just kept telling him that he was God's boy. He taught the boy songs to sing when he felt upset. The pastor taught him Scriptures and went out with the parents. Soon, a six-year-old boy was healed from weeks of nightmares. Today that boy is a Bible College student.

Oh, how God brings a very present help in the times of need.

God does not just want to help us tomorrow. He is our present help today through His perfect Finished Work.

A woman named Rose called our radio pro-

gram one day. She was in the midst of a terrible marriage, but then she started listening to our messages. Before long, her husband started listening as well. Where there once was a pattern of vindictiveness, this couple entered into a wonderful reconciliation. Their marriage became a love affair and a honeymoon all over again. The radio show was a present help for those two.

God's Honor for Us

It is so crucial that we understand how much God honors us. Even while we were on the road to hell, He honored us. "Honor" speaks of His decision to give us a place in His heart forever. He esteems us so highly—that is what honor means.

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

"And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:37-39).

Jesus told His disciples that He would not

lose them. Jesus could say to Peter, "I am not going to lose you" (see John 21). He said it to Paul, too, "I am not losing you!" (see Romans 8:31-35). He said, "I am not going to lose a single one who comes to Me. I will keep them all" (see Hebrews 13:5).

Beyond the treasure God has put into our earthen vessels, we have this tremendous worth to Him just because of who we are in His eyes. There may be days when you think you are not worth very much, days when you don't feel as spiritual as other days. Still, you have the same value, the same worth, the same love from the same God who is in you.

You have great value. He highly esteems you. He has a place for you on earth and a place for you in eternity. Those truths are forever realities.

Chapter Three

ROYALTY AND LOYALTY

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Royalty: that is what we are. We are members in particular of a royal family. It is the most amazing thing that God says of us.

Because of the royalty we have through His grace and the Finished Work, God's loyalty to us is indescribable. Jesus Christ says to us, "I have honored you with My death, honored you with My forgiveness, and honored you by representing you in heaven forever. Now all that I ask is that you rest in My words and reveal this same honor one to another, under the same conditions and circumstances, at all times."

God desires that we be kindly affectioned one to another. In honor, we prefer one another

(see Romans 12:10).

If we honor God, He will honor us (see 1 Samuel 2:30). We have such value to God that we haven't even come close to understanding. We have a worth that is amazing. Even on our worst days, our value does not diminish in the heart of God.

When a mother has a baby and that baby is sick or does something wrong, the baby's value to the mother doesn't change. The baby can't do anything about its sickness, but the mother takes extra care to help the child get well. That baby carries such value in the mother's heart.

The Waste of Hell

I was thinking today of the wasted years that go by for so many people. There are so many wasted moments, wasted days, wasted weeks, wasted months, and wasted years. As sad as all that is, that will not compare to a person's soul wasting in hell for eternity. That is wasting that will go on and on and on.

In Revelation 19:20, the beast and the false prophet were placed into hell where they were tormented day and night. A thousand years later, they were still there, according to Revelation 20:10.

That is the truth from the Bible about hell. Can you just imagine that? I mean in the heart of your soul and the center of your being, can you comprehend the torment of hell? A wasted soul created to live forever must spend eternity in hell, and all because he rejected Jesus.

This soul did have value. God so loved each one in the world that He sent His Son to die and to make a way for each one to avoid an eternity of wasting away in hell. Each soul has a hole in his heart that only God can fill (see Ecclesiastes 3:11).

When a soul goes to hell, all of the worldly appetites will remain with him. Those appetites, however, are never satisfied. The drug addict longs for his fix, but that fix of drugs will never come. The alcoholic pines for a drink, but he can't have his alcohol in hell. The materialistic person with all of his idolatry will never get what he wants. The lustful, the homosexual, all of the fornicators will long for what they used to have and it will never come to them again. All of this goes on in hell for eternity, all because those souls did not see how much Jesus Christ valued them, and they did not come to Him to be saved.

This is why we should have compassion. This is why I sometimes shed tears at the pulpit and at the prayer altar. This is why we go after souls day and night after day and night. This is why I rise early in the morning and spend precious moments with God. This is why I make decisions way ahead of time to be in church Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night.

It is so crucial for you to be here.

I will never forget going into a coffeeshop and seeing my daughter there unexpectedly. She ran up, hugged me, and wouldn't let go. "If you could only know how much I love you," she kept saying with tears running down her face. Needless to say, there were tears running down my face, too. What was she doing? She was sharing with me my value to her, and oh what value she has to me.

This is what God longs to do for each one of us. He wants us to experience the depth, the breadth, the length, and the height of His love toward us. He wants us to know that He is a very present help at all times, especially in the time of trouble.

CONCLUSION

There are lost people all over the world. Here in Baltimore and in every country around the globe, people need to know their value to God. Every person has the potential to be saved and to be married to Jesus Christ, to be a part of His Bride forever (Revelation 21). So many precious people are lost. I don't care if they are on drugs or struggling with alcohol, we need to go after them.

Let's embrace them. Let's never give up on them. Let's never quit. Let's love them and never stop loving them. Love them long before you ever preach to them.

How do we get in through anyone's door? By loving them just where they are. We visit them and we keep going back. We help them and then help them some more.

"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

A godly sorrow works repentance, and this is what it takes to be saved. Repentance speaks of having a change of mind.

If you are not a Christian and you are reading this, get saved today by changing your mind. Change your mind about self, about sin, and about God. Let the grace of God give you the gift of repentance. Pray and ask Jesus into your heart. Receive Him as your Savior, by grace through faith. Recognize that salvation is a gift from God, not the result of your own works.

Don't allow another moment of your life to be wasted. Get saved and walk in the Light. Cast all your cares upon Jesus, for He cares for you. He cares for you because you have such value to Him.

Insecurity

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INTRODUCTION

The greatest problems I see throughout America and the world are negative relationships and insecure faith. Faith isn't faith if it's insecure. In businesses and relationships, insecurity is revealed constantly.

The sad part about insecurity is that those who are living in it always feel a need to blame someone or something for their own inadequacy. In every aspect of society today, insecurity is at work. Even in certain Christian movements, insecurity toward the Word of God causes believers to seek certain experiences and feelings. Some believers develop a sense of inadequacy because they have been taught that a mode of baptism or a specific gift is necessary in order to be eternally secure.

Every single stand of Satan is based upon a lie against Truth. Everything about God is based upon Truth against a lie.

This booklet will show that to have secure faith we must have a right relationship with God, a relationship built on the Word of God. No matter how many times we are knocked down, no matter how many things are against us, we can be totally and completely secure in Christ.

Chapter One

THE TESTS OF SECURITY

Throughout the Word of God, we find the teaching and personal ministry of Jesus Christ always revealing whether people were genuinely secure, insecure, or falsely secure. The Word of God deals with the issue of security so individuals can learn exactly how to live in the substance of the reality of the life of God, as it is intimately derived through grace from the Holy Spirit.

A classic illustration is found in Matthew 15:22-28, when the Syrophoenician woman came to Jesus for her daughter who was vexed with a devil. Rejected, not only by the Jews but also by the disciples, that woman expressed through her actions before ever saying a word, "I believe that Jesus Christ loves me, even though I'm not a Jew but a Samaritan."

She came to where He was and then she cried out. When she besought Him, telling Jesus

how her daughter was in misery—distressfully and cruelly possessed by a demon—He didn't answer her a word. When she continued to pursue Him, the disciples said "Send her away—she's crying out after us!"

This is significant. Here's a mother crying out for her daughter. How many mothers reading this have, at some point, cried out for their daughters—not because they were doing wrong, but because of love and concern for them? This woman was crying out for her daughter, and, in this case, the daughter was vexed with a devil.

Jesus Christ was silent and didn't answer her a word. But then, to have heard the disciples say, "Send her away!"—wouldn't that have been a great opportunity for the woman to become insecure? *Yes!* What a time to display her insecurity and to go away wounded forever.

Then Jesus said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Please remember, He was saying exactly what His disciples in their arrogance and pride wanted Him to say. They had never wanted Him to heal blind Bartameus, and now they didn't want Jesus to heal the Syrophonecian's daughter.

The disciples had little faith and, at this point in their lives, the Word of God was not real

to them; it was purely academic—intellectual awareness of a perception with no personal experience—except when God would overcome them with power to reveal His nature through them, even though their character was not right.

Three Little Words

"Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me" (Matthew 15:25). Picture that! It was enough to send anyone away: the Savior, at first, not speaking to her; the disciples treating her like a dog, sending her away. Now, watch her humility. She comes and kneels, praying. She's determined to intercede for her daughter who is demon possessed, and she's *not* going to quit. She'll risk everything. She kneels; she prays; she says three little words: *Lord, help me.*"

Jesus answered her, saying "It's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to little dogs." In those days, all sophisticated Jews had little dogs in their houses. She replied, "Yes Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole

from that very hour" (Matthew 15:28)

Jesus was overcome by this woman's security in who He was, in spite of what she saw. He couldn't wait to answer her, to say, "O lady, great is your faith." He called her a lady—which is the correct reading from the original Greek text. She was more than just a female; she had character because of her confidence in Him, so He called her a lady. Oh, how her faith pleased Him! Everything was against her. But she was secure in who He was.

The Insecurity of the Disciples

I want to stress this. The disciples walked with Him, talked with Him, and watched Him heal and deliver. They saw Jesus' tears and His compassion. Yet, here was a woman who had never been around Him demonstrating faith that would be memorialized for eternity, while His disciples showed little or no faith. A stranger knew Him better than they did. She manifested security in the love of Jesus even when He did nothing to encourage her confidence.

The whole scene was to show the disciples true faith, which produces genuine security, and their lack of it. That's why they forsook Him at the cross. Even though they had walked with

Him for three years, everything was sight, feelings, and experience—but they did not have faith. When He allowed the demons to cause the storm, and the waves overwhelmed the boat, Jesus lay sleeping; He just wanted them to trust Him—and they did not trust Him. Jesus was always bringing the disciples into places where there were no resources and no provisions apart from Him.

Don't be discouraged if you have a problem with faith—you're in good company. The disciples were insecure even after the resurrection. The apostles themselves went through these seasons.

We are not on earth to please men. We are here to please God. This woman's great faith pleased the Master. He could trust her as a tremendous life illustration to those of His "inner circle" who weren't getting the message. If it happened today, we would say He insulted her. He did not. In His omniscience, Jesus knew what her response would be. How many go around wounded and hurt because of people in a plan allowed by God? Be very careful. You can always tell when you are being immature, looking unto people instead of Christ, because you will always be hurt or insecure.

Everytime a believer moves as he begins to grow, God will test his obedience and insecurities. Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees and, after some time, he came into a land of famine. He had a family to take care of, so being reasonable, Abraham went down to Egypt. But God said, "No." Abraham had been called by faith to a place he didn't know.

God promised to meet his needs and to show him great favor (Genesis 12:2-3), but Abraham was so occupied with himself and his personal needs by sight, that he never heard God. Of course, God would produce a famine to reduce Abraham to faith! Faith is the only thing that pleases God (Hebrews 11:6).

Never make a decision based on circumstances, needs, or provision, because your provision comes by faith in the living God. God deliberately allows His plan to make us insecure. He has to reveal it before He can deal with it.

The nation of Israel was miraculously delivered from bondage in Egypt. There in the wilderness, the Red Sea was moved back and the entire nation was delivered from bondage and slavery. Then, God deliberately led them to bitter waters.

The people were insecure with God's plan, and insecure with their pastor, Moses—the same man who had led them through the Red Sea. Now they murmured against him. This test revealed their bankruptcy of security in Christ. When we get insecure, we always blame somebody.

Later, in Exodus 17, the people murmured because they did not have water. They cried for a return to Egypt. Moses was told to strike the rock, and water came out. He showed them that they could be secure in God: Believe Him, trust Him, and God would bring the provision.

Forty years later—again there was no water, and again, the people in their insecurity rebelled (Numbers 20:1-13). Moses sought God and this time God told him to *speak* to the rock before the eyes of the congregation, and it would bring forth water. Instead, Moses got insecure at their rebellion and struck the rock twice in reaction—revealing his own nature instead of God's. God rebuked his unbelief. Moses was a wonderful, meek, holy man who walked with God. But the test revealed that he didn't trust God; the murmuring of the people made him insecure as a leader and it cost him to never enter Canaan—the promised land. God took him home early.

Job had all manner of things happen to him, yet he said, "Though [God] slay me, I will trust him." Esther went before the king, saying, "If I perish, I perish." The three Hebrew boys were thrown in the fiery furnace, saying, "If God delivers us, He delivers us. If He does not, we will worship only Him." For each of these people, the Word was adequate. Their faith was adequate. They were secure in the will of God.

We can always be secure in the will of God with the love of God, and we will always be rich with the Word of God. It doesn't matter what happens by sight; it only matters for our obedience to faith in Jesus Christ's love.

Chapter Two

INADEQUACY: THE ACCUSATION OF SATAN

The Word of God uniquely teaches how Satan is always approaching Christians, trying to convince us that God's provision and everything about it is inadequate. Satan communicates two things. First he tells us that the Cross is inadequate, that it didn't deal with all of our sins and failed to open a way for us to be eternally secure in Christ. Second, Satan attacks the plan of God as being less than perfect, inadequate. Romans 8:28-30 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he

also glorified." Yet, Satan comes to individuals and says the plan of God and the provision of Jesus Christ are inadequate.

Through the Fall, insecurity was established in humanity. Everything that comes from the Fall will reproduce insecurity, even if it's disguised as pride. This is why some groups believe one can lose his salvation; it's just another doctrine that promotes insecurity. Christians attack the adequacy of salvation by grace through faith when they attach any other requirements to what God says is sufficient.

Satan brings in distortions, immorality, promiscuity, and perversion in an effort to cause us to sublimate. He says that you need a relationship, an affair, perversion, youthful lusts—something that will make you have a "good self-image," because yours is inadequate. These sublimations attempt to hide our natural inadequacies and will prevent us from seeing our need to draw near to Jesus Christ.

Some women find security in lesbian relationships; men enter into homosexual affairs. Why? Feelings of inadequacy have developed to the point where these people feel that they cannot relate intimately with a member of the opposite sex. They turn to a satanic lie for security.

Everything Satan does is based upon a lie against who I am in Christ and what He has done for me, and against what it means to be hid with Christ in God. When I accept Satan's lie, I begin to think I have certain needs—outside of God's provision—because I am a "certain" kind of person. That's a lie. We have to know our enemy, but first of all, *we have to know our Christ*.

Here is a single person. God loves to save single people, to nourish and cherish them, to bring them up, helping and caring for them as a nurse for a little baby. Yet, that one finds that the Word of God is inadequate. They believe Satan's lie: "You need to have sex. Have an affair with someone you can touch. You can't touch God. He's inadequate!"

Something goes wrong in your marriage. Satan says God's provision is inadequate; he urges the individuals to be "realistic"—go to natural, human provisions, because God can't meet your need. That's a lie!

To someone who is married to an unsaved person, Satan tries to bring about divorce by convincing the Christian that it's an inadequate situation. Yet, 1 Corinthians 7:14 says that if the believer lives his life before God, the unbeliever will be "set apart." That spouse may not get

saved, but will be set apart and not be a hindrance to the Christian.

To the one who consistently falls deeply into sin and is weary of failing, Satan says that rebound is inadequate. This person probably has fallen on many occasions. Satan taunts, "You'll never change. You've been doing it for years." According to Romans 6:2 and 15, we should never use grace as a license to sin, but God will see that one through the process and give him the power to stand in grace.

No matter how tremendously weak a person may be, the Holy Spirit stands ready to say to him, "You are crucified with Christ. Enter into communion with Him, because you were already established in a union with Him the moment you were saved. You can trust God. He loves you deeply."

By attacking someone's emotional complex through trials and human rationale, Satan is trying to stimulate a belief that the Word of God is inadequate. The consistent cry of Satan has been "The Bible is inadequate." Throughout the history of the Church, he's been shouting against the promises of God.

The key to Satan's attacks is to convince a believer that he is not complete in Christ. He

wants to make the Christian view the Truth as theological idealism. "Do more to make yourself complete," the devil whispers. "Do something to prove your adequacy. You don't feel complete, do you? Reason tells you that you are not complete." Next, demonic projections come to reinforce feelings of paranoia, insecurity, and condemnation. The believer who may acknowledge his position in Christ begins to see that his experience is far from perfect and begins to accepts the projections of inadequacy.

Our sufficiency is in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:5*b*)! We are complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:10).

Satan constantly confronts the believer with human frailty and inadequacy. He challenges someone's financial circumstances, that the finances will never change. Standing firm, you claim the promise that God said He would supply *all* your need according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19), but Satan chides, "Let me ask you, frankly—is it working?"

God places a vision in someone's heart and Satan begins to attack. This person takes on the vision, believing that he can do all things through Christ, but when he steps out the door Satan says, "Look at you! You're a big joke.

You'll only foul up the Kingdom of God if you keep this up. Who do you think is going to listen to you when I get done explaining what you're like?" The devil tries to bring in a deep sense of inadequacy to the visionary Christian who is going from faith to faith.

When the Word of God says that we won't be tempted beyond what we are able to stand, and that with every temptation He provides a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13), believe it!

Satan's Attack on Love

Satan's deepest attack by far is an attempt to make the believer feel that the love of God is inadequate. We would not experience consistent errors in our thinking if we realized that there's something truly adequate—that is, the love of God. The love of Jesus Christ is infallible.

Calvary puts a spotlight upon the nature of God's love. It begins to reveal the quality of His love and the way He expresses and reveals that love to every heart.

Galatians 6:1-2 says we are to bear one another's burdens, fulfilling the law of Christ. If a brother is overtaken in a weakness, you who are spiritual are to go to him in meekness, restoring him back to fellowship, considering yourself

lest you fall. In the Greek text, *bastazo* reveals that the word *to bear* means that you lift the burden to remove it and take it up. Because you love that one so deeply, you take it over; not because you are forced to, but because the love of God is shed abroad in your heart and you are functioning in the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 13:7 says that God's love bears *all* things. When you begin to study line upon line and stay with it, you will realize that God is revealing a phenomenal truth. Here, the Greek text for *bear*, *stego*,means to roof over, to cover with silence, to endure patiently.

No wonder Satan attacks God's love! It caused his ultimate defeat. Christ bore our sins upon a tree. He said, "My love for you is so adequate, that I'm going to take every single sin you have ever committed, remove it from you and bear it myself. I'm going to show you the adequacy of my love. Your sins are gone forever, and I will never see them again. Therefore, through everything that I give you in salvation and in discipleship, you will discover a growing relationship where I'll be adequate for your mind, emotions, and will."

If you love only as the publicans love, what is that? They love those that love them. "Be ye

therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven in perfect" (Matthew 5:46-48). What is this verse talking about? God the Father has accepted us inside of Jesus Christ. The Father's love for me in holiness is a positional love expressed inside of Christ. Jesus Christ's love is Calvary's love, and the Holy Spirit's love becomes my experience, shed abroad in my heart, expressed toward others, glorifying Christ.

Satan and all the demons of hell cannot touch the adequacy of my position. God loves me forever. He cannot impute sin to me because he has promised the Son that He wouldn't. I am accepted in Christ, and I am in an adequate position. If I can keep this in mind, I will never be hindered by feelings of inadequacy. Even in failure, the Holy Spirit will convict me and help me through it, enabling me to grow in grace and knowledge and into a deeper fellowship with God.

God is telling us that *He* will keep us from falling. He will make us stand in resurrection life, just as He made His Son stand. His provision is adequate, His plan is perfect and His grace is more than sufficient. He will provide for my needs; I must simply stay occupied with Him. I must focus myself on Him and not look away

with a feeling of inadequacy.

I am a new creation, old things are passed away (2 Corinthians 5:17). Satan constantly tries to bring up the past, but it's passed away. The devil challenges the adequacy of Christ's blood, but God declares that the Blood gives us remission of all sins (Hebrews 9:22). It's adequate, and when we understand this, it motivates our love, grace, and mercy.

When couples begin to feel as if their marriages are inadequate, I pray that they would begin to see that Calvary is adequate, that the Holy Spirit is sufficient, that the promises of God are more than enough. The precious fruit of the Holy Spirit will go way beyond any problem that exists in a marriage; it far exceeds any trouble a person has in his emotions. The love of God is enough to bear it all.

Our expectations must be from God (Psalm 62:5). Husbands and wives expect too much from their spouse's flesh. Each one tries to get the other to change. What would happen if one of them just got on his knees and began to praise and worship God, praying "God, you are adequate for this marriage. I set You before my face (Psalm 16:8) and I put You between me and my partner. You be the resource. Everything must

come through You. I know You're more than adequate"? I believe a great reconciliation would take place in that marriage. A time of prosperity would come unlike any that couple has ever seen.

Secure To Be Healed

There are constant accusations coming at us, telling us that what we do and what we are is inadequate. It's a constant threat to any healing we might receive in Christ. God's provision is more than adequate to heal my mind, emotions, and body. The love of Christ is expressed in us and we can experience the fullness of God as He does exceedingly above all we could ask or think.

As I sense the presence of God in me, I will begin to sense the adequacy of Christ as something more than theology, as something more than an idealistic principle. My disposition is then converted into God's mind. With these conversions, Christ comes in and gives me His blessings in every area. He shows me that He is indeed more than adequate.

Chapter Three

SECURITY IN CHRIST

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice,

and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you," (Matthew 5:1-12).

The Laws of the Kingdom

These are laws for the Kingdom of God today, beautifully stated here in the beatitudes. This passage says if we are poor in spirit, we will inherit the kingdom of heaven. If we are mourning over our spiritual bankruptcy, God will comfort us. We are not condemned, we are comforted. This makes us meek and, as a result, we have an inheritance—not only in heaven, but also on the earth. Because we see our condition, we become merciful toward others. A ministry of mercy leads to a ministry of peacemaking. This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of Calvary. We become pure in our hearts and we see God, who is invisible, in action. Then we discover that those who reveal the nature of almighty God will be persecuted and lied about. For this, we are told to rejoice and be exceeding glad.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).

Verse 13 of Matthew 5 says that we are the "salt of the earth." If the salt has lost it savour—which speaks of His resurrection power at work in our disposition—then it is good for nothing. It is trodden under foot. Every Old Testament offering had to have salt in it. It typified resurrection power that seasons the Christian's human disposition with the divine dynamics of God's viewpoint.

We are the light of the world; we represent Christ, who is light, in the midst of the absolute darkness of this world. A city filled with light is not hidden, neither is a Christian's testimony hidden when he confesses Christ. A candle cannot be put under a bushel where it won't receive the proper oxygen to burn brightly. The bushel brings pressure upon it and the light has no value.

Then the Lord said that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. That He did. He

was the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes (Romans 10:4). Our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20), or we will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The Pharisees' righteousness was human righteousness. Our righteousness is derived apart from the law—it is imputed, in our position, by Jesus Christ and imparted, in our experience, through categorical doctrine.

The whole issue of Christianity is in the heart. Men look upon the outward appearance, and God looks upon the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). If someone is angry with his brother, he has already committed murder in his heart. If a person looks on a member of the opposite sex in lust, he has already committed adultery (Matthew 5:22, 28). It's a matter of the heart. These are the laws of the Kingdom.

A Self-Image Derived From Christ

"The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down" (Psalm 145:14).

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he deligheth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the

LORD upholdeth him with his hand" (Psalm 37:23-24).

"Who are thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4).

A believer becomes so secure when the Word of God is allowed to dwell in his soul; the Spirit flows in the richness of grace. Psalms and hymns are alive in the heart. The richness of the Lord's personal presence is manifested in the revelation of His nature. This person has entered into a faith that rests in God's promises, in His love, and in fellowshipping with Christ.

People, circumstances, adversities, and negativity no longer affect this person. All the things that come against his emotions cannot wound or injure the self-image he is deriving from Christ. No longer is he occupied with his own failures. He recognizes that failure is only a temporary fall, because he can never fall below his position, which is justification in Christ.

The Exceeding Greatness of Grace

We are hid with Christ in God. Therefore, our failures can never nullify our acceptance in the Beloved. Yes, there is discipline for believers

who continue in failure, but it is loving chastisement from a Father eager to see His children grow. We can never fall below the redemption of Jesus Christ's power on our behalf or His multifaceted grace.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2). In the original text, the verbs here speak of something that happened in the past but have present, continuing results. In other words, the believer who is down has access to grace and to the throne of mercy. He is truly saved; it wasn't a make-believe profession he made. He has the real thing, and he needs to realize that these verbs make an assertion of a dogmatic reality. It is dynamically true and cannot be changed.

"For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation," (Psalm 149:4).

We were created for God's pleasure (Revelation 4:11). Now, don't misunderstand what I am about to say. We do not teach antinomianism—that grace gives us license to sin. God forbid! But we do teach that when a man has fallen, as in the

case of Abraham, it gave the Father pleasure to make him the father of our faith—even after thirteen years of silence between them (Romans 4:16).

We teach that David's sin against Uriah (2 Samuel 12:9) should have resulted in capital punishment. Instead, God took the child—the fruit of a murderous, adulterous affair—and gave David a beautiful wife and son, Bathsheba and Solomon.

It pleased God to make Bathsheba, as she raised Solomon, one of the greatest mothers in all history, among the ranks of Hannah (Samuel's mother), and Eunice and Lois. That gave God great pleasure.

Ephesians 2:7 reveals that He will be showing us the exceeding riches of His grace and kindness throughout eternity. The wounds will always be there upon Jesus' body to remind us of the price that was paid for us. Sixteen times in the book of Revelation we see Jesus Christ in eternity, still bearing the nailprints in His glorified body. Because of the blood shed from these wounds, our sins were removed. In Revelation 21:4, the former things are passed away. He will never remember our sins.

In heaven, we will have perfect bodies without the old sin nature. But the fresh nail prints

on His hands and feet and the fresh wound in His side will forever remind us that it was all by grace.

God is able to make all grace abound toward us in all things, so that we will have all sufficiency. In the grace of God, insecurity is gone. When we receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, we learn to reign by one Jesus Christ moment by moment, thought by thought, step by step. Now we can live in the confidence of His union, communion, and fellowship—all made possible by the blood of His New Covenant, which can never be changed.

The Problem of False Confidence

Paul, in Philippians 3:3-4, warned against putting "confidence in the flesh." He was writing these things while chained in a prison, very secure in everything God had said. Paul had confidence in the Word of God. The circumstances were bad. The promises didn't seem to be working. There was no encouragement from people. Nothing seemed to be going right. But the Word was true and pure. He knew that Jesus' love, compassion, and provision would always be his.

In Mark 14:29 and 31, Peter told Jesus twice

that he wouldn't deny Him. Even if the other disciples failed Him, Peter said that he would stay true. He had a false confidence that soon would be challenged. Peter denied Jesus three times (Matthew 26:69-75).

In 3 John 9, Diotrophes had a false confidence in himself and wanted preeminence over the apostle John. In 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul wrote of Demas who put his security in this present evil world, and forsook Paul in order to gain a portion in this life (Psalm 17:14). It was a false security.

In Philippians 4:1-2, two prominent women were battling for preeminence. Their insecurity brought in contention and a competitive spirit. Insecurity motivated pride, and pride revealed their arrogance as they went about sowing discord in the church. It got to the point where Paul had to address the situation by mentioning names in his letter to the Philippian church.

Subjective people always display false confidence. Their convictions have to be confirmed by sight.

When God told Balaam not to go with Balak, in Numbers 22, the message was clear. The convicition was there—*Don't go!* Then Balak offered him wealth and honor, and Balaam went back

and prayed again. God told him if he couldn't have convictions that remain, then go ahead.

Balaam asked, and he was told what to do, but he went back to have his convictions confirmed. This is very serious. When God leads, we don't need to have our direction confirmed. When God ministers His Word, we don't need to have our convictions confirmed. That was settled years ago.

Many of the convictions I have had for years have never been confirmed by sight. Christ is still the only way. The Word of God is still everything to me. Heaven is real. Hell is real. Judgment is real. Sin is real. Grace, forgiveness, and love are still real. My conviction is that drug addiction is sin, that alcoholism is sin, and that immorality is still sin. Purity is still real.

I don't have to pray to find out if these things are right. Years ago, I made up my mind about what was right and wrong by studying what the Word says. I have followed after the One who knows the Way.

Following After God

Occasionally we hear people say, "Those people follow a man." Years ago I heard this answer: If the man is going in God's direction, then

follow him. If I were lost in the woods, I wouldn't mind following the man who knew his way out. I would be following a man for my safety and well-being. Paul encouraged people to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

In John 6:53, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." After hearing this, many disciples went back and followed Him no more. What He said made them feel insecure. They were not willing to trust the Master. They wouldn't trust His heavenly calling, a calling that would keep them far above the principalities and powers of this earth. They were too insecure to follow in a holy calling, being separated unto the Holy Spirit and categorical doctrine. They were insecure about a high calling, a call that would have separated them unto the greatest vocation in the world, allowing them to serve Christ and to become more like Him in time.

Christ endured the cross, despising the shame and yet counting it all joy (Hebrews 12:2). He was belittled and called a womanizer. He was called Beelzebub and the prince of demons. Yet, He was so secure in the Father's plan that He endured the cross for the joy set before Him—

the joy of being seated at the right hand of the Father.

Jesus was secure in the Father's provision when He had no place to lay His head. He was secure during those three hours of darkness, when there upon the cross, all of our sins were placed on Him. The sun said, "I'm not going to shine." The earth revolted and trembled with a great earthquake as though it were saying, "This is because of the suffering of the Son of God." Ancient documents in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran record three hours of great darkness and an earthquake. In each place, the documents are in agreement about the day this happened.

All of creation groaned on that day. It happened when Jesus committed His spirit to the Father's hand, secure in the knowledge of the Word that said He would rise again.

CONCLUSION

Do you feel insecure when people are silent? When they are sarcastic? When people belittle you and send you away, do you start getting introspective? Silence and sarcasm from Jesus and the disciples didn't faze the Syrophoenician woman. She didn't let these things make her insecure about Jesus. Yet, many people who had been listening to Jesus for years turned away and followed Him no more in the face of His challenge to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

Suppose you had one talent and I had one talent, but there was a brother with three talents and then another with five talents. Should we be insecure? Should we be caught up in feelings of inadequacy? No, because if we all work together, we have ten talents. Everyone has one or more gifts from God, and together we can use them to edify and build up the Body of Christ.

We never have to be insecure. The Word is near to us, even in our hearts (Deuteronomy

30:14; Romans 10:8). We cannot think evil (1 Corinthians 13:5), not even about ourselves. If something unkind is said or done to me, I shouldn't identify myself with it. Instead, I must identify with Truth and speak to myself only according to God's Word. In this way, I can thrive in the provisions of His plan, rightly related to His love and grace.

Intimacy in Prayer

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

God is progressively bringing us into levels and degrees of understanding in many areas of our Christian experience, especially in the area of healings and miracles. In this regard, we want to look at the subject of prayer.

In John 15:16, Jesus said to the disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you."

Prayer is such a misunderstood subject. It has caused us all kinds of problems, not because we don't believe, but because we don't understand that we have been chosen and ordained to bring forth fruit that remains. Because we lack precision, many of us have used prayer the way a hunter uses a rifle to shoot at ducks in the air from quite a distance, having no idea what he is going to hit. This booklet will reveal that God is

looking for precise faith that comes from receiving a precise promise spoken by weak yet overcoming believers who find intimacy with God through prayer.

Chapter One

ESTABLISH THE PROPER PREMISE FOR PRAYER

Prayer should always lead to the fruit that Jesus Christ ordained for us. And the only way we can have that is through an intimate, personal relationship with Him who is able "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). He is our High Priest, holy, undefiled, separate from sinners. As we think of Jesus Christ in His priesthood, each one of us must consider this: *How do I pray?*

First, I cannot allow unholy spirits to influence my habits, my thoughts, or my speech. I must be cleansed from any and all evil spirits, including passivity, neglect, and lukewarmness—not to mention any overt sins. Psalm 66:18 says that "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." That is, if I regard anything in my emotions that is not according to the

Word of God, that goes against the authority of God's power, against the spiritual authority of His promise, He will not hear me. I can just forget about praying. I must deal with my priorities in order to get my prayers answered.

If I live in personal sin, if I live in iniquity, if I live in mental attitude sins, He will not hear me. If I do not minister grace with my speech, God will not hear me. (That explains most of the problems with prayer right there!)

Once I have dealt with the things in my life that could hinder my prayers, then I must discover what works.

Plug in to the Power

"*All power* is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20*a*).

I must be plugged in to the power of God, plugged in to the delegated authority of Jesus Christ, my Lord. I need to have an uninhibited personal relationship with Christ. That means that no other relationship can ever take precedence.

A personal relationship with Christ must include these things: First, I must be rightly related to Him in categories (John 15:7-8), "…If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you…." When I am rightly related to His words, then I must be in union with Christ's life. Without Him, I can do nothing (John 15:5). Then, I will realize the purpose of prayer, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8*a*).

So when I am plugged in to the right source, I will have an uninhibited personal relationship with Christ through His Word. Abiding in the True Vine, I become a branch that glorifies the Father, bringing forth much fruit. Also, John 15:9-17 reveals the importance of having right relationships with my family and with the brethren: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:…love one another, as I have loved you…."

When both my horizontal and vertical relationships are absolutely proper, I will bring forth fruit. That does not mean getting "things" according to my desires. First, I must give who I am and make available what I have to Jesus Christ, rather than looking to get what He has for me.

If God tells a woman that she can win her unsaved husband by her 'conversation', or, by her manner of living, (1 Peter 3:1-2), that is a specific promise. If God tells another that he can sanctify his partner so the spouse will not interfere with his Christian life (1 Corinthians 7:14-15), that is specific.

Prayer is not based upon impersonal, religious duty, just throwing things up in the air. I need to have a *rhema*, a personal illumination of a word from the Bible. If God gives me a *rhema* such as Acts 16:31, that I can believe and all my house shall be saved, then no matter where my family is spiritually, I have a specific prayer promise. So, *because He has given me a specific promise, I have grounds for my faith.*

For example, God said He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Therefore, knowing that it is God's will that everybody be saved, I pray a specific prayer for specific opportunities to minister to those He brings in my path today: "Lord, You said you are not willing for anyone to perish. I'm going out now, on purpose, to seek the lost. Holy Spirit, convict some of the people I

meet today, according to John 16:8. I'm asking for specific doors for specific people, because of Your specific desire. Amen."

Now, instead of a generalized concept of prayer, I enter into the absolute, precise understanding of profound prayer at its very best, which is being missed by so many good and sincere believers.

Take God at His Word

I must believe in God's promises more than I believe in what I see or feel or experience against the promises. I must call those things that are not as though they were (Romans 4:17), because I believe a specific promise. In order to believe, I must have faith. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Categorical promises produce categorical faith, and categorical faith will always impart God's nature through those promises (2 Peter 1:4).

Understanding this, we sacrifice the pleasure of things in this life to enjoy the pleasures of God's life. We gladly sacrifice the temporal for the eternal. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

Now we begin to take God at His Word. In

John 6:7, Philip had it all calculated and figured out mathematically why Jesus could not possibly feed the multitude. Yet Andrew just took what came—five loaves and two fish—and gave a boy's lunch to Jesus. Andrew didn't try to figure out a thing. That is how people begin to understand prayer in *God's* economy.

Once we are rightly related to God and men, and we are plugged in to the right power, we get a specific promise from the Word, and we exercise specific faith. Then we need to recognize that time is no longer an issue. Time isn't even important. The answer may come when I am one hundred, but it was a fact as soon as I believed. Abraham got his answer when he was ninety-nine.

Prayer works on the basis of God's promises. I have a precise promise and a precise faith, therefore time is not relevant. When a mother prays for her children to be saved and proclaims it as a precise promise, she may be in heaven when her children actually get saved, but she will meet them in glory. This is so important for us to understand for the days ahead.

The Fruitless Fig Tree

Mark 11:12-22 tells how Jesus cursed the fig

tree that had no fruit but only leaves. The fig tree represented *self*-righteousness and a false covering. Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves with fig leaves when they became self-conscious because of sin. The fig tree also represented the nation of Israel who, in their self-righteousness, were not ready for the Messiah when He came to them.

The Lord Jesus cursed that tree by its roots—not just the leaves—because it brought forth no fruit. In that act, He demonstrated what he can do to disease. He can curse cancer just as quickly as He did the fig tree, and He can curse the thing that is prohibiting His life from flowing in us.

When the disciples asked Jesus how He was able to curse the fig tree, Jesus said, "Have faith in God." We have been placed into a relationship with God. We are to have faith in the power of His promise, and that faith is to be directly in God, with nothing interfering. "*Have faith in God.*"

The more we fellowship with His promises, the more we understand that they are real and that they do work. Don't go to God worrying and fretting, because He has already told you not to do that. When you read Matthew 6:25-34, jump up and down because He cares more

about you than He does the lilies (and He does a magnificent job with the lilies!).

Speak to the Mountain

Next, we need to understand the importance of our confession. I am to give all that I am to God and make available what I have to Him, which is quite different from trying to get something for me. But "speaking the word" is crucial.

In Mark 11:23-24, Jesus said, "Whosoever shall *say* unto this mountain, Be thou removed …and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he *saith* shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he *saith*. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, *and ye shall have them*." But here is a condition: You can't pray today then talk with your friend about the very problems you just prayed for. That reveals you do not believe. You can't whine tomorrow after you pray tonight, because whining nullifies your prayer. You weren't talking to God; you were just talking to the ceiling.

This is why people don't take time to pray: they don't understand prayer. But God cannot lie.

Plugged in to the power, having a precise promise from a right relationship with God's

Word, I will have a proper confession because I am rightly related to God, my family, and the Body of Christ. Because I have a rich and deep fellowship with Jesus Christ the person, then I can be rightly related to the lost and dying world, which means they are going to hate me though I love them (John 15:17-20).

Delight in the Lord

There is a specific way to hear, receive, and have what we pray for. We must stay away from subjectivity and delight ourselves in the Lord. If we pray but do not delight in the Lord, then we will not have the right desires in our heart.

To "delight yourself in the Lord" (Psalm 37:4) means that the Lord is first and the Lord is all. So, if your desires don't come to pass, you know you are getting the best from God, because He loves you! He wants the best for you and He knows how to give you the best. He is wise enough to know when to do it, how to do it, and He *will* do it.

Now, if you understand how to receive God's specific will, you will pray something like this: "Lord, it is Your will that we send missionaries into 220 countries, and I am going to pray for You to ordain the steps in details." Or, "Lord, it

is Your will to see a certain couple reconciled. Now that I know this because of Your Word, I will pray in specifics and receive what You promise toward that reconciliation."

God wants intimacy in prayer. He doesn't want it to be a person tucking in two or three paragraphs (when he didn't plan to pray), just praying out of religious duty. *That is not prayer*.

There has never been a true work of God without an assembly that really grasps the subject of prayer. People will not be added to the Church daily, and there will never be miracles of compassion and love until this is understood.

When you have a problem, fight the good fight of faith; don't try to fight it with your emotions or by bringing up the past. Stand in the will of God and claim one specific promise after another. Set the Lord before your face and you will not be moved (Psalm 16:8). The righteous shall not be moved. We learn to be utterly dependent on Jesus Christ because of a personal, intimate relationship with Him. Every other relationship I have comes after Christ.

Here Is the Key

Have you prayed specifically? Is your prayer based upon a specific promise? Do you make

declarations of precise faith? Have you already received the answer based upon the character of God—even when you can't see it, feel it, or experience it? Is it your greatest desire to delight in Him? That is the key to having a rich prayer life.

There are so many breakdowns to prayers, because so many are not connected to precise truth. Some people have said that God doesn't come through when they pray. Others will swear they heard Him speak when actually, they have fed so many lies to their emotions by their feelings, their feelings told them it was God, and it was not! It was subjectivity. Those people need to repent and begin to delight themselves in the Lord. They need to get out the Book, start believing the promises, and then stand on the promises of God.

Of course, with every selective group of promises we receive, we must also receive His divine nature and His wisdom. The promises reveal His character of integrity and the essence of His nature, so we can receive His divine nature. This is how we escape the contamination of *self*, the contamination of emotions running wild, and the contamination of subjectivity. We do it through a precise promise and the precise will

of God.

Now when I pray, I will pray precisely according to God's will. If God gives me 3 John 2 as a precise promise—"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth"—then *I will receive the promise when I believe it*, regardless of what I see. My confession will be according to that promise, and any time I think of it, I will confront sight and feelings with what I receive from the Word (Mark 11:22-24).

In Hebrews 11:13, many great men of God died in the faith. Having seen the promises afar off, they were persuaded of them and embraced them. They didn't see the promises on the earth, but their rewards follow them.

Chapter Two

ACCEPT YOUR POSITION OF AUTHORITY

God has placed every born-again Christian into a position of authority as a believer-priest. Jesus Christ said in Matthew 28:18-19, "All power is given unto me…Go ye therefore." He is saying, "I will never send you out without giving you a position of power and authority." In Luke 10:19, He gave power over serpents and scorpions, and power over every enemy.

Understand that when a person keeps taking drugs, it is not a habit or an addiction; it is a spirit. The purpose behind that spirit is to kill—first to divide, then to steal, then to destroy.

Every Christian needs power over *all* the enemy. The Lord instructed the seventy (not just the Twelve) in Luke 10, and sent them out with great authority. Jesus said to the disciples in John 20:21, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." He prayed for all of us who would be-

lieve (John 17:20); and in Matthew 28:18-20, the resurrected Lord delegated His own authority to men. His final words before His ascension were, "But *ye shall receive power*, after that the Holy [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Every Christian has been given a position of power.

Once we recognize that we have been given a position of power, it is important that we hear God speak precisely through His words and through His promises. Don't go off in a wild vision or a subjective delusion in the name of Christianity. We must have the precise Word, the precise power, and the precise faith.

In Mark 11:14, 20-22, Jesus said, "*I* withered up this fig tree. And do you know what? *You* can do it, too." How? Have faith in God. Plugged in to His power, receiving a precise promise, we exercise our system of faith in a precise way—*we believe precisely*.

Child-Like Faith

George Müller, a man of God known for his great life of faith and prayer, established many caring, Christ-centered orphanages in Victorian

England. In addition, he was used to raise support for China Inland Missions. Though he never made any public appeals for finances, every request was met. Müller's faith encouraged Christians throughout the world to believe every promise of God and to trust Him implicitly.

As we understand it, a little girl in one of the orphanages said to Mr. Müller, "I've never had a toy in my life. Do you think God would give me one?"

George Müller said, "Yes, He will. What do you want?"

She said, "A ball."

"God has all kinds of balls," he said. "What kind do you want?"

"A velvet, multiple-color ball!"

"Well, God will give it to you."

She ran after him and asked, "When?"

He thought to himself, "Lord, here I go!" Then he answered her, "In three days."

Müller didn't mention the request to anyone, and the girl didn't tell a soul. Three days later, along with supplies and food brought by a faithful giver to the orphanage, this man said, "God led us to bring this for a young child," and he gave a beautiful multiple-colored ball to the girl.

It was a precise prayer with precise power

because of precise faith based upon a precise promise that the girl received from God.

Have faith in God. "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea…." Notice the precision. Jesus didn't say "*a* mountain." He said, "I want you to address *this* mountain." Interestingly, they were standing on the Mount of Olives, which will be split and cast into the sea in its entirety during an earthquake in the last days.

Christ is saying to everyone who believes, "If you want to, speak to this mountain. Remember, I have nearly eight thousand promises, so what are you going to ask me for? Which promise are you going to pick up?" It is as though He is saying, "So you want a ball? *What* ball? You want a healing? What healing? You need finances? How much? Don't just come to Me and speak carelessly. I want you to tell me what *the* mountain is."

By the way, in Mark 11:23, He was not dealing with our faith but with what we *say* with our faith. He said that the things we say will be what we receive; and He wants us to *speak* the Word.

The Bible says in James 3 that the tongue can be creative, or it can curse. God spoke the Word in Genesis 1, and it had creative power. We are

to speak creatively to see God's character and God's nature created in our life and the lives of others.

See the Promise Afar Off

Hebrews 11:13 says that there were many who saw the promise afar off. A vision begins by seeing something afar off. Once you see the promise, you walk with God, agree with Him, and become persuaded. It is all by faith. And once you become persuaded, you embrace the promise. Finally, you confess it.

Of course, when you start confessing it (providing you have heard from God), you put yourself out on a limb, but God will never cut the limb off. God says, "I gave you that promise, and you have to speak it creatively. If you don't speak it, I will not let it happen."

When God has spoken, you should get around your best friends and confess the *rhema*. You don't have to go around discouraged, depressed, and dejected, confessing negative things about your life and reinforcing the spirit world of Satan. Instead, reinforce the Holy Spirit's world. Confess the promise! You may not know where and how God is going to lead with a vision. Just believe that what He said He will do.

Mark 11:23 says, "…he shall have *whatsoever he saith.*" You have got to *say* it, and what you confess must be based upon the Word of God.

With millions of people in the world going to hell, why would you stay in some convenient lifestyle? Why don't you get right with God? If He calls you to the mission field, then take that step. But why don't you start confessing big things for God?

When the disciples came to Jesus and said, "The multitudes are hungry," He replied, "They need not depart." Now, there is no way that five loaves and two fishes could feed the multitude. But the little boy brought to Jesus the only resources he had, which became more than enough. *The way you get what you need from God is to bring the resources you have to Jesus.*

Speak Precisely

We receive whatsoever we say. We speak precisely to this mountain; not *a* mountain—*this* mountain. We receive according to our faith.

Mark 10:46-52 gives the account of blind Bartimaeus crying out "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Though he knew who Jesus was, Bartimaeus hadn't yet received salvation. Jesus stood still with the multitude behind Him

and commanded the disciples to bring the blind man to Him. When Bartimaeus came near, Jesus said, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

Jesus was saying, "Don't just say, 'Have mercy on me.' *What do you want Me to do?* I have eight thousand promises. Which one do you want to be fulfilled?"

Bartimaeus replied, "Do You want to know what my mountain is? It's my eyes. I can't see!"

And Jesus said, "Your faith against this mountain—your faith for this need of your eyesight—has made you whole." The blind man's condition was obvious, but Jesus made him *say* it.

Don't go to God and say, "Oh, bless me today. We have need of finances. And bless the students. Amen." That is not prayer. God has given us a position of authority, a position of power. Be precise about the mountain.

Exercise your faith, then confess the answer; speak creative words among each other. Speak creatively about each other. Don't confess the kind of life where there is no victory and no power. Confess the promise and bring into action what God has said, remembering that our confession must be what *God* has said, and not subjectivity.

Take away the 'logs' that block your vision so you can see the vision clearly. Don't worry about this, that, and the other thing. You can have what you say and what you desire. Therefore, fix your hope completely on the grace of God that comes by doctrine (1 Peter 1:13). The minute you crucify the instinct to judge, you will begin to receive the gift of discernment without judging. God will give discernment about precise situations and precise satanic warfare, which is always associated with a spirit.

When you pray, make sure you have forgiven everybody, or don't even bother to pray (Mark 11:25). The only way God answers believers' prayers is on the grounds of the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3); and wherever that unity is expressed, God commands a blessing (Psalm 133:3).

Forgiveness (Matthew 6:14) may not always mean going to the person who has something against you. But the moment you hear it, forgive them mentally, right on the spot. If you can remember what they did, you haven't forgiven. God does not remember our sins (Jeremiah 31:34). But many people try to obey forgiveness

without forgetting, so they have the knowledge of what to do without the power.

To have faith without confessing it is not faith. When you confess what you believe, then you are putting yourself on the spot with what you heard from God. If God has spoken, we must confess it.

We need the authority of God's power. With all the pollution, unknown bacteria, colds, flu, and diseases that are spread through handshakes and on doorknobs, Satan has found a way to cause so much sickness. Doctors have told us that 60 percent of all illnesses are caused by these things we encounter daily, and which are nearly impossible to avoid.

So often we think we are dealing with bad habits when in fact we are dealing with a spirit. But when we realize that Jesus Christ has given us precise promises over precise mountains, we will understand the power of our confession. God's people are a community of believers. If charity is motivating our souls and humility is communicated through our lives with meekness as the vehicle for receiving God's life, then we are quickened with the power of God, and God can give us His promises.

When I read the Word, the promises should jump out. Once I receive the objective Word, it produces objective faith in Christ's character. I can speak the Word, confess the truth, and show by my faith that I believe it before it happens. We have a beautiful life ahead. You are not just "anybody" with mountains to tackle. You can be "somebody" who is getting a victory over *this* mountain.

In Matthew 14, Jesus went to the mountain to pray. As He prayed to the Father, the disciples were on a boat. During the fourth watch, there was a terrible storm. When the disciples saw Jesus on the water, they thought it was an evil spirit; but He said, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." So Peter said, "If it's really you, bid me to come," and in verse 29, Jesus said, "Come."

That was a precise promise in an invitation: "Come." Precise. And Peter believed.

The storm was terrible, and Peter, as we know, walked on that water, looking at Jesus Christ and honoring the invitation of faith. Jesus wanted to show him that God's supernatural life superseded the natural, in this particular case, when it was necessary to build him up in faith.

As Peter walked, Jesus allowed the demons to bring a tremendous wind. Of course, when Peter turned to look at the waves, he began to sink. He knew enough to cry out, "Save me!" and Jesus did. But the waves and the wind had promoted Peter's emotions and fears, which came from a spirit in the air, causing him to take his eyes off of Christ.

As we grow progressively each day and begin to give our resources over to God, what we give may not seem like much. But as with the five loaves and two fishes, we begin to realize that creative power really works when Jesus speaks. If you don't trust Him, though, you are not going to speak it.

The vision comes from God. The Word comes from God. The grace, the power, and the love come from God. Patience and forgiveness come from God. Revival comes from God; therefore, no man could ever stop the vision for one moment, because God is in it (Acts 5:38-39).

Harness up your faith. Enter into new dimensions of faith, new degrees of believing, new degrees of studying, and new degrees of praying, with new degrees of worshipping God through His provision. Take up your authority.

Chapter Three

BE CREATIVE, SPEAK FORTH THE PROMISE

To have intimacy with God in prayer, we know that first we must hear from God's Word and receive a precise promise. Then, we have to plug in to our position of authority (Matthew 28:18). Next, our prayer requests must be precise: We ask for *this* mountain to be removed. Like the Old Testament saints, in Hebrews 11, who saw the promises afar off, *we must be persuaded that we will receive the promises, then embrace them and confess them.*

Previously we referred to Adam and Eve's false covering of fig leaves. We also said that the fig tree that had leaves but no fruit represented Israel. In both cases, self-righteousness substituted for God's righteousness and resulted in a curse.

Isn't it interesting that in Mark 11, Jesus goes from cursing the fig tree right into a lesson on

how to pray? The disciples asked how He withered the tree, and He said, "Have faith in God."

What Jesus did, He wants us to do. Yet, we are so far behind in what we could have. "*Whosoever* shall say unto *this* mountain…and *shall not doubt* in his heart, *but shall believe* that those things which he saith shall come to pass; *he shall have whatsoever he saith*." Then in Mark 11:24, He said, "What things soever ye desire, *when ye pray*, *believe* that ye receive them, and *ye shall have them*." That's plain, isn't it?

In John 16:23-24, Jesus said, "…Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name…." In other words, "You haven't asked the right way. But whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you." It is not wishful thinking. It is not subjectivity. It is based upon the Word of God. And according to Jeremiah 1:12, "…I will hasten my word to perform it." God wants to perform His word because He wants *you*, His child, to receive it and to enjoy it."

"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4). But before He will give me my desires, I need to speak to this mountain and confess it publicly. God is saying, "Whatsoever you *say*, you shall have." If I don't understand that, I am

not going to have my request.

In 2 Chronicles 6:10, the Lord performed the word that he had spoken. In Ezekiel 12:25 and 28, He said, "the word that I shall speak shall come to pass…I say the word and will perform it…the word which I have spoken *shall be done.*"

We have to live in this confession, read in it, pray in it. We have to speak the Word of God. God spoke a word, and the worlds were formed. It's the creative power of the spoken Word. In Acts 3, when Peter and John saw the lame man at the gate called Beautiful, Peter said, "I don't have much—neither silver nor gold—but what I have, I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk." He spoke and the man was healed. Jesus spoke the word to the ten lepers, and they were all healed, though only one went back and praised Him (Luke 17:12-18).

We can choose to just sit back in no-man's-land and wonder (which unfortunately is what so many people do), or we can obey God's Word in Matthew 28:18-20, to go and preach, teach, baptize, and make disciples. Psalm 119:172 says, "My tongue shall speak of thy word." And in Jeremiah 25:3, "the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you." Several times, God instructed Jeremiah to speak His

words (Jeremiah 13:12; 22:1; 23:28). In Ezekiel 33:30, God's people were told to "hear what is the Word that cometh forth from the LORD."

Daniel: Man of Prayer

Emotions come and go, but you cannot trust your feelings. You cannot take orders from your feelings. You get your orders from the Word and from the Holy Spirit. Experientially, most of us have no idea who we are or where we are. But consider a man like Daniel who heard King Darius' decree that no one could worship God. What did he do? He opened the windows of his chamber that faced toward Jerusalem, and three times a day—morning, noon, and night—he prayed toward God's temple (Daniel 6:10).

During that time, Jerusalem was desolate because of Israel's wickedness, and in chapter nine, Daniel prayed for God to turn away His anger and to pour out His mercy. Daniel always included himself among the sinners: "*We* have sinned, and have committed iniquity…" (Daniel 9:5). He always had an attitude of praise and honor to God in his prayers: "for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies" (Daniel 9:18*b*).

In verse 23, the Word of God came to him saying, "thou art greatly beloved." In other words, "You are special, you are a darling." God beautifully answered his prayer. He was delivered *in* the lion's den and the king realized that Daniel's God was *the* God.

I want to reemphasize that God has said very clearly, "*Ask*, and it shall be given you." He didn't say, "Some day," or "On a certain day you will receive." He simply said, Ask—and you shall receive. "Seek, and ye *shall* find." Time is not the issue; *the character of God is the issue*. "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you," for everyone who asks, receives. And everyone who seeks, shall find. And to everyone who knocks, it shall be opened unto him (Matthew 7:7-8).

Matthew 7:9-11 says that if a natural man would not give a stone when his son asks for bread, nor give a serpent for fish, "how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

Be Fruitful

We have been chosen and ordained to bring forth fruit that remains (John 15:16). Our prayers should lead to our goals and to people's healings. There are believers in our church who will

be up all night, praying power for people, praying healing for people. They do it quietly and humbly, not parading it in subjective pride the way some do, and they will get results. Why? Because, they have learned how to pray to the Father in the nature of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Spirit-filled believer has fruit that will remain. Thank God, the tares don't remain! And from now on, whatever we ask the Father, He will give it. It's always that way with God. He doesn't say "maybe." Rather, He promises that all things—when you pray believing—you shall receive.

But you must be specific. It is not, "Please bless us today." That doesn't cut it with God. Don't say, "Bless my marriage." That is not a prayer of God's people. You say, "God, this is what I want for my marriage," then declare it. Pray for the church, "Lord, Raise up an army of soul winners, an army that has the life of God within, people who are obedient, an army of givers. And bless them financially. Do it now, Lord! Bless them so they can help us to send missionaries into all the world and to provide our community with provisions for your people. That is what we are saying, this is what we are confessing, and it is what we are believing! Thank you

Lord for hearing and answering. Amen."

Perhaps You Need Patience

Sometimes, after you pray, you have need of patience before you see the promise. Therefore, don't cast away your confidence (Hebrews 10:35-36). Jeremiah 28:7*a* says, "hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears." God said He will speak something into our ears that will produce faith, and He will cause the Word to do what He said it will do.

There may be times when God does not respond quickly because He wants to test you to see if there is doubting in your soul that could lead to criticizing, sowing discord, and not living a godly life. James 1:6-8 puts it this way: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering…. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*" And in James 4:3, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." These people do not ask so that God may be glorified. On the contrary, they haven't even made themselves available to God.

We need to take our five loaves and two fish, give them to God, and let Him do what He does

best: He answers prayer, multiplying our substance. He provides abundantly and always has some left over.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6). Plugged into God's power, we receive a precise promise, then we pray precisely, believing, receiving, and always glorifying God.

If we don't understand how to speak the Word of God, abide by it, and love people, we will give in to a spirit of fear, criticism, or discord. There are solid Christians who go through cycles of negativity because they let something hinder their walk (2 Thessalonians 3:6). We are to walk in the Spirit so we do not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). We are to walk in wisdom (Ephesians 5:15, Colossians 4:5). We are not to walk as carnal men (1 Corinthians 3:3), but to follow godly examples.

When people do not know how to walk, they do not walk in virtue love, and they will not profit from God (Galatians 5:2). Why? Because they regard iniquity in their emotions (Psalm 66:18).

God wants to bless us! The Lord of Hosts said in Jeremiah 5:14*a*, "Because ye speak this

word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire." His words will become life and power that we speak forth, so we can get to know the Word. Let God speak it in your ears. Then you will speak the Word into other people's ears. Be plugged in to your authority. Be plugged in to faith that comes from the Holy Spirit.

The Lord said in Ephesians 3:20 that He is waiting to give us above and beyond all that we could ever ask or think. Take God at His Word. Speak faith into other people's hearts. Speak faith around them. Because of the nature of people, it may take a process of time before they can be built up in faith. But as we build them up, we will teach them to encourage themselves. We will build levels of faith, levels of grace, and levels of mercy, with levels of power and protection—erecting superstructures of spiritually built-up ones. And as people are released, they will no longer regard iniquity in their hearts.

Dealing with Iniquity in the Sanctuary

Iniquity is emotional rebellion against God. We know that Satan desires to multiply iniquities and defile the sanctuary. He wants to give Christians the same emotional problems he first experienced against God when he found out

that angels would go to hell—and he's done a good job of it.

To deal with the effects of demons, there is no need for lengthy dialogues with the devil. In Acts 16:18, when the demon-possessed woman was following Paul, he simply said, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." Paul had the authority of the spoken Word, and the demon came out.

When we use the Word of God and plug in to our position of authority, demons will no longer influence our emotions. Remember, we are being influenced every moment, by either the Holy Spirit or unholy spirits. What we blame on the old sin nature is actually a spirit that is controlling or influencing us or, in the past, has hypnotized our memory center. The old sin nature releases principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness (which speaks of the demons that rule over cities and governments), and spiritual wickedness in high places. Satan and his forces bring infection on the emotions and minds of those who do not obey the truth and are not plugged in to purity by faith in Jesus Christ.

"Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's

house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word" (Jeremiah 26:2). I love that He said, "*diminish not a word*." It means, "Be precise; I don't want you to leave out anything. Tell it all, and I will take care of the results."

God gave a word to Balaam and told him how to speak it (Numbers 22:8; 23:5). We speak against demons, against flesh, against worldliness, against sight. We speak the Word when our feelings are affected by the devil's crowd. We must learn how to speak the Word of God.

When the Word is hidden in a clean heart, there is no wounded spirit. Your memory can't recall anything bad because you don't have a past, except for the fragrance of memories.

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). The Lord did not mention the past in these verses because your sins were cast into the sea (Micah 7:19), and God has put up a huge sign: "No Fishing Here."

CONCLUSION

Having an effective prayer life depends on having a life that is rightly related to God and to people, which enables us to draw from the proper power source. As soon as we hear and get definition from His Word, we obey (Psalm 18:44). Still, we often fail to live by every Word of God, so we must use rebound as often as we need it.

I love what the Lord spoke in Isaiah 57:19: "I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him." God will help us to speak with creative power. He will enable us to pray effectively. We will see so much fruit as a result of learning to have intimacy with God in prayer, because the root will be dealt with and we will be led with precision. We will confess what we believe and reap the abundance of what was sown in faith.

Intimacy

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"Intimacy" is derived from the Latin word *intus*, which describes that which is most within us. From divine viewpoint, intimacy speaks of having God's love as the most of what is in us. For a couple, intimacy is revealed by understanding one another and meeting each other's needs, exchanging without interruption, and being sensitive to one another without selfishness. Intimacy speaks of what is really within a person—the central motivating factor toward another.

Often two people will start dating. They may find an attraction towards each other that leads to a romance. However, a romance without having gone through the Cross will never develop intimacy.

Romance without a personal cross never leads to godly intimacy. But by taking up our cross, we experience co-crucifixion, and we are free to live in amazing purity, beyond the reign

of the old sin nature. Unfortunately, in Christianity today, there tends to be a lack of godly intimacy. This is reflected in marriages that have no meaning, engagements that have no inner quality, and friendships that fail in the reality of a crisis. It is a serious problem.

In this booklet, we will look at how the Word of God and the Holy Spirit work together within us to bring true intimacy to our lives.

Chapter One

GOD'S UNCHANGING INTIMACY

Chapter seventeen in the Gospel of John shows the intimacy that existed between God the Father and God the Son during the Son's time on earth. But when Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46), our sins were upon Him—a reality that, for the only time in all of eternity, broke the intimacy between the Father and the Son.

Often, a man will go with a Christian girl, and he will conform to the girl's religion and to her needs—to be "acceptable" in terms of an outward appearance. But she may discover that he has no understanding about true, godly intimacy.

He Never Leaves Us

The intimacy that God enjoys with us is the most beautiful relationship in the world. Has

God ever forsaken any Christian? The answer is no (Hebrews 13:5). Has He ever failed us one time with His grace, mercy, or unconditional love? No, according to Psalm 89:33. When God comes into our hearts, He comes in to stay with intimacy, with what is the most within us.

The Son loves us so deeply that even when we grieve His Holy Spirit, He says, "I will stay. I will not leave them. I will finish the work I began in them and always remain intimate with them. They may turn from Me, but I'll not turn My back on them" (see 2 Timothy 2:13).

"Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away" (Isaiah 50:1).

God will never sell us to anyone, though we may sell ourselves with our choices. He will never divorce us. God despises divorce (Malachi 2:16). In Matthew 19:8, Jesus said that even the divorces that God allows happen because of the hardness of the hearts involved. The opposite of hardness is softness, a characteristic of intimacy.

Do not feel condemned if you are divorced. That is over, and you are going on with God as a

beautiful and precious new creation in a beautiful, godly life.

Develop a Capacity for Intimacy

In order to develop a capacity for true intimacy, a believer needs to know who he is in Christ. But, he also needs to know his potential in Adam. For example, when a couple is dating and then they break up, it becomes evident if one of them was never really intimate with Christ. Often after a break-up, one of them goes out into the world and does things Christians should never do. Why? Because they have no capacity for intimacy with God.

Before a couple enters into marriage, they should recognize who they are in Adam and go after God and His Word, so that with God's provision they can overcome their weaknesses. Then, they should ask, "Who am I in Christ? Am I intimate with Christ, who is reigning in me?"

Chapter Two

THE CONCEPT OF THE CROSS

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:7-8, 15).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:16-17).

If there is one thing I want it is intimacy with God—I want Him to be the person who is most within me. I want my life to glorify Him.

Intimacy with God is the most precious thing we can have. I have heard a preacher say, "Sickness is your cross; marriage is your cross." Well, those things might be *his* cross, but that is not my cross. My cross is nothing unless I understand *His* Cross. Christ's Cross includes His dying for me and dying as me. His Cross includes His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. I was crucified, buried, and raised with Him.

The Cross is this: I accept my co-crucifixion daily, I accept my burial daily, and I accept my spiritual resurrection daily (Romans 6:11). I accept my death daily. I accept my brand-new life daily. When I do this by the grace of God, I am practicing intimacy. When I am filled with the Holy Spirit, using rebound when I do fail, I am practicing intimacy (Ephesians 5:18).

Intimacy in the Home

Intimacy in marriage is a tremendous thing. Your partner should be nourished, cherished, and deeply, deeply loved. Couples should develop intimacy in every way. Maybe they enjoy candlelight dinners at home or visits to a special

restaurant. Maybe they hold hands and take long walks.

Some couples have told me that they enjoy intimacy best during a worship service at church, as they raise their hands to praise God. They say they feel so clean, so right, and so good about their marriage when they sing together or sit together to hear a message. They are practicing intimacy.

Others enter into mental intimacy when they sit down and build each other up. They share their heartaches—not complaining, but in an honest exchange. There is no blaming going on. That is mental intimacy.

Then, there is emotional intimacy. The husband gets excited about something, and the wife loves him so much that she gets excited, too.

Physical Fulfillment

Finally, there is physical intimacy. Sex is such a sacred part of marriage. It should be cherished and nourished. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Sex should be a physical exchange of an expression of love that the couple shares with no one else. Sex is something God ordained for our pleasure as well as for the procreation of the human race.

This is all part of a fantastic intimacy that develops when the husband loves his wife by taking up his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. He loves her, and she respects him (Ephesians 5:33). She submits through honor, not as a doormat or a slave (Ephesians 5:22-24).

When we are intimate with God, it is so easy to be intimate with each other. If one party in a marriage doesn't have the capacity for intimacy, then the Word of God takes over. Each of us has a treasure in his earthen vessel that the excellency of power may be of God, and not of us (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Chapter Three

REVEAL THE TREASURE WITHIN

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

"For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4: 8-11).

Deep within us, the Holy Spirit wants to develop meekness. Meekness is accepting God-consciousness as the norm and standard we live by within the deepest part of our being—what is most within us. Meekness is to establish God's standard within. God's standard was to die for me when I was a sinner, and then to wait and wait until I came to Him to be saved. Through

the Holy Spirit and through God's fullness (*pleroma*) (Ephesians 3:19), His standard becomes the basis for having godly intimacy toward people.

When we are intimate with God, we may be troubled on every side, but we are not in despair. We may be persecuted, but we are not forsaken. We may get knocked down, but we are never knocked out. In every friendship, in every marriage, we are to bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus and let His eternal life be revealed and manifested through our mortal bodies.

We who are alive are always delivered unto death. This means we are to take up our death, burial, and resurrection daily by the grace of God and through the filling of the Spirit. We have been delivered to the Cross to reveal the treasure that is within us: Jesus Christ.

Death that Works Life

"For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

"So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Corinthians 4:11-12).

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, saying,

"Death works in me so that God's life can start working in all of you." He had true intimacy with Christ, therefore he could love the Corinthians unconditionally—"until death do us part." The apostle desired to share his treasure without forcing anything upon them.

Paul encouraged all the members of the Corinthian church to be of the same spirit of faith so that they, too, could be delivered unto death. Even if another party didn't have a capacity for intimacy, the treasure within could still be revealed.

A Consciousness of Grace

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2).

According to Galatians 6:1-2, the one who is spiritual is to go in a spirit of meekness to the one who has a fault. That is what it means to have *God's* consciousness of grace and mercy, God's consciousness of forgiveness, God's consciousness of just loving until it works. We may fail, but God's love never fails. And if we have

His mind in us and we operate in God's spirituality, then we can bear the burden, and we can bear the weakness of the person who cannot be intimate with us.

The people we go to may disagree, and they may not like what we have to say. But as God's men and women in God's place, with God's truth, we choose to do things God's way, with God's life. When God is the strength of our lives, nothing anyone can say will change our intimacy with Him.

What is most within us is that which comes out of us. We share it in our friendships. We share it with our families. We share it in marriages. We share it with each other over and over again. This is intimacy.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps you believe that you are married to someone with whom you cannot have godly intimacy. That is no reason to quit. Instead of leaving, God has a plan to change people.

That is the Bible at work. Every time there is a question, God's Word has the answer.

As Christians, let's choose to put off the old man and the old corrupt conversation. Let's be renewed in the spirit of our minds and put on the new man. That is true holiness.

In the name of Jesus Christ, stop fooling around with separations and divorces. Do not begin a process of alienation from having intimacy with God. Put on the whole armor of God, and stand in the power of His might. Go forward with godly intimacy in Christ and let the treasure be revealed.

Choose to glorify God in the short time that we are on earth. As we are pure and clean and go forward, we will reveal Christ. Everyone will

know that we live in a mystery—the mystery of true intimacy with Him.

Is There Not a Cause?

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The God who stretched the universe from the north over an empty place, He who hangs the earth upon nothing (Job 26:7), He who created the angels and every single person in the universe, He who created the sun, and the moon, He who numbers the stars and calls every one of them by name (Psalm 147:4)—He had a cause. The Lord who created all the beautiful flowers: the roses, the daffodils, the lilies—He had a cause. The Lord who made the trees, the forests, the mountains, and the seas had a cause. We know that the ten thousand lakes of Minnesota and all the streams and rivers were made by Him, but beyond all of that, He had a cause. This One who created birds that migrate thousands of miles every single winter and come within one-half mile of the same destination year after year—this One had a cause.

The Lord created men and, in His knowledge and foreknowledge of mankind, decided to give

them free volition. As a divine Gentleman, He let them choose. Then He became a Man Himself. Why did He do it? He had a cause.

Jesus has committed this cause unto believers. We are called to be His representatives in this world. Discover the great joy and divine motivation that comes from understanding that we have a cause.

Chapter One

THE COMPASSION OF THE CAUSE

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27).

God became a Man (John 1:1; 1:14). Yes, He was the God-Man, the most unique personality this world has ever seen. Though He was God, yet He was Man; and though He was Man, yet He was God. He had a cause. His cause was motivated by supernatural love. His cause was to identify with mankind. He would be tempted in all points, such as we are, yet He would live without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

This Man, the God-Man, would visit the sick and was moved with compassion to heal them (see Matthew 14:14). His cause was to show love. This Man said, "For this cause came I unto this hour." This Man saw people who had no pastor (Matthew 9:36) and He had compassion

on them, for He was the good shepherd of the sheep (John 10:11). This Man saw people who were hungry. Having compassion upon them, He changed five loaves and two fishes to become enough to feed the multitude (Matthew 15:32).

The Tears of the Savior

Exactly one week before He went to the Cross at Calvary, this Man, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, beheld the city of Jerusalem and wept (Luke 19:41). In His heart, His mind, and His soul, He saw the heartache, sorrow, pain, sin, iniquity, failure, ignorance, religious pride, and arrogance among the unsaved. He beheld them all. His mind stayed upon their condition until tears came to His eyes, and He wept.

After the death of Lazarus (John 11:33), Jesus saw Mary weep, and He wept. When He saw their friends weep, He wept. When Jesus saw that some did not believe in His power to raise Lazarus, this wonderful Savior groaned with a loud voice and, again, He wept (John 11:38). For this cause He came.

The Eternal Gift

In Mark 1:40-42, a leper, beseeching Him, said, "If thou wilt, make me clean," and Jesus

said, "I will; be clean." The leper was healed that instant. He saved the leper; He saved the publican (Luke 18:13). He went around seeking the lost and saving anyone who would come to Him by grace through faith to receive the gift of eternal life from God. They were not saved by their good works. They simply trusted His love. That's all. They would trust His love, call upon Him, believe, and they would be saved. Sixty-eight things happened to them at the point of their salvation.* They didn't know what was happening at that moment, but Jesus transformed them through His eternal gift.

The dictionary defines a cause as anything that produces an effect or a result. Every Christian must understand that we are saved from something, unto God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). We will be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son and delivered from a kingdom of terrible darkness, iniquity, infection, and evil (Colossians 1:13), because that is God's cause.

Very few take time to meditate upon this wonderful truth. So few ponder or understand the greatness of God's love, the holiness of His compassion, the purity of His motives, or the reality of His imparted life. So many of us do not take time to consider what a Savior we have, yet

we have received His gift so freely. He is altogether lovely and worthy of our full attention. This is our Beloved, and this is our Friend. (See Song of Solomon 5:16.)

*Read What Happened When You Received Christ?, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.

Chapter Two
STAY TRUE TO THE CAUSE

Recently in Washington, DC, the leader of a great church organization honored Dr. Billy Graham, the great evangelist of our time. Dr. Graham, this man said, has never had a scandal. Dr. Graham even went to a journalist who had often criticized his ministry and asked him to write his biography. "Why would you want me to do it? I've been very critical of you," the writer said. Dr. Graham said, "Your criticism corrected me and blessed me."

"Four things have characterized Dr. Graham," the speaker said. "Purity, humility, integrity, and loyalty. He has been loyal to his God, loyal to his call, loyal to the Holy Bible, loyal to his wife, to his family, to his association, to his friends, to the Church, and loyal to the entire world."

Someone asked Dr. Graham, "What is it that you would want people to say about you after

you have gone home to be with God?"

He replied, "To say that I had integrity."

"What is one of the greatest things that you have ever done in your life?" he was asked.

"My greatest moments were the times I spent having fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and His living Word," Dr. Graham said. This is a man who has had a cause. Is there not a cause for us today?

Seeing His Cause in Difficulties

A United States senator was going through some personal attacks against his character. One morning as he stepped off a train on his way to work, he heard a street musician playing "Amazing Grace." As he walked a little further, he was still able to hear the musician as he began to play, "Love Lifted Me." The songs were so timely. As soon as the senator arrived at his desk, he wrote a note of thanks and had it delivered to the man at the station immediately.

Those songs broke his heart and lifted this senator so much. At that difficult point in his life, he could see that, yes, there is a cause.

Victory Comes with the Cause

The army of Israel had been challenged by

Goliath and the Philistines. The giant demanded that one man from Israel come out to fight him one on one. In the meantime, David was sent to the battlefront by his father to take food to his brothers who were soldiers. When he got there, his oldest brother, Eliab, mocked him, saying, "You have no business being here. You should be taking care of the sheep."

The leader over Israel's army, King Saul, was very strong and tall. He was very capable of going against Goliath, but he was fearful because he didn't have the proper walk with God. David, on the other hand, sensed the urgency of the hour for the nation of Israel and was determined to go against the giant. When the soldiers tried to discourage the shepherd boy who brought them cheese and bread, David replied, "Is there not a cause?" (1 Samuel 17:29). He then ran at Goliath in the name of the Lord, slinging a smooth stone, and killing the great enemy of Israel.

Is there not a cause? There is a cause to pray for the lost, for the needy, for the weak, for the frail. For this cause we are here, through the Holy Spirit, the grace of God, and the love of God in the eternal purpose. We have a divine cause to reveal, represent, co-labor, and serve

with the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Africa, in India, in South America, in Europe—all over the world, we have seen that there is a cause. Our ministry has made an impact, currently in 181 countries, because we have a cause. We have an eternal purpose, and we are here on earth, along with precious Christians everywhere, for a divine cause. There is a cause. We must always remember that in whatever we do, there is a cause.

Chapter Three

REMAINING FAITHFUL IN THE CAUSE

Many years ago I made a motto for myself: "Don't quit!" Whatever we do, we cannot quit. Do not quit praying. Do not quit loving. Do not quit caring. Do not quit serving. Do not quit studying the Word of God. Do not quit being faithful to the services of your local church three times a week.

Why should we attend church three times a week? There is a cause. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the Word of God, and God gives a theme at every service that will help us for the rest of our lives. We have the privilege through faith to receive these themes. By faith, we work out precisely the themes for the hour that will make a difference in our lives forever. Yes, there is a cause.

There is a cause for our church to have over 130 outreaches and ministries in this very special

city to me. There is a cause, and I thank God that there is a cause.

There was a cause for the apostle Paul's suffering for the Gentiles (Acts 9:16). There was a cause.

Why did Jesus save Mary Magdalene, who had eight demons, and made her a wonderful woman of God? There was a cause.

There is a cause for a mother who conceives a child in her womb, carries that child for nine months, gives birth to that baby, and then takes that baby in her arms. She cuddles that baby, takes care of that baby, loves that baby, and treasures that baby. That is a precious cause for a mother.

There is a cause for a father who will rise up early in the morning, go out, and work diligently so he can bring in money to take care of his family.

There is a cause when a young Christian will work hard and receive an education so he can glorify God and honor Jesus Christ as a doctor, a lawyer, a nurse, an administrator, an engineer, or an educator. There is such a precious cause.

Do All to Glorify God

There is a cause, because whatsoever we do

in word or deed, we do all to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

"Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of Jesus Christ and unto the Father by Him" (see Colossians 3:17).

"Whatsoever you do, do heartily as unto God and not unto men" (see Colossians 3:23).

There is a tremendous cause.

A man of God once made this tremendous statement: "We should never be identified by our oppression. Our oppression should not reveal who we are."

Our cause is to glorify God in our sports, in our jobs, in our communication, in our motives. That is a cause. It is an eternal purpose. It is a divine cause.

You may say, "But I am not enjoying the work I do." Then, do whatever you do unto God and not unto men. Enjoy it by giving God the glory. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). In everything give thanks.

The precious drug addict—"precious" because of the value of his soul—does not have a cause. The alcoholic who refuses to seek help does not have a cause. The quitter and the slothful person do not have a cause. Do not become a

quitter, too lazy to study, too lazy to work because you don't have a cause. This is a problem with mankind. But God has a divine solution—a purpose for every man. There is a cause.

The Priority of the Cause

William Gladstone, eighty-five years of age, became Prime Minister of England. He would often walk to his office, and every morning he saw a little boy. The little boy would sleep on the streets, and William Gladstone would always stop and talk with him. One morning the boy wasn't there, so Mr. Gladstone said, "I'm going to find out where he is before I go to my office." He found the boy in a hospital with a serious case of pneumonia.

William Gladstone called the office and said, "I won't be in today. I'm going to be by the bedside of this young boy." Love motivated him in his cause. His priority was not in being Prime Minister that day.

Benjamin Franklin contributed to writing the Constitution at the age of eighty-one. Thomas Edison invented the phonograph (what we came to know as the record player) at eighty-three. Colonel Sanders didn't start his fried chicken chain until he was over seventy. They

each had a cause. Casey Stengel was manager of the Yankees baseball team at seventy-five. Connie Mack was manager of the Philadelphia Athletics at eighty-four. They had a cause. They did not just lounge around without a real purpose to their lives. There is nothing wrong with relaxing, but everybody needs to have a cause.

Stewards of the Grace of God

We have a cause! It is to be stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). It is to be faithful stewards of God's Word (1 Corinthians 4:2). It is to redeem the time because the days are evil.

We need to love the poor, honor the weak, go after the frail, bless the lonely, comfort those who need comforting, and help those that need help through the will of God and Jesus Christ. There is a cause. It is eternal. It is everlasting. It will never stop. There is a cause.

John Wesley was eighty-eight years old and fighting pneumonia when he preached his last message. "I've got to do it again," he said, and with pneumonia he preached the Gospel four times that day from a little balcony.

He said, "Got to do it one more time," and then he died. John Wesley had a cause.

The Energy of the Cause

Moses, at the age of eighty, led the children of Israel out of Egypt. Caleb at the age of eighty was just as strong as he was at the age of forty, and he said, "Give me this mountain! I'm as strong as I was forty years ago."

God's people have energy when they have a cause. Motivated by God's love, they are instruments of God's grace, channels of God's mercy, and communicators of God's life. When God's people really have a cause, they have power, vision, compassion, and communion. They go forward, never quitting. Whatsoever their hands find to do, they do with all their might (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Have a cause to keep your marriage together. Have a cause to love the one that perhaps isn't right with God. Have a cause, and let the Holy Spirit shed abroad the love of God in your heart. That is being a steward of grace on every side. First Peter 4:10 talks about the "manifold" grace of God—grace on every side. We give grace because of love, because of the Holy Spirit, because of the living Word—because we have a cause.

CONCLUSION

We were out knocking on doors recently when we heard loud rock music coming from a downstairs apartment. We went to that door and a lady greeted us. I broke as I told her, "God sent us here today to tell you how much Jesus Christ loves you. He died and paid for every sin you could ever commit—past, present, and future. If you believe, you will receive Him today, and the Holy Spirit will come in your heart."

And she said, "I want to." We went into her home and knelt down, and she accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior right there. That was a divine appointment. For people such as this lady, we have a cause to go soul winning. We have a cause to send out missionaries. We have a cause for our food bank. We have a cause for the prison ministries. We have a cause for the nursing home ministries. We always have a cause. Thank God for it, because it is a wonderful, marvelous, glorious privilege to be used for God's

cause.

I consider it a privilege to stand before my congregation. What a privilege it is to proclaim this message. What a privilege it is to serve a God who still has a cause.

Is Tithing for Today?

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INTRODUCTION

All things come from God, and what we give back to Him is simply already His. Think of the gifts God has given to people—tremendous gifts that so often are not used for God but for self-promotion, money, and fame. But someday, every person will have to face God and be accountable for what He gave us.

So many Christians are missing out on tremendous blessings because they have never really understood the principle of tithing—which is to give back to God a mere 10 percent of what is already His.

But the tithe goes way beyond giving money in the offering. In this booklet we will consider not only what the tithe is, but how it is to be given: willingly, systematically, and cheerfully. Please remember, this booklet is taken from a message preached in one of Dr. Stevens' classes. This is *not* meant to be a complete doctrinal statement on this subject.

Chapter One

WHAT GOD SETS APART AS HOLY

"But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? *for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee*" (1 Chronicles 29:14).

"For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for *it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer*" (1 Timothy 4:4-5).

"I *beseech* you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, *holy*, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

When Paul said, "I beseech you brethren…," he was urging believers to do something. He

was saying, "I urge you to go from theology to practice, from knowing to living this truth: We are to give our bodies as a "living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God." "Holy" refers to that which is sanctified, set apart, and given over completely to God. When I present my body to God, I am giving back to Him something He already owns (1 Chronicles 29:14*b*).

An understanding of what is holy is central to our understanding of tithing. "Holy" means set apart unto God and sanctified by Him. What is holy is the Lord's and the Lord's alone. He places it in His treasure house.

The Origin of the Tithe in the Garden

It has been speculated that there were ten trees in the Garden of Eden—nine of which Adam and Eve could touch and one they were not to touch (Genesis 2:9, 16-17). The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, however, was set apart by God for Himself. It was a volitional test. "This one is mine," God told Adam and Eve. "Of the rest of the trees, you may eat anything you want." The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil represented a conscience God didn't want Adam and Eve to experience. God didn't want them to enter into self-consciousness with their

prerogative and free volition outside of the perfect environment of Christ.

Adam did not guard the Garden as he should have. Eve was deceived, but it was Adam's fault for not covering her. In this perfect environment, he proved himself to be a very poor head. They ate of the first tree, which belonged to God. This tree gave Adam knowledge about Satan and the demons. God didn't want Adam to be conscious of evil; He wanted Adam to walk with Him. But when Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge, they entered into a consciousness of the precreation negativity of Satan and recognized their right to choose evil.

The Offering that God Respects

"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (Genesis 4:3-5).

Cain brought an offering from the ground. There is nothing to indicate that it was the firstfruits of the ground. To begin with, Cain should

not have brought that offering because it was without blood. But also, it was an *offering*, and we are not to give an offering without first giving the tithe. Offerings come after the tithe.

Abel, on the other hand, killed of the "firstlings" of his flock. He offered much more than a lamb, he gave his first lamb. Long before Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, Abel understood the order of the offering and the tithe. Magnificently, he gave a lamb with the shedding of blood, and he gave offerings beyond the lamb. The lamb, of course, pointed ahead to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the ultimate Lamb of God.

"And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Cain, God did not respect, because he didn't believe in the blood offering. Cain believed in a works program, and he gave without the proper motives.

Chapter Two

THE FIRSTS BELONG TO GOD

In Exodus 13:2, the Lord told Moses, "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine."

Many things are not ours, including our tithes.

Before the Levitical priesthood was established, each home was like a tabernacle. The man was the priest for his home, and his firstborn was set apart to carry on that role. God said, "Your first son is going to be mine, not yours. He is mine." It is a principle that is carried on through the entire Scriptures, even into the New Testament.

"Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD" (Numbers 3:13). The firstborn be-

longed to God: he was sanctified, set apart, and holy.

"The firstfruits also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give" (Deuteronomy 18:4). If you are a farmer growing corn or producing grapes, to whom does the first part of it belong? God. Touching that which is the Lord's would be like Uzzah touching the Ark of God, in 2 Samuel 6:6-7. He touched the Ark and died instantly.

The Ark of God's presence was not to be touched by man except when God gave orders for the Levites to carry it on their shoulders. The Ark was the Lord's, and this was God's way of handling His plan and His provision: The Ark belonged to God, a man touched it, and that man immediately died. The ark was sanctified, it was holy, it was set apart unto His treasury. It was God's.

Giving off the Top

"That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there" (Deuteronomy 26:2).

I gather fruit, bring it home, feed my family, and tithe on what is left, right? Wrong. The first basket had to be the Lord's. This is based on the principle of seeking His Kingdom first (Matthew 6:33). In 2 Corinthians 8:5, "they first gave their own selves to the Lord." The first son belongs to God, the first corn, the first wine, and the first-fruits. There should be no argument about tithing. The tithe is not ours; it belongs to God. We are not to keep it for ourselves.

"And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD:

"Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God:

"And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine, and of oil, unto the priest, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage.

"And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes:

and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house.

"For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God" (Nehemiah 10:35-39).

"Tithes"—the word is mentioned often in the Bible, although many try to rationalize it away. This is how we ought to work it. If a salesman makes a sale, once he has the money in hand, he should give the firstfruits to God, *before* taxes. We are to tithe before we do anything else, because that is what is commanded in the Book.

What does "first" mean? Does the first come *after* something? The first is *first*. There are no exceptions. The first tree, the first son, the first basket of fruit, the first corn, the first grapes, the first cattle, the first of the herds and the flocks, the first of all is set apart for God. The Bible clearly teaches in Luke 9:57-62 that the reason Jesus would not permit three men who "would" to follow Him was that each of them wanted to do something *else* first.

Remember, that which is holy is sanctified, set apart unto God. It is God's and it is placed into the treasury of the Lord.

Tithes and offerings are two separate issues. An offering is voluntary, given according to what you have or what you *don't* have (the Macedonians gave to Paul out of their *need*, in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5). The tithe, however, is the first tenth from what already belongs to God. He allows us to keep nine-tenths for our use, even though all of it belongs to Him.

"And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16:12). In Malachi 3:10, God says "Prove me…, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing…." In 2 Corinthians 8:9-11, we are instructed to give willingly as Christ gave Himself.

The tithes and offerings are brought into the sanctuary. They are not for us to take into our own hands. Based on Malachi 3 and Luke 16:12, tithes and offerings ought to go to the local assembly ("the storehouse"). From there, the leadership of the church, under the direction of God, determine how the money is to be used for the work of God.

Voluntary offerings can be designated for

specific purposes, but the tithes are what God has ordained for the support of His congregations and furtherance of His work. These firstfruits are not ours; the tithe has nothing to do with us—it is set apart. Furthermore, because it is not ours but God's, a good steward predetermines to give his tithe, even when he will be away for a week for some reason.

This is no insignificant issue, as we will see in examining the Scripture. God takes tithing very seriously, and so should every Christian.

God's Firstfruits for Us

Jesus Christ is God's tithe for the world (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). He is the firstfruits of them who came from the grave. Jesus Christ was set apart and sanctified in His humanity for God's use. God took what was His and gave Him as a gift for the whole world. He gave His own Son and shed His precious blood as a tithe for the whole human race.

"First" is the word we all have to understand. Jesus is the firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:20). God gave from off the top. He offered the most valuable thing for the world: Jesus Christ. It was the greatest gift ever given.

Marriages don't make it because couples

often don't understand what to put first. The Bible is holy, sanctified, and set apart by God. It is His Word, and it must be put first in every relationship. Every word of God is pure; if we add to it, we make ourselves liars (see Proverbs 30:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32). We are to live by *every* word of God (Matthew 4:4). Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). We cannot take away from the Word or add to it (Revelation 22:18-19). It is not of any private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20).

The Bible is to be put first—not our feelings and not our rights. We are to live by every single word of God and take up our cross daily. The Bible is God's living mind.

Sanctification does not mean sinless perfection, as far as we go. We can, however, live as clean as we want to live because of His provision. And, when we give ourselves, we are to give our best.

Did God take out for taxes? Did He subtract His expenses? No. Yet, more and more, Christians are becoming thieves and robbers. They are outwardly "good" people who may not live in any overt sins, but they don't obey this doctrine of tithing. And though it may seem, for a time,

that they are being blessed, they are missing *God's* blessing.

Chapter Three

HONORING HIS WORD

Jericho was the first city in Canaan, the land God promised to Israel. God said, "Jericho is *My* city—don't touch a thing in Jericho. The silver, the gold, the brass, and the iron are to be taken out of Jericho and put in the treasury house of the Lord" (see Joshua 6:19). Achan touched what God had set apart, and everything about him was destroyed. His wife, his family, his cattle, and his possessions were stoned and burned with fire (Joshua 7:1-26).

Jericho belonged to God. The whole city was burned with fire, which speaks of judgment. Furthermore, Joshua warned that whoever rebuilt Jericho would pay with his firstborn! Israel could have any other city in Canaan. They were free to drive out the enemies and live there peacefully, which they did for forty years.

Do we realize what we do when we touch what is God's? This is a very solemn thing to

consider.

Notice that God told Joshua: "Up, sanctify the people; sanctify yourselves against tomorrow" (Joshua 7:13). This came after Israel's defeat at Ai. As the leader, Joshua was responsible to pray for his people and their sanctification. The prayers of a pastor can set apart those in the congregation.

So, if the proper instruction from the Word of God is given, and people take that information and say, "God, by Your mercy and grace I will do this," then the Word is sanctified by obedience, honoring God's Word as *God's* Word.

God Sanctifies Our Words

Ananias and Sapphira said that they would sell their property and give the money to the Church. Many were doing it at that time, and they gave exactly what they said they would give. These were powerful gifts, for this was just the beginning of the Church, and they trusted God for the consequences of their giving.

Ananias and Sapphira, however, kept back half of the money they got for the property. This would have been fine had they not said that they were going to give it all. But they made a commitment and did not live up to that com-

mitment.

When we tell God we are going to do something, what we say belongs to God. It is sanctified. When I sit down to eat, I sanctify my food—and I am completely serious about it. So many do it frivolously, but I believe in sanctifying the food I put in my body.

If I should say to God, "I am going to start soul-winning," then I have sanctified the Great Commission in my life. I am obligated the rest of my life to go soul winning. I have sanctified the Word of God for me. Ananias and Sapphira sanctified something and then held back.

In John 15:12, Jesus says, "Love one another as I have loved you." We take this, say "Yes" to the Holy Spirit, and let Him fill us with love. We sanctify for ourselves what has already been sanctified by God. What we sanctify through grace and love ends up adding degrees of glory to our rewards and to our inheritance in heaven.

All That I Am Belongs to God

Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We are not our own; we belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). My body is holy. As a Christian, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God reside in it. It is not mine but God's, so I

have to be careful how I use what belongs to Him. He bought me and paid a price for me. My body is the Holy Spirit's habitation (Ephesians 2:22). Therefore, I have to make sure I honor Him in how I use it, how I clothe it, how I think with it, what I say with it, and where I go with it. My body is the Lord's.

All of us would have to admit that many times since we became Christians, we have used our bodies for ourselves, for the pleasure of the old sin nature, and for many other reasons. We have taken what was sanctified, that which belongs to God, and used it wrongly. This is true of every believer. But our bodies are not our own. They belong to God.

Chapter Four

TITHING IS NOT TO BE LEFT UNDONE

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

"And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.

"For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:42-44).

When the widow put in her two mites, she put in *all* that she had. Jesus was watching her. And what did she do? She sanctified what she gave (which was all that she had). That means she made it holy. It was set apart strictly for God. It belonged to God.

It is not the same for the tithe, however. We do not sanctify our tithe, because it already belongs to God. Remember the first tree in the gar-

den? The first basket of fruit? The first of the flocks? The first son? Who did they belong to? They are the Lord's. Did the firstfruits belong to the farmer? No. It was God's *anyway*. It was a tithe.

Some folks rationalize in Adam, saying, "I'll starve if I tithe!" Obey God, and He will be faithful to keep you. I know a missionary couple who live in a cramped apartment without air conditioning in a very expensive city in Europe. Still, he tithes off the top to his homebase ministry here in America. It never crosses his mind to touch that money. He knows God has sanctified it.

In Genesis 14, Abraham tithed to Melchizedek. Some have taught that this was merely a form of taxation because Abraham was a stranger in Salem, which later became Jerusalem. But according to verse 20, Abraham blessed "the most high God" and gave tithes of "all." Nothing is said about taxes. Abraham was giving back to God what belonged to God.

"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be

my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Genesis 28:20-22)

Jacob made a vow to God. What would he "surely give"? *The tenth.* He would give to God what was God's to begin with.

"Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10).

Tithing and the Law

One of the biggest lies from Satan is that tithing was something that was just done under the Law. Tithing has nothing to do with the Law. The principle that 10 percent belonged to God originated at least four hundred years before the Law was given (Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:1-10). Once the Law was introduced, tithing did continue (Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 8:17).

Tithing is to be grace giving. It started 430 years before the Law. We are to give by grace through faith, with a cheerful heart. Enemies of tithing always accuse tithers of being under the Law, yet Jacob was taught by Abraham to tithe.

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed

me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

"Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

"And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 3:8-12).

From this passage, we see that if we are faithful to tithe, God will not only pour out a blessing, but He will also rebuke the devourer. Yet, if the tithes are not brought in, we are "cursed with a curse." This does not mean that we would necessarily suffer a sudden attack. But it does mean that God may not intervene in our circumstances to bless us.

In Matthew 23:23, Jesus confirms tithing: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hyp-

ocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Are we to leave tithing undone? According to Jesus, we are not. "For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches" (Romans 11:16). This means I am to honor what is the Lord's. It is holy and set apart. It is God's. It is in His treasure house. It does not belong to me. Then I, as a branch, am holy because of my obedience to the Lord's Spirit, the Lord's grace, and the Lord's love.

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). As firstfruits, we honor what is God's and sanctify the Word of God, which is sanctified by Him. When we sanctify the Word, all of heaven protects us, blesses us, and uses us in the angelic conflict.

Chapter Five

THE JOY OF A WILLING HEART

"To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23).

We are members of the church of the firstborn. As believer-priests and members of the New Testament Church, we are placed ahead of the Old Testament believers. They are patriarchs and prophets, and they will be rewarded greatly. We are called to be His Bride, and Jesus is going to be our Husband. Today, He is the Head of the Church, and we are going to be the firstborn of all eternity. Kings and people will come to see us as the Bride, as the Lamb's wife.

We have such a rich inheritance. Therefore, we are to give willingly, cheerfully, thankfully, without thought of the consequences. We are to give with pure motives, as a ministry to the Lord and His saints, and we are to give consistently in

a systematic, organized, and preplanned manner.

In God's treasure house, He has sanctified, made holy, and set apart many things for Himself. The preacher sanctifies what God has sanctified when he tells the Truth. We sanctify what we hear when we obey in the Spirit of grace and love.

God's Great Gifts to Us

"But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee…I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart, I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee" (1 Chronicles 29:14, 17).

It is by God's mercies that we are not consumed. His mercies are new every morning; His compassions do not fail (Lamentations 3:22-23). The earth is the Lord's (Psalm 24:1; 1 Corinthians 10:26, 28). God gives the earth back to His people (Job 15:19). God quiets the earth (Job 37:17). He scatters the east wind (Job 38:24). He waters the fields (Job 38:25-26). When a tree is

cut down, He makes it grow again (Job 14:7-9). The sun, the moon, the stars—everything about this place called earth, God made for man, whom He made a little lower than the angels.

In His amazing eternal grace, which reveals His character, God decided to give us a tremendous gift. Billions of years ago, in foreknowledge of what we would choose to do in sinning against Him (Psalm 5:4; Habbakuk 1:13), God gave His Son, the best heaven had to offer. The Son became the firstborn among the brethren (Romans 8:29) and the firstfruits of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23). While we were yet sinners without strength, He gave His only begotten Son. What a gift! God says to us, "I want you to get to know me, because I am a God who honors your volition, and I am the God of all grace." There is a difference between grace and mercy. Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve: salvation. Mercy is God not giving us what we truly deserve: judgment.

Mercy met truth (Psalm 85:10). Righteousness and peace kissed each other. Heaven looked down and truth sprung up from the earth. God, who spared not His own Son but gave Him up for us all, now freely gives us all things in His way, His truth, and His plan (Ro-

mans 8:32).

When we believed while we were yet ungodly, God saved us in our weakness and gave us so many things by grace. The Father justified us so that no sin record could ever be brought up before Him. At that moment, He sanctified us positionally. Now, He sanctifies us daily in a process. We are sanctified, we are being sanctified, and we will be sanctified. He has seated us in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), hid us with Christ in God, and made us brand-new creatures forever. Old things are passed away, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). He took away our past except for the fragrance of memories (Song of Solomon 2:11).

God did all of these things out of His nature of love as the God of all grace, all mercy, all comfort, and all patience (Romans 15:5).

When we give something back to God, He doesn't want us to do it unless we do it with a willing heart. Our giving must be done willingly, cheerfully, and systematically (see 2 Corinthians 8:3, 12; 9:7). It must be done with thanksgiving and with pure motives (2 Corinthians 9:9-11; Matthew 6:24).

If I don't have a willing heart, I am not to give offerings. If I gave a million dollars without

a willing heart, it would be counted by Him as wood, hay, and stubble (using money selfishly, not tithing because of circumstances and conditions). But whatever I give with a willing heart is counted as gold, because I trusted Deity; silver, because I redeem the time; and precious stones, because God esteems my faith-giving as precious.

Chapter Six

GIVING LEADS TO WISDOM

"And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying,

"Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass,

"And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,

"And oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, and onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate.

"*And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the Lord hath commanded*" (Exodus 35:4-10).

God told Moses in Exodus 35:4-10 that He wanted the people to give specific things for the

building of the Tabernacle. The wise people came and gave willingly. God stirred their hearts with a willing spirit (Exodus 35:21-22). The God of all grace creates in us a response to His grace. Those who gave willingly, cheerfully, and systematically simply gave God what was already His.

Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, purchased by the blood of the Lamb. We are to glorify God in our spirit, soul, and body. Will God force me to present these to Him? No. I must present myself with a willing heart. If I don't present myself, then I have to face the consequences from God.

Be Doers of the Word

We seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; then, all things will be added unto us. The gift of righteousness comes by grace to help us to reign in life by Christ Jesus (Romans 5:17). When we take God's grace, use it, and respond to it, we have sanctified grace in our lives. When we obey God in soul winning and go with a willing heart that is *strong* in grace (2 Timothy 2:1), *growing* in grace (2 Peter 3:18), *established* in grace (Hebrews 13:9), and *standing* in grace (Romans 5:2), then we sanctify the Great

Commission. In going into all the world—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts—we sanctify the Word by obeying it.

The Bible has been set apart as holy. From Genesis to Revelation, God has set apart sixty-six books as His. He reveals this Word through His Spirit and His heart. Christ is the living Word. The Bible is the written Word made alive through the Spirit and grace.

When I love others as Christ loves me, I sanctify the commandment to love one another (John 15:12; 13:34; 1 John 3:14-15). We obey the commandment and set it apart for God. God then sheds His love abroad in our hearts. We are filled with love and grace and obey the channel of communication as the means of manifestation.

God's Word is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). Heaven and earth will pass away, but His Word will never pass away (Matthew 24:35).

We give the firstfruits of everything in our lives to God. Then, in every area of our lives, God's resurrection power abides through grace, through mercy, and through love. If we don't give, He will be loving, gracious, patient, and kind.

"As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey

me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me" (Psalm 18:44). As soon as we hear the Word and we obey, then with our obedience we sanctify the Word of God.

Without power, without grace, without mercy, and without love, doctrine is worthless—it is just knowledge and the letter of the Law. The flesh profits nothing. But, the words Jesus speaks to us, they are spirit and they are life.

God sanctifies His Word, we obey and we sanctify it, then we are conformed to Christ's image. We trust Him with all of our hearts; we lean not on our own understanding; we acknowledge Him in all of our ways; and He will direct our paths. That is *God's* promise to us.

CONCLUSION

"And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem" (Nehemiah 11:2).

Ultimately, tithing reflects a giving of ourselves back to God. We are His. Yet, he equipped us with free volition, and the choices are ours to make. First, we give ourselves to God and then to men, by the will of God, to do the work of God (2 Corinthians 8:5). We are always under grace. If we fail, we name it and rebound. God will not condemn us; He has paid for everything. He only wants to teach us how to set apart what He has given us to set apart. Then, whatsoever we do, we do to glorify God—and we do it from the heart (Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

God has allowed us to be great stewards of His grace, and so much of our stewardship is properly managing what He freely gives us. Tithing reveals a trust in His Word and His pro-

vision. The righteous are never forsaken (Psalm 37:25). Trust God, and see what He will do! "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16).

Thank You, Lord, that You are so trustworthy. We are grateful that your plan for our lives is only to bless us. Let us use the authority of Your Word with conviction as we use our volition. We choose to buy the truth and sell it not. We desire to be good stewards of Your gifts, and we will give portions as we go, knowing that You see everything. In the end, it will come back, multiplied. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jewels of Reconciliation

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Reconciliation is a subject that is always on the heart of God. He never looks at people the way that you and I do. He sees as only He can see, and He is always waiting to be gracious to His people.

For the most part, the world's attitude toward those who fail is that they should be shunned and forgotten. Very few will commit themselves to reclaiming and rectifying damaged lives. According to the Bible, however, this is exactly the way God operates every moment of every day.

In this booklet, we examine the path taken by the prodigal son in Luke 15. We see his downward spiral into a wasteful existence. Happily, the story does not end there. These pages

will reveal how the Father's love remained steady and ready to receive the son back to the family and to fellowship.

Chapter One

FAMILIARITY BRINGS WITHDRAWAL

"And he said, A certain man had two sons:

"And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said,

How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:11-24).

In the story of the Prodigal Son, we find an expression of the jewels of reconciliation in the Bible. It is a unique story—probably one of the most recognized stories in the Book.

First, the younger son asked for his inheritance, and his father gave it to him. God will sometimes give us what we want, even if it is not the best thing. So many people have received things and, in a temporal evaluation, have called them blessings of God. When God answered their prayers, however, He answered them in accord with their own self-will. According to Psalm 106:15, He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.

Recently, there have been certain attacks upon the Body of Christ. Without going into specifics, these attacks have had a specific purpose, which is to make people walk by sight. Satan wants people in the church to depend upon their experiences—and, oh, how he has a field day when people walk that way.

Jesus did not reprove by what He saw (Isaiah 11:3), and He did not judge by what He heard. He refused to walk by sight in His humanity on earth. He refused to base His evaluations on hearsay. His instruction to the apostles was this, in John 7:24: "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

Self-Will Triggers a Reaction

The first mistake the prodigal son made was

that he lived in his own self-will. Oh, may God help us to say as Jesus did, "Not my will, but thine be done" (Matthew 26:39). Next, he gathered up all of his belongings and took off on a journey into a far country. There, he wasted his substance with riotous living.

He progressed from self-will to selfishness. First, he said, "I am going to get my own way." Then he said, "I am going to experience life apart from my father, apart from the boredom I experience at home."

It is amazing how easily people withdraw. They are bored with God, bored with Jesus Christ, bored with the Holy Spirit, bored with their Creator, bored with the Redeemer. They go from self-will and they progress into selfishness. That is why we always need to catch boredom whenever it crops up into our lives. We must also catch familiarity and bring it into captivity to Christ.

Anytime you are dissatisfied with your life or with people, it is because you have not been crucified with Christ for the moment you are in.

Each of us must take up our Cross each day. In doing this, we will love the fellowship we have with God, the fellowship we have in serving Him with others, and the fellowship of obe-

dience to Him. We will love to fellowship with God once we treasure His presence, magnify His Person, amplify His promises, and live in divine experiences.

Chapter Two

FROM WASTING AND WANTING TO REPENTANCE AND LIFE

The Prodigal separated himself unto what he wanted, and then he began wasting what he had. He went from separation from God, separation from his father, and separation of service in order to serve his desires. He descended into a deep-rooted life of sensuality and squandered all that he had until he found himself spiritually and materially destitute.

We will always spend all that we have when start down the path of self-will and selfishness. Spiritual destitution is our destination when we enter into the pattern of sensuality and we are separated from God in our experience.

The important point, however, is that in the midst of his self-abasement, the prodigal son was humbled by God. This story is a testimony of how God humbles us when we refuse to humble ourselves. This man was far from home

and deep in want. He could not have what he wanted because he had spent all that he had. The process of wasting brought him to self-abasement.

God let the prodigal reap exactly what he had sown. Notice Luke 15:16:

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him."

This son had no idea what he had lost. He was longing for the slop that was fed to the pigs.

But beyond that, this son had no idea that he had a father at home who was looking out from his front porch, always wondering if this would be the day that his long lost son would come home. The prodigal had no comprehension of his father's heart. He never understood proper motives and how they related to his father's heart. He never understood the privilege of serving God. Familiarity, boredom, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life consumed him. What did that lead him to? Starvation.

Realization and Conviction

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with

hunger!

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:16-17).

A beautiful thing happened here. The son "came to himself." This is called a realization. When God's people come to themselves and get right with God, they stop their backsliding, because they have experienced a realization. It is the most precious thing to realize that God has a provision for every single problem we will ever have.

I have said this to so many people recently. For every situation, God will provide a divine solution. When this divine solution comes to us through the Word of God and through the Holy Spirit and we mix faith with what we hear, then we will experience a realization of the solution.

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:18-19).

First came the realization, and then came resolution through humility by choosing to return to his father. Sin had exacted its price in his life, and now he had a realization and a resolution. "I will go home and just confess to my father and admit that I have sinned against heaven."

This is repentance. Oh, the gift of repentance is something very beautiful. The prodigal son had to repent for something big, but as believers we should go beyond this and also repent for the little things that have crept into our lives.

"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.

"Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth" (Jeremiah 31:18-19).

Chapter Three

THE GREATEST OF COMEBACKS

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:20-24).

We have seen the Prodigal experience realization, resolution, and repentance. Now we will see his return and his reconciliation. He came back to the place that he left; he came back to the

place that he had misunderstood. There, he had a great reconciliation with his father.

The father then called for the robe, the ring, and the shoes. The once-lost son is getting re-clothed.

God re-clothes us when we come to the point of reconciliation. For our outward appearance, we receive the robe of righteousness. Our restoration becomes very evident. Even though we are saved, if we have wandered away in sin but have returned to God, we all need to experience the re-clothing of the inner man and the outer man. God clothes us again with the Finished Work.

At last, after all of this, there is rejoicing—wonderful rejoicing in celebration of the son's return.

Rejoice Over Those Who Return

At every service, someone gets saved in our church. I always get a feeling of rejoicing when someone is saved. I cannot explain it. I cannot grasp it. I cannot understand it. Yet, there is joy, just as there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner who is converted. The angels rejoice, and I believe with all my heart that loved ones already in heaven rejoice as well when they

look through the crystal sea and view what is happening on earth.

Believers ought to be happy to see people get saved. No one in a church service should grow bored and feel as if they have to get up and leave during the invitation for salvation at the end of the service. How can anyone be bored when souls are being transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son? A true believer should recognize this as one of the most important rewards he ever receives in his service to God.

Just as there should be great rejoicing in the hearts of Christians when an unbeliever receives Christ, we should rejoice when a Christian returns to Him and is reconciled.

The Glorious Ring

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

"And patience, experience; and experience,

hope:

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us" (Romans 5:1-5).

When the Prodigal came back home, He received a ring. In that ring were eight jewels, the jewels of reconciliation, as I like to call them, referred to in Romans chapter five.

First, there is justification and that brings in peace. Next, we are given access by faith. Right now, at this moment, we have the jewel of access by faith into the grace wherein we stand. This access comes with an authority, and it guarantees an eternal circle of access to God the Father that has been given to us by Jesus Christ.

What an amazing thing this is! With this level of access, we can come boldly before God's throne.

Other jewels in the ring of reconciliation include joy and hope. Then we have patience and experience, two jewels that really go together, as patience works experience into our lives.

How vital it is to experience the love of God, the grace of God, the convictions of God, the way of God, the truth of God. We can experience the life of God in the plan of God, in the purpose

of God, in the poise of God, through the provision of God!

Next, we have hope. What a beautiful thing it is not to be alienated from the life of God through unbelief, but instead to enjoy the tremendous blessed hope that is in knowing and trusting God. Our hope is not only in Jesus Christ's second coming, but our hope is also in having His blessings in our lives right now.

Then, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

I cannot explain to you what I believe God is going to do for us. Great things are planned for God's children because of the jewels in His ring of reconciliation of Romans 5. Justification, peace, access, joy, patience, experience, hope, and love are available to us all the time.

"But I tried and I failed," you say.

The answer for you is Daniel 3:17: He is able to deliver you. Romans 4:21 says that He will fulfill His promises. In 2 Timothy 1:12, God guards what is committed to Him. He saves us to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25). And, according to Jude 24, God is able to keep us from falling.

Still, when we do fail, we have to get up and keep going on with Him.

God wants to bring us the sweet blessing of

reconciliation. He wants us to experience His sweet presence and do His mighty works. Praise Him. Let us stand before Him and realize just how wonderful it is to live in the blessings of reconciliation.

CONCLUSION

Have you ever considered some of the last words of people in the Bible?

For example, among Jesus Christ's last words before He ascended to heaven were these: "Ye shall receive power." He promised us power to resist the devil and power to bless others. This promise includes the power of God over sin, over fear, and over failure.

The last words of Second Peter are these: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18). John's last words in Revelation are these: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21).

These are beautiful principles from the Word of God, and they point to God's great principle of reconciliation. Instead of isolating ourselves from the Body and hiding out because of fear and shame brought on by our failure, let us

allow those jewels of reconciliation to shine forth. We have been redeemed, and all the glory goes to God.

Joy Comes in the Morning

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INTRODUCTION

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5*b*).

"The darker the night, the brighter the light shines." Oh, I still hear the words of that old song as they were sung by my first wife, who suffered and died from cancer a number of years ago. These phrases still bring so much comfort to my heart.

The dark seasons our souls go through can seem so very, very long. Nighttime experiences also bring pain and tears. Still, Psalm 30 promises that for every night there is a morning. No matter how dark things may become, the light will shine when the sun rises.

Think of how the disciples must have felt shortly after Jesus Christ's lifeless body was taken from the Cross and carried to the tomb. Much heaviness must have come over them as the stone was rolled into place and their Master disappeared from their sight. How dark that Fri-

day night must have been for them as they returned to their homes.

Yet, for all the despair that came on Friday, that following Sunday the sun broke through, the earth quaked, the stone was rolled away, and Jesus Christ was resurrected. The only begotten Son of God became the first begotten from the dead. He came alive again and remains alive, seated at the right hand of the Father, ever making intercession for each of us.

Joy came to earth that Easter morning. In the just same way, joy can come to us in every one of our mornings.

May God bless these words and bless each one reading them with the spirit of worship, the spirit of faith, the spirit of responding, and the spirit of trusting. May God bring in a spirit of blessing as it relates to eternity for every single person, in Christ's name.

Chapter One

RECOGNIZING THE TREASURE WITHIN

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:5-9).

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing them-

selves among themselves, are not wise.

"But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you" (2 Corinthians 10:12-13).

The "treasure" Jesus Christ speaks of is the way He gives us His light and knowledge, the doctrine of His glory in the face of His Finished Work. We have a treasure in these earthen vessels, that the power may be of God and not of us.

Think for a moment of the great principle of judging not. When it comes to any one of us measuring ourselves by ourselves, we all could justifiably measure ourselves against someone else and come out on top compared to the failures of others. That is because all of us have sinned.

So many are judgmental and critical of certain kinds of failures—usually of those that are far removed from their own weaknesses—while they fail God but in different ways. This is why Romans 2:1 says that "thou art inexcusable, O man," speaking of one who judges: for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself, because you do the same *things*, (not the same *thing*). In the measure we judge, judgment is returned to us with the very thing that we judged

with in the first place (see Matthew 7:1).

God Gets All the Glory

We have this treasure inside our bodies. We have the Father, we have the Son, and we have the Holy Spirit, that the excellency of the ability of power may be of God and not of us. God must receive all the glory for everything in this ministry and in each individual's life. In everything, God must be the one who receives the glory.

According to Acts 12, God will not share His glory with another. He will *supply* His glory, He will *impart* His treasure in our earthen vessels, but He will not share His glory lest a man exalt his own efforts. A man can be loved, honored, and respected but never exalted, because God is the One to be glorified.

We Are But Dust

We all have feet of clay. Therefore, it is not fair when we depend upon each other and make unreasonable expectations upon others. We are all in bodies of sin and death (Romans 6:6; 7:24). I am not excusing our failures, but I am making a provision so that we do not judge one another in the midst of our failure.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not in distress; we are perplexed, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8).

This word "troubled," a present passive participle in the Greek text, refers to something we go through because of the treasure in our earthen vessel. We suffer "tribulation," a term derived from the word used to describe the process of pressing and squeezing grapes.

"Troubled" refers to the present whereas "perplexed" refers to the future. When we are perplexed, we seem to have no way out, and we feel stuck in embarrassment or doubt; that is, unless the treasure is operating thoroughly and fully in us.

According to this verse, we are squeezed on every side, yet not in distress. We must understand that sometimes we are placed in narrow places. God allows us to be crowded into tight spots. Still, we are not in despair (another present participle middle voice in the Greek grammar). That means the subject receives and participates in the action of the verb. "In despair" is *exaporeomai*, which means to be utterly at a loss, to despond, to be utterly without a way. We are not in despair, however, because we have a new and living way made by Jesus Christ

when He died on the Cross for us.

Chapter Two

ENDURING THE NIGHT SEASONS

As we consider this, I remember a message by E.V. Hill: "Weeping at Night and Joy in the Morning." I listened to some of it late, late one night because I couldn't sleep. It was very good, and it made me think of this section of 2 Corinthians. In that message, Pastor Hill said that we weep because we do have nighttimes.

Everybody has night seasons. Everyone has the dark times in their life. It is hard to say how long those periods may go on. They may last a long time for some people. We may weep because we are falling short. We may weep because we are sick of failing in an area, so we weep in our hearts. We may weep because a child or a member of the family utterly fails, and that makes parents weep. In a marriage where someone has indeed been unfaithful and gone out on their partner, the victim weeps.

May I add that we weep because many times we are persecuted unjustly. If it is consistent, if it continues for a long period of time, we weep more. We are human, so we weep. It is a night hour for us, and we weep. We weep because loved ones hurt us, because friends hurt us. Then we weep because we hurt loved ones and friends and we are sorry for hurting them. There are so many night hours we go through in this lifetime, times when we are troubled on every side but not in distress, perplexed but not destroyed, persecuted but not forsaken, and therefore we weep.

Then there are times that we weep when, through the Holy Spirit, we honestly consider people going to hell, especially if it is a member of our own family. We weep when we consider the damnation and darkness of hell, which is the destiny for people who plainly reject Jesus Christ. We weep when we consider some of the people we have known all our lives who have died and who definitely rejected Jesus Christ, because they are in hell. We weep because so many people are lost. That troubles us, and that makes us very, very concerned. We seem so helpless to do anything about it. And it is all because they simply reject Jesus Christ.

Sickness is another thing that can make folks weep. Some people we know have been sick for a long time, and we see what they go through. We see pain that nobody knows but them. We sense the agony, the feelings of their emotions, the thoughts in their minds, what goes through their heart, and we feel so helpless. Yes, they will receive grace. Yes, they will be blessed in eternity, but we weep because of what they must endure in this lifetime.

We weep if we lose a loved one, and we weep in identification with other people who have lost a loved one. Even though we know that Christians are absent from the body and present with God immediately, tears come as we consider certain memories and the plain fact that we will miss them.

For example, a very special lady lost her husband who was in his forties. No one knows but this woman and her family what she has gone through. She has some dear friends who have stood by her side. We know that this separation from our friend is but for a moment. Yes, God does give grace, and God does make a provision, and thank God He sustains us and builds

us up. But we do weep because we identify with how they must feel.

We weep for children when a home is broken up by someone's unfaithfulness. That is a nighttime experience. We weep. We may not weep outwardly, or we may weep outwardly, but I'll guarantee you, we weep.

The Afflictions of Our Society

We also weep because society is just plain mad. For example, the boastfulness that has come with the rise of homosexuality and lesbianism: Bragging, boasting, coming out of the closet, they demand that society would accept their lifestyle. I have compassion for any sinner who wants help, but many want us to agree that what they are doing is okay. We also weep because of the drug addicts, the murderers, and the thieves who continue in their ways.

Some people weep because they just never have finances enough to get by, and they have to go on and on and on with needs. We weep at those things. Having said this, there is basically no quick-fix program for many of these situations.

It takes prayer. And with prayer there always comes hope.

Chapter Three

THE SUN ALWAYS COMES UP

"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

"They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

"The LORDis my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

"The LORDis good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD" (Lamentations 3:22-26).

The beautiful thing that the Bible reveals to us is this: Nights do not last forever. The sun does come up. There is always a morning. And then there is joy.

Oh, the joy we have when God brings us into something!

For example, when I was a young man, we lived in a house with no indoor facilities (if you

know what I mean). We had no electric lights when I was a teenager, no hot water, none of those things. To have gone from that stage in life to owning a house, there is joy.

There is such joy when God gives us faithful friends. And then there is joy over reconciliations. In the past several years, I personally have had many reconciliations with people who do not live in this area. They have been very sacred and very precious reconciliations where love is now abounding and prayer was answered because the morning came.

The sun came up, joy came back, and that joy became our strength.

Trained in the Night Seasons

The night seasons have trained us in many areas. They have taught us how to identify with the Cross. They taught us how to identify with Christ's sufferings. The night seasons have taught us how to trust Him in the midst of some of our worst situations. That has been very profitable for us, very meaningful for us. I thank God for those times.

I was sharing this principle with a businessman who has become my great friend. We were together in my office, and we were both very

broken as he shared about his thirty years of marriage. I was telling him how my first wife suffered with leukemia. Oh, the pain, pain, pain! I shared about the night that I came home with the college basketball team from New York after she heard the news from the doctor. I can still see her saying to me, "Sit down." And we sobbed.

For the next two months, her pain was incredible. She said, "Please, please pray that God will take me home, because I can't stand this pain." When leukemia is in its worst stage, there is nothing you can do to take away the pain. Give medicine, do anything, and it doesn't work anymore. The needles go in, and the transfusions keep you alive, but you are just in so much pain.

The night before she went home to Jesus, she said very beautifully to me, "You are my king." And I said, "You are my queen." She was gone just few hours later.

But the joy came in the morning because she was out of her suffering. It was God's appointment for her to take her home.

At Last, Joy Will Come

Joy always follows suffering. Joy always fol-

lows, and the morning always comes. Light will always shine through. It can't stay dark all the time.

"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God" (Isaiah 50:10).

"And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel" (Isaiah 45:3).

If we are careful to observe them, then we will find treasures in darkness, secret riches in the midst of painful times. When our mind is stayed on God, He gives us amazing victories of faith and grace.

As you think this over, never let your darkness or your weeping defeat you. Whatever the reason is for trouble, it really isn't the issue. Never let these things bring you down. Things are going to hurt you. There will be plenty of pain. But never let those things keep you there.

Learn and grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ through all things. And remember, if you are going through some of these

things now, I will guarantee you that the sun will come up, and the dark night of your soul will be over. It doesn't matter if you fail or I fail or somebody else fails us. It really doesn't matter. Any of these things can cause weeping. But thank God, joy comes in the morning!

CONCLUSION

Yes, we can be troubled on every side, yet not in distress. We are sometimes perplexed, but we are never destroyed. We endure persecution, but we are not forsaken. As all of us old-time boxers used to say, we are often knocked down but not knocked out.

As believers, we are always bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may indeed be manifested in our bodies. We which are alive are delivered unto the Cross that the life of Jesus Christ may be manifested to others.

Often the Cross and death work in us so that life can work in those who do not know Christ the way we do. God never gives us more than we can take, although many times it seems as if He does. But we will always find that God is faithful (1 Corinthians 10:13). God is so faithful! He will not put us into situations that we cannot take, and with every temptation He always will

provide a way of escape.

Father, indeed bless us today with this message. We thank You for the truth of it. We thank You for Your provision. We thank You that there is a purpose in it. The Cross is working in us, the death of Christ is working in us, and life is going out of us. And where is that life coming from? It is coming from the treasure that is in us. That treasure is revealing its reflections and its light, giving hope and the promise of joy even in the darkest night. Thank You! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Just a Heartbeat Away

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INTRODUCTION

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

"And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

"And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:16-21).

It will only take an instant for us to pass from this life into eternity. Jesus spoke this para-

ble to expound on the temporary nature of our existence here on earth.

Every single of one us is just one heartbeat from facing our destiny. When our time comes, each of us will go into eternity. For those who, through a decision of faith, have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior, this moment of passing will be glorious. In a moment, we are absent from our bodies and present with the Lord. And there we shall stay forever and ever.

Those, however, who choose not to trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior shall be translated, upon their death, to a very different place. Hell is not a place of parties and sensual enjoyment. Rather, hell, as described by Jesus Himself, is a place of terrible and endless torment, both mentally and physically. It is a total separation from God and everything that He is.

This booklet describes the great reality of heaven and hell, emphasizing how close we are to experiencing eternity. For all of us, each heartbeat brings us closer to our eternal destiny.

Chapter One

THE PLACE OF FINAL JUDGMENT

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"

(Revelation 20:11-15).

I would like to invite you to look into the greatest truths ever known to mankind. These great truths come from the Word of God as communicated through the lips and tongue of Jesus Christ. Those truths are as follows:

1. There is a literal heaven.
2. A person has to be born-again to go there.
3. There is a literal hell with unquenchable fire.
4. There is no way to get out of hell.
5. The people in hell are forgotten after the White Throne Judgment.

I have preached upon the full impact of the White Throne Judgment once in my life, in a message called, "Last Looks, Last Thoughts, Last Words."* The saddest thing about the White Throne Judgment is its conclusion, which results in one's final, eternal separation from God. The souls in hell will be resurrected before their judgment at the great White Throne of God. I don't know what kind of bodies they will have. It certainly will not be a glorified body.

At the White Throne Judgment comes the final judgment for the unsaved. Before that judgment, their existence is similar to that of a person put in prison while he is awaiting his final

trial. They are in prison until the trial comes, and then they must enter into the finality of their sentence. Multitudes upon multitudes, indescribable numbers of people, will go to hell. These are all of those who have never accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior through the Blood of the Lamb.

Our Last Look

The multitudes who have accepted Christ by grace through faith, and not according to any work done of themselves, will go to heaven. These have received the gift from God because they have believed that Jesus Christ died in their place, taking their sins upon His body at Calvary. They go to heaven by grace through faith, and they will be resurrected with glorified bodies.

I have often, in my heart only, asked God to roll back the curtain. What will it be like when I see loved ones and say my last good-byes to them at the White Throne Judgment? My conviction is that we who are born again will be seated in a heavenly grandstand, witnessing the final judgment conferred upon the lost. We will be in glorified bodies, while our loved ones who have not accepted Christ, will not have glorified bodies. We will watch as they go through the

White Throne Judgment and their eternal destiny is cemented.

I have no idea the feelings and the emotions we will have. I am overwhelmed every time I think of certain people. I am thinking of loved ones who don't go to church. They are not against it, but neither are they for it, and I sometimes wonder if they are saved at all. I am praying that if they do not know Christ, they will be saved.

The Details of Torment

"And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is

not quenched.

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:42-48).

This is how Jesus described hell. First of all, He said that the conscience of the unsaved cannot forget anything and that hell's fire is an unquenchable fire. The worm, referring to the conscience, never ceases to exist. This means that no one in hell will be able to kill a memory. Over and over and over again, the memories of the earth will return to them, and they have to live with those memories. They do not have God. They have never had the Blood. Again and again they have to deal with memory.

"And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit" (Revelation 9:2).

Another amazing thing about hell is that it is, indeed, a bottomless pit. Now what does it mean for the people in hell—loved ones or whoever they are—to be in a bottomless pit? It

means they never reach an end, they never touch bottom. Throughout eternity, they will be falling and falling and falling. Can you picture it, that they go on and keep falling but never reach an end? God cannot accept those who have rejected His grace and received it in vain. He cannot accept those who have denied His love. They have never accepted Christ and they have rejected eternal salvation. Therefore, no place is found for them (Revelation 20:11).

We have to answer to the justice of God. The moment when we truly believe and we receive Christ as our Savior, the justice of God is satisfied by His blood, His death, His burial, and His resurrection. It is a beautiful, beautiful story.

* *You can read this message in* Hallmarks From the Heart, Volume 1, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

A PICTURE FROM ETERNITY

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

"And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

"And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

"And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou

in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

"And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

"For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

"Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

"And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

"And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:19-31).

Picture with me the rich man in hell. The beggar Lazarus died and went to heaven. On earth, he desired to be fed with the crumbs from the rich man's table and lived a hard and diffi-

cult life. The rich man died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes from the torment. Then, the rich man started to pray.

He said, "Father Abraham, would you please send Lazarus, that he might go to my father's house and tell my five brethren, lest they come to this place of torment." Hell is full of fervent, earnest prayers.

Many people today in hell are praying with all their hearts but not a single one of those prayers will ever be answered. That alone represents torment. They will never taste forgiveness. They will never taste fellowship. They will never have another opportunity to be united with members of their family who are saved. So it becomes an amazing story of separation.

Oh, we must understand the urgency of getting the message out. The rich man pleaded, saying, "Please go to my father's house. Please tell my five brethren. Please!" Let us go to our families, our friends, our neighbors and plead with them to understand and accept these sacred, sacred realities.

The most beautiful thing about God is that He paid for our sins. He will never take back a single sin. He loves us. He loves so much that He calls us children of God and sons of God.

"Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit" (Proverbs 1:12).

"Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them" (Psalm 55:15).

Hades swallows up people alive. What does this mean?

It is interesting that the Word of God says that the wicked, the unsaved, go down into hell "quick." It means that when the body dies, the soul is alive when it goes to hell. It is not living in "soul sleep." In Proverbs 1:12 and Psalm 55:15, God teaches us that there is no soul sleep, but that Hades swallows them up alive and whole.

Hell is damnation. The conscience never stops dying. It is an amazing story. The fire is not quenched. Men are fully conscious in hell (Luke 16:23). Every person in hell will be judged by his works. They may spend their days on earth in wealth, but in a moment they will go down to the grave.

Everyone is just one heartbeat from eternity. That is the reason we go out soul winning whenever we can. We realize the amazing truth that if

we can just get the Gospel to people, Jesus Christ can save them for all eternity.

Chapter Three

WHY WE REDEEM THE TIME

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16).

I remember as a young pastor I would be alone going door to door because there was nobody to go out with me. The church was very small at first, and I would go into my room and weep. I would cry before God and say, "How can I reach them? I can't stand the fact that they are going to hell. I don't know how to tell them." And God just said, "Go and tell the truth." So I went and told the truth.

I was thinking the other day of all these years, nearly fifty years now, that by the mercy, grace, and love of God, I have been able to tell them the truth. On the street, on radio, on TV, I have told people about the truth, and I have never quit. No trial could make me quit. No hate

could stop my love. No sorrow could interfere with my joy. No doubting could take the place of faith.

Allow me to thank the many folks who have co-labored with me over the years for their faithfulness and for their love. I want to thank my church for being a tremendous Body. If people knew your hearts, they would understand that you are one of the greatest churches in the world. I mean that with all my heart.

Christ's Communication Is True

In hell, according to Luke 16:24, people will be preoccupied with torment. Think of what that would be like—to be preoccupied with torment for all of eternity.

You say, "That cannot be" but it is. If that is not true, then the Bible is not true. Jesus said He created us, and here we are. He told us what would happen in prophecy, and it has.

All of these things are true. This world is a very dark place. We have banded together in prayer and love, to go into all the world the best we know how, either by prayer or by faithfully supporting missionaries. We have been able to go out throughout the week, for all these years, to evangelize the lost. We are available to find

more ways to evangelize the lost.

Why?

I believe with all my heart that the White Throne Judgment is a real event. I am going to see all these unsaved people I have met, and it will be a frightening experience to see them there and to know that shortly they will go to hell.

So, really, we are living for one reason, and that is to glorify God, to be conformed to His image, to love each other, and to manifest and reflect the Master, the Lord Jesus, to whosoever we can, in the boldness of faith, in the foundation of grace, and in the nature of love.

CONCLUSION

I remember an entire family that came to Jesus Christ in my early ministry up in Maine. The husband was a drinker. The wife was a drinker. The daughter was just starting to get a little wild. The son was doing all right. I think I stayed a half a day in that town, just half a day. I pleaded. I begged them to receive Christ. But they sent me away on that day and did not make a decision for Christ.

The husband, who was under tremendous conviction, called me up several days later and said, "I haven't been able to stop thinking about what you said. Can you come over?" His daughter had just been in an accident and was in the emergency room. So we went over, and the whole family accepted Christ and the daughter survived.

What I want you to see is that we are all just around the corner from death. We are all one heartbeat from our destiny.

For you who do not know Jesus Christ, my prayer is that you will not hestitate to recognize the great need of your soul. Please take this moment to place your trust in His death, burial, and resurrection. Come to Christ and live. He will give you a new heart and a new mind instantaneously.

Please make this decision. There is no other way to heaven and eternal life with God. Pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive You as my personal Savior. Thank You for loving me so much that You died for me so I can have eternal life with You. Amen."*

Just Let God Love You

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

What is the force that could heal us more than anything in the world? We do everything to be healed physically. We do everything to be well. But the greatest force for healing is so misunderstood.

The first need in everyone's life is this: to be loved by God. Do you know what the second need is? I'll tell you: It is to be loved by God. And I will tell you what the third need is. It's to be loved by God.

Have I made that clear?

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

"We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

I want you to know that God's love was here first, so the first need for every kind of healing is to be loved by God just as you are. God loves us just as we are, and He keeps on loving us just

as we are. God's love also never demands a change; instead, it produces one.

If you can grasp what's being communicated in these pages, His love will make tremendous changes in your personal life, in your friendships, in your marriage, and in your family.

Chapter One

WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8).

Jesus Christ commended His love for us by dying for us. Picture that for a moment. He not only loved us, He did something about it. We didn't do anything. We didn't repent to make God love us. He loved us without our repentance. Am I suggesting that we can live in sin? No, I am not. I am saying that God's love produces a change but never demands it.

Be loved by God just as you are. Don't try to love God. Don't try to love others. The moment you try, you will fail. Just be loved by God. Receive a love that can never fail you, a love that

will never change toward you.

He Rests in Love

"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

Jesus Christ shed His Blood and died on the Cross to pay for our sins. He was buried and He rose again and went to Heaven. Because of this, God now forever rests in His love toward us. That's why Romans 9:16 tells us that His love is not dependent on "him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." John 1:12 says, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." He begat us of His own will with "the word of truth" (James 1:18).

Bad Relationships Made Good

Let me be very practical. How do I deal with a bad relationship? By worrying about it? By condemning myself? By feeling guilty about it? By making a fair display in my flesh (Galatians 6:12)? No. When a relationship is bad I simply let God's Word be true and let Him love me.

If I fail, I let God love me. I have no strength to change; I let God change me. Does His love fail? No, it does not. Will He change? No, He will not.

Chapter Two

JUST AS YOU ARE

A man recently called me. He's in a very bad condition, having tested positive for the virus that causes AIDS. He failed in his weakness three times in fifteen years. The third time he got HIV, and he wants to die. He was so ashamed when he told his wife about it.

What can he do? He already hates what he did. Right now, this man needs to let God love him as much as before he knew he had HIV.

Letting God love us doesn't produce lawlessness. To the contrary, it teaches us to deny ungodliness and to live quietly with the Word of God dwelling richly in our hearts.

The most beautiful thing is to let God love you just as you are. I have a reason for repeating that statement, because letting God love you is the only way the memory and the soul can be healed. The only way self-images and attitudes can be changed is by letting God love you. The

reason some men cannot love their wives properly is very simple: they don't understand how to be loved by God.

Conformed to the Image of His Son

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:28-30).

In His foreknowledge, God knew that with my volition I would choose to believe on His Son. I was justified, sanctified, and glorified because God was always for me. And He rests in His love toward me because my sins were paid for by the Son.

A person from another church called me. He said, "I have attacked you, I have hated you, and I have fought God. At twenty-nine years old, I am dying and I want to repent."

I said, "The only thing I am interested in is that you let God love you."

He said, "I have AIDS. I'm going to die."

"Just be loved, let God love you," I told him. "In the state you are in, just be loved."

He had done wrong, but the only thing he needed was to be loved by God. I visited him every day and kept telling him, "Let God love you." Within twelve weeks, that man was out of the hospital, and he was baptized in the church he hated in the past. God changed him. This man's thoughts, emotions, and decisions were now being expressed according to the Word of God. His heart was changed, then his soul was changed, and then his mind was changed. He began to love the wife he had battled for many years, and he started to love his two daughters. As he began to love the church, he began to love the lost.

The key with this man was that he did not love himself. Inwardly, he couldn't love himself, and he didn't think God loved him. He testified in church that his body was healed. Love can do that in the will of God. The Lord didn't demand a change, but He produced one with His love.

The more I let God love me without putting myself on trial, the more I let God love me without fear of failure, the more I let God love me without being resentful and angry toward others,

then the more everything in my life becomes healed. In the sovereign will of God, I will be healed, no matter what the problem is. My heart, my soul, and my emotions will be healed by just letting God love me.

Chapter Three

LOVE MAKES NEW BEGINNINGS

A twelve-year-old girl came to me about her terrible home life. The parents were seldom home; one would leave on the weekends. There was screaming and fighting. There was alcoholism. She said to me, "I'm afraid to go home because I don't know what to do. You're my pastor, could you come to the house?"

I went to the house. Very uniquely, the girl said to her father: "I want you to listen to the pastor." So I began to talk to him. "Do you know that thousands of years ago, Jesus knew that I would be here today as a servant of God?" I told him, "Sir, if I could put into words how much God loves you right now, I would. If I could put His love into words and if you could possibly believe it, things in this home would be changed."

He told me how dysfunctional and destructive the family was. "That's true," I said. "But

first I want you to let God love you, without condemnation. I'm not even going to ask you to change your drinking habits. Just let God love you." He cried like a baby right there.

That night, after church, we went out and the man accepted Jesus Christ. He never took another drink. Later, his wife accepted the Savior. They were baptized together and that twelve-year-old girl had the day of her life. The family had its picture taken and gave it to me. What a testimony of what letting God love you can do.

Forgetting the Past

I didn't go to that home to discuss how bad the father was. Genetically, psychologically, and emotionally, we could have found all kinds of reasons for the way things were. But I went there to say that God created this man in His own image and to tell him how much God was in love with him at that moment. There was no discussion of sins. I allowed the love of God to produce repentance. That little girl's daddy was changed and given a brand-new beginning.

The love of God produced a new self-image.

The love of God produced a new awareness.

The love of God produced faith.

The love of God produced hope.

The love of God revealed mercy.

The love of God revealed grace.

These parents personalized His love. They internalized it. God's love was imparted to them, and it became a part of them. Is it any wonder that 1 Corinthians 13:8 says that love never fails?

Brought Forth into Light

"I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness" (Micah 7:9). Micah the prophet was feeling down when he wrote this. He had sinned, but he understood God's love for him. He knew that God was right down there with him. Micah knew that he was going to come back because of the light of love, and he would receive forgiveness.

The love of God guarantees that God loves you as you are, as a sinner without strength. It justifies you while you are ungodly (Romans 4:5). It makes you righteous apart from the law and works (Romans 4:6). It sanctifies you. By His love, Jesus is made unto you "righteousness,

and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). The love of God guarantees that you will never be charged with another sin. It also guarantees that if you do continue in sin, the love of God will discipline *because* of love, not outside of it. The discipline comes to protect, to provide the mind of Christ, and ultimately to bless.

Chapter Four

NO IFS IN THE LOVE OF GOD

"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3).

When God said this, the nation of Israel was worshipping idols. He did not say, "I will love you if you get right." He did not say, "I will love you if you stop worshipping idols."

No, God said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." There are so many "ifs" in our relationships—so many ifs that hinder mental and emotional healing, and that sometimes stop physical healing. But God doesn't say, "I will love you *if*…." He says, "I have loved you, even while you were 'out there.' "

Didn't the father love the prodigal son while his son was "out there" in the far country just as much as when he was right at home? Yes, he did. The father's love didn't change when the

prodigal was living in sin. His love just waited patiently to give his son grace. When his volition decided it was time to go back home, just as he was, the prodigal received forgiveness and cleansing. The father gave him a ring, a robe, new shoes, and a welcome 20

home party. They killed the fatted calf for the celebration, and it all happened because the son came home just as he was (Luke 15:11-24).

Think of all that has happened in society. Consider the depths of sin going on today. Consider the terrible dysfunction in families and individuals. With all that goes on, the greatest thing the human race needs is to understand how much God loves us. Dealing with sin isn't the great issue. Deal with how much God loves you, and God's love will deal with the sin. The love of God will produce the change.

Shed Abroad in the Heart

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).

The Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in the heart, and love is the fruit of the Spirit. When I receive His love, dealing only with Him

loving me, then God's disposition takes over. His temperament comes in. I may not even realize it, but I am receiving it as His nature comes in and begins to commune and fellowship with me. And God's nature doesn't sin.

Changing Course

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

"*But God*, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:2-6).

What you are walking in doesn't matter. In time past, we all walked according to the course of this world. We were all controlled by the prince of the power of the air, as children of disobedience. But God, rich in grace, rich in mercy, has a *great* love "wherewith he loved us" (Ephesians 2:4). And by that love the changes come. For every believer, God's love was there for us. Getting to know how much we were loved led us to be saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. He came into our lives, and the love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit became internalized and personalized.

Waves of love can flow through the cells of your body every day. It is not human emotion; it's divine love.

"I have not done right," you say.

Just accept God's love for what you did wrong.

"I don't feel spiritual."

Accept love even though you don't feel anything.

Just receive His love, and it will produce not only love but also joy, peace, longsuffering, patience, divine goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.

The Easy Yoke of Love

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden

is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Do you know what His yoke is? It is love. When I take His yoke upon me, I am simply choosing to take His love upon me. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins….We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:10, 19). No wonder His yoke is easy. No wonder learning of Him produces rest unto my soul. The Father is resting in His love (Zephaniah 3:17). I take the yoke. I let Jesus love me just as I am. And then He produces that change in me because of the power of love, the dynamics of love, the faith of love, the grace of love, and the presence of love. At last, the change comes and I am healed.

First Love Yourself

There is an order to God's love. I am not to love others first; I am to love myself first. I cannot even love God unless I love myself. I must let God love me. That's the way it goes. First, I let God love me. Second, I love myself. Third, I love God and, finally, I am very free to love you and everyone else—even my enemies.

When you love yourself, there comes a new self-image, a new self-awareness. You receive a

new sense of being special, a new sense of being made righteous before God because of sanctification by Christ's Blood. There's nothing between you and God. There's nothing between you and anyone else. You are loved and you love in the power of the Holy Spirit. I'm not talking about sentimentality or carnality, I am talking about what the Bible says about God's love for us while we are sinners.

Oh, is it any wonder that David said that the Lord's mercies are great (2 Samuel 24:14)? Is it any wonder that Peter called Him "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10)? Paul called Him "the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3).

"Abraham," God called. "You haven't spoken to me for thirteen years, but I love you."

"Jacob. You have gone away and backslidden for twenty years. But I still love you and I will use you" (Genesis 32).

"Gideon. You're hiding and you don't want to be used," He says. "But I love you right where you are. I will calm your fears and bring a great victory" (Judges 6).

"Samson. You did wrong with Delilah. But I love you. Now take back your power and destroy your enemies" (Judges 16).

"Peter. You denied me and even cursed while you were doing it. Publicly, you forsook me, but I love you. You will preach this great message to the multitude after the Holy Spirit comes upon you" (Acts 1).

"Paul. You murdered Christians. You watched as Stephen was stoned. Still, I loved you. I saved you and will use you mightily among the Gentiles" (Acts 22).

In John 13:1, the Bible says He "loved them unto the end." What does this mean? The end? It means that nothing changed Jesus Christ's love for His disciples. They backslid. They denied Him. They forsook Him when He needed them most, but that didn't change His love. He loved them unto the end, so will He love you and I unto the end.

CONCLUSION

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

If you are trapped in sin, let God love you where you are, and let Him produce a pure change in your life. The issue is just responding to His love, that's all. My only hope is that these words have stimulated you to let Him love you and go on.

God is love. He is all forgiving. I have been forgiven, you have been forgiven. We have been cleansed, purified by faith. His love never fails and it never fails to change us. Beyond that, His love will never fail to change others through us. It's the most dynamic force in this world, so let's let it loose!

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)* .

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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INTRODUCTION

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

For every Old Testament chapter, a chapter or verse in the New Testament reveals its fullness under the new covenant. Jesus Christ shed His Blood and became sin for us, according to this New Testament verse. It is a commentary on Leviticus 4.

Leviticus 4 is not dealing with sins. It is important that you remember this throughout this message. The chapter does not deal with what we have done or what we do. Instead, it deals with what we are. The difference between what we have done and what we are is found in the analogy of the root and the fruit.

Let's say that my life is not manufacturing any particular sins. The fact would still remain that I have a sin nature. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not

in us (1 John 1:8). This doesn't say, "if we say we have no *sins*," because, by the grace of God, we should not be sinning. But it does say, "if we say we have no *sin*" (sin nature), which produces sins, then we are lying. There will never be a time on earth when we will be without our sin nature. Until we get our new, glorified bodies in heaven, the sin nature will never be eradicated.

If you have had an honest experience with God, you will notice that it did not eradicate your sin nature. That experience, however, can give you power through the Finished Work and through the Cross so that you can go on to enjoy the revelation of all the spiritual blessings God has given (Ephesians 1:3). And, when anything interrupts your communion with God, there is one thing powerful enough to overcome the accusations from hell: *Just present the Blood.*

Chapter One

THE KEY TO VICTORY

The blood offering of Leviticus 4 was to take care of any sin that was committed through ignorance. Many people always worry about whether or not they are doing okay. "Have I done enough good?" "Have I witnessed enough?" "Have I prayed enough?" "Have I given enough?" They are always worrying about these things.

When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, His Blood took care of all the sins that God has not revealed to us yet. You never have to ask God if there is anything wrong in your life. He will be faithful to tell you. First Corinthians 1:9 says, "God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." The Holy Spirit's job is to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

Whatever is wrong in me, the Holy Spirit

will do the convicting. I don't have to go through an hour or a moment or a day worrying. He will do the convicting. If He doesn't convict and I'm walking in the light that's been revealed to me, then I can be sure that the Blood of Christ has taken care of my sins of ignorance. Furthermore, He has taken care of all the sins that I have already confessed.

The Blood of Jesus Christ is the key to the believer's victory. Therefore, we must understand more and more about the Blood. Consider the different phases of the application of the Blood.

First, there is the Blood of the new covenant (Matthew 26:28). The importance of the Blood of the new covenant is explained in Hebrews 9 and 10. Second, we have the Blood of new life (John 6:53-54). Third, there is the Blood of redemption (Hebrews 9:12, 14). And last, we read of the Blood of atonement (Hebrews 10:10,14).

The Blood of the New Covenant

When Jesus Christ died and shed His Blood, He took care of our sin with that Blood. We are talking about sin, in the singular, meaning the old sin nature. His Blood completely blotted out our sin nature and covered our sins by casting

them into the sea of God's forgetfulness (Micah 7:19).

"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:7-8). What happens when the Blood takes care of the sin nature? We still have the nature, but we are blessed.

Put some of these thoughts together. He who knew no sin became sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and truth is not in us. But, blessed be the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Jesus Christ has forever taken care of the sin nature of man by becoming sin and paying the penalty for it with His death on the Cross. Jesus the man became sin so that we don't need to have our sin nature imputed to us, though we still have it.

This is where dear people misunderstand and speak of the eradication of the sin nature. They have no concept of the difference between positional truth and experiential truth. He that is born of God cannot commit sin (1 John 3:9; 5:9). This sounds contradictory. First we say we have a sin nature, then we say he that is born of

God does not commit sin. What does it all mean? It means that in God's eyes, believers cannot commit sin because God the Father never sees the sin that they commit. Why is this true? Because of the Blood of the new covenant.

What happens if any one sins in his experience? If any man enters into his sin nature and sins experientially, he has an advocate with God the Father, and it is Jesus Christ the righteous, the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1-2). Now, if a man knows that God will not impute sin to him and he chooses to practice sin and does not go to the Advocate, there are consequences. First, he grieves the Spirit and breaks his fellowship with God. Second, he leaves himself open to chastisement and to the problems the sins themselves bring back. But, God the Father does not impute those sins to him. Notice I said "God the Father," because Jesus Christ the Son satisfied God the Father.

The sin grieves the Holy Spirit, who is God within him (Acts 5:3-4), but God the Father, who is above him, doesn't see the sin. The sin breaks fellowship, but it doesn't change the believer's relationship to the Father. Chastisement is done in love to correct him, but because of the new covenant between God the Father and God the

Son, the Father never sees it.

Seated Above

God cannot look upon sin (Habakkuk 1:13), and because that is true, there would be no way for us to be accepted in heaven unless God the Father could see us as completely perfect. When Jesus Christ went to heaven, He took us with Him, and positionally we were seated there with Him as born-again believers (Ephesians 2:6). From that point on, the Father could never again see us in sin.

We *are seated* (perfect tense) with Christ in heavenly places. It is a finished work, and we are hid with Christ in God in heaven. Never again will He impute sin to us, because we are washed in the Blood and saved. If we sin on earth, and we confess it, we are immediately restored in our experience. If we don't confess it, then we reap what the sin produces, judicially, and what the Holy Spirit of God in us must do to chastise us.

When the precious Blood of Jesus Christ brings us into the new covenant, we receive His new life (John 6:53). We are redeemed by the Blood (Titus 2:14; Mark 10:45); we were bought back from the world, from the devil, and from

the flesh. We were bought back through the Cross, empowered by the Resurrection, and totally purchased—paid in full—by the One who created us.

There's more. Not only are we bought back, but we have also entered into atonement with the One who bought us back, both in heaven and on earth.

Follow this carefully. The Holy Spirit is grieved if we sin. He sees us, convicts us, and chastises us. The Father doesn't see our sin because He is the Planner, and according to His plan, He has to accept us through the new covenant of the Son. Furthermore, the Son does not see our sin either, because He has made us one with Him for eternity by His Blood. The only Person of the Trinity dealing with us in time is the Holy Spirit, whose dispensation pertains to the Church.

The Son has redeemed us forever; and the Father has accepted forever whoever the Son has redeemed. The Father only sees the Son, and every believer is *in* the Son (Colossians 3:3). And the Son of God is one with us, so He sees us as nothing less than His own body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). He sees no spot in us (Song of Solomon 4:7). We are without a wrinkle

in the eyes of Christ (Ephesians 5:27). Jesus has accepted us in His organism, His body, as one.

Only the Holy Spirit sees the sins we commit. This is why the Bible says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30). The Word of God doesn't speak of grieving the Father or the Son. It speaks of grieving the Holy Spirit. But it is also the Spirit who bears witness in my heart that I am seen as perfect in heaven and on earth. It is true that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one, but the One God operates in redemption, according to His plan.

Chapter Two

AS HE IS, SO ARE WE

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

Does this give me a license to sin? Absolutely not. I want to be able to fellowship with the Father, and I want to be able to operate in the victory of the Son in my experience. But if I am grieving the Holy Spirit, there is no way I can enjoy fellowship in the plan of God. There is no way I can enter into the implementation of the Son's execution of the plan. Therefore, I don't want to sin. God forbid!

Usually, in this type of revelation, when we get to the first point, people will say we are teaching that anyone can sin and get away with it. I am not teaching that at all. What I *am* teaching is this: Thanks be to God, we are in atonement with the Son. We are one with the Son. We

are redeemed, purchased completely, never again to be resold into the slavery of sin.

Satan cannot take back what God has redeemed. We have entered into eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12). "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). By the grace of God, we are redeemed. We have entered into atonement. We are part of a new covenant. Glory to God, we have new life.

Anyone who gets this straight won't need to have a nervous breakdown. And to top that off, the Blood covers every single sin of ignorance, because it has made us perfect in the sight of God. The reason those sins are ever revealed to us is so that they won't hinder our fellowship with the Father.

Present the Offering

"Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and shall do against any of them:

"If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bul-

lock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering" (Leviticus 4:2-3).

If a priest of Israel sinned, he did not start seeking something. He did not say, "Now, wait a minute, I am not sanctified. I need to do more." He did not look back, he didn't look within, he didn't look forward—he didn't do a thing. He just brought the bullock.

When a man sins—and God forbid that he does—he only needs to bring the offering. And that offering is Jesus Christ: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). There is no need for rationalization. This man doesn't have to worry or fret. He just brings the offering, and brings it fast, to appropriate the application of the offering by faith through the Holy Spirit's power. Immediately, he can go on in the victory of the Blood and the atonement.

You don't go on in the aspect of the Blood of redemption. You have already been purchased forever. Rather, you go on in the Blood of the atonement, because you are nothing less than one with Jesus Christ.

The children of Israel just brought the offerings. What happens when a person gets weary and tired and does not bring the offering, even

though it is available? He is always defeated and unhappy. But the moment the Blood is presented to God, it's over; and once again this person is totally perfect in his experience.

It takes less than a second. It is simply a response of His faith through the promise of His Word. It doesn't even take *my* faith. It takes a response to His Word. And when I believe His Word, His Word produces His faith in me. I just agree with it and all I have to say is, "Yes, Lord. I am in agreement with You that I only have to present the Blood. Thank you! Amen!"

The Blood Is Everything

I will tell you why people have so many problems: It is because we trample the Blood under our feet and we walk by sight. We have to trample the Blood under our feet in order to be miserable. We have to trample the Blood under our feet to be discouraged. Christ's Blood has more than just redeeming value. It has made us one, complete, accepted, perfect, cleansed, and purged. It is a peace offering, a burnt offering, a meal offering, and a sin offering. It is *everything*.

The Blood was put on the horns of the altar by our High Priest, Jesus Christ, the One who is ever living to make intercession for us (Hebrews

7:25). The horns speak of power. Believers are to put on the power of the altar. The Holy Spirit is the power of the altar. His eternal Spirit reveals the Blood of the Cross.

When we go to the Cross by faith, we automatically have the horns and the Blood that is upon them. The Cross is where I died with Him. His Blood is what covers my sins and buries them, and the Holy Spirit is the power that takes over my life.

Now, put it all together. The Cross took care of me and my sin nature, forever, in the eyes of God. The Blood took care of what I have done. Now, the horns speak of the power of the Holy Spirit in me, with the Blood applied, which takes care of my present life.

I do have a sin nature, but God will not impute it to me. I don't have to experience the old sin nature's terrible effects, because I have the Holy Spirit and the Blood on the horns of the altar. I have the Cross, the Spirit, the Blood, and I am free.

Chapter Three

COME BEFORE THE LORD

Leviticus 4 doesn't tell the one who has sinned that he must do penance and be miserable for twenty-five days to get over it. He is not told to be depressed for three weeks in order to pay his debt. He is not told to take his head and rap it against the wall and go into a fast to pay for what he did. No, the sinner is simply told to bring the "bullock without blemish."

Is he told to bring the bullock before the congregation? No, he is told to bring it before the Lord. The Lord isn't interested in a penance program; He is interested in Christ. No matter who you are, what you are, or what you have done, you just simply bring Christ back to the Father, and that restores your fellowship through the Holy Spirit.

It is a shame to take Christ for granted. It's a shame to think that He is anything less than all in all (Colossians 3:11). He *is* all, and *in* all. No

matter how you feel, present Christ. When you get on your knees, do you present yourself? No. You present Christ, and then you will present yourself to the Holy Spirit. Then, as the Holy Spirit reveals Christ, you can reveal the Spirit of Christ in you. As you present Christ, you can be certain that you are absolutely in perfect fellowship with Him.

The tabernacle of the congregation is a representation of the Corporate Body. By bringing the Blood, which has cleansed you, you are restored perfectly into the Body of Christ. What does the Blood give you? God's experiential living Body, completely cleansed and purged, without spot or wrinkle. It completely cleanses and makes you new in the freshness of Christ.

The Word of God says the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the Lord (Leviticus 4:6). "Seven" speaks of perfection and completion. Jesus Christ has finished the work for us. When He took our sin upon Himself, He completed the work before God the Father and before the veil of the sanctuary. This veil speaks of the flesh of His body.

Where was the Blood brought? Before the flesh of the body. Why? When the Father sees our flesh, he only sees the Blood of Christ. The

Blood is in front of the veil. We have this veil and we won't lose it until the Rapture, or until we are absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Our high priest, Jesus Christ, put His Blood before the veil of our flesh by finishing the work of redemption.

The Blood at the Root of the Altar

"And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense…and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Leviticus 4:7).

The reason that this blood is poured out at the bottom of the altar is because the bottom is the root of your death. The altar speaks of death, sacrifice, and offering. When we come to the altar, the Blood is at the root of it.

In other words, we present His offering and we reckon ourselves to be dead indeed to sin (Romans 6:11). Every time we present our bodies as a living sacrifice, the Blood has to be at the root of the altar. Everything about sacrifice, everything about offering, and everything about death must have the Blood at the root of the altar.

Many times people serve God without the Blood. They talk without the Blood at the altar. They preach sermons on the Cross and preach without the Blood as the foundation of their experience. The Holy Spirit wrote the book of Leviticus in a unique and significant way, because He knows that hundreds talk about the Cross and talk about the sacrifice and offering, but they do it without the Blood being at the root of the altar. The Blood must be at the root to cleanse and redeem.

The Blood must be at the root of every sacrifice, every reckoning. And every time that we present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, it must be the Blood—completely His sacrifice, His life, His offering, His Cross, and His Holy Spirit.

When the Blood is at the root, our lives go on without spot or wrinkle, spiritually speaking. There are no spots of sin, no wrinkles, and no scars. We are complete and we know it. It is all Christ. It is all what He did. It is all in who He is. It is all in trusting in Him and in what He did at Calvary. It is all about the Blood.

CONCLUSION

Christ finished the work at Calvary. As a result, we go forward in the most glorious way as a glorious church, a glorious tabernacle of the congregation. The Blood is in front of us. The Blood is on our conscience. At the altar is the Blood. Behind our singing is the Blood.

When we fail, we just present the Blood. When we look to the past, we see the Blood. When we think of the present, we see the Blood. When we think of the future, we see the Blood.

Everything is the Blood! The Blood! *The Blood!*

"…When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). There are no other conditions. God only sees the Blood upon us.

When you have an evil thought, present the Blood. When you haven't done something that you should have done, present the Blood. When someone offends you, present the Blood. When you don't like someone, present the Blood.

The Blood wipes out "you" with the cleansing. No matter what the accuser says to you, just believe in the Blood. And what about this: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb!" (Revelation 12:11*a*). Satan was overcome by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of His testimony. This is the tremendous way to victory. The Blood—it is the only way to overcome.

Keep Your Soul

from Bitterness

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).

The Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in the heart of a Christian. It is shed abroad through the heart into the five parts of the soul. Then, as he is filled with the Holy Spirit, the love of God controls the believer's life. Having the soul filled with the love of God is one of the most precious things that can happen in the life of the believer.

This love, however, is only shed abroad if it is not hindered by wrong choices. If we don't apply God's love in a relationship, we grieve the Holy Spirit. We may be justified in our differences with another person, yet we must love them with God's love. If we begin to criticize, judge, and sow discord against them, we will grieve the Holy Spirit in us. And when the Holy

Spirit is grieved, He does not shed the love of God abroad in our hearts.

When a root of bitterness against another person is allowed to enter in, a believer may begin to grieve the Holy Spirit by mentally and then verbally attacking someone. He may deny the bitterness and cover it up with self-righteousness, justifying himself; but then bitterness will begin to control that believer. This booklet will reveal the dangers of harboring bitterness and grieving the Spirit. But it will also show how the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, brings in a deep healing and deliverance from bitterness and its root.

Chapter One

FUELING THE PRIDE COMPLEX AND CARNALITY

Bitterness is a tremendous problem. The top secular psychiatrists today have examined this subject thoroughly and have identified bitterness as the number one emotional problem for both men and women. Bitterness may be suppressed; its presence may be disguised, denied, and go unrecognized when a person is doing well in other areas of the five parts of his soul.

When bitterness comes into the soul, sublimation of some kind is necessary to fill up the empty places in the soul. Sublimation is any attempt to stimulate a pleasurable experience relevant to our lives, apart from the filling of the Spirit. It comes in many forms, and it may mean hours of gossip and railing, watching the wrong television shows, playing with suggestive or violent computer programs, and even drug addictions—all in an effort to fill the emptiness caused

by bitterness.

While some people tend to react more in their emotions, others try to hide bitterness or cover it up. Women's emotional problems are primarily caused by seeds of bitterness that were never dealt with. Men also experience the effects of bitterness when their needs are unfulfilled, yet they often try to deny it because of a self-righteous complex. Bitterness can turn love into hate, blessings into curses. It turns happiness into malice, where a wounded person wants to hurt someone on purpose by wrongly accusing them. Bitterness fuels the pride complex to bring in self-righteousness. It damages the emotions, hindering the believer's life and making him carnal.

Stop the Blame Game

A bitter person will blame God and others for his own wrong decisions. But we must never forget this: No matter what happens, we are always responsible for our decisions, though God determines the consequences. The three Hebrew boys were thrown into the fiery furnace because of a decision they made in a time of great difficulty (see Daniel 3). Of course, it was the right decision, and God honored them in it

with a miraculous deliverance.

Job had to make a decision to either wallow in self-pity or trust God with his life. Job's answer was this: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15*a*).

No one can hurt any believer beyond what God permits. If God does allow us to suffer, then God's love shed abroad in our hearts becomes our provision. That love becomes a wall of fire that protects and insulates the soul so it does not become distorted (Zechariah 2:5).

We must never blame people, even though we may have to go to them alone for the sake of oneness if they are also believers. We are accountable for our own responses, and we live in the consequences of how we have kept our souls. If the soul is kept right, then no one can get through that wall of fire. What's more, we will not see the heat of the battle when it comes (Jeremiah 17:8).

Jeremiah confessed that his soul had grown bitter (Lamentations 3:15). His soul had stopped prospering until he discovered through right thinking that God's mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:17-23). So he understood how to recover and rebound.

Job confessed his bitterness (Job 7:11) after

his three "friends" blamed him for his troubles (which were, in fact, tests from Satan and ultimately would glorify God). When Job changed his confession, God prospered his soul as well as his substance.

Hannah had no children. In those times, that meant rejection from the community and a sense of being incomplete as a woman. She became bitter because she was taunted by her family and talked about everywhere she went. "There goes poor Hannah," they would say. In 1 Samuel 1:10, she poured out her bitterness before the Lord, and God gave her a child—Samuel—whom she gave back to the Lord. She was a great parent and eventually gave birth to five more children. The Spirit shed God's love abroad in Hannah's heart, and her victory is recorded for all to read.

On the other hand, when parents have a child, invest in his life, and the child refuses to walk with God, Proverbs 17:25 says those parents may become bitter toward the child.

When a person is bitter, even strangers don't want to be around him lest they lose their joy (Proverbs 14:10). A bitter person infects others with his words. Unless we identify that his problem is bitterness, we will be infected with its ef-

fects: resentment, implacability, negative reaction, and the blame game. It is so important to set a watch upon our lips, to be slow to speak and very careful how we hear.

Satan's Seven-Fold Attack against the Body of Christ

Satan has demon armies organized for strategic, tactical warfare against believers.* Although the attacks come against anyone who would be used by God, one of Satan's ultimate goals is to knock any effectiveness out of God's second institution: marriage. His strategy to destroy marriages is to undermine every other institution —the family, the Body of Christ, and national entity. These have their foundation in the strength of the three-fold marital union, which includes the presence of God (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

The first army, *Rhadiourgia* (translated as "mischief" in Acts 13:10), comes in to make a person overrelaxed so that he lets down his guard and loses his commitment. Along with this army come demons that want you to do well and to "bless" you without Christ. Then once they have "blessed" you, Satan sends in demons to harm you, making you pay for violating your own convictions.

Next is the army of demons called *Tsiyiy* (Lamentations 3:52, translated "desert-dwellers" in Psalm 74:14). They are hunters that search out your weakness. They see what causes your countenance to testify against you (Isaiah 3:9) and bring their report to *Baal Peor*.

Baal Peor (Numbers 25:3, Deuteronomy 4:3; Hosea 9:10) is an army that investigates how to knock you out of the race. Marriages are primary targets of this army. They spy out what could make each party unhappy. Then, they use their influence to promote that unhappiness so that there is never any fulfillment. The husband and wife become bitter and cannot complement one another. These particular demons hate women, and they try to make men bitter to the point of lasciviousness. Tremendous sensual impulses come in to supernaturally influence men, and their souls become distorted by libido waves of bitter sensuality and perversion.

In the end, these demons can incapacitate a man toward the woman God gave him for his wife. They watch for bitterness and are ready to attack when they perceive it. These forces of hell can then hypnotize people through the power of the air and plague them with bitterness.

Another army is called *Yanshuph* (Isaiah

34:11), the demons of confusion. These demons set up a person to be attacked by *Belial* (Psalm 101:3), demons of lies and infections that come in through impulses and vibrations.

Then come the wasters, *Lumainomenos* (Proverbs 18:9; Acts 8:3). These demons cause havoc as they waste a Christian's capacity to get right with God. If things are not made right in the soul, *Eggastrimuthos* (Isaiah 8:19; 29:4, 1 Samuel 28:7) brings in a subtle attack of familiarity.

This seven-fold onslaught often seals the destruction of marriages in the finality of divorce. These people may carry on for a long time with a superficial relationship, but it is merely game-playing.

In addition to these seven armies that conspire against oneness among believers, Satan uses *Panourgia*. They are described in Ephesians 4:14, 1 Corinthians 3:19, and 2 Corinthians 4:2 as the demons of manipulation and control with cunning craftiness, very skillful in trickery and deceit. For example, these demons try to make believers deny Satanic activity in a relationship by having them confess "that is just his personality." According to Ephesians 4:14, these demons lie in wait, ready to deceive.

With all the definition God has given us, we

must not be lulled into complacency on the subject of angelic warfare. As never before, we must understand what it means to pray without ceasing and to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).

**For more about spiritual warfare, read* Dealing Precisely with Demons *and* Exposing Satan's Armies *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

DEFILEMENT AND CONTAMINATION

"Looking diligently lest any man fail the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15).

"Defile" is a very interesting word—*miaino*—in the Greek text. The word pictures contamination (sewage) coming from what were known as "chamber pots" kept in every home and emptied into the gutters of the dirt roads used at that time. It describes people who were clean until they were splattered by the filthy contents of a chamber pot when it was carelessly tossed from an upper window as they innocently walked by. That is the picture of defilement and its effect as it proceeds from a person filled with bitterness.

James 3:14 and 16 say: "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie

not against the truth….For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." A bitter person will carelessly spill out verbal waste, uttering slander, because he has exalted himself above another. Romans 3:14 says that his mouth is filled with cursing, his heart is full of bitterness.

Bitterness turns love into hate, happiness into malice, blessing into cursing. The bitter person blames God and others for his own flaws, failures, and wrong decisions. Bitterness feeds the pride complex and self-righteousness. These bad emotions perpetuate carnality and destroy the spiritual life.

If a wife is not happy and cannot relax to love her husband and respond to him through the love of the Holy Spirit controlling her soul, a root of bitterness has sprung up. Likewise, a husband who cannot love his wife with God's love is bitter. They may be able to control their bitterness outwardly. But remember what bitterness is: It is a root that troubles a person's soul and has never been dealt with. Ultimately, a bitter person will contaminate others through his tongue (James 3:5-10).

Some people are able to control the expression of bitterness, but they must deal with the root. In conspiracies, people who never gave each other the time of day, suddenly start having "coffee" together. They begin to "air" their differences, but in reality they are just spreading the infection of bitterness. Bitterness goes from one person to the next as they transfer all the blame onto the person they are talking about. Instead of builders, they are destroyers.

When you hear any negativity about anyone who is not present to hear the conversation—about your church, your work, family members, friends—stop the conversation immediately. You can even approach the situation in kindness by saying, "Excuse me, but I would like to let that person have a chance to hear what you are about to say. Do you mind if we call him?" That will nip most conversations in the bud.

A conspiracy begins when someone receives an accusation against a person who is not present. If the report is not true, any discussion about the matter is maligning. If the accusation is true, to discuss the matter is gossip. And whether it is gossip or maligning, the person

who listens to an evil report is just as guilty as the one who says it.

An evil report comes from bitterness, and the effects are so destructive. Some people feel justified in talking about someone just because the report is true. God, however, is in the business of redemption, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconciliation. The Lord doesn't repeat a matter, and we won't either if we have love in our souls.

Judgment Tables Turned

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:1-2).

God has established a table of organization to deal with problems between individuals in the Church. Galatians 6:1 and Matthew 18:15 tell us that we are to go *alone* to the one who has sinned, and we are to go with love in our souls to restore him. If that person refuses to get right, Matthew 18:16-17 provides the scriptural procedure for the church leaders to follow to prevent infection from spreading to others.

A pastor dealing with people in the table of organization must keep quiet about all matters.

If he even tells his wife, he is violating thirty-four Bible doctrines.

When we talk about someone, the discipline God intended for that person is taken off him and placed upon us. If we never committed adultery, but maligned someone who did, we would receive his chastisement. That person becomes clean because of our tongue. God says we are to go to the person *alone*. If we don't do this, we take on his penalty because his sin was paid for by Christ. In talking about him behind his back, we have maligned him outside of the Cross. The Cross, which is the highest expression of love, covers the multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). It doesn't spread bitterness. It doesn't separate friends (Proverbs 17:9). But it does motivate us to go alone.

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Romans 2:1).

Our job is to restore the one who has failed. God's goal is reconciliation without hurting him. We are to help and give him opportunities to be restored. We must honor the Word of God and go to him alone. This is a doctrine so many just

do not practice. People involved in conspiracies have never understood it. Yet, this doctrine has been taught in the whole counsel of God.

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4).

This verse shouldn't keep us from going to a person alone. We must go (and follow-up, if necessary) through the table of organization to protect the Body of Christ and to love the person who has fallen. What God is saying in Romans 14 is this: "I am his Master, and you are not. You are My servant, so you are not to judge My servant. You should deal with My servant the same way I do as his Master."

Remember this, too: When God forgives, He forgets. He doesn't bring up a matter five days later, and He doesn't enter into presumption three months later. Forgiveness includes forgetfulness with God's omnipotence, despite His omniscience and omnipresence.

Chapter Three

GOD'S ANSWER FOR BITTERNESS

Bitterness can get into a soul to spoil and hinder it, leaving the soul flawed because of ignorance. In this state, a person usually defends his ignorance. In these cases, certain demons go to work, causing people to become "do-gooders" without the Cross. Because their good works are done in the energy of the flesh, they will eventually burn out.

Then come the demons that spread evil infections, using projections to incapacitate those who need love from being able to receive love. These demons will also hinder a person from receiving grace because of overwhelming failures. If another believer were to go to him with love, he could not receive it. He is so occupied with his lack of capacity and his damaged self-image in Christ, he feels unworthy. Either that, or he becomes arrogant and proud through rebellion and negative reactions.

In Isaiah 38:15, Hezekiah was extremely bitter. He said of the Lord, "What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all of my years in the bitterness of my soul." Then in verse 17 he said, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: *but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.*"

Hezekiah had gone through a terrible time of bitterness, then he discovered that God had cast all the sins of the past behind His back. He learned that God wanted him to simply agree and go forward with Him. That is when the bitterness left Hezekiah.

Medicine for the Sick Soul

Deliverance from bitterness comes when we have the love of God, given by the Holy Spirit, shed abroad in our souls. Jesus Christ declared that the great commandment is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). When a Christian is walking in love, that love is located in the soul (see Ephesians 5:2). The soul includes the mind, self-consciousness, conscience, emotions, and volition. Also located in the soul

is the old sin nature. We are to deal with it in our experience by reckoning on its death and burial with Christ.

A great misunderstanding concerns the location of God's love in a believer. The Psalmist wrote: "Heal my soul: for I have sinned against thee" (Psalm 41:4). Soul love, when it is brought by the Holy Spirit, is among the most precious things that can happen to a believer's spirit, soul, and body. The love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit through the heart, into the human spirit, and into five parts of the soul. This believer is walking in the light of God's life, confessed up-to-date, and not living in any known sin, but using rebound as necessary.

The Spirit, however, cannot shed God's love abroad in the heart when there are hindrances from negative volition. If I violate the Word of God and contend that my soul is all right, I am lying. My soul is sick. It may be in the early stages of illness, but it is sick and needs healing through rebound and the process of rehabilitation from the precise light of the Word of God (Ephesians 4:23).

Perhaps you have had trouble getting along with another believer. Your soul doesn't have God's love shed abroad into every part. In an

attempt to justify yourself, you can provide various reasons for your differences and for the problems in your relationship. Still, the real issue is that something has affected your soul and grieved the Holy Spirit that dwells in you. When the Spirit is grieved, He cannot shed love abroad in your soul.

The Key to Soul Prosperity

Jonathan and David loved each other as their own souls. Their love was in every part of their souls. When the Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in our souls, it is then that we begin to prosper. "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2).

Having God's love in the soul maintains our relationship to Him, as well as to people. We become healthy because we walk in love in every part of our souls. Differences may come, but we keep them to ourselves and only deal with those differences in love when fellowship is threatened because of sin. We have no criticism, no judgmental attitude, no sowing of discord. We edify—even people who have become our enemies—because of the love of God that is resident in each part of our souls. We let God remove

every obstacle that could lead to bitterness, and we walk in our victory.

CONCLUSION

No one can really hurt us if the Holy Spirit has shed God's love abroad in our hearts. His love brings protection, provision, and insulation. It sets up a wall of fire so that the soul does not become distorted.

With God's Word and God's love, the soul has all it really needs. We have no need to sublimate, we avoid defilement, and infection is checked. Roots of bitterness cannot spring up when the love and grace of God are allowed to fill the soul to overflowing. Instead of infecting others, we will see curses turned into blessings.

The healing power of the Holy Spirit inspires tremendous edification. Ultimately, God's Kingdom is furthered as others draw near to receive redemption, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconciliation.

Heavenly Father, thank You that You are interested in the secret places of our hearts and that nothing is hidden from Your eyes. We are so grateful for

Your character of lovingkindness and longsuffering toward us. We trust You to tend to the roots as well as the fruit of our lives, to remove every trace of bitterness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Keeping Your Heart

On Fire

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet, a Doctrine Weekly classic, came from four messages preached by Pastor Carl H. Stevens. Many people have been blessed and motivated by these thoughts and we have transcribed and edited them for the purpose of inspiring each reader to practice the principles of keeping his heart on fire toward God.

The following chapters are not designed to build upon one another, but were given as separate messages on various aspects of this subject. When considered carefully and applied, its content will draw each reader into a more intimate communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are grateful to Dr. Lee Robertson and the late Dr. Jack Hyles who preached messages that consistently encouraged believers to have a heart that is on fire to serve the Lord. It is our prayer that you will benefit deeply from these thoughts from a pastor's heart.

Chapter One

"OF SOME HAVE COMPASSION, MAKING A DIFFERENCE"

Jude 21-22 expresses a key principle in keeping your heart on fire: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference."

Thousands of church services across the world honor Jesus Christ, glorify God, and preach the truth. Many men and women serve God diligently and love God with all their hearts. Yet, there is a lack of warmth today in the church of Jesus Christ because many believers do not keep their hearts on fire.

God has given us a number of vital ways to keep our hearts warm and on fire with God. Keeping your heart warm and on fire means to let God's Holy Spirit move as He motivates your heart.

One of the most vital ways to keep your

heart on fire is to keep in touch with Calvary. Let the eye of faith show you Jesus Christ as He took your place on the Cross. Consider that every personal sin was transferred to Him. He was perfect in His humanity; He never sinned. He loved us when we were guilty. We cannot think of Calvary in the power of the Spirit without having it break our hearts.

Unfortunately, one thing that has characterized much of Christendom is indeed a coldness of heart. Many believers allow their hearts to get cold because they serve God through duty. They are faithful in stewardship, but they do not have a warm heart toward people. Others live in rigid intellectualism, never allowing God to break them. There are also religious people, like the the publican by his self-righteous prayer (verses 11, 12).

So many Christians know nothing about keeping their hearts on fire for God. They may be duty-bound and faithful in their religious convictions, but they do not understand what it means to allow the Holy Spirit to give them insight into the love of God and the needs of people.

Remembering a Person's Background

To keep our hearts on fire, we need to re-

member that some people have not had the same privileges we have been given in life. My dad died when I was three, and I grew up in poverty, yet I had the privilege of having a loving family and a mother who laid down her life for us. Instead of judging someone, consider how they were brought up. Consider what they have gone through and how much they may have suffered. Remembering their value in Christ and their individuality before God will keep your heart warm.

Perhaps the person who rubs you the wrong way has never had a peaceful home life or a good marriage. They may have wealth and possessions, but perhaps they have never experienced happiness because they have never been treated kindly. When we consider these people with God's heart, it will keep our hearts warm.

Remembering Certain People and Places

There are various places that warm our hearts the moment we think of them. The cemetery is a place that should warm our hearts. How readily loved ones are forgotten, and how easily friends who have died go unmentioned. Yet, we can sense God's presence as we remember their lives when someone brings them to

mind—the sweet fragrance of memory.

My heart gets warm when I think of all those who have been dear friends and loved ones—beautiful men and women of God—who have gone home to be with the Lord. My father, my mother, my first wife, my mother-in-law, brothers, and many dear friends are there. Remembering those who have died will keep our hearts warm.

Key Phrases

"*Grace* be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *Father of mercies*, and the *God of all comfort*" (2 Corinthians 1:2-3).

Key biblical phrases that impart the character of God warm my heart. Phrases may differ from Christian to Christian, but the principle is the same.

For example, I can think of God's grace, which is so great that sin cannot exhaust it. This thought will warm my heart any time.

I can think of the Father of all mercies, and I will be broken in very quick order.

I can think of the God of all comfort, and as I think of the millions that He has comforted, I

will be moved in my heart every single time.

Certain Names Keep Your Heart Warm

Certain names keep your heart warm. You may bring up a certain name, someone who meant very much to you—someone who was always there, someone who deeply cared, someone who did not criticize, someone who was faithful to friendship and diligent in responding to and giving love. Any time your heart gets cold, simply think of certain names and your heart will become warm.

Certain Songs Warm Our Hearts

Certain songs warm my heart. Some songs are inspirational. The stories behind some songs and the reasons why they were written make them very significant. But other songs just warm your heart. Songs about Jesus, songs about the Cross, songs about victory—these warm my heart. I have always liked the lyrics, "On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."

When I am going through something heavy and I sense my heart growing cold, I study to be quiet and consider "What a friend we have in Jesus." Think of it. What a friend we have in

Jesus! What a friend! He is the one who sticks closer than anyone on the earth (Proverbs 18:24).

Being Used for the Sake of Christ

Someone said to me the other day, "Pastor, I don't think I can ever love again, because every time I love, I get hurt." I said, "Oh, yes you can, because there is Someone who loves you so much that He will never leave you, not even for one moment. Jesus will always be with you."

The Lord Jesus said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5*b*). You can love again if you are not selfish, if you don't have the wrong motives toward others. Loving is not what I can get out of a relationship; love is what I can give someone. Love is not characterized by what I need. Love is measured by what I can share and give.

That person repeated again, "Every time I love somebody, they hurt me." The Holy Spirit began to usher in these thoughts: "Do you mind? Does it make a difference if they do not return your love?" Is there something wrong with letting other people use us for Jesus' sake, for love's sake, and for the sake of grace? Paul was used for Christ's sake. In 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 he said,

"Always carrying about in the body the liability and exposure to the same putting to death that the Lord Jesus suffered, so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be shown forth by and in our bodies. For we who live are constantly [experiencing] being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be evidenced through our flesh which is liable to death" (2 Corinthians 4:10-11, Amplified Translation).

Oh, we are such strong Christians! We don't want anyone to use us. "No one will take advantage of *me*!" says the modern Christian. What is wrong with letting people use you for the Gospel's sake? What do you think laying down your life means? What do you think loving your enemies means? What do you think turning the other cheek means? What do you think 1 John 3:16 means? Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. Should we not lay it down for one another?

"Greater love hath no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

There is nothing wrong with letting people take unfair advantage of you as long as the life of Christ is being imparted. Your life may bring

conviction to the guilty. I made up my mind a long time ago that if people want to use me, then God will give me the grace to let them. I will not resist it. It always warms my heart when I think I can be used by God to lay my life down for others, for Jesus' sake. This always warms my heart.

Thoughts of the Bema Seat

When I consider the Bema Seat evaluation for believers (sometimes called the Judgment Seat of Christ), I think about the fact that every blood-bought child of God will be there. At the Bema Seat, Jesus Christ will determine in righteous judgment whether or not the works of each believer were motivated by the Holy Spirit, or whether they were done in the energy of the flesh.

"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:9, 10).

"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of

Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account for himself to God" (Romans 14:10-12).

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

One day, you and I will face the Lord Jesus. I think of each one going before Him—each one in his glorified body. As born-again believers who have eternal life, each one will face Him alone. Knowing this should keep my heart on fire. I don't want to be ashamed on that day. I do not want to suffer the loss of rewards. I want to hear Jesus say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). Until I meet Him at the Bema Seat, I want to always "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

The Bema Seat will reveal motives that were wrong as well as motives that were right. It will

bring out secret motives that no one knew but God. The Bema Seat will show why we did what we did; it will bring out what we did in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Bema Seat will reveal opportunities that were lost because we never took advantage of the many chances He gave us to serve, evangelize, visit the sick, feed the poor, pray, and lay our lives down for others. God will show you how He called your attention in countless situations, but you would not take advantage of redeeming the time. God will show you when the Spirit moved in the services, but you quenched Him by not responding.

The Lord will reveal the time when there was a terrific urgency to evangelize the lost, yet you did not respond. The Bema Seat will reveal the time when there was a tremendous emphasis on prayer, and many people loved it. Yet, you failed to pray.

Keeping Souls from the White Throne Judgment

Something else that warms my heart is winning souls for Christ who would otherwise be headed for hell. I think of the last words that will ever be spoken by those who reject Christ. On that day, those who died without Christ will

already be in hell, but they will also have to come before Christ at the White Throne Judgment.

"And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:29).

At the White Throne Judgment, they will receive their final sentence based upon their works:

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them (Revelation 20:11).

I think of the saints who will be gathered together there. The Christians will have their glorified bodies. I think of how the Word of God records that Jesus is so holy that the unsaved people who will be judged cannot stand before Him. Soon they will hear the last words they will ever hear, from the Son of God. They will see faces of redeemed loved ones for the last time, and never see them again.

Imagine what it will be like not to see a loved one ever again because he rejected the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for his sins. Imagine people who work with you who are lost. Can you imag-

ine what it will be like when they look at you for the last time before they are cast into the lake of fire? You are saved, and they are lost. Does this thought motivate you to win the lost while there is still time?

Can you imagine what this last look will be like? No wonder that after the White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:10-15), God wipes away the tears from our eyes. The former things *must* pass away, otherwise we could not stand the pressure of knowing that loved ones and friends are separated from God for eternity. God, in His great compassion, erases them from our memory (Revelation 21:4).

The former things are passed away and all things become new, otherwise heaven would not be heaven. I think of the White Throne Judgment and of the teenagers who never got right with God. Many of them went to evangelical churches but never received Jesus Christ as their Savior. I think of people who sit in church pews and profess to be saved, yet they may never have had a real born-again experience. With compassion, I think of those who are lost, and it keeps my heart on fire to think that there is still time and hope for them to be saved.

Disciplined Thinking

One reason why some people have cold hearts is that they are not disciplined in their thinking. They do not plan their thinking. The reason that people become angry is that they do not think before they react in the flesh. The reason why people are resentful is that they do not think. Their free volition acts in cognizance of their old sin nature. The greatest need for God's people is to be disciplined in their thought life and to plan what they are going to consider.

Most people go through the day without acknowledging the Holy Spirit. They live as though He doesn't exist. Christians need to be constantly filled by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18*b*). The Holy Spirit controls the human spirit; the human spirit and the Word of God control the mind; and as a result, the mind controls the body. A believer must live in disciplined thinking. He must plan how he is going to speak and when he should be silent.

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, Paul said: "For though we walk [live] in the flesh, we are not carrying our warfare according to the flesh and using mere human weapons. For the weapons of our warfare are not physical (weapons of flesh

and blood), but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, [Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the (true) knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, Being in readiness to punish every [insubordinate for his] disobedience, when your own submission and obedience [as a church] are fully secured and complete" (Amplified Translation).

People become cold and insensitive when they are not disciplined to think with God. A person can be blessed by God and three days later act indignant around other people. This is a consequence of a lack of self-discipline. There is no excuse for having a cold heart.

Thinking of Heaven

When I think of heaven, it warms my heart. I think of the loved ones who are already there. When you think of heaven, does it warm your heart? Jesus Christ has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us, for He has promised:

"In My Father's house there are many dwelling places (homes). If it were not so, I

would have told you, for I am going away to prepare a place for you. And when (if) I go and make ready a place for you, I will come back again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:2-3, Amplified Translation).

Considering What Others Have Done for You

When I think of all the things that people have done for me, it warms my heart. When I think of all the things that people have done for the church, it warms my heart. When I think of all the sacrifice, dedication, commitment, and all the selfless hours of work that have been given for the sake of Christ, it warms my heart.

Consider all that everyone has ever done for you, and it will keep your heart on fire! I thank God for my wife and children, for the way they have always co-labored to glorify Christ. I thank God for their faithfulness. I can think of each one individually and it causes my heart to be warm.

Chapter Two

TEARS OF COMPASSION

In John 11:33, it is recorded that Jesus "groaned in the spirit." Even though He was about to perform a great miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, still He wept at the graveside (John 11:35). Also, in Luke 19:41, when Jesus drew near and could see the city of Jerusalem, He wept audibly over it.

Jeremiah was called the "weeping prophet." In a time of experiencing a great burden for the people of Israel, he cried out, "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a reservoir of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." (Jeremiah 9:1, Amplified Translation). Isaiah also wept for God's people in the "day of trouble" (Isaiah 22:4, 5). The Apostle Paul was a brilliant, intellectually gifted, and well-educated man, yet he wept day and night for the duration of three years. The original Greek says, "Paul, in humility served

the people in tears" (see Acts 20:19). Those were tears that came from God.

The Scriptures contain so many verses on the subject of weeping. We are referring to tears which are motivated by God's love for the sake of truth.

In contrast, we all recognize that there are sentimental tears which originate from the emotions. Those tears do not stem from the love of God. Sentimentality produces tears which have no eternal value. For example, one time, the children of Israel wept all night because of self-pity. Those were not tears motivated by God. Therefore, when people cry, it does not necessarily mean that they are compassionate or spiritual.

Have you ever wondered how some pastors can preach on such sacred topics, and yet weep so little? Many servants of God are cold though proper in their presentation of truth. In order to produce results, God's Word must be pondered over, identified with, and experienced in His unconditional love. We must be constrained by the love of God (2 Corinthians 5:14) as we learn to think with God in a disciplined manner.

What Causes Godly Weeping?

A man of God may weep for many reasons.

First of all, he may weep because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In his heart and mind he pictures Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary bearing our sins in His own body. This vision is always fresh in his mind.

When we take communion and the Holy Spirit pours out the truth of the love of Jesus Christ, this should always make us weep. Picture Jesus Christ loving the unlovely; consider His great compassion for the lost. Jesus loved people beyond their sin. He taught men and women how to be released from the bondage of self-destruction caused by negative volition toward the Word of God.

The Word of God teaches us to call on the Lord Jesus Christ in time of need and to make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). Jesus Christ taught men how to abide in the Word and let the Word abide in them (John 15:7). The magnificent provision of the Word of God can make us weep.

Reconciliation Makes Us Weep

In a moment, the truth about Jesus can make us weep. There is no one who is righteous, "no, not one" (Romans 3:10). Yet Christ, who was perfectly righteous, died in my place at Calvary.

He became sin for me—He "who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21*b*). God, through Jesus Christ, came to redeem us while we were dead in our sins (Romans 5:6, 8). While man was unworthy and absolutely unable to help himself, when he was still an enemy, he was "reconciled to God by the death of his son…" (Romans 5:10).

In Romans 7:18*a*, Paul said, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Every person must understand that in his natural state (in his flesh) he is depraved. People in every walk of life must believe what the Bible teaches: that man, apart from God, is utterly helpless and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). There is no good thing to be found in our flesh. Jesus said, "The flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63), and "without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ…" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Jesus Christ is everything! He that sows is nothing, he that waters is nothing, but God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6*b*). No wonder the apostle Paul, in Colossians 3:11*b* said,

"Christ is all and in all." No wonder the disciples could not but speak of Jesus and the things which they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20). No wonder Jesus was the center of attention when He spoke in the synagogue (Luke 4:16-21). No wonder, when Philip met the Eunuch, he began to preach Christ (Acts 8:35-37). No wonder, when Elijah and Moses had disappeared on the mount of transfiguration, that only Jesus remained. When Peter, James, and John lifted up their eyes, "they saw no man, save Jesus only" (Matthew 17:8).

Can you see this with me? "…God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

When a believer thinks of Jesus Christ, it will take no time at all before his eyes are filled with tears. No matter how difficult the circumstances of life may be, when we think of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, it will make us weep. If only every pastor would preach the Word of God with a heart that is broken by Calvary!

Tears Motivated by God's Love

A person who now goes to our church gave

this testimony: "I didn't like your voice; I didn't like your humor; I didn't like your presentation; I didn't like *you*. Yet, something made me come back. I didn't like it when you cried out from the pulpit because I felt convicted. I waited a week, and something motivated me to come back. I tried to figure out what it was about the church that made me return. Then, I found out what made this assembly so different. I realized that while I was fighting the love of God because of my intellectual pride, you wept because of the love of God."

Compassion and love characterize a ministry that keeps hearts on fire. That individual's testimony reveals his sensitivity toward a ministry that loves God deeply and his understanding of a pastor-teacher who is not afraid to express God's love in tears.

Men and women who are after God will recognize genuine compassion. For example, an unsaved man came to one of our Sunday services. He had been unable to receive Scripture as the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Then, the compassion and love of God took over his heart as a pastor shared with the congregation about an 88-year old woman who needed people to visit her when she was in the hospital.

This unsaved man had never wept in a church service before, yet on this day, because he sensed that pastor's heart toward the loneliness of this woman, he wept. After the service he said, "That is the way it ought to be. Pastors ought to love like that."

A believer in Jesus Christ has the capacity (through Him) to love a stranger. The love of Christ constrains him (2 Corinthians 5:14*a*). The love of Christ will cause him to experience legitimate tears of compassion. There are too many preachers who say too much without shedding a tear. If you had the opportunity to hear a sermon given by the apostle Paul, do you think you would be moved by his tears? There are men who preach the Word of God continually, but have not shed a tear in months!

What are some of the reasons God moves us to tears of compassion? As believers in Jesus Christ, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit. Consider the fact that the Holy Spirit uses us to edify the Body of Christ and to win the lost. Therefore, we should acknowledge His presence more and more, throughout each day.

It is also very important to understand that God always empowers us for special responsibilities and tasks. Believers have access to the

constant filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). In the original Greek text, the word *pleroo* is the command "to be filled"—a command which is carried out through the operation of grace.

Another facet of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life is to give him the awareness of the magnitude of Christ's love for the lost, as well as His great compassion for the needs of man. God's compassion is expressed through the life of the believer who is abiding in the Spirit and motivated by divine love.

Thoughts from a Pastor's Heart

When I see people in our assembly walk into church, I do not see them as ordinary people. Each one is an ambassador for Christ, and each one has a special calling on his life. Although we may not speak to one another often because we all have tremendous schedules, I think of how much I love each one in a special way. I watch their countenances and I think about them. I have already prayed for them, but now I see their faces. I think of how deeply God loves each member of His body. Individually I look at them, and it warms my heart.

There are many people I look upon as I deliver the message, and it keeps my heart warm

when things are difficult. Perhaps I am tired or under pressure. When I look at them I can see the purity, wholesomeness, fervency, and the love of God in their eyes. I may look at one person and their countenance will reflect a godly smile. I may look at someone else, when no one seems to care or understand the fervency of the moment, in the depth of the moving of God, and this *one* person's countenance will reveal that they are receiving the message in faith.

Oftentimes, Christians forget to thank God for the message; they act as though they had never heard it. We may have experienced a great visitation of God, yet no one is moved! All of heaven is moved, yet no one says a word. Oftentimes, during a service I may look at two or three people, and their countenances testify that they were visited by God. They were weeping as I was preaching. I may look over and smile at them—smiling keeps my heart warm. People who walk in the Spirit keep their pastor's heart warm.

As I consider a person's background in life, it keeps my heart warm. I saw a young boy about the age of seven in church the other day. I looked at him and thought, "I wonder what his life is like." He is from a very poor family. He is

not loved, so I've been told, and he doesn't have much of an opportunity in life right now. As I thought of him, I picked him up and threw him into the air, and I hugged him—because he needed it. Thinking of the needs of people should warm your heart.

Then I thought of a widow who never says a word, but she comes to church week after week. She has lost her mate, yet she goes on serving God. She is godly, loyal, pure, and honorable. But she is human, and I know that she misses her husband. I thought of her faithfulness to God. Although she doesn't have the intimacy of marriage anymore, she sits in these pews week after week, faithful to the church. She loves, prays, and ministers. She is kind and she always edifies others. When I think of widows, it warms my heart.

When I think of the many young people who are saved and fall into sin, it breaks my heart. There is one girl who has made a tremendous mistake and she has been on my heart for weeks now. She fell into sin. She is a beautiful girl as far as I'm concerned, and she is a lady. I know that she will come through for God. But at night, I weep as I pray for her. Praying for her warms my heart. She sinned and is now preg-

nant, but she has repented. Repentance should warm your heart. Her sin was wrong, and she is terribly sorry. You see, the needs of people should always warm your heart.

There are those who are handicapped, yet they come to church week after week in wheelchairs. There are those who suffer from chronic illnesses, yet, they are strengthened inwardly by Christ, and they serve God with joy. When you think about their lives before God, it should warm your heart. In the midst of an academic message, in the midst of presenting an exegesis, I may interrupt the sermon to say, " You know, God loves you." Expressing the love of God always warms my heart.

Memories also warm my heart. My first wife, who went home to be with the Lord, used to sing, *"The Darker the Night, the Brighter the Light Shines."* When it is time to preach, when I've been through a difficult day, I sometimes (though not intentionally) feel indifferent. For some reason, there are times when I don't sense God's presence. We know we should not live by feelings, but on the other hand, I thank God that He has given us emotions so that we can respond to and appreciate truth. I may stop speaking for a moment and ponder those words, "The

darker the night, the brighter the light shines. I'm walking with Jesus, the Light of the world." This memory will always make me weep. My wife used to sing the song *"Unworthy."* If anyone says "unworthy" in any circumstance, that song will be brought to mind, and I will think of her life before God and weep. You can call it sentimentality, but I call it the encouragement of a godly memory.

If someone brings up the word "mother," my whole heart is touched, as I think of the faithfulness of my own mother. I loved her. Memories can warm your heart.

Years ago, I asked God for the gift to teach more than just the letter of the Word. "The letter killeth but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:6). I knew that knowledge of the Scriptures without the brokenness of the Spirit would only bring death to its hearers.

I want to share something else that warms my heart. I watch people give in an offering. I think of the many hours they worked in order to give to support God's work. I think of how much of their own lives went into the offering. When people give money to Jesus when giving is not legislated, when people give gloriously unto God, this makes me weep.

We have so many people who attend Bible school and go out weekly on outreaches. I know they have full-time jobs, yet, they are people who are also committed to serve God. It warms my heart to watch them serve.

Names warm my heart. I think of Fred Lowell, a godly fellow, and his wife, Bea. Fred Lowell stood by me the first six months in Montsweag when no one supported me. When Fred Lowell's name is mentioned, I often weep. Fred came over every morning to go on visitation. Fred was always there beside his pastor. Names warm a preacher's heart.

"A Place of Quiet Rest—Near the Heart of God"

"There is a place of quiet rest, near the heart of God." One of the problems that many churches have is that preachers do not keep their hearts warm toward the love of God. They don't love their people. They may serve their people and preach good messages, but they do not serve their people with brokenness before the Cross.

Love is contagious, but someone has to initiate God's love. Someone must take the first step to warm the heart of another. We must first receive God's love, and then impart it to others. God's love will always warm your heart. Com-

munion with God will warm your heart. Prayer will warm your heart.

Now, do you understand a little bit better why Jeremiah said, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes were a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people" (Jeremiah 9:1)? I think I understand a little bit better why Paul in Acts 20:19b said that he served God as a slave, in humility and in tears. I love this principle. I think I understand why Paul said, "By the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31).

I think I understand a little bit more why Jesus went to the mountains and wept. I think I understand why He groaned in the Spirit and wept at Lazarus' grave. I think I understand why Isaiah wept for his people in the hour of trouble. Their hearts were broken by God's love. They put Christ first and without selfishness and self-occupation. They were able to love others with His unconditional love. Their self-life had been crucified at the Cross, and God's tears of compassion were released through their broken vessels.

Chapter Three

WAYS TO KEEP YOUR HEART ON FIRE

The Home Is the Castle of the Heart

A believer's attitude and disposition in the home reveals his heart relationship toward God. There are many things that we all do unintentionally which prevent the heart from being kindled with fire. You see, the home should be the happiest place in a person's life. It should be the place for creative fellowship, quietness, communication, and appreciating God's love.

The home should be the quietest of all resting places. We should make our home comfortable without making it an idol. In its proper perspective, our home should be made the spiritual mansion of the heart. We may not have a great deal of time to spend at home, but the time that we do have should always be very profitable. Therefore, we should not use our family as a sounding board for the moods of our nat-

ural disposition. The home should never be a place to express negative moods. The home must never be a place to express hostility toward others or any form of negativity.

Every believer is a member of God's royal family, and the home should be the castle of the soul. Therefore, we should work on ways in which we can change our lives at home if necessary. After much thinking, we should creatively implement ways of initiating the life of Christ in our family relationships. We should be effective in our approach without being contrived or superficial.

There are many ways to initiate happiness in the home. First, we must purpose in our hearts to make our home a haven for our lives before God. It is important to be kind to family members and relatives as well as those who visit our home. If I am unkind in my own home, then my message is without power, as far as God is concerned. If I am crude in my manners, then I am not honoring the Word of God in my home. Courtesy, kindness, hospitality, gentleness, and all the attributes of Jesus Christ should be expressed in the home. We must plan to magnify Christ in our home life and then act upon the Word of God. All of these things are a result of

disciplined thinking through the mind of Christ.

Setting Apart Time for God

Another way to keep our heart on fire is to set apart specific time to spend with God. Disciplined communication, action, and application of the Word in circumstances of life come from having a disciplined relationship toward God. A relationship that has been trained in the Word of God is then controlled by the Spirit of God. Therefore, time should be set apart to praise God, to thank Him for what He has done, and to worship God for who He is.

Also, time should be set apart to confess sin and to ask for and implement forgiveness. Confession should be a spontaneous response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Time should be set apart to meditate, to deeply think about what you already have received. Every Spirit-filled believer should schedule a time every day to worship God for who He is. Even if you have only five minutes each day to be alone with God, simply say, "God, I want to worship you for who you are." Praise God for what He has done; worship Him for who He is! Think over what you already know without studying anything new for that period of time.

Meditate on a particular verse and ask the Holy Spirit to bring life through the Word of God.

Keep the Fire Burning on the Altar of Your Heart

In Leviticus 6:12-13, we are given a beautiful picture of keeping God's fire perpetually burning:

"And the fire upon the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be allowed to go out; the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it, and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. The fire shall be burning continually upon the altar; it shall not go out" (Amplified Translation).

Every morning the priest placed wood on the fire and it burned continually upon the altar: *The fire would never go out.* All believers are saved by Jesus Christ's Finished Work on the Cross of Calvary. Christ has paid for all of our sins; He will never impute sin to us. The fire of salvation will never go out! The fire of grace will never go out! The fire of love will never go out! The fire of forgiveness will never go out! The fire of redemption will never go out! It is impossible for the fire of the Finished Work to go out because it is a perfect work of God, apart from the effort of sinful men. But, wood has to be put upon the fire by each believer-priest every morning. The

wood speaks of our humanity.

"It is of the Lord's mercies and lovingkindnesses that we are not consumed, because His (tender) compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great and abundant is Your stability and faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23, Amplified Translation).

As we rest in His promise of mercy, it keeps our hearts warm every morning. This is the secret of keeping your heart on fire. When we purpose to bring ourselves into the inexhaustible love, grace, and power of God every morning, the fire cannot go out. The Finished Work does not cease.

What happens when the wood is not laid in order upon the Finished Work altar of our heart? If God's order is not honored, the heart will cease to be warm. This principle cannot be emphasized enough. Behind every effective pastor, behind every productive servant of God, behind every fruitful Christian is a heart fixed on the new mercies and tender compassions of our faithful God, according to Lamentations 3:22-23.

By placing our humanity upon the altar every morning, we exchange our natural life for his supernatural provision. The fire is always there, but unless we choose to walk with God, the wood has not been placed on the altar.

Whenever a believer backslides, the fire did not stop burning; the believer simply did not place his humanity upon the altar. This means that he did not receive grace so that the fire of the Spirit could consume the dross of sin. When you look back over your life and the times that you became cold, see if these were the times that you did not put the wood of your humanity on the altar in the morning.

Jesus Christ met Peter, John, and James and the other disciples in the morning (John 21:9-14). They had been out fishing and caught nothing, until Jesus filled their net with fish. Meanwhile, as they came closer to shore, the disciples recognized that Jesus was there, already cooking breakfast for them (John 21:9).

It is a beautiful thing to meet Jesus in the morning. Communing with Jesus helps our hearts to be aflame all day long. When we go to bed at night thinking negative thoughts, we will wake up in the morning thinking negative thoughts. The wood of our humanity must be placed on the altar of our hearts continually. Unless we cherish the time of prayer, meditation, praise, and worship in the morning, our humanity will not touch the fire of God's grace, His Word, and His Spirit.

CONCLUSION

Let us never allow our hearts to grow cold toward God, toward serving the needs of others, or toward winning the lost. Although you may know the letter of the Word perfectly, are you in communion with the only One who can give you the words of life? How can you impart the essence of God's life to the world if you are not in intimate fellowship with God?

Every believer needs to develop a fervent, effectual prayer life so that he can get to know the One whom he has believed for salvation (2 Timothy 1:12*a*). The time is tragically short and the urgency to win souls for Christ is greater now than in all of human history. We encourage each believer to place his humanity upon the altar of the Cross each morning so the perpetual fire of God can ignite the heart throughout the day.

Last Looks,

Last Thoughts,

Last Words

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Last looks, last thoughts, and last words. Have you ever stopped to think of the importance of a look? It's quite important how people look at you and how you look at them. The Bible clearly teaches that our countenance reveals much, if we are sincere. Looks—they are very important. How we look at each other is very important.

Then, of course, last thoughts are always very important—remembering opportunities we have had with God and with people.

Think of the last words spoken when somebody is leaving for a period of time. The last words spoken when someone is going into eternity are always unbelievably precious.

So we would like to address this subject: Last looks, last thoughts, and last words.

Across our nation and across the world there are all kinds of sufferings—sufferings that have many descriptions: sufferings of starvation, pri-

vation, leprosy. Sufferings of guilt, torment, disease, and all kinds of afflictions. And then, of course, in the world today we have all kinds of bitterness, hatred, resentment, jealousy, envy, and strife. These are kinds of mental and emotional sufferings.

If you should take all the physical suffering and all the mental suffering in all the world today and in every single age of human history, if you put them all together so that you could see them all at once, they would not compare to the suffering that I am talking about in this message: Last looks, last thoughts, and last words.

Chapter One

A HEART VISION: LAST LOOKS

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

"And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:20-27).

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).

I was riding alone in a car when the Spirit of God began to speak in what I would call a "heart vision." It was regulated by the Word of God in truth, and it came entirely from the Scriptures.

All of a sudden, I found that I had to stop the car. It was like a record was playing, and I wanted to hear that record. I was so captivated by the drama that I was absolutely overcome in total stillness and quietness, in absolute subjection to God.

This is what the Lord showed me in that heart vision.

The first thing I saw was the suffering of humanity such as I have never seen it before. The Lord gave me a concept of the physical and mental torments experienced by people in remote parts of the world and all over America. But then He showed me that all these sufferings would not even remotely begin to add up to what He wanted to reveal.

I saw a throne. And on that throne was Jesus Christ. I suppose the thing that completely overwhelmed me at first was the description of Jesus Christ, which was according to the Scriptures. In Revelation 1:13, He had a garment that came way down and covered His entire body. He had a golden girdle, which really looked like armor, but it was in the form of a girdle around His tremendous, beautiful robe.

The hair on His head was white as snow. His eyes were piercing, with the most beautiful fire that you could ever see. His feet were brass that had been in the fire, purified and absolutely shining with beautiful, beautiful glory. His face was shining as the sun, revealing His purity and perfection. His right hand was stretched out, and in it were seven stars.

Out of His mouth proceeded a two-edged sword, which speaks of the Word of God and the two sides of it, fitting the scene perfectly (Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:16).

To look at Jesus Christ in this heart vision completely took my breath. I checked out the reference God gave me in Revelation 1:12-20, and I discovered that it was accurate and perfect according to the Scriptures. I hadn't read those verses for many, many months.

The Great Grandstand

He stood and He was at His throne. Behind Him were masses of people in grandstands. The grandstands were suspended, resting upon nothing. They were made of gold, silver, brass, and beautiful iron. The combination of colors was absolutely out of this world. The grandstands were something that cannot be articulated in human phraseology.

I saw the cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1); the spirits of just men made perfect (Hebrews 12:23). And I saw every single born-again believer gathered in the grandstands, and they were all at the Throne. There was a line between them and the people whom they were facing.

Jesus Christ looked beautiful to the people in the grandstands, yet the grandstands were full of tension. The silence was so unique, so different. It almost seemed as if my heart would stop beating. I was not conscious of the other cars on the road or anything, just my heart's vision.

I looked at some of the people in the grandstands. I expected them to be smiling but they were not. One by one, they were weeping, and it looked very strange. They were beautiful. They did not have bodies of flesh and blood. They had glorified bodies that were so much like His. But there was something more significant in the fiery, glorified expression of His deity.

All of a sudden, I saw heaven and earth flee away, and then I knew that God was saying that the earth and heaven will flee away (2 Peter 3:13, Isaiah 66:22, and Revelation 20:11). It will flee away so there can be a new heaven and a new earth. Heaven and earth fled away, and there we were: suspended in eternity. Not time, not space, but eternity.

As I got that picture, I felt as if I were there on the scene. I was there as a witness, because this scene will happen, and it will be like this.

Chapter Two

UNSPEAKABLE SORROW: LAST THOUGHTS

This heart vision went on beyond time and "now" into the "Eternal Is"—God's description, which is strictly spiritual. This vision was the eternal mind of God revealing eternity that always "is", from the standpoint of our existence in Him. We abide in I AM (Exodus 3:14), in the Eternal Is of God.

Next, I saw the multitudes—literally masses of untold billions standing in front and to the side. Everyone in the grandstands could see them as if they had a close-up view, as if each one was right before their eyes. And the multitudes in front of the grandstands stood, but there was no place found for them on the platform. The multitudes had no place there, for this Great White Throne Judgment was for the unsaved people who have never been washed in the Blood of Jesus Christ, as described in Reve-

lation 20:10-15.

None Could Look upon Him

Those who were brought before the Throne tried to look at Jesus' eyes, but they could not. They could not even glance at Him. His eyes were filled with fire and His body was so perfect, they could not look upon Him. Even when they turned to look, they could not do it because the brightness of His glory would instantly consume them. It was as if the multitudes were passing through the air, and one by one they kept coming back to a position where they would be standing before God.

The Lord Jesus did not look to the grandstands. He looked at the multitudes, and one by one they came up to Him. We could see perfectly every person who came before His judgment seat, because time and space did not create any problems with our vision. We were not limited as we are in our human bodies.

One by one, Jesus Christ began to read off the different things an individual had done for works, good and bad. And many times in this vision in my heart I saw pastors and different ones going before God. I heard a pastor speak back to Him and say, "I prophesied in Thy

Name and I have done many works!" But God could not look upon that pastor. The pastor was pleading, but then he only heard the voice of Jesus Christ piercing his soul, saying, "I have never known you. Depart from Me."

Someone in the grandstands would cry out, "Oh, no!" It was a loud yell that was so deep in its intensity that the person could not even say another word. It was overwhelming to behold the deep and intense feeling of suspense that came into the grandstands and the silence of the multitudes.

Those Who Never Knew Him

I suppose the worst thing I saw in that vision was church members who did not take Jesus Christ seriously. These were those who made professions with their heads but never really received Jesus Christ in their hearts. They were just interested in spiritual things. They lived their lives strictly in the self-consciousness of their independent Adam nature, and they never really came through for God with real, genuine Holy Spirit conversions.

I saw them among the multitudes, and I remember so plainly that I couldn't see inches ahead of me because of seeing church members

across our nation, and in our state, and even in our midst. I cried, "Oh, God! No!" The grandstands were alive with these cries as some of those church members came before God, lost and undone. The people in the grandstands who knew them and loved them would cry out and say, "No! No! No!!!"

But God would not respond. He only looked at the individuals who couldn't look at Him.

I heard some voices pleading, but every time I heard Jesus say, "I am sorry, I have never known you." When He said it, the hearts of the subjects and their expressions cannot be explained in human words.

Accountability

Another terrible scene included teenagers—some of them from our own church—who went through the motions. They came here to church with their parents and were brought up in this ministry. I saw some of them standing before God in absolute horror and terror. They were going to be separated from their families—separated forever from the Body of Christ. They were going to be separated because the reality, truth, life, and honesty of the Word of God and Christ had discovered them and what was really

going on inside of them during the services. What was really inside during their lives at home was now being revealed in unbelief. They never really got saved.

I said, "God! Not our teenagers! No!"

But God never answered.

And some in the audience and the corporate body that were saved groaned, screamed and cried, "God, give them another chance!" Of course, God could not answer that prayer in any way, shape, or manner.

I think the worst thing about the heart vision was when Jesus Christ said to some of the teenagers, "I am sorry, I never really knew you. You lusted in your automobiles, you were sinful, and whosoever lives in lust can never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. You never really got right. You were never born again. You did those things consistently, and you never really truly had an experience of a new birth with Me.

"Your mind was elsewhere. I pleaded with you many times, I loved you, and I sent people who loved you. I had the message plain and clear, and I sent love, grace, and mercy over and over again."

For every time that a person heard the message of love, God will show it to him in that final Judgment. None will have any excuse, and there will be no place for them to hide. There will be no bedrooms, parked cars, loved ones, parents, or church members to run to. Reality is there. And all the significance of truth, integrity, and honesty will be revealed in one colossal consummation of human history. You will be what you are, and what you are will be revealed before everyone. God will reveal it just exactly as it is!

That is what I saw.

They tried to hide in a lie, Isaiah said (Isaiah 28:15), but there was no lie to hide them, because the enlightened countenance of the glorified Master was there.

I saw parents there. I saw adults there. I saw people there of every description, from every walk of life—people who dishonored the Corporate Body, who dishonored Jesus Christ, who dishonored the Holy Spirit. They knew that they had no hiding place, and there was no excuse for them now.

Rationalization was gone. Empiricism was gone. What they thought was gone. The inde-

pendent and intellectual concept was gone. They had to face what God says, what really is—and there is no escape. No escape! And I knew this was for real.

Occasionally, someone in the multitude would look to the grandstands, and the moment he would look with his last look, the person in the grandstands would stand and say, "I am sorry because I was a poor testimony. I was a stumbling block. Honestly, I am sorry." The person would respond with his last look, a death look, in absolute confusion and anger and hatred and bitterness such as you have never seen before. He would like to kill the one in the grandstand, but he couldn't. And the person in the grandstand had to stand there knowing he was going to heaven forever and also knowing the other one was going to hell.

I looked at those last looks, and I considered their last thoughts, and I thought I was going to faint. It made me so very weak. Oh, those last looks and last thoughts.

Chapter Three

THE FINAL JUDGMENT: LAST WORDS

I remember one person who said, "I lived just three houses from you, and you never once showed me Jesus Christ."

From the grandstand, that person said, "I am sorry."

"It doesn't do any good to be sorry. It's over!" said the one standing in judgment.

In the heat of that scene, I began to understand the importance of visitation, the necessity for us to go forth as Jesus told us to do.

I remember seeing a girl looking at a preacher who preached the Gospel and its basics and she said, "You never preached about judgment, you never preached about hell. Why didn't you tell me there is a place like this? Why didn't you?" The preacher hung his head and looked as if he wanted to die a million times.

Then I said, "Lord thank you for making me

a true preacher and for giving me the anointing to tell it the way it is. Oh, God!"

I raised my hand in the car and said, "God help me to preach it always the way it is—always the way it is, at any cost."

In one scene, I saw a boy who had grown up with his father who was ugly and angry at home and not a good testimony. The father professed love, but in reality he didn't express love, though he was saved. The boy grew up and rejected Christ because of his father's testimony of trouble and anger in the home. I saw the father in the grandstands, and the boy, grown to the age of accountability, was going to hell.

"Lord, why are you showing me this scene?" I asked. And the Lord said, "Because it is happening in your congregation."

The boy said, "It's your fault. You didn't get along; you didn't live the life; you didn't honor Jesus Christ. Therefore, I hated the One you stood for, because in the home you led a double life. You were not faithful to God. I resented you and the God you stood for, and I made up my mind that I would never go your way."

The father begged and pleaded with Jesus Christ, but He never looked his way. And the hell for that father who was now in eternity was

that Jesus would not do that; he had led his son into hell even though he was going to heaven.

And I said, "Lord, can anyone stand such a thing?" He said, "Your life is being recorded and you are becoming what you are. This is reality, and this must be faced where grace and love and truth are being rejected."

One Final Scene

First, there were the last looks. Then, in the grandstands, there were the last thoughts. Dear friends, more tears will be shed in that day than in all of our lifetimes put together. Tears were being shed in buckets and people in the grandstands were weeping. There were no good-byes, just last looks and last thoughts. I saw a mother get up in the grandstands and say, "I want to go to hell, too. They have grown up in disobedience, and I helped to send my children there.

And then, there were the last words of Jesus to the lost: "Depart from Me. I am sorry, I never knew you."

Those last words were piercing the grandstands and piercing the masses who were being judged at the White Throne Judgment, with the glorified Savior now facing them as their judge. He faced them and they could not look at Him.

No place was found for them. They looked at their loved ones and the corporate Body who knew they would be with Christ forever. The agony, the drama, the terrible sin, the hatred, the resentment—all the horrible feelings were manifested all at once.

Parents were separated from children. In some cases, husbands and wives were being separated. People in the grandstands were sorry they had not been faithful to church and to the leadership of God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. All kinds of things went on. And I will never forget the last one being cast into Hell.

Tears Wiped Away

Then, Jesus turned His eyes. He looked to the grandstands and said, "I am privately going to wipe the tears from your eyes."

The scene of the Great White Throne Judgment is described in Revelation 20:10-15. But according to Revelation 21:4, Christ personally takes away the tears from their eyes. In some mystical, supernatural way, Jesus will wipe away the buckets of tears from their eyes and look into each one and say, "I am wiping away all memory so that you can inhabit the reality of

eternity that I have for you."

So all of the memories will be wiped out, except for Jesus Christ in the Eternal Is, the eternal now, of His eternal Person as the Head of His eternal corporate Body. We are married to Him, and He wiped the tears away with beauty and compassion. But just before He wiped the memories away, He said, "I am sorry but this is the way it is, because this is reality, and it is the truth, as I said it would be. I am just, and when grace is rejected, that is what will be."

We all seemed to understand, and, as a multitude, we looked back with brand-new eyes and brand-new countenances. We thanked Him and worshipped Him and blessed Him. We sang a new song, and all the grief and sorrow were gone forever. Heaven and earth and everything about it was gone, and I remember that we got up and sang a new song about the Blood. Everything was over. Our past had been blotted out, and together we sang with the Master.

A Final Celebration

There were choirs and bands of angels and thousands of redeemed people singing with harmony—music that was unbelievable—music that could not be heard on earth except through

a supernatural revelation, and all of it just seemed to ring out. And the Son was in the center, but it was just as if He was facing each one.

The magnitude, the royalty, and the beauty of His presence captivated us. We were there with each other. Sin had gone. Sickness had gone. Death had gone.

We embraced Him and worshipped Him and He gave us personal attention. We realized that here we would be forever, with Jesus Christ, with the glory and beauty of hearts unspeakably filled with His glory. We thanked Him, and we worshipped Him, and it went on like that forever, more beautiful every moment.

CONCLUSION

Last looks, last thoughts, and last words. This was my heart's vision many years ago, and it is just as clear today.

I came out of my heart's vision, and the Lord said, "Do not tell it until I tell you to tell it." Three weeks later I was permitted to speak of this vision. I never said a word to anyone until the Spirit told me to reveal it to some folks in my car and then in a morning service.

You will notice that it is extremely scriptural. I prayed then, "Lord, help me to be a Spirit-filled preacher continually, a soul-winning Christian, a loving pastor, a concerned man for everyone.

"Please help the Body to take up the Cross and give everything for God and through God."

Then, He showed me something else that I cannot reveal to you today about His second coming, which would be totally misunderstood so I cannot share it. But I am convinced that many will never face death, and they will be

raptured—caught up to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The Second Coming is that soon. I don't mean that He showed me the date or anything like that. But He did show me in a fantastic way from His Word the proximity of the Second Coming.

I was weak and faint and could not drive, and I said, at last, "Lord, what can I say, except that I love you. I love you! I am unworthy, but I have been accepted and made worthy through Your Blood. I love you."

Father, Please continue to encourage every one of us in the reality of the truth about who You are and what will be. Make us people who share Your heart for the lost, who never take for granted what it means to be saved. We love You. We thank You. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Lay Aside Your Burdens

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Today people put such tremendous emphasis on the physical body. The appearance of the physical body is largely determined by genetics; the appearance of the soul body, on the other hand, is determined by doctrine—how to think properly with God. The more we build up our souls with doctrine, the more magnificent our soul bodies will be in eternity. The physical body is so vulnerable: it is dying and we never know what will happen to it next. We should do what we can to keep our bodies healthy, but our real emphasis should be to keep our souls healthy.

The book of Hebrews, chapter 11, lists heroes of faith. These men and women were far from perfect, and several of them committed horrible sins, but those sins are not listed. They are called heroes because they had a deep overcoming faith in God during many situations in their lives.

Today there are heroes of faith in America

that hold back judgment from the nation. A group of believers who are Spirit-filled, dedicated to prayer, and filled with the Word of God can hold back God's judgment upon nations.

God is saying to each of us today, "Lay aside every weight and every sin that does so easily beset you. Look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith, who endured the Cross and despised the shame for the joy that was set before Him. He is seated at My right hand" (see Hebrews 12:1-2).

A lot of people want to love but they have no capacity because of the weights that they carry. This booklet will examine the weights that many of us carry and how we can lay them aside by the mercy and grace of God.

Chapter One
BURDENS OF GUILT AND SHAME

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

The following illustrations explain what the Bible means by "weight."

A thirteen-year-old girl was crying because she missed her daddy who had died one week

before. Her mother screamed at her and said, "You are one of the reasons he died of that heart attack! It was you!"

From that moment until she finally decided to go for counseling at the age of thirty-one, this woman carried a weight of unearned guilt and unearned shame. Problems came into her marriage after she had a child—all because of what her mother said to her one week after her father's death.

"You are not guilty of anything," I told her. "You did not cause your father's death. The issues of death belong to God, according to Psalm 68:20." The weight that was over this woman's soul for more than seventeen years, was now finally able to be laid aside.

Demonic Projections

Another mother did a good job raising her children. When her husband left them, she started going to church, but one of her daughters was hanging around with the wrong crowd. The mother was not legalistic or overbearing; she invested in her daughter and did everything she could for her. She went to all of her games in high school, went shopping with her, bought her good clothes, but the girl started taking

drugs and would not obey her mother. At the age of sixteen, she took an overdose and died. After that, Satan kept projecting to the mother that she was responsible for her daughter's death.

In counseling, I told this woman, "You were not responsible for her death. People are responsible for their own decisions. Deuteronomy 24:16 tells us that parents are not responsible for the sins of the children, and according to Ezekiel 18:20, children are not responsible for the sins of their parents. You are a godly woman. Please lay aside this weight."

"Lay aside," in the Greek in Hebrews 12:1, is an aorist middle participle of apotithemi, which means "just lay it aside, throw it away in a garbage heap, and don't pick it up again." Describing the weight as having "so easily beset" us (euperistatos in the Greek) means that the weight is all around, trying to take advantage of us, and it will not leave us alone. Therefore, we have to make a conscious effort to deal with the weights that would overtake us.

Unreasonable Standards

A young man had a mother and father who always screamed at him to do better. He cried and cried. "I will never make it," he said. He

was a good child; he did the best he could, but the parents' standard was way beyond reality. He carried around tremendous guilt, thinking that he was not honoring his mother and father.

"Your problem should not be guilt," I told this boy. "It should be disappointment. You are disappointed because you cannot please your parents. They are being unreasonable." I began to tell him that God is pleased with his life. Not only was he was doing the best he could, but in fact, for a young man, he was far above average.

It took time. He listened to many doctrine tapes, and I sent him several letters. The parents' standards were too high for him, and they were not being fair. They had put a great weight on him, which affected his social life and his capacity to receive from God. But, finally, this young man did accept himself.

There are other people who set unreasonable standards for themselves. When they cannot meet their own standards, they start to feel guilty and ashamed. This becomes a tremendous weight upon them.

Longtime baseball fans will remember Jim Piersall, a fine center fielder for the Boston Red Sox who was later a radio announcer for the White Sox. The story of how he overcame a ter-

rible psychosis was made into a movie. Right in the prime of his career, Jim Piersall became psychotic. He came out on a sunny day with an umbrella and wearing a raincoat, and he stood at home plate ready to bat. He ran the opposite way around the bases. Eventually, he had to receive psychological help in a hospital ward. The reason for it all was traced to the way his father screamed at him, day in and day out, at the ballfield. The father continually demanded that his son play better baseball. The result was that baseball became a tremendous weight in Jim Piersall's life. He thought that he could never satisfy his father.

Lay aside your weights. Even if the weights are because of sin, lay them aside. Your Father in heaven knows how to take care of you.

Chapter Two
OPPORTUNITY TO OVERCOME

Peter sinned and he could not forgive himself for his sin. But watch how Jesus Christ approached Peter's weight of sin in John 21:15-19:

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

"He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou

wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

"This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."

Instead of condemning Peter for denying Him three times, Jesus Christ approached him only with an opportunity of success. He never said a word about failure. He did not bring it up, because it was in the past.

Living in the Finished Work

I will not continue to counsel a person who constantly relates to his past. If he has to go through it one time in order to develop a capacity for God, I will let him, but that is where it stops. The past is gone forever! We are living in a finished work.

Some counselors believe we ought to let people talk about their past all the time. What? Talk about Adam? Talking about Adam never got anyone anywhere. Instead, we need to talk about God, Jesus Christ, the Blood, the cleansing, and the purging, and the facts that we are

clean, that we are new creatures, and that we are seated above with God in Christ (Colossians 3:3).

We are seated above in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). We are members of His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). We have been joined to Him as one spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). God does not see a single thing but us being hid with Christ in God, and He doesn't impute a single sin to us (Romans 4:7, 8).

Let's not fulfill the psyche of Adam and relate to ourselves Adam's way. God refuses to counsel us in Adam, and His counsel stands forever (Psalm 33:11).

The woman taken in adultery carried a heavy weight. But in John 8:10-11, Jesus said, "Who is he that condemns you?" She said, "No man, Lord." And He said, "Neither do I condemn you: Go and sin no more."

"Neither do I condemn you." What an evidence of God's provision and God's love for a person who has been carrying a tremendous weight! To those going through problems because of failure, God says, "I do not condemn you. In fact, I paid for what you are doing. Receive My love, receive My grace, and go forward through My forgiveness."

Chapter Three
FINDING REST FOR YOUR SOUL

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

Psalm 16:6 speaks of having our lines fall in pleasant places and having a goodly heritage. Studies of the central nervous system show that lines of communication and patterns of motor responses are established in the brain, connecting specialized nerve cells to every part of the body through synapses (gaps between nerve fibers where chemical neurotransmitters send electrical impulses from cell to cell). To put it simply, if we hear or do the wrong things repeatedly, cells connect in lines to the old sin nature. These lines will not let us free because of

the weights of adamic history attached to them.*

After we are saved, however, these cells can be connected through Jesus Christ and the Word of God, establishing brand-new lines and connecting us to a brand-new gene pool (1 Peter 1:23) with brand-new incorruptible seeds. Therefore, if you will accept it, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God can make you become a brand-new person, mentally and emotionally. You will be the happiest person in all the world.

Lay aside those weights and run the race by going forward and forgetting what is behind you. If you have sinned, just confess it and lay aside the sin. Do not live in its consequences; do not live in what it has done to you or others. Just do the very best thing you can by trusting God with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. Acknowledge Him in all your ways and He will direct your paths.

Refuse to Internalize Lies

A woman carried a great weight of not being able to enjoy sex with her husband. She would not defraud him, but she did not feel comfortable, and she ran herself down about it, even though she is a very wonderful wife.

In counseling, I found out that her husband

was constantly telling her she was not a good lover. He wanted sex every night, and secretly he read pornography and was filthy-minded. She received what he said, internalized it, and thought that she had failed as a wife.

I said to her, "What you are feeling is not sin. The sin is on his part. His standard for a sexual relationship is not God's standard. He has a problem and he needs help, but don't carry that weight any longer. Lay aside the weight and be free."

By God's grace, she went home and asserted herself. "I am not the guilty party here," she told her husband. "You have been laying a guilt trip on me but you can stop it right now, because I am standing in the grace of God (Romans 5:2). I have no condemnation. And furthermore, the problem is with you, and I am an amazing woman." She is still open and available to be a good partner, but she is no longer carrying the weight of his expectations. At times it is necessary to be self-assertive and tell it as it is.

Sometimes guilt motivates people for shame and more failure. But Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. I will give you an opportunity right now to get up and go on. Let's not discuss what you did. Will you take

this opportunity?"

"Looking unto Jesus," in Hebrews 12:2, is *aphorao*, a word that means to take your eyes off self, circumstances, people, and your past completely, and to fix your gaze on something else. If you have been hurt or if something is not right, look away from it and look to Jesus Christ. With a steady gaze, keep looking and keep gazing at Him, because in that way you become just like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). As you look at Him, you are transformed to become like Him.

Come unto Jesus

Many of you never even realized that you have been under a weight. You have had a weight and you have not defined it. It does not matter if you caused it or if someone else did; lay it aside and look unto Jesus.

One of the greatest revelations I have ever had in my life relates to Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Labour" speaks of the times when we have failed; "heavy laden" refers to times when someone else is causing us heartache.

Jesus said, "If you did the failing, come anyway. It's okay. And if someone else has hurt you,

come anyway. Come unto Me, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you will find rest for your soul. I am not a respecter of persons. Come right now. It is all the same to Me. Just come and you will get rest. You will learn of Me and see that My yoke is easy, My burden is light, so just come."

"That is too simple," some of you may be thinking. You mean, you would rather live in self-punishment? Stop punishing yourself! There is not one time that self-punishment will help bring you peace and victory—even when you are guilty.

Lay aside your weights and sins and realize that Jesus accepts you as you are.

*Read The War Against the Mind, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.

CONCLUSION

Look to Jesus Christ. Follow Him, respect Him, respond to Jesus Christ and receive His love just as you are. Go forward in the grace of God, through the love of God, in the joy of God, by the forgiveness of God, in the power of God, in the patience of God.

Rebound and go forward so that you can be transformed. This is His work, not yours (Romans 12:2). You do the believing, He does the changing. You do the following, He does the transforming. You do the asking, He does the answering.

Many people overcome many obstacles. They are Christians who are proud to say they love the Word and that they are following God. They have a desire to care for others. These are people who used to carry such heavy burdens, but now they continue to look unto Jesus, having laid aside their weights.

Leading People

into Discipleship

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INTRODUCTION

We are part of a work of God that is reaching men and women in the uttermost parts of the world, bringing them the Gospel by every means possible—through radio, television, the Internet, and dramatic presentations.

Of course, nothing is as effective as speaking with people face to face. That is why as a local church we go door to door, sharing the salvation message throughout our city several times a week. As an international ministry, we also send missionary teams into all the world to evangelize people in villages, cities, and entire nations with the good news that Jesus Christ paid the price for sin so they can believe on Him as Savior and receive His gift of eternal life.

Still, if that is as far as we go in our outreach, a vital step is lacking: Discipleship. Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]" (Matthew 28:19).

But that is not all. In the next breath He added: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20*a*).

The Holy Spirit convicts men's hearts of the truth of the Gospel. But God has left the business of making disciples to people like you and me. Though we may convince many to profess that they need salvation, we are to lead people into a life-transforming knowledge of God that includes obedience to the truth. This booklet deals with the importance of making disciples, giving practical steps to help lead people into discipleship.

Chapter One

A SOLEMN QUESTION

"A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

"And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

"And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold….He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 8:5-8).

The Bible says in Romans 3:24-25 that we are all justified by grace through the redemption of Jesus Christ and through "faith in his blood." It means we are saved and hid with Christ in God in the new covenant. Of course, when we go out soul winning, give a clear presentation of the Gospel, and pray with a person, we want to be-

lieve that he became saved—but, did he? Did he get saved, or, was he a disciple that would go back and never follow Jesus? Did he just profess to be a disciple, a learner?

When a person receives us into his house, we clearly present the plan of salvation. If there is no immediate outward response, we always say, "Thank you for letting us in your home," then we pray a simple prayer: "Thank You, Lord, for this home, and for this person who just made a decision." Of course, we don't know what kind of decision they made.

From the account in Luke 8, it is possible that as many as seventy-five percent of people who make professions are not really saved. They don't go to church, and they do not get baptized. They accept the knowledge of the Gospel but not the gift of repentance through the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31:18-19*a*).

Many Are Called, Few Are Chosen

Second Corinthians 3:6 says, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." The knowledge of the truth is very interesting to some, and they may even tell their best friend about it. But if they really were born again, they would repent through the grace, love, and mercy of God. They

would let God turn them and give them the power to walk in the newness of His life. They would come to the next church service, begin to study the Word, and obey what they hear from the Word of God.

You say, "Isn't salvation with the filling of the Holy Spirit a free gift?"

Yes, it is a free gift. But why does the Bible say, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14)? They have received a knowledge of grace but not the Holy Spirit of grace through faith. By grace, through faith, it takes the Holy Spirit to convert a person through regeneration and to indwell them, guide them, and reveal the power of the Word of God. Without the Spirit, it is the power of the flesh with knowledge that puffs up (1 Corinthians 8:1).

Regeneration means that a person has a conversion first, and then he becomes a new creature. Yes, salvation is grace plus nothing *if* it includes a willingness to be turned around by God. But if a person who has professed Christ as Savior goes away with only an emotional response, unchanged, and never goes to any church for the rest of his life, he has taken the grace of God in vain.

This is why I fear that some people who make professions are not really getting saved. Every person who is saved should follow it up by attending a Bible-believing church and being baptized. By our fruit we are known. It is not like the thief who was dying the moment he was saved (Luke 23:39-43). He had no opportunity to produce fruits of obedience, yet we are certain that he was regenerated.

To be honest, many are not saved at the time that they make a profession. Some are, but many will never step foot in church, and they bear no evidence that they are saved. There is no change.

When people understand salvation, they go way beyond receiving the knowledge of the truth. But the problem we have to deal with is in Luke 8, where Satan takes the Word out of their hearts before it saves them. They make a profession, and they use it as a security blanket without experiencing the gift of repentance.

The gift of repentance brings about a change in the heart, mind, and soul. You were going one way, and you turned right around—180 degrees. And now, you are going God's way. You let God turn you right around. Your attitudes toward

church attendance, the Bible, and priorities change because you have a new life, new light, and a new perspective.

If, however, you only believe in the knowledge of the Gospel, that does not save you. According to Acts 5:32, obedience is the evidence of the initial act of salvation, which is when we were filled with the Holy Spirit. "And we are witnesses of these things: and so is also the Holy [Spirit], whom [the Lord] hath given to them that obey him."

God has to take away what many seem to have, because the best they ever did was receive the knowledge of salvation (Luke 8:18). They never became regenerated by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

That can be hard to hear when you consider that we are saved by grace alone—and we are. The problem is with the condition and preparation of the soil that receives the seed of the Word of God. That is why Luke 8:18 is in the Bible.

In Matthew 7:21-23, God said to the evangelist who preached Christ, cast out demons, and did many wonderful works, "Depart from Me; I never knew you." That man was not regenerated, and he never received the Holy Spirit. He was preaching *about* the Holy Spirit, but he had

never received Christ as Savior and had never been born again, though he went forward to serve God and the ministry! That is what concerns me.

Everyone who is saved should have the fruit of God's love. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). We let love cast out fear; we love ourselves, others, and our enemies. That love is the evidence of eternal security.

Grace Leads to Repentance

To whom does God give the gift of the Holy Spirit? He gives it to those who obey. Where does obedience start? It is revealed in our mental attitude when we accept Christ.

So, someone may say, "I've been looking for this all my life, and I finally found it!" and appear to have been saved. But if he is saved, his hunger for God and the Word will lead him to church somewhere in the future weeks. More than that, he will be led of the Spirit.

Many sincere Christians misunderstand grace. You see, we are saved by grace through faith and not of works. But grace will always produce a desire to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and power to live quietly with

doctrine in this present world (Titus 2:12). So if the Holy Spirit of grace comes in, He comes to indwell, teach, guide, lead, and reveal the truth.

We need to teach people that Satan's mission is to take away the knowledge before the Holy Spirit comes in. In the parable of the sower in Luke 8, Satan takes away the knowledge before obedience comes into the mind. As a result, many hear but are unable to receive the Spirit for transformation.

Now do you see why I am concerned? Many will say, "I knew You," and God will say, "I didn't know you."

Many Christians lack precise doctrine, and that makes the difference. Doctrine means how to think with God in the Spirit—not how to think with God in knowledge, but how to think in God with the knowledge of the Spirit in the spirit of knowledge.

What I am afraid of is that many people have a form of godliness—they make a profession of knowledge—but deny the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5), so they don't come to church. They refuse to submit to a pastor-teacher; they don't receive doctrine; and they don't grow in grace and knowledge.

Imagine a child coming into this world as a

little baby, and ten years later the child never grew at all! He remained as a little baby, unable to speak or do anything on his own. That is what we face with people who have not been fed Bible doctrine.

An Outward Response to an Inward Call

Regarding soul winning, I always consider that when I lead people to Christ, I impart knowledge. But when they will come out to church services, I know that they obeyed something they heard and the Holy Spirit took over, imparting new life.

It is so easy for children of Christian parents to believe the knowledge of their parents' doctrine but never to receive and obey the Spirit of truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. We receive the truth of the Word of God, which says that Jesus was crucified, through the eternal Spirit of God.

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). If the words we speak are not Spirit-filled, then our knowledge doesn't have life. Knowledge without the Spirit puffs up and makes people rebellious.

The only way we can live in retroactive truth (which includes our death, burial, and resurrection in Christ), is through the eternal Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two

SOUL WINNING IS JUST THE BEGINNING

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

"And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

"*But they have not all obeyed the gospel*. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath *believed* our report?

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

"But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Romans 10:13-18).

When we share the Gospel and people make a profession to receive Christ as their Savior, follow-up with a goal of discipleship is crucial. We need to take the time to show people how to begin their new walk. It is not up to us to judge whether a person means business with God when he prays the prayer of salvation. But it is up to us to share with them the richness of the life we have received.

Lovingly, graciously, tenderly, encourage the person you prayed with to read the Scriptures. Using your Bible, turn to the verses, and whenever possible let him read the passages out loud. Mark the pages beforehand so you can easily find the verses.

One of the first things to establish is the fact that the Word of God is pure and divinely inspired, and we must not add to nor take away from the Word of God. Include yourself in the discussion; say "we" instead of "you." For example, "*We* are all sinners, that is why we must handle the Word of God with the utmost respect…." Let them read the verses that you know on that subject. You may not need to go into Deuteronomy 4:2; 11:17-18, and 12:32; but you certainly should read Proverbs 30:5, Matthew 4:4, and Revelation 22:18 and 19.

From time to time, stop and ask whether they have any questions. You can refer them to publications such as *What Happened When You Received Christ?* (by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999). A booklet such as this, which outlines 68 things that happen at the moment of salvation, can provide an excellent outline of the kinds of things to share with a new believer, to build him up in his status as a child and an heir of God.

Also, it is vital to teach new believers about the importance of rebounding when we fail (1 John 1:7-10). When we forgive, we forget. If we tell what somebody did to us a year ago, or about some sin they did, we don't reveal God's love. People who withdraw from church, become negative, and live in sin for a period of time, often question whether or not they are saved. Every believer needs to know that sin cuts off fellowship with God; but when we confess it and isolate it we can forget it and go on because of rebound.

The Testimony of Baptism

It is a good idea to encourage the new believer to be baptized as soon as possible. If they begin by being obedient to baptism (when they

understand what it means), then they will keep a process of obedience, for which they will receive rewards.

Let new converts know why baptism is so crucial. Baptism is a testimony that we have entered into a union with the retroactive truth of Jesus Christ's crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. In other words, we give public testimony of the truth of what happened to us from God's viewpoint of our position, "hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

Baptism has nothing to do with salvation; it is a testimony of obedience because God said to do it (Acts 2:38; Matthew 28:19). Jesus was baptized by John in obedience to His Father's will (Luke 3:21). Baptism is an outward testimony of our obedience to God, before the angels and the demons of hell. It is a public declaration—before the world, before demons, and before God—that we have changed sides.

We are saved by grace and grace alone (Romans 11:6, Ephesians 2:8, 9), and the only "work" required is that we believe the Gospel. Yet the Scriptures show that when the first believers were saved, they couldn't wait to follow the Lord. They became followers of Jesus—the Light of the world (John 8:12)—in every part of their

lives (Matthew 16:24).

"Buy the Truth, and Sell It Not"
(Proverbs 23:23a)

We should never presume that because a person has been exposed to good biblical teaching that they are necessarily saved. Many good people have given mental consent to the truth, but they trust in their own goodness, which is as filthy rags in the sight of God. Let the new believer see the immediate and eternal value of the Scriptures—that God Himself esteems His Word above His name (Psalm 138:2).

It is important to set up a time to meet again with the new believer, either at a restaurant, at his home, or at church. If he is willing, have him give you a date immediately, while the message is fresh. That is God's "close" to make sure he is serious about what he heard and that the message goes beyond his emotions.

We need to be thorough and take time; do not be in a hurry. This is how we should invest in every person who has made a profession of salvation. Yet, so many Christians fail to follow through when counseling people who just prayed a prayer to be saved.

Satan will do everything he can to take the

Word out of the hearts of new believers. Many have only *professed* to be saved, and time will tell whether a profession is a pre-salvation experience or real salvation.*

Parents or teachers should have a time when they share the Gospel plainly to the young people in our Christian schools, one-on-one. Ask them, "Has your life ever really been changed? It doesn't matter what you say about believing like your parents do. Has there been a time when your life changed?"

Not by Bread Alone

It is important to show a new believer that the Word of God will evaluate his life and his fruit at the Bema Seat.** Explain that all who are born-again will be accountable before God based on their opportunities on earth to obey God's Word.

For example, the Bible tells us to love God and to love one another (Matthew 22:37-39). It tells us to study the Word (2 Timothy 2:15), to trust the Lord for our needs (Proverbs 3:5-6; Luke 12:22-31), and to forsake not the assembling of the church (Hebrews 10:25). God keeps a record of our hearing and living by His Word in the Book of Remembrance (Malachi 3:16), and

based on that record, we will either receive rewards or suffer loss of rewards when we face Christ.

While the subject of the Bema Seat is fresh in his mind, you could turn to John 12:47-48 and have him read it. Then you could say, "Now, according to the Bible, from what you saw with your own eyes, what is going to evaluate us at the Bema Seat?"

If he is following you, he will answer, "The Word of God."

Always keep your words sweet and tender and edifying: "Yes, that's right! It's the Word of God."

On Being Hid in the Body of Christ

Then, take him into Hebrews 10:25, to show the importance of church attendance as members of the Body of Christ. You just turn there, and ask him to read that passage: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Don't say a word until he has finished reading. Then explain that we are learning to live by every word of God, because we have discovered

that God's Word will judge us at the Bema Seat. Therefore, we want to be able to know what it says. You can make a specific appointment to meet him at a church service or even offer to give him a ride.

This would be a good time to teach about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit with the doctrine of the Word of God. Then I would teach the doctrine of having a pastor-teacher. This can be introduced with the category of faith.

Steps of Faith: Walk, Don't Run!

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). Romans 10:13-15 will introduce the new believer to the value God places on His government on earth through the local church ("…how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?…").

Once you have shown him that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, then you say, "Okay, faith cometh by hearing, hearing by the Word of God. And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

And you pause and you say, "How do they hear?"

"By a preacher."

Don't let your approach be all business or too mechanical. Once in a while, inject words that let him know you thank God for his heart, that he can see the reality of the Scriptures.

Obviously, we can't obey the Word if we don't know it. And we can't enjoy its treasures if we don't know what it says. But remember: Faith comes by *hearing*. We need to hear it. It doesn't say we need to 'read' it. Faith comes by hearing from a pastor who is skillful with the Word, who knows how to exegete Scripture by studying the original language along with the historical frame of reference (isagogics) and correlating precise categories of doctrine. This pastor knows how to share every word of God in the love of God.

Certainly, a Christian who is a disciple can read the Word for himself and do well with it. But we are addressing the new believer. He could read the Bible cover to cover and still not get anything out of it, practically speaking, because he has never categorized truth through the Holy Spirit's power.

In fact, millions have knowledge, traditions, rituals, and even a profession of faith to lean on. But without obedience to faith, there is no Holy Spirit of power. And God gives the Holy Spirit

to them that obey Him.

If a person says, "If it is not of works, how do I obey Him?" you can tell him, "By faith you do what the Bible says, through the grace of God and by the Spirit who dwells in you. The Bible says, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved…' (Acts 16:31). So when you believe God's Word, you become saved, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in you, to quicken you and convict you of more truth, and you are obedient."

The Quickening Power of the Word and the Spirit

"Many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). Why did Jesus call them "disciples"? A disciple is one who is a learner, a student, a follower of a certain way. Those disciples who turned back started to learn, but then they stopped and decided not to go on with the Cross life, complaining that Jesus' sayings were "too hard." They professed to believe that what Jesus said was the truth. But when it came to obeying that truth, they never followed Him again.

As a pastor, I am concerned when people do not become broken by a fresh truth from the Word. A lack of brokenness reveals that they are

not being quickened—spiritually renewed—in the reality of the breath of God in the moment of that second in time.

Psalm 119:154*b* says, "Quicken me according to thy word." Psalm 119:25 says, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word." Verse 40*b* says, "Quicken me in thy righteousness." "Quicken me in thy way…after thy lovingkindness" (see verses 37 and 88).

That is exactly what the Word of God does for the believer who receives it in faith. It quickens us. Sharper than a two-edged sword, it pierces "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." It becomes a critic of the motives of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

Learning How to Walk

Within every person who is truly saved is the power of creation, the power of redemption, the power of the resurrection, the power of the ascension. Within us is the power of eternal life. It is a gift of life residing inside a body of death that is constantly being quickened. It comes from letting the Word abide in us as we abide in the Word (John 15:7). So, whatever we do for

work, all the time we are working, we can be automatically quickened by Jesus Christ in us, just the way we automatically breathe without stopping to think about it.

Ephesians 5:14 says, "Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The light is the Word of God (Psalm 119:130). We learn to walk circumspectly, with wisdom and discernment. It is not at first an outward walk but an inward thought that produces an outward step. Then, one thought becomes many inward thoughts, which produce steps in a walk with God. We redeem the time, and we are wise, not "non-thinkers" (Ephesians 5:15-17).

**For more about this question, read* Salvation: Profession or Possession? *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

***For more about the time in heaven when Christ will evaluate believers, read* The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?, *Grace Publications, 1996, and also* The Morning Star Order *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

THE RESULT OF DISCIPLESHIP: LIVELY STONES, KNIT TOGETHER

New believers have to be discipled. It is not just saying a prayer, "Father, come into my heart." Certainly, people need to know they are saved by grace plus nothing. But they need to be discipled, and it takes a believer who *is* a disciple to teach another to become a disciple. That is the whole purpose of the Christian life (Matthew 28:18-20).

When I was saved, men of God discipled me thoroughly. They stayed with me until I could begin to fathom the height, breadth, and depth of God's love. Then I discipled others, and those disciples discipled others. It takes at least four or five months of staying with someone, being available to the questions that come up, helping them to understand something about angelic warfare, and showing them how to trust their own vertical relationship with God.

One person may be able to disciple two or three people at a time. Someone who is hungry for the Word, hid in the Body of Christ, and goes all the way with God will see the same kind of fruit in the lives of the people in whom he invests.

Occasionally we meet with people who seem to be spiritually dead. They may have been associated with a dynamic church for years. Still, it is possible that they never grew, spiritually, and there ought to be a way for us to disciple them. It is vital that they understand the importance of not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the Body of Christ, to hear the Word of God—to draw near instead of withdrawing.

In Acts 2, when three thousand were saved in one day, they met together daily. Of course, few can do this today because of work schedules, and that is understandable. Our church makes it available, however, with Bible college classes, rap sessions, and a variety of outreach opportunities that include times of prayer and fellowship around the Word. Stress the importance of *hearing* the Word of God daily—even if it is by getting to a class one day a week and listening to tapes or radio, besides the church services.

Remember, true salvation is "plus nothing." It is the gift of grace through faith, and that comes by hearing (Ephesians 2:8-10). But true believing changes a person. Show James 2:19 to the person you are discipling. It says, "The devils believe and tremble." They tremble because they know the truth *about* God but they never had a personal faith *in* God. Make sure you go this far at first. The devils had faith in all the Scriptures as being true, but never had a personal relationship with Christ, so they never were saved. They can't be saved, and they know they will spend eternity in hell.

Encourage a Prayer Life

Be sure to address the importance of prayer and developing a personal vertical relationship with God. Let people know that even if it is brief, they can develop a prayer life with God. Suggest that they have a little book to write down prayer requests as they come up. You could encourage them by saying something like, "A prayer life is not works. If you don't feel like doing it at first, at least start speaking to God in prayer. You don't have to, but it would be wonderful if you do, because the more you participate with God in obedience, the more you want

to obey, and the more you grow by obedience."

Recently someone wrote me a short but very encouraging note, and in it they wrote, "I love you." I began thinking that if we will listen to Him, God takes time every single morning to tell us that He loves us. His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). And when He said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3), that is God's way of initiating love through mercy to you and me every single morning.

It is quite a thing that Almighty God, who has created billions of people, takes time to spend with us from the Word of God individually, to tell us He loves us. Jesus met with His Father very early every morning. Jesus ministered grace to the backslidden disciples in the morning (John 21), and He offers us mercies for each day, along with compassions that never fail.

God Does Not Want Any to Perish

So there it is. That is what has to be done with every single convert—spiritually and professionally. It is my opinion that if a person raises his hand to be saved but never goes to church and never goes on with God, he may only have had a pre-salvation experience, tem-

porarily convinced of the truth but not convicted to be converted.

We are not to drive a person into making a profession of faith, and we are not to antagonize people. With quietness, kindness, creativity, and spirituality, we can be professional yet very personal and sincere as we make disciples of men.

There is nothing wrong with being professional. Some think that just because they are Christians, that they can't become professionals at soul winning and discipleship. But a Spirit-filled person is relaxed and skillful in righteousness (Hebrews 5:13-14)—resting in faith, creatively discipling another person with the creative inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of the Word of God with the grace provision of a divine premise. Still, whatever we do must be done in grace and in divine love.

If we do this properly, many of the people who get saved will end up attending church regularly. That is why thorough, personal, doctrinal discipleship is so crucial.

Paul was a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1). He was willing to be afflicted for their consolation and salvation (2 Corinthians 1:6) "your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). Paul said, "I will very

gladly spend and be spent for you…" (2 Corinthians 12:15*a*). Paul took discipleship very seriously.

Predestined in Christ

God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). Jesus Christ has never predestinated anybody to go to hell. He has never predestinated anyone to be lost. He is not a respecter of persons (Romans 2:11, Acts 10:34). He would have all men "come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

Jesus died for the sins of the entire world (1 John 2:2, John 3:16, and 2 Corinthians 5:19), not imputing our trespasses to us. That is the unlimited atonement. We will never have to pay for personal sins, because, through the unlimited atonement, Christ paid for them all with His blood.

So, whosoever will call on the Lord Jesus Christ, believing, shall be saved (Romans 10:13, John 6:37, John 3:17-18, 3:36, 2 Thessalonians 2:13). It is not whosoever was elected by God's preference and God's choice. *Whosoever will* may come, according to those verses.

Obviously, God loves everybody equally, in terms of subjective love. That love is based on

who He is as the Giver, not on who we are as the objects of His love. When He died on the Cross, He died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2; 1 Peter 2:24).

"But as many as received [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). Having been saved, we have been called with a holy calling—not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began (see 2 Timothy 1:9).

CONCLUSION

A saved man is a transformed man and will be conformed to the image of Christ more and more. His portion will not be with those who are satisfied with only this life. Rather, his portion is the Lord (Lamentations 3:24). We must not presume that because someone has prayed the prayer of salvation that he is born again. The Bible says we must *believe in our heart* as well as confess with our mouth (Romans 10:9). If a person professes to be saved but neither reveals the fruit of the Holy Spirit nor attends a church where the whole counsel of the Word is taught by a servant of God, something is not right.

When God gives the gift of salvation, it comes with the gift of repentance. The Holy Spirit moves in the hearts of men and women who truly believe and have received Christ as their Savior. He reveals the Father's heart toward us and leads us in the paths of righteousness (Psalm 23), using the Word as it is ministered by

other believers.

Peter had been severely backslidden when Jesus commissioned him to make disciples of men, saying, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). Why would God depend on people—sinners—to lead others into discipleship? We are the Lord's Body on this earth. He speaks through those who yield themselves to live by precise doctrine, who are willing to invest time in rightly dividing the Word of truth, sharing what they know about God with others.

Heavenly Father, give us your heart for people. We desire to have Your thoughts with wisdom, boldness, and discernment as we minister to those who have made a profession of salvation. Teach us how to have compassion without compromise and the ability to confront issues without unnecessary conflict. We pray for every soul we share with to be convicted by the truth and truly converted by grace through faith. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Lean on Him

A passion for working with young people has kept Pastor Love connected to the ever-shifting focus of popular culture during the past 30 years. As Greater Grace Church's Youth Pastor and volunteer chaplain for the NBA's New York Knicks, Pastor Love calls upon a vast reserve of knowledge, humor, and technique to reach hearts for Christ.

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

This message is really designed for those who prefer crutches while going through life. It's a warning. Now, before you assume that you're not such a person—you think that you do not prefer crutches—you should think about this. I believe that, without exception, all of us prefer crutches. It doesn't matter who you are or what your background is.

I remember when I first got saved. When I came home and told my older sister that I had accepted Christ, that I would be going to Bible studies, and that I wanted to get to know God, she said, "Well, that's all right. That's good. Your Christianity is a crutch." Then she made a statement that really rings with truth. She said, "And it's all right because everybody needs a crutch."

But I got offended because pride says, "I don't need any help walking through life. I don't need any assistance."

This is why so many people reject the Gospel

and reject the offer of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior—they don't want help. "I can do this by myself," a proud person will say. However, this booklet will show just how much each of us needs the Savior and why leaning on Him is the greatest thing in the world.

Chapter One
MAKE GOD YOUR CRUTCH

Humble people are the ones who say, "I can't make it. I don't just need help—I need a miracle." Thank God, a miracle is exactly what was given to us. We didn't come to God and say, "I need some help." We needed salvation. We needed saving. We needed total and free deliverance—which is what we got when we embraced Christ by faith. But it's okay to have a crutch. What's the purpose of the crutch? It provides us with something to lean on.

Have you ever used a pair of crutches? I have on a number of occasions. And thank God that there are such things. Maybe we'd prefer motorized wheelchairs, or perhaps those carts that the elderly drive. (I would have mine turbo charged.)

But the fact is, crutches are real blessings because you're able to lean on those crutches, take the pressure off the injury and get around. They

offer you something to lean on, which is very, very important.

But the problem with our lives is that we prefer crutches. It is not natural to lean completely on the Lord, so we look for substitutes. We don't get up in the morning and say, "Look, God, I don't want to lean on You today, I'll find something else." We don't consciously make that kind of a decision, but subconsciously we prefer to have any other kind of crutch so that we don't have to lean completely upon God. But God's entire program is designed to remove all of our crutches so that we will learn how to lean completely and entirely upon Him.

There you are with your artificial crutches, or something other than God to lean on. I just have this image in my mind that when God sees that, He comes along, and He kicks them out from underneath us. Not so that we would be further injured, not so that we would be hurt—just to reveal to us that we're leaning on something other than Him.

Poor Substitutes

Crutches can become substitutes for God, and He really is a jealous God. Maybe that jealousy does not reveal itself initially; but, if you

give God enough time, He will remove all of the substitutes so that we would just lean on Him.

God wants to be our one and only crutch. Don't ever think that there's something wrong with that. It's okay. We all need something to lean on. There is even a song that says, "We all need someone to lean on." Now the point is, we do. That song isn't far from the truth. The problem is that it doesn't say who that somebody is. The Bible *does* say who we need to lean on—God.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

"Then shall you call upon me, and shall go and pray unto me, and I will hear you, and you shall seek me and find me.

"When you search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

There it is. When you're leaning completely on God, that's when you will find Him.

The Scriptures suggest that maybe we won't find God the way we really wish to find God until we learn to lean completely on Him. Why do you think that God doesn't profit some young people in their relationship to Him? They haven't gotten to the place in their lives where

they're really looking for God.

There are all kinds of reasons for this. They are intimidated because some of their friends are not seeking for God with all their hearts—so they can't do it either. They haven't learned to be an individual, to think for themselves. They are still being directed by the mentality of the herd. They cannot choose independently of the herd. Even though something inside of them says, "You ought to trust God completely," their response is, "I can't yet, because not enough of my friends are. If I make an independent decision, it will be too dangerous. They might expel me from the acceptance of that group."

That's okay. Do you know what? You're going to do something that's going to make them expel you sooner or later anyhow. The peer group is going to be whittled down by God, and there's only going to be a few of them left. Chances are, you're not going to be one of them.

Will you be with them twenty years from now? Probably not. Will you be serving God side by side with one of them? Probably not. Then why is it so important to conform to the peer group? It's because you're still getting your identity from the peer group, and not from God.

So we have to be careful about these crutches, because God wants to bring us to the place where we lean upon Him alone.

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

This verse is really a commentary, and essentially it says this: "There is only one place to lean, and that is God." There is only one place for you to lean. Underneath are the everlasting arms, a place where we can find rest, a place where we can find comfort, a place where we can just let ourselves go.

When you let yourself go, you fall into the rest of the everlasting God and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Not only will He catch you, not only will you learn to lean on Him, but He'll take care of your enemies as well.

Don't let crutches become substitutes for God.

Chapter Two

LOOKING UP INSTEAD OF LOOKING AROUND

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

The original Hebrew reads this way: "Do not fear, for I am with you: do not anxiously look about you." Now, is that something you've ever done in your life? Do you anxiously look about you?

It's a fascinating thing to see how people respond when someone enters a room. In a meeting every time the door opens, every head turns as if to say, "Who is it? Is it an important person?" Apparently not. Then they turn back and give attention once again. There's a tendency with all of us to anxiously look about.

"Do not fear. I am with you."

This is God's promise. He says, "I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Surely I will help you." Here it is. "Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

What a promise from God! Mix faith with it.

"Don't anxiously look around. I'm your God. I'll strengthen you. I'll help you. Surely, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

Do you know what God is saying?

He is saying, "I will hold you up. Please don't run around and look for substitutes for the very thing that I am in your life to do. I am the One who has the arms that are underneath you, the everlasting arms."

It's not like you're going to say one day, "That's it! I collapse." And God says, "Whoops, sorry, I wasn't there." Then you go through and hit the bottom.

God's arms are the everlasting arms. They're never going to move. They're never going to leave. They're always going to be there. The care is never going to be removed. The love is never going to be taken away. He promises to uphold you and to strengthen you with His righteous right hand.

There are so many substitutes for God in this world. I believe that they line up at the doors of our hearts—each of them waiting for its chance, hoping that it would be called upon as the next substitute. It's nobody's fault. It's in our nature to want to go after substitutes rather than the real thing.

Life's crutches just keep crumbling underneath us. They're not adequate, they're not sufficient, and as much as we would like to continue to lean on them, they don't get the job done. Finally, we just throw the crutches away. We relinquish our hold on them, and we say, "God, please, I want to lean on You."

Crutches keep the focus of our soul on a horizontal level rather than on a vertical level in a relationship with God. In other words, if you're the kind of person who always looks this way and that way when you get into trouble—you don't look vertically—then your problems are only going to increase.

Do you remember Moses when he thought he was ready to deliver the children of Israel? He finally sensed who he was. He came to grips with his identity. He was an Israelite, and it

made no sense trying to deny who he really was. It didn't matter if he grew up in the palace of Egypt. It didn't matter if he was adopted as Pharaoh's daughter's son. None of that mattered. He knew who he was. He was an Israelite.

Moses sensed, as God spoke to him, that he was going to deliver his people. But Moses didn't realize that he wasn't ready. The reason that he wasn't ready is that there was still too much of Moses in Moses. God has to get us out of ourselves and get Himself into us to get the job done through us.

So Moses saw an Egyptian, a taskmaster, whipping one of the children of Israel, and Moses says, "You know what? If I'm going to be a deliverer, I might as well start today."

Moses is ready to intervene, and he's going to take care of this Egyptian. He's going to do more than take care of him—he's going to take him out.

But before he touches this Egyptian, do you know what he does? The Bible says that he looks this way, and he looks that way. When he saw that nobody was looking, then he killed the Egyptian and buried his body in the sand.

Instead of looking this way and looking that way, he should have looked up. He should have

simply said, "God, do You want me to kill him? I'll kill him." God would have said, "That's not the way I'm going to deliver My people." But Moses didn't do it that way. He looked this way, and he looked that way.

You're not ready to be delivered from your crutches until you become perfectly indifferent to the praise or the criticism of people. You see, when you get to the place where you don't care, you know that God is leading you in making your decision because you've got a relationship that is vertical.

Get vertical with God. Become perfectly indifferent to praise or to blame. You will never be free to be the man or the woman that God wants you to be until you are free from all people in your vertical relationship.

When you first get on a vertical hold with God, you will begin to hear from God and He will lead you. Frankly, once God leads you, you really won't care about the response of people.

Chapter Three

FINDING PERMANENT RELIEF

Crutches paralyze the walk of faith. With human crutches, it's inevitable that you'll remain horizontal—whether you keep looking at friends, money, security, career, or family—human crutches keep you from looking up.

What are you leaning on right now? Is it a person? Is it a relationship? Is it a career? Is it money? Is it your car? Is it your music? Is it your friends?

You say, "Well, you know what? It happens to be three out of those five." Or, it could be all of the above. "What are you going to do about it?"

Me? I can do nothing for you. God? That's another story. He might kick the crutches right out from underneath you. It's not unlike Him to do such a thing.

Crutches only offer temporary relief, whereas God offers permanent relief. All of us have a tendency to turn to some kind of a remedy that comforts us and dulls our pain. We do this just so that we can get through and endure some of the storms of life.

I spoke to a friend of mine recently and he said, "You know, I'm not sure why I do what I do, but I think I'm sublimating because I can't deal with the pressure." We all do it. We sublimate. We substitute things in the place of looking to God. We turn to things that take our minds off the problems at hand. We check out of reality.

What do you do? Do you go to your computer? I know with some kids, it is video games. They just look into that screen, and there they go. They jump right in. They are one of the combatants in the little game that they're playing.

How do you check out of reality? How do you sublimate? I want to tell you something. That only provides temporary relief, not the permanent relief that can only come through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think about it. You can have temporary re-

lief, or you can get permanent relief through Christ.

When we lean on other things or other people and we keep doing it, guess what happens. The problems only intensify.

You could find a relationship and that relationship meets your needs. But if you haven't gotten vertical with God, that relationship is a crutch. And as much as you think that it helps you, you will discover that it will only complicate your life and intensify your problems.

When God kicks the crutch out from underneath you, you're going to think you're devastated, but that's going to be your only way to find permanent relief as you learn to lean upon Him. All kinds of substitutes are out there. We go looking for them when we don't even know we are looking for them.

God is not into providing temporary relief. You could cry out and say, "God, please, I'm going through it. Will You dull the pain?" Do you know what He would say? "No, go through it. Learn something. Find Me. Even more than that, lean on Me. I'll get you through it."

CONCLUSION

A.W. Tozer once wrote, "Our woes began when God was forced out of His eternal shrine and things were allowed to enter. Within the human heart, things have taken over. Men have now by nature no peace within their hearts, for God is crowned there no longer, but therein is moral dust. Stubborn and aggressive usurpers fight against themselves, or among themselves, for first place on the throne."

Sounds like a description of our hearts. Our hearts covet things intensely. I hear people talk like this all the time in the Body of Christ. They use words such as these all the time:

"My this."

"My that."

"My ministry."

"My school."

Nothing is ours. These words sound innocent enough. But they reveal this natural-born inbred desire to take things and to substitute

them for God.

There is a place God Himself should inhabit. The shrine is in our hearts. It is there that He alone should be crowned King. Let's stop leaning on things, and let's learn to look up and lean only on Jesus.

Leaving Your Island

for a

Brand New Garden

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Everyone has wounds in his mind; we all have them. These wounds may very well be buried. They create within us an "island," a place in the soul that is detached from the life of God and His provision of grace, mercy, and victory. For example, there are people who, as children, were moved from one welfare home to another because their parents rejected them, so their islands are filled with a sense of rejection. Therefore, the emotions are consistently subject to being hurt as they respond to periodic wounds in the mind.

By the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, a way has been made for every believer to be rescued from these islands of defeat. God has made a living way for each of us to live in a brand new garden, a garden set aside by the Lord to bring forth fruit unto righteousness.

Chapter One

WOUNDS, DESOLATION, AND DEFILEMENT

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws in their mind, and write them on their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Hebrews 8:10).

Everyone who has been saved—washed in the Blood of New Covenant—has a new heart and a new spirit. In the heart there is a point of reference, a frame of reference, a memory center, and a volition. It is the place where all motivation begins; but we read in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" This means that the predisposition of the heart, with its presuppositions, leads to compulsive acts that hurt society and defile the islands within us.

Speaking of the nation of Israel specifically,

and of the condition of men in general, God says this: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (Isaiah 1:5*b*-6*a*). The natural man has no soundness in his mind, but there are wounds. Also, there are bruises, which would be better rendered "infections," and running sores, which speaks of continuing problems in the emotions. Not a pretty picture, is it? Wounds, infections, and continuing problems in the emotions: a description of God's people.

Then the Word of God, in Isaiah 1:6-7, makes this diagnosis: "... They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate." That is to say, the island within every living person is defiled. In some people, the island is filled with memories of being abused, molested, or raped. Others were completely and totally rejected by their peers and by the social structure that confronted them; rejection fills their islands. Others are filled with pride based upon social advantage, intellectual capacity, and measures of economic success. These things produce the basis for their islands.

When a person becomes a Christian, his island has not changed. This island is, indeed, his subjective world. The subjective mind, making up 95 percent of man's mind, is the uneducated, involuntary part of the mind. Apart from the grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the transforming mind of Christ, the island tries to conform to Christianity through human good by becoming religious, by strengthening moral precepts—which in themselves *are* good—or, by a system of works within the church.

This island is absolutely detached from the life of God and independent of the application of co-crucifixion with Christ. It will receive messages, but the messages do not transform the island. Why? Because the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). The carnal mind is at enmity against God and is not subject to doctrine, neither indeed can be (Romans 8:7). This island, then, cannot be a recipient of God's divine nature as a true Christian can be through "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4).

This is what happens on these islands. A person's self-consciousness is preoccupied with

how to change the island or how to change others for the benefit of the island. His conscience tries to produce morality, or that which is culturally accepted. Or, he may become bankrupt as he goes deeply into lasciviousness—a life without restraints—resulting in a completely seared conscience (1 Timothy 4:2).

Predispositions of the Soul

The volition on this island of a person's soul is changeable, because it is based upon his predisposition—the moods and temperaments of the soul. A predisposition is established by decisions, habits, and involvement in the world. It can be influenced, in a limited way, by a person's genetics or from the fall of Adam. The natural predisposition that fills the subjective mind is overloaded with presuppositions, concepts that may or may not be true.

However, predispositions cannot be blamed for everything, because it takes the volition to enforce and implement the trends of predisposition. If a predisposition with its presuppositions is left unguarded and undefined in the subjective world—the involuntary realms of the mind—then it leads to compulsive acts and emotional outbursts in critical decisions with no thought-

protection from God.

Here's a woman who says she's not compatible with her husband. She's living on her island. She has done what she could to her island to make it acceptable—at least, livable—in a survival type of relationship with people. But her husband doesn't satisfy her, so she has needs. As time progresses, the needs become greater and she becomes very vulnerable. These needs become hindrances, distractions, and obstructions to spiritual growth.

In this island life, everyone has needs. People who are opposites meet there because their needs are met by being opposites. People who have similarities meet on this island to satisfy the need to find someone just like themselves. They have an amazing compatibility in the subjective realm, which leads to a mutual attraction of great strength.

This woman finds a guy who notices her, even though she's married. He seems to take time for her. "He's so peaceful and sweet; he really cares," she explains. "He says things that my husband never says." What is happening to her? She has been detached from the reality of God's provision, power, protection, and peace. She is totally separated from her purpose on

earth, and this man becomes a pursuit. You tell her to leave him alone, but she won't. The messages from the pulpit tell her to stay away and make no provision for the flesh.

"I can't," she says.

This woman and the man she's pursuing build up a subjective, compatible need. At first, it's involuntary, and then the need is transmitted to the conscious objective mind, which responds this way: "I'm receiving the signal; you really need to have an affair, even though you know it's wrong. But it will be worth it." The same pattern follows with a husband going out on his wife, or a single Christian yoking up with an unbeliever because of a need for a natural provision.

Do you notice how all of the college students go to Florida for Spring Break? They arrive at the beaches and the parties begin. There is all kinds of drinking and drugs; all kinds of worldly pleasure. But before those parties are over and the masses head back to their hometowns, there is always pain, sorrow, and tragedy mixed in with the pleasure. The whole problem is a detachment from life: people entering into mutual attractions in mutual needs to receive the mutual fulfillment of their lust patterns.

When someone begins to backslide from a healthy local church, he often becomes very involved with the world and never wants to be around other Christians. Why? He is trying to fill up the terrible island within him through people who have mutual needs. This person is on this tremendous island, cut off from God's life and independent of grace. The Holy Spirit has been quenched, and he is living in a process of grieving God's Spirit in constant deception. When he hears the Word of God, he does not mix faith with it; he is busy building up his island, making it a place of stimulation for personal value and personal worth.

Anyone who lives on this island can never change his self-image. He can stimulate it. He can bring it into new areas of personal value, but he cannot build his self-image to personal acceptance.

Chapter Two

WASHED IN THE BLOOD, CLEANSED BY THE WORD

When someone receives a transplant—heart, liver, kidney, etc.—the doctors don't know if the person's body will accept the new organ or not. Sometimes the body will reject the transplanted organ. It will not accept something so necessary to its survival. In the same way, when God speaks to that island, and you are living in that subjective domination of self-ism, your subjective mind rejects truth. The island can't receive truth but can only be stimulated in a survival process to live in mutual provision.

Think with me for a moment. Jesus Christ becomes a man, though He is God. On the cross of Calvary, He pays the wages of sin—death. It's a magnificent act of mercy, with the Son performing an expiatory act to satisfy God the Father. *Expiation* means that Jesus satisfied the

holiness of God, turning away God's wrath toward the sinner. In expiation, Jesus first satisfied God the Father.

Jesus also endured spiritual death for three hours. The evidence that His spiritual death was over is recorded in Luke 23:46, where He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." The Father accepted His spirit, and this meant that the spiritual death for bearing all of our sins was over.

Precious Blood

Wasn't this enough? Why did Jesus need to shed His blood? Isn't the *death* of Christ enough? After all, He was perfect.

Some say the Blood isn't precious, that only spiritual death is necessary. But, I read in 1 Peter 1:18-19 that it's the *precious* blood of Christ, because it was blood with no disease and no sin, in human veins. In Hebrews 10:29, the Bible says His blood *sanctifies*—it was life out of death.

Sin requires a substitute and a vicarious sacrifice with the pouring out of blood. When the blood came out of the veins of Jesus, it was life coming out of death, spiritually speaking. It was His own blood, the blood of God (Acts 20:28).

Jesus' blood was designed by God to be a

payment for sins. According to Genesis 3:21, when the Father killed the animals and clothed Adam and Eve after their fall, there had to be a shedding of blood. Abel understood this, so he brought an offering of blood (Genesis 4:4). In Genesis 15:9-10 and Genesis 15:18, Abraham understood the covenant of blood. Moses reiterated this principle in Exodus 24 and ratified God's covenant with Israel with blood. Moses sprinkled blood on the people of the congregation (Exodus 24:8; Hebrews 9:15-23).

The Seal of the Covenant

Jesus' blood was a valid seal to a deed, and the deed was the New Covenant — the Father getting together with the Son to form an agreement. The terms: The Son would die and pay for the sins of the world, and the Father would receive everyone who received His Son by grace through faith. In this agreement, the Father would never remember anyone's sins (Hebrews 8:12). He would blot them all out for His nature's sake (Isaiah 43:25). He would remove the sins from the sinner and make it possible for the sinner's conscience to be purged by the Blood through the Holy Spirit.

So, now there is no place for guilt or con-

demnation. There is no more "conscience of sins" (Hebrews 10:2). Whenever a believer fails, he can name his sin, forsake it, and confess it, to experience immediate recovery. The cleansing agency of the Holy Spirit comes in, purges the guilt, and takes away the stain of human failure.

The Holy Spirit's power transmits eternal life, and eternal life keeps me from falling. This life is in me, a life given through the Blood, which validated the deed of the New Covenant and became the basis for all remission of sin. "Without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22b).

For this reason, before the first Passover, God told Moses, "When I see the blood I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). The children of Israel were told to apply the blood of the passover lamb to top of the door and on the two doorposts—a picture of the mind, emotions and will being cleansed.

Now, that subjective part has a new opportunity because God doesn't remember sins. More than that, God's mercy takes care of the effects of what other people have done. He removes the effects of all sin. His vicarious death, burial, and resurrection, with the Holy Spirit's power of cleansing, all work together to purge

me and take away the sin, plunging it forever into the sea of God's forgetfulness.

Cleansing the Way

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9).

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26).

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

God is saying to every Christian, "I blotted out your sins. I removed them as far as the East is from the West, and I don't remember them any more. Now, *there's no condemnation!* The sentence of death has already been passed upon my Son (John 5:24). You are clean—no matter what anyone did to you or what you did to yourself. You have been cleansed. Futhermore, I have taken you *out* of Adam and placed you *in* Christ, and you're seated above the angels in your position at this moment."

The New Garden

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; be-

hold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

What is this new creation under the new covenant? It is God bringing a brand new garden into the soul of the redeemed child who receives His Word, who is built up in grace, and who understands the application of the literal Blood that cleanses and purges the conscience (Hebrews 9:14). In Isaiah 51:3 and Isaiah 58:11, God very beautifully describes Israel as becoming "like a watered garden,…like the garden of the LORD."

"For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (Isaiah 51:3).

"And the LORD guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (Isaiah 58:11).

God comes to that island and removes it. Of all the waste places that the island occupied in the soul, He now makes a beautiful garden. This garden can receive seeds; it receives magnificent

new life. Everything about it is new; *nothing* old remains. This is an amazing work that God does forever: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

What happens in this beautiful garden? The waste places are now comforted, no longer filled with hindrances, distractions, and obstructions. We don't live in the guilt of sin or the wounds of others hurting us. The mind enjoys indescribeable new thoughts and attitudes. The emotions have been healed. The self-conscious part of the soul is now conscious of God's presence, His love, and His mercy. The conscience is filled with grace; the volition says, "I can be positive now because I'm not being fed negative signals."

The memory center is no longer hindered or harassed; it is now remembering categorical truth, principles of life from the Word of God. Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, brings to your memory what you've been taught (John 14:26). The memory is filled with grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, patience, kindness, power, and understanding. There is now humility and a capacity that is able to receive divine wisdom. The memory center is totally released.

The Lord brings in this magnificent garden—and joy is there. Now the mind, emotions, conscience, and self-consciousness don't fail your soul. The volition, now operating with a new vocabulary, becomes the guardian for the soul, making right decisions with objective truth.

Chapter Three

DIVINE IMPETUS AND SPIRITUAL MOMENTUM

Once the new garden is in place, you're ready for a life of what I call "divine impetus" and "spiritual momentum." This divine impetus refers to the wonderful new force now at work in you—the Word and the Spirit—constraining you to increase your capacity for God, His fellowship, His people, and His work.

Spiritual momentum defines your progress, showing you how you are growing in grace and knowledge without obstruction. When trials and tests come in the valley experiences, you go from strength to strength (Psalm 84:7). You leave that valley full of water, when it was once a dry place. You go from faith to faith (Romans 1:17) and more imparted righteousness comes in. You go from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18), and each time you are being conformed more and more to Christ's image. There is momentum

going on, a divine impetus taking place in this whole new soul creation that's now filled with New Covenant thoughts. You have a brand new life. There is phenomenal momentum going on and you're reflecting thoughts from above and revealing the nature of God. You're a Christian who understands that the *soul* is the new creation. "…Their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all" (Jeremiah 31:12).

This new life spiritually comes into the new soul now functioning as a watered garden. It is no longer independent of grace and detached from the New Covenant. To say, "I would like to live right, but I can't!" would be a lie. What you mean to say is "I want to live that way but I *will* not." Why? Because the Holy Spirit transmits His life and keeps us from falling! (Jude 24). That life is in us! We must *choose* to go against it.

Now, how can you ever practice defeat with this great salvation? Financial problems, hindrances, distractions—they all have to face an Almighty God. You don't have to struggle to accept people: your new disposition is to accept each one because you are a partaker of God's divine nature.

We don't have to struggle, working out our

past; our past has been worked out by God on Calvary. We don't counsel Adam; Adam was found guilty—he's condemned, sentenced, and buried. It's a terrible thing to still counsel the old guy! I can't get this through to some of you. I know you want to go back to ungodly counsel in the name of "reality"—God forbid! We are *new* creatures. Old things are passed away!

A Sealed Garden, A Spring Shut Up

"A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard" (Song of Solomon 4:12-13).

Your garden is enclosed; your spring, with its purity, is shut up; the fountain is sealed. When you were saved, you were sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). Sealed! The infections of the evil world can't touch you. The wicked one, Satan, touches you not (1 John 5:18).

What happens when you live in this new garden? You keep reproducing the pleasant fruits of God's nature in the midst of the devil's world system. According to Song of Solomon 4:13, you produce pleasant fruits and reproduce pomegranates. A pomegranate has many, many

seeds. And every seed has the potential to produce another pomegranate: fruit that bears *much* fruit (John 12:24).

You're relaxed, with a melody in your heart and a song in your soul. You don't deal with the old things—glory to God! Calvary took care of that! Christ did it. Yes, you are accountable to Him. You live responsibly, facing reality. But no longer do you deal with the things concerning Adam; our wonderful Savior took care of those things once and for all.

Don't try to patch up the old island. Don't try to bring the island into new social contacts so it can be stimulated with a survival package of pleasure. Positionally, you have left that island and have entered into its death and burial with Christ. Now, in its place, there is a watered garden in your soul! Don't go around mourning, moping, reacting, and murmuring. Instead, go around with a spring of living water welling up and a river of living water flowing out. Where does this river come from? It comes from your emotions (John 7:38), because you now have a sound mind.

CONCLUSION

According to Hebrews 10:29, every believer has been sanctified by "the blood of the covenant." Christ's blood was the seal that validated the New Covenant. Therefore, when the testator, Jesus Christ, died, He left us a testament (Hebrews 9:15-17), and it is this: Every single part of us has been cleansed from the consciousness of sin. We don't have to live in the guilt of sin or in the wounds from others hurting us. We have renewed minds. Our emotions are healed. The conscience is filled with a new standard: the grace of God. We are self-conscious of the presence of God. Our volition is positive.

Instead of being detached from the possibilities of God's power, how about being detached from that old island and enjoy the new watered garden in your soul? Oh, does Satan hate it when you think of yourself and others as brand new creatures! The devil will do everything in his power to stop this from becoming a reality in

your experience. But can the devil make us live in infections? Satan cannot touch you (1 John 5:18*b*), unless you give him a place.

As God's people, we are so free! We are separated from the island, detached from the natural needs of fallen man. We are new. We have the protection of the New Covenant and the provision of the Word and the Spirit. The power of God is operating within, giving us a soul that is a brand new watered garden, a new creation.

We don't have to deal with old things; God made them pass away. We don't have to deal with the sins; God removed the sins from the sinner. We are clean. If we sin, we confess it and we are restored to fellowship with God immediately. We are free, living in a wonderful new garden where nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Let God Clear the Way

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The heart is cluttered with evil thoughts, blasphemy, and foolishness, and the Word of God declares that these proceed into the discourses and experiences of our lives. When we realize our need for a remedy, we will spend so much time and energy trying to educate the natural man, grooming him to manage and maximize his potential. But the result of those efforts is religious striving, which is man's attempt to please God.

We try to do good in order to set right the negativity, but when all is said and done, there remains a terrible mess. Even in our best estate, God has declared that the heart (the center for all the communications that enter into and proceed out of the soul) is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

All that a man does in himself is vanity—empty of any eternal purpose. What we need is to come to Jesus Christ as a child and allow the

Holy Spirit to clear away the clutter in our hearts.

When we received Jesus Christ as our Savior, God gave us a new heart. Salvation is a finished work, sealed by the Holy Spirit because of the Blood that was shed for us. And, as this booklet shows, the new heart is kept new through the washing of the water of the Word of God. Though we walk through a world filled with evil, if we stay in the river of life we can have a new purpose and a renewed heart continually. God will break up the old structures that clutter the way and begin fashioning a strong structure stabilized by His objective Word.

Chapter One

GOD'S BULLDOZERS

Let us say that you realize that you were born with a sin nature. You understand that the wages of sin bring a separation from God, perverting your mind and sending your emotions vacillating. You see that you are carnal and soulish, having a will that does not know how to make right decisions in the eyes of God. Then, you come and accept Jesus Christ. You accept the cleansing of His shed Blood and receive the Holy Spirit. Regeneration comes from Him to your heart and you become a new creature in Christ. Anew attitude comes into your life and a new foundation is established.

We receive Christ by receiving the abundance of grace. We do not save ourselves by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps or by joining some club. We simply received the abundance of grace and we were saved. Moreover, by this same abundance, we can reign in life by

One, Jesus Christ.

This is the promise God gives. His abundant grace wants to rule, regulate, and direct our lives. Every part of our being can be controlled by God's gift toward us—the gift of grace.

Plowing Away Wrong Patterns

For this reason, God allows circumstances into our lives in order to deal with wrong habits or patterns. This is what I call God's bulldozer. He wants to plow the wrong things out—the things that keep us from experiencing childlike faith—so He can reign freely. The Lord does this by allowing tests and trials. Sometimes through suffering, often through heartaches, God gets us to the place where we can only depend upon Him.

We cannot get to this place in our flesh. For example, someone with a bad temper can chant to himself, "I will not get mad. I will not get mad. I will not get mad…." Then, someone starts complaining or irritating him and he hollers, "I will not get mad!" He reached the end of his rope in trying to overcome his temper through the will of his flesh. This may work for some as a temporary and superficial remedy, but it will not change the heart.

Another one tries to convince himself by saying, "I will be happy" over and over again. In the midst of a difficulty, he may even break out into an unusual smile. Then the bulldozer comes in. Perhaps it is a letter from a creditor or a bank saying that he will lose his home or go to court if he doesn't pay a bill, and all of that easy-going positive thinking fails at this point.

Responsible Hearts of Grace

This is where we must realize that living in the will of the flesh is simply human energy practicing religious doctrine fundamentally—a work of the flesh trying to do good. We need more than this. We need the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus Christ to us.

When we are allowing Jesus Christ to lead us, we can face our difficulties and say, "I will be happy." We can look at that bill and respond in truth, saying to ourselves, "With everything God has appointed for me today, I will face this thing with a responsible heart and live in the abundance of grace."

Let God clear the way.

Chapter Two

YIELD TO THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD

God really wants us to stop living in the realm of feelings and habits. Consider what He allowed Job to endure. Here was a man living before God, but then the Lord allowed Satan access inside the hedge He had placed around Job. The devil jumped right to the task and began attacking Job's family, his possessions, and his health—he didn't even realize what God was doing with it all.

"Okay, Satan, I will let you do this and this," God said. All the while, the Lord was simply letting the devil act as His bulldozer.

Job's wife started nagging him. His three friends refused to talk to him for seven days. Sure, Job started out strong, but then he became sensitive to his circumstances and began to complain to the Lord: "For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without

cause" (Job 9:17).

God let the bulldozer clear every possible thing out of Job's life so he would strictly trust and glorify Jesus Christ regardless of the silent friends, regardless of the nagging wife, regardless of the seven sons and three daughters who died, regardless of the embarrassment of financial ruin. The Lord was pushing out of the way the old foundation Job had laid down for himself.

This is not necessary if we will just learn of God through His Word. God only brings in the bulldozer when we refuse to allow Him to do what He must do by the Spirit through faith. We have to learn to accept the truth according to the Bible just as it is, by faith, and then yield ourselves to the Spirit.

Delivered from the Body of Death

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present

with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me" (Romans 7:15-21).

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 7:24-8:1).

The things I want to do, I really cannot do. The things I do not want to do, I do repeatedly. There is no power in my life. What I need is the filling of the Holy Spirit.

But what if I refuse to recognize this need? Then, in comes God's bulldozer. A trial comes. Perhaps I find myself in an embarrassing situation. Someone hurts my feelings. Someone gossips about me. Another one lies. God is pushing out the old stones in the foundation of my life.

He is working to break up the patterns of habit that hinder my life.

God wants me to let Him establish a new foundation that is rooted in His life. Then, everything I do will be in His power, through His glory, and by His grace and peace and love. He clears the way so we can reign by Him in the midst of any trial.

Really, God would prefer not to use the bulldozer. He prefers not allowing us to go through the trials. The way He really wants us to take is in Romans 6:

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

"What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart

that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:13-18).

First, we have a promise from God that the abundance of grace will make us reign in life. As the promise is recognized, it is experienced. I yield myself to God, point by point. If I do not yield myself to God, then the Holy Spirit's power will not come in. This results in crises that come into my life later that make me troubled, burdened, and bothered. My heart becomes full of burdens.

It doesn't have to be this way. I can let God clear my way by yielding to Him.

Chapter Three

REIGN IN LIFE BY ONE, JESUS CHRIST

What we yield to is what we serve. If we yield to fear, we live in fear and become servants of fear. If we yield to lust in a sexual sense, then we live in lust and serve it. This can damage the sacred sexual relationship God designed for us to enjoy in marriage.

We should not yield ourselves to bad tempers. We can enjoy godly balance in our mental and emotional development. If we let our temper get the best of us, then we are simply serving our emotions, letting them—and not God—be our master.

Yielding to the cravings of nicotine, narcotics, and liquor makes us servants of those things. Anyone who has suffered from an addiction knows just how powerfully it commands attention and satisfaction.

Whatever we yield to is what we must obey.

This includes defeat and fear. If we keep living in fear, then we become the servant of fear, and it just goes on and on, wasting hours, days, and years of our lives. Alife of fear and defeat is useless and ineffective. There may be spurts of revival, but they amount to nothing, because fear is reigning in us.

Every newborn baby tries to pattern his parents' attention and responses. He will cry in the middle of the night. His diaper doesn't need to be changed. His belly is full and he is not ill. He just wants attention, so he cries. If a parent continues to yield to his cries for attention, then the child, not the parents, will rule the home.

Some people put their nationality and ethnicity ahead of the Lord. Americans do this as much as any one. We need to put God first and God will take care of America. When we put God first, we refuse to yield to appeasement and compromise. Be who God made you to be. Let Him be victorious and reign in your life.

Live in Victory

I thank God that, by His grace, I don't have to pick up a social drink to be happy. In me dwells no good thing; I am just rotten flesh. But by His Spirit and by His Word, I am a winner. I

do not need cigarettes to relax and enjoy life. I do not need to fill my mind with images and conversations in the media of TV, radio, and print that do not edify my soul.

We reign and rule and love as we are filled with God's peace and power and purpose through Jesus Christ. We are victorious through the Blood of the Lamb. We simply need to receive the abundance of grace and let Him clear the way for us.

The presence of God can overcome anything hindering our lives. Because of Calvary and because of the life of One, Jesus Christ, I can reign today. My language or just my countenance can express His glory and joy.

Some believers have not entered into the Lordship of Christ. They will not let the Holy Spirit reveal Jesus to them. Therefore, the things God gave them to reign over rule their lives instead.

It is high time for God's people to get smart and wise up. Some of us are going to face God's bulldozer. He will bring it in and break hearts in pieces. It is the only way He can get some of us to establish new foundations for our lives. Messages have been preached; statements have been made. Some people just go right on serving fear

and defeat and failure and habits. He will break those habit patterns. He would like to break them with love and joy. He wants to do it by expanding the coasts of our faith. But if He must, if there is no other way, He will use His bulldozer.

Perfect Peace with a Sound Mind

Thank God, we can reign in life—over sin, over habits, over Satan. We are more than conquerors through Him who loves us. He *always* causes us to triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Thank the Lord we can live in perfect peace with a sound mind (Isaiah 26:3; 2 Timothy 1:7). The Spirit sheds His love abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). We can have God's wisdom, God's redemption, and God's sanctification. He wants to be our very life (Colossians 3:4).

All the sins of our yesterdays have been buried forever in the deepest, deepest sea. We are free to live and experience the Person of the Holy Spirit as Jesus is revealed to us at every corner and in every moment.

We have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). We can yield everything to Jesus and enter into His presence. We can accept His truth and go on, living by faith. In any temptation and trial, we can be set free instantly because God

will clear the way.

CONCLUSION

The bulldozer is waiting for some people today. Some will not take the Word of God seriously, and they just go on, living as servants to fear, to unholy relationships, to ungodly habits. It doesn't have to be this way.

I intend to reign today. How about you? I do not intend to be a servant of fear. I plan to yield myself to the Holy Spirit and live as God's servant today.

Christ has made us free from sin. We can sing the songs of victory. Fear does not need to take us down the road to bondage. A wicked temper and lust patterns do not need to enslave us. By the grace of God, we yield ourselves to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Once we let Jesus Christ reign in us, then look out! We will let go of self-occupation and we will grow in grace and knowledge. We will yield to Christ at every point. When we fail, we will simply confess it and rebound by faith. We

can change our servanthood and let God clear the way as He changes us through the Holy Spirit.

Let God Fight Your Battle

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

There is something about our human nature that is always defensive and ready to fight. We get into situations where cannot see the way out, and we struggle and struggle to find some way to win. Sometimes we enjoy momentary victories, but the effort of our flesh leaves us exhausted and spent.

The battles we face as Christians are those that God wants to fight for us. It is part of His process to humble us and to bring us to the place where we depend solely on Him and not on ourselves. The Cross represents Christ's complete and total victory over Satan and sin. God wants us to understand and walk in the power of the exchanged life found in His resurrection.

Because we have been reconciled to God through the Blood of Christ, we no longer have to depend on human effort in any area of our lives. As you will see in this booklet, our chief need is to reckon ourselves dead and ineffective,

looking to Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our faith. With this mental attitude, we will learn to recognize that every one of our battles belongs to the Lord.

Chapter One

STAND STILL AND WATCH GOD DELIVER

"And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.

"To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel.

"Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you" (2 Chronicles 20:15-17).

There is a misconception for some about being reconciled to God. No one should become a doormat for someone else. People must be re-

sponsible and accountable for their behavior and their actions. Yet, being reconciled to God means that I take a responsible position for an exchanged life with Jesus Christ through the Cross. When God says, "Be reconciled to Me," He is saying that we are to accept our exchanged life from God and be reconciled to His promises, to His provision, to His power.

Within the realm of being reconciled to God, I love to consider the situation of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles. Imagine facing a battle where it seems as if there is not one thing we can do.

God's instruction is this: "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you" (2 Chronicles 20:17*a*). I love that. This is not a call to passivity, irresponsibility, or subjectivity. This is encouragement from the Lord. I co-labor with God, but He fights the battle. It is not mine to fight.

Many of you could go back over your lives and think of times when you could honestly say, "Boy, when it came right down to the ultimate moment, I saw the deliverance of God."

Why should we be concerned? It is not our battle, and we cannot fight it. We must be responsible, we must do what is right (as far as we

know from God), and then we must be still.

Go Forward into a Peaceable Habitation

"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10).

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

"And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isaiah 32:17-18).

In Exodus 14, Israel appeared to be trapped, up against the Red Sea with the army of Egypt in close pursuit. God told them to stand still and see the deliverance of the Lord. God was ready to fight for them. After the sea was parted, Israel had to go forward to claim victory. The chariots and soldiers of Egypt were swamped behind them as Israel reached the other side.

The key was in going forward.

David ran straight at Goliath, in 1 Samuel 17. The giant came with a spear and a sword, but David came at him in the name of the Lord. David knew that the battle was the Lord's and the giant was slain.

I think one of the most difficult things I have

had to learn is to let God have the battles. Have you ever had that problem? Sooner or later, we become so exhausted from fighting in our own strength. At last, we have no chance and no other choice but to say to God, "You had better take this, because I'm exhausted from trying to do my part."

We don't need to fight our battles. We do the best we can in being responsible, then we stand still and see God's deliverance.

Chapter Two

LOVING AS WE ARE LOVED

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Often I think of how incredible God has been to our ministry. Throughout these years, we have seen full houses and overflow crowds at all of our services—Sunday nights and Wednesday nights included.

We have done nothing to deserve such success. Sinners have been made to be saints through Calvary. Having been reconciled through the Blood of the Cross, we are made members of the Body of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:20). He made peace for us through His Blood, then He

placed us in His body by the Cross.

We are reconciled to God by simply trusting Him with all our heart. It is so easy to trust Him and to lean not on our own understanding. If we will choose to acknowledge Him in all of our ways, he shall direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Oh, Father, I am so grateful for this verse! I could hear it over and over again. I am so thankful for what You have promised to us for just trusting You. *You* will direct our paths.

Words of Reconciliation

So many times when I have faced a counseling session, I have prayed like this: "God, this session will be worthless unless You give me a word of reconciliation and a ministry of reconciliation motivated by Your love, amplified by Your grace, ministering Your mercy, and responding with Your wisdom."

Because I have been reconciled to God through the Holy Spirit, I understand that sometimes we need to express tough love. Those of you who have raised families and reared up children know that this is true. A mom and a dad have to express tough love because that tough love produces the discipline that releases the soul to grow and to be established in re-

sponsibility.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

He who knew no sin, became sin for us. In other words, Jesus Christ did not take our blame, but He did take our guilt. He became sin so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. It is a great thing that we are reconciled to God by the fact that He took our guilt upon Himself.

Tender Hearts

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

I am so grateful that God doesn't have a single record or charge against us. Because I am reconciled to Him, I should love others as He has loved me. There are times, I realize, when I am not careful to have the same love for another that God has for me. This is a battle I have to

give to Him. I have to let Him show me that since I am reconciled to Him, then I have to forgive others and be tender, because God, for Christ's sake, forgave me (Ephesians 4:32).

It is overwhelming for me to think of how God has forgiven me. It is a precious privilege to respond to that forgiveness by giving Him the battle within myself and then letting Him teach me to forgive and be tender hearted.

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17).

I am very sensitive on this point. A friend loves at *all* times. Does this mean we always agree? No. Does it mean that we don't make people accountable? It does not. What it means is this: In our hearts we have a mental attitude of love, even in moments of disagreement.

To love at all times requires having a ministry of reconciliation. It takes believers who are willing to always give God their battles. It takes people who are always ready to express words of reconciliation.

Chapter Three

WAITING WITH CONFIDENCE

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:28-31).

In letting God fight our battles, it is very important that we learn how to wait upon the Lord. Waiting on God often means trusting Him when times are desperate, when the battles keep coming one after another.

You know the situations I am talking about. It is in those times when you sometimes catch yourself saying, "What is it, God? Are You deaf to my cries? I did not come to you as a perfect person. Why are You taking Your time?"

God's answer would probably go something like this: "I am teaching you to wait upon Me. And, while you are waiting, I am teaching you to trust Me."

The battle here is one of maintaining our confidence in God and His promises. Hebrews 10:35 says, "Cast not away your confidence." We cannot afford to let our confidence leave us. After we have done the will of God the best we know how, we still have need of patience so that we can receive the promises.

The Work of Patience

God is working patience in us, and this is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. As we wait upon Him in our battles, the mystery of His patience will be worked into our hearts so that we reflect the nature of God. This is the nature that holds back judgment upon America and the world.

Let us not cast away our confidence, for God longs to train us and teach us to stand still and wait upon Him.

We need to be reconciled to God in the fact that we give thanks to Him in everything. We need to be reconciled to God for what we communicate in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening. We need to be reconciled in the language of thanksgiving. God wants to give us a very special language—a language of the heart, a language of the tongue.

Wait upon the Lord, and learn how to be thankful.

The Battle of Prayer

One of the great areas of battle is prayer. God wants us to be reconciled to Him in our attitude of prayer. I cannot begin to tell you how much God loves our prayers.

Recently I talked on the phone with a businessman who hasn't been saved very long. But, I can tell you that he knows how to talk with God. Just talking with this man is so edifying to me.

"Every morning I talk with God as I go to work," he said. "I had to let a couple of employees go, so I was asking God to send in some new ones. Just like that, God did it."

What a sweet conversation I had with this man. He had such a confession of faith. He is a man who knows Who to give his battles to. He

knows how to come before the Lord.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Reconciliation takes place in the holy place, at the Mercy Seat (see Leviticus 6:30). It is a supernatural transaction. Reconciliation is not natural; it is supernatural. It does away with all enmity and hostility and puts fellowship and friendship in their place.

This reconciliation is so unique because it leaves our soul in peace as it makes every battle the Lord's.

CONCLUSION

I am so thankful that our ministry has been reconciled to God in giving. We also have been reconciled to God in the area of the Great Commission. The best we know how, we are going into all the world and preaching the Gospel to every creature.

Indeed, there are different parts to play in fulfilling this Commission. Some are called to stay here, giving and serving in our Jerusalem. They possess a missionary emphasis in their work here, praying and giving support to help those going to Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

Having an understanding of reconciliation prompts us to give all of our battles to the Lord. This releases us to worship Him, knowing that in every situation He will triumph.

It feels so good to be able to raise our hands and praise Him with all of our hearts. We can be so peaceful and possess such confidence because

we are not afraid. There is no reason for us to be dismayed. The battle is not ours. The battle is the Lord's (1 Samuel 17:47).

Let God Remove the Veil

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INTRODUCTION

Many precious but unsaved people read the Bible over and over. They study it diligently. There are students and scholars who examine its every letter. Still, there remains a veil. Yet, when anyone truly turns his heart to the Lord, the veil will be taken away (2 Corinthians 3:16).

The "veil" obscures the truth from all who practice a religion but never establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. For example, many do not perceive that Jesus is the Messiah spoken of throughout Isaiah 53. But that veil has been done away with in Christ.

As Christians, however, we often approach people and circumstances as through a veil. That is, we do not know how to let God live and love through us. While we look forward to all the blessings awaiting us in heaven, God wants us to learn how to tap into the glory of the Finished Work that is in us, here and now.

Though the flesh and worldly attachments

tend to obscure the glory of God, the Holy Spirit wants to shed abroad the love of God in us and let it touch others in every situation.

How will this happen? We simply need to recognize, from moment to moment, who we are in Christ. The work of God is finished. Jesus Christ has authored and finished our faith. We have been made complete by His sacrifice on the Cross. This is the reality of God. May this booklet inspire each of us to reveal the Lord in all of His glory.

Chapter One

LETTING THE LIGHT SHINE

"And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

"But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.

"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

"Nevertheless when it shall return to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:13-18).

The children of Israel made Moses put the veil over his face. In Exodus 20:19, they said to

him, "Don't let God speak to us—*you* speak to us, Moses." In other words, they didn't want to establish a personal vertical relationship with God. They wanted to keep the relationship horizontal, through a man.

It is so easy for many Christians to fall into the same kind of trap. We will go to church, hear messages, read the Bible, and go on about our business. We are born again and saved, but a veil prevents us from having a close relationship with Christ. The veil causes so many heartaches because as long as it is there, we cannot receive all of the provisions God has for us.

The veil keeps sick people in defeat when they could be victorious, even if they do not get well. It keeps them in sorrow when they should have tremendous joy. It keeps them in a state of confusion when they should enjoy the tremendous unity of truth. This is so sad because all anyone needs to do is turn to the Lord and the veil is taken away.

Revealing His Glory

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

A precious young man was in my office recently, and I asked him what he liked about our church.

"Jesus Christ is lifted up, and we really see the glory of God through the Word of God," he said.

That's quite a statement coming from one so young. He doesn't have a veil obstructing his spiritual discernment.

In Moses' day, most of the Israelites could not stand to see the glory of God upon the face of a man. They saw the glory upon Moses, and they didn't want any part of it. They didn't want to hear the voice of God, and they didn't want His glory shining out from the face of a man.

But this is precisely what God wants to do in every believer. The Holy Spirit comes inside of each of us to do the work and to put His glory upon our faces. Then, when we laugh with godly joy, it is revealing God's glory; when we cry with godly sorrow, it is revealing God's glory; when we smile with godly compassion, it is revealing God's glory. It is God shining through us.

Chapter Two

REFLECTING CHRIST'S IMAGE

Everyone reading this booklet has gone to a mirror at some time or another. Perhaps, there have been times when you were troubled by the mirror. Your face seemed fine—so you thought. The problem was in the mirror. It was dirty, with spots all over it, you thought. So you cleaned it up. Still, the mirror did not reproduce the image of yourself that you were expecting. Perhaps you had refused to acknowledge the fact that you are little older, and the mirror succeeded in getting you occupied with the mirror instead of you being occupied with the reflection of your beautiful face.

Face it: A mirror only gives back exactly what you give it. It does not lie. It doesn't give back something you haven't put into it.

We do not have to be occupied with our reflection in the mirror of life. Instead, we can behold Christ with an open face as in a glass,

through His Word. We can behold Christ at work in us.

Free to Reveal the Creator

Jesus said to Philip, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." The Father was the origin and image of all that Jesus Christ is and all that He expressed as the God-Man on earth. Through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit encourages us to execute the divine prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ in His eternal program and process, so then we will come to the place where we will bear the image of His own initiations. We exactly represent God on the earth when we reflect the glory of God on our faces.

Oh, how fortunate we are to know such an amazing Savior. Oh, how blessed we are to be saved and not be blinded by a veil as so many are. Oh, how blessed we are to have God alive in us—men and women who are able to reveal His glory. The Lord Jesus manifests of His power, glory, nature, essence, and character through believers. Therefore, people see us as the light of the world (Matthew 5:14).

A man came to me one Sunday. He was weeping with joy because he had been a drug addict but was now delivered.

"Two years ago, I came to church and got saved," he said. "Since then, I have felt so clean, so guilt-free. Others may feel tempted, but I don't feel tempted at all. The shame is gone, and everything about my life is brand new. I was on drugs for twenty-five years. Now, I don't even desire it. I am just free to live, walk, and enjoy God and His people. I enjoy my family so much. I am just so free."

Active Grace

Another man had been wrapped up in pornography and fornication. I met with him privately, prayed with him, and asked God to deliver him. He came out of a wrong relationship and entered a personal relationship with Christ. Now he is a completely free and cleansed man. He is clean in his conscience and so free to experience, exhibit, and illustrate the life of Christ in his humanity (Hebrews 9:14). He is absolutely available to God right now. He is free to be what God has made him to be in Christ.

"I was so frustrated with defeat," this man said. "Now, I can look in the mirror and honestly say of myself, 'You are a man of God.'" Now he goes and serves on different outreaches to share the love of God with others.

This is the ontological nature of the grace of God in action. Jesus Christ was filled with grace before He ever created the angels and before He ever created man. When the man and the woman fell in the Garden of Eden, that did not bring out God's program of grace. No, God's grace existed years and years and years before the creation. God had grace before man came into existence.

Constrained by Grace

"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17).

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Corinthians 5:14-16).

Cheap grace means that I apply the grace of

God without the truth of God first. Grace is abused when it is used to get me through my sinful pleasures and all the activity of my human nature without repentance or changing my ways. The true love and grace of God helps me, through the Word and the Holy Spirit, to turn from my wicked ways.

God's grace is always active—it is never passive. Grace enables us with power, and then we reproduce the very life of Jesus Christ. Grace always empowers, and grace is always ready to act on behalf of the believer.

For this reason, Paul wrote, "The love of Christ motivates me and constrains me to live unto God and to know no man after the flesh."

What does this mean? It means we are to know no one according to human viewpoint, natural standards, or moral excellence. A Finished Work Christian knows no one after natural standards, human viewpoint, or human evaluation. His values are not established by sight.

Where once Jesus Christ was known after the flesh, we know Him no more in that way (2 Corinthians 5:16). We do not know Jesus after the flesh. Now we know Him as the glorified Man, representing us before God the Father, forever and ever. He is ever living to make inter-

cession for us. We now know Him with His victory over sin, over death, and over everything we have ever done wrong—past, present, and future. We were, we are, and we will be absolutely clean and absolutely complete in Jesus Christ forever.

"What if I sin?" you ask.

Rebound.

"What if I don't rebound?"

If you are saved, you will be exposed to God's discipline, which He applies in a progressive way (Hebrews 12:6). God's discipline is always applied in a sweet, kind, and loving way. It is always done in love. He never disciplines His children in anger. He simply wants to help us.

Chapter Three

OUR GOD FINISHED THE WORK

"For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Hebrews 4:3).

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

These verses of Scripture reveal the absolute nature of the Finished Work. Jesus Christ has finished the work. He is not going to wait for us to work our way to heaven; He is not waiting for us to get better. He is not waiting for us to exhibit a more consecrated life, a more dedicated soul, or a more committed spirit. He is not going to wait for those things. Instead, He finished the work and says, "Only believe, and I will give you My righteousness." That's it.

"And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD" (1 Chronicles 28:20).

David encouraged Solomon, his son, saying, "I want you to exhibit power with God. I don't want you to fear; I want you to be very strong. The LORD God, my God, will be with you!"

"He is *my* God." That was how David always thought of Him. We can say this just as much as David could say it. We can enjoy the same relationship with God as David had because of God's imputed righteousness.

Receive His Righteousness

Outside of God's righteousness, however, we are filthy and bankrupt in every way (Isaiah 64:6). The Word of God says, "He who plants is nothing and he who waters is nothing, but God who gives the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7). When a "nothing" receives God Almighty, he becomes a saint, he is adopted into the royal family, and he becomes a child of God, a brand-new creature in Him. He becomes a "someone,"

forever going somewhere, because of who he has become, on the basis of what Jesus Christ did for him.

To Solomon, David said, "God is going to finish the work in you." Solomon lived in sin for years and years, but God still finished the work in him. Solomon wrote three inspired books of the Bible; and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes were written *after* he was left with a hunched back and only his two front teeth. He also had trouble sleeping because of bad nerves. Sin took its toll on Solomon; but glory to God, the work of the Lord was still finished through him because it was based upon God's righteousness and not Solomon's.

Under God's Finished Work principle, Jesus Christ declared this billions of years ago: "There is not a single Christian in all of the human race and in all of the vastness of time that I will not finish the work for him. No one will be able to pluck any of them out of My hand. Even those precious ones who mistakenly believe they can lose their salvation will be Mine. One day they will discover that it was something that they could never lose."

God knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4). God never saw anyone on earth as saved who then got lost. He knows the end from the beginning. He completes the work in us. Therefore, we can be confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in us will complete it (see Philippians 1:6). God perfects everything that concerns His saints (Psalm 138:8).

Jesus Christ said, "I have finished the work I was given to do. Therefore, those who believe in Me will never ever have to be charged with sin. They will never have to face death because they will never die spiritually. I have finished the work, and I will never impute sin to them at any time. They are free. Even when they fail, I will help them get up. I will hold them and hold them until they can finally get back on their feet and start walking again."

This is the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10).

There is one way we can reveal that we have the Finished Work of Christ and really mean it personally, individually, and inwardly. It is by letting the love of God be made perfect in us. Of course, God's love is already perfect. But when

His love is perfected in us, we fulfill every single purpose in our marriage and our family. Ultimately, we will fulfill everything we are supposed to fulfill in business, in education, and in all processes of growth.

The Finished Work means we have received the love of God. It means that we understand it and are giving it to others. We are fulfilling love's purpose in maturity and honesty with the integrity of God in us. God has removed the veil, and we reveal God in the things we are doing to glorify Him.

CONCLUSION

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well" (James 2:8).

To love our neighbors as ourselves is to fulfill every purpose God has for us on earth. It is to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, flowing from our innermost being, affecting the people who come in contact with it. We are lights in the world because our countenances and our actions reflect the light of Christ that is our life.

By the grace of God we manifest the love, the glory, the peace, the power, the forgiveness, the joy, and the integrity of God in wisdom. Grace means that everything is finished to fulfill the Body of Christ (Colossians 1:19-24). Jesus did it all in the past, at Calvary. We fulfill His royal law by revealing His deity in our humanity, letting people see the image of His initiations toward us.

We are those He has redeemed and restored through His divinity to be used in our humanity. We are members of a living Church; we are living epistles known and read of men as we go through Satan's world as God's guests, ambassadors of heaven, proclaiming the gospel of grace. God removes the veil, and we go forth in boldness and confidence because we are His very own.

Let Jesus Reign

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Ye, as lively stones, are built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, that you should offer spiritual sacrifices, accepted by God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

Jesus Christ is always interested in building up His Body. The best way that He can do this is when His people allow Him to reign in their hearts by faith.

You can usually tell when people do not have Christ ruling on the throne of their hearts. They are detached from the power of God, so their lives appear to be empty. The moods, the attitudes, and the arguments are there. These demonstrations of negativity only serve to tear down the Body of Christ and to assist Satan's kingdom by producing confusing counterfeits that afflict individual believers.

Under the reign of Jesus Christ, a believer lets the peace of God rule in his heart. Called into one Body (Colossians 3:15), he is thankful

as he submits to the heavenly King and to His government.

As this booklet will show, Christians who let Jesus reign take every opportunity to build up the Body of Christ. They allow God to breathe on their lives as they become part of God's great army, seeking and saving the lost, under the leading the Captain of the Lord of hosts.

Chapter One

ESTABLISHING THE RULE OF HEAVEN

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Do we really understand what the kingdom of God is? Really, it is the secret to our lives as believers. Wherever there is a kingdom, there is a king. Wherever there is a government, there is an administrator. According to 1 Corinthians 12, the government is the Corporate Body of Jesus Christ, the administrator is the Holy Spirit, and the King, of course, is Jesus Christ.

The rule of heaven and the Church go together (Matthew 16). For believers, to live in the Kingdom of God simply means to abide under the rule of heaven through the Spirit of life in the Corporate Body of Jesus Christ on earth.

According to Colossians 1:13, there is an-

other kingdom. People are under the rule of the kingdom of darkness until they get saved. Oh, they are in a kingdom, but it is a satanic kingdom, a kingdom of darkness, and Satan is the ruler. A liar from the beginning, he institutes programs of counterfeits: false peace, false pleasure, false covering, and wrong thoughts. Those who live under his authority are deceived.

Many philosophies at work in the world today have a satanic origin. Instead of God's righteousness, there is human righteousness; instead of Christianity, there is religion; instead of the power of the Holy Spirit, there are works in the flesh. In the place of the perfect peace of God, there is a circumstantial peace produced by the natural effort in the flesh. All happiness in the satanic kingdom is dependent upon what happens next. It has nothing to do with spirituality.

Absent from the kingdom of darkness is the joy of the Holy Spirit which is derived from the ministry of God when He is on the throne of the heart. It is an unspeakable joy that I experience regardless of the circumstances. But instead of emotional soundness and mental security, Satan stimulates mental elevations of self and emotional spasms that mimic the reality of what the

Spirit does in the mind and emotions of a believer.

Satan has a counterfeit for everything that God does. For example, the Word of God says that, as a principle of identification with Jesus Christ, a person should be baptized *after* he is saved (Acts 2:38). But the devil comes along and promotes the false doctrine that someone must be baptized *in order* to be saved. Concerning liberty, God declares that there is complete liberty in the Holy Spirit, and it is a liberty to go all the way with Christ, according to His Word. Hell, in contrast, stirs up the idea that there is a liberty to do what we want to do in the flesh, to cast off all restraints and to let no one rule us.

That is how subtly the devil takes the truth of God and twists it.

Ye Must Be Born Again

"Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:5-8).

People who are not born again cannot understand the kingdom of God. A dog cannot fly because it does not have the life of a bird. A bird cannot talk because it does not have the life of a man. And the reason that some people cannot enter into the reality of the Christian life is that they have never been born again.

Every Christian needs to be taught, counseled, exhorted, loved, bathed in and saturated with grace in order to live practically in the kingdom of God. If, however, a person is having difficulty understanding the kingdom of God for his life, perhaps he needs to be born again.

In the old days, buildings were made of stones, but a heap of stones is not a building. Today, many structures are made of bricks, but a pile of bricks cannot function as a building. Churches are made up of born-again believers, but a group of born-again believers do not make up a church, any more than a heap of bricks make a building. A group of Christians do not

necessarily form a habitation for God.

What does it mean to enter into the kingdom of God? The first thing it means is to be translated by the Holy Spirit out of the kingdom of darkness (Colossians 1:13). It means the Holy Spirit takes you from one kingdom with all of its counterfeits and places you in the kingdom of His dear Son, all because of His love and grace and all because of the rule of redemption in God's Kingdom.

Chapter Two

THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE GOVERNMENT OF HEAVEN

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

"And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:13-18).

What Jesus was really saying in that last verse is something such as this: "You are Peter, a small movable stone, and upon Myself—Christ, the immoveable stone, the rock of 1 Corinthians 10:4—I will build My Church. I will build upon the rock of your confession. You said I am the Christ, and Christ is the rock, the immovable stone. And upon that immovable stone, which is the chief corner stone (1 Peter 2:6), I will build."

"Lord Jesus, what are You going to do?"

"I'm going to build."

"What are You going to build?"

"My Church."

Unless we understand that the Church is an assembly of men and women who are in the process of being built up in Christ, we won't understand how Jesus is to reign in our lives.

We are members of His Church. Moreover, Jesus Christ wants us to understand most clearly that as His Church we must live under the authority of the King. Every kingdom must have a King. The King must have a throne. The throne must have an administrator. And the administrator must administrate the gifts of the governmental Body to produce the authority of the divine government of God's Kingdom of heaven. Every born-again believer can enjoy a

life that is fitted into the Body, administrated by the Holy Spirit, and ruled by a King. That King is Jesus Christ.

When Jesus Christ enters into your life and my life, we must submit to God and to each other in the Lord (1 Peter 5:5). Thus, heaven becomes our government. King Jesus reigns on the throne of our hearts, and the Holy Spirit administrates our personal spiritual gifts. Jesus as King continually builds up His Body as He ministers in absolute, supreme authority.

A Habitation of the Spirit

"Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

"In whom all the building fitly groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19-22).

It is Jesus who is building up His Church. We enter into the authority of the life of the King on the throne of our hearts, and heaven's rule is

produced in the minds of men on the earth below.

We are Christians for one purpose, and that is to be fitly framed together with this whole Body, submitting to God's rule, and letting Jesus Christ be King, which ultimately glorifies God. We accept the government of the pastors and the teachers God has given to the church (Ephesians 4:11-12). We accept the administration of the Holy Spirit. We are fitted into the Body in a marvelous way, with new authority, because of God's life and the King reigning on the throne of our hearts.

Are you a built-up member of a local assembly that is being fitly framed together? Are you allowing yourself to be built together, never isolating yourself as only one among a heap of stones?

It is so great to allow Jesus Christ to reign so we can be built together to operate with the authority of the Church, the authority of souls being saved, and the authority of healing. We desire to receive all that goes with the release from bondage and servitude to the old nature, having been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

Chapter Three

BONE TO BONE, HEART TO HEART: GOD BUILDS HIS CHURCH

"The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

"And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.

"And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

"Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O you dry bones, hear the word of the LORD" (Ezekiel 37:1-4).

If a person is not built up by Jesus Christ, the gates of hell will prevail against him in his practical experience. We must be built together with

every other believer, fitly framed. We must be carefully enclosed by the grace and protection of God's presence. If we are not, we are simply men who have dry bones with no life.

A lot of people live in a valley of dry bones because they are detached from the life that is in the Body of Christ. Notice several things about the dry bones: They were scattered in the cemetery, not connected; they had no life; therefore, they had no authority.

Today, as Christians, we have been called to reach out to people who are tired of being dry bones, people that are not living in God's life, that are not built up together, that are not growing with the life and the authority of the King.

Why are there so many problems in America today? It is because the Church does not have the authority of the King. Why do you think that many people do not get saved? Of course there is the matter of free volition, but in many cases it is because the Church does not have the authority of the King, Jesus, and the valley is full of dry bones.

It is a matter of Christ's life being revealed.

Scattered Lives Knit Together

"Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones;

Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:

"And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

"So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone" (Ezekiel 37:5-7).

The scattered bones represent many minds, and many bodies, and many divisions (1 Corinthians 11:18). But when Jesus Christ reigns in the assembly, the bones come together! When bones come together, that produces a body. And with the breath of the Holy Spirit, the Body of Christ begins to live in the one area that defeats the kingdom of darkness—that is, the authority and the life of God (1 John 3:8).

What does Colossians 2:2 teach us? It teaches that we are to be knit together in love. Jesus said, "I will cause these bones to be knit together, to be built together, to join each other, and then I will produce My life in them. But unless these bones come together, they will be dried up, withered up, arguing, tormented, defeated, frustrated, bored, selfish, temporally-minded bones

that amount to nothing."

Dry bones live for temporal values instead of Christ. It is amazing that a person would come to a living Church of God and not get deeply excited about life. It is sad that anyone could even want to miss a church service for no reason. Christ is healing and saving day by day in the Church services, and yet many people stay home.

Dry bones are scattered. They are living in a gray world of dryness. Bored though they are, they will never reap satisfaction, because they are not knit together for God to inhabit.

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

Christians would not have so many problems with their bones if they understood Christ's authority to loose them and to set them free. If they would come under the submission of the heavenly rule, under the administration of the Holy Spirit in the government of God's leadership, their troubles would go. If they would allow Him to reign in their hearts on the throne of their lives, they would no longer be as dry bones.

Breathed Upon by the Spirit of God

"And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.

"Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

"So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army" (Ezekiel 37:8-11).

I am sure that Jesus looks upon church after church and sees a picture of Ezekiel 37:1-2 and Ezekiel 37:8: "There is no breath in them." There is no song of praise to God and there is no life of the Holy Spirit revealed. Do you know why? It is because they are not being built together by Jesus Christ Himself, so they are not bone to bone, heart to heart, fitly framed in the temple of a corporate Body, experiencing the liberty and power and authority of heaven, which has been delegated unto them by Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 16:18).

"He that is joined to the Lord is of one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17). When we realize this great principle of the corporate life of Christ, we won't

expect anything of the Body of Christ. We won't debate with the Body. We won't try to reason or argue. Rather, we will complement each one. We will be building up and edifying continually because Jesus always builds. He doesn't destroy His Body. He builds, and edifies, and builds. He does not demand a thing.

Jesus Christ never demanded a thing from anybody. He gave His life. Many people are always looking for something instead of giving their lives. Let Jesus reign so that He might be our life, as we become "bone of His bone"—members of His very Body in our experience.

CONCLUSION

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15-16).

What happened to those bones in Ezekiel 37? They came together. Our Body will be as strong as the members who supply it with the life of Christ as we are building up one another. Our assemblies will be no stronger than the weakest member as each one is built up by the supply of the Word in the life of Christ.

Our Body will be regulated by each one of us—by our listening, our prayers, and our love, having constructive, creative life to build up one

another.

When the Body is functioning like this, it "maketh increase of the body." Souls are saved and lives are transformed when each one of us is supplying each other. Joined together and fitly framed, the Body is regulated by the measure with which we contribute through the creative life of the King on the throne of our hearts, through the administration of the Holy Spirit, under the government of the pastors and teachers.

As we understand this, the Body is compacted together, bone is fused with bone, and the life of God comes in. We stand. We have life. We breathe with heavenly breath. We let Jesus reign! And then what happens? By the grace of God, the Body increases itself. It reproduces itself after its kind, souls are saved, and lives are changed forever.

Let the Prudent Keep Silent

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INTRODUCTION

Talk, talk, talk, talk.

We live in the so-called information age. It seems as though everyone and his brother has a "talk" show on television or radio. Go onto the computer and you can chat away, all day and all night.

All of this talk and chatter has overwhelmed our society, and it has affected the church, often negatively. Christians go to meeting after meeting to discuss this program and that program, for this group and for that group. Yet, discussion settles so little, tending more to create confusion and to cloud our vision of what is really important in these days.

We live in an evil time. Satan is really at work to distort the Gospel message and to hinder the work of bona fide Bible-based ministries.

In this booklet (taken from a message and a rap session between Pastor Stevens and Pastor Tom Schaller during a recent International Con-

vention), you will see why, in an evil time, it is so important for Christians to refuse to stir up issues. Our prayer is that these thoughts will help each reader to learn silent prudence so that we will see that behind every silent thought of God is the highest possible process of thinking.

Chapter One

SILENCE IS GOLDEN TO GOD

"And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

"But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

"But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

"Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

"But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

"And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole

from that very hour" (Matthew 15:22-28).

"Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time" (Amos 5:13).

Why is it important to be silent in evil times? Without the mind of God, we are not able to understand the depth of an evil period when it comes upon us, so God is saying, "Step out of the way. You need to be silent now."

The first thing "prudence" speaks of is wisdom from above (James 3:17). It is inspired by God as a manifestation against Satan's government and his policy of evil. Evil is the administration of Satan's government. It is sin but it is beyond personal sin.

In churches today, there are people who slip in and out of divorce without blinking an eye. There is an evil time in their marriage, but they don't know how to handle the evil. They are not aware that they are not up against personal sin. Rather, they are contending with a supernatural government. Satan's policy is evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22; 2 Thessalonians 3:2-3).

Prayer will never get you out of evil. It is going to take deliverance through a maximum intake of doctrine to get a person out of evil.

A person can go to the Cross from now to eternity and it will not remove him from the ef-

fects of evil. The only thing that will take care of evil is receiving the Word of God in stillness.

Quickening Comes by the Word

Consider some of these verses in Psalm 119:

"Quicken thou me, Lord. Deliver me according to thy word," (154, 156)

"Lord, I'm cleaving to the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word" (verse 25).

"Mine eyes behold vanity; quicken thou me in the way," (verse 37, speaking of the perfect protocol of God).

"Quicken thou me in thy lovingkindness" (verse 40).

Notice the emphasis through repetition: "Quicken thou me…." "Quicken thou me…." "Quicken thou me…."

The fact that I was quickened yesterday has nothing to do with my need today. This morning I must be quickened. Tonight I must be quickened. And tomorrow morning I must be quickened. Furthermore, it must be exactly according to God's Word.

The most beautiful thing in the world is when God's people understand that a prudent person will be silent.

"What do you think?"

Stop! Don't be so quick to answer that question when it is posed to you. You could destroy yourself and the person who asked you. Let God do the thinking on this one.

Be Connected to the Head

Colossians 2:19 speaks about the Head, Jesus Christ. I will not have Body life beyond the measure that I am submitting to the authority of the Head. Inasmuch as Christ is my Head, if I submit to the authority of the Head, I will have God's life in my body. More than that, I will participate in giving life to the Body of Christ. I will be a life giver year after year if I am submitting to the Head. Disconnect me from the Head, and natural strength takes over. When that happens, the Cross does not have a way to eliminate what is going on. As a result, I have no life.

Everything about the Body of Christ is about giving life, and this life builds and revives and restores and quickens and makes new our thoughts and motives. We accentuate the positive.

The most amazing thing is to be properly related to the Head. We can have the best marriage in town, and if our family gets to know the Head, nobody can touch it. The family members

will reveal His life wherever they are. It is all about having a life that builds. And with this process, there may be a whole lot of silence.

When we focus, we begin to realize something tremendous: Bible precepts. We long for His precepts. We seek after lovingkindness. We seek after righteousness. We want everything to be according to His Word. In all of these verses and their renderings, the application that comes springing out of an individual is the tremendous life of the Head.

God gives comfort in affliction (Psalm 119:50). He says, "Listen, if you get under the authority of the Head, you will have authority in your Body life that is spiritually perfected."

Dangerous Misconceptions

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20).

The Bible says that they see good and call it evil, or they call evil good. Satan is always inventing evil things, and he throws in some "all right" things to seduce people who are deceived. We must study what the Word of God says about demons. We must study sermons on

the doctrine of demons* and realize that we are not immune to them, no matter how good we may be. You and I are just as subject to demons as anybody else.

Check your conversation. Check the preparation of your soul each day so your tongue doesn't get ahead of your mind. We must never let Satan get away with deception to control our lives with his government.

**Grace Publications' Doctrine Weekly has reproduced several of Pastor Stevens' messages about Satan's governmental system of evil, including* Dealing Precisely with Demons *(1998),* Imaginations of the Heart *(1998),* Why Did God Create Satan? *(2000),* Satan's Limitations *(2002).*

Chapter Two

GOD GIVES THE ANSWERS WE NEED

In Matthew 15:23, the Syrophenician woman talked to God and begged Him to say something, but He didn't open His mouth. What was He doing with her? He was answering with silence.

Has He ever done that with you? Has He ever answered you with silence? But isn't He alive and motivated and eager to help us out? He is, but His silence brings us to a higher thought life than when He speaks, and this is why: Eternity is behind His silence, and having to express His full thought with our vocabulary, He is often limited. But in His silence, He is able to work out the thing so you can see Him work through your faith, resting in His precepts and your love for them.

It really is wisdom to be silent. Who are we to be involved in the work of God? Just get out

of the way and be silent. Be still, and let God be God. A young pastor told me how that often, in the presence of evil, the temptation is to speak out; but when he waits upon God, his response is silence.

This is indeed a very good response, because when Satan is in phase one of evil, he tries to engage us in hand-to-hand combat with his kingdom, his government, and his supernatural resources. As a result, he can easily confuse us and deceive us. Through the projection of emotional stimuli, he tries to make us think that it is God when it is really him. And so the Lord says, "It is very prudent for you to stay silent, especially in a time of evil."

In an evil time, many of the words that people use in their communication (talking, defense; dialogue, offense) are dogmatically unwise. First of all, they don't know who they are fighting, and when they don't know who they are fighting, they try desperately to defend themselves. The problem is, they have no idea what they are defending themselves against. But, when we enter into a special kind of prudence, we are silent because we enter into a high level of thinking, which is actually thinking with God.

When a man enters into silence because of

high thinking, God has the opportunity to begin to get in and talk to him, teach him, show him, and most of all give him wisdom from above.

Wisdom from Above

Awise man in the world knows what to say, when to say it, who to say it to, and how to say it. This gives him an advantage over his competition. As God's people, receiving wisdom that comes from above is the only possible way we can have an advantage over evil. Evil is absolutely bound by the man who knows what to say, when to say it, where to say it, and how to say it. A man who is led by the Spirit is able to remain absolutely quiet and totally confident. God will say to him, "Now I am going to give you words of wisdom, and you just repeat it." So he repeats the wisdom that God gives him, and this becomes more than a match for anything that comes from the supernatural offender, Satan.

When a man is prudent, he is silent, and he receives four steps, four directions of applying wisdom from God: what, when, where, and how to speak. Because it is God's wisdom, he doesn't say anything that makes him have to apologize later. He doesn't get angry at people who refuse

to agree with him. He is just quietly confident, and he finds new resting places (Isaiah 32:17-18). That is a fantastic lesson of wisdom.

One desire for our church, for the people who work for us on these grounds, and for pastors throughout the land is that we would all receive a gift of wisdom. That is the greatest need in the church today. Jesus told His disciples to pray, "Deliver us from evil." He said, "Pray that, because you will need to be delivered from evil, so that is what you had better pray for."

People come up with so many opinions that are not accurate. Put it all together and you will discover in the end that silence is the greatest weapon the Christian has for a Spirit-filled offensive.

The woman in Matthew 15:22-23 was praying for her daughter who was grievously vexed of the devil, but Jesus "answered her not a word." Why? He was teaching her a lesson, and He was teaching His disciples a lesson. He was testing everybody's faith in His decision to answer the woman with silence. In the end, we know that He healed her daughter and then praised her up for her faith.

But first, He was silent.

Think about it this way also. How silent is God? He has given us His Word, and in it He has told us the most important things. But many times in our daily walk with Him, He doesn't say anything to us. He is keeping silent in an evil time.

In other words, maybe it is good when we don't know everything about a matter. If He told us more than we need to know, it could confuse us and trouble us. God's silence is a blessing for us, because it requires us to live in love. According to 1 Corinthians 13:7, love believes all things that have been told to us. We don't need to scrutinize people or their motives, we only need to trust God to lead us. What's more, love bears all things, endures all things, and hopes all things. Love is able to live in faith and believe that God has the best for us.

So what about us? Do we need an answer in every trial? Should we talk about everything and fill the void with words? In Job 23:4-5, Job said to his accusers, "I wish I could stand before God. I would fill my mouth with arguments." We certainly would have a lot to say if we could stand before God. But God is silent in an evil

time. He has told us what we need to know.

At the Last Supper, in John 14:30, Jesus told the disciples, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the Prince of this world cometh." As soon as He was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said to the Pharisees, "this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53*b*).

What Jesus had told the disciples up to that point was enough. They knew enough to be able to go through the trial that was coming. We believe that about our ministry, too. We believe that we have learned enough over the years to go through everything that the devil may throw at us and that God may allow.

We have walked out of the Bible school classroom in awe and said, "I can't believe God brought me here. And what I have heard! If I hear no more, what I have heard is awesome."

God is silent, but He has told us what we need to know with each other. We should be people of few words, people who are swift to hear, slow to speak.

Beginning in Job 38, at the end of Job's trial, God confronted him and said, "Answer me, Job! Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" God proceeded to ask him nearly

eighty questions, and that put Job in his place. Job saw just how small he was in the grand scheme of things.

"Then Job answered the Lord, and said,

"Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth" (Job 40:3-4).

Recognizing Our Smallness

Theodore Roosevelt, before he became President of the United States, fell in love with a woman, and he married her. But while having their first child, she died, and it crushed him.

Though a young man, he was a gifted politician in New York, but the tragedy devastated him. So he decided he would go out to the Dakotas and be a cowboy. For two years he was out there in the wilderness. He would lie down on the ground at night and look up at the sky. He said, "I would look at the stars until I became very small."

Years later, after he became President of the United States, he would do the same thing. When he could have been tempted by the power of his office, he would look up at the stars until he realized how small he was.

A lot of our words come out of ourselves, and maybe it is better, as Job said, to "put my

hand on my mouth." After God was done talking to him, Job repented.

We are called to worship God, to walk by faith in Him, to love Him. And if He doesn't talk to us, that is okay.

Ruth said to her mother-in-law, "I will follow you wherever you go" (see Ruth 1:16). So, when Naomi turned to go back to Bethlehem, Ruth followed her in silence.

A disciple must learn to follow God in silence. The prudent—the wise disciple—will be silent in an evil time, knowing that God will be silent with us because He wants to teach us how to live with love in an evil time.

Search Out the Right Things

The greater and higher form of silence by God produces and promotes a greater quality of faith in searching Him out. In other words, God is saying: "If you don't know what I am saying, if you don't hear me, establish your heart in the quality of faith that will discover what I am going to say and what I want, without evidence.

Sometimes we do a lot of talking about a matter such as tithing, but we don't tithe. God instructs us with His silence. "Prove Me. Prove Me with your tithing. Prove Me. Put in your

money. There is no need to talk about it. I told you to do it. So do it. Case closed. No discussion. Prove Me."

"It is to the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2).

This is an awesome proverb. One matter you cover. The other you investigate and you search out.

When we walk with God, we search out the things of God, but we cover something else—perhaps the guilty party, or the offense itself. But the flesh, the natural man, has it backwards. When we operate in the flesh, we cover what we should look for and reveal what should be hidden.

Please understand. The issue is not necessarily that we should not talk about people. God says that when it comes to the ways of the world, the flesh, and the devil, we should not even speak about those things. In sowing to the flesh, we find that too often we cover over the things of God while we talk about the things of the flesh. But if you talk to a spiritual man, he will cover the things of the flesh, and he will reveal the glory of God.

Chapter Three

THE RIGHT TIME TO SPEAK

The Gospel is what we need to be able to speak to people in these evil times. No analysis of situations, no criticism of people and their positions. We just need to preach the Gospel to the lost. On this, we cannot be silent. In these cases, it is prudent for us to speak.

Up in Milton Plantation, Maine, we were knocking on doors on a Thursday afternoon, and we went to a farmer's house. This one said he wasn't ready to receive Christ. He was sending his children to our Sunday school, but we were compelled to communicate the Gospel to him. "You never know when God's going to take you," we said.

But he said, "I'm not ready." He said, "I appreciate what you're doing for my kids. But I'm not ready to accept Christ," and he made that dogmatically clear.

During our church service, we got word that

this man went to crank up his tractor, and in some way it fell upon his body and he died a short time later in the emergency room.

That Thursday afternoon may have been his last time ever to accept Christ. That is why we must be prudent and understand that there is a time to speak the truth in love.

Taking the Word to the World

Isn't it awesome when a person gets saved? Several of us were in Azerbaijan, and there was a Turkish man. By his appearance, he seemed so cold, so hard, and his face never changed, so we had no way to gage the impact of our words. Six months later we saw him again. He had taken off, spiritually speaking. That man has a future in God. And he said some interesting things.

"In Turkey," he said, "there are people who are very social, and they are very hungry for love, but then they pull away from love that is expressed—especially the intensity of God's love. Of course they show love in the family and of course they are social, but they hurt so much that they pull away from it. They are being pulled in two directions. One is to love and the other is not to love, but to protect."

Boy, what an awesome thing it is when the

grace of God breaks through that wall and really gets a hold of someone's life!

So we speak—but not according to our own desire to be heard. We are prudent, silent in the storm, waiting upon God. We learn to be wise, to listen for God's direction, and then we speak the words that bring life to the soul who needs to hear from the Word of Life, Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

God is moving quietly in parts of the world, and amazing things are happening. Here is an Iranian who met with some of our missionaries. He looked like someone who has been going to our Bible college. About thirty-something years old, a lawyer from Tehran, Iran, he was filled with the Holy Spirit—crystal clear. When he became a believer, the government fired him, and he went to Istanbul to find a new life. We know of six hundred Iranians who have gone to Istanbul because they have become Christians.

We saw a document from an official of an Islamic country, warning its leaders about the spreading of the Gospel. This memo speaks of "people in our country, rebellious against our government, who are turning to Christianity…."

This is such good news, isn't it? God is at work in the Islamic world. And this Iranian man said, "I lost my job. I am persecuted by the government, but I am so pleased! I am so thrilled

with Jesus Christ."

To look at him, you would think there is no way that this man would have anything to do with us. We do not speak the same language. We are from totally different countries. But God and His Gospel are not cultural things. This is the Holy Spirit and the gift of salvation. And this is so refreshing, isn't it? Oh, it is beautiful.

The prudent man keeps silent when the enemy accuses. The prudent man will not hastily offer his opinions about anything. In fact, he will not say a word except the Holy Spirit gives Him utterance. Yet, how beautiful are the feet of him who brings the Good News (Isaiah 52:7). How excellent it is to carry the Word of God and the truth about the Finished Work of Jesus Christ to every corner of the world.

Let the Word Uphold You

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2 Corinthians 13:8, the Word of God says we can do nothing against the truth, but only *for* the truth. Many of us have witnessed the veracity and preciseness of God's truth through the trials of our faith. Those trials worked in us patience, in time. That allowed God, who inhabits eternity, to act through our human volition with His mercy.

Yet with all God has revealed about the Finished Work, some people seem to think they can do something harmful against the truth of grace, of love, and of mercy. But they never can. When it's all said and done, what anyone seems to do against the truth will work out for the truth.

This booklet will instruct us in the value of applying the whole counsel of God to every endeavor. When we let the Word of God uphold us and not our own strength, we will be quickened for the next moment by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead.

Chapter One

"DOTH THIS OFFEND YOU?"

"When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?…The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:61, 63).

"For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13:8).

The words that God speaks are eternal. They were settled in heaven billions of years ago for this very hour. Every time we hear the Word of God preached, it is a fountain of life that renews, refreshes, and rekindles the spirit within.

People are drawn to churches that teach grace because of the nature of the grace message. Yet some of those same people go against the grace message, mocking it as they leave the assembly. They come because of unconditional love, and then they go against it because they cannot live up to the message. They are drawn

to it because of the Finished Work, and then they try to "unfinish" what Christ has completed. They come because they believed in unity, and then they cause disunity. Still, these people can do nothing against the truth.

We can do nothing against the truth. If we try to hurt another brother or sister, we are going against the truth. If we make comments against a brother or sister, we are going against the truth—but ultimately, none of us can do a thing against the truth. What we say against a brother will sometimes come back on us in some form of chastisement (though we will probably never acknowledge it because of deception, intellectual pride, and a life that has not been crucified).

Offended by the Truth

In Mark 3:21, His "friends" said that Jesus was out of His mind. In John 6:53-61, many disciples were offended when He told them, "Eat My flesh and drink My blood, or you will have no life in you." The Word of God says they were offended. Jesus "knew in himself" that they were murmuring, and He said out loud, "Does this offend you?"

Yes, it did.

In Mark 6:3, when He went back to His hometown to teach the Word of God, His countrymen were offended. "Where did *he* learn these things, and where did he get his authority? Isn't this the carpenter?" they said. The Bible says, "They were offended at Him."

When they finished eating what became known as the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples, "Ye shall be offended because of me this night" (Mark 14:27).

It is an amazing thing to consider, but that is the Lord Jesus. He was constantly offending people. He was despised and rejected because people were offended by Him (Isaiah 53). Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, full of grace and mercy, became an offense to "good" people.

Offended by the Cross

But according to Galatians 5:11, the greatest offense in the history of Christianity is the Cross.

In counseling, for example, people may communicate for nearly forty-five minutes on a problem, and the compassionate pastor will love them, take their hand, and say, "I understand. I identify with how you feel…." And in cases where the people are well taught, the pastor who hears from heaven will add, "…But your

solution is Calvary."

People do not want to hear that. The flesh gets offended. We are offended by the Cross because Calvary means we must lose our life. Calvary means that we are buried with Christ. It means that we have a new nature and that we need the filling of the Spirit with love shed abroad in our heart. Many times we do not want to hear about the Cross.

The Cross has always offended people who try to impress God with their works. It has always offended the "relative righteousness" crowd who compare themselves with others (2 Corinthians 10:12-14). The Cross is always offending those who complain. The Cross always offends the crowd who think they are not liked as much as others, who feel they are not loved and that they don't have the proper attention given them. Calvary is the greatest single offender in the history of the world.

Offended by the Blood

With Calvary came the shedding of the Blood, without which there is no remission of sin. Redemption required the shedding of Christ's blood. The Blood is so offensive. Many theologians deny that the shedding of the literal

blood of Christ atoned for our sins. They deny the ability of Christ's blood to deliver and its absolute power to cleanse. They say that spiritual death is all that was needed for our redemption.

So many Christians lack discernment on the fundamental doctrine of the literal Blood. They will hear a message that compromises this truth and never know the difference, because the messenger still preaches the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—they just leave out the Blood.

The Blood offends. It doesn't make sense to the natural mind that the shedding of Blood could cover a person's sins forever. Yet, God's plan began to unfold when He shed the blood of an animal to cover Adam and Eve. In Exodus 12:13, before He sent a deadly plague through Egypt, God told His people, "…When I see the blood, I will pass over you." And He did. But only a perfect Sacrifice has the power to save the souls and cleanse the hearts of sinful men. Perfect redemption would be accomplished through the sacrifice of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two

"GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD"

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

When God calls you to a church, go where He leads. Leave the old things behind you, and become a faithful member in particular. As you go forward, you will fall in love with everything God is doing. Still, many are offended when the pastor teaches on soul winning. They are offended because they never go.

So, if the pastor teaches what the Bible says about soul winning (in Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:20-22, and Acts 1:8), he will offend people with that message. If he teaches John 4:28-30 about the woman at the well who went soul winning as soon as she was saved, he will offend people.

In Luke 9, Jesus sent out the twelve disciples. In Luke 10, the seventy went out. Yet, if the pas-

tor teaches that the last words Christ spoke before He ascended were "Go…and preach the gospel!" people get offended. They will tell you they believe in soul winning, but they never go, and their behavior is wrong! It is wrong not to go. James 4:17 says that "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." If I do not go soul winning regularly and on purpose, I am backslidden, because that verse says we are to do what we know is right.

Grace Teaches Us to Go

Jesus didn't "suggest" we win souls; He commanded it! We go because we are told to go by the One who made us, the One who bought us, the One who paid for our sins, the One who lives inside us. His Word is filled with His heart toward the lost. He went, the twelve disciples went, the seventy went, the women went—and we go.

The people who do not have a conviction to go soul winning are the same people who often have unresolved conflicts hindering their lives. Many of these people tend to come to church late and seldom fellowship with other believers. So much in their lives has not been crucified and buried with Christ; therefore, the casual life of

Laodicea rules. Because their attitudes are not right with God, they do not have attitudes of grace and mercy.

Grace teaches us to deny ungodly attitudes like intimidation and slothfulness that would keep us from going (Titus 2:12), and grace teaches us to go. We may have a very rigorous schedule, yet if we know it is right, and we do not do it, that is sin.

Satan, the accuser, would like you to think you are being led in a system of works. Seeking the lost isn't "works" for those of us who love God. But if you don't love God, do not go, because *that* would be works.

We Can Do Nothing against the Truth

We cannot do a thing against the truth; the Bema Seat will tell the story. Jesus offended the disciples. Peter meant well when he said, "Though all men are offended because of You, Jesus, I will never be offended." But Jesus knew the truth of the matter (Matthew 26:31-34).

Jesus Christ always offended the Pharisees, and He offended the scribes. Even as a child, He offended Joseph when He said after being gone and apparently lost for a day, "I am busy doing My Father's business" Jesus was reminding

Joseph in so many words, "*You* are not my Father." Mary and Joseph were probably offended, because basically Jesus was saying, "I didn't tell you what I planned to do, because I am the Creator." Again, He offended His mother and His half-brothers and sisters when He said in Luke 8:19-21, "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it."

We must not patronize carnality. We must not lower our standard to appease the guilty. No one can do a thing against the truth, only *for* the truth. If you try to do something against the truth, the truth will come back to you later—if not in this lifetime, then at the Bema Seat of Christ.

You will look into His eyes, and He will say, "What happened? Were you busy? You did know that I said these things, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"You did know that just before I ascended, the words that I spoke were recorded in all four Gospels and in the Book of Acts: 'Be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.' Did you know that?"

"Yes."

"Did your pastor teach it?"

"Yes."

"Did other people in the church go soul winning?"

"Yes."

"Well, why didn't you do it?"

And you will stand there, ashamed, with no answer.

"Was it because you didn't love the Word? Was it because you didn't love Me? Yes, that was why you didn't obey Me. You were glad that I saved you, but your love was limited; and that was revealed by your limited obedience to the Cross. When I said to you in Mark 8:36-37, that one soul is worth more than all the world, I meant it."

From 1 John 2:28, we understand that many who are saved will be ashamed when they face Jesus. Let's purpose to trust God and know the unspeakable joy that comes from seeking the lost (Psalm 126:5).

Chapter Three

"WHOSOEVER SHALL LOSE HIS LIFE…"

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35).

We cannot do a thing against the truth but only *for* the truth. Jesus gave His life away for others. He simply gave Himself away.

"I want to ask You a question, Lord. You are the Creator, You are our Redeemer. You are eternal, with no beginning and no ending except in Your humanity. As You worked with disciples, as You were born in a slum area, I want to ask You a question. How did You conduct Your life?"

I believe He has already told us: "First, I became like the least (Luke 9:48).

"Second, I became the last (Mark 9:35).

"Third, I came to minister and not to be min-

istered unto (Matthew 20:28).

"Fourth, because of love, I came to die for every man's sins (John 10:11).

"Fifth, I did not open My mouth to my accusers, even when I justifiably could have, because I gave My life away for people and to satisfy My Father's justice" (Luke 23:9).

The greatest Christians give their lives away. If a man is great, it is because he has given his life away. It is not something that he does just once in a while, when his schedule permits it. Seven days and seven nights, week after week, year in and year out, he gives his life away.

Of course, vacations are legitimate and right. God encourages His people to come away and rest awhile (Song of Solomon 1:7; 2:10-13, Mark 6:31). But we should carefully consider the timing, in terms of what is going on in the eternal plan of God.

Also, a godly servant is willing to trust people. We can't distrust people because some have hurt us. We have to make up our minds that we will believe the best about people. While we must use wisdom (Matthew 10:16), we shouldn't suspect a person's motives without cause.

Every servant of God, man or woman, who knows the Cross, knows Resurrection, under-

stands the Ascension—that kind of person makes a decision to give his life away. He knows Bible doctrine and understands how to internalize precise illumination, inspiration, and information from God. A true servant recognizes his place in the Body of Christ and the value of his presence as a member in particular.

Do All to the Glory of God

As a Christian, whatever job you have, do it for God's glory. When you give your life and glorify Jesus, you will be quickened in your mortal body (Romans 8:11). When the Spirit flows in you, and when the Spirit flows out of you, somehow your exhaustion level is limited to a minimum, because you are being quickened by a power that isn't human power.

Likewise, when you go soul winning for Jesus, when you witness for Jesus, when you help people, the thing to remember is 1 John 3:16: Give your life away.

When you truly give your life away, you won't become offended by the people to whom you give it. In Psalm 119:165, if a person loves the Word of God, they do not get offended, and they do not become paranoid by what people do. Instead of evaluating people, they study the

heart of God and understand that behind acts of willful disobedience are areas of unresolved sin.

A man of God who is upheld by the Word is led by the Spirit of God. When he speaks, he ought to be diverse in his presentation. On one day, he will weep as he pleads for men's souls. The next day, he will teach academically, with phenomenal precision. Another day, he may give a devotional message with tears. Yet another day, it will be heart-to-heart. The Holy Spirit may anoint him to preach an old-fashioned message, to reprove and exhort with divine authority. But he will always be motivated by love that changes people's lives with a desire to honor the truth (2 Corinthians 5:13-14).

We can do nothing against the truth. We are responsible for the words that we speak. Every word is recorded, and we will face God to give an account for them all.

Be Led by Every Word

Don't be a coward when it comes to God's will in your life. Get some fortitude. Let His Word uphold you and direct you so you will not stagnate in God's permissive will.

If this message has touched you, make up your mind that you will always accept correc-

tion instantly, be transformed immediately, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. By the grace of God, the power of God, the love of God, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, determine to be illuminated with a permeation of divine light that places you in favor with the eternal purpose of God for your individual destiny.

Someone asked, "What do you do when you give your life away and people turn against you?"

That's simple. You just keep on giving it away. You keep right on giving it. That's what the Savior did.

Jesus said, "I have laid down My life for you. You ought to give your life away as I have (see 1 John 3:16). And when you do that, you will know beyond a doubt that you are truly saved (1 John 3:14), because of the love of God that motivates you and causes you to lay your life down."

Amos 5:6 says, "Seek the LORD." It doesn't say, "Seek something about Him." It doesn't say, "Seek a place." It says, "Seek the LORD." Seek Him where you are. *Seek the LORD*. It is the Lord we seek. It is His Person we are after.

Take advantage of God's provision for rebound if you need it. Take advantage of God's

Spirit. Take advantage of God's plan. Take advantage of having the truth. Take advantage of grace, mercy, and love. And take advantage of becoming obedient.

A Christian never has to be moody. We never need to become strange. Why should we when God is inside of us?

If God Almighty is in you—and if He is greater than everything in the world—you don't need to be depressed or become discouraged. Anytime those projections come in, just say, "No, Satan! God is in me, and He is greater than anything you have."

God upholds us by the Word of His truth (Psalm 119:116)—and we need never be ashamed.

CONCLUSION

This kind of message offends people. But a God who cares, who loves His people, and has given His life for His people doesn't care whether or not He offends their flesh. He only cares about what His people need.

If God convicts us with His Word, we don't need to be offended; we just need to get right. If God tells us that we can be overcomers, *we can!* If He tells us we can always triumph, then we will (2 Corinthians 2:14).

When the Word of God is preached, it is not the word of a man. It is eternal. We are not bigger than an eternal Word being communicated on any given day. Show reverence for the old-fashioned Book that was settled billions of years ago. Though the pastor studies and plans his messages as part of his schedule, remember this: God planned the message for the very hour it was given. We are to receive it as the truth, communicated by His servant.

Father, we love You. Bless each one who receives this message. Give them eternal benefits that come from your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Let Your Weakness

Become God's Strength

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

God needs to bring every Christian to the end of his own natural strength. It was that way with the apostle Peter, who boasted at the Last Supper that even if it meant death, he would stay by Jesus Christ. Of course, after the Lord's arrest, and faced with arrest himself, Peter denied that he knew Jesus. Realizing that he had this weakness caused Peter to weep bitterly. But in this disciple's weakness, God became strong. Soon after, Peter was restored and equipped to serve as one of the great leaders of the early Church, even unto his own death.

This booklet reveals the freedom that comes when we keep our eyes upon the Lord. As believers, we have to realize that apart from God we have no might against the things that come against us. We must see God as more than sufficient in everything. Our natural ability does not impress God. He will expose our weaknesses so we will rely only upon His strength.

Chapter One

LAYING ASIDE AREAS OF PRESERVATION

"O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee" (2 Chronicles 20:12).

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5).

God uses weakness and brokenness to bring His treasure through the earthen vessel. His purpose is not only to bring His light out of darkness but also to stop self-destructive patterns and certain sins that have been concealed.

The effects of people hurting us, the effects of people's sins, and the effects of our own sins bring such tremendous pain and heartache. Eventually, we come to the point where we can no longer depend upon ourselves. It is then that

God uses brokenness to establish new patterns and new relationships in our lives.

"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us" (2 Corinthians 1:9-10).

Although this passage relates to physical death, we can apply it to becoming spiritually broken. It is vital to realize that we can no longer preserve our weaknesses, which are areas of being tempted with personal sin, where we just cannot experience God's victory (Romans 7). But God can use these areas to break us and fill us with His ability through grace.

The Limitations of Our Strength

Though our natural strength is a tremendous hindrance, preserving our weakness is one of the greatest problems we face as Christians. The Word of God says we are to lay it all aside:

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

The real meaning of the original Greek text of Hebrews 12:1 says, "Lay aside your areas of natural strength, and lay aside your areas of weakness." Everyone has areas of strength, and everyone has areas of weakness. God sees an area of strength as one in which I might be able to function very well without God. In fact, I did exactly that when I was lost. But, He also sees areas of weakness that I must not preserve. I would enter into a downward progression, adding "sin to sin" (Isaiah 30:1). This is quite a process.

Sooner or later, a person can no longer preserve his weakness. Neither can he preserve his natural strength, which is outside of the Cross. God always sees areas in the life of every Christian where He wants us to come to Him, surrendering our strength to Him and not preserving our weakness.

Natural strength outside of the Cross is not always a "bad" thing; but because it is human goodness, it needs to be crucified. Some people grew up in Christian families. They were well trained and well taught by their parents.

Out of respect and honor for his parents, one Christian may stay away from certain negative behaviors. Still, his motivation is the natural

strength of respect for his parents. But, at some point, he may fail because he can no longer preserve his natural strength to be "good." For a while, he was strong enough not to do certain things; now, he is not.

Another person believes with all of his heart that although he has a weakness of the mind or the flesh, he can somehow preserve that weakness so that it will not affect his behavior outwardly. Eventually, however, he will give in to sin because the weakness could no longer be preserved.

Chapter Two

LIVING BY THE POWER OF GOD

"For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you" (2 Corinthians 13:4).

God has clearly taught us in 2 Corinthians 13:4 that while Jesus Christ was crucified in weakness, He lived by the power of God. Think of that for a moment. God incarnate was crucified in weakness, but He lived by the power of God. That is the combination we need to understand. Jesus Christ was weak in His humanity—physically, emotionally, and even in His soul. In Gethsemane, the night before He was crucified, He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38*a*).

His soul was sorrowful unto death; yet, He refused to live in His weakness. The Father's plan for Him included the Cross. He would not

use the weakness in His soul and His physical body as an excuse to sin by coming short of the Cross. Instead, He used His weakness to trust in the power of God.

Overcoming the Old Sin Nature

We have a different weakness than Christ had. We have an old sin nature; Jesus did not. But the greatest victories we have come when we refuse to use our weakness for the old sin nature. We are aware of the weakness, we sense the weakness, we are tempted in the weakness. Still, we don't use it for the old sin nature as an excuse to sin and to live in sin.

We also are weak in Him, but we shall live by the power of God toward others. Salvation doesn't make us stronger; it makes us weaker in our own ability. Once we are saved and begin to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, our old "self" actually grows weaker in its control over our lives. Yes, we become strong, but the strength is coming from Him (John 3:30).

"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah" (Psalm 84:7-8). The children of Israel went from strength to strength, but they

had just been through the valley of Baca—a place of suffering and tears, a place where they were broken. Instead of drowning in their sorrows, they "[made] it a well; the rain also filleth the pools" (Psalm 84:6).

"*We Are Weak, but He Is Strong*"

In 2 Corinthians 13:4, Paul wrote that "we also are weak in Him." Then he added, "but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you."

First, I thank God that we are in Him. Next, I thank God we are weak. Then, I thank God that we are weak in Him. Seeing it all together, our weakness is in the right place. As long as we are in Him, we can live by the power of God expressed toward us and to each other. We simply recognize our weakness, and we rely on His strength.

Therefore "let the weak say, I am strong" (Joel 3:10*b*). We can say it and mean it because our weakness is no longer hindering His strength. We are using His strength now, not our own. We are so weak that we have to use His strength. That is a great place to be. Therefore, He can say of us, "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Chapter Three

THE STRENGTH OF UNLIMITED GRACE

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

What strength is this verse talking about? It is the strength of grace. God is saying that His grace is unlimited, and, because it is unlimited, it is perfect. If God's grace were limited, it would not be perfect. But the truth is, we cannot limit God's grace toward us. Even if we were to refuse to let grace teach us, it would *wait* to teach us:

"And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isaiah 30:18).

If a believer will not let God's grace help him, and he continues to live in serious sin, God could just take him home (1 John 5:16).* That way, he could be out of his body of death, with no old sin nature, happy in heaven. Even then, God's grace remains unlimited toward him. God would never take a believer home early unless He knows that one will absolutely refuse to receive grace to overcome his sins.

My strength, which is God's grace, is made perfect in my weakness, because grace is unlimited. If I didn't have the weakness, I wouldn't need the grace. And if I didn't have the grace, I wouldn't have His strength.

"Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands" (Job 4:3).

"In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted;

"And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever" (Micah 4:6-7).

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

God makes weak hands strong spiritually.

He gathers the "halt," those who are lame and afflicted, whose flesh is weak. At times we have confrontations with people. Even if we were right, the fact remains that the flesh is weak and it reacts—no matter whose flesh it is. The point is, though the flesh is weak, the spirit is willing. We need to let Him be our strength in our relationship to others.

The Willing Spirit

The key to spiritual growth is to have a willing spirit. Don't give up because your flesh is weak. God already knows it is and has said that it is. But He also says that our spirit is willing. Every spiritual Christian has been there, struggling with flesh that is weak, but having a spirit that is willing. If I have willing spirit, then God's strength will be made perfect in my weak flesh.

Hebrews 11:34 speaks of faith heroes who "out of weakness were made strong." Paul didn't write, "When I am strong, then I am strong." He wrote, "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). Paul recognized his weakness, and he also recognized God's strength. So instead of trying to preserve his weakness to make it grow, he just received grace. The result? God's strength was made perfect in his weakness.

I thank God for this. With all we face each day—the responsibilities and heavy schedules—it would be easy to feel overwhelmed. The more we become involved with God's desire for lost souls, and as we take on new challenges, these things make us see how weak we are. Yet, the weaker we are and the more we trust God and depend on Him, the greater His strength is made manifest in us.

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). Think of it: When Paul was weak, it was then that he began to be strong.

No Glory for the Flesh

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

"And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things

that are:

"That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

God has chosen the weak things to confound the things that are mighty. He uses the foolish things to confound the wise, and the base things to bring to nothing the things that are. No flesh can glory in God's presence.

It is wonderful when, instead of letting our weakness destroy us, we let it become a means to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10). Our weakness then becomes a means of trusting Him with all of our hearts, using rebound when we fail.

Instead of letting weakness give us a poor self-image, it becomes a means of giving us a new-creation self-image in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). With a new-creation self-image, we have new-creation self-esteem because of the love of God. Then comes a new-creation self-destiny in the plan of God. We are destined to become perfect as He is perfect, and we are destined to always have Christ's strength made perfect in our weakness.

**To learn more about this, we suggest reading* The Great Detective: Sin, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

God's eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those who fear Him (see 2 Chronicles 16:9). He is not looking for strong people, because He cannot use them. They have too much strength.

Perhaps you have heard of someone attempting to rescue another who is drowning. Often, the one who is in trouble will fight the one who is there to save him. He can become so strong that the rescuer needs to knock him out in order to safely bring him ashore. In other words, it is necessary to make a "strong" man weak to save his life.

God is looking for weak people who don't live in self-denial, people who are not hypocrites with God. He is looking for weak people who really know that they are weak. They don't preserve their weakness, but they let God knock them out at the Cross. When we let God crucify our strengths and weaknesses at the Cross, His

life comes in through resurrection power (Galatians 2:20).

Keep drawing near to God in your weakness, and let His strength and power be yours.

Let's Discern Worldliness

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine getting ready to eat a mouthwatering meal: roast chicken with stuffing, gravy, spinach soufflé, and piping hot biscuits. You know the chef, and you know that he only uses the freshest ingredients. Yet, when you sit down to partake of the fare, there is a strange odor. The soufflé is sunken and curdled. The biscuits are hard. The gravy has separated. The chicken looks good—until you taste it. You know it is spoiled, so you spit it out before it can make you sick.

What happened? Somewhere between the preparation and the presentation, something went wrong. Distractions may have caused delays, instructions for handling were not followed, things were left uncovered, the fire went out, the air got to it, and the lukewarm roast became a breeding ground for dangerous bacteria.

Just as a cook would never intend for a hot meal, well prepared and ready to serve, to cool down to room temperature, so a Christian would

never intend for his spiritual life to cool down to world temperature. Yet, it happens, and all too often.

The problem is that so few people recognize worldliness. As a result, many find a comfort zone in their Christian lives, and their spiritual heat is reduced to lukewarmness: they are neither cold nor hot, and they have no effect for the Kingdom of God (Revelation 3:16).

This booklet takes a look at worldliness and lukewarmness. It shows how men of God avoid these hazards and instead make an impact on the world with the Gospel.

Chapter One

THE ENEMIES OF THE SOUL

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:57-58).

"I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Psalm 16:8).

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

Christianity presents the story of the creation of man, his fall, and his spiritual sickness, which extends from the soles of his feet to the top of his

head (Isaiah 1:5-6). It is also the story of hearts so desperately wicked that they cannot be fathomed (Jeremiah 17:9). It is the story of men and women created in God's image in a perfect environment only to choose wrongly. It all started with a single choice—a choice that led to a series of wrong choices.

Our calling is heavenly. It is holy. Fully experiencing God's call includes being in the right location. To receive a prize, it means that we must remain and abide in the call. Ever growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are to be ever obeying, ever learning obedience, ever learning that to be steadfast and immovable is the only option for Blood-bought, born-again Christians. As steadfast and immovable Christians, with minds and emotions that cannot be moved, we can always abound in the work of the Lord.

The Smell of Hell

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:6-8).

These verses describe the three great enemies of our souls: the world, the flesh, and the devil. This giant world system flashes its bright lights through Hollywood, with its odor of hell. The smell of entertainment is vulgar, base, and disgusting in its representation of the world.

Many Christians are so at ease in this world, putting what *they* want first. Oh, these Christians don't go out and do drugs or go on a gambling spree—though some of them ultimately do just those things. Instead, what they do is quietly and continually make choices in their lives without recognizing the Cross and the price that was paid for their lives. To live one moment or to do

anything—however small, seemingly noble, or good it may be—without the Cross is worldliness.

The Discipline Process

Sooner or later, a Christian who lives outside of the Cross and the protective walls of doctrine will attempt to fulfill his flesh by making a provision for it. But, whatever the believer builds that is not on a godly foundation, God eventually comes in and tears it down (Jeremiah 31:28). If there is still no change, He may wait a few months and then tear it down again. Eventually, if this believer doesn't repent, God will allow him to be crushed through discipline and chastisement. God's purpose is to plant and build upon a sure foundation.

Millions of Christians will find themselves unprepared for the events of the Last Days. They will grow weary in their well-doing (see Galatians 6:9). Without proper rest, a body gets tired. The soul grows self-centered. Inconsistency comes in. Nothing terribly bad happens, but there is no Cross. There is an affliction. It is called worldliness.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit

with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:14-22).

The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ spoke to the Laodiceans. The works of these Christians were neither hot nor cold. They were lukewarm. They had taken on the comfortability of the world system. The warning here is that continuing in worldly living could prompt God to "spew" or vomit the Church out of His mouth. Here, God's "mouth" speaks of the breath of fellowship. The Laodiceans were described as being wretched, miserable, blind, poor, and naked. God used these five words because they related to the character of the city of Laodicea, a place where clothes were made, a place where many came to treat eye problems, and a place noted for gold trading.

God was pointing these things out to the Laodiceans because He had such a great plan for them. He was knocking on their door because He longed for them to repent and become zealous. He promised great fellowship if they would only repent.

Worldliness is not discerned by much of

Christianity. It is not named, and it is not understood. It starts with spiritual weariness and descends into passivity, withdrawal, and a lack of concern for the things of God. When it gets to this point, God is left with the option of chastisement to get our attention. But remember that He only chastises His children (Hebrews 12:8). His thoughts toward us are peace and not evil, and He has a plan to bless us. Therefore, He chastises us because of His love.

Chapter Two

MEN WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

J.C. Penney's early life was filled with poverty. At age eight, his father told him, "I cannot spend another cent on you. You will have to take care of yourself, because I can't give you anything."

So J.C. Penney went to work, and he worked hard. He also went to the altar and prayed. "God, I promise You—and I am not just saying this—I promise You, if you will bless me, that I will give and give and serve, and I will not withdraw."

God responded: "I will do it."

This poverty-stricken young man came in contact with a couple of men who offered him a business opportunity. "You are such an ambitious man," they said to J.C. Penney. "We will let you become part of our business for an investment of $500 to $2,000."

Penney managed to borrow $1,500, got into

the business, and the business was blessed. Soon the company had thirty-four stores and $2 million in profits. Oh, yes, the business also carried the J.C. Penney name, which it carries to this day.

Morning, noon, and night, J.C. Penney spent time on his knees. This man's life was dedicated to giving to God, loving God, praying to God, and keeping God's Word. This Christ-centered businessman always sought the Kingdom of God first and God's righteousness. As a result, God just kept adding to him.

Heaven's Moves Produce Earthmoving Ideas

R.G. LeTourneau was a man who couldn't stand sickness, and he could not bear to be around anything related to death and dying. Then, at a critical point in his life, he was involved in a serious accident, breaking his neck in a stock car race. He saw the sick bodies at the hospital, and the scenes nearly drove him insane. The accident should have killed him, but by a miracle, he survived. In the hospital, the place he didn't want to be, Mr. LeTourneau received tremendous ideas from God. These ideas revealed how to engineer, develop, and build a bulldozer. God gave him all the details of how

to create it, make it, and market it. During World War II, LeTourneau's company was producing more than seventy percent of all the earth-moving equipment used by the allied forces.

Before these ideas came, however, R.G. LeTourneau got on his knees in the hospital and prayed. "God, if You will, please bless me and take away my fears and my insecurities. Remove my fear of death and my fear of sickness, and I will give everything in my entire life to You. I will not withdraw."

God answered these prayers, and today, LeTourneau University in Texas specializes in raising up engineers, many of whom use their skills for the glory of God. There are highways named for this man. God blessed him and made him so successful that throughout his life he donated much of his income to support missionary efforts in Africa and South America.

R.G. LeTourneau and J.C. Penney were wise men who did not descend into worldliness, in spite of their wealth. As a result, God raised them up as a testimony and blessing to the world, in the midst of the world.

Chapter Three

FOLLOW FAITHFULLY

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and

I will raise him up at the last day.

"For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

"He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:53-57).

"Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said,

This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

"When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth

this offend you?

"What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

"But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

"And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:60-66).

A group of disciples were walking with Jesus, listening to His words. A number of them were struck by His statement: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

"What does He mean by this?" many in the crowd murmured. They were dull of hearing, unable to discern what Jesus was saying. Jesus wasn't referring to His literal flesh; He was speaking of His Word and His life. Still, many were offended by what He said, and many

turned back and followed Him no more.

What was the problem with these people? They were suffering from worldliness in a lukewarm crowd.

Lukewarm isn't being cold. Lukewarm isn't being hot. Lukewarm is neither. For the lukewarm Christian, going to church is okay—a nice thing to do. But no hunger, no thirst, no living desire for God exists in the worldly, lukewarm Christian. There is no consistency, no energizing motivation, no power within to do God's work without. He has no divine adequacy for human problems, for change, for moods, for what happens in life.

"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:67-69).

Peter declared that he understood the reality of who Christ was and is. "We are not going anywhere," Peter said. "Where You go, we will go. What You say, we are going to say. What You want us to do, we are going to do. No one is

going to stop us. We are followers of You."

God will not settle for anything less than a life that eats His flesh and drinks His blood. Literally, this speaks of consuming Bible doctrine of how to think in the power of the Holy Spirit. This reflects the New Testament agreement between the Father and the Son to sanctify our conscience and our standing in positional truth (Hebrews 9:14).

The disciples who remained with Jesus were determined not to cool off and flirt with the outer darkness of hell. They were ready to go forward and move on to reveal the living God, morning, noon, and night.

Well Done Christianity

"His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:23).

"And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28).

These verses are very interesting and profitable. None of us will escape an encounter with

Christ at the Bema Seat. We cannot buy our way out of it, think our way out of it, or work our way out of it. At the Bema Seat, worldliness and lukewarmness will be exposed. This is why it so important to discern it, avoid it, and conquer it by eating the Word of God and drinking in the fruit of the life of the Spirit.

Those who live this way will not be ashamed at the Bema Seat. Rather, they will enjoy a private, face-to-face experience with Christ. There, they will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Are there any words in the human vocabulary that could bring more joy to a Christian? Nothing, I believe, will bring greater rejoicing than hearing Jesus say to us, "You were steadfast and immovable—well done, thou good and faithful servant."

CONCLUSION

In Psalm 16:8 and 11, David wrote, "I have purposed to always set the Lord before my face. He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. He will show me the path of life. In His presence, I find fullness of joy. At His right hand, I discover pleasures forevermore." (See also Acts 2:25).

The only joy, the only real pleasure we can find on earth is in the presence of God's life. Walking in His pathway, we are kept from worldliness. But we cannot walk this way only when we feel like it. We must walk this way because it is right to walk this way.

Go forward with Jesus Christ. Take up the Cross and go where God tells you to go. Be guided where God is guiding you. Be faithful. Just as Jesus did not look back and long to return to Nazareth, you cannot afford to be sentimental and look back to one moment of your past, except to bring glory to God.

Heavenly Father, allow Your Word to become

powerful within us. Light the fervent fire of truth in our hearts—a fire that will burn hot, making the Word quick and powerful in the midst of this world's system, among those who do not know You. Let us have godly wisdom and discernment for every decision and every step we take. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Lift Up Your Eyes

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

"Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed" (Psalm 84:9).

According to Genesis 6:16, Noah's ark had no side windows. The only window was way up above, because God did not want those on the ark to focus on the people and animals perishing in the flood waters. He wouldn't allow them to see that, so he instructed Noah to have one window—and to see through it, they would have to look up.

Lifting up our eyes is the key to life for a Christian. When we lift up our eyes, we remove our focus from this world and from what is going on around us, and we see the One who is the author and finisher of our faith. Looking up, we see the reality of who God is and who we are in Christ.

The disciples came to Jesus in John 4 and wanted Him to take food. "But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of....My

meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (verses 31-34). Then Jesus told them, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields." Christ was always trying to get the disciples to turn their eyes away from themselves and their temporal needs and to look to God.

As this booklet will show, God doesn't see things as we see them. He looks unto His Son, His Anointed, and the Father is asking us to lift our eyes on high and see Him who does not fail.

Chapter One

THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER SEES OUR POTENTIAL

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth" (Isaiah 40:26).

"Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt

surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth" (Isaiah 49:18).

"Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side" (Isaiah 60:4).

Through the Eyes of a Friend

God the Father looks upon His Son, His Anointed One, the Psalmist tells us. And if He looks upon the Son, shouldn't we as Christians also do the same thing? For this reason, He exhorts us to lift up our eyes.

Mary Magdalene sold her body as a prostitute, but Jesus never saw her that way. He saw someone who would be a tremendous woman of God. The Father looked upon Jesus for her, and Jesus looked upon the Cross for her. She looked upon Jesus as the "author and finisher" of her faith. Jesus saw the woman who would be first at the tomb (John 20:1), the woman who would weep as she mistook the resurrected Son for a gardener (John 20:11), the woman whose heart rejoiced when she realized it was Him saying to her, "Mary" (John 20:16). Yes, He saw a

tremendous woman of God.

Think of how the scribes, the Pharisees, and others in the religious crowd must have murmured in the background when Mary was around Jesus. Ultimately, they would declare Him to be "a friend of publicans and sinners." His only answer to that charge was this: "Wisdom is justified of all her children" (see Luke 7:34-35). Jesus Christ meets people right where they are. He isn't concerned with what they have done; He wants them to lift up their eyes and look upon Him.

Never a Hopeless Case with God

When we look upon the field of the inner city, rather than seeing it filled with drug addicts and hopeless cases, we need to see living souls who need investment, love, and mercy—who need one-on-one encounters with Jesus Christ and with people who care.

Suppose your pastor were to announce that three people who had each committed murder would be preaching from the pulpit for three consecutive Sundays. First would be Moses, who killed an Egyptian (Exodus 2:11-12). Next would come David, who had Uriah set up to be killed in battle to cover up David's adultery

with Bathsheba (see 2 Samuel 11). Then we would have Saul of Tarsus, a man responsible for the execution of numerous believers in the early Church (Acts 9). How would you view these preachers? Would you see them as ex-criminals, unworthy of any pulpit? Or, would you look to Jesus and see the fruit of grace and mercy?

Not one of these three would testify of their murders and declare how glorious it was to kill people and then find Jesus. They would look upon God's Anointed One and testify of Him. What God sees and what people see are altogether different. He says, "Know no man after the flesh" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Neither should we know ourselves after the flesh.

I wonder what people thought when Jesus went to Matthew, a crooked tax collector, and simply said, "Follow Me" (Matthew 9:9). Matthew's reputation wasn't the issue. Jesus saw his potential as a Christian, and He went to this tax collector's house for a party, where "many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples" (Matthew 9:10). That must have *really* provoked the scribes and Pharisees! "There He goes again, eating with publicans and sinners."

We must lift up our eyes and look. There is Christ who paid for the sins of the world, Christ who never sees people as they *were*. He never saw Saul of Tarsus as a murderer, He always saw him as Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, one of the greatest servants in the history of the New Testament Church.

God's Focus: The Future

Many would look at Peter and see him cursing and publicly denying the Lord (Matthew 26:72-76). "There he is; some disciple of Jesus Christ *he* is," they would mutter. But that is not what Jesus saw in Peter. He saw the one who would preach the first sermon at Pentecost; He saw Peter's amazing potential.

Don't look down upon anyone. Without a doubt, little children and struggling teenagers among us will be God's heroes some day. Don't judge anyone in the midst of failure. Instead, lift up your eyes on high and see what will happen to that one person when love and mercy get through to his heart and grace arrives in his soul. See him as someone who could be used by Jesus Christ in a moment of time.

The twelve disciples who turned the world upside down, according to Acts 17:6, knew noth-

ing about theology. They didn't study in the great schools of religion. Their education came from walking with Jesus, spending three years in His outdoor Bible college. No one ever built Him a building, and He didn't ask anyone to.

After three years with these Twelve, Jesus went through the pain of seeing them asleep as He wrestled in prayer, sweating drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:44-45). While He was on the cross, they stood afar off (Matthew 26:56). Still, Jesus did not look upon their failures; He focused on their futures.

Chapter Two

FOCUS ON POSSIBILITIES, NOT PROBLEMS

"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth" (Isaiah 40:26).

In John 4, the woman at the well admitted having had five husbands, and the man she was living with was not even her husband. Considering the beautiful principle expressed in Isaiah 40:26, Jesus reached out to her. The disciples didn't like it, so they went for food.

Jesus told this Samaritan woman "all things" that she ever did (John 4:29), and off she went. The disciples then came to Him with food, but He was more than satisfied, looking upon what God would do with this woman. He responded, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet

four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together" (John 4:34-36).

This woman came back with a crowd from the city, and "many more believed because of his own word" (John 4:41). The woman at the well had gone through five husbands and was living immorally with a sixth man outside of marriage. What happened to her? She became the great soul winner of Samaria.

Try to imagine how the disciples felt when they saw her coming. Their minds were on food, and Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes, the fields are white and ready to harvest." This woman never took a soul-winning course; she didn't have the "Romans Road" method available to her to help win them to Christ. She just told people what Jesus did for her and brought them to Him. That's all she did after she was saved and repented.

Who Is Among Us?

Jesus, our Lord, never sees people in their

condition of sin. He sees them in a heavenly love that paid for every sin they ever committed. He sees their possibilities. We never know who may be sitting beside us.

It was a stormy day when, along with just fifteen other people, Charles Spurgeon, at the age of fifteen, went out to hear a speaker. The invitation for salvation was given, and Charles Spurgeon was saved. Spurgeon would go on to become a great servant of God who touched many lives. He wrote a number of books that are still blessing Christians a century after they were first published. Only sixteen came out that stormy day, but among them was a young man who became known as the "prince of preachers."

The men and women in our churches have the most amazing potential because inside is this throne of mercy, this unconditional love, this understanding that God so loved the world, He died for them. The Father looks upon the Son, and we are to look unto Jesus.

Don't look upon people's failures—if you do, you will end up failing. Don't listen to gossip and look upon what someone just did. Look to Jesus and pray about what the person is going to be some day. Always see what God has done, then look ahead to what He is going to do.

It is so easy to look at our nation and to see only the bad parts, the effects of what fallen men have done. Don't undersell God's ability to bring revival. Don't undersell the effect our prayer can have on the lost. Don't undersell what prayer could do in Washington. Don't undersell the possibilities we have with the love of God. We have an amazing potential in the love of God. By His grace, I have no doubt God will move as we get out the *glorious* gospel of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 4:4-5).

Realizing His Perfect Plan

Peter, James, and John were three fishermen. God said, "They will do. I want to use them." Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. "She will do. I want to use her," God said. Matthew was a tax collector—"He will do. I want to use Him." John Mark left Paul and Barnabas at one point, but even of him God could say, "He will do. I still want to use him too."

When the love and grace of God come into us, our potential is elevated. We see Jesus Christ for who He really is and the love He really has for us. We then realize the Father has a perfect plan. We don't have to earn His love. We don't have to buy it. It is something we keep right on

receiving by grace through faith.

After this takes place, we can see the worst unsaved person around us; then lifting up our eyes on high, we can see the Creator—the One who created these things and who brings out their host by number and calls the stars by name. Let's lift up our eyes. Remember, the only window in the ark was above Noah and his family, because God didn't want them to see the terrible destruction going on outside. "You just look to Me while this is going on," God said to Noah. "I will protect you."

Chapter Three

HOW GOD DOES BIG THINGS

Gideon was a small man in an insignificant tribe. As it is written in Judges 6 through 8, however, God saw Gideon as a general leading an army. "I know Gideon will be afraid, but he is going to defeat the Midianites through My plan," God said. "He will be a great general, effective in conflict and battles." With an army of just three hundred, Gideon put the attacking Midianites to flight, and Israel was "in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon" (Judges 8:28). None but God saw Gideon that way. The Lord saw the potential in a little man from a small tribe.

Bad marriages, broken homes, poor decisions—no matter what problems you have had in your life, God doesn't see those in you—He didn't even see them when they were going on, except to identify with your suffering and love you in spite of them. The Father is always looking upon the Son. When you started looking

upon the Son, you began to receive reflections of the Son through the Holy Spirit and His nature within you. When you lifted your eyes up above all the things that people see, you saw Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of your faith.

Believe that He can do anything for anybody no matter who they are. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ. Look unto Him.

When I started out preaching, there were only a couple adults and about thirty-five kids in my group. God saw something in those precious folks. He didn't look upon this country preacher. He looked upon what He was going to do by mercy and grace and love.

Then, we moved on to another little church with about twelve to fifteen people and a hole in the floor. God didn't see the smallness of that place or that congregation. God saw that a great work would come out of that small beginning. God was looking upon His Son. He saw what grace would do, what love would do, and what godly people would do when they received His grace and love.

I could tell you so many great things God has done in people's lives. He has always made a way for us. The principle is that God had His work for us. The world looked at us based on

what people said, and God looked at us according to what Jesus said. Jesus had a work He was going to perform, and those in the world thought they could interfere. There was just one problem for them: If the work is of men, it will never succeed. But if the work is of God, nothing can stop it (Acts 5:39).

Through His love and grace, Jesus has always used sinners to glorify His character so that men and women will praise Him, honor Him, and love Him throughout eternity. Jesus doesn't use just anyone. He uses people who will trust His love, trust His grace, trust His provision for rebound, and trust all that He does.

Follow the One with the Scars

In John 20, after Jesus had appeared to the other disciples in His resurrected body, Thomas said that he would not believe unless he could see and touch the nail prints in Jesus' hands. Jesus accommodated him. When Thomas was there, He came to him and said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side ... and Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (John 20:27-28).

At least, Thomas knew enough to follow the

Man with the scars. Thank God, we follow the One who has the scars. Paul wrote, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17). If you want to know the right way, find the people of God who bear the scars of battle and follow them. That way, you will be victorious.

Thank God for what He is doing in so many lives. Oh, if you could see your potential—if you could just see what God's Word and God's Spirit can do in you. If you could understand the love and grace of God, you would never again see yourself in the natural. Don't look upon yourself that way. See yourself as a living soul under the power and provision of God's perfect plan. See yourself as someone who can do all things in Christ, who can be used mightily to change a city, a country, the world! God can do that through you. He can do it in any believer because of the way He sees us: hid with Christ in God.

The Father hasn't seen any sin we have committed since we were saved. David wrote, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (Psalm 51:4*a*), because he saw himself as hid with Christ in God. The Father saw all of our sins upon the Son as He was nailed to the cross (1 Peter 2:24; Hebrews 9:28). There isn't a sin on our record

any more (Colossians 2:14). When we fail and refuse to come to God and repent, He graciously chastens us so that we will rebound and bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). There is no condemnation. God just wants us to bring forth those fruits that cannot come forth when we are living wrong. Thank God and lift up your eyes on high.

The Father sees us hid inside of His Son; and when we behold ourselves as who we are inside the Son, seated above with Him, then we will really see what love can do, what faith can do, and what grace can do. We will see what we are becoming, and we won't look at failure as final. Instead, we will see a failure as an opportunity for someone who is ready to rebound and grow in God.

We can't look at someone who is down as being out; we have to see that person as someone who is getting up and ready to run. We are not to see someone who has a weakness as a person who is prone to failing in an area. We need to see that person as someone who is going to be a faith hero for God.

That is why the Father used the people that He used throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. He used foolish things to con-

found the people who thought they were wise, used weak things to confound the mighty, used the base things and the "things that are not" to confound those who would go against Him (1 Corinthians 1:26-30).

No flesh can glory in God's presence. But of Him, are we in Christ Jesus, who has made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. If any man glory, let him glory in the Lord.

CONCLUSION

It is time believers took their eyes off the world and off each other. Let's take our eyes off circumstances. Let's get them off the bad things that may be going on around us. We have to lift up our eyes on high, get them on Jesus Christ, the One who calls out the host by name. Look unto Him who is the author and finisher of our faith. We won't see anyone as beautiful as Jesus Christ.

I don't want to see as the world sees, I want to see what God the Father sees, what Jesus Christ sees. I am "confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). He will perfect that which concerns me (Psalm 138:8). God is concerned with every believer, so He is perfecting all of us. Do we earn it? Do we deserve it? Absolutely not. He does it all by grace through faith. It is all a process, all mercy, all rebound, all believing. It is

looking, receiving, and going on with Christ as we have never done before.

Lifting Up

A Personal Cross

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Many Christians are plagued with problems that never seem to go away, because they will not take up their cross, accepting their death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus Christ. As a result, they do not grow from faith to faith (Romans 1:17), from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18), or from grace to grace (John 1:16).

We must make a decision to take up our cross each moment of the day. If I am passive toward that decision, my passivity reveals that I am taking up my cross only occasionally—usually when I receive material blessings.

For example, when an employee takes up his cross daily, he always has more fun in the office and he always works with the same level of energy. He doesn't get mad at co-workers, because he has disconnected himself from the 'old man' who is angry all the time.

Within each of us is a power that wants to take control and cause us to live like the devil.

At times, we can feel that power come against us like an army, but it must connect in order to trouble us. Even Jesus, though He was without sin, faced strong temptations in His humanity, especially after He had fasted for forty days (Matthew 4). But Jesus refused to connect with those temptations. He made choices to honor the Father's will in every situation. "Not my will but thine be done." This is what it means to take up a personal cross.

Chapter One

THE CURSE OF THE SOULISH LIFE

When Adam and Eve partook of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were overwhelmed with an understanding that was outside of the Cross of Jesus Christ. They had exposed themselves to a knowledge that led to exalting the ego in human viewpoint.

Eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil gives way to overindulgence in uncontrolled knowledge. This results in an overgrowth of human reasoning detached from divine viewpoint. [1]Human reasoning, left on its own, produces self-defense mechanisms—self-justification, self-deception, self-absorption. Then, "logical" reactions based upon human viewpoint spring up, along with the vocabulary to complement Adam's ego.

A Christian who continues to eat from the Tree of Knowledge is growing in Adam without

losing his life. For a season, he appears very healthy. He seems to have it all together, and he seems to have a new self-image. But ultimately, this Christian is in a process of spiritual self-destruction, living as if he were accountable to no one.

Accountability is the key to spiritual growth in the soul, where the life of Christ increases and the soulish life of Adam decreases. As the child of God is accountable to live by every Word of God, he will become accountable to the Holy Spirit, the pastor-teacher, and the Body of Christ.

Leaning on Human Understanding

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

As a pastor, it is overwhelming to counsel people who acknowledge the truth, but refuse to *pursue* the truth. They acknowledge everything about the truth, but they will not change. What's happening? The objective light of God's Word is not allowed to bring about a subjective conversion.

"For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9). In God's

light, we receive more light, meaning in objective light, we receive subjective light. People who acknowledge truth in the objective mind but are never converted in the subjective mind become very strange. Churches are filled with these people today. Pastors, don't try to discover how many there are in your church—that's God's business. He will reveal them soon enough.

I have a group of people in my church who will not draw near to the messages or the fellowship. Yet, they want appointments for counseling. Even though years have been spent investing in their lives, they still want to be pampered and babied as they withdraw into their flesh. Instead of coming to church, they stay home, depressed because they want to enter into sin but they don't dare to do it now. Behind the subtle deception controlling their lives is arrogance, pride, and stubbornness. Their souls resist the Cross and the Body of Jesus Christ.

"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16).

God records in His book of remembrance

every time a Christian attends a church service. I can't understand how anyone would want to miss an opportunity to experience the inspired Word of God as it is manifested in an assembly meeting. A man in my church who has faithfully attended three services a week for the past twenty years shared with me how he heard more than twenty new things in a recent message. He has not become familiar; he is still very receptive to the truth.

You can't talk someone into spirituality who has decided that he doesn't want God. Jesus sought the lost sheep who wandered in frailty and weakness, but He never pursued the disciples who turned back and followed Him no more.

Every person has a free volition; each one can live as he chooses. If he wants to forsake the truth, it's between him and God. Please understand that rebuking this person won't do any good. We are to let God deal with him.

To some, Christianity is just an option. They have no desire for heaven, nor do they want God's power in their lives. But, we cannot take the Cross of Christ and force it on them. We must follow God ourselves, going forward with our eyes on Him.

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10.)

These verses teach *stewardship*, which is accountability to God's Word and grace. A caretaker of the Word of God must be found faithful as a steward of categorical doctrine.

It is a frustrating thing for a pastor to counsel someone who will not receive what the pastor has to say. The pastor may be equipped with all the right answers, but unless a person accepts co-burial with Christ and co-resurrection in the New Creation, nothing the pastor says can help.

Healing for the Snakebites

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass,

he lived" (Numbers 21:8-9).

The Hebrew word for *pole* is unusual in this case. It carries the meaning *brilliant light*. Many of the Israelites had been bitten by poisonous serpents, but as soon as they looked at the brazen serpent, they were healed. In the same way, we are healed from all of our "snakebites," the moment we look to the Cross of Christ.

Snakebites of lust, drugs, pride, indifference, smoking, pornography, insecurity, depression, stubbornness, and rebellion have poisoned many Christians. Spiritually, these believers are dead. But they can be instantly healed by looking at the brilliant light of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Looking to the Light

The word *look* in Numbers 21:8, in its spiritual application for the believer, means to gaze into the life of Jesus Christ, who was lifted up for us on the cross to draw all men to Him. In looking to the Cross, we allow Christ's death to become our death. His life then penetrates our souls, bringing in life, because internalizing Christ's life ushers in resurrection power.

"When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the

humble person" (Job 22:29). Resurrection life is imparted when we lift up the brilliant light of the purity of His death. Christ's death reconciled us unto God, but it is His resurrection life that saves and delivers us from the snakebites.

"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his [resurrection] life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (Romans 5:9-11).

1. The problem is explained in depth in the booklet *Uncontrolled Knowledge*, published by Grace Publications, 1997.

Chapter Two

DISCONNECTING FROM THE OLD MAN

"But whoever denies and disowns Me before men, I also will deny and disown him before My Father Who is in heaven. Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

"For I have come to part asunder a man from his father, and a daughter from her mother, and a newly married wife from her mother-in-law; And a man's foes will be they of his own household.

"He who loves and takes more pleasure in father or mother more than in Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves and takes more pleasure in son or daughter more than in Me is not worthy of Me;

"And he who does not take up his cross and follow Me [that is cleave steadfastly to Me, conforming wholly to My example in living and, if

need be, in dying also] is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his lower life will lose it [the higher life], and whoever loses his [lower] life on My account will find [the higher life]" (Matthew 10:33-39 Amplified Translation).

This can be a difficult passage to preach upon because it deals with dying to self and confronting natural affections that disrupt the human soul. In Matthew 10:38-39, Jesus said that those who follow Him must cleave steadfastly to Him, conforming themselves wholly to His example in living and in dying. He went on to say that those who preserve their lives—in soulish personalities and temperaments—will lose the higher life of God.

"Whoever loses his life on My account," Jesus said, "will find the higher life. And he who receives, welcomes, and accepts the men I send, receives, welcomes, and accepts Me. Those who accept My preacher *because* he's a preacher shall receive a preacher's reward. Those who receive and accept a righteous man because he is righteous shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matthew 10:40-41, Amplified Translation).

Jesus Christ came to bring a sword. A sword is painful. It pierces, it wounds. For this reason, many disciples went back and followed Him no

more. It is difficult for some to think that the Savior, the Lover of our hearts, the One who sacrificed Himself to pay for everything we ever did, also came to bring a sword into families and relationships.

"And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child [Jesus Christ] is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35).

Some become upset after hearing messages on these verses. The preacher quotes the Bible, but these people are still unhappy about what Jesus says. This kind of person is always seeking a church that doesn't preach the truth so he can continue to be sentimental in human affections and natural relationships. Pastors who are not afraid to confront people with these verses are generally not well accepted.

The Struggle of Denial

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

The word *deny* limits the original meaning of

the Greek text. If I am living in my old sin nature, how can I "deny" myself? I have tried to deny myself thousands of times and have never gotten to first base. I have tried to disregard myself, but my problems continued.

Typically, some preachers will try to get you to deny something you *can't* deny. Our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked. We cannot deny the power of sin that is within us any more than the leopard can change his spots (Jeremiah 13:23). We have all tried it. A person who has a terrible problem with drugs may say, "I am just going to deny that problem today." But the problem returns that afternoon. I don't know how many people have sincerely said to me, "I am never going to take another drink" or "I will never worry again." They don't realize that they can't keep such promises.

Deny himself is *aparneomai,* which means to have no connection with the person. This is the same word used to describe how Peter denied Christ: "I know not the man," Peter said. He meant, "I have no connection with the man you're going to crucify."

In Matthew 10:33, Jesus said, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Christ

will never deny a believer's salvation, but everything that person ever did on earth will be burned up as wood, hay, and stubble at the Bema Seat (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

"You denied me when trials and persecutions came," Jesus will say to these people when they stand before the judgment seat. "You did not confess me before men. When you failed, you only confessed how bad things were. You are saved—you will spend eternity in heaven. But now you must suffer loss of all rewards because I could not connect with your lifestyle on earth."

Wood speaks of things that are done in human energy. *Hay* refers to emotionalism. *Stubble* is objective doctrine that was never allowed to convert the subjective mind. A person can have objective understanding but still live in subjective defeat. A part of his mind will not formulate truth, therefore Christ isn't formed in the *whole* man.

Chapter Three

THE RENEWAL OF THE MIND

"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23).

Renewed is *ananeoo,* which means to receive brand-new vigorous energy from a divine resource. It is an intransitive verb, with an instrument of agency and an ablative of source. The source is the Word of God—the mind of Christ—and the instrument of agency is the Holy Spirit. The voice is passive, meaning, the subject receives the action of the verb.

The principle here is that I am delivered, not by denying myself, but by receiving the operation of the kingdom of God through the Spirit and the Word of grace. This is God's *elative conclusion*—His divine option for subjective minds.[1] When I choose God's provision, a new emotional structure is formed in my soul as the Holy Spirit combines the simplicity of revelation with my humility.

You can try to change in your emotions, but it will not work. Years ago, I was always the first person to go forward when the preacher would ask people to rededicate themselves. I was very sincere, but it never worked for me. "Oh, my God, I must be the most wicked person in the world," I can remember saying. "I come to all the services. I tithe. I don't go out on my wife. But I have secret sins, and I can't get rid of them through these rededications. Even though I keep studying the Bible, I can't forsake those sins."

My problem was that I was spiritually insane, trying to deny myself. 1 Corinthians 15:56 says that the strength of sin is in the law. Trying to deny yourself is like putting yourself under a law. For example, if you are overweight, you want to deny yourself the desire for food. But all the time that you are "denying" yourself, you can only think about your next meal! Through your denial, you are doing worse than ever.

Aparneomai (deny) means that I make a decision to refuse any connection with my 'old man'. I choose to be disconnected from anxiety, jealousy, envy, and fear. This means that I take up my cross and live in resurrection life.

Then what does it really mean to take up your cross? Your burdens are not your cross. The problems you have caused for yourself do not produce a cross. The things people do to you are not a cross.[2]

Years ago, a woman on one of my sales routes lost a child. "I never thought God would give me this cross," she told me. But that wasn't her cross. If five of my family members died, I would certainly mourn and miss them terribly. Still, this wouldn't be my cross. *Taking up our cross has nothing to do with outward circumstances.* It has to do with the subjective mind being converted by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but thine be done." He said, in John 5:30, "I can of mine own self do nothing…because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." When there is something that I want to do, I check it out with God. I say, "Not my will, but thine be done." *That* is taking up my cross.

As I take up my cross, I make choices moment by moment to connect with Him and His will, and because I'm disconnected from my

will, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. I don't have to talk about something I *want* to change; neither do I require counseling. I just take up God's will with God's provision: God's grace, and God's mercy through God's love in the power of the Holy Spirit. *That* is taking up my cross. Christ bore my sins on His cross. Now, I bear His cross internally.

Christ: Our Example

Christ made Himself an example by taking up His cross. Philippians 2 describes Jesus Christ's *kenosis*, or, self-emptying. He was and is always God the Son. But emptying Himself meant that during His time on earth, Jesus would never exalt or glorify Himself. He would never do anything apart from the Father's plan. Certainly, Jesus used His deity to perform miracles, but every miracle was for the sake of others in order to glorify the Father and not Himself. Every day, He derived His life from the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of doctrine.

Jesus never allowed Himself to be led by His human emotions, even though He did weep out of compassion and love for people. He was never led by His feelings but by the words of the Father through the Holy Spirit.

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might by destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:6-7).

Considering the example of Christ, we have a choice to make: Follow self, or follow the Cross. We will either live in the defense mechanisms of Adam or in the provision of Christ. Christ wants us to see ourselves as crucified once and for all and then to reckon upon that crucifixion *daily* (Hebrews 10:10; 1 Corinthians 15:31).

The Purpose of Wounds

"…For I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased" (Jeremiah 30:14).

"For her wound is incurable, for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem" (Micah 1:9).

Why would God wound one of His children? Because this person will not accept the teaching of His Word in certain areas. Rather than letting him live in self-occupation for thirty years, God wounds him so that, in pain and agony, the believer will get on his knees and ac-

cept God's provision for healing. "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 30:17*a*).

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart….Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:12, 16).

Sometimes God needs to bring the sword into your soul, and that can be painful. God has to wound you because of your lifestyle. It isn't the church that wounds you. Your first husband didn't wound you, neither did your children wound you. You can't blame it on your boss, nor on what happened when you were fifteen. It is *God* who has wounded you.

Everything that comes into my life must go through God. A drunken driver cannot kill a child unless God permits it. I cannot have cancer or a nervous breakdown unless God allows it. My business cannot fail unless God permits it to fail.

Wounds come into our lives to crush us so

that we will come to the Father through the Son and receive grace and mercy. When we do, God heals the wounds and puts ointment on the scars, making us brand spanking new creations. The old reactionary, defensive life is taken away and a new spiritual life comes in.

The Cross has done its perfect work. Daily, we live refreshed in the vision, dead to self and alive unto Christ, as we gladly lift up a personal cross.

1. The principle of the *elative conclusion* is discussed in the booklet *Motivated by God's Provision* from Grace Publications, 1997.

2. *The Cross: A Burden or a Blessing*, Grace Publications, 1996, presents this issue in depth.

CONCLUSION

I cannot perform God's will through religious effort. I am not going to try to live the Christian life. It is impossible. Instead, I am going to receive from the Word of God and allow the mind of Christ and the Holy Spirit's power to become the instrument to establish God's Kingdom within me.

By grace through faith, I receive objective transformation followed by subjective conversions. If I lose my soulish life, I will find God's life.

God's estimation of His Son is, "Thou art *worthy*." And, the Father sees me hid in Christ. Therefore, when I lift up a personal cross, rightly esteeming His character, I realize that I am worthy of the Father's provisions for my life because I am hid in the Son.

Live in the Provision

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

This is one promise from the Bible that believers often overlook. Jesus did tell us that in this life, times of testing and trials would come. As Christians, we do not belong to this world's system; therefore, it will battle against us.

Yet, God allows these things—the suffering, the trials, the times of persecution—to come into our lives to help us grow. It is vital that we take up His promise that declares that no temptation or test will destroy us (Isaiah 54:17; 1 Corinthians 10:13). The Lord provides a way of escape for every situation. When all is said and done, we will stand out as testimonies of God's provision, declaring His power to the world system and to the angels at war in the air, all around us.

This booklet is written to reveal to each heart that Jesus Christ never allows us to be without His provision. In the midst of this evil, deceitful,

crooked world, He always has a way out for us, no matter how tremendous the trial we face.

Chapter One

GOD'S TRAINING PROCESS

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God is faithful, for He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. With every temptation, He provides a way of escape. If we were to read all the Bible verses on the subject of temptation, and then ponder and meditate on those verses, we would come out with a tremendous resource for our hearts that would help us in times of trouble.

The Bible tells us that we will be tempted. Satan loves to tempt us. The devil tempts us to be discouraged, tempts us to think that we are not good enough, tempts us to feel condemned. But he is not allowed to tempt us beyond what

we are able to bear.

First Corinthians 10:13 is so comforting, because it says that the tests and trials we face are exactly what everyone else faces. No matter how much pressure God allows Satan to apply to us, God will also supply the way of escape.

God uses the temptations to work a greater degree of glory into our lives. "I am training you," God is telling us in these situations. "I am going to bless you. I am going to teach you. I am going to edify you. I am going to build you up. I promise that you will not be tempted beyond what you are able to bear."

Paul learned to endure as he suffered for the Gentiles (Acts 9:16). So much of what he wrote in the New Testament was written during times of tremendous physical and mental suffering. Still, his message of hope in Christ's provision was loud and clear: "You can endure the trial, and you will make it through. You may not think you can take it, but you can."

Recognizing the Way Out

Time and time again in my life, I have looked back and recognized just how beautiful God's provision was during every temptation and test. Yes, sometimes the pain is so deep, the

suffering so great, that you might wonder, "Can I go another day or month like this?" But then, you will see that God has a way out.

In His plan, God makes sure that we can take it. He will not allow a situation to go beyond what we are able to bear. He offers a provision for us to bear everything we go through. We can bear every single thing in our lives because no temptation has taken us but those that are common to man.

Some of us have faced times of immeasurable discouragement. Still, every time, in the end of it, God reveals Himself and says, "See! You were able to bear it. What's more, you will be able to bear the next situation and the next one and the next one."

Times of testing and trials come our way, and we not only bear them, but we grow as we are being trained. Our tongues cease from criticizing people. Our hearts stop resenting others. Our souls refuse to be divided in our love for people. All of this is possible because God encouraged us to take up His provision in the midst of temptation.

Chapter Two

THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST MADE EVIDENT

"And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

"Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

"And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

"And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

"And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

"Their wings were joined one to another;

they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

"As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle" (Ezekiel 1:4-10).

The provision is always greater than the trial. I like to think that God has His weigh station just like those on the highways that weigh trucks before they are allowed to go across a bridge. God's weigh station gauges the pressures and problems that we are about to go through. He weighs what we are going to go through and, because He understands our personalities and makeup, He makes sure there will be a way for us to bear what we will go through.

I preached a simple message on a recent Sunday—but one that was also very deep—on how it is of the utmost importance for families to reveal their love for one another and how much they care for each other in their circles of fellowship.

Oh, it is so easy to find fault. Anyone can do that; however, it takes so much more to reveal something that reaches beyond the fault. Grace is greater than any fault we could find.

Ezekiel stood by the river Chebar, his heart growing faint because of the persecutions he was enduring. But then God revealed to him the face of a man. It was not the face of an angel that Ezekiel saw, but the face of a man. In every trial we go through, the countenance of Jesus Christ is made evident.

Oneness, Unity, and Thankfulness

I have been thinking a lot about my marriage lately. I realize more and more that time is so limited and our love is so great. Our oneness and unity is so precious.

Knowing God together is such a personal thing. It is a very special thing to love your mate in such an intimate way, and to grow closer in any trials you may go through by taking up your provision. Personally, I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

Since coming to Baltimore several years ago, I have been so blessed by the people in this city and in this church. Never before have I been so blessed with the unity of oneness, the unity of love, and the unity of thankfulness we have found here.

It has been such a blessing not to worry about problems and divisions. I have been so

free to be happy and relaxed as I enjoy a great marriage, a great Body, and a great family of God.

I love those who live in God's provision, refusing to withdraw and staying true to their commitments. There is such meaning and purpose to what we are doing here. I see such tremendous discipline in those around me, and they do not reveal the flesh at all. As a result, there has been such happiness, such joy, and such thankfulness as we serve God together. There has been great peace and great respect within our church and within our community. We have let God show us that we can bear any temptation when we live in His provision. We have learned that we can take it, no matter how great the trial.

Chapter Three

GREEN PASTURES AND STILL WATERS

"So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.

"And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents" (Numbers 9:16).

"And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

"And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

"And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket

by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

"And Abraham called the name of that place [Yaweh-Yireh]: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen" (Genesis 22:10-14).

God wants us to see His provision for every decision we make. In the wilderness, Israel was led by the cloud during the day and by the pillar of fire by night. He provided the manna from heaven for food (Exodus 16:4-5). But when the nation of two-and-a-half million thirsty people came to bitter waters, they murmured against Moses—so God showed Moses a tree. When the tree was placed into the water, the water became sweet, and now they could safely drink it (see Exodus 15:25).

God made a provision for Abraham on Mount Moriah. Just as Abraham was about to offer his son Isaac (as God had told him to do), God placed a ram in the thicket for a sacrifice. As a result, Abraham declared the Lord to be "Yahweh-Yireh"—the Great Provider.

All throughout the Bible we see that God provides. According to Exodus 34:6, His provision is revealed by His name: lovingkindness,

full of mercy, full of grace, full of love, and full of forgiveness for us.

Cared for by the Great Shepherd

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Psalm 23).

What a psalm this is! It reveals that even in our deepest heartaches and trouble, God is providing for us just as the shepherd provides for his sheep. David was facing terrible circumstances. His son Absalom had stolen his throne as a reaction against David for keeping him out of the palace for two years.

In exile at this point, David believed that he

would never see his palace again. He thought that he had lost everything forever. Oh, but then he realized the provision of God for his life. "The Lord is my shepherd, and I have need of nothing."

The Lord Jesus makes a provision for every situation.

I remember a precious family in Vermont. A terrible accident left a man all alone, his wife and three children dead. I can still remember how he was wandering along the highway. He didn't know where he was, and he was rushed to the hospital.

Later, he came to his senses, and we had to break the terrible news to him. "Your wife and children have gone home to be with Jesus."

As time went on, this man wound up at Bible college. He was intensely committed and uniquely dedicated, and he became a great missionary. God made this man to lie down in green pastures. He was led by the still waters, and he learned to live in God's provision.

A Divine Reversal

A woman left a husband who loved her dearly. She took their child and ran off, not even bothering to tell him why she left. Somehow

that man got hold of my number and called me.

"God has a provision for you," was all I could tell him.

"I don't see it," he said.

"That may be true, and yet, He does have a provision," I said before praying with him.

With a little effort, we found where this woman was and I visited her. We gave her the Word of God, built her up, and drew her in. Soon, she was back at home with her husband, and they grew to become a wonderful family. Instead of living in dissatisfaction with her husband's humanity, God became her provision.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:14-16).

Oh, the Word of God is a great provision! It quickens us (Hebrews 4:12). The precious Holy Spirit is a provision, supplying divine guidance every step of the way as the Comforter that quiets our soul. When things seem dark, dreary, and dismal, there remains a provision for us.

Once we believe that, all we need to do is to live in the provision of God.

CONCLUSION

There is no temptation that has taken us, but such that is common to man. With every temptation, God provides a way of escape. We are able to bear everything. We are able to bear anything. Why? Our provision is greater than any problem. The provision of God is always greater than any pressures we go through.

I thank God for all the men and women who support godly ministries. I thank God for my secretaries and all the staff of our ministry. It has been such an amazing thing to see God's provision worked through us, as it also works through each member of the Body to glorify Jesus Christ. His heartbeat—even His pulse—is revealed through us.

God's provision has done a great work in our lives. When a ministry recognizes God's provision, men and women are miraculously healed—physically, mentally, and spiritually. We are made more than able to take all of the pres-

sures that come our way.

We have a provision as the Holy Spirit fills us and as the Word of God is imparted to us. It is a provision that was given when we received Jesus Christ, when our names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Now, all we have to do is to live in the provision of God.

If you are not born again, if you have never received Christ as your personal Savior, there is a provision for you today. It is a provision for salvation—a provision for instant forgiveness, cleansing, and purging. Simply pray, *Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I receive You as my personal Savior. Thank You for loving me so much that You shed Your blood and died for me so I can have eternal life with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Living an Anointed Life

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INTRODUCTION

Very sincere Christians can find themselves doing very wrong things, even though they are trying to do good. They are born again, washed in the blood of Christ, but when they would do good, evil is present with them (Romans 7:20). Things they should not do, they do, as Paul wrote in Romans 7. Something is lacking from their lives: They lack an anointing.

An anointing will see a Christian through anything he might face. We have received "an unction from the Holy One" (1 John 2:20). *Every* born-again believer has an unction, or 'anointing', not just selected individuals. The anointing we have received abides in us.

We were sealed with the Holy Spirit when we first believed (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). We were regenerated by that same Spirit (Titus 3:5), and He came to dwell in our bodies. This is true of every blood-bought believer. This booklet will show that to experience the fullness of Christ's

life, His anointing needs to be manifested in everything we do. Allow the Holy Spirit to show the anointing of Christ that is within us.

Chapter One

THE POWER OF GODLINESS

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy [Spirit].

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were

added unto them about three thousand souls.

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

"And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

"And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:36-47).

The Power of Pentecost

The second chapter of Acts describes one of the most powerful events that ever occurred on the planet. It was called "the day of Pentecost," when the Holy Spirit first took up residence in born-again believers, filling them with power. Acts 2:14 says, "…Peter, standing up with the eleven…," which means that all the apostles stood in one accord. They were united because

they were anointed by the Holy Spirit of God.

Before Pentecost, Peter and the other disciples did everything in their power to be spiritual, but they were not. Certainly, they walked and talked with the Lord Jesus Christ on earth and witnessed many miracles. They saw how He fed the four thousand and the five thousand (not counting women and children) with just a few loaves and fishes. They were there when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:40-44) and saw Him beautifully raise the dead son of the widow from Nain (Luke 7:14). They also watched Him raise a twelve-year-old girl from the dead (Luke 8:49-56). They saw Him heal the sick of leprosy, fever, and all manner of diseases, sending many home in amazement at His power.

Seeing all of this, the apostles so wanted to please Him. But they could not because they did not have an anointing. Peter really meant it when he told Jesus that he wanted to follow Him anywhere. But Jesus said, "One day you will follow Me, but you can't do it now Peter—in fact, before the night is over you will deny me three times" (see John 13:36-38). In other words, He said, "You can't follow Me now. You haven't had your Cross experience. You haven't had a

resurrection experience in the Holy Spirit yet. Oh, you *want* to follow Me, but you cannot." However, after Calvary and Pentecost, Peter would follow Christ.

The disciples *wanted* to follow Jesus, but they just could not do it. They didn't want to forsake Him when He was being crucified, but they did. Only John came back to the foot of the cross. Peter did not want to curse, or swear, or deny Christ—but he did.

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit descended, and everything changed. The Jews were seeking a sign, so God gave them a gift of tongues—a supernatural expression of national languages. (Christ also had given many other signs.) Prior to this, the disciples had a form of godliness, but they denied the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5). They had a *form* of godliness, but they had very little faith.

Discern and Manifest the Anointing

God said of David, "with my holy oil have I anointed him" (Psalm 89:20). David understood something that is a great mystery to many believers, about the position and call of other servants in God's Kingdom. King Saul had murder in his heart. Filled with jealousy, pride, and ar-

rogance, he wanted to kill David and tried to kill him.

Having had his life in danger by Saul, David had many opportunities to kill the king, yet he would not do it. David understood that Saul's anointing came from God too, and he said, "I will not stretch forth my hand to touch God's anointed" (see 1 Samuel 24:10-12; 1 Samuel 26:9-25).

How could Saul have been anointed to be king over Israel and yet desire to murder someone? Because, the prophet Samuel (as a representative of God) anointed him with oil to be a godly king over Israel. Saul, however, did not manifest his anointing.

Thank God for those believers who manifest their anointing—it is one of the greatest things the world can see. Every Christian is anointed for as long as he lives, but the anointing needs to be manifested.

Be Sensitive to the Anointing

Many people are gifted speakers, but to communicate the heart of God requires something more. Knowledge and academia will not set people free, but a godly speaker will manifest the anointing through God.

Also, the members of the congregation need to have an anointing to hear properly (Exodus 29:20). They need to recognize the vital role they play in the anointing of a church service. An anointing is very sensitive to distractions. Therefore, when people get up and move around during an anointed message, faith fields and degrees of faith that could bring miracles break down.

Every Christian must learn how to execute the anointing in his personal and private life as a believer-priest before God. Many would be healed if they learned how to operate in their anointing, and many would experience total victory by learning to manifest their anointing.

In John 20:22, Jesus breathed upon the disciples in recognition of their office, but they still did not have the power to fulfill their apostleship. The change came in Acts 2, when the Spirit of God filled the disciples. Right away they manifested an anointing they never had before. Souls were being saved, disciples were being made, and men everywhere were hearing the Gospel of grace.

Chapter Two

THE IMPORTANCE OF MANIFESTING THE ANOINTING

"For this purpose the Son of Man was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

"For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:11).

One of the saddest things is when people we know and love are not able to manifest God's anointing. They are good people who have followed God for years. Perhaps they have been backsliding, but no matter what their sins are, like Saul, they have an anointing. They are just not able to manifest it. Others may be serving God, yet their anointing is not manifested. But what a difference to go out and serve God in the manifestation of God's Spirit!

The life of Christ has to be manifested

through the Holy Spirit. When it is not, there are so many problems in marriages, and many Christians fall into lust patterns. We need to recognize that the manifestation of the anointing through the Holy Spirit brings freedom.

"It shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing" (Isaiah 10:27). The anointing removes the yoke of jealousy, the yoke of envy, the yoke of insecurity, the yoke of lust, and the yoke of pride.

A New Identity

When the anointing of God is being manifested in a believer's life, his fallen personality dies, though he still has individuality. Jesus Christ did everything that the Father told him to do. He could do nothing of Himself (John 5:19, 30). He spoke when the Father told Him to speak, and He did the Father's works through abiding in the Father (John 14:10-11). Referring to believers, Jesus also told the disciples, "greater works than these shall he do" (John 14:12). Jesus Christ was anointed of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38), and every Christian can live

in the manifestation of His anointing.

A believer will manifest an anointing when he has gone through the Cross and on to identification with Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering. By this, he is made conformable to Christ's death (Philippians 3:10). Through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, by meekness and humility, the Christian identifies with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection—not just on certain days but all the time, using rebound after moments of failure.

As a pastor, when I prepare a message I must enter into an anointing for that message. If I'm going to preach on hell, I think of the people who are suffering there today. I will consider them and, thus, by the time I reach the pulpit, I can hardly say a word without weeping.

Paul wept day and night for three years (Acts 20:31). Jeremiah was called the weeping prophet. Many words in the Greek text convey the idea that Jesus wept often, more times than we read in the Scriptures. Jesus wept as He looked down from a mountain onto Jerusalem. Why? In the Spirit, He could see that Jerusalem once again would be taken into captivity, this time by the Romans (which did occur in A.D. 70). He wanted to save the people from that, but

they would not be saved. For this reason, He wept.

Why did He weep and groan in the Spirit after Lazarus had died (John 11)? He wept because so many people did not trust Him, and they did not believe Him. Mary and Martha—His dear friends—didn't trust Him. They trusted that He would resurrect Lazarus in the future, but they didn't believe Him for that to happen there and then. All those around were crying. And Jesus wept. With His tears He was saying, "Why can't they believe Me?"

The Varieties of Anointings

When a person is under an anointing, there is diversity in his communication. If he is a pastor, his preaching should not sound the same every time. If he is a soul winner, his approach should not be the same every time. In Isaiah 58:1, the Lord said, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet…." But in Isaiah 42:1-2, He was very quiet—sometimes even silent. His voice could hardly be heard on the street.

During His life on earth, Jesus manifested many different anointings. In Matthew 23, He had an anointing of righteous indignation against the sins of the Pharisees. Then, in John

8:7-11, He expressed a tender anointing toward the woman taken in adultery. Identifying with her against her accusers, He was very tender. He had an anointing for teaching and an anointing to preach. Each one was different.

Just as our moods differ (in a good way), so do God's moods differ. God knows the heart (1 Samuel 16:7), and His moods differ in relation to the capacities of people He is dealing with. Every yoke that is not of God can be destroyed by the anointing. Therefore, we ought to sincerely pray for one another for an anointing that breaks the yoke.

The Meek Shall He Teach

Psalm 40:6 says, "Sacrifice and burnt offerings thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). In Leviticus 14, to cleanse the leper, the first thing the priest anointed with oil was the right ear. This is because before a man could be anointed for service or for his walk (represented by anointing the thumb and the toe), he needed to be anointed to listen, so he could hear from God.

Likewise, the believer starts to experience

his anointing by being anointed when he listens. That happens by the fruit of the Spirit called meekness (Galatians 5:22-23; Psalm 25:9). Meekness guarantees a Christian's anointing. It means to be God-conscious, Christ-conscious, Cross-conscious, and Resurrection-conscious.

What a difference meekness makes! Meekness takes away Adam's personality and brings Christ's personality (which was the Father's personality) into the believer's individuality. Every person is different and has individuality, but no one has to live in his fallen personality. It is so important for every believer to understand this. When the Holy Spirit takes over, we definitely retain individuality, but now we are Spirit-controlled, Spirit-led, Word-of-God-anointed individuals.

Chapter Three

ANOINTING AND THE GIFT OF REPENTANCE

When Peter spoke at Pentecost, he had an anointing of boldness and preaching. "You killed the Lord," he told the crowd there in Jerusalem. He explained how Jesus was promised to them through David and came to them through the house of David. After their hearts were convicted, Peter skillfully brought people to a point of decision:

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter saith unto them, Repent [every one of you], and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy

[Spirit]" (Acts 2:36-38).

Gripped by his anointed speech, the Jewish people asked what they could do to be saved. Peter's answer, "Repent, every one of you," is a very significant phrase in the original Greek text. It is a second-person plural in the aorist tense and imperative mood, marked by a radical break, or pause, before "be baptized." (*Repent* is in the active mood—the subject produces the action. *Be baptized* is passive—the subject receives the action without doing or producing the action himself.)

In other words, Peter said, "I command you to repent, and you will be saved." *After* that, he instructed them to "be baptized every one of you." This time, he spoke in the third person singular aorist imperative. The radical break indicates separate actions. Proper exegesis of this verse reveals that *repentance* brings salvation; it did not have to be connected with baptism. Rather, baptism is something we do *after* salvation. Do you see how important it is to rightly divide the Word of Truth?

Change of Mind, Change of Heart

Imagine what might happen if all Christians understood the real meaning of repentance.

Metanoeo, translated "repent" in Acts 2:38 means to have a change of mind and change of heart that comes by being available to God and to receive His gift.

"[Jesus Christ] hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, *for to give repentance to Israel*, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). This verse makes it clear that repentance is a gift. Also, Romans 11:29 says that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." What does that mean? Only God can change me! Only God can change any of us. That is why John 1:13 says salvation is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

We need to understand what Jeremiah understood: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God" (Jeremiah 31:18). This weeping prophet understood repentance, for he went on to write "Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed" (Jeremiah 31:19). The anointing of repentance turns a man. The anointing removes the yoke of drugs, and it removes the yoke of lust.

I got a letter from a young man who had been delivered from homosexuality. "If people

only knew the change that comes to a man's life when he is delivered from that sin," he wrote. "It was a sick, horrible, ugly lifestyle, but only God could turn me from it." God turned this man as he kept drawing near.

He drew near. He came to every service, took every opportunity to hear the Word, and read everything he could get his hands on that would draw him to Christ. He drew near and God turned him. After he was turned, his mind was changed toward God's viewpoint. Then, he began to receive instruction on how to live. That is how repentance works.

God Does the Turning

"Turn us, O God of our salvation," David wrote in Psalm 85:4.

There's a big difference between what this message is telling you and what some others would tell you. Some preach that a worldwide revival will come when people repent, and then they tell you that repentance means that you change your mind. The Bible says that *you* cannot repent! The Bible says that God will give you a gift to draw near. And if you keep drawing near, God will give a gift of the Holy Spirit's anointing that will break any yoke and take

away any burden from your shoulder: "...And the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing" (Isaiah 10:27).

Please understand, *there is hope for everyone*. Some people come to church, get deliverance from drugs, and then fall back. I happen to believe that they will be totally delivered one day. Many of them are already able to stay clean longer than ever, and some have been totally delivered.

I know of a couple with a great testimony. Both of them were drug addicts, and he spent time in jail. Ministered to by people on an outreach in our city, one of them prayed for salvation but resisted conviction from the Word of God. So, both of them ended up in a very low place. But at last, they looked to God and He turned them.

They drew near, and they received the gift of repentance. It was a gift, and that gift destroyed the yoke. Do you understand what happened? They received the gift of repentance from the Holy Spirit. Now, they come to every church service. They continue to draw near.

Chapter Four

RECEIVE GOD'S GIFTS

Salvation is a gift. The Holy Spirit is a gift. Repentance is a gift. All we have to do is receive the gift and use it. When we have faith toward our Lord Jesus, we bring forth fruit because we believed. We believed in the gift of repentance, and we brought forth fruit (Acts 20:21; 26:20). What's more, the gifts and calling of God are *without* repentance.

Luke 13:3-5 says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," but in reading this we must keep in mind *the principle of first precept*. If something in Scripture seems to be a contradiction, go back and always accept the first precept.

Genesis 3:21 offers the first precept on repentance. Adam and Eve did no works to be saved. God killed an animal; there was a shedding of blood. God removed their fig leaves, took the skins of the animal, and clothed them. It was God's gift. Lamentations 3:21-26 tells us that

repentance is a gift. Psalms 25 and 51 speak of repentance as a gift, and Jeremiah tells us repentance is a gift. Therefore, if repentance is a gift, *God* can do it. I simply let God change my mind.

In Matthew 27:3, after Judas betrayed the Lord, "…when he saw that he was condemned, *repented* himself…." The word for "repented" here is *metamellomai* in the Greek, and it implies regret. Judas wept, he cried, but he did not let God change his mind. He had a worldly sorrow for what he had done, but he did not receive the gift of repentance from God to be changed.

Esau, according to Hebrews 12, sought a place for *metanoeo*, which is God's gift of true repentance from the heart and mind (and the emotions follow). But Esau could not find it, because he had *metamellomai*: He was very sorry—but it was a worldly sorrow. He was sorry, but he never received the gift that would change him.

As we mentioned before, Acts 2:38 (where Peter commanded the people to repent) must also line up with the first precept for repentance, which is that repentance is a gift from God.

Anointed for Power

I don't care what your yoke is or how long you have been under it. The Word of God says

the anointing will destroy the yoke. Believe it! And be careful to be filled with the Spirit every morning, noon, and night. Young people, high schoolers, college students—any believer can be anointed with a manifestation from God. Let your heart and your soul be filled with the fresh oil of God.

"But my *horn* shalt thou exalt...I shall be anointed with fresh oil" (Psalm 92:10); that is, my power has been raised up, and God will anoint me with fresh oil. "Horn" speaks of power. David was anointed three times with oil, representing the fact that he had to be empowered for everything he would do.

We need an anointing for the work of the Lord. We need an anointing to pray and to win souls. We need an anointing to be faithful to God's house. We *need* an anointing, and it is a gift. We don't earn it. We don't have to merit it. God loves us, and He has paid for all of our sins. Salvation, just like everything from God, is a gift. Come and receive the gift!

If you are still carrying that burden, believe God for His deliverance. You will be delivered! Just draw near, and God will give you the gift of deliverance. Ask God for the manifestation of His anointing every morning. When you are

tempted, get on your knees, fall before God and say, "God, give me the gift of your anointing. I don't want to go back to that sin."

Receive Precise Thoughts

When you start hearing categories of doctrine, you are receiving precise thoughts that are transferred by the Holy Spirit into the memory center of your mind, now, because you are thinking precisely with the Word of God. These categories enter into your frame of reference to be used by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26) as they are needed. This is a gift from God.

Thank God that in our flesh dwells no good thing (Romans 7:18)! The flesh profits nothing (John 6:63). It is the anointing that breaks the yoke and brings the filling of the Holy Spirit. After this comes love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance—the fruit of a Spirit-filled life. Then we live in divine guidance with the Spirit (Romans 8:14-16), and doctrinal guidance by the Word (Psalm 119:133; 37:23). It is divine because God takes over, and we cooperate. It is no longer us, but Christ who lives in us.

For those who were saved on the day of Pentecost, they were baptized by water *after* they re-

pented. Baptism never saved anyone, but it is a command. It is an expression of retroactive positional truth—of our death, burial, and resurrection in Christ, which is a testimony before God. Three thousand were baptized the day they were saved, a testimony before the angels.

No one should wait for something else to happen before they become baptized. If you have received the gift of repentance, you are gloriously saved: God has forgiven you, and you have the gift of the Spirit. So now, get baptized after you understand thoroughly what it means in positional truth. Don't put it off.

Anointed to Give and to Share

In Acts 2:41, after the people were saved they gladly received the Word. They repented through being turned by God. Then they were baptized, and they gathered every day to hear the Word. Verse 45 says they "sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

So often this verse is misunderstood, but a careful study shows what it means. Those who had more than they needed were anointed to help those in need. They brought their gifts to the church, where everything was distributed.

The motivation was love, not religion. They took what they had extra and didn't need and gave it to those who didn't have anything. They were anointed to give. They had an anointing to share because of love. And that anointing broke the yoke of greed.

When we are anointed, our gifts from God knit us together in the Body of Christ, and the world knows who we are by our love.

CONCLUSION

God gives anointings for all kinds of things. Some are anointed to sing and to play instruments. There are anointings to pray, to love, to forgive, and to be patient. God gives an anointing to be pure, to be made clean one moment at a time (Isaiah 27:3), and to glorify Christ one day at a time.

After you have read this, please just close your eyes and think of God's great gifts. This is how anointings truly work. There is not a single thing that can happen in our lives except by having a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Keep in mind that we need to have more than knowledge of these things. There must be a trust from the heart. Once you have confessed every known sin, accept the fact that those sins were paid for once and for all. Isolate them from yourself forever. Even if you have done something again and again, simply isolate it, forget it, and move on.

Pray, "*Dear Lord, I receive the filling of the Holy Spirit as a gift of grace.*" When you were saved, you received the Spirit. Now receive the Spirit's filling to motivate, energize, and teach you. Receive your anointing, which breaks your yoke, and manifest the life of Christ that is in you through the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Living an Inspired Life

from the Breath of God

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The book that we call the Word of God is a pure Book. In Proverbs 30:5, the Holy Spirit says that every word of God is pure, *every single word*.

Probably the most awesome mandate God has given us was actually addressed to Satan when Jesus declared that man must live by every word of God (Luke 4:4).

Here is the premise: If we are to live by every word of God, and *if* every word of God is pure, and *if* we cannot add anything to it nor take anything from it (Deuteronomy 4:2), and *if* we are to be sanctified by every word of God (John 17:17), *then* let *every* man be swift to hear—and slow to speak (James 1:19).

As individuals who are also sinners, we must use recovery in the process of life. We must apply the principle of recovery with integrity and proper intentions the moment the Holy Spirit convicts. That means we acknowledge our sin, name it (before God), change our minds

about it, isolate it, shake off the dust from where we've fallen, and go on. So, when an individual with integrity can look up to heaven and say, "Every word of God is pure," he won't confess how bad he is! Instead, he will confess truth: God has commanded me to live by *every* word that proceeds from His mouth. He has given me grace, and He breathes His life in me.

Breathing is a necessity for life. Without breathing, we die. Without inhaling air, we would die; and without exhaling, we would die. We also know that people can become sick and even die from breathing in polluted air. Spiritually, the analogy holds true. This booklet deals with a further aspect: What is the source of the breath we're exchanging?

Eggastrimuthous is the original breath of Satan that controls the old sin nature, the mind, the emotions, and, ultimately, the vocal cords. Mentioned by name in Isaiah 8:19, the King James Bible calls it a familiar spirit. It is shocking to know that there are Christians who live by Satan's breath.

Then we have the breath of God, *neshamah* in Hebrew and *pneuma theos* in Greek. God's breath is the Spirit of life that refreshes the weary and gives life to the faint hearted and to all those

who put their hope in God.

When you hear divine illuminations from heaven, don't be hasty to say much about it (Ecclesiastes 5:2). Be caught up with the message, meditate on its application, and be slow to speak.

Be swift to hear, because hearing—inhaling the truth—produces faith. Faith is the first thing in our lives that pleases God. Then, when we obey by faith the Word that we have heard, we will experience a revival of God's breath of life. Every time we obey the Word, we reveal that the breath of God has revived us. Each time we disobey also reveals what's happening in our soul.

Deliverance begins with definition. Let the life that came forth from the grave minister to you the importance of inhaling and exhaling the pure breath of God.

Chapter One

WHERE THERE'S BREATH, THERE'S LIFE

There are two powerful forces at work in our lives all the time: the breath of God and the breath of Satan. Both kingdoms breathe on their subjects. This is the premise.

The Word of God says in Genesis 2:7 that God breathed into man the breath of life (that's the human spirit), and man became a living soul. The human spirit came into man by the breath of God and produced a living soul. Job 32:8 says, "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration (or the breathing) of the Almighty giveth them understanding." There is a spirit in man. In 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by *inspiration* of God…." It is "God-breathed," and the inspiration of God gives man experiential understanding.

In Job 33:4, the Word of God continues to teach on this subject: "The Spirit of God hath

made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." The breath of the Almighty gives us life. So, when I inhale His breath, I inhale *life*.

In Ezekiel 37:4*b*: "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD." But 37:5*b* says, "I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." We know that God was addressing the nation of Israel, but the spiritual application is for us today; the biblical premise has been established.

So, now we see that the breath of God comes through hearing the Word of God, and the spirit, soul, and body of a man are preserved blameless (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Here's an amazing principle: As long as we understand that the spirit of man is the candle of the LORD (Proverbs 20:27), and as long as that human spirit is operating, then we are living in the breath of God. We think, speak, initiate, and respond in the breath of God without self-consciousness, without insecurity, and without fleshly desires. But the moment the human spirit is not functioning, we begin to breathe in something else.

There are four different forms of demonic activity that relate to *eggastrimuthous*, the breath of Satan, through his demonic world:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against *principalities*, against *powers*, against

the *rulers of the darkness* of this world, against *spiritual wickedness* in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). If I were just carnally minded, that would be one thing. Yet, inasmuch as our wrestling is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual entities, then the moment my human spirit is not functioning, I am no longer conscious of God's Word. I am not operating in God's grace, loving in God's Spirit, living in God's Word, or obeying God's resurrection life.

Ministering Life to Dry Bones

Perhaps you have read the book by Jim Bakker, *I Was Wrong*. In it, he tells the story of a time while he was in prison when he was particularly low. The guard announced, "You have a visitor."

He was in terrible shape, his clothes and sneakers torn and worn out. "Who is it?" he asked.

"Billy Graham!" The guard was sarcastic.

As he went out to see the visitor, Jim Bakker thought, "Boy, I smell!" He couldn't believe it, but it really was Billy Graham. He was used to everybody hating him. As Billy Graham went up to him, he embraced him and wept.

That's Christianity.

Our friend, Dr. E.V. Hill, who is a wonderful pastor from California, was on a televised news panel with five other pastors discussing immorality in the church. Asked their opinions by a network news anchor who does not profess to know Christ, five ran down Jim Bakker publicly.

When he realized that one panel member hadn't spoken, the newsman asked, "Well, what do you say about this, Mr. Hill?"

"I don't agree with any one of these five," replied Dr. Hill. "The last I knew, these men were sinners."

Then E.V. Hill said, "I sinned today." Without flinching he added, "As a matter of fact, I've sinned several times today. May I ask, is there one of you who is perfect?" (You should have seen their faces.)

When the interviewer asked, "Why is it that a pastor like Jim Bakker would commit a sin like that?" E.V. Hill answered, "What are *your* favorite sins?" putting an end to that topic.

Time for an Operation

So, we have *pneuma theos,* the breath of God, versus *eggastrimuthous,* the breath of Satan's kingdom. It is so important to be aware of the angelic contest when we read verses such as Ro-

mans 8:6-7, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Remember, we are talking about the motivating life of Satan being imparted to us.

We don't wrestle against flesh and blood because our enemy is supernatural. You see, if a marriage needs to be restored, you're not simply facing two people who have differences. You face a supernatural life in either one or both parties. It's extremely serious.

When you deal with someone who either has a drug habit or is selling drugs, it's more than dealing with a person who enjoys drugs; you're dealing with Satan's life that was shared to destroy him eventually.

Ezekiel 37:5*b* says, "I will cause my breath to enter into thee, and you will live." Here is the correlation: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner [a critic] of the thoughts [motives] and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

"Hear the word of the LORD, dry bones!" It takes the Word of God to separate the human

spirit from the troubled soul. God's Word is a sword that pierces, and it does its work quickly and powerfully. When allowed to operate, the Word separates the human spirit (rendered powerless by the attachment) from the human soul that's been cleaving to the dust. In the end, I can function in the inspiration of the Almighty and understand doctrine.

Eggastrimuthous is the name given to a "familiar spirit" in Isaiah 8:19: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that *mutter*: should not a people seek unto their God?…"

A spirit that "mutters" is engaged in at least one of five behaviors: passivity, murmuring, complaining, reacting negatively, or refusing to obey. It means to utter sounds because of close atmospheric contact with a personality from the air. When a personality in the demonic world connects with me closely, I will become familiar with people, my church, my habits, my choices. I inhale the breath of a familiar spirit that shares its life with me.

In Luke 11:24-26, after the unclean spirit was driven out and his victim's spiritual house was swept clean, the demon said, "I will go back to

my own house." Furthermore, he took with him seven more powerful demons." There are degrees of power in the demonic world, with varying degrees of wickedness. So, he returned to "his own" house.

God's Body, Our Provision

Every demon has an identity and a personality of its own. They want to share that identity with us through a soul that is disconnected from the breath of God in the human spirit.

In view of this strategy, the Word says that God gave some to be apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, and pastor-teachers, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

God has a provision for our helplessness. As God breathed on the disconnected bones in the valley, each joint was supplied with the sinew, the necessary connective tissue, that would cause dead men to rise up and walk.

The pastor-teacher is a gift to the Body for the purpose of communicating the Word, building up the Body, leading believers into godly maturity, and doing the work of the ministry, "Till we all come to the unity of the faith, and

the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (Ephesians 4:13-14).

Notice a key phrase here: "they lie in wait to deceive." What are "they" (speaking of a category of demons) waiting for? They are waiting to share their life with us—for us to give them a *place* (Ephesians 4:27), a marked off area where our lives are dysfunctional. Usually, people live in denial regarding the area of their dysfunction.

"But," the Word of God says, "speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" because, "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15-16). That means that as we share the life and breath of God, the Body of Christ increases itself through evangelism.

"This I say therefore,…walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity [emptiness] of their mind" (Ephesians 4:17). The Holy Spirit wants us to understand that those people are alienated from the life of God through their ignorance *because of the blindness of their hearts*, "Who being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:19).

But then He says, "ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind*; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:20-24).

In these verses, Scripture reveals the inhaling and the exhaling of God's life versus inhaling Satan's thoughts, accusations, and condemnation. We stop inhaling the devil's defense mechanisms. We stop inhaling his life from the dark world, and we start inhaling God's life through the Word. Through God breathing upon us, the

Word and Spirit become life (John 6:63). As we inhale God's life, we begin to exhale His life. Then, all of a sudden, we realize we have put on this 'new man'.

"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind…" (Ephesians 4:23) is a very unusual construction. *Be renewed* is an intransitive verb, which means it doesn't have an object. Instead, the verb is followed by an instrumental dative case with two agencies of help. The first agent is *the spirit*, referring to the human spirit. The second agent is *your mind*, referring to the mind of God ("Let this mind be in you..." Philippians 2:5). The grammar indicates that the spirit and the mind are the instruments being used to bring about a renewal.

Through the human spirit we inhale the breath of God by His Word. The effect is that we have love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. Having the fruit of the Holy Spirit causes us to live in purity—free from drugs, lust, gossip, and lying. Free, we live as a new creation. Our human spirit is quickened by the Word, we take on the mind of Christ, and we are renewed. This is what happens when we begin to inhale the Word of God.

Chapter Two

BINDING THE STRONG MAN

The Pharisees accused Jesus of doing everything by Beelzebub, the prince of demons (Luke 11:15). Isaiah 29:4 relates to familiar spirits that speak out of the dust. *Bathos* is the name given to the head demon of the dust. In Matthew 16:22, this demon overcame Peter and controlled his vocal cords. Peter tried to say something "good" by speaking out against the Cross. "Don't go there, Jesus! Be it far from thee, Lord."

Here is the picture: We have the Lord Jesus Christ casting out demons by the Spirit of God (Matthew 12:28). To His accusers, Jesus said, "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then [you know] the kingdom of God is come unto you." The kingdom of God is the plan of the Father, the operation of the Finished Work by the Son, and the power of the Holy Spirit, with the definition of the Word of God. It is the Trinity with the Word in categorical doctrine operating freely

inside believers. So, what happens?

Jesus continued, "But if I cast out devils by the spirit of Beelzebub, that would mean that Satan's house is divided against itself. How shall it stand?" That is the principle in Matthew 12:25-27.

Spoiling the House

Then Jesus said a very wonderful thing, "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and *then* he will spoil his house" (Matthew 12:29). He said, "First you have to bind the strong man, and then you spoil his house."

Many people are troubled by demons constantly. To be free, their old behavior and habits must be destroyed. And do you know how that's done? We bind Satan, "the strong man."

How do you bind him? By keeping your human spirit open, allowing the Word of God to enter freely into your spirit, hearing the Word of God, and letting God *breathe* on you. Your soul will become a living soul as Christ shares His Resurrection power. Then, with your vocal cords, speak the truth in a godly confession *regardless of how you feel*. This action binds that supernatural strong man. We are to spoil his *goods,* which is our body—our hands, our feet, our eyes, and

our faculties. We *spoil* his goods by taking back by force what had been his possession and giving it back to God.

There are people who for years have been hooked on drugs and alcohol—their bodies are a house for habits and behaviors that Satan uses to bring them down through self-destruction. We bind that strong man by Jesus Christ's words that minister to the human spirit, by what we hear from the pastor-teacher, and then by functioning in our priesthood. When we bind him, we bind *eggastrimuthous*. We bind the breath of Satan, the life of Satan, the plan of Satan.

Satanic Strategy

Demons have a plan. They evaluate. They think. They travel freely. They consider some houses as their own. They recognize *degrees of* wickedness. Specific demons identify with specific categories of sin. For example, there are demons that identify with sex, drugs, lust, slander, gossip, accusations, anger, fear, insecurity, or reaction. The demons for each category have separate identities. Not only does Satan want them to share their separate identities with the soul when the human spirit isn't functioning, but also he wants them to hypnotize our minds.

He wants to bewitch (hypnotize) the memory center (Galatians 3:1). Once he successfully hypnotizes the mind, he doesn't have to keep sending his spirits back. If he can use hypnosis, a person can go around for years confessing, "I don't like myself. I'm no good. I will only fail again!" These are confessions from a memory hypnotized by *eggastrimuthous*, the breath of a supernatural personality, muttering and speaking from the dust.

In Mark 5:9, these demons love to combine their forces to cause confusion. When Jesus asked one, "What is your name?" the reply was, "My name is Legion: for we are many."

Counter Attack: Even Your Faith

I want to show you an effective way to overcome the demons. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world….and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith*" (1 John 4:4 and 5:4). We overcome Satan's world system by faith.

This is how you do it: Confuse the enemy! *We have the mind of Jesus Christ*. When demons come against us, they often combine forces by using family members, former friends, or a spouse. In their complicity, the goal of the attack

is to confuse us, attack our self-image, and by any means possible to cause us to self-destruct. But when they attack, *bind them*!

In binding the strong man, we spoil his goods. No longer can he have my eyes, my tongue, my hands, or my feet. We spoil his house and take back what is God's.

When the enemy comes in like a flood, Jesus Christ tells us clearly that "Greater is he that is in you." But, the Lord must be operating as our Head (Ephesians 4:15) through the life of the Body—the fullness of Him on earth (Ephesians 1:23). When we have His mind and He is not only our 'head' but our very life, then we bind the enemy as we operate through the Resurrection power of God (Colossians 2:12).

Once the strong man is bound, *he flees!* Satan *flees*. We bind him, he flees! Don't you love it? In James 4:7, we resist the devil and he flees. Here we are in the midst of terrible trials, confounding the enemy with our positive confession (Revelation 12:10)—sinners saved by grace and functioning in grace—and the accuser of the brethren is cast down.

Think It Not Strange…

Have you ever wondered why Jesus' public

ministry only lasted three years? It is because he was persecuted so heavily. He didn't start preaching until he was thirty; and even then, He didn't want anyone to know about His miracles. Knowing that Satan's kingdom was with the Pharisees, Jesus knew they would try to kill Him.

Why do we think it's strange when we come under attack? Jesus Christ was crucified after only three years. The apostle Paul spent a good part of his life in prison. So, why is it so surprising when we hear of persecution? It's to be expected! (Not that we go looking for it. It will find us!)

Isaiah 44:25*b* says that the Lord who formed us turns wise men backward and their knowledge into foolishness. That means they may have received doctrine, but it is merely *gnosis* (doctrine stored in the left side of the brain, the perception and awareness area), instead of *epignosis* (experiential knowledge applied to the human soul by transference through the heart.)* Their knowledge of doctrine is turned into foolishness. Once wise because they knew doctrine, now they have turned away backward. As they go backward, the breath of *eggastrimuthous*, the breath of Satan, is activated to motivate, energize, and reinforce them in their decisions. When I see

this happening, I need to guard my heart so I don't become self-righteous toward those who have turned backward.

Jesus said, "They are either for me, or they are against me." When Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the Christians, Jesus said, "Why do you persecute Me?" Then He added, "It's hard to kick against the pricks" (see Acts 9:1-5).

Anyone who persecutes any pastor or any church is in danger of persecuting Jesus Christ, the One who delegated the office and who is that pastor's head. What's more, anyone who *listens* to a verbal attack against another believer is as guilty as the one who said it. (When a person receives an evil report, even passively, he is receiving cockatrice' eggs—serpents' eggs.) If the eggs do not hatch immediately, they stay until they are either crushed or hatched (Isaiah 59:1-5), "…They hatch cockatrice' eggs and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper."

That's why you should never hear a word against a believer. Refuse to be a party to that kind of attack. Rather, if you have a problem with a person, go to him alone (Matthew 18:15). Go in meekness and brokenness, considering

your own frailty. Galatians 6:1-2 is God's way of correcting a pastor.

Mark them that speak from the dust, and avoid them (Romans 16:17). Don't allow the breath of Satan to control your vocal cords. On the other hand, thank God for the people who open their mouths to edify, ministering grace to the hearer.

The reason Jesus Christ only had a three-year ministry was that He represented grace. The Pharisees and Satan hated grace—the Pharisees because they could not perform it, and Satan because he could not have it. In Matthew 20:1-15, Jesus gave an unusual illustration to explain the nature of grace. The laborers who worked one hour received the same amount as those who had been working nine hours. When the ones who had been there all day saw it, they reacted. But the householder answered them, saying: "I gave you the amount I agreed to give—a penny."

"But you're giving *them* a penny. Lord, they only worked an hour!"

"That's right. It's what we agreed upon. That is my privilege."

In other words, Jesus was saying, "Everybody here gets grace. You received it, and they

received it," and the Pharisees and the devil hate the fact that Jesus gives people something they don't deserve! *That's* why they crucified Him. That's why He asked people not to tell when He performed miracles (or else, He wouldn't have even made it three years!).

Satan flees when we bind him with categorical doctrine functioning in the human spirit in the kingdom of God. With the Father, Son, and Spirit, and the Word working together in us, we can bind the strong man.

We have authority! It is the authority of Resurrection, the authority of Ascension, the authority of a victory, the authority of the Finished Work. We have an Intercessor, and don't you forget it. Satan knows it! Let's use this authority from God. Get bold in your prayers.

Seated Far Above

Ephesians 4:9-10 says that He who descended into the lower parts of the earth (speaking of death and burial), also ascended far above all the heavens to fill all things. Isn't it good? Jesus Christ descended into the grave, and Satan thought he had finished Him; he thought he had the victory.

Then, by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ was

resurrected (Romans 1:4).

Christ ascended far above principalities (Ephesians 1:21), far above powers, far above Satan. He now sits on a throne of mercy, allowing all born-again believers to be seated with Him in their position. While we are seated above, we are living on earth; so, let's exercise our authority from above.

We are not merely Christians on the earth; we have been resurrected. We are not only resurrected, but we have ascended. And we have not just ascended, we are seated.

We are seated far above Satan, and we should declare it. Hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3) we have a bold confession: "We have ascended far above you, Satan. We have decided to exercise our authority over some of your projects and the things you're doing to people. Are you ready for us? We are going to bind things in earth, and loosen things from heaven, because Matthew 16:19 tells us that we have that authority. If you want to accuse us, just remember: We are the *grace* children. You couldn't accuse Joshua, and you can't accuse us because the Blood of Jesus has paid every debt."

Thank God that we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Thank God

that He always causes us to triumph in Christ.

The key is to inhale the breath of God through the Word of God. The breath of God brings deliverance from the breath of Satan.

*The Hearing Heart, *Grace Publications, 1996, describes the effect of the Word and the Holy Spirit upon the human mind in the process of transformation.*

Chapter Three

THE HISTORY OF INIQUITY

"And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust" (Isaiah 29:4). This unusual verse describes the experience of multitudes of Christians.

Eggastrimuthous—a familiar spirit that speaks from the dust—had its origin when God found iniquity in Lucifer (Ezekiel 28:12, 15). Until then, Lucifer was "full of wisdom, perfect in beauty," perfect in all his ways. But as he was lifted up in his own beauty, a familiar spirit was born in him—the first familiar spirit in angelic history.

That spirit went from Satan into one-third of all the angels.

From there, it went into the entire human race. Conceived in iniquity, mankind became fa-

miliar with their Creator and familiar with the air they breathed, with the sunshine, the rain, the food, the shelter, and everything that God provides for His creation. They became familiar with relationships, with vows, and with honor.

Stop Your Whispering!

Jesus Christ came, God incarnate, revealing Himself in a hypostatic union for the first time. He was unique because He was both God *and* man, yet He always depended upon God the Father to deal with *eggastrimuthous*, the familiar spirit that controls the mind and often controls the vocal cords. Repeatedly, Jesus was faced with people who murmured and muttered and spoke from the dust. "Get thee behind me, Satan. Stop using Peter's vocal cords." They always confess either negativity or angel of light "goodness" from the Tree of Knowledge.

"Oh, I'm going through so much. What am I going to do?"

Brought down low, they speak out of the ground; they speak from the dust.

"Thy speech shall *whisper* out of the dust…." The Hebrew word for 'whisper', *tsaphaph*, describes "the peep of the wizard, the chatter of ungodly spirits. This portion shows a person

conquered by the lower nature through an impartation from the dust.

When Isaiah 29:4 says, "thy speech shall be low, out of the dust" it speaks of someone who goes from person to person with their lower nature controlling their vocal cords through the impartation of a familiar spirit (*eggastrimuthous*).

"Thou shalt be on thy belly, and thou shalt eat dust all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:14b). The word for "dust" is *aphar*, meaning dry earth, dust, ashes, rubbish—serpents' food! The only thing Satan can eat now is dust.

This is why the psalmist said in 119:25, "My soul cleaves to the dust…." He said, I'm eating serpents' food while I suffer unimaginable torment at the hands of my captors. I'm eating the food of familiar spirits. "…*Quicken me according to thy word*."

When you hear a fresh message, be very slow to speak. Be solemn. It's more than "hi" and "bye." Don't be casual with the moment, but be swift to hear so the Word of God can become residential through *theantric action*, which simply means through God's government of grace (the Father, Son, and Spirit, by the Word) controlling the soul of man. As mentioned before, however, those who refuse to come under

God's government will be ruled from the dust. God turns their wisdom and knowledge into non-thinking foolishness (Isaiah 44:25*b*).

Often, the breath of Satan controls the souls of men. When this happens, a man becomes a soul mate with Satan, sharing his life in his thinking, his emotions, and his speech. We can become his soul mates as believers. In Jeremiah 17:5-6, this type of person doesn't see the good when it comes. Under pressure he becomes like a scrub in the desert, dried up and barely alive. When Satan breathes on a soul's lower nature, *eggastrimuthous* controls that person's vocal cords and behavior, establishing ungodly habits.

The Breath of Life

In John 20:21-22, before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, Jesus *breathed* on the disciples. In Genesis 2:7, God breathed into man "the breath of life; and man became a living soul." God's breath, the breath of life, the breath of God: More than 170 times in Scripture, *pneuma theos* is mentioned in some form—the breath of God.

"But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8). The *breath* of the Almighty gives

understanding. When God breathes through the human spirit, Paul said, "I pray God, that your spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless until the coming of Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Here is God, through His Word and through His Holy Spirit, breathing into man, breaking familiar spirits, breaking negativity, breaking passivity, and breaking a pattern of murmuring. The inspiration of God's breath breaks down negative reactions and presumption (the great transgression, Psalm 19:13). God is breathing. The woman, the man, the child, the teenager, or whomever He breathes on, begins to have understanding. It's a wonderful thing.

Then Job 33:4 says, "The Spirit [or, the breath of God] hath made me, and the breath of God has given me life." *Life!*

"The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD" (Proverbs 20:27). That spirit (Hebrew, *neshamah*) is the breath of God. The breath of God becomes the life of the human spirit, which controls the soul. When we receive the breath of God, we are no longer soul mates to Satan. When we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, we begin to inhale, and we put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and holiness after the manner of God (Ephesians 4:23-24).

This is the experience for many believers, but it is God's desire for *all* of us. You are inhaling God. You're inhaling His mind, His thoughts, and His nature. When Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, we become rooted and grounded in love. We begin to "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge..." (Ephesians 3:18-20). Filled with all His fullness, He gives us beyond what we ask or think. So then, we exhale what we have inhaled, and we're giving out the breath of God.

Is it any wonder that in the valley, the dry bones were able to rise up and live? God breathed into them, and they lived.

Whatever is wrong with God's people, it can all be changed when individuals allow the breath of God to control the human spirit.

Degrees of Love

We have so many different degrees of love. They all could come under *agape*, the unconditional love of God. Sometimes they do, but most of the time, they are detached.

Philaguria is the love of money or material things.

Philoteknos is the love of children, which is wonderful, but often they are loved more than God.

Philandros is the love a wife has for her husband—and she should—but some women love their husbands more than God.

Philanthropia is a love of mankind, an attitude of humanitarian good will.

Philagathos is the love of good men.

Ethelo is a fondness for people that can break down if the wrong words are said.

Phileo is a mutual love found between good friends. If I do you well, you do me well.

Eros today applies to sexual love. Even *eros* can come under *agape*, and it should. God desires that the sexual union in marriage would be totally fulfilling and pleasurable for the husband *and* the wife. Yet, most of the time it becomes detached from God's unconditional love because of Satan breathing out sensuality and familiarity in sexual exchange in marriage and before marriage.

Love for God is Supreme

If you have *philoteknos*, everyone will think you are a wonderful person. You may show unusual care for your children, which is not wrong

in itself. Or, if you have *philandros* or *philanthropia*—and you display an extraordinary love for mankind, people would say, "There's a *good* person." But if your love for people and things is above your love for the Lord, it is out of order.

On the other hand, when the *agape* love of God fills our hearts, we say, "God, I don't trust myself. I don't trust my own goodness. You are first in my life. Breathe upon me. Breathe upon my prayer today. Breathe upon my relationships, my thinking, my words, my vocal cords." Oh, I want to live in *God's* breath. It means that "Thy word is a lamp unto my *feet* [the human spirit] and a light unto my *path* [the Word of God reflected in preciseness]" (Psalm 119:105).

Chapter Four

A LIGHT AND A LAMP

The Word of God is a lamp unto my feet. It's what I breathe in, through my human spirit. The Word is a light unto my pathway, and it illuminates my behavior.

As we begin to understand that for all the days of his life, Satan will eat dust (Genesis 3:14), what do you think he wants the children of God to do? Of course, he wants us to eat degrees of dust through the light he provides for our lower nature. Satan breathes through the familiar spirit of a closely knit demon that works in us as a *soul mate*. He uses combinations of demons in a diversity of tactics.

One person may feed on drugs, and another may feed upon lust outside of love, or alcohol, or gossip, or negativity. In every case, they are feeding on the serpents' food. As Satan shares his life (Isaiah 59:5), serpents' eggs get into the memory center to hatch later on.

Is it any wonder that the Bible says in Isaiah 44:20, "He feedeth upon ashes: a deceived heart [referring to Satan] has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his [own] soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand?"—the "right hand," speaking of approval.

The problem is that we feed on the food prepared for us by Satan instead of feasting on the Lamb. Many Christians are eating dust instead of eating the Bread from heaven (John 6:35). We need to eat Jesus Christ's flesh (His word and substance), and drink His blood (the New Covenant of His grace, mercy, forgiveness, and love—John 6:53).

Think of the provision you have. At any moment, you can receive the breath of God upon you, causing you to live above and beyond, to live with every facet of His power.*

Just think of the power of God coming in. The beautiful work of the Holy Spirit transfers the Word of God into your memory center. As the six kinds of power take over our life and the breath of God reigns, we are no longer in bondage to addictions, to pornography, to passivity, or to prayerlessness.

As we begin to realize that the Holy Spirit controls our vocal cords, our old sin nature can't

control us. Because we're under grace, sin doesn't have dominion. Christ fulfilled the law (Romans 6:14), and we understand that the strength of sin is in the law. When God fulfilled the law, He fulfilled that which condemns and judges us every moment we live. He fulfilled the demands of the Law: It is *finished!*

And then the grace of God comes in. Grace always comes as a teacher, and it always comes with the breath of God, with mercy rejoicing against judgment. Grace always comes ready to impart, ready to initiate, ready to help, ready to pick us up.

The Comforter Has Come

One of the greatest expressions in all the Bible is when Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as "the Comforter" (Greek, *parakletos*—John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). He is the One who picks us up when we fall and stands by our side. The most precious thing about the Comforter is that when we fall down, He picks us up with the breath of God, and He brings into our soul a life from above. Now we can stand as a brand-new creation with the Word of God for a standard. When the enemy comes in like a flood, God raises up the standard against him. The Word

brings our human spirit into right thinking with God as it brings in the precious filling of the Holy Spirit. The Word brings life and light into our soul. The moment this happens, we enjoy faith rest in love.

"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17). We enjoy faith that rests in love. It means that we are breathing in as God breathes on us. We are constantly inhaling—we're inhaling heaven, provisions, and purity. We just keep on inhaling.

Spiritually, just as much as physically, we need to breathe to live. We inhale God's life, and we exhale God's life. We receive God's life, and we give God's life. His life controls us, and we end up with abundant life (John 10:10*b*).

In Isaiah 30:28, the Word of God says that the breath of the LORD brings us an overflowing or overwhelming stream into our souls. His breath caused the frost to be (Job 37:10).

Job said in 27:3, "When I was bitter, when I was complaining, when I was mourning, the Spirit of God was upon me." In other words, "Here I am, bitter and complaining, and the breath of God is in my nostrils—but instead of

inhaling God's breath, I'm inhaling something else."

In Psalm 27:12, the Word of God speaks of enemies who " breathe out cruelty." They exhale cruelty. In Acts 9:1, Saul of Tarsus breathed out threatenings as he wanted to kill the disciples of the Lord.

Today, people everywhere are breathing demonic thoughts, exhaling demonic words. But before we ever breathe out demonic words, first we have to feast on serpents' food—accusations—and allow a deceived heart to turn us aside.

When you lay down this booklet, you will continue breathing in and out spiritually, regardless of whether you are conscious of it or not.

God said that He would cause His breath to enter into us, and we would live. There is a spirit in man, and it gives understanding. The breath of God gives life. He is saying, "I formed Adam out of the dust. I created Adam and Eve with a human spirit. I gave them My *breath* and they became living souls."

Revival

What is revival? Revival is when the truth breaks us and we are preoccupied with truth as

we're occupied with Christ. Revival is when the Word quickens us (Isaiah 57:15) and revives us again and again.

John said, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). We are able to *walk* in truth because we know the truth, and the truth has made us free (John 8:32, 36). And as we walk, we inhale the Word, inhaling and exhaling God's breath.

We don't preach ourselves; we preach Christ. You have heard the Word of God and you have a choice: You can have a familiar spirit (*eggastrimuthous*), which controls most governments and many relationships, even with various degrees of love; or, you can have *pneuma theos*, the breath of God.

Allow the Lord to breathe upon you and with His breath sweep you up with His river of life. Let the springs of God flow up to heaven through your soul, and the river of life to flow out as the breath of God conquers you.

**For more about the six forms of power the believer possesses, read* Having a Heavenly Vision, *Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

Satan wants people to inhale his breath. He wants us to make a vain show in the flesh (Galatians 6:12), and to argue our cause (Job 6:24). Arguing proves nothing, but Satan wants us to argue our cause, debate our case, fight back, and react with hatred.

The Lord, however, wants us to enter into His *agape* love, and with that, allow the various degrees of love to rule every part of our lives. God wants us to enter into His life, which is derived through a Cross, in Resurrection power, and operates from the viewpoint of Ascension.

God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34); He will take over anyone who asks. A man's weaknesses cannot begin to resist the grace of God's love if he will give in through the Cross. When Jesus Christ breathes upon individuals in a congregation, He breathes upon our relationships, our thoughts, our emotions, and our volition. The most precious thing that I know of is

Jesus Christ breathing into a human spirit.

Do not live as *tsaphaph*, as someone conquered who continually speaks in their lower nature through the breath of a demon, obsessed with the dust through hypnotism. The Bible describes that person as a "whisperer," but it's more than that. It is having one's vocal cords controlled by Satan in the name of the natural man.

Make decisions. More than just passively agreeing, let the breath of God transform you. Begin to inhale and exhale in a new dimension. Breathe in God's provision. Let the life of God control your spirit, soul, and body.

Heavenly Father, we worship you, praise you, and thank you. You didn't say we are more than conquerors for nothing. You said it because we are. Cover and protect us from making wrong decisions. Keep us from any negativity in our thinking, speaking, reactions, and feelings. Bless us spiritually, physically, and financially, in every realm as we take in the breath of Life. We ask it in Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Living by Every Word of God

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the Amplified Translation. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

In this booklet, we have set forth the premise that the key to victory in the Christian life is based upon living by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. There is no other way to experience the life of Christ in our daily walk with Him. As Christians, we are called to make an invisible God visible to a lost and dying world, and appropriating the Word is our means of making Jesus Christ a reality in the lives of those who do not know Him as Lord and Savior.

Some readers may be inclined to think that to live by every word of God is to live in idealism, but this is not so. Every born-again believer must understand that God has specifically designed each individual to think and act in explicit accordance with the Scriptures. To follow anything less than the divine standards set forth in the Word of God is unacceptable to Him. Yet, God has not called us to follow a standard that is impossible to implement. He has provided a

limitless supply of grace.

The Word of God is an eternal, immutable standard, forever settled in heaven and brought into existence by the Living Word, Jesus Christ. The exact character and nature of God the Father is expressed in the life of Christ (Hebrews 1:3). Therefore, He is our perfect example of what it means to live by every Word of God. Every moment of the Lord's life, every thought and action, was a demonstration of His commitment to live in obedience to His Father's plan.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are commanded to live by every word of God. It is a privilege to carry out His will in every situation. Imagine—every conversation and every situation is a potential opportunity to appropriate the Word of God! Knowledge of the Word becomes wisdom as we, by faith, allow Jesus Christ to live His life through us.

Each believer must commit his life to follow divine precepts. In contrast, the unregenerated or carnal man employs his limited, finite, human viewpoint to evaluate the infallible Word of God. The natural man's reference point is men rather than God. Pride causes him to think that he is qualified to evaluate life based upon the data he receives from his senses. He will not ac-

cept the fact that apart from God, the capacity to know truth is impossible. He does not realize that it is impossible to evaluate life on the basis of the severely limited capacity of his senses. God declares that the Word of God alone will judge all human experience, but the Word of God will never judge the Word of God (John 12:48).

When we reach an understanding that the Word of God is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89), and that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16), we come to realize the great and awesome privilege God has given us to appropriate His divine standards in every aspect of life. As we continue in His Word, we go from faith to faith, and we realize a specific, precise, immovable provision for every detail of life. Every believer is a living epistle of the Word of God, not written on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3*b*).

Chapter One

IT IS WRITTEN

Immediately following the baptism of Jesus Christ, which marked the beginning of His public ministry, Matthew 4:1-4 explains that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. The first temptation came after Jesus had gone without food for forty days and nights.

"And the tempter came and said to Him, If You are God's Son, command these stones to be made (loaves of) bread. But He replied, It has been written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:3-4, Amplified Translation).

The Lord's response to this challenge was identical to words given to the children of Israel, in Deuteronomy 8:1-3:

"All the commandments which I command you this day you shall be watchful to do, that

you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware to give to your fathers. And you shall (earnestly) remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your (mind and) heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that He might make you recognize and personally know that man does not live by bread only, but man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord."

Note the correlation between these two circumstances. The Israelites spent forty years in the wilderness, and Jesus Christ spent forty days in the desert. These were tests to provoke a response of humility and recognition that God's instructions, through the Word of God, are the mandate by which man is to live.

Remember, Jesus Christ was God incarnate, so He had the power within Himself to overcome his hunger. Yet, He was waiting for God the Father to supply His needs. Over and over again, throughout the Gospels, we read that Jesus would do nothing without specific guid-

ance and direction from the Father, because it was the Father's work that He came to accomplish (John 17:4).

John 17:24 explains that the Father, from the foundation of the world, bestowed His gift to love the Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus describes this love as His own personal glory! Now, we only know God the Father through the Son, "For there is one God and one mediator, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). By what means did Jesus impart to us those things which the Father had given to Him from the foundation of the world?

"For the uttered words that you gave me I have given to them. And they have received and accepted them, and have come to know positively and in reality—to believe with absolute assurance—that I came forth from your presence.

"And they have believed and are convinced that you did send me. I made Your name known to them and revealed Your character and Your very self, and I will continue to make [You] known, that the love which You have bestowed upon Me may be in them—felt in their hearts—and that I [myself] may be in them" (John 17:8, 26).

Through Jesus Christ, we are adopted as

God's own children, and we can truly know God with absolute assurance. God's plan and purpose for His children, which was ordained from the foundation of the world, is that we might live for the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:12*a*). This is the glory of living by every word, because it is by the Word of God that we are sanctified, set apart for the Master's use. We are to follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Living Word, who overcame the world by obedience to His own Word.

"I have told you these things so that in Me you may have perfect peace and confidence. In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer—take courage, be confident, certain, undaunted—for I have overcome the world—I have deprived it of power to harm, have conquered it [for you]" (John 16:33).

Chapter Two

IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE

How can we possibly live by every Word of God unless we hear it? How can we have the power of God if we do not receive it? How can we be effective in serving Christ if we are not habitually involved with His people? There are those who think that being faithful to a local church is old-fashioned and not meant for today. All local assemblies which make an impact on this nation consist of members who have solid convictions about church attendance. Satan is always available to give us excuses why we should not attend services. This chapter will provide the reader with scriptural ammunition to support the Biblical principle that it is vital to assemble together with the brethren in Christ.

The Church of Jesus Christ is described in 1 Timothy 3:15 as "the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and

stay—the prop and support—of the truth."

The church is the means by which the truth of the Word of God continues to be propagated on the earth. This is the divine institution through which God the Father manifests Jesus Christ, His Son. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, "Upon this Rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Ephesians 2:20 says that the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, [with] Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone."

Therefore, it is elementary for every believer in Christ to be diligent in his commitment to the local body of believers to which God has called him. The apostle Paul exhorts believers to hold fast to the truth, without wavering in their hope.

"Not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together (as believers), as is the habit of some people, but admonishing—warning, urging, and encouraging—one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25, Amplified).

The church is the pillar and support of the truth. It is our only hope in this life, for it is the place where we receive the Word of God and the enabling power with which we serve God.

We must hear the Word of God if we are to live by its precepts.

"Not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together as believers" appears in the Greek text as *me egkataleipontes ten episunagogen heuton*. Not forsaking (*me egkataleipontes*) is a double negative adding greater force to this command. The word *episunagogen* means "to go with" and originally referred to a synagogue of the Jews. In the New Testament, it refers to the meetings of the local assembly, the church.

"As is the custom or habit of some people" appears as *kathos ethos tisin*, and means that, even then, there were believers in the habit of missing or staying away from the assembling of the church. This is a clear command not to forsake the gathering of the saints. Paul admonished them not to follow the poor example set by some church members who neglected the local assembly. The phrase "but encouraging one another" is *alla parakalountes* in the Greek. This means "to admonish, warn, urge, and encourage one another to be faithful," "to call one another aside and exhort one another to be faithful." How do you respond to those who have not been obedient to this passage? We should encourage others not to miss services. A humble

believer will joyfully accept and receive the words spoken, rather than react in negativity with excuses and hidden anger. Hebrews 3:13 says, "Warn (admonish, urge, and encourage) one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened (into settled rebellion) by the deceitfulness of sin—(that is) by the fraudulence, the strategies, the trickery which the delusive glamour of his sin may play on him."

We are to encourage one another "all the more faithfully, as [we] see the day approaching," which in the Greek is *kai tosouto mallon oso blepete eggizousan ten hemeron*, meaning "do it more and more as you see the day approaching." As the end of this age draws nearer, Satan's attempt to overcome God's kingdom becomes more and more intense. As believers, we should not be ignorant of the strategies of Satan and his demonic host. Ephesians 6:11-17 explains the spiritual warfare that is waged against the individual members of the Body of Christ. Part of our defense against the supernatural evil that is taking place in the atmosphere comes through our involvement, commitment, and faithfulness to the local assembly and pastor-teacher to which God has called us. Needless to say, with-

out a firm determination and an undaunted commitment to participate as part of a local church, the believer makes himself susceptible to demonic influence. He actually allows Satan access to his life by a choice of his own free volition.

God commands us to identify with and be active in our local church because it is established for our protection and benefit. Without the local church, God knows that we do not stand a chance. If we are not faithful to a local assembly, eventually we will be deceived in one area after another, until complete carnality takes over our lives. It is for this very reason that Jesus came full force against the temptation of Satan by declaring, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

The provision of necessary details in life (i.e., food, clothing, and money to pay the bills) are not to be the controlling factors in our lives. Concerning people who are controlled by the details of life, Jesus said, "O ye of little faith! Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:30, 33). In this verse, Jesus is making an appeal. He is emphasizing the fact that the Word of God

should have preeminence over the details of life. If we live by every word, He promises to take care of our physical needs. The Apostle Paul wrote, "And my God will liberally supply (fill to the full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Each believer should ask, "In which area of my life am I vulnerable to Satan's bid? Can I be bought for a price?" This is the question that Satan asks God about each believer. Consider the book of Job. Job had everything. Satan wanted to know whether or not Job's love for God was dependent upon God's abundant provisions in his life. Job is our supreme example in suffering, because God allowed everything he owned to be leveled and destroyed, all in one day! There are very few Christians who have endured such affliction and trial. God won the battle in Job's life, but what does it take to upset our security and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Job said, "I esteem the words of your mouth more than my necessary food" (see Job 23:12). The word "esteem" here means to hide something away or to store it carefully for use as needed. Job understood that the Word of God, which was stored in his mind and ready to be drawn from in the time of need, was more im-

portant than having the necessary food which would sustain his body.

As believers, we must exalt His Word above all else. "For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Psalm 138:2*b*). God has placed greater importance upon the words that He has spoken than upon His name. His name represents His character and nature; His name also represents His reputation and authority as Creator of the universe. God made this statement because He wants us to place the same value and emphasis upon His Word as He does. He sent Jesus to complete the work of Redemption. Jesus Christ is called "the Word" who became flesh and dwelt among us. It is impossible to separate the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from the Word of God, the Scriptures.

"In the beginning [before all time] was the Word [Christ], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself" (John 1:1).

Luke 14:12-27 gives the account of a man who prepared a great banquet. Jesus compared this banquet to eating the bread of the kingdom of God. The master invited his friends, family, and wealthy neighbors to come to dine, but many refused the invitation because of prior commitment. One man was a landowner and,

undoubtedly, felt is was more important to attend to the many details brought about by such a great responsibility. Another man replied that he must take care of his new yoke of five oxen, the means of his livelihood. Another man explained that he had to spend time with his new wife and, therefore, could not be present at the banquet.

These appear to be legitimate excuses. "I'm too busy with my property investments." "I have to take care of my work vehicle." "I can't neglect my new bride." But it is obvious that these people did not take time to realize that it was the master who bid them to come. The account in Luke chapter 14 goes on to say that the master became very angry. He sent his servant to invite to the banquet the poor, blind, disabled, and lame from the highways and byways. In the same way, the Lord invites "whosoever will come" to His banqueting feast, because He wants His house to be filled.

We are capable of putting other things before the kingdom of God. We all make good excuses to justify putting our family, home, job, and friends before God in our priorities. In striving to maintain our attachments, we often fail and miss the mark of our calling, which is to seek the

kingdom of God first in our lives. God is just and righteous. Therefore, He cannot wink an eye at our disobedience when we hold on to worldly things that keep us from being faithful to Him. Church attendance is one of the first areas where unfaithfulness to God begins to be manifested.

We must, again, learn to comprehend the priority God has placed upon His Word as the eternal truth. The church is the divinely instituted pillar or support of the truth. Therefore, we must not allow anything to enter into our hearts and lives that would cause us to abandon our commitment to faithful church attendance. If you have never made such a commitment, we urge you to do so. Let nothing keep you from committing yourself to a church that has a worldwide vision.*

* *Be sure to read,* Choosing A Local Assembly, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2001, for further study.*

Chapter Three

RESULTS OF INCONSISTENCY

Apostasy is one of the topics most thoroughly explained in the New Testament epistles. Apostasy comes from the Greek word *apostasia*, which means "a departure or series of departures." Another definition is "to draw back as a process of the free will." This word is used in the epistles to describe the process by which a believer, either consciously or unconsciously, enters into a series of departures from the truth of the Word of God.

Apostasy becomes evident in a believer's life when he begins to make negative decisions regarding his obedience to the clear commands of truth in the Scriptures. Please note that an individual is not apostate if he misses an occasional service, but if he misses habitually, this definitely would be a trend toward apostasy. Hebrews 3:12 says, "(Therefore beware) brethren; take care lest there be in any one of you a wicked, unbelieving

heart—which refuses to cleave to, trust in and rely on Him—leading you to turn away and desert or stand aloof from the living God."

Remember, there is a constant spiritual battle taking place between the kingdom of God and the evil world system ruled by Satan. Satan's strategy is to somehow cause each believer (to some degree) to forsake the Word of God, until he eventually forsakes it entirely.

Again, it is the church of Jesus Christ—the local assembly of believers—that has been ordained by God to be the propagation and support of truth in the world. Therefore, the very first evidence of negativity toward the truth is described in 2 Timothy 4:4, in that some will "turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off the myths and man-made fictions." This is an obvious reference to the fact that some Christians were unable to deal with the truth that was being preached in church. The previous verse explains that they will go from one teacher to another.

In order to grow spiritually, it is necessary for a believer to faithfully attend a local church. He will have a more personal experience with the Lord if he has a church and a pastor-teacher that he can call his own. The pastor should be al-

lowed to preach the Word in season and out of season. He should never legislate or lord it over the congregation, but lovingly lay down his life for the people whom God has given him. He should be the greatest and most humble servant in the church.

Yet, when a Bible-believing pastor preaches the Word of God in truth, it must be heard as the Word of God, and not as the word of men: "And we also (especially) thank God continually for this, that when you received the message of God (which you heard) from us, you welcomed it not as the word of (mere) men, but as what it truly is, the Word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe—exercising its (superhuman) power in those who adhere to and trust in and rely on it" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). The pastor-teacher simply communicates what can and should be verified by the believer-priest by reading the written Word. We are not dealing with the issue of false teachers here, but rather we are referring to the believer who is turning away from the objective truth of the Word.

Another form of departure is found in 2 Peter 3:17: "Let me warn you therefore, beloved, that knowing these things beforehand, you should be on your guard lest you be carried

away by the error of lawless and wicked [persons] and fall from your own [present] firm condition—your own steadfastness [of mind]." Peter is warning us to beware of conspiracies that form in the church and cause us to turn away. As time progresses, people involved in conspiracies turn against the pastor-teacher as well as against the spiritual people in the church. Hebrews 3:12 teaches that they will affect the weaker members of the Body, especially if they can find sympathizers and others who harbor a seed of rebellion. Satan revels in this activity. He injects it with momentum until he causes a full-blown conspiracy to split or destroy the local church.

Rebellious people have difficulty submitting to the visible authority of the church because they lack sufficient faith to trust God for the human inadequacies of the leadership of the pastor-teacher. In order to justify their form of rebellion, they become experts at twisting and privately interpreting the Scripture. They will remain in this deceived state until repentance takes place in their hearts.

"Jesus said, Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye

offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:28, 29). The eye here represents spiritual perception or the place where light enters into the soul. The word "right" in the Greek is *dexios*, which means that the part of the soul that will not surrender to truth must be pointed toward the truth. Specifically, Jesus is saying that there is a place in the soul of every man that will not receive and honor the absolute authority of the Word of God. The spoken Word of God will judge us on the last day.

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48, KJV).

The man who will not turn away from the sin of lust (the example used in the above passage), or any other form of mental attitude sin, will not be led to the truth. When we do not hold steadfastly to truth, mental or covert sin limits our perception of truth. Instead of making a divine impression on our hearts, truth only passes through the mind leaving us guilty, insecure, self-condemned, reactionary, rebellious,

and discouraged.

Psalm 36:9 says, "In Your light do we see light." To sin and not repent is to refuse the light. We need the light of His Word to get through the day, but unless the Word cleanses this area of sin, an evil trend will take over. Unable to submit to the light of the truth, the lust becomes more important than the Word of God. Stubbornness takes priority over humility, and grace is refused. The result is that a place is then given over to Satan.

Matthew 5:29 says, "If thy right eye offend thee…." The word for "offend" in the original text is *skandalizai*. This verb appears in the present tense, active voice, and indicative mood. This means that the subject of the sentence is continuing with certainty to produce the action of scandalizing his own emotions. The emotions of man were divinely designed to receive and appreciate truth, but sin and negativity scandalizes or incapacitates the emotions so that they react to evil stimuli. If a believer remains in this state of incapacitation, it will lead to a departure from hearing the truth (2 Timothy 4:4), unbelief (Hebrews 3:12), and apostasy. This person forsakes the assembly (Hebrews 10:25) and has no choice but to build relationships with others

who foster the same incapacity toward truth. He sustains himself on the basis of personality rapport, endorsement, and fulfillment from these friends (2 Peter 3:17).

The Word of God says, to "pluck out," whatever hinders our walk with God. The phrase "pluck it out" appears in the Greek as *ezele auton*. This verb is in the aorist tense, active voice, and imperative mood. This means that it is a clear and definite command for the subject to produce the immediate action of deciding against that which stimulates sin, so that he can move toward the Word of God. This is the only way in which an incapacity toward truth can be healed.

According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words,* "pluck it out" means "to take out with determination." This applies to any area of life where we refuse the truth of the Word. By the grace of God, cast down whatever prevents God's life from flowing through you (2 Corinthians 10:5). God promises victory. We are commanded to strike at the root of unholy inclinations, and to rid ourselves of anything that would stimulate the old sin nature. On the other hand, we are to be "set apart" through the Word of God, which He has magnified above His character, reputation, and

authority.

Once the incapacity has been plucked out, it then must be cast away. The word "cast" is *bale* in the Greek, which means "to throw with force, smite oneself with a slap, or to buffet oneself with a decision." The word also appears in the aorist tense, active voice, and imperative mood. This means that the subject is given a definite command. He is commanded to produce the immediate action of throwing away his incapacity to receive truth and, through doctrine and grace, force it out of his life!

Unless we grow in the grace of God, we will experience the frustration of Romans 7:18 and 21: "For I know that nothing good dwells within me; that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it—I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out.... So I find it to be a law (of my being) that when I want to do what is right and good, evil is ever present with me and I am subject to its insistent demands."

Each of us has experienced—either willfully or in ignorance—the tremendous power of the old sin nature. When it is combined with the satanic, cosmic, world system, we find out what it is like to be ensnared and entrapped by the force

of sin. No matter how hard we strive to improve a situation, we always come back to the same defeat.

Of course, the only Person great enough to overcome sin is Jesus Christ, who is the Living Word. The Word of God is quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). The Word brought about creation, framed the heavens, and holds all things together. It reveals the Cross, the Blood sacrifice, grace, and salvation as a free gift through Jesus Christ. Through the Word, the Holy Spirit creates a hunger and thirst for righteousness, a tender desire to glorify Christ, and a pure and innocent motivation to magnify the Word of God. We have victory when we execute our will to agree precisely with the eternal Word.

The God of all power, who created the entire universe, reaches down in love and joins the five parts of our soul (the mind, conscience, emotions, self-consciousness, and free volition) with God's divine thought patterns. God produces a heavenly life of power in each believer. Divine illumination in the heart of man takes over human capacity and causes us to think in the power of God's Word, as well as to reveal the attributes of God in practical behavior.

Chapter Four

THE WORD AS OUR FRAME OF REFERENCE

A believer's premise for life is Matthew 4:4: "Man shall not live and be upheld and sustained by bread only, but by every Word that comes forth from the mouth of God." We have seen the importance of consistency and faithfulness to hearing, receiving, and obeying the Word of God. Let us turn our attention to what is, perhaps, the most crucial aspect of living by every Word of God: loving the Word of God. The Psalmist cried out to God, "Your Word is very pure—tried and well-refined; therefore your servant loves it" (Psalm 119:140). Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

The objective and realistic believer must soon come to the conclusion that the Word of God is the only true authority in his life. Pro-

verbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seems right to a man and appears straight before him, but at the end of it are the ways of death." Jeremiah 17:9 declares, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly perverse and corrupt and severely, mortally sick! Who can know it (perceive, understand, be acquainted with his own heart and mind)?"

Again, the believer who thinks objectively in agreement with the Word is convinced that he cannot trust his own heart. The Word of God promises not only to keep him from an evil path, but also to guide him in the way of truth. The eternal Word will penetrate our being, dividing our soul and spirit: "For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power—making it active, operative, energizing and effective; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and (the immortal) Spirit, and of the joints and marrow (that is, of the deepest parts of our nature) exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

The believer who perceives the Word of God in this way has no choice but to make every commandment the norm and standard for his

life. Regardless of circumstances or feelings, he must decide that the Word will reign in his heart, since he is determined to conform to its every command. God's love and grace have been bestowed upon us through Redemption that is ours in Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must determine to esteem the Word of God and every precept as right, just, and holy.

"I considered my ways; I turned my feet to obey Your testimonies.… Your testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, even to the end. I hate the thoughts of the undecided (in religion) double-minded people: but Your law do I love" (Psalm 119:59, 111-113).

We must allow the Word to have entrance into our hearts and minds. Also, we must become responsible, as well as accountable, before the Lord. The Holy Spirit has promised to convict us in all areas of sin and unrighteousness. Therefore, we must respond to His conviction with repentance and humility rather than reacting in pride and arrogance. James 4:5 says that God yearns for the Holy Spirit to be welcomed into our hearts. "The Spirit whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us—and He yearns

for the spirit [to be welcome]—with a jealous love" (James 4:5*b*).

What should our frame of reference be toward the Word of God? We should love the Word and always be ready to receive it with a humble mind in submission to the authority of God. To do otherwise would be to exalt ourselves against the truth of God, turning away from objectivity and reality into a form of proud, emotional subjectivity. Since we are in a sinful condition, we must humble ourselves before God in repentance. We must have a willing heart to obey every area of truth.

In one of His weakest moments, Jesus responded to temptation by saying, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4).

Jesus did not consider the fact that He had not eaten for forty days and nights. His circumstances mattered not, for it is written! The phrase "It is written" is *gregraptai* in the Greek. It appears in the perfect tense, passive voice, and indicative mood. The perfect tense indicates that it was written in the past, stands as it was written, and is still in full force and effect today. Kenneth Wuest refers to it as "the existence of

finished results in present time." The passive voice denotes that the subject receives the action produced by the verb. Jesus as well as Satan, receives the action and the force of "It is written."

However, note that the very next verb in this verse is *zesetai*, the Greek word for "shall live." It appears in the present tense, active voice, and imperative mood. A man himself produces the action by choosing in his free volition to live by every Word of God. The necessity for food is a detail of life, and we are not to be occupied with our need. We are commanded to be controlled by the Word of God and not by the details of life.

Chapter Five

THE ABUNDANT LIFE

John 10:10*b* says, "I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance—to the full, till it overflows." This chapter will deal with the benefits that committed believers will receive for temporal or experiential blessings to be enjoyed in this life, and eternal blessings that will be experienced in heaven.

Fullness of Life: The Body of Christ

Jesus Christ desires that every believer would have life in abundance—"to the full, until it overflows." How do we experience this abundant life? This question is answered in Ephesians 1:23: "Which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all—for in that body lives the full measure of Him Who makes everything complete, and who fills everything everywhere (with Himself)." Psalm 133 teaches us about the blessings we receive when the brethren dwell to-

gether in unity.

One of the greatest problems in the world today is loneliness. So many people think that no one understands or cares about them, but in the Body of Christ we are able to bear one another's burdens. Generally, it is not the problems people face that cause them heartache, but it is the fact that they feel as though they are the *only* ones who have these kinds of burdens.

Satan loves to isolate people from the life of Jesus Christ in His corporate Body. Those people do not have Christ's life to meet the needs of their situation. John 5:40 says, "And still you are not willing (but refuse) to come to me, so that you might have life."

If you do not come to Jesus Christ, how can you have His life? If you do not hear the Word, how can you have faith for your personal life? If you do not show yourself friendly, how can you have friends? (See Proverbs 18:24.)

When you go through a trial, do not withdraw from hearing the Word. Draw near! The Word of God promises that if you draw near to God and His people, He will draw near to you! James 4:8 states: "Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that

you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery]." The result of drawing close to God will be that you begin to overflow with the life of God. You will be able to comfort others in the same way that God has comforted you (2 Thessalonians 2:16).

Our Self-Image is Changed

You are what you hear, therefore be very careful how you listen. If you are not mixing faith with what you hear from the Word of God, then listening will be unprofitable. Your self-image will reflect what you hear by faith. There are millions who suffer from a poor self-image. Since the fall of man, we have been plagued by a poor self-image, one which stems from our awareness of sin. Every human being is searching for a new self-image "in Adam," but many do not fully understand that when we are born-again, our self-image and identity is found only in Christ.

Satan wants your past failures to determine your identity. He wants what other people say about you to become your self-image. Satan wants you to deny what God says in His Word. The place where we assemble together to wor-

ship and to hear the Word of God is where we begin to learn, from eternal viewpoint, who we really are "in Christ." The Psalmist said, "I will walk at liberty and at ease, for I have sought, inquired for (and desperately required) your precepts" (Psalm 119:45).

Romans 5:8 displays the divine genius of the unlimited atonement of Christ, in that He loved us and died for us before we believed. Those who are in Christ, by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), have been justified, acquitted, made righteous, and have been put into right standing with God as we await the day of Redemption.

Romans 8:31-34 teaches an evident truth: In the eyes of God, every believer is in a state of positional perfection—he can never be charged with sin. Psalm 103:12 says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." People cannot condemn or accuse us of sin because they are commanded not to judge. Judging brings error and defilement into the heart of the one who judges, thereby disqualifying a person to stand against another in judgment.

Furthermore, Satan is precluded from passing judgment and condemnation to the believer,

who is "in Christ," because God does not see our sin. He only sees the blood of Christ that was shed on our behalf.

From these facts we come to the conclusion that God is for us (Romans 8:31*b*). *God is for us!* Do we live in the practical application of this truth? Romans 8:35-39 explains that nothing is able to separate us from the love of God:

"Who shall ever separate us from Christ's love? Shall suffering and affliction and tribulation? Or calamity or distress? Or persecution, or hunger, or destitution, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written, For Thy sake we are put to death all the day long; we are regarded and counted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet amid all these things we are more than conquerors and gain a surpassing victory through Him Who loved us.… that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things impending and threatening, nor things to come, nor powers, Nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The love of Christ causes us to be more than conquerors because we have already obtained the surpassing victory in everything through the Lord Jesus Christ! John 16:33 explains: "I have

told you these things so that in Me you may have perfect peace and confidence. In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer—take courage, be confident, certain, undaunted! For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you]."

The work of Redemption is finished. Sin has been dealt with entirely. Jesus has finished the work and now says that He will freely give us all things. The unlimited atonement proves the surpassing greatness of God's love.

"But God shows and clearly proves His (own) love for us by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The Old Testament was given to provide examples of the way God dealt with man in a variety of different settings. Zechariah 3:1-4 gives an account of Satan as he stood before the throne of God and accused the High Priest, Joshua. Joshua was guilty of the sin for which he was accused, for it says that he was clothed with filthy garments. The Lord's response to this situation was to remove Joshua's filthy garments and clothe him in rich apparel. This is a beautiful

picture of the righteousness of God covering Joshua's sins.

The fact is that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Everyone is truly guilty before God. The choice is up to us whether or not we are going to believe the accusation of our own self-consciousness, the pointed fingers of others, and the fiery accusations of Satan. We can, however, choose to believe God and live in the truth that righteousness has been fulfilled within us through Christ. We must step into the light and confess our sin (1 John 1:9). We sin by nature, but we must believe the second part of 1 John 1:9 which says we are forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness. Recovery from sin takes place the moment we decide to believe God and agree with His truth, then we stand in grace. Concerning our inheritance in Christ, if we are saved, nothing can ever change, even when we fail and sin. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Our self-image becomes rooted in the character of Jesus Christ. His image becomes our image as we reflect His nature. "Now the Lord

is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—emancipation from bondage, freedom. And all of us, as with an unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in every increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

Our Families Are Transformed

The Word changes as we hear it. It never returns void (Isaiah 55:11). We become particular members in the Body of Christ, and our self-image is changed. Then, God begins to work in the lives of those closest to us. Our families are touched by the stabilizing influence of the Word of God as it becomes the norm and standard around which family life revolves. The value of godly families is immeasurable. They are the salt of the earth, the preservers of Christ's life in the world. God becomes very beautiful for our situations. Our children have the opportunity of being influenced by the pastor-teacher, Christian school, and the youth ministry. Truly, one individual's obedience to live by every Word of God

will make a profound difference in the lives of others. "So by one Man's obedience the many will be constituted righteous—made acceptable to God, brought unto right standing with Him" (Romans 5:19*b*).

Our World is Turned Upside Down

"…They dragged Jason and some of the brethren before the city authorities, crying, these men who have turned the world upside down have come here also" (Acts 17:6).

One of the greatest privileges Christians can experience is to be a part of a ministry which is affecting the entire world. Our prayers and support play a vital role in sending out laborers to the mission field. If we cannot go to the mission field, we can become an active part of sending those who are able to go. It all begins when we decide to live by every word of God. The Word affects our frame of reference. Then, our cup (or capacity for life) overflows into our self-image, family, close friends, and into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world.

Again, this happens when the love of Jesus Christ is shed abroad in our hearts and His life overflows to others. This is a direct result of faithfully and consistently hearing the Word of God

in a local assembly. This is why Proverbs 23:7*a* says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." When we orient our thoughts to His thoughts, we are set free from our natural, limited frame of reference.

Temporal and Eternal Rewards

"But, on the contrary, as the Scripture says, What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and has not entered into the heart of man, [all that,] God has prepared—made and keeps ready—for those who love Him [who hold Him in affectionate reverence, promptly obeying Him and gratefully recognizing the benefits He has bestowed]" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

"And [then] when the Chief Shepherd is revealed you will win the conqueror's crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:4).

"He who receives and welcomes and accepts you, receives and welcomes and accepts Me; and he who receives and welcomes and accepts Me, receives and welcomes and accepts Him Who sent Me" (Matthew 10:41).

The rewards God has given us in this life are truly more than we could ever ask or think.

"And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or par-

ents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luke 18:29-30).

Believers who are overcomers will receive crowns of glory that never fade away. Other crowns will also be given to those who have endured trials and magnified Christ amidst great difficulties.

Every reward will come by living by *every* word of God.

CONCLUSION

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12).

We will receive every blessing that those in the front line of the mission field will receive, if we are one with them and faithful to support them with all of our heart.

When we are part of a local assembly that is obedient to the heavenly vision of Acts 26:19, the fruit is endless. We will not know, until we get to heaven, the value of being found faithful to our local church. Finally, remember the strategies of the devil and combat them with a vow to continually draw near to God and His people during the times ahead. God will provide His abounding grace to help us each time we are in need. It is our prayer that the following words of our Lord Jesus Christ will dwell richly in your heart as you choose to follow the Lord's example:

“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4, KJV).

Living Epistles of Grace

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

We live in an age when information comes at us from practically every angle. There are now hundreds of television channels, many of which run hour after hour of news programming.

Our computers connect us to the Internet with its millions of sites and links that direct us to limitless streams of data. We carry cell phones that keep us all "in touch."

Really, we have reached the point of overload. No wonder there has been an explosion in the cases of mental neuroses and psychoses. There are just too many facts and figures for the average person to sort through and process.

Yet, despite all the technology, God still chooses that men and women be the primary vehicles of communicating His Gospel, His message. The Great Commission, to go into all the world to preach the Gospel and make disciples, is still in effect. He works in our lives so that oth-

ers may see His great grace and goodness.

This booklet is intended to edify believers in the pursuit of God and in following His call. Through these pages, my hope is that readers will see the importance of living as walking love letters from God, as living epistles of grace.

Chapter One

OVERCOMING THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

"But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:7-10).

In verse 7, the Holy Spirit makes a definite statement through the apostle Paul, referring to the great gifts that Jesus Christ has imparted:

"For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

This passage reveals what God wants for His people, for new believers and older believers alike. The Word of God teaches that Jesus wants us to have love, a sound mind, and the power of God. He wants us to be able to live without a spirit of fear that causes anxiety, frustration, perplexity, and depression.

It is amazing how many people live in their insecurities. For example, something may have happened in your family, and as a result you are insecure and you have fear. Instead of the love of God and the power of God's grace operating freely in your mind, the spirit of fear takes over. You know that perfect love casts out fear, but if you do not let love do its work, then fear keeps you from realizing the manifestation of the perfect love of God. When fear gets so deep within your soul, it is a fear that only the love of God can take care of.

Someone else may have difficulty feeling accepted. That person lives in the insecurity of rejection. Something in his background, in his heredity, upbringing, or environment, has harassed him and made it impossible for him to live and be occupied with God's love.

Someone reading this may be in very deep financial difficulty. Perhaps you do not even know where your next meal is coming from, yet God has not given you the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

The Lord wants you to know that He has given you something. The first thing is power, the second thing is love, and the third thing is a sound mind. The Holy Spirit revealing the character of Jesus Christ is producing within you the spirit and the life of Jesus Christ.

You Stand Forgiven

Every time that you are troubled and tormented by fear and insecurity, just remember: God did not give that to you. It did not come from Jesus Christ.

Maybe you have fallen and you have sinned, and as a result you have fear. Perhaps you understand the mechanics of rebound, the mechanics of eternal life and the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and the mechanics of the sovereignty of God's impartation of His divine nature. You may understand all of that, but you still have fear—not the fear that is reverent toward God, but the fear that causes torment.

Perhaps you have fallen before, and you

failed recently, and there is a subjective projection in your objective mind that says, "God doesn't really trust you, and He doesn't trust you to carry on in your Christian life."

A spirit of fear comes in, but it doesn't come from Jesus, because Jesus has cleansed you from that sin. If you have confessed it and, with a sincere and honest heart, you are willing to let the Holy Spirit take over, then you can be assured that your fellowship with God is established and restored. You can continue going forward just as if you never did it. Furthermore, God never imputed it to you because of the principle of positional truth.

God has not given us the spirit of fear! Thank Him and praise Him. Worship Him in your spirit, because God is not giving you the spirit of fear. He is giving you power—power to overcome weakness through His strength. Power to overcome condemnation through Romans 8:1. You do not have to fail the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15). You do not have to be grounded in a root of bitterness or a root of fear. Instead, you can be standing in grace (Romans 5:2), rooted and grounded in the love of God (Ephesians 3:17), and able to believe God. In everything, you can quietly praise His name in your heart,

because He has not given you the spirit of fear.

No Disease Shall Triumph Over You

Someone reading this may have a fatal disease. Maybe it's cancer. Perhaps you are suffering in your body, and you have a very definite disease that will cripple you, paralyze you, or hinder you until God takes you home. That is what it appears to be, and that is what you've been told. You fear sickness and disease. You fear old age. You fear affliction.

But God has not given us the spirit of fear. You don't have to live in fear of sickness and disease. First of all, you should believe God that He will heal you, and ask Him to touch your body. Believe Him with all of your heart, and praise Him for your healing.

In Framingham, Massachusetts, someone came up to me in a service and said, "I was sitting in the pew and all you did was pray for about two or three minutes at the end of the service that God would touch the sick." She had been diagnosed with a growth in her intestines and it had caused her great pain for 11 months. Just at the end of the service—a service at the end of which 13 people professed to have received Christ as their Savior—we stopped and

asked God to touch the afflicted.

He touched this woman. That week, she went to the doctors to get an x-ray, and sure enough the pain had left because the growth had gone.

How precious it is that God has not given us the spirit of fear. Let's say that we do pray—that we ask God and believe God that whatever our condition is He will heal us. Suppose, however, that God wants to do another kind of work in our hearts and wants to give us the grace that's sufficient? In this case, we just thank God that we don't need to have the spirit of fear, even if He doesn't take away the disease. We can love Him and glorify Him and just believe Him, knowing that if we are confessed up-to-date, this is God's perfect will for our life. His plan could be to glorify Himself in our affliction as He did with the apostle Paul.

Oh, thank God that He's given us the spirit of power, the spirit of love, and the spirit of a sound mind. I thank God we don't operate with a sense of insecurity. We don't have to put everyone in our mold. We don't have to fear if everyone doesn't agree with us. We don't have to worry about this one who goes to the right and that one who goes to the left. We can bal-

ance our lives in the throne ministry of Jesus Christ. Thank God that we can trust Him.

I recall seeing little Rachel, a little girl who had been run over by a lawn mower. She has gone in and out of the hospital again and again. Yet, she is always so sweet. Never complains. She's not disturbed over her affliction. She always has a great big smile and gives me a great big hug. That little sweetheart demonstrated more childlike faith than we have seen in a long while in a lot of adult believers. Everything is okay with her. I mean, she doesn't know all the details but she's rejoicing in her affliction. It's beautiful and it's precious! Oh, how God uses the children and their childlike faith to teach us what He wants out of us in every situation and every trial.

Chapter Two

THE SECRET OF GOD'S MOVING

What is the secret of God's moving in a church?

Someone once asked me that very question. He was really asking for an explanation of corporate body truth.

The number one secret to the move of God is that everyone in the assembly recognizes that we're all growing together.

Secondly, we are learning obedience.

Thirdly, the best we know how, through the grace of God and through the Holy Spirit, we love each other.

Fourthly, we are willing to grow and not rely on a formula just because some popular leader advocates it. We're willing to grow in grace and knowledge in all areas as we decrease and allow Him to increase (John 3:30). Certain philosophies gain acceptance, and some people live in insecurity because others abuse the true reality of

God's Holy Spirit.

Someone once said to me, "When we walk into your church, it just seems that the love of God is all over the place. We feel at home, and we just feel that love is there, and life is there. What's your secret?"

The secret, I think, is that we are learning how to worship. We're learning how to put our spirit, soul, and body into honoring Jesus, praising Jesus, loving Jesus, and responding to Jesus.

I think we've come to understand that Jesus loves us just as much as He loves the Father. And, I think we're beginning to enter into the experience that we can love one another with the same kind of love.

The preciousness of God's love is in the fact that I can love you with all my heart and soul and strength, and I can love God with all my heart and soul and strength, because Jesus in me does the loving, the motivating, the energizing, and the manifesting of that love.

As one expression of the Body of Christ, we are learning that divine love has no insecurity. Divine love is unchangeable. Divine love cannot be offended. Divine love isn't critical. It does not judge. It accepts the judgment of Calvary instead of executing judgment on a personal level.

Divine love is able to restore when someone fails, always relating to others in the spirit of meekness and always speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Divine love always carries a burden for the other person (Galatians 6:2). We consider ourselves lest we would also be tempted.

Receive Others As Christ Received You

When we are living as epistles of grace, relating in an atmosphere of receiving one another as Jesus received us (Romans 15:7), loving one another as Jesus loves us (John 15:12), we have the unity of the Spirit that builds "faith fields"—surrounded in areas of need with the special healing presence of God and the assurance that He has done it. Five of us chase a hundred, and a hundred chase ten thousand and put them to flight (Leviticus 26:7, 8).

We acknowledge that we are sinners, and in ourselves we are worms, totally incapable of being consistent, totally incapable of loving, totally incapable of being true in our relationships. Though we don't want to, we'll always find times when we criticize one another and hurt each other. Therefore, we must consider ourselves as nothing before God, but also thank

Him with all our hearts for the Holy Spirit, for His love, and for the Word of God. By faith, we receive the continuing love and the continuing grace of that spirit. Then, that love casts out fear, insecurity, emotional disturbances, depression, grief, and anxiety, because we are just conscious of God's love.

We are not occupied with the fact that somebody isn't doing right. We are occupied with what Jesus has done perfectly. We are not occupied in thinking about how someone mistreated us. We never judge a motive and we never judge an appearance. We understand that we are going to live a life where we don't judge motives and we don't judge appearances. We are going to let Jesus be God, and we are simply going to be servants and friends of His, in love with Him.

Chapter Three

OUR HIGH AND HOLY CALLING

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:8-9).

I was thinking of that word "calling." I thank God that Jesus called me out of the business world, laid it upon my heart to pray, and laid it upon my heart to study His Word in the way that He provided for me.

I have a high and a holy calling. I wouldn't trade the high and holy calling for anything in the world. I wouldn't sell it for sin. I wouldn't sell it for lust. I wouldn't sell it for material gain. I wouldn't sell it for silver. I wouldn't sell it for

popularity. I wouldn't sell it for convenience. I wouldn't sell it for anything. It is my high and holy calling.

Glory be to God, this high calling is not according to my works, because in my flesh I am egocentric and wicked and deceitful. Rather, my high calling is mine according to His purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

I thank God that He had me in mind and that He had you in mind. Every child of God has a high and a holy calling.

I wouldn't sell my calling for division. I've told my staff that no matter what it is, don't do anything or say anything that will cause division. We're not going to compromise, but let's exhaust diplomacy. Let's exhaust every option available through divine love and divine grace in order to keep the unity of the faith (Ephesians 4:13), which the Holy Spirit has already established.

Unity in the Spirit

There is nothing more beautiful than the Holy Spirit's unity. Psalm 133 describes it as an ointment poured down upon us. It flows down the head, down the beard, and to the edges of

our garments. There isn't anything more beautiful than the dew of Mount Hermon, which represents the fresh grace of God coming down from heaven, through the Holy Spirit, revealing Jesus.

The ointment of the Holy Spirit comes down from Jesus our Head and goes into the inner roots of our souls and the inner habits of our lives. It flows out from us through the corporate body. The Body is blessed, and God commands a blessing forevermore (Psalm 133:3).

There isn't anything more beautiful than to experience through the Word of God and by the grace of God the joy, the love, the suffering, the trials, the victory, and the peace of a high and holy calling.

There are those who are seeking to be great, those who are climbing the business ladder. But if you're a Christian, simply trust Jesus to equip you for whatever your occupation is. Obey Him and let His Holy Spirit fill you moment-by-moment. Just thank God that you have been called out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13).

God doesn't see your old nature. He has done away with it forever, positionally. You are complete and pure (Acts 15:9). You are free (John

8:36). You can pray and be heard. If you've fallen, you can confess it and instantly, experientially, you are restored. You can sing, and Jesus sings in our midst (Hebrews 2:12).

Jesus Christ, through His precious grace and love, has given you a high and a holy calling. Don't let your occupation make it anything less. Your vocation is to fellowship with God, to worship God, and to love the brethren just as much, with God's love.

Your vocation is to be a soul winner. Your vocation is to communicate Jesus Christ. Your vocation is to live in the power of Jesus Christ's Finished Work. Your occupation is simply an opportunity to communicate the power and purpose and Person of your vocation and to manifest His characteristics.

There isn't anything any greater than the high and holy calling to be a Christian—to be sealed, to be saved, to be a living epistle of grace. Don't take it lightly. Don't discredit it. When you sing, sing with all your might (Ecclesiastes 9:10). When you pray, pray lovingly and with all your might.

Put Jesus First

Judas Iscariot put silver ahead of his calling.

Many are called and few are chosen (Matthew 22:14). Judas put silver first. Don't put silver ahead of love. Don't put silver ahead of forgiveness. Don't put silver ahead of unity. Don't put silver ahead of worship. Don't put silver ahead of soul winning. Don't put silver ahead of prayer meetings.

You say, "I don't want to get rich; I just want to make a good living." Well, make sure that you're living good through the power of Jesus Christ before you think of making even a good living.

Some people are putting silver first. It makes them irritable. It makes them critical. They find it easy to judge. They've got to have everything their way. Amillion years from tonight they'll be facing Jesus Christ. A billion years from tonight the issue won't be what they did in their job or their business. It will be what Jesus did through them in the corporate body of Christ, the fullness of God that fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22-23). It will be how much we let grace and love work through us. The issue will be how much we allowed divinity to work through our humanity to bring an eternal purpose in the eternal grace of God's remuneration for letting His Spirit flow through us.

Simply, the thing that will matter is this: Did we live as epistles of grace?

Don't let your intellect come between you and God in this divine fellowship. Don't rationalize everything and try to put it in a test tube, but just receive the promises and accept the Word. Don't rationalize, but instead remember that you have been given a high and holy calling to live by faith, by receiving a promise, believing it, and obeying it. Experience the divine nature of that promise. We have been instructed by God to live by the promises of God. In everything, we are to give thanks.

Don't let intellectual rationalization interfere with the blessings of your high and holy calling. Don't let defeat interfere. Maybe you've failed miserably, but don't let that interfere. You still have a high and holy calling. Jesus will never leave you. He still wants to use you, and that is why you are still alive. Jesus doesn't want defeat to interfere with your high and holy calling to live as His epistle of grace.

His calling is high and it is holy. Jesus is living inside of you. Don't let sin and lust get in the way. Don't let doubting and unbelief compromise your call. Just experience it. Grow in it. Thank God for it and love it. It's a very precious

calling.

When you go to bed tonight, thank God for it. When you get up in the morning, thank God for it. When you see your first person of the day, thank God for him. It's a high and a very holy calling, and it is according to grace. It is according to grace!

Chapter Four

LET GRACE MOVE YOUR MOUNTAINS

"Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it" (Zechariah 4:7).

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

In Zechariah 4:7, the Holy Spirit said to Zerubabbel, "Remove this mountain. Remove this mountain by grace." That is the true meaning of that verse. Every mountain we have can be removed by grace, and it will become a plain. And no matter what your mountain obstacles are, they can be removed not by good works, not by struggling, not by a second blessing, not by this and not by that, but by the pure grace of

God's love.

Receive the manifestation of your holy calling, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of God, and the grace of His mercy as God ministers to your heart in the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:5, Galatians 3:5).

Thank God, grace removes the mountain.

How do you feel about what God has done for you? You were deceitful and desperately wicked, on the road to hell. One day you heard the Gospel. You said, "Lord Jesus, I don't even understand it, but will You come into my heart?"—and He did. He has forgiven one sin after another that you've committed. He has forgiven them forever and cast them into the sea (Micah 7:19). He remembers them no more (Hebrews 8:12).

If you sin now, it breaks temporal fellowship. Continued sin takes away your assurance of God's presence. Nevertheless, your sins are not imputed to your account (Romans 4:7-8). You have received a grace whereby the Holy Spirit doesn't leave you, even when you grieve Him; grace whereby divine love is still available, even when you enter into human love and sentimentality. You have received the grace of God whereby you have the corporate body of Jesus

Christ—the fellowship of like-minded believers who receive and impart His character as they operate in the plan of God, as He has set each one in place for a particular purpose (1 Corinthians 12:4-27).

We ought to be so in love with Jesus that we automatically would know no man after the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16). We ought to be so in love with Jesus that we could forgive and restore any brother at anytime in the spirit of love. We ought to be so loving that we wouldn't use our tongue to criticize or judge anyone, because God says not to. We ought to be able to be so in love with Jesus that we feel, "I'm unworthy, but I have received grace. I am unworthy, but I have received love, and I will make sure people receive it from me. I am going to make sure that Jesus Christ ministers it through me to them, just as I have received grace." Let us be ministers of the same love as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

I was thinking the other day of how we received this beautiful grace, yet we often refuse to minister it. Many people come out and say, "I'm not going to put up with this." They begin to make conditions pertaining to people, and they begin to make conditions with God. They

begin to judge people and to be unkind and rude because of jealousy and envy, and the motive is never what they think it is.

How Spiritual People Live

Spiritual people know that Adam is deceitful. Spiritual people esteem others. Spiritual people love, and think no evil. Spiritual people are kind, fervent, and unchanging in their attitude of grace toward the weakest member of the Body. They will receive others, but not unto doubtful disputation.

Spiritual people do not need to prove that they are right, but they will prefer others, lay down their lives (1 John 3:16), and be silent. They will lay down their lives and minister grace and love. And if they are right, God will vindicate them. But in the meantime, they will manifest something that the other person needs desperately.

You don't have to defend yourself. You don't have to argue and rationalize. As mature believers, we don't have to prove anything. We just acknowledge that we are weak sinners, saved by grace.

I Deserve Nothing

I am a weak sinner. I'm standing on no human merits. I do not deserve love, or grace, or power. I do not deserve this ministry. I do not deserve a thing. I do not deserve a thing but hell. I do not deserve a thing but judgment and condemnation, and I'm not saying this just to say words. I do not deserve a single thing. And the longer I'm in the ministry, the more I love and appreciate grace and love and mercy and the Holy Spirit's power to keep me through grace.

I don't deserve it. I don't deserve anything from God or anybody, and that's how we must approach God. I don't deserve anything from anybody. I don't deserve to prove I'm right. I don't deserve anything. But tonight, by God's grace, I've received forgiveness. My name is written in heaven. I've received the Holy Spirit, and I can continually be filled with the gift of salvation.

God is no respecter of persons. By the grace of God, Paul said, "I am standing in that grace" (perfect tense) (Romans 5:2). Grace will remove all my mountains, and I can minister the same grace as a good steward of God.

Why are we here on earth? Just to let God's

love and grace flow to us and through us, so we can minister the life of the invisible God, His character, His nature, and His power. When somebody doesn't deserve love, give him love anyway. Give him something he doesn't deserve, kindly and sweetly and cheerfully.

Confess Jesus Christ and confess love. Praise God and build up the Body. Edify one another. Minister to one another when you are with them and minister to them when you are not. You are not ministering to the flesh; you are ministering grace.

We are living epistles of grace, known and read by all.

CONCLUSION

What is revival? It is receiving something I don't deserve and then letting Jesus communicate it to other people that don't deserve it. Living in revival means always receiving the love and power of God that we don't deserve, and always letting the Holy Spirit shed it abroad, as one continuation of receiving and giving grace.

My tongue ought to be under grace. My mind ought to be under the grace of God. My emotions ought to be rooted in the grace of God. My decisions ought to be rooted in the Word of God and in the mind of Christ and the grace of God. We are just epistles of grace (2 Corinthians 3:2), written on the hearts of every man.

Remember that your high and holy calling has a purpose—to receive and minister grace, to communicate grace. When you're awake, thank God for grace. And today, whatever you do, just come to God as you are and receive what you need continually. Then, be willing to share it and

to minister it.

Thank God that you're an epistle of grace. You are the only Bible that some people will read. Don't be a person who feels that God has given you the right to be a judge at the Tree of Knowledge. He has given you the privilege of being a sinner saved by grace to minister Jesus Christ twenty-four hours a day.

Living in Divine Absolutes

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3).

Week in, week out, month in, month out, a believer needs to make sure that he never deviates from the foundation of Christ. He must keep building properly on that foundation through the absolutes of the Word of God. Otherwise, his capacity for the moral precepts of the Word will deteriorate, and life will become nothing more than a religious game.

We live in an age of relativity. Few hold onto truth. "Situation ethics" promotes inconsistency and a lack of stability in society. The effects have been devastating, even in the Church.

God's Word is absolute. Everything the Bible says about the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are facts. God is not a man that He should lie. This booklet will show that the only "house" equipped to weather the storms of this world's system are those constructed of divine absolutes

that rest on the sure foundation of Jesus Christ.

Chapter One

HAVING AN EVERLASTING FOUNDATION

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward"

(1 Corinthians 3:9-14).

Every believer must be careful and honest about how he is building on the foundation. Every moment, every thought, every relationship, every conversation is building something on God's foundation. The believer's foundation is Jesus Christ. Yet, if we build upon it wood, hay, and stubble, the structure will be easily destroyed, though the foundation remains.

The unrighteous, however, build houses of clay on foundations of dust, and they are crushed like a moth (Job 4:19).

Picture an old rundown shack, a very poor structure without a foundation. I wouldn't want to be there on a windy day. Yet, I would feel very secure in a strong house that was established on a sure foundation. That house wouldn't go anywhere in the midst of a storm. "As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation" (Proverbs 10:25).

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

Do you want teaching from a pulpit that

adds to or takes away from the Word in order to accommodate your flesh and your habits? What kind of structure would that sort of ministry produce? Certainly, not a good one. Whatever God commands us, we must be available for Him to do through us. We cannot add to it nor diminish it (see Deuteronomy 12:32).

Every time I preach, I have to teach the Word as it is written—I cannot take away from it, nor can I add to it. Because of the condition of your heart, on a given day you may adore a message that builds you up. The next message you hear, however, may stir you with solemn conviction. The Word is still doing the same work, but it may hurt because it is rooting out what needs to be rooted out in order to make you mature.

Furthermore, I am to teach *everything* in the Word of God; every pastor is charged to present the entire scope of the Scriptures. There is no such thing as a "better" sermon from a pulpit where the whole counsel of God is being taught. Certain messages may seem more relevant because of what the listener is going through; but really, every word is relevant. Either we *are* going through something or we will be, and we need the Word to make it through.

What "All" and "Every" Mean

"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6).

"…It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Is it clear what God means by the words "all" and "every"? Pastors must preach *all* the Scriptures, for they are all inspired. Every believer is to live by *every* word of God. Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Jesus Christ and His Word—all of it—must be our foundation. If not, then we are sure to have problems in our marriages, families, and friendships. If our foundation is flawed, the structure will never look right to God.

Attitudes and Additions

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

"And if any man shall take away from the

words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:18-21).

Consider this: Have you ever added to the Bible by being angry, critical, envious, jealous, or petty? Those attitudes add something that accommodate the flesh. We cannot afford to add things to justify our wrong thinking or our sinful lifestyle. We have to lay a foundation against the time to come (1 Timothy 6:19).

Because of decisions against God and God's Word, America is in the midst of a cycle of discipline from God. Therefore, we have to be very careful about maintaining our foundation. We must take heed to build upon it one day at a time, in the grace and love of God.

Paul wrote, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11)

Chapter Two

THE GRACE FOR GRACE STANDARD

Ponder this in your hearts: The believer's foundation is the pure grace of God, motivated by the love of God. This foundation enables us to experience the forgiveness of God whereby we receive the cleansing and purging from the guilt of sin. We have the possibility of becoming new, moment by moment.

"In the beginning…." Everything about our foundation began with the Book of Genesis. In this book we have the first marriage, the first family, the first sin (and the results of it), and redemption. Genesis records the first blood offering made by God for Adam and Eve. In obedience to God, Abel also brought a blood offering, but Cain, in rebellion, brought an offering of vegetables. One saved, one lost—and the lost one murdered the saved one. Why? Cain had removed himself from the foundation laid

by God.

In Genesis, God said He would make man in His image. So He formed Adam from the dust of the earth, then He took Eve out of Adam and gave her to him. In the heart of eternity, the foundation for marriage was God uniting a man and a woman as a picture of the oneness of the Trinity. The man is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, and the woman is to submit to him (see Ephesians 5:22-25). What has happened? The foundation for marriage has been destroyed. Homosexuals are now granted licenses to marry one another, to receive government assistance, and, in some states, to adopt children. God's foundation is mocked. Lesbians with lesbians, homosexuals with homosexuals, bringing reproach upon God's perfect plan (see Leviticus 18, Romans 1:18-32).

The foundation has been lost, so there is no supporting structure for marriages and families. Therefore, no superstructure exists for the home, and it grieves the heart of God. Eventually, it will cause Him to reject this nation.

The foundation for capital punishment that was established by God in the Old Testament and upheld throughout the New Testament is gone. Because our policies are inconsistent,

every year we see hundreds of murders in each of our major cities. In my opinion, if the judicial system would do it God's way by using capital punishment and severe penalties, we could clean up almost all of the crime. Offenders would think twice before committing an offense against the law. But that foundation is gone, and crime increases. Gangs, thieves, drug dealers, and murderers steal away the freedoms and rights of person and property. The foundation is gone. And if the foundation be destroyed, what will the righteous do?

But Grace for Grace

The balance is this: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matthew 5:38-42).

The foundation includes not adding to or taking away from the Word of God. The founda-

tion includes grace, not an eye-for-an-eye mentality. Jesus said, "You might say an eye for an eye, but I don't say that." According to John 1:16, it is now "grace for grace." There has been an exchange in God's provision for the New Testament believer in the Church Age. It is no longer an eye for an eye. Many believers enter into arguments with the thought of "an eye for an eye," and they can't get along.

"Don't think in terms of an eye for an eye," Jesus said. "Use love, and do good to them that despitefully use you. Give them the love they have never had. Give them the grace that you have received from Me. I give you grace, and you give it to them. That is your foundation now: grace for grace. Be a good steward of grace on every side" (see 1 Peter 4:10).

If one party in a marriage enters into an eye-for-an-eye mentality, regardless of who is at fault, there is no godly foundation in that home. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). This is the Word of God.

Chapter Three

LIVING BY THE WHOLE COUNSEL

Children are not to tell their parents what the standards for right living should be, nor should parents dictate their own standards. Parents are only to communicate *God's* standards in love. That produces a godly foundation. And when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Holy Spirit of God raises up a standard against the devil (Isaiah 59:19*b*). That standard is the Word of God revealed by the Spirit.

As a believer, I am to live by every word of God; and as a pastor-teacher, I am to preach every word of God. No congregation should turn against a preacher who is obeying the Book. Still, some people get angry when the whole counsel of God is preached (Acts 20:27) and when that preaching doesn't accommodate certain exceptions. These carnal Christians want to sustain Adam's rights in their lifestyles.

A Christian school must have standards. Love, forgiveness, grace, and restoration are there; but standards are vital, and they must be upheld. A marriage needs standards. Husbands and wives shouldn't *think* about going out on one another (see Ephesians 5); this is God's standard. A pastor should not usurp any authority over the lives of men and women in his congregation. He should just quote directly from the Word of God in love. But once the pastor is finished preaching, he must trust God for the decisions people make with their volition.

No Room for Compromise

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1).

"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright" (Proverbs 23:31).

"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also," (Habakkuk 2:15*a*).

A man didn't write any of these verses. A man did not declare that there could be no leaven in the Passover feast (which indicates that the "wine" Jesus drank at the Last Supper

had absolutely no fermentation). No, the Holy Spirit inspired these verses to be written so that we may be mature, thoroughly furnished unto what is good before God.

Now, what kind of pastor would you want to have? One who compromises the standards of the Book, or one who stands on a foundation of convictions derived from the whole counsel of God?

In friendships, we cannot remove ourselves from the standards of the Word. God's standard is that a friend is born for adversity and loves at all times (Proverbs 17:17). A friend covers when there is sin; he doesn't repeat the matter, but he lovingly goes alone to restore that person (Proverbs 17:9). This is charity that doesn't fail.

A teenager wrote to me, saying, "I have been secretly watching pornography and listening to hard rock music. But recently when you preached upon our potential with God, I went to my room and wept and said, 'God, forgive me—I repent.'"

A woman told me that for more than fourteen years, she had only partially honored her husband. "I was rebelling against him because I had never seen his potential," she said. "I went to him, embraced him, and asked his forgive-

ness for never building him up and for not being a helpmate. He is a changed person! Thank you for your message. I am so free. It is easy when you do it God's way."

God's way is love, mercy, and grace—seeing each other's potential. Let's never be removed from that foundation. Regarding friendships, Proverbs 27:10 says, "Thine own friend and thy father's friend, forsake not…." We must not be removed from the foundation for family and marriage; instead, we need to love, honor, and esteem others above ourselves.

Forsake Fashions that Fade

We live in the world, and of course we need to go out into the world. Yet, Jesus said He was hated by the world because as He went, He testified of its evil (see John 15:18, John 7:7). He let the disciples know that if they were not hated too, it was because they would not deal with the evil of the world.

Love not the satanic system, nor anything that is in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. The lust of the eyes and the pride of life—they are of the world, not of the Father.

Why talk about following the fashions of the

world? Fashion passes away. I am for heavenly fashion: that is, godly modest apparel. The real stars are *not* in the movies; they are the Christians who go out soul-winning. Daniel 12:3 tells me that those who win souls are wise and shall shine as the stars of heaven forever and ever. Our brightness will surpass anything the world can manufacture. God's people will shine "as the stars," speaking of the glorified bodies of Christians reigning with Jesus Christ.

Some Christians choose to entertain their flesh with too much television and movies because they don't want to grow in the Spirit and in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you live in the flesh, you have to accommodate it or you become bored. These words may sound harsh, but they are said in love to encourage you to receive all the blessings God desires to give you.

The Word of God, the Spirit of God, the love, the grace, the mercy, the convictions, the standards, the purity, the counsel, the wisdom, and the joy of God, with the direction of the Word in the Spirit—all these are attributes of a sure foundation.

We need to have a sure foundation. The whirlwind takes the wicked away, *but the righteous shall be an everlasting foundation* (see Proverbs 10:25). Jesus Christ is our foundation, yet we also *become* a foundation for others. A godly husband becomes a foundation for his wife and children. A godly pastor becomes a foundation for his church. Don't misunderstand: Jesus Christ is our foundation, and we become a foundation for others in soul-winning, in Body life, in prayer, and in consistent Christian living.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

As a Christian, a pastor is accountable to God. When a preacher opens the Bible, he has to keep in mind that everything in it came from God. Therefore, he must study to show himself approved unto God, "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of

truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Any time someone has a problem with the message, the real problem is always the condition of their heart; it is never the condition of the Word (see 2 Timothy 3:16).

When people don't treat us well, our lives can be a godly foundation, built upon with gold, silver, and precious stones by manifesting the love and grace of God through us. Therefore, when our day comes to stand before the Lord at the Bema Seat, we will receive great rewards because we built properly on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Others will be saved as by fire, and everything they have done will be burned up before their eyes in the Supreme Court of heaven. They will be ashamed for a season when they realize their loss was because of their choices (see 1 John 2:28).

Our church, our day schools, and our college will continue to stand on a sure foundation—a right foundation that leads to right teaching and right thinking, with love and mercy taking care of the building process. We are always building *something*. God's desire is to build in us a "superstructure"—an extension of our foundation, which is Christ. Every pastor desires that each believer he presents to the Lord will be accepted with honor and receive rewards at the Bema

Seat. As a pastor, I will present members of my congregation to Jesus Christ. I want to watch as He distributes amazing rewards for the loving stewardship of grace displayed in each life. I look forward to seeing God honor those who were determined that they would never be removed from the right foundation.

Make decisions now that you are going to honor God's sure foundation and lay up for yourselves treasures for eternity that is to come (1 Timothy 6:19). "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: *he that believeth shall not make haste*" (Isaiah 28:16)—because it is a *sure* foundation.

Don't build a house upon the sand and watch it fall like an old shack when the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow (Matthew 7:26). Let's build our homes and families upon the Rock, Jesus Christ, so they will stand through the many trials and tribulations we face (Matthew 7:24). Then, when the rains descend and the floods come, when the winds beat upon the "house," we will stand—because we are built upon the Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Let's not be removed from the Rock; let Him

develop in us a magnificent superstructure so we can be witnesses in all the world. I thank God for all churches and ministries that believe that Christ is the answer and that He alone is our Rock.

Chapter Four

ABSOLUTE THINKING FOR LIFE

Do you have a Bible-absolute for every category of your thinking? Certainly, we use rebound immediately when we fail, and we recover purely by faith. But Bible absolutes in our thinking will preserve us and make us happy in every divine institution we encounter.

We are not to add to or take away from the Word of God. When we add Adam's disposition—Adam's jealousy or Adam's anger—to a situation, we add a fleshly nature to replace God's nature. That is adding the wrong thing to the Word of God in our lives. When we take away from love, mercy, and grace, we take away from the nature of God's characteristics and His essence expressed in His Word.

Jesus Christ is the Living Word—the written Word made flesh through the Holy Spirit. When a person takes away from giving God's love, mercy, and truth in a marriage, he takes away

from the essence of the living Word. To add anger is to add to the character of Christ something that is not from God.

Consistency in Categories

"How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth? They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it" (Job 4:19-20).

To stand fast on God's foundation, we need categories of doctrine—a divine index for precise thinking from divine viewpoint—in our soul. As we begin to understand thoroughly how to establish the proper foundation, happiness comes in, joy comes in, and we are free and peaceful.

Thank God that there is no other foundation but Jesus Christ. There are 181,253 words in the New Testament, and only Christ is mentioned as our foundation. We don't want Adam as a part-time foundation; actually, he can't be any foundation at all. A structure built upon the flesh is like a shack that was thrown together and sure to fall. No, what we want is a magnificent, beautiful home—a finished product worth living in for years.

To build upon our foundation, we deal with old fashioned absolutes that remain purely in the Word of God. Every pattern of thinking is either absolutely right or absolutely wrong. Everything in the Word of God is absolute truth. It is final, it is permanent. As far as God goes, it is immutable and autocratic—never changing and unlimited in its authority. It produces something magnificent among individuals in the Christian church.

We, as believer-priests and ambassadors of Jesus Christ, have absolutes. If we deviate from those absolutes, we cannot have an effective impact. People will come out in great numbers to a church where the Word of God is taught in its entirety, complemented by good music and the worship of God in spirit and in truth. The principle is this: Don't replace the Word of God and categorical doctrine with opinions and emotional experiences.

Let Doctrine Govern Experience

Removing categories brings in a premise of opinions, experiences, and emotionalism. There is nothing wrong with our responsive emotions when they are responding to God's initiation. We all have had times when we have responded

to God in our emotions. Still, we never look for the experience again, because we were not looking for it in the first place.

Everything in the Word of God is an absolute. When you become born again, you are saved through the Blood of the Lamb. That is an absolute. When you are filled with the Spirit, that is an absolute. When you get baptized after you are saved, that is an absolute. Did you know that Jesus Christ walked sixty miles to get baptized? If you don't think baptism is important to the Father, then why did Jesus go that far to get baptized? It is important to God. Baptism by immersion is an identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection—a public testimony that glorifies God in our obedience to the command to be baptized after salvation.

When we were saved, we were justified freely and forever (see Romans 5:1 and 3:24). We were immediately sanctified forever. These are absolutes. We were set apart and sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ "once for all." People don't have to get saved again. They have been sanctified perfectly. We receive, love, and worship Jesus Christ. When we experience a problem, we rebound as believer-priests. None of us is perfect. Yet, we are

sanctified—the Book tells us that we are. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). That is an absolute.

Eternally Secure— "All Glorious Within"

Even though we have an old sin nature, God declares that there is no spot in us (Song of Solomon 4:7). We belong to the King, and we are "all glorious within" (Psalm 45:13). This is absolutely true. It is God who called us. It is He who justified us. Those He justified, He glorified (Romans 8:30). This is an absolute: in God's eyes, we are glorified.

Absolutely, we are justified, sanctified, and glorified. Yet, because there is an old sin nature in us, we are growing every day of our lives to be more like Him. We are complete in Christ, we are mature, and we are seated above. He did it, we believe it, and that settles it. Grow in this absolute. Rebound if you fail; isolate the sin, forget it, and don't worry about it. He took care of it.

If you don't know and understand the absolute of eternal security, read the Bible. Study the character and nature of God. Once you begin to grasp this reality, you will be so blessed. Eternal security doesn't give us a license to sin.

What it gives us is an ability to live in a process without being hypocritical, inwardly pretending. Remember this: If you say you have not sinned, you make God a liar. But if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness (see 1 John 1:8-10).

Absolute Perfection

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Philippians 3:14-15).

"As many as be perfect" refers to our relationship to the Finished Work in Jesus Christ. Right now, we are hid with Christ in God forever. That is an absolute. When we rebound, we are not dealing with our sins; we are acknowledging that He paid for those sins. The reason we confess our sin is to continue our fellowship with Him.

Don't continue to fail, just because you failed once. That is called "chain-sinning." When you fail (and God forbid that you do), name it, rebound, and isolate the failure. Acknowledge

what Christ has done so that you don't have to live in guilt. Instead, grow in grace and knowledge in a process of victory through rebound.

Chapter Five

ABSOLUTES IN ACTION

"…Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

This verse is an absolute. In our ministry, we have taken up this absolute and established nearly 140 creative outreaches to bless our local area and the communities and cities nearby. God's promise is an absolute reality that works: We have received God's power, and as a corporate body we have gone out with that power to serve. With us, soul winning is an absolute. Furthermore, we have purposed to send missionaries into two hundred and twenty countries. With God's power, we will; it is just a matter of time.

A friend of mine was very ill, and when I spoke about him from the pulpit one night, I became very broken and in tears. When he heard

how broken I was, he wept. He said, "No one has ever shown so much personal concern toward me." It was precious. He was touched by absolute love while I simply identified with him in his suffering.

Loving one another is an absolute command from God; it is not something we pretend to do. Thank God, we don't compete; we love. We don't relate to each other in the flesh; we love each other. We love each other because we don't know how long we are going to have each other. We don't know at what time Satan will attack, or when God will allow something to happen in His perfect plan.

Absolutes Stand the Tests

I recently received a phone call from a single mother who was in a car that was hit by a tractor trailer. One of her daughters was killed in the crash, and the other was still in the hospital. "Oh, please say something to comfort me," she said. "Just say something to comfort me. I don't go to your church, but I do listen to your radio show. Just say anything."

At those times, you can only pray, "God help me," because the Holy Spirit must minister something specifically to bring real comfort. It

could not be just a response based on knowledge; it had to be the Holy Spirit ministering love to her.

"You must have been so very precious for God to allow this to happen to you," I told the woman. "You have some great days ahead. I am terribly sorry about what happened. At the same time, you have been a beautiful woman who is doing a wonderful job raising your children without a husband. You are just a precious person. Don't get discouraged; God loves you, and He will work this together for your good."

Then, we prayed. The whole point is this: She had an absolute hope because the promises of God are absolute—even in the midst of pain, weakness, and sorrow.

The Absolutes of Eternity

Heaven is an absolute. There are people we have known who are now looking down on us through the crystal sea (Revelation 4:6). Thank God, the only death for the believer is physical death (2 Corinthians 5:8). Hell is also absolute. What motivates us in the love of God are these absolutes.

Don't deviate from the absolutes. Let's enjoy the rich blessings we have. Every Word of God

is pure. We have an absolute faith and an absolute prayer. We can think absolutely through grace, mercy, and love; and we can enjoy absolute victories as overcomers with a foundation from God.

If you seem to be in the worst state that anyone could be in, don't give up. You are just as precious to God as the most spiritual person on earth. Don't give up because of failure. You are so precious to the Father. This is absolutely true. God's love for us is permanent, unconditional, and unchanging.

You may be struggling and fighting some battles, let the Body of Christ fight them with you. Let others pray with you, love you, and help you. Receive these absolutes from God and be built up by them as you continue to build on an absolutely sure foundation.

CONCLUSION

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

"I am with you always." That is an absolute from Jesus.

"I will never, no never, never forsake thee" is another absolute.

"I will never impute sin to you, and I have no record of it" is an absolute.

"I am with you to strengthen you." That is an absolute, too.

These are all absolutes. This is the Christ who makes us want to lift our hands toward heaven and worship Him.

Here is another absolute: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. God loves you as much as He ever will, right now. You won't ever become someone He can love any less. Oh, worship Him and thank Him.

Thank God, the Bible absolutely teaches us to grow in the grace and the knowledge of a Person, and not in works of religion. We grow in grace and knowledge. If we fail, we rebound, grow some more, and become more like Christ because of His precious power of love and the Holy Spirit. We can feel absolutely secure, not because we are better but because we know this: Jesus Christ did it all, and we are absolutely free.

Living in God's

Tree of Life

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INTRODUCTION

All of us have to guard against knowing God in our temperament, not being transformed in our character. Let me say that again, very carefully: *We must guard against knowing God in our temperament without being transformed in our character*. Many people are deeply deceived when it comes to understanding the human soul and the individual essence of people. Recently we considered the nature of temperament and character.

My temperament is how I react in my soul under pressure. You may or may not have had a very good temperament before you were saved. You may be very stubborn, selfish, and secretly overbearing at home because of your temperament. Then suddenly, when your temperament begins to fear God, you seek to have God in your life. Still, some people never go beyond knowing God in the limitations of their temperaments.

For example, my wife and I have a friend who is a multimillionaire. He is like a yo-yo. If he doesn't have something, he wants it. When he gets it, he doesn't want it. If he loses it, he wants it back again. He doesn't know a need or desire beyond his temperament. He doesn't have a transformed character; the *whole* man has never been converted.

For a long time, Peter was not saved beyond his temperament. His temperament was impulsive; he wasn't saved beyond his temperament. His temperament could be very good; it could contribute to the church. It could even go soul winning and be very nice to be around, because it had been trained by knowledge. But Peter had not allowed the Cross to take over his temperament (Luke 22:31-32).

When the Cross comes in and a man begins to be filled with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, his character is transformed, producing a spiritual temperament. This is living in God's Tree of Life.

Chapter One

TO HIM WHO OVERCOMES

In Revelation 2 and 3, reference is made to the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. To each of these seven churches, God said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." And, to every church God said, "To him that overcometh, I will give…." In each case, He addressed only a remnant of believers—*just* the remnant. That's all.

The church at Ephesus had left their first love. The people there had many wonderful qualities. They loved soul winning. They loved integrity. But they had 'lost' their first love. So, God said, "To him that overcometh"—if he will hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church—"will I give to eat of the tree of life." God promised access to the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden of paradise for all eternity (Revelation 2:7).

I want you to really pay attention to this. Let's let the truth make us free! Let the truth set us free *indeed* (John 8:32). When we pray for each other, let's allow God to make us right, as never before.

The Tree of Life Revealed

In Proverbs 3:13-18, the Tree of Life is revealed as wisdom. The Tree of Life is knowing precise doctrine and applying it by faith in precise details, using rebound if you fail, and doing everything in the faithful eye of God's life. The Tree of Life is the historical, dogmatic, absolute, irrevocable fact that Christ died on the cross, bearing your sins, my sins—the sins of the whole world—and paying for them all.

There are three categories of sin. *Iniquity* is the pre-Creation sin of Satan—rebellion against the characteristics of God in relationship to the details of life. When I rebel against the plan of God, I'm in iniquity. When I go out and have a ball in my flesh, I'm in *personal sin*. When I crusade against a man or a ministry of God, then I enter into *governmental evil* with Satan.

People in iniquity can be forgiven, but most of the time they enter into crusades with small groups of people. Personal sins, on the other

hand, can lead a person into the government of evil, where he becomes infected all over; he becomes a slave of Satan's government and stays under it for sublimation in order to meet his emotional needs. (Remember Psalm 32:1, 2.)

The Tree of Life is Calvary *after* the fact of Jesus Christ's death and my death with Him, after the fact of His burial and my burial with Him, after the fact of His resurrection and my spiritual resurrection with Him, and after the fact of His ascension and my ascension with Him. This is the Tree of Life.

Don't ever forget what the Tree of Life is. Don't ever say with familiarity, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live" (Galatians 2:20*a*). Don't ever be familiar with that!

Crucified and Buried

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not [be a slave to] sin" (Romans 6:6).

We are planted together in the likeness of His death, raised in the likeness of His resurrection. Therefore, the Word of God says so clearly that we reckon ourselves "dead *indeed* unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our

Lord" (Romans 6:11). (We see that word *indeed* again).

Now, we are to yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God, instead of instruments of *un*righteousness unto the old sin nature. We've been freed from being slaves to sin, so we bear the fruit of the righteous (Romans 6:13-22).

A Tree of Resurrection Life

Consider this carefully; this is a crucial message for your life. Only a remnant of believers really understand it.

What does it mean to "take up our cross daily?" It doesn't mean suffering. It doesn't mean a burden. It doesn't mean being in a wheelchair, or losing a loved one. These things have nothing to do with the Cross. To take up our cross daily means we live in God's Tree of Resurrection Life, recognizing our co-crucifixion with Jesus Christ as a fact.

Some folks have tried to bury people alive so that they will die. But you can't bury a living person; it's against the law! Only dead people can be buried. On my first trip to Moscow, a group of us saw the body of Lenin. It has been preserved for more than fifty years. That man is

dead and *not* buried, just as many of us in the Christian life today. We died with Christ, but we refuse to be buried.

We don't want to bury other people's pasts. We feel very self-righteous when we can remember the bad things someone has done. We may even use those things against that person, even if they're not true. Yet, every Christian was crucified and buried with Jesus Christ, pronounced dead with Him by God Almighty.

Imagine someone going to the graveyard, digging up a corpse, and saying, "Do you know what you did to me in your lifetime? You owed me money! Go back to the dust." A lot of good that would do. But, Christians are always digging up skeletons, even though Jesus Christ crucified our old sin nature, bore our sins in His body, condemned our sin in His flesh, and buried us.

God is telling us to live in Someone who has been *raised* from the dead (Romans 6:13), instead of living in sin. We are to live as one who's been raised from the dead, so we can experience a spiritual resurrection.

Chapter Two

RESURRECTION VICTORY

The Tree of Life has nothing to do with the Tree of Knowledge, where man, for the first time, entered into self-consciousness without the manifestation of God's provision or presence. When the soul grows rapidly in uncontrolled knowledge, a person can either go crazy or become partially insane, arrogant, proud, a religious hypocrite, or very confused.

What did Jesus mean in Revelation 2 and 3 when He said, "If you overcome…"?

Throughout eternity, we will frequently celebrate in the paradise of heaven, a garden made just for celebrations and godly parties. Everyone will have access to that garden—the most beautiful, precious garden ever known to man. We'll have our glorified bodies as we go into that sacred garden—the paradise of God.

In Revelation 2:7 and 22:14, however, the Lord describes who will be allowed to eat of the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden:

First, it will be those who have been under the right pastor-teacher—not just any pastor-teacher, but the *right* one.

Second, they are active members of the right local assembly.

Third, they receive Finished Work teaching.

Fourth, they understand categorical doctrine.

Fifth, they love Body life.

Sixth, they understand the Tree of Life.

Seventh, in their hearts, attitudes, and compassion, these people are committed to evangelism in their Jerusalem and throughout the world.

Eighth, they live in prayer and praise, worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

Ninth, they have a ministry of edification.

These people partake of the Tree of Life.

Hundreds and thousands will be in the garden of paradise, but only those who fulfill Revelation 2:7 and Romans 6:17 will be allowed to partake of the Tree of Life. They will be given special eternal intellects, with wisdom about eternity that no one else will have. Many in Ephesus couldn't receive it, because they had left their first love.

Living "from" the Cross

The word *overcome* used in Revelation 2 and 3 is *nikao* in the Greek text, which really means *victory*—even *winner* isn't the best translation. Here's how the phrase should read: "To him who will accept, once and for all, the post-resurrection and post-ascension victory…." This person stands in grace (Romans 5:2) and has access to God through His glory. This person understands that Jesus Christ literally did it all. Every morning, he takes up his cross. So, it clearly means *victory*. The believer is so victorious that he becomes someone who can be delivered unto the Cross so that life may flow out to others. "For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:11).

Oh, listen! The Tree of Life isn't what people think it is. Living in the Tree of Life means that I have a victory that is already won. I walk *from* the place of victory, and with it, and in it—*from* faith *to* faith, *from* glory *to* glory, and *from* grace *to* grace.

Living in the Tree of Life does not mean that I walk *toward* the Cross, trying to straighten out my marriage, heal my emotions, or get delivered from problems with drugs, alcohol, sin, or lust.

A person who does this may know the Word of God and the Finished Work but it is only "knowledge"—theological concepts and human perceptions. He walks *toward* victory, which is deception. But, a true believer walks *from* victory. A true believer doesn't walk toward grace, he walks *from* the empty grave with the resurrection power of grace. Acts 4:31-33 says that resurrection power was there in the upper room, and "great grace was upon them all."

The Mystery of Iniquity

I don't know why; it is a mystery of iniquity that we cannot submit to what has been won for us, once and for all. We believe Hebrews 10:10 and 10:14: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.…For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." We believe these verses, but, for some unknown reason, our problems are not solved.

Still, I see it over and over. I read it in letters, I hear it on the phone: "We love your tapes; we love your ministry; we love our local church; *but*…." For some unknown mystery of iniquity, these greater grace Christians can't seem to realize that we are to go *from* a victory that is ours

forever.

In John 20:2, Mary Magdalene was weeping, yet the grave was empty. I know she didn't understand it, God bless her. Christ was resurrected—and she's weeping. She had been *told* that He would come forth from the grave. But she's confused, weeping, and the tomb is *empty*. She's weeping at an empty tomb.

Have you been weeping over problems lately? Have you been trying to "get to the Cross," working out hard-to-settle crucial issues you can never settle anyway?

In Luke 24:18-24, Jesus was walking with two men going from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a place known for lacking peace. Cleopas didn't know he was walking with Jesus when he said to Him, "You're not aware of what's been going on in Jerusalem? About this Jesus (who, by the way, never did come forth from the grave), you're not aware of that?"

Cleopas was walking with the resurrected, glorified Christ; and yet, he was living in past defeat, with the wrong frame of reference, until his eyes were opened and he saw Jesus' hands passing the bread during communion (Luke 24:30-31). Jesus acted as if he were going to keep walking by; but instead, He went in and had

communion with them (Luke 24:28-29). Very interesting!

Walk by Faith, Not by Sight

In John 20:25, Thomas said, "Except I shall see in his hand the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, Thomas was still walking by his feelings, by human reasoning, and by sight—just as some of us do—when Jesus came through the wall in His glorified body. Jesus didn't go to Peter. He didn't go to John or James. He went right to Thomas.

Have you ever felt as if your pastor doesn't minister to you the way he ministers to someone else? The pastor goes to the person who needs him the most, to the one who's doing the worst. Many times, I am led by God to do some "unusual" things because of what I know about certain people.

Jesus went only to Thomas that day. He said, "OK, Thomas, I wasn't there, but I heard what you said. Touch My hands. Touch My side. Put your hand inside of the wound. It's fresh. My wounds are fresh." And Thomas said, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

In Luke 24:17 some disciples were sad because of living in the past. In John 20:24-25, Thomas was sad because he hadn't listened properly. But now, a man who lived by his reason, sight, and feelings was converted.

Chapter Three

RESTORED TO SERVE

To me, the funniest scene is in John 21. I'll never figure it out. Peter had already seen the resurrected Jesus twice. But, in John 21:3, Peter said, "I'm going fishing!"

Now, in Luke 5, Peter was told never to go fishing—for fish—again. Yet, Peter rebelled. "I'm going fishing!" Why? Condemnation. Shame. No spiritual self-image. Peter knew Christ was resurrected, but he was so ashamed. He remembered how he had denied Jesus and how the Lord turned and looked upon him (Luke 22:61-62). Jesus turned to Peter to show him compassion with His eyes, and Peter went out and wept bitterly, but he couldn't forgive himself.

Please hear me. No matter what you have done, *please accept forgiveness*. If you don't accept forgiveness, you will stay on the painful, 'death' side of the Cross. But if you'll accept total forgiveness so that you can't even recall your sin because you are so filled with the Spirit—you're on the Resurrection side.

Death totally took care of what you have done, but it also took care of who you are. Burial means God doesn't want anyone to bring up the past. Have no frame of reference with things that are dead. We live as those who have been raised from the dead as brand-new creatures, a brand new creation. Old things are definitely passed away forever; everything has become new.

A Beautiful Fish Story

Peter was ashamed. But, I think the sweetest story in the Gospels happened in John 21, when Peter went fishing all night and caught nothing. Let me illustrate it. Perhaps John said, "Peter, left side. Catch anything?" It's four o'clock in the morning. They're all tired. "Nothing," Peter says. So they cast the nets on the right side. Then, the left side. Then, the right side. They go back to the left side. (That's what fishermen do.) Still, nothing.

Then Peter said, "John, take over. I'm tired."

Peter was backslidden, guilty, ashamed, disobedient, and so tired. Even the fish would not come into the nets because the fishermen were away from their Creator.

"John," Peter said, "did you catch any-

thing?"

"No."

"Cast the net over to the other side." Peter waited. "Did you catch anything?"

"No."

Finally, the sun came up, and the voice came from the shore: "Children, do you have any meat?"

Peter thought it was a Galilaean.

The voice said, "Cast your net on the right side!"

You know what happened: They couldn't haul the net for the abundance of the catch, and John knew instantly who it was on the shore.

"It is the Lord!" he cried. "*It is the Lord.*"

Peter jumped from the boat and splashed to the shore ahead of everyone else—guilt and all. He was ashamed, but it was early morning; he was tired, sick of defeat, sick of frustration, and sick of guilt. Peter went to shore.

Of course, Jesus had His own fish; but He took some of their fish and cooked breakfast for the disciples. Then, three times Jesus asked "Peter, Do you love me more than these? Feed My sheep.… Feed My lambs.… Feed My sheep" (John 21:15, 16, 17).

The Lord recommissioned this backslider to preach. He recommissioned this guilty, sad specimen of an apostle. Jesus related to Peter and his sins from the resurrection side of the Cross. Peter was still living over there, going toward the cross instead of living *from* it. But Jesus treated him from the resurrection side, saying, "OK, Peter, I've paid for your foolishness, and you really won't become what you should be until you're older. But, that's all right. You'll make your mistakes, but feed my sheep. Feed my lambs. Grow as you go, and go as you grow."

Chapter Four

THE OVERCOMER'S REWARDS

Throughout the remainder of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, the Lord clearly spells out the rewards that will be given to the remnant of overcomers in each of the remaining six churches.

"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation....be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life....He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Revelation 2:8-11).

The church of Smyrna was told, "You're not going to be hurt in the second death. You've suffered mightily; but, I'll give you the crown of life." The crown of life is a fantastic decoration given to the believer who suffers without compromising or quitting. The crown of life reveals three kinds of suffering: You suffered for Christ; you suffered with Christ for the Kingdom; and you suffered with your own problems—and,

you didn't quit. You simply said, "I accept the victory by grace through faith. I accept the Cross as a provision for resurrection today. I'll walk by faith and not by sight. I accept the fact that I'm in Christ, hid with Christ in God." Smyrna was a crowd that didn't quit.

Hidden Manna, White Stones

Next, we'll look at the church at Pergamos. Pergamos has a lot to do with Satan: "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is,…where Satan dwelleth" (Revelation 2:13). Jesus Christ spoke about the depths of Satan, meaning, Satan's entrapments, his seductions, his projections, his thought transference, his environment, his supernatural armies, his supernatural administration, his supernatural orchestration, his supernatural invasion of the soul.

But, the Lord said to Pergamos, in Revelation 2:17, "To those who have accepted My victory, I will give hidden manna: I will give you doctrine that is precise, categorical, and so fantastic that the devil can't touch your mind." In Exodus 16, it was manna that came down as bread from heaven. Hidden manna is the Word of God given by the Holy Spirit. It is received by meek-

ness in faith.

"…And [I] will give him a white stone…" That means that you become purified completely (Acts 15:9) by faith. "…And in the stone a new name written…." Nobody will know it but you and me. In other words, God said, "I'm going to have a personal relationship with you on the basis of your obedience to the Finished Work. You're going to have a name that is going to be so intimate, just between us. You and I will be the only ones who will know your heavenly name—all because you walked on the resurrection side of the Cross instead of living in all the strife of the other side."

Authority to Rule: The Morning Star

The Word of God says to the church at Thyatira, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:…and I will give him the morning star" (Revelation 2:26-28)—to him who is a victorious Christian, overcoming through the Cross, death, burial, and resurrection. To the Christian who is victorious through the grace of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, and through the Resurrection power of God, Christ will give authority to rule over nations. Even as

Jesus received authority from His Father to rule over nations, He said, "If you'll just walk on the resurrection side of My cross, you will rule with me, and not over *one* nation, but over *nations*; and, I'll give you divine authority to rule."

I don't want to fool around with pettiness or with the flesh. I don't want to fight a battle that's been won, nor deal with something that's been condemned. I don't want to live in the old life that's been crucified, nor dig up what has been buried and live in vain. With God's authority, I want to rule over nations.

Garments of Light

In Revelation 3:1-6, the Lord deals with the church of Sardis: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead"—you have a name, but you're dead. Many churches have a "name," a reputation, but they're as dead as they can be. Watch this:

"Thou hast a few names…which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white [a bright, fantastic light].…He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment [white garments of light]" (Revelation 3:4-5*a*). In other words, if anybody overcomes in this church of Sardis, I will give him degrees of

glorified light over his glorified body.

That means that if you can accept victory in this type of dead church (it was a devastatingly dead church), then every time you suffer and glorify Christ, every time you go through a trial and become positive in your volition, He will give you a degree of light in your soul and in your glorified body that will never be taken from you.

Degrees of light! You will have degree upon degree of light, in 1 Peter 1:7-9—and you'll get all of these degrees of light in your soul body (which would go directly to heaven if you were to die now). At the same time, you will receive all these degrees of light in your glorified body. Indeed, you will be ruling with Jesus Christ.

Pillars of the Church

In Revelation 3:7-13, we have the church of Philadelphia. In verse 10, "thou hast kept the word of [God's] patience." They had a "little strength," meaning, divine strength, and they "kept the word of [God's] patience." And God gave a promise there that was written to all Christians (not just to the apostles, mister! as some people misunderstand, misquote, and misteach). He was speaking to the church of

Philadelphia.

"To him that overcometh…," He said, "If you walk on the victorious side of the Finished Work and live in that realm where I cause you to triumph—where you are *more* than a conqueror, because I love you and you receive My love—then I will write your name in the pillar of the temple. I'll write My name upon you, and I'll write the city of God upon you, and you will go out no more" (cf. Revelation 3:12).

If you study this in context, the Lord was saying to the church of Philadelphia that in the New Jerusalem, there will be two things written about the believer who keeps the Word, who walks on the Finished Work side of the Cross, who takes up his resurrection power, identifying in the purpose, plan, and Person of Christ and the provision of God's grace. First, God writes the story of that believer's salvation, then, a story of his life on earth and how his name became a part of the temple of God for all eternity. Read it for yourself, in Revelation 3:12. That's the word to the church of Philadelphia.

The Overcomers of Laodicea

Finally, we hear what the Spirit is saying to the church of Laodicea—the lukewarm church

that was neither hot nor cold (Revelation 3:14-22). It had been hot, but became cold. They were saved, but grew cold. They did not live in overt sins; they just never received the Word of God in meekness. They lived in familiarity, in atmospheric spirits; they were carnal, materialistic, and worldly.

Jesus says, "Listen, I am at the door, knocking. If any man open the door, I'll come in and sup with him, and he with Me. Together we will have a banquet with doctrine. And, what's more," He said, "I will grant him to sit on my Father's throne with me, even as I was granted to sit on my Father's throne."

He said, "In this Laodicean church, if you happen to be a Christian who lives in the victory that has already been won, you will sit with Me upon my Father's throne." Now that's pretty good!

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

Chapter 5

DEFEATING THE ACCUSER

In Revelation 12:9-11, I read that the Devil, that old serpent, is out to deceive the whole world; he accuses the brethren from morning to evening. Satan constantly accuses, and he tries to frustrate the purpose of God by accusations. But, the Bible also says that though he may try to deceive the whole world, "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Do you see it? The blood of the Lamb. The blood of the Lamb. They became conquerors by the blood of the Lamb! *Conquerors*—by the blood of the Lamb, "and by the word of their *testimony*," which means, the characteristics of Christ.

Every city is ruled by a specialized host of demons (Daniel 10; Ephesians 6:12). Wherever you are called in God's perfect geographic will, be careful that you don't make light of the characteristic sin that targets the region. For example, here in Las Vegas, you have to be careful

that you don't make jokes about gambling. This is sin city, mister!—sin city! Obviously, there are many other places that are also "sin cities." And thank God, He has servants here; God bless you. As you serve God, you're right in the will of God. But, remember where you are. Don't ever trifle with words. Don't live in foolish jesting. This is an evil, wicked, unbelievably hell-bound city. Multitudes are here.

This city will be judged just like Sodom and Gomorrah. Thank God for the Christians who are going to address the remnant, those who will be saved. Certainly, many have been saved, and many have tremendous needs. You are in the perfect will of God. But I want to say this:

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb…." You need boldness. You need a precise purpose, a precise plan, a very precise strategy, a precise prayer life, a precise light, a precise love, a precise patience, a precise understanding, a precise application of doctrine to be able to overcome. Enter into the Finished Work resurrection side of the Cross. Operate from the place of victory so you can invade the areas saturated with demonic traps and seduction.

God hates iniquity. He loves righteousness, but He hates iniquity (Psalm 45:7). God cannot

even look upon sin (Habakkuk 1:13). He is holy. And when I'm filled with the Holy Spirit, I will not play games with trivial language, foolish jesting, and inappropriate little remarks among my friends. I will want to confess Jesus and be separated unto the integrity of God's nature, the integrity of God's purity, the integrity of God's character.

To one of those seven churches, Jesus said, "Because you're victorious, I'll confess you to the Father" (cf. Revelation 3:5). Another church suffered more than the others, for "ten days," speaking of the ten separate periods of history appointed to them. Before the Father, they will receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

Thinking on Things Above

Here is a most beautiful principle to understand: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Therefore, we are members of His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). "But, he that is joined

unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17). Christ is the head, and we are His body (Ephesians 1:22-23). Watch how this goes:

We're in union with the Conqueror, that One who has conquered all things, and that's why we're more than conquerors! We're in union with Him. All we have to do is to set our affection, our minds, on things above, moment by moment (Colossians 3:2). "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

So, set your mind on things above—things above!—and let your conversation be in heaven (Philippians 3:20). I've watched what happens when Christians talk carelessly. Our conversation *must* be from heaven—not from a worldly, cosmic advantage, but from heaven, "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." We walk by faith, moment by moment, and we keep being filled with the Holy Spirit. God keeps us by His ability, by His power, by His presence, by His omniscience, by His omnipotence, by His omnipresence (1 Peter 1:5).

God keeps His children from falling (Jude 24). If you understand that, you will not be careless nor reckless. You'll be a man or a woman who has made a decision, through an eternal purpose, to live inside the Kingdom of God,

with that Kingdom controlling your inner soul.

This is something to get excited about!

Change with a Purpose

Ametamelatos is a verbal adjective in the Greek, defined as something that is done "without change of purpose," which brings no repentance. Without a change of purpose, there is, therefore, no repentance. Judas cried, but he didn't repent. Esau cried, but he didn't repent. Oh, they were sorry; they wept; but they didn't repent. Judas eventually killed himself, and he went to his own place—*hell* (Acts 1:25).

Consider this carefully. *Ametamelatos* signifies that no matter how much the truth is acknowledged, there's no change in purpose. Without a change in purpose, a person's priorities, habits, relationships, strategy, and tactical warfare will not be right.

Acts 20:21 says our repentance must be toward God, and our faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." The word for repentance is *metanoia*, which means a change, or turning, of the mind toward God. Then comes "faith toward Jesus Christ." We let *God* turn us. We let Him change us—and it happens on the resurrection side of the Cross.

CONCLUSION

There are many denominations and belief systems, including legalism, that preach the Finished Work but do not live from the resurrection side of the Cross. Oh, they love an occasional message on the resurrection side, but they live always working toward victory. They're working toward deliverance, toward changes, using Finished Work “language” with no results.

We were crucified.

We were condemned.

We were buried.

Our lives have been paid for, bought with a price, once for all. The history of Adam is over and now we are on the resurrection side. There is One who has raised people from the dead, and He will again. By the grace of God, that same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is enough to quicken our mortal bodies.

The problem we face is that too many Christians have become familiar with their fallen per-

sonalities and their natural temperaments, saying, "Oh, that's just a part of being human." Shame on you! I don't want to hear that. Yes, you are human. But we are to live as people who have faced an empty tomb, people who have the power of divine ability, the power of God that can make a man live forever and give him a perfect glorified body.

Let's have new minds every morning, through the mercies and compassion of God. Let's have new lives, new beginnings, new hearts, new motives, new premises, new presuppositions, new conclusions, new friendships, and new relationships out of the old ones.

Leave the old-ness of the 'letter' and simply live as a new creature in the new creation from the New Covenant with a new life.

Divine justice cannot forsake the integrity of God's righteousness in the believer. Let God permeate and penetrate your human soul with this truth.

Living in Resurrection Power

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

There is no one in the tomb where they laid Jesus. It is empty. On that Resurrection Sunday, Jesus Christ came forth, just as He said He would. Resurrection power made Him alive again. Death was conquered once and for all.

Why is it then that so many live as if He were still in the grave? The men and women who walked with Jesus for three years witnessed countless demonstrations of the power at work in Him. Still, many of them were consumed with fear and doubt. Darkness *did* have its hour. Jesus really did die on that cross. All did seem lost on that Friday.

And yet, Sunday did come. Jesus was alive. In compassion and glory, He revealed Himself to the disciples in resurrection form. The record of it all is there for us. Christ Himself said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29*b*).

We have a risen Savior at work in us today.

By His resurrection power, we can enjoy total victory in every area of life.

Chapter One

SUNDAY DID COME

"Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy [Spirit] had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:2-3).

John outran Peter to the tomb that Sunday morning after the crucifixion (John 20:1-10). And yet, it was not Christ's resurrection they were anticipating. The fact that His body was missing made them think that the power of darkness really had been triumphant.

In Luke 22:53, Jesus announced to those who arrested him, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." Indeed, there are many times when the power of darkness believes it has won, and many of us have experienced that feeling.

On one Friday, Caiaphas the high priest, the Pharisees, the scribes, and the Sadducees, along with the Roman government, thought that they were completely effective in getting rid of this "blasphemer." They thought they had finally defeated the One they accused of drinking wine, the One they accused of being a womanizer, the One they accused of taking money under the table (Luke 7:34). Jesus, of course, hadn't done any of those things. But the hour had come when His accusers believed they were finally victorious. Satan and all the armies of hell felt that they had finally defeated Jesus Christ and the cause of Christianity.

But this was Friday. And for those who thought they had won the victory, there was one problem with Friday: Sunday was coming.

According to the Jewish measure of time, any part of a day was considered a day. When Jesus said, "I will rise on the third day," that statement was entirely accurate. The mystery is that on *many* occasions Jesus predicted He would come forth (Matthew 20:19), but John 20:9 says of the disciples: "For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." The disciples heard it many times, but still, they "knew not the scripture." Even James,

Jesus' half-brother, did not know the Scriptures, and he did not believe upon Jesus until after the Resurrection.

Think of it. They witnessed His many miracles, such as raising the dead and healing the sick. They saw what He accomplished with His loving grace to forgive sins. They watched His amazing compassion flow out to the multitudes. Yet, though He told them He would come forth from the grave, they knew not the Scriptures.

This is one of the great problems we have at this hour. So many people who go to churches do not know, understand, or experience what God has said. In the dark times, they do not realize that their Sunday is coming.

Victory Will Be Ours

A woman lost two daughters in a car accident caused by a drunken driver. The crash also put her husband in the hospital for months. In her devastating pain, she listened to our Grace Hour radio broadcast and heard the good news that Christ died for her, was buried, and rose again. She became gloriously saved, and in a letter she wrote, "I will see my two daughters again. They were killed by that drunk driver. But thank God, the day is coming when I will be

with them again."

No matter what your problem is, your Sunday is coming.

Caiaphas, you can mistreat Jesus. Go ahead and have your fun. This is your time of darkness. Pharisees, with your hypocrisy and your religious pretense, you think you are so right in going against the Son of God. But, you will find out on Sunday that you were wrong! Sadducees, you do not believe in a resurrection. You have argued that there would be no resurrection. Yet some of you will have to believe it when Sunday comes around.

Darkness Shall Be Defeated

Today, the gay rights movement pushes for their rights to get legally married and even to adopt children. While we would do anything to help anyone come out of this terrible, degrading lifestyle, we understand that it attacks the institution of marriage, it goes against family values, and God hates it.

God loved homosexuals enough to die for them (John 3:16-17). If any will turn to Him, He will save them, forgive them, cleanse them, and give them brand-new beginnings. But God rejects their lifestyle. They will find out that ho-

mosexuality and lesbianism are absolutely corrupt and wrong, breaking down families and marriages. One day, Sunday will come, and they will see how wrong they are.

People who live in premarital sex or have affairs outside of their marriage are absolutely wrong—the *Bible* says so. Jesus paid for those sins, and He paid to make a way for holy, honorable marriages that have virtue, values, God's love, purity, and conviction. The attitude of the world says, "You don't have to get married. Just live together. And if you are unfulfilled in your marriage, let someone else satisfy your flesh." Those values are absolutely from hell. They are wrong. But for every believer who refuses to compromise the truth of God's Word, Sunday will come. Thank God.

Chapter Two

THE STONE IS ROLLED AWAY

"Peter, how do you feel now that Jesus is gone?"

If we had talked to Peter after Christ was crucified, he may have said, "I feel terrible. I cursed him. I denied Him, and now He's gone forever."

In Luke 24, after Jesus was resurrected, Peter not only saw the empty tomb, he walked into it himself. Still, he was perplexed and didn't believe what the Lord had told him. Even after he saw Christ twice in resurrection form, Peter backslid and went back fishing because of shame and guilt (see John 21).

What of the others who were close to Jesus?

"Disciples, why did you forsake Him?"

"We were afraid. It was a terrible time. Everyone was against Him. And as the people yelled, 'Crucify Him! Crucify!' we were afraid."

"Mary Magdalene, He delivered you from

seven demons. How do you feel?" (Luke 8:2).

"My heart is broken. He loved me. He let me break the alabaster box of spikenard and pour it out on Him. He let me wash His feet with my tears. I miss Him. Oh, how I miss Him! But He is dead."

"Mary, you were the mother of Jesus. How do you feel?"

"I remember the things that were told to me. But I can't understand it. I just don't understand it!"

All of those people walked closely with Him. His half-brothers and half-sisters did not believe upon Him. In the gloom, darkness, sadness, and grief that came on Friday, fear filled the hearts of those who seemingly had faith. It is a mystery of iniquity that no one believed He would come forth.

The Record of His Appearances

On Sunday morning, the tomb was still sealed with the Roman seal. On Friday, a huge stone had been rolled against it and roped into place. Anyone who broke that seal would be punished by death. But the Roman guards didn't punish the angel that came and broke the seal. Instead, they just stood there, so paralyzed with

fear that they couldn't do a thing.

Then, the Lord Jesus Christ came out of that tomb. The stone didn't have to be removed to let Him out; it had to be removed to let us in! Sunday finally had come.

A study of the historical context of that day reveals that a woman's witness was not accepted in those times. So what did God do? He first appeared to a woman, Mary Magdalene. When she came to the tomb, He appeared to her. Not to Peter, not to John, not to James, but to Mary.

After her, three more women came to the tomb. Then He appeared to Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5) and then to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24). In John 20:19-25, He appeared once to the disciples as they gathered in the upper room, though Thomas was absent. In John 20:26-29, He appeared to them again. This time, Thomas was there.

He appeared to seven disciples who had gone back fishing, in John 21. He also appeared before five hundred (1 Corinthians 15:6). Next He appeared to James, His half-brother, who did not believe He was the Son of God until that moment (1 Corinthians 15:7). He again appeared to the eleven disciples, and finally, for the last time on earth, they saw Him go up on Ascension day

(see Acts 1:2-9).

With all of these eyewitness accounts, we know without a doubt that Sunday did come. Amen.

Fellowshipping with His Power

No matter what condition you are in, victory is on the way if you trust God. Perhaps you are in bondage to drugs. Victory is on the way! God will come in and give you victory and power. Your Sunday will come.

Maybe you have a problem with alcohol. God loves you. Your Sunday will come. Perhaps you have physical problems and you are sickly, or lonely, and sometimes you feel depressed. Sunday is coming for you.

Let's learn to fellowship intimately with the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:10). Just realize what it means. No longer are we dead in trespasses and sins. No longer are we defeated. No longer are our sins written in the record books of heaven. No longer are we destined to die in the dungeon of darkness, shackled by sin. No longer do we have to fear tomorrow.

If it were not so, Jesus would have told us. He declares, "I am he that liveth, and was dead;

and, behold, I am alive for ever more, Amen" (Revelation 1:18*a*). Even as we see our loved ones pass away at different ages—some old, some very young—we can thank God that whosoever lives and believes in Him shall never die (John 11:26).

Our Sunday has come. There is an empty tomb. We have power over sin because sin has been paid for. We can have victory over soulish emotions, and victory over the old sin nature through the Cross of Calvary and the resurrection power of the Spirit. Our Sunday has come.

A mother called me to say that her husband left her and their five children. "My three-year-old and five-year-old cry for their daddy every night," she said. "I don't understand why God let him do that."

"God had nothing to do with his leaving," I told her, "but victory is going to come for you. As you stay in there, trust Jesus and abide. God will take care of you and those children. Meanwhile, we can hope and pray that God saves your husband and brings him back."

Victory will come to the believer. We may live in the midst of the power of darkness. Darkness may have triumphed for a moment, but it will not reign over us because there has been a

resurrection. God loves to resurrect marriages. He loves to impart resurrection life to a husband and wife. He loves to see families raised with godly virtue, values, and resurrection love.

Chapter Three

LIFE CONQUERS DEATH

There is immeasurable value and virtue in Christ's resurrection. Not only is every sin paid for, but by the grace of God, a Christian is absent from the body and present with the Lord the moment he dies (2 Corinthians 5). Stephen was dying, and he saw Jesus stand up to meet him (Acts 7:55). That was a post-resurrection appearance. Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4-6). Later, in Arabia, he was taught by Jesus (Galatians 1:17). Four times, Paul had post-resurrection encounters with Jesus.

The apostle John on the Isle of Patmos at the age of 98 was tortured terribly, including being plunged into hot oil three times. Yet, John saw the glorified Christ who comforted him on that terrible island of persecution. Whatever terrible thing that can happen to a Christian will be followed by victory.

The three Hebrew boys were placed in a fur-

nace, and King Nebuchadnezzar thought he was triumphant (Daniel 3). But in that furnace was the Fourth Man. Those boys weren't hurt at all! Victory came out of a furnace that was turned up seven times hotter than ever before.

Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, and he was put there just when they were the most hungry. The angels put the lions to sleep.

After Daniel came out, the people who conspired to get him in there were placed in the same den. "Daniel's God delivered him," they were told. "You said he worshipped the wrong god, so let's see what happens with you in there." There was no angel to put the lions to sleep, and those people didn't last two minutes. All of them were consumed by the lions.

Satan has been defeated. As we pray for each other, regardless of the circumstances, we know that our Sunday will come. Adversity can attack us on the outside, but it doesn't have to be internalized as stress. Glory to God, we have resurrection joy and resurrection peace. We know that we know that we know that we know that Jesus is resurrected! We have spiritual resurrection on the inside. Not once will sin be imputed to us. At no time do we have to carry guilt around. Our Sunday has come, and we can live as those

who have been raised from the dead (Romans 6:13).

Resurrected for a Purpose

With the resurrection power we have, we need to share the gospel. Recently I heard the testimony of a Christian woman who awoke from a terrible dream. In the dream, she received a letter from her friend, Marcia. The letter was written from hell. In it, Marcia blamed this woman for never telling her the truth about the gospel. "I cannot call you my friend now," Marcia wrote. "You never told me about Christ, and you *never* warned me about hell."

Though it was only a dream, it seemed so real. The woman awoke, shaken, and she promised herself she would call Marcia the next day and invite her to church. A day went by, and the details of life kept her distracted. When she finally made the call, Marcia's husband answered.

"Bill, can I speak to Marcia?" she said.

"Don't you know?" Bill answered. "I thought we had gotten word to you. Marcia was killed in a car accident last night." That is a true story.

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold,

now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2*b*). We need to share the Good News *now*, so that "whosoever will" may come unto Jesus. Every time a soul is saved, there is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels (Luke 15:7-10). One lost soul receives resurrection life, heaven witnesses it, and there is joy.

Chapter Four

MADE NEW BY RESURRECTION LIFE

Oh, if we could have spoken to some of the disciples after they believed that Jesus was really alive. Imagine Peter's response, to finally be able to rest in the Finished Work.

"Peter, how do you feel now that Sunday has come?"

"The Lord Jesus Christ forgave me. He gave me back my apostleship. His love is so great! He didn't judge me or put me on probation. He just said, 'Feed my sheep; feed my lambs.' He never rebuked me. Instead, Jesus looked at me with eyes full of compassion. Even in my defeat, He loved me and recommissioned me, as He did with all the other disciples that forsook Him (Matthew 26:56)."

"Mary Magdalene, what do you have to say now?"

"Thank God! I am so happy. He is alive! He

loved me so much, and delivered me from those demons. My old lifestyle is gone—I am no longer a prostitute. I just love Him so much for making me a brand-new creature."

This is what Jesus does, friend. He is not in the condemning business; He is in the forgiving business. He hears your prayer. He will never leave you once you receive Him.

Make Jesus personal; He is real. Don't try to be religious. Don't settle for values only. Go beyond values and enter into godly virtue—virtue that can only come from God. There is human virtue just as there is moral light. But moral light replaced by spiritual light makes morality a spiritual blessing with God, because God does it all.

Jesus brings in spiritual light to control moral values. True virtue is the integrity of Jesus Christ operating in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the purity of love, executed through grace, using rebound in failure. God gives us virtue to control our values, and He gives spiritual light that goes way beyond moral light. God gives us more than divine establishment and national entity. He gives us His Kingdom within us.

This is the order of the work of God: The Planner is the Father, the Executor is the Son.

The Holy Spirit reveals the work, the Word of God describes it, and the Christian enjoys it as he receives it by faith.

Chapter Five

DOUBT IS DEFEATED

"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

When Resurrection Sunday came, some were not as happy as they should have been. There were those who thought that Jesus was still in the tomb. They would not believe. This has happened to so many people, even though He told us otherwise. Every time Jesus spoke of His death, He also said, "I am going to be resur-

rected." He never mentioned the Cross without mentioning the Resurrection.

Several disciples did not believe. Peter was perplexed when he entered into the tomb that morning (Luke 24). At that moment, he did not believe.

Believest Thou This?

There was another man who desperately wanted to believe, but he could not. He hated to doubt, and in his heart I am sure he was saying, "I have walked with Him; I have talked with Him; I have ministered with Him. I don't want to doubt, but I do. I want to believe, but right now I can't."

This man may have been there when Jesus was baptized. If he could tell us the story of that day, it would probably go like this:

"I remember John the Baptist as a strange person, wearing camel's hair and a leather girdle, eating locusts and wild honey. But every time he opened his mouth, he had just one message: 'Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand.'

"When Jesus came, John the Baptist knew who He was, and he cried out, 'Behold the Lamb of God.' Jesus asked to be baptized by him, and John refused at first, saying, 'I am not worthy to

do it.' But Jesus said, 'This is what God wants for right now.' So John baptized Jesus, and I saw the dove come from heaven. Jesus had always been filled with the Holy Spirit, but this time the dove came upon Him, and the Father said, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:17).

Eyes of Compassion

This man who could not believe witnessed that scene. He watched the eyes of Jesus as He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). This man was there when the poor leper who had no hope in the world came to Jesus, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And Jesus said, "I will; be thou clean" (see Matthew 8:2-3).

He saw those things, yet in his heart, he was saying, "Jesus is still in the tomb; He hasn't come out. All my hopes are gone. I believed He was the answer. I watched His life so carefully, trying to find something wrong about it. Oh, I know He is still in that tomb."

This man saw how the Lord Jesus wonderfully healed and forgave the man with palsy (Matthew 9:2-8). "Seeing that gave me courage

and hope," this man thought, "But He is not coming out of that tomb. After all the time I spent ministering with Him, I don't want to doubt, but I do. I'm sorry, but I don't believe He will rise. It's just not going to happen."

Jesus Stood Still

This man was with Jesus in Jericho when a filthy blind man cried out, "Son of David, have mercy on me." The disciples charged him to keep still, but it was Jesus who stood still instead (Mark 10:46-52). Not a thing was happening with that crowd that followed Him from Jerusalem to Jericho. Yet, Jesus stopped for one blind man who cried out, "Have mercy on me." As Jesus commanded them to bring the blind man to Him, this man heard Jesus address blind Bartimeus. "What would you have me to do?" Jesus asked. And he said, "Heal my sight." Jesus healed him and forgave him.

With his own eyes, the doubtful man saw Jesus cast out legions of demons—thousands of them—from one man, and he watched as they were sent away into a herd of pigs. He was there when Jesus interrupted a funeral procession for the only son of a widow. He saw Jesus raise the boy from the dead and give him back to his

mother (Luke 7:14-15). He was outside the house when Jesus told a girl who had died, "Little darling, I say to you arise." Not only did she get up, but also she served them (Luke 8:54-55).

If you were to have a conversation with this man, he would tell you, "I was there with the other disciples when a woman taken in adultery was pardoned. Protected from being stoned by her accusers, she wept with relief after Jesus said to her, 'Does any man condemn you? Neither do I. Go and sin no more.' I saw how He forgave her."

This man saw the love in Jesus' eyes when He healed the sick. He saw compassion come from the Lord when He forgave sin. It was wonderful. But he still believed that Jesus was in the tomb.

What would this man say for himself? "It was so painful, and I guess I was a coward—all of us disciples were cowards. We saw Him walk up the hill and fall down under the weight of the cross. We heard and saw the result of the thirty-nine lashes from the cat-o-nine tails, a whip riveted with thorns, metal, and stones. I saw it and it broke my heart. I was afraid. Fear came upon all of us, and we stood afar off. I did see it, and it brought such pain."

Remembering the terrible details of that day, his eyes would close, and he would become quiet before he went on. "There were three crosses. He was on the cross in the middle, hanging there between two thieves. Just a few people were around, most of them were women. We had to admit it was over. I couldn't believe. Of course, I wanted to believe, but I couldn't. Jesus Christ wasn't coming out of that grave. I couldn't believe that He would."

By now, you might have figured it out. This unbelieving man was *Thomas*.

His Sunday came a week later than the other disciples'. On the first Sunday, Jesus came to where the disciples were hiding (John 20:19). Yet Thomas, for fear of the Jews, was not there. The others told him how Jesus came right through the locked doors. They were all rejoicing because they had seen the Lord.

Thomas, however, wasn't glad, though he was very honest, saying, "Except I put my finger into the nail prints in His hands and reach my hand into the wound in His side, I will not believe."

Jesus Reaches Thomas

Jesus appeared again to the disciples in the

upper room. This time, He went straight to Thomas. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27).

Suddenly, Thomas realized that everything he had believed was true. Jesus had risen. "There *is* forgiveness! I *will* go to heaven," he could now say. "*Everything* is beautiful."

Thomas finally believed that we have a Savior who went through death, came alive, and was resurrected. He saw the wounds in Jesus' hands, and all hope was renewed, all joy was kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit. By the grace of Almighty God, Jesus is risen. When Jesus said, "Peace be unto you," every cell in Thomas' body was filled with joy. His Sunday had come and his doubts were gone. Now it was all real to him.

If we could interview him now, Thomas would probably say, "After Jesus ascended, I went on to be a missionary to India. Each day that went by, I remembered seeing Him in the upper room, resurrected. I was so ashamed that I had doubted Him. But He forgave me, just as He forgave Peter for his denials. I went on to India, to serve the risen Savior."

When Thomas was martyred in India, he said, “Oh precious Jesus, I thank God that I could serve you on the mission field and die for you. I am so grateful. The pain is nothing because I am so in love with you.” No more a “doubting” Thomas—this was one man who really understood how to live by every Word of God in resurrection power.

CONCLUSION

I love the power of the Resurrection. Thank God that He doesn't put us in the grave where we would have to sleep for years before the Rapture. When a Christian dies, his soul leaves the body and the angels carry him straight to heaven. While we cry and mourn our loved ones, they are in heaven. They have traveled through space and time, which God controls and transcends. We may be here crying because we miss them, but they would say to us, "Believe what you have believed all these years. We are going up!"

For believers, Christ's resurrection means justification. It also means redemption, reconciliation, forgiveness, and sonship, as members of God's royal family. We are seated in heavenly places in our position. We have brand-new opportunities, brand-new beginnings. We are new creations—old things have passed away. Our old lives are gone, and everything is new. If we

fail, we name it and rebound because Jesus Christ paid for our sin, and we return to enjoying our fellowship with resurrection life.

Life in Christ gives us the power of grace, the power of the Spirit, and the power of love and friendship. With godly values and virtue, we will always be victorious. Faith will conquer. Oh, what God will do when He sees a heart that will trust Him.

Father, thank You that we can look forward to more than this life. We love You and praise You that Yours is an empty tomb. Resident in our bodies is the same divine power that raised Jesus from the dead and will raise our bodies from the dead as well. This resurrection power heals leprosy and palsy. It heals fevers. It has raised the dead, cast out demons, and changed men's and women's lives forever. This power gives us victory over personal sin.

Lord, You are the same yesterday, today, and forever. We thank you that Your grace shows us how to pray. Please bless us with resurrection power in every realm of our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Living in the Moment

with Eternal Purpose

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INTRODUCTION

One of the great misunderstandings of the average Christian is that he must discover his identity from day to day. There is a beautiful song, "One Day at a Time, Sweet Jesus" and it really is one of my all-time favorites. I would not change it. But, the truth, according to the Bible, is that God's plan, according to His purpose, is revealed from moment to moment.

In Isaiah 27:3, the Lord promised Israel that He would take care of her as a husbandman over His garden. He promised to water her every moment and keep her night and day. As children of God, we need to learn to live moment by moment. There are so many moments in a day, the problems could overwhelm us if we tried to manage them day by day.

Many believers do not possess the intention and purpose of God's identity. To have His identity means that we can have His same interests, His same objective thinking, His same values

and virtues, and His same provisions for problems through our Lord Jesus Christ. In this booklet, we will examine the importance of having an identity with God that carries us through our days moment by moment.

Chapter One

QUICKENED TO LIVE IN OUR DIVINE PURPOSE

"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself" (Ephesians 1:9).

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:8-11).

God has a specific will for each of us to develop a God-given special identity which He purposed in Himself. The apostle Paul understood that though a man may be considered "less than the least," when he discovers God's eternal purpose and lives in it, God is able to give him a provision that is specifically for that purpose.

God's provision is for an eternal purpose. Therefore, we must make a decision to evaluate our opportunities according to God's purpose. That is what Daniel did when he purposed in his heart not to partake of the king's meat or wine while his brethren suffered under Babylonian captivity (Daniel 1:8).

Daniel recognized the superiority of God's provision and refused to partake of the king's meat. He purposed in his heart and would not allow himself to be defiled by worldly provisions put before him. His obedience became a great testimony in the palace of Babylon. Soon, many in the palace were eating as Daniel was eating, and they all prospered in their health.

Recognize Your Purpose

Many Christians have wounded emotions. They carry around wounds because they live in

a temporal purpose. Their identity is not properly established in the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

There is simply no reason for us to live beneath the purpose that God has established for us. For example, according to Ephesians 2:1-5, even as we were dead in sins, He has quickened us together with Christ:

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

"That in the ages to come he might shew the

exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:1-7).

Walk in the Spirit

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:16-17).

We are not living in God's eternal purpose unless we walk in the Holy Spirit for each moment, using the principle of rebound when we fail. This is very difficult for many believers to accept—especially for those who live by a system of good works. Yet, I cannot emphasize enough our need to live under the leading of the Holy Spirit moment by moment.

Here is the problem: The flesh gets very weary trying to serve God. Certainly, such a person may be saved, but walking in the flesh brings only weariness and familiarity.

Think about it: What people do you feel most comfortable with? Where do you find yourself becoming familiar and bored?

Revelation 3 describes a church of lukewarm Christians in Laodicea. Jesus said they were not

hot and they were not cold. They were just room temperature—they took on the purpose of the air around them. Their contribution to the kingdom of God is called "vomit." This word refers to good food that goes into the body's system but is never digested. It comes right back up again, and the food is never allowed to nourish the organism.

The spiritual food God communicated to the Laodiceans took on the acids of their attitude and it became useless and spoiled. It was not allowed to create a divine identity for them. Whenever someone goes against the truth, he cannot develop a proper spiritual identity.

The Divine Outline

I love the provision of God. The Greek word for "purpose" in Ephesians 3:11 is *prothesis*, which speaks of an outline put forth by God. In other words, God outlines our moments, not our days. Consider Psalm 119:133:

"Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

This should be our prayer and practice. We need to recognize that God outlines not just our days, but our steps and our moments! Still, so many people do not realize this truth. Our

Christianity must be experienced one moment at a time, not even minute by minute. We are to live for Him each moment.

Chapter Two

NOTHING IS LITTLE WHEN GOD IS IN IT

Let me tell you this great story about the late Dr. Jack Hyles. Dr. Hyles was going to college and pastoring a church on the weekends. Every Monday morning, his teacher, Dr. Bruce, would ask the students to get up and talk about what they did over the weekend.

Dr. Hyles stood up and said, "Well, I have this little church down in…."

"Sit down," Dr. Bruce said. "I don't want to hear about it."

All the other men in the room were allowed to go on with their reports.

The next week, Dr. Bruce asked the same question and Dr. Hyles stood and said, "Our little church…."

"Sit down! I don't want to hear from you," Dr. Bruce shouted, again in front of a classroom full of students.

This time, Dr. Hyles spoke back. "Why are you telling me to sit down? You are embarrassing me!"

Dr. Bruce answered him: "I'll tell you why. There are no "little" churches! If Jesus Christ is the Head of your church, it is by no means a little church."

At that moment, Dr. Hyles learned a lesson about having a right confession. The next week he got up and said this: "I have this huge church and it pays me five dollars a week."

God's Purpose in the Small Things

"For who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10*a*).

There are no small, insignificant moments with God. Every single moment is another opportunity to glorify Him and to exalt His Kingdom.

There was a great conference taking place in New England, and an evangelist walked to the conference hall from his hotel every day. On the way, he encountered a man sweeping the sidewalk in front a very large department store.

"Good job. Good job," the evangelist said, thinking he was edifying a janitor who was just doing his daily duty.

One day the evangelist walked into the store and saw an employee meeting taking place in one department. Taking charge of the meeting was the man he had seen sweeping the sidewalk. The man he thought was a janitor turned out to be the president and owner of the company.

That man was very popular with his employees and with the folks in that town. One reason, believe it or not, was that his sidewalk was always well-kept. He understood how a few moments of doing a seemingly small task could make such a big difference.

Energized in Divine Provisions

"And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant" (Jeremiah 51:29).

"(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth)" (Romans 9:11).

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testi-

mony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:7-9).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

"Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-25).

God performs the purpose that is His. You can mark it down: His purpose will stand. The Word of God clearly declares that it is His own purpose.

I want always to live as one who practices God's eternal purpose. That is what motivates the manifestation of divine provision. That provision is the Holy Spirit's love. It is constant forgiveness. It is the Finished Work. God's total work is finished. Our failures are never final with the Lord; He is faithful and just to forgive

us our sins and put us right back on our feet when we confess it, isolate it, and rebound.

God's provision is joy and peace and long-suffering. He puts His doctrine inside of us for the purpose of providing us with gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. It is His work that develops the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

Chapter Three

GOING FORWARD IN GOD'S PROVISION

God's eternal purpose carries an eternal provision and an eternal identity that declares that we have been crucified, buried, risen, ascended, seated, freed, liberated, and delivered in Christ.

A Christian living in God's eternal purpose is never Laodicean. He resists the devil. He refuses to be up and down, but neither hot nor cold in his testimony. He is ready to smash the devil to hell and back. He just refuses to step out of God's provision. Recognizing the Lord's purpose for his life, this Christian walks in the Spirit step by step.

As we are led by the Holy Spirit, we can confess our sins and declare, "My sin was crucified and judged by Jesus on Calvary. I do not need to do anything more than confess that it was paid for." Then he goes forward to the next moment.

Redemptive Moments

There was a man who used to visit me all the time, but there was just one problem. He was always chewing tobacco. He was a sweet man, but he had a terrible habit of chewing and spitting tobacco. He would have to spit out gobs of tobacco just to speak a sentence.

I did not want to legislate righteousness to him, so I just let it go on without saying a word. I let him do it until one day he asked, "Pastor, what do you think of the fact that I chew tobacco?"

"It's terrible," I told him. "I think you should get rid of it before you get tongue cancer."

He stopped right there and started chewing sugar-free gum instead.

What is my point in telling that story? God's purpose is always wrapped up in redemption. The right moment came for me to tell this man to stop chewing tobacco. I said what had to be said, but it was said in the right season and it probably saved the guy from a lot of medical problems.

Seeing God's Purpose for Others

Many years ago, a famous doctor in London made friends with a dirty street boy who lived

by picking up trash off the city's streets. Every day the doctor would stop and say, "Hello, Billy," and talk with him. He didn't just say hello; he took a moment for the boy.

One day, Billy was missing, so the doctor went to the people the boy worked for and asked about him.

"Billy is very ill in the hospital with pneumonia," the doctor was told.

He found the hospital and spent the next several days and nights making sure Billy was well cared for. That doctor was a wonderful Christian with a great testimony for God. But most impressively, he redeemed moments in his busy schedule to be concerned for that young man. He saw God's purpose for the boy's life.

God sees great purpose in our lives. And, just like this doctor, the Lord is with us moment by moment by moment. May we constantly derive our identity from this truth.

CONCLUSION

Recently, a dear friend of mine was going through something serious and he finally gave it over to God. For a time, he let it trouble him and he even lost some sleep over it. So he asked God, "Why am I so troubled? I can't seem to get rid of this thing." God revealed that he did not trust Him with his whole heart, moment by moment.

We are so quick to lean on our own understanding and let fear interfere with God's love. All we have to do is take on His identity and start fulfilling His purpose. So, he just said, "Here, God! I give this concern to you."

There is never any reason for us to live by our emotions. When we are not rightly related to the Word and the Spirit, our emotions can only cause us to lose our purpose and our identity.

Moment by moment, you and I must let the Holy Spirit remind us of these realities: I am cru-

cified with Christ. My old sin nature has been buried. I have been raised up with Christ. I have the Holy Spirit, and I can be guided by the Word of God.

By these truths, we can live in our eternal purpose and go forward, moment by moment, hid with Christ in God.

Living in the Spirit

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INTRODUCTION

God created man in His image. As He is represented in the Trinity (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), God created Adam as a three-fold being (spirit, soul, and body).

The human spirit equips a man to communicate and have fellowship with God. But when Adam sinned, his spirit died. Ever since, all men are born into this world functioning as two-fold creatures—the body and soul without the human spirit.

Now, because of Calvary, the moment a man receives Jesus Christ as his Savior, his spirit is quickened and he is restored to God's original design. The saved man has a capacity to function fully as a three-fold being, having the necessary connection to God.

Sadly, many Christians, whose human spirits stand ready to operate and to direct them by the Word and the Spirit, function at two-fold capacity. This booklet is written to reveal how the

Spirit of God can communicate with the human spirit to bring victory and joy through the life of God.

Chapter One

THE BREATH OF GOD

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

"That the man of God may be [complete], throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

All Scripture is inspired. The Greek word for "inspiration" really means "God-breathed." The Holy Spirit breathed into the human spirits of the writers of the various books of the Bible. God inspired them with His precise thoughts (Job 32:8), which the writers recorded.

God Almighty speaks to His people by the Word and the Spirit through the human spirit that has received the breath of life. All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

The Bible is full of examples of the breath of God in action. In John 20:21, Jesus Christ ap-

peared to His disciples after the Resurrection and said, "Peace be unto you." Then He breathed upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel 37 speaks of a valley of dry bones. When the Holy Spirit breathes upon those bones, they will come alive. In 2 Thessalonians 2:8, the wicked one shall be consumed by the spirit, or the breath, of Christ's mouth.

The Three-Fold Man

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26-27).

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"

(Genesis 2:7).

Man was made in the image of God as a three-fold being. In the Trinity, the Father was the planner of creation; the Son, Jesus Christ, executed the plan of the Planner; and the Holy Spirit communicates the plan as He glorifies Christ.

God reached down and formed man out of the dust of the earth. Then, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, making him a living soul. Adam was first God-conscious in his human spirit under the three-fold image of God. In his soul he was world-conscious, and he became self-conscious after the Fall.

God, the Trinity, is three Persons in One. A man cannot get to know God—or even desire to know Him—until he lives as a three-fold being: spirit, soul, and body. The human spirit represents the only part of man that can ever know God, receive from God, respond to God, serve God, and love God. The soul contains the mentality, the conscience, the self-consciousness, the emotions, and the volition of a person. The body is the part that everyone sees.

God's design is that a man's body and soul be governed by the human spirit—that part of a man that is sensitive to and conscious of God.

But since all men have inherited a sin nature, the soul governs the body of an unsaved person or a carnal Christian. It takes the Holy Spirit of God to quicken the spirit of a man. If the human spirit remains dead, man is lost.

The Effect of the Fall

When Satan tempted Eve in the Garden, he enticed Eve to sin. Then Adam also took of the forbidden fruit and their human spirits died. Now the man and the woman functioned only in their body and soul as two-fold creatures without God-consciousness.

With the human spirit dead, Adam and Eve became self-conscious, aware of their nakedness before God and each other. God covered them by shedding the blood of an animal, and they were saved, but the human race as a whole inherited the curse of spiritual death.

That is the condition of every person born into this world: self-conscious of sin, of desire, of need; self-conscious in educating himself and trying to make himself better—but not saved. In this condition, not a single thing in man is God-conscious. He is fallen, and his human spirit is dead in trespasses and sin.

Fallen man always attempts to hide himself

because he is afraid. Fear plagues those who live in the temporal value system. Fears, lusts, phobias, withdrawals, depressions—the world has come up with a thousand excuses to hide from God.

As a two-fold creature, man is soulish. God is unable to fellowship with the natural man. Though he may prosper in the world's system, he cannot hear and obey the truth, so he lacks an eternal value system.

God often gives logistical grace to people who just want their portion in this lifetime. He lets them have their portion on earth because there will be nothing but hell for them in eternity.

Ecclesiastes 3:21 tells us that the spirit of a man goes upward. Matthew 10:28 says that we need not fear them who can only kill the body. Rather, we ought to fear the One who is able to destroy both the soul and body in hell. The Bible is clear that those who have never had their spirit quickened will end up in hell.

A body-and-soul creature may hear the Word of God, but he cannot receive it. There is no revelation for him. His body lives in the desires of the soul. He may appear to be "good." He might be self-righteous with very clean habits. It won't matter. None of that will save

him. He must accept Christ as his Savior, and God will quicken him together with Him (see Ephesians 2:5).

Quickening the Third Part

When the two-fold man hears the Gospel, the Holy Spirit can touch his soul with the Good News. When he sees the truth of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection from God's viewpoint, if he accepts God's provision of salvation by faith, the moment he believes, he becomes a new creature. He is born again, not of corruptible seed but of the incorruptible Word of God that lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23).

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy [Spirit]" (Titus 3:5).

Now, the human spirit is made alive in this man. He has a spirit, soul, and body. He is made in the image of the Trinity with the Holy Spirit indwelling him. When he dies, his body, which will be resurrected later on (see 1 Corinthians 15), goes to the grave. But his spirit and soul go right up to heaven (2 Corinthians 5:8; Ecclesiastes 3:21). When Resurrection day comes, his Spirit-filled soul body will join up with a resur-

rected, glorified physical body to defeat the devil.

The Truth about Who We Are

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9).

This verse is often misconstrued. It doesn't say that a man does not commit sin; it says that what is born of God cannot commit sin. The human spirit, which is born of God, cannot commit sin. A man is considered saved when his human spirit has been quickened by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. This means that his human spirit will never sin.

Will the soul commit sin? Yes. Does a man have to confess sin? Yes. He confesses to God alone and isolates the sin by putting it behind him, getting up, and going on with God. This is called the program of rebound. Once a person rebounds from sin, his fellowship with God is totally restored. The positional truth of the Bible declares that all Christians are complete in Christ, perfect in Him, and hid with Christ in God.

Chapter Two

THE TRIUMPH OF THE SPIRIT

To understand why people have so many problems and why we sometimes behave the way we do, it is crucial to discover what goes on in the invisible spirit world. Satan reduces our thinking to the relativity of the soul. The sad thing is that too many Christians will not stand in faith for what they believe. They will not fight back in the strength of the human spirit. They won't fight back with abundant life. They continually rationalize supernatural living by bringing it down to human levels in human viewpoint.

The spirit man always has dominion over the soulish man. The spirit-man is the head and not the tail (see Deuteronomy 28:13). The spirit-man is always the winner. He overcomes in the integrity of his application of the truth.

Two Emotions, Two Ways

"But there is a spirit in man: and the inspira-

tion of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8).

"The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4).

"I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:10).

Man has a greater purpose than he ever could imagine. He was made a living soul, and in the last Adam—Jesus Christ—he became a quickened spirit (see 1 Corinthians 15:45). The spirit of man is the light or lamp of God, searching out the emotions, which reveal whether his resource is God or not.

Often, God uses "metonyms" in Scripture—words to represent a relevant concept that would otherwise be difficult to explain. Many of these words refer to body parts: the arm of God, the heart of a man, bowels of mercy, the head and not the tail, and so on. In Jeremiah 17:10, the word "reins" (the Hebrew word *kilyah* in the plural) is literally translated "kidneys," and it speaks of human emotions.

Just as we were designed to have two kidneys, God has given man more than one emo-

tion. The "left" emotion (for the sake of our analogy) represents the spiritual aspects; the "right" one represents the carnal. Our left emotion responds to our human spirit, reigning supreme and controlling the temporal value system; the right emotion responds to carnal initiations, reacting to what it wants.

If we function in the right emotion alone, we become spiritually short-circuited. This brings weariness, withdrawal, sarcasm, fears, phobias, and, in the worst cases, depression. The right emotion feeds off of human goodness to satisfy a self-righteous appetite. Simply put, the right emotion functions in the temporal value system.

Aperson functioning in the world's temporal value system is filled with fears. All the phobias of hell are easily projected at him. Projections affect him because he is only conscious of himself and what the world has for him. His central nervous system and chemical processes in the brain are attacked. He is detached from his human spirit and detached from God's living power. God's abundant life cannot come through the soul. He may be a Christian who is operating as a two-fold creature, one who is coming up short of victory, power, joy, deliverance, and transformation.

The left emotion represents the spiritual capacity of the human spirit. Glory to God, the left emotion only responds to God and His Word. No one can function spiritually unless he is connected to God properly. Therefore, in faith we do not respond to the things which can be perceived by the right emotion, but to the godly things which cannot be seen. The things that are seen (possessions, people, lands, natural barriers) are part of the temporal value system; what is not seen (eternal security, love, heavenly citizenship, spirit-led prayer) is part of the eternal value system.

Moment by moment, I am either responding in my left emotion through the human spirit, or responding in my right emotion strictly according to the temporal value system. Under this temporal value system, I can make a good show in the flesh. But the natural soulish man, in his best estate, is but vanity, according to Psalm 39:5. All of man's righteousnesses are as filthy rags before God (see Isaiah 64:6). A person who is saved and functions in the human spirit controlled by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God has healthy emotions.

The Meekness of Wisdom

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

"This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

"And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:13-18).

"So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck" (Proverbs 3:22).

The key word in James 3:13 is "meekness." It speaks of having a gentle spirit, not resisting God but receiving His Word and His dealings with us as good and for our benefit. The human soul has no capacity for meekness without God. Without Him, the human soul cannot be gentle

except in educational pretexts of habits. Without Him, the body will lust both in immorality and in carnal ambition. The body can be brilliant and successful, but it cannot function spiritually without God. When the human soul through the human spirit and the Holy Spirit is occupied with Christ, then the human body can refuse to be world conscious and function as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).

I could get up and preach a message of knowledge without inspiration from the Spirit and it would be of no value. The Holy Spirit works only to reveal the truth to men and to glorify Christ—not Himself (see John 14:16-17; John 16:12-14; John 15:26).

In Genesis 1:26, "God *said*…." But in Genesis 2:7, "God *breathed*…." The Holy Spirit will not move outside of what God has said. The Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself; He only reveals what God has spoken and what Christ has done. The flesh profits nothing. The words God speaks are spirit and life. The words and the spirit are life together.

God breathed into the human spirit, and the human spirit came into the soul. A Christian under the inspiration of God makes an invisible God visible. He reveals an eternal value system

that goes forward in reckless abandonment to the Cross of Christ under the policy of grace in the motivation of love and energy of faith in the absolute dogmatic principles of the living Word of God.

When we listen to the Word of God, we must hear it with God's frame of reference—the human spirit. Aperson who receives and applies the Word in meekness of wisdom is functioning with a living spirit.

Wisdom that comes from above makes a person easy to be entreated. He is full of mercy and good fruit, and he shows no partiality or hypocrisy (James 3:17). This precious wisdom operates in the human spirit through the Word and the Spirit. It feeds the soul and makes it occupied with Christ. The body then is occupied with being a holy temple for the indwelling Christ and is not occupied with a hundred other things.

Today, we need men of God who study, exegete, and understand the premise of the Scriptures. We need preachers who preach more than just glorified Sunday School messages. We need men who will open their mouths to reveal the absolute, dogmatic, dynamic, wholesome, resurrection reality of man's eternal value before God.

Chapter Three

TAKING UP CHRIST'S YOKE

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Look at the phrase "take my yoke upon you." What was Jesus' yoke? It was the Holy Spirit and God the Father. He was always yoked up to the Spirit and to the Father. He never took a breath without being yoked. He did not do anything of Himself. He would not speak unless the Father spoke. He wouldn't work unless the Father did the work through Him.

When we take His yoke, we yoke up with the Holy Spirit just as He did during His days on earth. Then, meekness finds a place to live in our human spirit, the only place it can live.

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you" (2 Corinthians 10:1).

Meekness can only come through a person whose human spirit is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Once meekness controls a Christian's human spirit, the soul doesn't have to hide in fig leaves of the Garden with fears, phobias, and carnality. The moment meekness comes in, God-consciousness and Word-of-God-consciousness with wisdom from above take over. This brings in abundant life to the living soul, living emotions, a living will, a living mind, and a living joy. Then, gentleness will mark his soul as an outward expression of meekness.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

"Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Every word of Scripture is so perfect. The first three fruits of the Spirit are inward: love, peace, and joy. The next three go outward, toward others: longsuffering, gentleness, and divine goodness. The last three—faithfulness, meekness, and temperance—are directed upward to God.

No one can hunger after God unless his human spirit is quickened. The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. It divides the spirit from the soul, so anyone who has faith in the living God will have a living soul through a living spirit in a dynamic physical body that glorifies and manifests Christ as His eyes, hands, and feet (Ephesians 1:22-23).

"But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

"And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

"But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:40-42).

Martha was troubled about many things, particularly that Mary wasn't helping her at the moment. "Lord, don't you care that Mary isn't doing anything?" she was saying.

Mary was living in the human spirit at that time, drawing near to God; but Martha was not.

Without the human spirit, people are problem-centered, self-centered, fear-centered, and criticism-centered. They are, simply, centered in themselves. But when the Holy Spirit is controlling their human spirit, they are grace-centered, love-centered, forgiveness-centered, power-centered, Christ-centered. The whole thing is the spirit, soul, and body being preserved blameless until the appearing of Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

When the human spirit comes alive in a marriage, it makes the marriage unbelievably blessed. The husband just can't wait to love his wife with his body and soul. He can't wait to build her up. Her weaknesses do not matter to him. He ministers to her until she is filled with love. He is operating as a three-fold servant of God; his spirit, soul, and body are functioning under the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. He is so changed (Ephesians 5:23).

Years ago, a little boy came to me after church and told me that his father was beating his mother. Today, that father is a tremendous man of God in our church. He has been delivered from alcohol and has raised a solid, tremendous family. How did it happen? The human spirit began to operate in the husband, and

God's love started going out from him to his wife. He won the victory by drawing nigh to God, His Word, and His Church.

'Be It unto You'

Jesus Christ said, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). Consider someone battling a terrible disease. The Word of God produces the life of Christ in the human spirit, faith takes over self-consciousness, and that life flows over to the body. The waters of the river of life become streams that flow into every part of an individual, strengthening him with God's power. Sometimes this power results in physical healing; that is always a possibility. But the Spirit-filled believer will be continually strengthened in the inner man. Then, he can glorify God according to *His* plan and *His* purpose with His provision, which may include suffering for the sake of others or because of the angelic warfare.

When the human spirit is filled with the Holy Spirit, the soul is occupied with Christ. The Word of God now guides the body and the soul (Psalm 119:133). The steps of a good man are ordered by the Word and the Spirit. He is always giving God's love and God's life, and he understands that it shall be given back to him—and

much more. That can mean money because of giving tithes and offerings, or it could apply to mercy, forgiveness, grace, and love. In the measure that I give these things, these things shall be given back to me.

If we give mercy, we get mercy back. If we give forgiveness to someone who doesn't deserve it, that forgiveness will be given back to us. This is the operation of the royal law of love (James 2:8). It is the perfect mature law of Finished Work liberty (James 1:25). When you give with God's heart, it shall be given back to you in good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.

CONCLUSION

A Spirit-filled Christian is a serious threat for the devil, for his demons, and for the world's system. God's Spirit takes the believer from glory to glory, changing him along the way of faith. Though the world may hate us, the devil cannot touch us without God's permission. Even when we are hated, we return love for hate and go on with God.

Satan is a loser. Remind him of that every chance you get. Don't let him lie to you. Walk in the light of truth, knowing that he cannot bring up any accusation that will stand against us. Even in failure, we can rebound and go forward.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God shall flourish in His Kingdom. He will enable them to grow and prosper in the power and abundant life of Christ.

Perhaps your human spirit is dead just now. You need the Holy Spirit to come in and make it alive. Works of righteousness won't do it. It

takes God's operation of quickening. You need to accept Christ as your Savior.

You need to be born, not of the flesh, but born of God (John 1:13). Don't waste a moment. Ask Jesus Christ into your heart and get that human spirit turned on. Be saved today by grace through faith. Pray this prayer:

Dear Jesus, I believe what Your Holy Spirit has said about You. I want to know You and live in my full capacity—spirit, soul, and body. I want to have healthy emotions that can recognize You above every - thing else that fights for my attention. Thank You for shedding Your precious Blood on the Cross to save someone like me. Please come in to my heart and live. In Your name, Amen.

Living in Your New Name

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

It is very easy for people to take on wrong identities. For example, as a young person my teeth were not good, and we couldn't afford a dentist. In high school, I remember being intimidated and ashamed because some other kids made fun of my teeth. The name they had given me was "Poverty." That was my identity among the people in that group.

Eventually, I came to know Jesus Christ, and He gave me His name—the Name above all names. That is the name by which Christians are to live.

This booklet will expand upon the revelation, illumination, and inspiration of this fact: We have a new identity in Christ. As truth is formed within us (Psalm 51:6; Jeremiah 31:33), our association with God is enhanced. Therefore, when the devil tries to accuse us by calling us names—Loser, Liar, Cheater, Arrogant—the only name we will respond to is the name of

God, who is absolutely pure and guilty of nothing.

We are not to live by our old names, which speak of our identity in Adam and the old sin nature. We are to live in the new creation, created in the image of Christ, with a brand-new name and a brand-new identity (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Chapter One

WHO GOD IS

It is so important that we understand God's eminence, the greatness of His majesty. His eminence is represented in the fact that God is omnipresent; heaven cannot contain Him.

His eminence is seen throughout the universe—in the earth, the stars, the planets, and every facet of creation. All of it belongs to God. We need Him to sustain us, but He does not need to sustain Himself. God is, and He holds everything together by the power of His might (Hebrews 1:3).

In Genesis 17:1, He is called, "The LORD God Almighty"—*El shaddai* in the Hebrew text, which means "divine eminence."

In contrast to His divine eminence is God's condescension. The Son of God became human while remaining perfect in His hypostatic union—perfect God in perfect Man. Coming to earth, He was tempted in every single point as we are

tempted. Yet, He remained sinless—a fact that qualified Jesus to become the propitiation for our sins, to satisfy the holiness and justice and integrity of God the Father who could not look upon sin. He condescended for our sake, and the Just died for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18) for the Father's sake (2 Peter 3:9).

He Transcends All

After His condescension and crucifixion, God exhibited His transcendence. God the Son ascended to the right hand of the Father. It must have been quite an amazing scene when the Father received the Glorified Man who was also the only begotten Son, saying to Jesus, "I am well pleased with You. Your deity could not sin, and your humanity did not sin."

The Son is transcendent, reigning far above all the demonic world, all the principalities and powers of darkness. He has all power, all might, all dominion. His name is above every name that is named on the earth and below it (Ephesians 1:21). He is the head of the Church, and everything has been put under His feet (Ephesians 1:22-23).

By His authority, He transcends every sin and all guilt and the record of our failures. He

transcends everything, not imputing our sins, to make us complete in Him, the transcendent "head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10).

In every believer dwells God the Father (John 14:23; Philippians 2:13). He is the eminent One. He indwells us, and He has put every conceivable blessing in our portfolio. We have divine assets on record in heaven.

The Planner, the Provider, the Revealer

"The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies" (Psalm 59:10).

"Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defense, and the God of my mercy" (Psalm 59:17).

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you…" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father

will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

Do you see how personal God is? The Father indwells us. He is our strength and our mercy. In Psalm 59:10, the word "prevent" means "to go before." Billions of years ago, the plan of God went before us. That plan was to receive us and that we would see the defeat of our enemies.

Any Christian anywhere in this world has the eminent Christ indwelling him. The Planner, the Provider, the Revealer lives inside of us. The Lord Jesus Christ, in His execution of the perfect plan, lives inside us. Before Him, not one single thing existed. The One who holds everything together by the word of His power is in us (Hebrews 1:3). He is in you; He is in me.

The Holy Spirit dwells in our temple (1 Corinthians 6:19), quickening our mortal bodies (Romans 8:11), leading us out of bondage and into our rights as adopted children of God. His Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirits (Romans 8:14-16), guiding us into all truth (John 16:13). When we are filled with Him (Ephesians 5:18), He brings the precise Word for the situation to our remembrance (John 14:26).

Therefore, we must "quench not the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). "And grieve not the holy

Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

Don't Live in a False Name

Perhaps someone has said to you, "You're stupid." Maybe peers have run you down. Don't take up the characteristics of that name in depression. That is not who you are.

If you have your name legally changed, it is against the law to operate in the old one. It is breaking the law because the old name is false. You can't live under a false name. Those of you who are living in the old name when you have a new one are living a false life.

We cannot afford to grieve the Spirit by living according to a false name. We can't afford to quench Him by allowing ungodly spirits in our homes. The Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). The Trinity—the Planner, the Provider, the Revealer of our salvation—lives in us. The Word of God, which reveals the mind of the Creator, dwells richly inside of us. We have the mind of Christ through the Word of God. We walk around in this world with everything we need inside of us.

The Father, who is the Planner, formulated the perfect Plan (Psalm 18:30). The Son, who is the Provider, has given us all things by making

us co-heirs with Him so that we can do all things (see Philippians 4:13, 19). The Holy Spirit, who is the Revealer, leads and guides us as He glorifies the Son and exalts Him (John 16:12-13).

Chapter Two

TAKE UP YOUR NEW NAME

"And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

"And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

"And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which

were redeemed from the earth.

"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb" (Revelation 13:17-14:4).

"And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.

"Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married" (Isaiah 62:2-4).

In Revelation 13, the mark of the beast is "666." Man's number is six, which falls short of seven—God's number. God's number stands for perfection, completion, and the Finished Work. Man's number speaks of being self-centered in problems, of being human-centered in thoughts, of being circumstantially oriented most of the time.

In Revelation 14, the Lamb stands on Mount Zion and the Father's name was upon His forehead. His mind was God's mind. Verse 4 of Revelation 14 speaks of the followers of the Lamb. Their name is "Sacrifice." Their name is "Obedience." Their name is "Love."

God shall call you by a name. Out of His mouth, He shall name you with a new name. Every servant of God receives a new name (Isaiah 65:15*b*). No longer can we be called "Forsaken." Instead, we will be called "Hephzibah," which means God delights in us as His people.

The Power of Unconscious Identities

God has a special name for each one of us. There are many fine parents whose encouragement and edification help their children to recognize and live by "good names" with godly characteristics.

Some children, however, are told that they can't achieve certain things. Too often, parents give their children names such as "Failure." Labeled as a failure, children live by these names when they are discouraged. Parents give children a "name" when they mistreat them, or by not being good examples. The children take on the names they are given and pick up the char-

acteristics projected to them.

All of us inherited Adam's nature (Romans 5:12), and we all are made in the image of the first Adam (Genesis 5). For those people, the name they live under is Adam-lust, Adam-filthy, Adam-dirty, and Adam-unclean.

One of the biggest pornography producers in this country—he has made millions of dollars doing this—told of being molested as a child. Now it is as if he is saying with his life, "I will take revenge on others and make them filthy because I was molested." He has taken on the name of "Revenge" for his molestation.

This is why believers should take in as much of the Word and Finished Work doctrine as possible. New believers need to know about the cleansing power of the Word and the Spirit. It is vital to let the water of the Word of God cleanse our thought patterns. Here is why.

The unconscious mind becomes connected with what a person has been through in life. Especially when there have been traumatic events such as molestation, the victim will have "short-circuits" in his subconscious mind. For some, this may lead to a lust for pornography. Others will go into sexual perversion or an aversion to sex entirely. Something has happened to them

and they become charged in their unconscious. They enter into the vision of whatever is inside of them. This vision is then acted out in the flesh.

Leaving the Old Name Behind

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Genesis 32:28).

God asked a question of Jacob—He wasn't trying to find out Jacob's name so He could go visit him or call him. He was asking about what Jacob represented.

God said, "What is your name, Jacob? What are you like?"

"My name is Jacob—which means cheater," Jacob said. "That is what it means, that is what I am."

But God then said, "I am going to give you a brand new name: Israel, prince with God, power with men."

Abram was no more Abram in Genesis 17:5—he became Abraham, the father of many nations. Sarai was no more Sarai after Genesis 17:15, she became Sarah, queen, adorable one, a mother of nations.

"Simon" means "thinking one." I don't know

why his parents gave him that name, and names really meant something back then. "Thinking one?" That's not how Simon turned out.

In Matthew 16:18, Simon was given a new name. "You shall no longer be called Simon, I am going to call you Peter, a rock."

There are people such as Jabez. His mother was in great pain as she gave birth to him. In 1 Chronicles 4:9, the mother said, "I am going to name you Sorrow-maker, because you have brought me such pain in childbirth."

Jabez, however, refused to become what his name meant.

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested" (1 Chronicles 4:10).

Jabez understood that he didn't have to live as Sorrow-maker. He became a Grace-taker and a Blessing-giver.

Chapter Three

AN IDENTITY OF CHRIST-LOVE

There are many godly people who have never dealt with their unconscious names. For this reason, they always seem to have problems, though they don't live overtly bad lives.

Researchers surveyed a variety of family-owned companies. The families that got along had prosperous businesses. Where there was division and bitterness within the family, their businesses went downhill and failed. That is the power of Adam-division, Adam-resentment, Adam-arrogance, Adam-pride.

For you who are in Christ, your name is now Christ-love. It is your new name. You can take up other names such as Christ-joy and Christ-contentment as you grow into it. You can be Christ-peaceful. You can live as Christ-forgiveness. This is your name with God. You are Christ-edifier. You are Christ-servant. You have a new name.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17).

The victorious ones will have a name that no one will know. Only God will know these names, because He knows them beyond anything that anyone else has ever known them by.

There was a television program about a woman who took in stray dogs. She trained them, cared for them, and started a ministry with them, taking them to hospitals to visit children with terminal diseases. The program has been such a success that doctors allow the dogs to accompany the children to all their treatments. Once, these strays were unwanted; now they are considered vital. This woman's love and vision changed them. Change can happen to any of God's creations.

The Father's name is in our minds. To each of us, God says, "That's My name on him. That person has My name." We are brand-new creations cleansed from all the names that others

have given us.

Cleansing Faulty Circuitry

Thank God, the blood of Christ can cleanse the circuitry of Adam in our unconscious minds. When that happens, the short-circuits stop. A vision for lost souls, loving others, building up others, and praying for others can reign instead. We have a great treasure in our earthen vessels that can quicken us (2 Corinthians 4:7).

A wonderful woman in our church had a husband who went home to be with God after a long, painful battle with cancer. She has often told me how apprehension, unresolved worries, and lingering pain can sometimes rob her of the promises of God.

"Death is too real, it separates us from loved ones that are so dear to us," she has said. "But no matter how clouded my eyes are with tears, and no matter how overcome I seem by fears, I still have a hope, and I live in that hope."

Surely, this lady knows her name, and she knows she belongs to the One who conquered death. What's more, she has grown into a living example as one who triumphs over the darkness of grief by walking in the Light.

CONCLUSION

We begin to experience our new creation and our new name by putting on the new man. This new man is to be renewed continually, causing us to grow up and to receive new strength and vigor through the intake of the Word of God (Colossians 3:10). When we receive the Word by faith, we become stronger and stronger in our new identity.

Don't live under a false name. Adam has been crucified (Galatians 2:20). Live in the name of Jesus Christ. Even when you fail, you are a new creature in Him. Don't call yourself "Depressed." Don't call yourself "Sad" or "Lonely." Call yourself "Pure" and "Forgiven." Let your name be "Joy." See yourself as Christ sees you: brand-new in Him.

Lord, Help Me Laugh!

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INTRODUCTION

A good laugh is something everyone really needs from time to time. Scientists have performed conclusive studies that show just how much good laughter does for a person's physical and mental well-being. Most of us have heard the fact that it takes many more facial muscles to form a frown than it does to form a smile.

Face it. Unhappiness is more work.

This is precisely the point God wants to make. Throughout the Word of God, He reveals that the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Real joy involves plenty of laughter. I am not talking about laughing that comes from suggestive humor and foolish jesting. I am talking about laughter that springs from knowing that God is in control and having the freedom to laugh at the things that happen in our human experience.

This booklet is written to express God's view-

point on laughter and to reveal that it can set each of us free from ourselves and from the straitjacket of the world's system.

Chapter One

LAUGHTER IS ANOINTED

"Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow" (Job 8:19).

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

Some Christians are so serious about life that they never allow themselves to get in gear with a joyful, free anointing of laughter. The Bible reveals a number of anointings that God uses to express His character along with His thoughts on a matter, and one of them is laughter.

All of us have seen professing Christians who walk around wearing serious expressions. They honestly think they are obeying the scriptures that say to be spiritually sober (1 Peter 4:7 and 5:8). They always seem to be going through some trial, and they just keep this "face" on. Yet, the word "sober" as it appears in the Greek text of 1 Peter 5:8 (*nepho*) refers to having a spirit that

is calm and collected, even in the face of trouble. And in 1 Peter 4:7, the word for "sober" (*sophro - neo*) speaks of having our thinking filled with doctrine.

Obviously, people who can remain calm and who are habitually thinking with God know how to laugh at the right time. This is what the Lord meant when He instructed us to weep when others are weeping and to rejoice when others are rejoicing (Romans 12:15)—not to make light of their sorrow, but to be one with them in every kind of situation.

We cannot afford to take ourselves so seriously. God knows when we need to relax and be released. He has divine ability to fill our human capacity with His joy and to reveal amazing happiness in spite of our circumstances.

Books and articles have been written on the power of laughter to improve the chances of healing for the body and the soul. It has been medically proven that when a person laughs, certain chemicals are formed and released in the brain that stimulate a healing process in the body. The studies also conclude that the deeper the laugh, the more oxygen enters the bloodstream to supply tissues with necessary healing properties. (That is why oxygen saturation is

carefully monitored in patients during and after operations in the hospital.)

One publication gave testimonies of over one hundred miraculous physical healings of people who were determined that if they were going to die, they were going to die laughing. Norman Cousins, the former editor of the Saturday Review, wrote a book concerning his own illness and the program of laughter that kept him alive long after his doctors had predicted at best. He deliberately exposed himself day and night to humorous scenarios—comedy television and movies, for example. As a result of his personal research, many others have seen the benefits of laughter for physical and mental healing. But thousands of years before his "discovery," God had already revealed through His Word the healing that comes from laughter.

Smile Awhile

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

"A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken" (Proverbs 15:13).

There is a song some of you have probably

heard. It says, "Smile awhile, and give your face a rest…." God teaches us the doctrine of laughter because He wants our joy to be full. In the majority of instances where we find the word "joy" and "rejoice" in the New Testament, the words refer to a physical and emotional response.

Many people, however, fall into the bondage of self-consciousness and they are not free to laugh. So much is going on in their lives, and they are just so conscious of it all. Watch a Christian who has entered into serious backsliding and you will see a Christian who has a hard time laughing. These are Christians who are bogged down with the details of their lives, and you will have a very hard time to get them to laugh.

One of our assistant pastors portrays a character we call Dr. Lumpleaven. This character is hysterical—so hyperintellectual that he has no sense of humor at all. The sad thing is that some people are really like that. As a matter of fact, the persona of this character is drawn from a man that the pastor met in real life.

Doctrinal Christians possess the God-given ability to laugh even in the most trying situations. I can remember going through a very serious trial, and at one point, all my wife and I

could do was laugh. Certainly, the facts of the situation were not good by sight, and it was a very heavy moment, but we carried no secret subjective depression. We leaned on the knowledge that we belonged to God, that He was in charge of everything, and that we could rely on Him to bring us through valiantly. And He did!

Riding off in my old car, we just broke into laughter. In the midst of this trial, God was showing me that He was in all that was going on. He was making me willing to move on to a new adventure with Him. That is the kind of thing that will bring in joy every time. And, throughout that time, God kept giving us a song:

Everything's all right in my Father's house,
In my Father's house, in my Father's house.
Everything's all right in my Father's house
Where there's peace, peace, peace!
Everything's all right in my Father's house,
In my Father's house, in my Father's house.
Everything's all right in my Father's house
Where there's joy, joy, joy!

Chapter Two

THE JUDGMENT THAT SPARKS JOY

"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

"But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

"I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Proverbs 1:24-26).

This passage stirs up many questions. Why does God laugh when He has to judge people? He laughs because of all the years He has loved them even though they kept rejecting Him.

God is love. God is *always* love. More than an expression of His character, God is love. From eternity past, God knew He was going to die for the sins of the entire world. Some, however, rejected His love and His grace. Some refused the opportunities for salvation and stood against Christianity. Now God's perfect justice includes

His perfect laughter. He is laughing at their false excuses for why they never accepted Him.

This is called the perfect laughter of justice, because for all of their lives, those individuals had opportunities to know God freely and personally. They could have received salvation in an instant, at any time. Then, they would have been saved without a problem. They would have gone to heaven. Instead, they chose to reject the Lord and His free gift of salvation.

Now, if you were to experience constant rejection and cursing and verbal abuse, I am sure you would have some kind of reaction when it all came to an end. Laughter will be God's reaction when He sees this rejection to its final end with this judgment.

The Great Hallelujah

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

"For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

"And again they said, Alleluia. And her

smoke rose up for ever and ever.

"And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:1-8).

What happens in heaven when the Great Whore Babylon is judged? There is rejoicing. There is more rejoicing in Revelation 19 when the world system, the beast, and the false prophet are brought down. God's judgment of the evil Babylonian system with its one-world religion, its one-world banking system, and its one-world military brings joy to heaven.

Do you think it is wrong to have a celebra-

tion over judgment such as this? It is not wrong at all. It is simply the culmination of God's complete victory.

For so many centuries Satan, the father of lies, has been able to mock the people and the things of God. And now, in the time of the Revelation, we see how it will all play out. Satan will be exposed, his plan ruined, and his system destroyed before God's servants.

Millions in heaven will sing "Hallelujah" at the sight of this judgment. At last, they will have seen the fulfillment of God's promise to put an end to Satan's program of mockery, lying, and thievery. He sought to steal our souls, and when he couldn't do that, he consistently tried to steal our joy.

God's laughter is absolutely justified. His love justifies His laughter. His grace justifies His right to laugh at those who have committed the sin of blasphemy. The ones He will laugh at mocked Him and grieved the Holy Spirit. Their blasphemy of the Holy Spirit evidenced by their rejection of Christ gives God the right to laugh.

Now, certainly we do not laugh at people who are going through hard times. We cry and weep with them, just as Jesus Christ cries and weeps with them.

The Lord identifies with compassion for them for years and years. But, for those who refuse to recognize that Christ died for their sins and freely receive His gift of salvation, there will come a day when He will have to withhold His grace and enter into judgment. He must do it, simply because they would not accept the truth—that they could live with no condemnation and pass freely from death into life through Him.

Chapter Three

STRENGTH COMES FROM GOD'S JOY

"Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

Joy is expressed in laughter, and this joy is food for others. A person who laughs is generally stress-free. Laughter in its purity is an expression of faith that rests in love, an expression of confidence in God, and a revelation of boldness for a Christian who takes the consequences of what happened and still know that God is on the Throne. AChristian who laughs is a Christian who is very secure in God.

The devil desires to create Christians who never laugh. Therefore, Satan sends out demonic armies that are instructed to steal away our joy.

In doing so, those demons seek to sap the spiritual strength of certain believers.

I knew a Jewish man who was born-again who had a gift of conveying the story of Calvary. He became a great evangelist, and many, many people got saved at his meetings.

This man had such a way with his words. His messages painted a picture of Christ's death on the Cross and it would go right to your heart.

Yet, I honestly never saw this man laugh.

Some of his lack of joy came because his father absolutely rejected his testimony, and when he got saved, his father said, "I will never speak to you again." Unfortunately, his father never changed.

Still, I wonder just how much more effective this man would have been if he had allowed God to help him laugh sometimes.

The joy of the Lord is our strength. Much of the stress we encounter is there because we possess no joy. People struggle to overcome certain diseases because they never relax. They will not practice the doctrine of laughter.

The Necessity of Laughter

If you are planning to get married, I suggest you consider marrying someone who knows

how to laugh with you and also knows how to weep with you. There are just so many things that happen, so many serious situations that come about. And whether we could or could not have avoided them, all of us need to experience the freedom and release of laughter, or we will suffer from stress.

Again, this is not about the laughter that comes from suggestive jokes or unkind pranks. I am talking about real joy and laughter that set our spirits free. The physical tension that comes with unrelieved stress robs the body of necessary oxygen as it promotes some chemicals to be released to attack healthy organs.

It is understandable why some movements in Christianity have had an unbalanced approach to laughter. When the Christian experience is crowded with people who just cannot have fun and to whom the work of God is drudgery, some people will look for an obvious alternative. The problem is that for the freedom to last, there must be a healthy balance of categorical doctrine preached and the *whole* counsel of God honored.

Real, godly laughter makes people healthy because it makes people free. As one writer put it: "The more you laugh, the healthier you will

be; if you were blind, God will make you to see!”

CONCLUSION

"And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me" (Genesis 21:6).

Laughter is a serious matter. It should be a very real part of our Christian experience. God enjoys His laughs and we need to enjoy ours too!

Perhaps certain things are preventing you from enjoying the things that God has done for you. Allow Him to speak to your heart. Lay your burdens at the feet of Jesus and let Him bring a great release to you right this moment. You really have nothing to lose but your unhappiness.

God really is in the midst of all that you are going through. He is faithful. He did call you, and therefore, He will give you the strength to perform it. He accomplished this with Sarah by giving her a son in her old age, in Genesis 21. God made her laugh with such joy that she

named her son “Isaac,” which is the Hebrew word for laughter.

Let go and let God help you laugh.

Love Is Satisfied by Mercy

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Love is satisfied by mercy. Personally, I believe that this subject is not comprehended by many Christians, and, as a result, many are not operating in the effectiveness of God's power.

I have found that certain degrees of morality are often substituted for love and mercy. The bone of contention is morality that produces self-righteousness—and self-righteousness is the greatest blind spot today. This is one of the greatest problems that Christianity faces.

The Holy Spirit is grieved when love is not satisfied, and love is not satisfied when mercy is not appropriated. If there is someone whom you find it difficult to speak to, you have a grieved Spirit inside of you, and your love is not satisfied. You have love, and it is still everything it should be toward you, but it is not satisfied.

As this booklet will describe, true morality is derived from spiritual life. The intense love of Jesus Christ is satisfied toward us by God's

mercy, which is rich and wealthy and cannot be measured by situations, by details of life, by time, by people, or by counselors.

Chapter One

THE RICHNESS OF MERCY

"Among these we as well as you once lived and conducted ourselves in the passions of our flesh [our behavior governed by our corrupt and sensual nature], obeying the impulses of the flesh and the thoughts of the mind [our cravings dictated by our senses and our dark imaginings. We were then by nature children of [God's] wrath and heirs of His indignation, like the rest of mankind.

"But God—so rich is He in His mercy! Because of and in order to satisfy the great and wonderful and intense love with which He loved us" (Ephesians 2:3-4, Amplified Bible translation).

The richness of God's mercy satisfies the intensity of God's love toward us. His mercy becomes the satisfaction of His love toward us, who were dead in trespasses and sin, who walked according to the course of this world, ac-

cording to the principalities and powers of the world (Ephesians 6:12).

Vibrations from the air can manipulate and control us when we allow them. Yet, mercy wipes out the effects of sin and satisfies love. Why does mercy satisfy love? It is because love pays for everything and then mercy comes into the scene to wipe out the past and to wipe out all the effects of the past. By this, you can see where mercy is necessary to satisfy love. Without mercy, love would not be satisfied toward us.

Please remember, love totally satisfies God because that is who He is. God is love, and nothing can be added to complement His love, because He is love. We are speaking in terms of anthropopathy (attributing human characteristics to God who is supernatural) when we say that in order for His love to be satisfied toward us, He has to give us mercy.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"*So* love" was exemplified in Jesus Christ, who was given on the Cross, in our place, so we could have everlasting life by believing upon

Him. But despite what love did, we could not experience the meaning of love without mercy satisfying it toward us. When mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other (Psalm 85:10). Jesus Christ satisfied the demands of justice, holiness, and righteousness and the integrity of the Father's holiness. When this took place, then we could be accepted in the Beloved. Jesus Christ paid for our sins because God so loved us, and that brought in mercy to meet with the truth of His holiness and His perfect righteousness.

Forgive and Forget

Here is the sadness of Christian churches today. Consider a ministry that preaches salvation by grace through faith. They preach beautifully that everything is executed by the grace of Almighty God. But here is a pastor whose mother died and after a period of time his father wanted to get married again—to a woman who had been divorced before she was saved. The father asked his son, the pastor, to perform the marriage and the son refused just because the woman had been divorced at one point in her life.

Love was not satisfied is this case because

there was no mercy. Doesn't that hit some of you right between the eyes? Be honest. You see, love is love, but love is not satisfied unless the richness of mercy is demonstrated in the effectiveness of grace.

What if somebody wounded and hurt me, and I remembered it for years? I might know how to be religious and to say it doesn't matter. I might know how to choose my words and to sincerely defend myself with my vocabulary, and I can say publicly, "That doesn't matter. Yes, they did do that. Yes, it did hurt, but it doesn't matter." But if it doesn't matter, how can I remember it? I'll tell you why I remember it: Because love has not yet been satisfied in me by mercy toward the person who hurt me.

Be Filled with the Spirit

A lot of people are insecure, and when they are insecure, love is not satisfied because they have not received mercy. We are right in the middle of a revival, and most of you are happy. Others don't even know what happiness is. Why? Mercy isn't satisfying love in their lives.

It is a unique thing to satisfy God's love, a love that the Amplified Version of Ephesians 2 describes as "the great and wonderful and in-

tense love with which He loves us." God is so rich in mercy that when we believe, in order to satisfy the great and wonderful and intense love with which He loves us, He has to quicken us from being spiritually dead (verse 5). He has to raise us up together with Him. He has to seat us together in union with Him, and then He has to give us the very life that was in the human body of Jesus Christ. This satisfies love.

When I am not filled with the Holy Spirit, love is not satisfied. Oh, love is still adequate, sovereign, and perfect, and it doesn't need anything else to help it be love, but it is not satisfied until I accept its cleansing and its redemptive provision. I must accept the filling of the Holy Spirit and use rebound when I fail. I recognize my sin, confess it to God, isolate it, get up, and go on in the newness of life.

It is important to realize the two kinds of Christians we have today. We have the Christians who have accepted God's love for their salvation. Then we have the Christians who satisfy the intense love of God with mercy rejoicing against judgment.

I think I have the answer for why a lot of counseling fails. It is because love isn't satisfied. The one who is being counseled has not ac-

cepted mercy. He may have accepted the salvation of love, but he still hasn't accepted mercy that takes away all the effects of his sins and everybody else's sins. Therefore, love, intense as it is, is not satisfied. It is not satisfied because it is not being allowed to accomplish what it is by its very nature.

Chapter Two

THE DEGREES OF MORALITY

"Of this [Gospel] I was made a minister according to the gift of God's free grace (undeserved favor), which was bestowed on me by the exercise—the working in all its effectiveness—of His power.

"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints (God's consecrated people), this grace (favor, privilege) was granted and graciously entrusted: to proclaim to the Gentiles the unending (boundless, fathomless, incalculable and exhaustless) riches of Christ—wealth which no human being could have searched out" (Ephesians 3:7-8 Amplified Bible).

This passage needs to be understood for the working of the effectiveness of God's power through the gift of God's free grace. God is saying, "I want this grace to produce the working and effectiveness of My power."

How is God's grace going to be working in

the effectiveness of God's power? By receiving the satisfaction of His intense love that was given to us through mercy. It is unending. It is boundless. It is fathomless. You cannot calculate it. It is inexhaustible, and no human can search it out.

You come to me and say, "I don't think you handled that situation properly." You will never know, because you can't search out God's mercy. You don't know what it means to satisfy God's love. Therefore, you are speaking from human viewpoint, based upon your understanding of the degrees of morality.

Moral Light, Moderate Success

One degree of morality comes from God-consciousness, which produces a moral light inside of man through the justice of God. "This is the light that lighteth every man" (John 1:9); that is, God-consciousness (Romans 1:18-22). There is a morality that comes from the moral light springing out of God-consciousness.

This morality is a system of doing right but, in this case, without the Holy Spirit. Any unbeliever can exercise himself in the deepest form of this kind of morality.

The good part of it is that it helps a marriage

if you are not saved. It tremendously contributes to a family, it contributes to a community, and it blesses a nation in the government of cities and states, because it protects our freedoms of person and property and our rights to exercise our free volition and to transact business in a free enterprise system.

This degree of morality, however, never does save a person.

I think that this degree of morality, again and again, has been substituted for spirituality. It doesn't take the Holy Spirit for a person to be moral. My mother was as moral as a person could be, and she didn't believe in Christ until she was 68 years old.

Self-Righteousness and Comparison

Another degree of morality is a morality that produces self-righteousness. There was one point in our ministry when I can remember so much of this morality of self-righteousness hanging around. These self-righteous conspirators flattered one another and elevated one another's value, and it was all done to run us down. It was a confession of morality that was self-righteous.

Then there is a degree of morality that con-

stantly produces relative morality. This is the morality of comparing ourselves among ourselves, and the Bible says this is never wise (2 Corinthians 10:12).

"I don't cuss, you do. You're not moral."

"You drink a little beer. I don't. You're not moral."

"I work hard, and you don't work as hard as I do."

"I tithe, and you don't."

That is relative morality. It is different than relative righteousness.

One lets his kids dress immodestly, and he defends it. The other one doesn't do that, but he has a secret affair going on. Now tell me, who is the moral one here?

This kind of morality goes around and around. It plagues countless local assemblies. These brands of morality represent how the majority of Christians enter into tremendous problems. Why? People mix sincerity in with it, so it becomes very difficult to define and very easy to deny there is a problem because we are so sincere.

Sincerity as we think of it deals with a personality trait, but it does not necessarily relate to a person's character. When we were born, we

were not created equal. Our genetics were different, and we were not created equal. Therefore, some of us were born with a personality that expresses sincerity, which has absolutely nothing to do with our character. Furthermore, a person can be very sincere about what they believe and yet be sincerely wrong.

The only thing we can do is to receive from heaven the very character and nature of Christ, which we derive through the indwelling Holy Spirit and the sincere milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2).

Chapter Three

REAL SPIRITUALITY

The most beautiful and the best degree of morality is morality derived from the grace of God. What is morality that derives itself from the grace of God? It is a morality by which we honor Jesus Christ and walk in the filling of the Spirit. We love God with all our heart, mind, and strength. We don't put people under any relative morality or relative righteousness.

If you fail, you don't deny it—you judge it upon Calvary, and repent. Because of Calvary, you enter into a spiritual life that honors a godly, moral understanding of how to treat others.

I would call it spirituality that produces godly morality. That means I do not judge other people, but I forgive them as Christ forgives them.

This godly morality extends mercy that satisfies the intensity of God's love toward us. No human being can search out the depth of it. No

human being will ever be able to discover the power of it. That is what Ephesians 3:7 in the Amplified translation of the Bible says, "...the working in all its effectiveness—of His power."

This godly morality, which derives itself from a spiritual life, has tremendous power—the power to completely do away with what I have done.

That takes power. That takes more than words. That is the working of the effectiveness of His power, with the satisfaction of love, by giving mercy toward the subjects who need it. This is the power that keeps a man from sinning in the same area all the time, even though he may have been committed to that sin for quite a while. Finally, he finds the power to give him victory over that sin—godly morality that derives itself from spiritual life.

Unsearchable Riches

Now we have the unsearchable riches of God's grace. They are called "unsearchable," and they are called "riches." This is the wealth that is provided through God's love. And the wealth provided by God's love is the mercy toward us that satisfies the working of the power of God's love.

This is what it means: Forgiveness is complete. There is no memory of sin or sins. Patience is inexhaustible. God's love is unfathomable. His mercy is incomprehensible. His grace is inexhaustible. Therefore, when we counsel one another, we try to search out where this applies and where it does not apply.

When do you exhaust it because of discipline? When do you exhaust it because of justice? When do you exhaust it because of the way people are treating you? The answer to that is, you can't; and therefore, you don't exhaust it.

Am I saying that there isn't a common place for tough love? Of course, there is. But tough love is still making all of this available in its completeness, while it requires a person to choose to operate in its effectiveness. If a person will not operate in the power of its effectiveness, it is for them, but it is not in them; therefore, it cannot be a functioning process of satisfying love because the mercy has not been received within them.

Still, love isn't taken away from that person. There has to be tough love toward him, always with the hope and desire of knowing that love can be satisfied by mercy and the power working effectively in us, which comes from spiritual life.

CONCLUSION

A person who doesn't understand how the intense love of Christ toward us is satisfied through the wealth of mercy is a person who will always end up with irrational emotions. When you enter into an irrational emotional complex, you do a lot of crying instead of believing. You do a lot of negative thinking instead of positively trusting Christ. You try to draw out for yourself a concerned listener who understands your irrational emotional complex. This complex derives itself and it is established through relative morality that produces self-righteousness.

Understanding these truths gives us the answers for why our emotions, our temperament, and our disposition come under the control of our old sin nature, while we justify it with one degree of morality or another.

So, I think you can see with me the value of understanding the satisfaction of God's love to-

ward us, which is to draw toward us and to receive in us the riches and wealth of His mercy. That alone takes care of the workings of the effectiveness of His power.

It takes power not to sin. It takes power to forgive. It takes power to love the unlovely. It takes power to believe for somebody who shows no evidence of doing right. It takes the power of patience, the power of faith, the power of prayer, the power of praise toward God, the power of worship, and the power of the Scriptures working specifically in us and through us.

God doesn't want the effectiveness of His power paralyzed or crippled inside of us through the grieving or quenching of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19). He wants His power to be liberated to represent the satisfaction of His love, which is to have mercy toward others, revealing our spiritual status, in maturity and stability.

Love: The Test of Faith

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Probably everyone reading this has experienced a measure of disappointment in the area of love. Perhaps when you were in grade school or in high school, you had a "thing" for someone, and you called that thing "love." But then, you found out that the person really had a thing for someone else, and what you called love turned into a form of hatred. The one you wanted to be with so much, now you could not even stand to be around.

Now we are older. Still, these childish types of disappointments crop up from time to time. A person will let us down and our whole perception of him is altered. We may think that we have left childish things behind (1 Corinthians 13:11), when really we have not.

First Corinthians 13 is the Bible's great discourse on love. Love never fails, it suffers long, it thinks no evil, and it rejoices in the truth. That last statement carries great significance for us as

Christians. "Rejoice"—sugchairo in the original Greek text—refers to entering in to a joy that comes from God's grace. The same word has been used to describe the skipping trot of a frisky lamb. What an awesome picture that is of a believer who loves!

As you will see in these pages, true love springs from truth and is the real measure of our faith in Christ and His Word. It is God's test of faith.

Chapter One

MEASURES OF FAITH AND LOVE

"Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

"For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

"And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

"And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:30-38).

Here we read of a great promise. Our quality of love and our quality of truth brings to us a reward, something that is "pressed down, shaken together, and running over."

Romans 12:3 tell us that every person has been given a measure of faith. What we do with that faith is the issue. It determines destinies and regulates attitudes and actions. For years, I used my measure of faith to embrace a false concept of God. This concept contained no understanding of sin, no Satan, and no hell. I continued in that belief system until I came to receive Christ. I recognized that His blood was shed for me to cleanse me from my sin. When I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection, I activated the gift of faith in the Son.

That is when I became born again.

People who are unsaved have a measure of faith to believe that there is a God. They can see Him in nature and creation if they look at things in a certain way. Yet, when presented with the truth of the Gospel, they reject it. Still, even as they reject the truth of redemption and resurrection that God puts before them with the sunrise that comes each morning of every day, God still loves them.

God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever would believe on Him would not perish but have everlasting life. That is the message of John 3:16. God is good to those who remain unthankful in their measures of faith. He allows the rain to fall on the just and the unjust (see Psalm 73).

Overcoming the Limits of Human Love

If you are like me (and because you are human, you are), you have wondered why wicked people seem to prosper while you struggle along, loving Jesus with all of your heart. You have wondered why you go through tremendous trials while others seem to sail through life. Times like that represent real tests of faith. Do we love God in these moments of

difficulty? Do we recognize that God's love is steady and unchanging? He still "so" loves every single person in the world. He loves them and He blesses them and He doesn't need to have them return His love. The Lord doesn't need to receive anything in return for His love. He is love and always will be love.

Human love isn't this way. People love people who are good to them. But if I love only those who love me back, then I am really no different than an unsaved person. Over the years of my ministry, God has led me to send out gifts and cards to people who have wronged me. In those times, I use my measure of faith to give what God has given me.

As believers, we give to those who seemingly do not deserve to be given anything. We give so that they might receive something they do not deserve, just as we receive things from God that we do not deserve. We love those who do not deserve to be loved because we desire that they would experience God's love.

In Luke 7:47, Jesus loved the prostitute who was washing His feet with her tears. She was forgiven much, and she loved much. What joy that brings in heaven! There is rejoicing above when we give love for love's sake.

Chapter Two
BLESS AND BE BLESSED

Everything a Christian does when he is filled with the Holy Spirit is based upon a desire to bless others. Sadly, not many appreciate the love of God. He so loved the world that He suffered, bled, and died without any guarantee that anyone would respond to that love.

It really is a beautiful thing to love and not receive a single thing in return. There are folks who cannot love unless they receive some gesture in answer to that love. The real test of our faith in Christ could be summed up in this question: Do I love others as God loves me?

If my answer to this question is "Yes," then I will choose to lay down my life for the brethren. I will not be possessive. I will not manipulate. As Christ laid down His life, so we are to lay down our lives for one another. That's the test. If I am not operating in love in this way, then I am walking in a form of darkness.

Loving in the power of the Holy Spirit means that I love even those who do not like me. It represents the evidence of my salvation. It is not my theology that comes first; it is my love for others.

Possession and Dependence

Many people are very possessive in their relationships. They get a friend or two, and they cannot function unless they are around those people. They are building their lives around relationships that are stuck in dependency. They always want something.

Their exchanges go something like this:

"Hey, I called you," one will say, "and you never called me back."

"I was busy."

"You just don't care enough to call me back."

Shouldn't our love run deep enough to cover someone who simply cannot return a phone call?

Love expands the measure of our faith. This expansion brings glorious results in our lives. I give mercy, then God returns it to me without measure. I don't measure out how much I should give. I simply give it, and I receive mercy without measure. It is pressed into my life,

shaken together, and my capacity runs over as mercy goes out through me to others. When mercy flows from me without measure, scores of people will return mercy to me. It represents the spiritual law of love.

Suppose I were to forgive a thousand people. Several thousand people will in turn forgive me. Boy, that's a great principle isn't it? I don't deserve any of it. But God is behind this activity. He presses it all down and concentrates it upon me. He takes it all and mixes it all together so that they all work for good. Eventually, all of this becomes such a rush of mercy, such a flow of joy, that I cannot contain it. I have to give it out and let it spill over to those around me.

Chapter Three
FAITH EXPANSION

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

"And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

"Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

"And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

"But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

"And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: be-

hold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

"He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

"His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

"And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

"His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

"Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with

usury.

"Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents" (Matthew 25:14-28).

In the parable of the talents, God outlines the process whereby more is given to those who use what they already have. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Then my faith acts in love. This is how my faith grows. I have a measure—everyone has that as a gift from God—but then that measure expands.

Mark 4:40 speaks of those with "no" faith, meaning that their measure of faith is inactive. Negative choices have kept it dormant. Then we see that some have "little" faith, according to Matthew 6:30. Some have a measure of faith that develops into what Matthew 8:10 calls "great" faith. Then you have Stephen, in Acts 6:8, who was "full" of faith. And, according to James 2:5, the poor of this world can be "rich" in faith.

Maybe you are married to someone who is not treating you properly. We will just leave it at that statement, which covers a realm of situations. Faith has given you the key to open the cupboards of God's blessing, and that key is unconditional love. You love and you pray and you serve. This spouse certainly deserves none

of it, yet you give that love—God's love. You are operating in a faith that serves by love (Galatians 5:6).

Perhaps you are a parent and your child takes the car without permission and gets into an accident. You love and you forgive. You exercise discipline because a parent who spares discipline from his child hates his child, according to Proverbs 13:24. But you love and give your child something he doesn't deserve. You use the situation to develop your relationship.

What does God do for you in that situation? He leads you from little faith to great faith and then to the fullness of faith. The riches of faith are there, too, for love's key opens up the treasures of God's provision.

The exceeding growth of your faith comes every time you use mercy, forgiveness, kindness, and joy. God's plan is to give you much more than you ever gave away. Mercy comes back upon you. Forgiveness and love and kindness are shaken together so that the cup of blessing overflows more and more.

Initial Reactions

God understands the reality of how we are made. He made us and He knows that we are

dust. When God told Abraham that he and Sarah would have a child (even though he was 99 and she was 90), Sarah laughed. Some would call that doubt. I don't think so. I think that was just a realistic reaction.

Certainly, you would laugh if such a thing were said to you at such an age. Our feelings and emotions react. This is part of being human. We may laugh, but our measure of faith, if it is built on love from God and for God, will believe. If we believe, we can move mountains.

Peter was in jail, and the angel led him out. He went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were praying for him. Peter knocked on the door and a girl answered, but she did not open the door. Instead, she ran to tell the news to everyone at the prayer meeting.

"Peter's here!" she told them.

"You are mad," the people said.

But Peter kept on knocking, and they were all astonished when the door opened and there he was.

Those people believed, but they needed help for their unbelief. God heard their prayers and brought Peter to them. They received an answer that took their faith to a new level. They had

never considered what the power of God could do. That was the answer of love.

In any big faith adventure I have started, my emotions always tried to tell me, "No." But my faith, rooted in God's love and validated by the testimonies from the Word of God, always said, "Yes." Love lifts me above myself, carrying me beyond my emotions.

This is the faith—the faith of the Son of God, the faith that works by love.

CONCLUSION

Faith is something that pleases God. Faith acts because of its love for Jesus Christ. Faith blesses others because of love. Love wants nothing in return. It simply enjoys blessing someone because it wants to share the faith.

God wants us to go beyond loving those who love us back. He wants us to see the hurting, the abused, the wounded. Our faith responds in love, and we go toward them. We expect nothing from them—we expect nothing because we really know so little about how much they have been hurt and wounded and disturbed.

We love them for the privilege of loving them and then we see their joy as they are being loved by us.

God loves to see people receive His love when they simply don't deserve it. There is such a distinction between possessive love, conditional love, and unconditional love. The world

has plenty of the first two, but so many are crying for a love that carries no conditions.

Oh, people need love. In faith, let's give God's love. Just watch what Jesus can do when we love with His love. We may not get a single thing in return from the ones we love. But God will do something. He will expand the measures of our faith. We will have such a fullness and richness in the love of God that our faith will move mountains.

Love's Plan for You

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The plan of God's love is a tremendous principle. Billions of years before we were born, the Lord Jesus Christ knew each of us by name. There is no reason for us to suffer from self-pity, because He has considered each one of us. Before we came into this world, Jesus Christ knew everything about our weaknesses. He knew every problem we would have. He knew every sin we would commit.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit sat down in an eternal convention before the foundation of the world (see Acts 2:23; Isaiah 46:10; Ephesians 1:4) and perfectly planned the provisions we would receive the moment we accepted Christ as our Savior. Everything we would need to live in Him was provided for us at the point of salvation (see 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

God planned our lives so that regardless of what we do as Christians, everything will work

together for good. There is not a thing we can do to defeat God's plan. We can challenge it at times, but we can never, ever defeat it.

God knows our end from the beginning. He chose us before the foundation of the world. God was able to plan things on the basis of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done. He deals with us according to the fact that what Jesus did is a finished work. This booklet will show that no matter what you have done, no matter how much you have failed, if you have accepted Christ you will never be defeated. God is love, and He has a plan for you.

Chapter One

LOOK TO JESUS AND BE HEALED

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

"For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John 3:14-20).

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live" (Numbers 21:8).

In Numbers 21, the children of Israel murmured because they were saddened over their physical needs. Murmurring is one of the greatest problems in the church today. Christians come under God's discipline, mentally and emotionally and physically, because of it.

The murmuring in Israel brought out the serpents, and they began to bite. According to Isaiah 14:29 and 59:5, the moment we start to murmur, cockatrice eggs—eggs of the devil, eggs of the snake—start to hatch. Emotional and mental problems are produced through the painful bites caused by these snakes. Moment by moment, the bites aim to kill individual capacities and to assassinate the character of God's people.

To heal the children of Israel, God commanded Moses to make a serpent out of brass and place it on a pole. Whoever looked upon the brazen serpent was healed. The brazen serpent

was a type—a figure—that represented Jesus Christ, who became sin for us. He bore the curse of all sin for all men. Christ placed Himself in the position of the serpent because all of our sins were placed upon His body at Calvary.

The Brazen Serpent Lifted Up

The brazen serpent represented the condemned Christ. He was condemned because the Father had to look away from His Son when our sins were upon Him.

God told Moses to take the serpent and put it on a pole. Those who were bitten by the real serpents only had to look at the serpent on the pole and they were healed. All they had to do was stop focusing on the pain that had taken hold of their bodies and look toward the brazen serpent.

Some in Israel refused to look at the brazen serpent, and they remained in their pain. They kept in touch with the feelings and the lumps and the swelling going on in their bodies. They were so occupied with the swelling and the pain that they would not look at the pole.

There are those who come to church and yet remain occupied with their troubles, their failures, their problems, or even their pleasures.

They are so occupied with their trials, their suffering, and their own ways that they simply will not look.

When we are going through terrible times of sickness and affliction, the one thing we really need to do is look and get a hold of the body of Jesus Christ—the Church. Yet, some of us will withdraw because we choose to stay occupied with our own lives, our problems, and our afflictions.

Foolish Things

Some just would not look because they did not understand how a seemingly foolish, brazen serpent could ever save their lives.

"You are in terrible pain," Moses said. "Just look at the pole. Your pain is excruciating, but just look at the brazen serpent and be healed."

"I don't understand how it works," some complained that day. " I cannot look. My pain is so much more than I can bear. I will not look."

Oh, how many perished that day, and simply because they refused to look for their healing. They were so occupied with the sickness of their bodies. In the same way, some people stay so occupied with feelings of condemnation and sin that they will not look to Jesus and be saved.

If you are not saved, would you stop and take a good look at Jesus? He is the One who died for your sins. Never mind your problem and your sickness; forsake your sin and your weakness. Take your mind off of your problems. Look unto Jesus and receive His salvation.

This is love's plan for you. One heartbeat from now, you could be in eternity. An accident could send you out of this world. If you refuse to receive Him, you will be lost to heaven's glory—lost to living in a perfect place under a perfect government with a perfected people serving their Master. You will be lost because you never took a look to be saved.

Chapter Two

UNDERSTAND THE DEPTH AND BREADTH OF GOD'S LOVE

In the wilderness, many of God's people would not look at the brazen serpent simply because they were confused. With the snakebites, there was complaining and murmuring. They were so involved with the problems and the heartaches of people around them, they did not look.

People today do the same thing. They become so focused on the whining, crying, begging, and pleading of others that they do not look to Jesus. Moses told the children of Israel, "Look, and you will be healed. Your children will live. The swelling of the bites will go down. Just look!"

That is also the answer for today. People just need to look to Jesus. But because Jesus Christ's death is foolishness to them, they will not look and really, truly be saved.

This is love's plan: Look to Jesus Christ and be saved.

This plan is the reason we have a Bible college with a tremendous emphasis on missions. Even while you are reading this, some mother in India is throwing her baby into a fire to appease her god. In other distant and bleak cultures, crowds are dancing all night under the influence of demons. Thousands of the heathen are putting themselves through amazing rituals—eating the dung of cows and using that as a means of worship. All of these things are happening because people have never heard about the scope and depth of God's love; they have never been introduced to Jesus Christ.

We pray that God will continue to send out many missionaries. We pray that keen-minded people who love God will come and be trained in Bible college. As they study the Word, God will intensify their understanding of how God so loves all people, including those who do terrible things in the name of religion. As missionaries, they will be trained to understand the truth about the love and grace and forgiveness of God.

Not long ago, millions of frustrated and perplexed people in Eastern Europe were living

under the iron hand of Communism. Godless ideologies gripped their lives. But as people got alone with God and began to pray, God opened up many wonderful doors. Many Christians received a burden from the Lord, and they laid down their lives to serve God and bring the Gospel to people, both at home and in the uttermost parts of the world. My prayer is that we would continue to give and to pray and to watch as God blesses, secretly and quietly, in these places. Think of China. Think of the countries ruled by Islam! The Lord's plan of love must be communicated in these places.

Changed Lives Make a Difference

Let me tell you this story. An old farmer had a daughter who died suddenly after suffering terrible burns in a freak accident. This man and his wife attended a church but had never been saved.

This incident drove the farmer to Christ, and he began to have family devotions and readings around the Word of God. He became a quiet and loving Christian and a member of a good Bible-believing church.

A while later, this man and his wife were killed in an automobile accident. At the funeral,

several missionaries came forward and spoke of the hundreds of dollars this farmer had quietly given to support their works. The attendance at their funeral was so great that the ceremony had to be moved to a larger auditorium. The man owned only one suit of clothes, yet he gave sacrificially to support the work of God. What a testimony of what three and a half years of Christian living had done for this couple.

That man could have become very bitter over the death of his daughter. Instead, he came to Jesus and got a vision of the scope of God's love. "The world is going to hell," the farmer once said to his wife. "So many are really lost. We must help to reach them. With what little time we have left, we must do something to bring God's love to them."

Chapter Three

THE GREAT SCOPE OF GOD'S LOVE

Love's scope is to reach the world. Let's not be insensitive to the tremendous needs of the world. Our hearts must spend more time in prayer. We must trust God by faith to give and to send out missionaries. God wants us to send out our brightest and best so that we can have a greater worldwide vision of love's scope.

The one great thing about God's love is its unselfishness. Today we see so many trends in Christianity. Different people put forth different philosophies, principles, and ideas. New ways of thinking come flying across the theological circuit continually. People play the role of Pharisees, magnifying little differences and judging motives.

All of this is going on while Jesus Christ's love is longing to reach the world. Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it (John 3:17).

He did not come to criticize. He did not come to malign.

Certain philosophies have put people in strait jackets. They have no inner joy, no inner peace, no faith rest, and no liberty. Certain people can cause frustration and may put you into limited situations where you cannot be yourself in Christ. They bind people with their traditions, customs, and rituals. Unless you follow everything you are told, they will reject you.

Look for Ways to Save Any Situation

A Christian who is Spirit-filled is always looking for a way to save a situation. He watches, observes, and considers ways to build up, edify, and change difficult circumstances. He will always be ready to let Jesus Christ communicate love and life, and he will always avoid condemnation. He is always trying to save and heal and bring something good out of the situation (Genesis 50:20-24). Satan means things for evil, but God can turn those things around for good.

God will take things that are not good and bring something good out of them. Even if you have failed and fallen flat on your face, Jesus Christ loves you and He wants to redeem your situation. He wants to save your failed marriage.

He will do whatever it takes to deliver you, to give you an abundant life (John 10:10) and fullness of joy (John 15:9). He wants you to have perfect peace (John 14:27).

God does not want us to live in guilt complexes, insecurity, frustration, or fear, with its hundreds of different expressions. He wants us to be free. He wants us to be sound. He wants us to be Spirit-filled. He wants us to understand grace and mercy and love and forgiveness and faith. He wants us to understand that all we have to do is look to Him and be healed—no matter what we have done (Hebrews 12:2).

As believers, all we have to do is look to Him and be healed. Just go back and look to Him—at the Cross. That is where your sins were forgiven. That is where you were set free. That is where God took care of your old nature, once and for all time. That is where you can be made free to serve God (John 8:36).

The Cross is the place where He gives you a song in the night (Psalm 77). That is where you find patience (Romans 5:3). That is where you can have power (Acts 1:8). That is where you find true conviction that agrees with the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). That is where you can find calmness and joy that glorifies God (Isaiah 32:17;

Proverbs 15:13).

Look to Jesus and develop the kind of conversation and manner of living that honors the Kingdom of God and represents His grace to all of the angels looking on. Look to Him and grow up, and become a real follower of Christ. Bad situations will be healed, mended, and corrected if you will simply look to Him.

Never allow yourself to look at your affliction, your suffering, your disease, or your frustrations. Never look at your failure. Look to the One who took care of it, the One who paid for it, the One who has forgiven you and who wants to set you free forever.

It matters not if you have failed a thousand times. God never came to condemn you. He came that you might be saved and delivered from the very condemnation of the flesh. Jesus Christ did not come to earth to place misery upon your emotions or to torment your soul and harass your mind to subdue your will to Satan and this world system. God's changes will set you free.

Be Set Free by His Unselfish Love

God's love is unselfish. Jesus Christ did not seek something for Himself. He came to make

us free. He came to set our personalities free and to help us to live as God wants us to live, not as servants of sin, but as those who are free in holiness and purity and righteousness. We can be purified by faith (Acts 15:9).

Those who belong to God's true corporate body, wherever there is a local expression of it, do not condemn others. They do not live judgmentally. They do not point fingers. They build up (1 Peter 2:5). They edify (1 Corinthians 14:12-19). They are always trying to minister life (2 Corinthians 3:6). They allow the love of God to be shed abroad in their hearts (Romans 5:5). They have one single, eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:11). They are out to bless you, to help you, to build you up, to strengthen you, to edify you, to take you by the hand no matter the problem in your life. They look to help others in the power and the grace of the risen Christ no matter what condition they are experiencing.

That is the corporate body of life.

Overcome Feelings of Condemnation

"Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth" (Romans 14:22).

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).

Jesus Christ did not come to condemn. God wants to bless you, to give you life, and to build your faith. He desires to give you courage and the assurance of His love. Most of all, He wants to give you His life and to manifest it through you as a channel of love, a channel of purity, a channel of mercy.

His life was lived in total unselfishness. As He went through the six illegal trials on His way to Calvary, He kept saying, "Not My will, but Thine." On the Cross, Jesus cried, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." When those at Golgotha challenged Him, saying, "Save yourself and come down off the cross!" He would not do it. He would not preserve His reputation; He would not preserve His own right to be saved from death.

That is love's plan. It is unselfish in its purpose to seek and to save and to set free whosoever will come to Him.

CONCLUSION

Given these truths, there is not a reason in the world for anyone to feel defeated. If you have not accepted Christ, then you are going down a dead end street. You are condemned already (John 3:18). You are lost and destined for a Christless eternity.

It is no mystery to me why our services are filled to capacity three times a week. People are hungry to be built up in life with eternal truth. They are hungry to be edified and strengthened by the Spirit and the Word of God. They are hungry to be a part of a soul-winning ministry. They desire to be in a corporate body where each member contributes to one another in the love of the Holy Spirit. People do want to hear the Scriptures and hear them taught with power in an anointing.

A ministry that does not reach out and operate according to prayer and love in the situations we face is not a ministry of the Lord Jesus

Christ. Those people are interested in things that are not vital to the purpose of Christ. They are not motivated in love's plan for the lost.

In the power of God, families that come together at the Cross to receive Christ will be transformed. People who suffer with unhealthy emotions simply need to look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith, and be healed. Teenagers, seniors, and middle-agers—everyone needs nothing more than to look to the Cross, to see Jesus and be healed.

That is love's plan. That is love's purpose.

In these times, let us draw near to Jesus Christ and live, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as members in particular of His corporate body, in the plan and the purpose of love.

Loving God

by Loving Others

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible says we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our mind, and with all of our strength. How do we express this love to Him? We do it by sharing with others the love we receive from Him.

When you allow the love you receive from God to flow out of you, then you are loving Him with all of your heart, soul, mind, and body. As you will see, there is no shortage of places where God's love can go.

Loving God is not a works program. These pages will show that the love we are speaking about is unconditional love. It takes the Holy Spirit to produce it in us (Romans 5:5) and to bear the fruit of it (Galatians 5:22).

Chapter One

THE HEART ISSUE

"And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord:

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:28-30).

The heart is the supreme center of all communications, feelings, and decisions that apply to the physical body. It is the premise for all motivational thinking and the basis of all human operation. The heart produces both positive emotions and negative emotions, which result in positive or negative volition. Based on those conditions, we either honor and glorify God

with our bodies or do not.

The soul has five parts: the mind, the emotions, the conscience (with its norms and standards), self-consciousness, and the free volition. The old sin nature, which was the result of Adam's decision to disobey God, also operates from the soul.

The mind is a collection of correlated single thoughts that characterize our knowledge of a subject. From those thoughts, we make observations that result in an understanding (whether right or wrong) of the subject and an awareness to apply what we know. The mind reveals the attitude of the soul, which is determined by the information given by the conscience, controlling our attitude and directing our will. It is the place of understanding and logical thinking—the intellectual, reflective faculty of man. As that part of us that perceives, thinks, and concludes, the mind is the decision-maker of the soul. (See Romans 1:28, 7:23 & 25, 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:16, 14:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 4:17-18, 5:17.)

Finally, the "strength" the Lord referred to speaks of the physical body with which we can serve and glorify God or not.

First and Foremost

The Word of God teaches me that if I love the Lord my God with all of my heart, then I will be motivated to help everyone with God's love, no matter who they are.

If I love Him will all of my mind, I will spend time in meditation, communicating with Him, letting the Word dwell richly in my heart.

If I love Him with all of my soul, then the five parts of my soul will be submitted to the new heart and the new spirit of Ezekiel 36:26:

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

If I love Him with all my strength, then I will keep my body pure and I will not give it over to drugs or to any lifestyle that would cause it harm. In loving God with all my strength, I will not give my body over to promiscuity because I understand that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. I therefore preserve my body to glorify God (Romans 12:1-2).

A Need Brings a Call to Love

"And the second [commandment] is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as

thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31).

The real secret to being right with God is not whether we make mistakes or not. The issue is not what we do overtly. The key to having a right relationship in our hearts to God is in the measure of our obedience to Jesus Christ's commandments to love, as expressed in Mark 12:30-31.

For example, if a husband loves his wife with all his heart, treating her with kindness and gentleness, communicating with her, and providing for her, then that husband is loving God. Every time he loves his wife or children, he loves God, because the proportion of his love for God is reflected in how that love is shared with others.

A person's need is God's call to love. Those who answer God's call for evangelism share God's love with strangers. They love Him at every door they go to. They are loving God with their bodies. They are loving God with their hearts, souls, and minds by sharing Jesus Christ with those who need Him. That is one way you can tell if a person loves with God's love.

For this reason, we are known by our fruit (Matthew 7:16-20).

Aman was dying in a hospital. He was not a

member of my church, but his friend who was newly saved asked me to visit him. This man had been brought up in religion, but had never received Jesus Christ as His Savior. I started visiting him daily and eventually led him to Christ. At three o'clock one morning a nurse called me to say that he was dying and wanted me to be there before he went. "You are his favorite friend who visits him. He loves you and wants you to come now," the nurse said.

Loving that man was loving God.

Chapter Two

UNTO THE LEAST

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

"And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

"And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

"I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

"Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

"Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

"And these shall go away into everlasting

punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:31-46).

Another way to love God is to forgive and forget as God forgives and forgets (see Ephesians 4:32). Giving by grace in the offering is loving God. Jesus said in Matthew 25:40, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Every time we obey God by loving someone we are loving God. Feeding the homeless is loving God. The folks who visit the nursing homes are loving God by loving those people. Those who go into the prisons to teach and to show kindness love God.

Our value is not determined by what we do for others in works. Rather, our value is measured by a faith that serves by love (Galatians 5:6, 14).

The Value of Every Soul

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?"

"And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:33-37).

The Samaritan had compassion on the wounded man, unlike the Levite (representing the law) and unlike the priest (representing religion). Jesus told us to give our neighbors mercy just as the Samaritan did.

Every soul in the universe is so valuable. It doesn't matter who they are or where they are. Those eating out of garbage cans have value to God. The ones who have made terrible, terrible mistakes and are now in prison have value to God. The children left neglected and wounded because of a broken home have value to God.

Three children belonging to a drunken couple started coming to our Vacation Bible School. One of the little ones came to me and asked, "Please go talk to my father and mother—they

drink all the time, and they scream and argue." So we went over to their house.

Within an hour, both the mom and dad were on their knees, praying to receive Jesus Christ. Soon they were both baptized. That day, the six-year-old boy came to us and said, "Thank you for loving my mom and dad and making our home happy again."

Going to that home was loving God with all our hearts, all our minds, all our souls, and all of our strength.

Forgiveness and Restoration

We do everything in our power to teach our young people to stay pure and to keep themselves as virgins. We preach and teach and have programs in our schools designed to keep them from living in sin. Yet, an isolated one, here and there, will fail. These ones we take in, and we counsel them, love them, and treat them just as if they had never sinned. That is God's love.

Some were ready to give up—they thought that no one would ever let them have a church wedding because of their sin. But we went ahead and married them. Why? Because they repented, and now they need God's love, not a probation period.

Jesus Christ doesn't put people on probation, although some crimes require we be obedient to honor the ordinances of law. Still, spiritually there is no probation for anyone who rebounds after his failure.

Chapter Three

SUPERNATURAL GRACE IN ACTION

Every time we love someone in a pure and godly way we are loving God. When someone fails and hurts us, we go to him and say, "I forgive you, and I want to help you. It doesn't matter that you have failed. I want to help you; I want to restore you to God." This is loving the sinner where the sinner is at in his failure. It is an expression of supernatural love and supernatural grace through the supernatural communication of the Word of God.

Do you know someone who is off? Someone you think needs correction? Just remember this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Were we sinners? Yes. Did Jesus wait until we got right before loving us? No. While we were yet sinners, He shed His blood and died for us just as we were. Did we merit that kind of love? No. Did we receive that kind love? Yes.

Jesus came into the world not to impute our trespasses unto us, but He came instead to give us a ministry and a word of reconciliation (see 1 John 2:1-2, John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Don't misunderstand me: Every soul on earth must be saved in order to go to heaven. They must make a decision to become born again. By grace through faith each of us is saved. But while we were sinners, Jesus loved us with all of His heart and no longer imputed sin to us. The moment we believed, we received His righteousness and had our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life for all eternity.

A Vision Beyond Borders

All of us have a part in the vision our overseas missionaries have for their countries. They are making a great impact, but they couldn't do it without our love and support. Some of us will never go to another land. Yet, others couldn't be sent without the prayers, the encouragement, and the financial support of those here.

Every time someone goes to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, the Philippines, Uganda, Ghana, Thailand, Russia, India, and all the places we go, it is an expression of our body loving God. They go and represent

Jesus Christ, walking in distant fields, living under unusual conditions and adversity, risking their health and their lives at times. When they do this, we share the reward—members of the body of Christ in the local church loving the Lord with all of our hearts.

Working the Fields

We have a woman in our church whose husband is very sick in the hospital, and she has two small children. Still, she is so calm and precious, with the peace of God, loving her husband and her kids. With all that she is going through, she is showing God's love at every moment. She is loving God with all of her heart.

Staying true to the Truth and being faithful to three church services a week is loving God with all of our hearts. We are just a group of sinners in need of God's love but going forward. This is one of the beautiful things about being in a city such as ours. We have such a field with great needs. All of our ministries—for the women, for the youth, for the down-and-out, for the up-and-out—all of them are about showing His love. Any cup of cold water given in the name of the Lord is an expression of the love of the Lord.

Expressing God's love is something very practical. It is down to earth. Still, we can all touch heaven as we love God by loving others. There is no greater thing on earth.

CONCLUSION

Moses had an impediment in his speech (Exodus 4:10). According to Exodus 4, he came up with four excuses—reasons why God could not use him. When he realized his excuses did not impress his Creator, he insisted that God use Aaron to speak for him. Still, God mightily used Moses.

Paul was said to have a speech pattern that was contemptible (2 Corinthians 10:10). This wasn't speaking of his theology but of his high, squeaky voice. Though he was a brilliant man of God, he must have been hard to listen to when he preached all night. Those with him at the time, however, fell in love with what he had to say. Therefore, it wasn't a problem to listen to him preach all night and every day. They could hear him because they loved God.

Be reconciled to God and start loving Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and body. We have so little time here on earth. We can't afford

to waste it in defeat and disagreement. We need to reveal Jesus Christ to someone. There are so many who desperately need to be shown the love of God.

The power, peace, and provision of God is available to us. We will bless people in special ways—simply by loving them with God's love.

Loving Yourself

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

As a young man from a small town in Maine, I made a discovery that changed my life forever. I discovered that God Almighty was available to me, to love me, and that I could receive Him into my life.

Imagine it! The One who died on Calvary, shed His blood, was buried, and rose again; the One who is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient; the One who has all patience, all mercy, all grace, all joy, all peace, all wisdom, all knowledge—this One was available to *me*, loving me personally! That was quite a discovery, and I am so grateful to Jesus Christ for it.

Then I discovered that all I had to do was be available to Him, and that was a wonderful discovery. But for a person to make himself truly available to the Lord, he needs to recognize his value in God's kingdom. Unfortunately, not recognizing the value of souls, including their own worth in God's sight, is what prevents many

people from going forward.

Many people never consider going to the mission field or even to a local outreach because they are too busy considering their own shortcomings—what they *don't* have, what they are *really* like. What they need to discover is that God is the one who first loved us, who made Himself available to us, and who is utterly dependable to see us through.

This booklet shows that to love ourselves is to honor the One who created us and to highly esteem His plan that includes us. By trusting Him for each step that we take, we can love others and make ourselves available to them as we are available to God. But we can only love others to the extent that we love ourselves.

Chapter One

YOU ARE A MEMBER IN PARTICULAR

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

"For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

The Word of God says that there is one body—just one—but many members, and we are all baptized into one body by the Holy Spirit—regardless of where we came from. So whether you are from Seattle, Chicago, Baltimore, New York, Ghana, Budapest, Hong Kong, or a little town in Maine, if you are born again, you are a member in particular of the Body of Christ. We are many members, part of just one

Body—that is it.

A very precious phrase in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that could easily be overlooked says that we have all been made to "drink into one Spirit." It is not that we drink "from" one Spirit but "into" one Spirit—inside of God, glorifying Christ. We all are made to drink, and it becomes experiential—an experience of being inside of Christ—because we are drinking into the Holy Spirit's glorification of Christ.

God's Availability to Us

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-6).

In this passage, the Bible says that because of God's great love for us and the richness of His mercy, when we were dead in sins He quickened us together—not separately, but together—with Christ. Now, that is the availability of God for us.

He quickened us together.

He raised us up together.

We are seated together.

Those who truly understand what it means to be a member of the Body of Christ are those who walk, experientially, in the Holy Spirit of the living God. They understand the power and the tremendous provision of dogmatic, absolute togetherness: oneness that goes beyond likeness.

In the Body of Christ, there is not one person whom I do not need. I need each one deeply, with all my heart. No matter who you are, where you are, or what you do, if you have been born again, you are a member in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27).

God tells us to love each other with the same love wherewith He loves us. Among Spirit-filled Christians, when one weeps, we all weep. And when one rejoices, we all rejoice (1 Corinthians 12:26). Why? Because we are members of one another. There are many of us, but we are just one body. Not one member but many, all born-again, all sealed with the Holy Spirit, all with the provision of having a God who became available to us by becoming a man.

Dependability and Availability

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

This passage speaks of dependability. Think of it! The God who created the universe has made Himself available to us by His promises. He has promised that if we will simply trust in Him and not ourselves, He will reveal Himself to be utterly dependable.

The Word of God teaches us about the riches of grace as we learn about God's availability to us.

The Lord has taught us His Word in our togetherness, in the uniqueness of our unity, experienced by the power of the grace of God, and enjoyed through the Holy Spirit of God, because He is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10; Psalm 18:12).

As believers, you and I have no past in eternity except that we have always lived in the eternal "is" of God. Can you imagine it? The only record of our lives in eternity says that we are perfect. We made the discovery of God's availability to us and accepted Christ as our Savior, by grace through faith and not of ourselves. Then we realized that the availability of God's love for us was also to everybody in the entire world. Therefore, in Christ we have received His vision for the lost. Understanding that all men

have sinned, we take up our Cross and go into all the world with the message of the glorious Gospel—that Christ paid for the sins of every man and woman in the unlimited atonement (1 John 2:2 and 2 Corinthians 5:19).

Chapter Two

MADE ACCEPTABLE IN THE BELOVED

God desired from the beginning of time that we would accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. Because of this, the Father placed His Son in a position where He would always make His love available to us, personally. And because we are hid with Christ in God in the eternal "is" of time, the Father must always be available to us, because of His commitment to Jesus Christ in our behalf.

"A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary" (Jeremiah 17:12). God's throne room is our hiding place.

Why We Forsake Not the Assembly

But in Jeremiah 17:13, we read, "O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken

the LORD, the fountain of living waters."

"Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the Lord? let it come now" (Jeremiah 17:15).

The people mocked Jeremiah. In their unbelief, they challenged God's authority by saying, "You've been telling us we're going to be judged. Now let it come!" the people said in anger.

And then Jeremiah made a wonderful statement:

"As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee" (Jeremiah 17:16).

Jeremiah turned to the Lord and said, "I didn't run from Your call on my life to be a pastor, Lord. I have and I will follow thee. It's very painful that these people accuse me when I tell them that judgment is coming. But as for me, I will follow thee. I don't desire judgment. But You know, Lord, that what I have spoken is right."

He said, "No matter what they say, with their not loving me and their forsaking me, they brought pain into my life. But I will follow You.

And You know very well that what I have spoken is right. I don't care what they say. It is right, before You."

Here Am I

In the midst of a great trial, the pastor, Jeremiah, discovered that God was available to him. He discovered that God loved him personally even though the people rejected him. And when God spoke to him, Jeremiah became very available to God. No longer was he fearful of the people, trying to hide in his own inability. He was now saying, "Here am I! Here am I! Use me, Lord."

In the twenty-second chapter of Genesis in the first verse, Abraham was told early in the morning to take his son to Mount Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice. Early in the morning, God said, "Abraham, Abraham," and he replied, "Here I am." And he said it again in the twenty-second chapter in the eleventh verse. *Here I am.* That is all that God wants. Abraham could go ahead because he trusted God's love toward him.

Jacob said in the forty-sixth chapter of Genesis in the second verse, "Here am I." God said to him, "Jacob, Jacob." And he replied, "Here am

I—just as I am: deceitful, crooked. But here am I." After wrestling with God, Jacob, too, realized that God was for him.

In Exodus 3:4, God called to Moses, who had spent forty years in the backside of the desert. "Moses! Moses! We've been separated for forty years. But I haven't forgotten you." As a man, Moses had no confidence in his own image. He had deserted God because of his flesh. But when God called, he immediately said, "Here am I. Here am I." And because Moses got to know God's character, he became the meekest man on the earth.

In 1 Samuel 3:4, the Lord called to young Samuel in the night. Several times the boy heard, and he responded, but he thought it was the voice of a man. Finally he understood, and he made himself available to the One who was calling him. Again God said, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he replied, "Here am I. I'm just a little boy, but here am I."

Did Samuel, who was just a child, understand the tremendous voice he was hearing? Oh, the power in the voice of God, the power in the voice of God's call. No matter how it comes or where we are, it descends upon us in the transcendence of His foreknowledge and His love,

knowing every detail about our life.

Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up on a throne, seated, with His train that filled the temple, in Isaiah 6:1. And after he had been cleansed and purged from the particular sin of his individuality, the Lord said in verse 8, "Who will go for us?" Isaiah said, "Here am I. Here am I."

Responding to the Call to Love

It is tremendous when we begin to understand that one of the greatest things in the world is to hear God. Second, it is to know God's voice when He speaks. Third, it is to trust God for His call. And fourth, it is to say "Here am I."

If your marriage needs strengthening, your marriage needs the Lord Jesus Christ to touch it and come in and take it over. What do you say? Instead of defending yourself, or listing all of your faults (or the other person's faults), just say, "Here am I." Perhaps your family needs to acknowledge some problems and become one in the togetherness of God's will. It begins by a declaration: "Here am I. Here am I. Do what You need to do with me, Lord."

The Holy Spirit may have convicted you because your temperament isn't what it should be. All of us are tempted to live in the carnality of

the old sin nature at times, and we despise it and hate it. But instead of struggling with the flesh, we can just respond to the Lord and say, "Here am I. I am here to be changed. I am available to be changed. I am available to pray. I am available for a new word from heaven. I am available to be corrected. I am available to be edified. I am available to the corporate Body. And though we are many, we are one."

Available to Glorify God

I am available, and I want to drink into the same Spirit that glorified Christ (John 16:13-14). When I do, the Holy Spirit will glorify Christ in me.

Jesus Christ prayed in John 17:21-22, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." In other words, the glory that the Father gave to His Son, Jesus has given to us.

We started out with the glory of God. That glory was from the very beginning of the first moment you were saved. And with the glory of God, a place was set apart in God's sanctuary,

which is your body, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Three

THE MAN THAT I LOVE AND THE MAN THAT I HATE

There is a man that I love, and it is me—that is, when I am rightly related to God and to others. Together, we are as one new man. There is, however, a man that I hate. I despise him. And thank God, he is not around any more. This man that I hate is the man that I was in my old sin nature.

But the man that I love is also me. I have been quickened, saved, raised up, seated, and hid with Christ in God. Sixty-eight things happened to me the moment I was saved. We who are saved have indeed died, and indeed we have been buried. Thank God for that. We can remember who we were if we want to, but we can choose not to know ourselves after the flesh.

Love who you are in Christ. You don't have any sin record. You may remember some of your sins, but because of grace and mercy, you have

no sin record whatsoever. Every one of us who is born again is seated on a throne in heaven, and in our bodies is the glory of God. The precious glory of the Holy Spirit indwells us. We have a capacity of availability which results in dependability, which enters into acceptability and all the possibilities of probabilities in Jesus Christ.

We Are Commanded to Love Ourselves

In Matthew 22:37-39, a lawyer among the Pharisees tempted Jesus by asking Him, "What is the greatest of all the laws?" Jesus said, "It is that you shall love the Lord thy God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. That is first. But the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." He said, "Those two laws cover all of the words you talk about endlessly but never truly understand."

You have every right to love yourself. In fact, the Word of God commands it. There is no need to get up and always confess how terrible you are. That is buried. Yes, it is true that we have an old sin nature, but it is crucified and buried in God's eyes. You are now a *new* creation.

In Romans 6:4 you have a brand-new life. In 2 Corinthians 3:6, you are under a brand-new

agreement between the Father and the Son, and they can never reject you (Hebrews 6:18). According to Isaiah 62:2, even before you get to heaven (Revelation 2:17), you have a brand-new name.

The flow of God comes to us from His throne in heaven. It was given to us from the very beginning, and how glorious it is. We can fellowship with our crucifixion. We fellowship with our burial. And oh, most important, we fellowship with our resurrection and ascension in Christ.

A very beautiful verse is Psalm 45:2*b*, and it says, "Grace is poured into thy lips: therefore, God hath blessed thee for ever."

Thank You, Jesus! Grace is poured into my lips, that I might be blessed. That is the man I love: The new man who has his only identity with Christ. The man who, when he suffers, reveals Christ. The man who is seated with Christ. The man who is a member of the Body of Christ, knit with every member in the body. This man is one with those who are members of Christ's body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30), joined to Him as one spirit. That is the man I love. He is hid, and he is called in the oneness of the entire corporate Body.

The Gospel Comes with a Call

Every Christian is called, but not every Christian hears from God. They don't know what He has done in them. They go to a church that preaches the Gospel, but they do not experience an abundant life. They do not understand that we are called into a Person—the one new man of Ephesians 2:15. Yes, they hear the Gospel. But with the Gospel comes a call to serve (Luke 1:74-77), a call to grow, a call for discipleship, a call to prayer, a call to repent, a call to be one, a call for the flow of heaven.

When the flow of the Word of God comes down in the pulpit, it flows out—not because of the person behind the pulpit but in spite of him. It comes down from heaven and flows through the speaker into all the people that are one with him. And as an assembly, they receive the tremendous revelation of the living waters. And they receive it through the Holy Spirit of the living God, and God is the Giver.

So as the local church responds to the "go" of the Gospel, they begin to minister to their Jerusalem and their Judea. They receive a vision for their Samaria as well as for the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). They respond to the

call of God. And when a Christian changes location because of the call of God, that new place becomes his Jerusalem.

If he is called to China, what was once the uttermost parts of the earth now is his Jerusalem. It is a beautiful exchange from God, giving us the freshness of the invigorating vision for the entire world, leaving nobody out. Our vision is still for all of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. This is falling in love with God for the world.

Becoming All That You Can Be

The availability of God, your acceptability by God, the dependability of God's faithfulness, and the realization of all the possibilities of God in you—that takes you into everything you could be and makes you become what God has already made you to be. As you begin to realize this, by the grace of God, you discover that you are God's woman, you are God's man. *You are!*

And as you go through life, you will begin to discover that it isn't what you go through that makes a difference—it is what goes through you. It isn't how much you suffer but how much you suffer with Christ that brings glory to God.

In the simplicity of God's communication, in

the explanation of God's desire, please remember this. This man that I love, I love him because he is a member in particular in the body of Christ, a lively stone fitly framed in the place where God Almighty dwells.

People ought to love themselves. God gives messages like this one because a lot of people who should love themselves don't. Please understand this: You are not your own. And if you are not your own, and if you acknowledge that you belong to God, then God controls your tongue, your lips, your ears, your mouth, your feet, your hands, your mind, your emotions, your conscience, your self-consciousness—and you will love yourself.

CONCLUSION

I am not my own. Many years ago, I heard a call from heaven to preach. God said, "I am available." He said He would bless our ministry with television and radio broadcasts, missions, and schools. And He has.

But the truth is this: All of my availability to the One who is available to me produces all the possibility of His power. As a result, I live in my acceptability in Christ because of the holiness of God's throne, which is glorious.

I am changed from glory to glory as I love myself—that is, Christ in me. I love the Christ in you, so I don't know you after the flesh, and I don't know myself after the flesh. God doesn't know us after the flesh.

Furthermore, we love one another through the power of God's provision, His Person, and the truth of God's will. There is not a reason in the world why we should not love our new creation. And I happen to be in it, so if I love my

new creation, I love myself!

Made Perfect in Love

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

Love is a powerful element in a person's life. Some have described love as a state of mind, and they can go into all kinds of theoretical descriptions of how the mind can be trained to love. It all comes across as very academic and very methodical.

The Bible, however, provides us with a different picture of love. It shows us that "love" is not just a state of being. Rather, it is primarily an action. Furthermore, love is always in search of an object that will receive its action.

When Jesus approached Jerusalem, in Luke 19:41-44, He wept as He beheld the city. Why did He respond that way? I believe one reason is that Jesus loved the people there so deeply. Yet, He knew how His love would be rejected and the consequences of that rejection, both for the city and for the people. Jesus' love longed for the opportunity to make a difference, and He was moved with compassion because the objects

of His love opposed Him.

Love is made perfect when it acts, as you will see in this booklet. God *is* love, and His love is still going out to the world, acting and moving and living in believers everywhere, constantly seeking those who are lost as objects of that love.

Chapter One

FAITH THAT WORKS BY LOVE

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:14-18).

Faith comes alive when it enters into the substance and evidence of the promises. The Greek word *hupostasis* means to "abide or stand

under." Faith is something that must stand under the absolute authority of God's words.

Aperson who is right with God always has a faith that acts. This is what we see throughout Hebrews 11, the faith-heroes chapter. Verse 4 refers to Abel's more excellent offering. He committed an action of faith, by grace, through the Holy Spirit. In verses 5 and 6, Enoch was taken up to heaven because he pleased God, who is only pleased by our faith in Him. In verse 7, Noah prepared the ark by faith, and for the one hundred and twenty years that it took, he preached to the people. In verse 17, by faith Abraham offered Isaac, the long awaited child of promise.

In every one of these cases, someone put his faith into action.

Do You Believe What You Know?

I really do not believe that which I do not implement. If I believe what I know, then I will reveal it with what I do. I must enter into obedience to what I have learned and set priorities with what I have inside of me. If God is my source, that will be revealed in my life throughout each day.

Faith acts under the absolute truth of the

Bible, but faith is absolutely nothing if I do not understand love. Galatians 5:6 tells us, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

One problem today is that few preachers really understand what love is about. Love does not get up in the pulpit and compromise the Scriptures, not daring to speak the whole truth of the Word, but making sure that everyone enjoys each message without anyone getting offended. A godly preacher, one who preaches every single word of God, will actually offend people with his message on many occasions.

The only thing that counts with God is love that is perfected. I do not have God's love if I have not a love that is perfected. There are diversities of meanings for the Greek words translated as "love" in the New Testament. *Phileo* can mean, "I love you because of you," and agape can mean, "I love you because of me." Now, when I love you because of God's love in you, and I love you because His love is in me, we can have a wonderful time with God. This means we both have love in us, and that is the basis for objective fellowship.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

"We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:17-19)

A Christian who is perfected in love doesn't linger in depression. He is not afraid. He is not insecure. Instead, he walks with a tremendous identity all because perfect love is the source of his self-image.

The fruit of the Spirit *is* love (Galatians 5:22, 23). Here, the verb is not plural but singular. This is the only fruit of the Holy Spirit. Joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance—these are attributes of the fruit of the Spirit. God knows what He is talking about; He utilizes good grammar. The fruit of the Spirit is love, and then He mentions these eight attributes. Why? Because these are the evidence of the fruit of God's love in believers.

For example, love gives us joy and the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). God's

joy remains in us, according to John 15:11, because love is the source of our joy.

Peace is part of the fruit of the Spirit. Love gives us peace, and that peace is perfect (Isaiah 6:3), not transitory such as the peace the world gives (John 14:27). Love is always giving something, so it gives us peace.

Longsuffering (*makrothumia* in the Greek) represents a supernatural patience with people and a supernatural ability to stand in adverse circumstances. Still, longsuffering is only one characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit. You can train yourself to suffer long and still not have God's love, but if you do have God's love you will suffer long.

Next, there is gentleness (*christotes*) which is extreme courtesy and kindness that comes from a love that has lost its life at Calvary, at the Cross, and now lives on in its resurrection provision.

Then, there is divine goodness. You have to be careful when you say someone is good, because if he is good in his flesh then he is not good at all. He simply has trained Adam to be good. Divine goodness comes from love. It reveals a love that is very unusual.

Faith, meekness, and temperance are also given to us when love is our source. All of these

attributes spring from love—the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two

LOVE IN ACTION

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the

truth;

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13).

This chapter reveals the way love gives us those eight things we mentioned. Love is more than just a mental attitude. If it is just a mental attitude to you, then you have not been made perfect in the area of love.

Can you imagine being around someone

who doesn't know how to love? It is one thing to know what love is, but it is another thing to know how to love. First Corinthians 13 shows us how to love.

Consider the Christian who does not have a burden for the lost. He does not have love. He has not been made perfect in it. A church that doesn't purpose to seek and save the lost in its Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth is a church without love. It might be a very nice church that preaches the Gospel. But there is no love there. Love is only perfected when it acts.

In 1 John, love is mentioned almost fifty times. The apostle John, who became known as "the apostle of love," understood that without an object, love cannot act. The Trinity was filled with love before they created anyone or anything. The Father loved the Son, the Son loved the Spirit, the Spirit loved the Father. The Trinity acted in love before the angels were created. Love always needs to have an object to love because love is only perfected when it is in action.

A Laid-Down Life

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). The action of

laying down His life is directed toward an object. James 4:6 declares that He gives more grace to the humble. He gives. Love always gives. Love is not complete until it gives. Love is not perfected until it gives from its source, Jesus Christ. Then, the Holy Spirit sheds love abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5).

If a married couple is having a hard time, then God's love is not being made perfect in that marriage. They may be sincere Christians and they will go to heaven, but they do not understand perfect love.

Perfect love in a marriage is the husband loving his wife as Christ loved the Church. Just as Christ gave His life so the husband gives his life and uses the Word of God to invest life in his wife. Love has been perfected in him. Likewise, the wife's love is perfected when she responds and reflects the source of the love she has received.

Love always acts. If someone doesn't give others the ingredients of love, then love is not perfected in him.

As God is in heaven, so are we in this world. God so loved the world that He *gave*. What did He do? God, who is love, gave His only Son. What a beautiful thing to consider.

Chapter Three

MIRACLES OF LOVE

Several years ago, we had a couple in our church named Charlie and Ethel. One day, I was doing our radio show and God told me to pray for someone who was bedridden and an invalid. Ethel was healed that day. She got up out of bed and met her husband at the door. She started twirling and dancing around their living room.

The doctor who had treated Ethel said himself, "This is from God. I had nothing to do with this."

That was God's love in action. Afterward, these two people were at everything we did at the church. God had perfected in them this deep, deep love from Calvary. Remember, there can be no perfect love without the Cross. There can be no perfect love without resurrection. And, there can be no perfect love without the filling of the Holy Spirit.

"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate

you.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John 3:13-15).

Love gives. Proverbs 28:27 says, "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack…." It is not a works program; it is love being perfected in someone.

Can you imagine preaching Christ and not being made perfect in the area of love? How are we made perfect in love? It comes by living in obedience, by faith, in the grace that is given through the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is love.

If I love those who don't love me, then love has been perfected in me. If I only love those who love me, then I am just like anyone else. I love them because they are good to me (Luke 6:32).

Love That Withstands Opposition

Amissionary went to the interior of Uganda and served the people for fourteen years, yet he was persecuted and hated and finally beaten and killed. One of this missionary's friends followed in his footsteps and there came a great re-

vival. Sadly, he too died in the midst of a government skirmish.

So many believers lay down their lives for people in the same manner—in the way of love. Maybe not to the death, but they suffer and go without, all because love has been made perfect in them.

Jesus came down from heaven as the God-man in order to perfect our faith. He died on the Cross to show us perfect love. To show us how perfect love is imparted, He saves us the moment we believe. To show us how perfect love is imputed, He will never impute sin to us. He gives us eternal security to show us how perfect love gives us confidence that comes from knowing His character and the permanence of our relationship with Him. He will not let us go.

Jonathan loved David as his own soul. He made a covenant with his friend and gave David his robe, his sword, and his girdle—all of his garments. What was Jonathan doing? He was expressing God's love.

"David, God used you to defeat Goliath,'' Jonathan said to him. "God has spoken to me. I am not to be the king. You, David, will be the king. And, I am going to make sure that you are."

As long as Jonathan was alive, David never committed immorality. The perfected love he received from his friend gave him great encouragement to draw closer to God.

See, you can never separate love from giving. You can never separate love from obeying. You can never separate love from the geographical or the operational will of God. You can never separate love from the perfect will of God.

People need to be in God's geographical will for their lives in order to take advantage of all the opportunities to have love perfected in them.

Don't Get Careless With Love

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

"And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee,

because thou hast left thy first love.

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:1-5).

The mention of the works of love refers to having an active faith that does something. In a ministry such as ours, we have to keep our hearts warm every day and make sure we do not become careless toward each other. We cannot afford to become careless toward the world or our enemies, and we must not become careless toward the lost.

We must make sure that the Holy Spirit fills us with His precious love—love that is always serving and always giving.

CONCLUSION

When we are made perfect in love, we simply walk in love, and our actions, through the Holy Spirit, reveal that Jesus Christ is our source. Remember, a spiritual man is not made spiritual by what he knows. I could understand everything about the Bible and still not be a spiritual man. I could pray for hours and hours and still not be spiritual. I believe in prayer and I believe in studying the Bible, but I still need to be made perfect in God's love.

If your love is perfect, you will impart that love to people who need it desperately. You will give it to those who are lost to different values in this life. Beyond this, you will remain patient enough to wait until those people can finally receive that love.

God loves us even when we don't know anything about love, when we haven't responded to Him at all. He makes us perfect in Him, because *His* love depends entirely upon Him.

Make a Stand for the Gospel

Pastor Steven Scibelli is a graduate of Stevens School of the Bible. In 1988 he led a team that included his wife, Linda; their two children, Lysa and Peter; and twelve others to Ghana, West Africa. Today, Greater Grace World Outreach in Ghana has expanded to 18 churches that have sent missionaries to Nigeria, Togo, and Liberia.

Staying true to the vision to spread the Gospel and to make disciples of men in the uttermost parts of the world, Pastor Scibelli has ministered in more than 20 African countries and 50 other countries over the last 20 years.

In between church planting and his bimonthly trips to Africa, the Scibellis live in Baltimore where he teaches at Maryland Bible College and Seminary and serves in the Missions and Outreach departments at GGWO.

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INTRODUCTION

There are choices, and then there are decisions. I can choose to do this or that, and the results of either could be equally good. But as a believer, I make decisions that leave me no options. Many of us know the song that goes, "I have decided to follow Jesus.... No turning back, no turning back." That's what I'm talking about.

This booklet came from a message I preached after returning from a Bible conference on a luxury cruise ship. Naturally speaking, I would have thought that to be rather ironic—definitely not my choice. But I made a decision to follow Jesus, and He is apt to take us where we would not go on our own. It proved to be a very fruitful time.

We are not just "in" Christ to go through life doing whatever. We are in Him so that whatever we do and wherever we do it, we can know that He has positioned us providentially to defend

the Gospel—to proclaim the truth about heaven and hell and about what Christ has done to put the devil on the run!

This booklet is dedicated to Jesus Christ and Pastor Carl H. Stevens, the examples of being set for the defense of the Gospel.

Chapter One

MAKE IT PERSONAL

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

"Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

"For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

"Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace (Philippians 1:3-7).

Paul was writing the epistle to the Philippians from a Roman prison. As a partaker of grace, he said many things about joy, and peace, and thanksgiving, and contentment, and assurance, and strength—things that would never cause us

to imagine that he was in prison. But he was.

His words in this letter were conversational—as though he were talking face to face with the people in Philippi and trying to describe what God was doing in the situation. Twenty-one times he used the word "joy." Yet the fact of the matter is that he was locked up—aware of his situation but more aware of God than the situation.

I like that! I want to be more aware of God than I am of what is going on around me, even though it is actually happening and I am in the middle. Recently I was a guest on a cruise ship for a Bible conference, and many times on that trip, I was aware of situations, but I was more aware of God. I was aware that the ship was moving and that my legs were not so steady—fading to the left, then fading to the right—but I was more aware of God than of the motion.

I like to run sprints a few times a week, and this boat had a big running deck up on top. This particular day there was quite a crowd on the track, and most of the people were walking or jogging. Since my stroke, I can't see out of my left eye and I was afraid I would knock some people over if I didn't run them over, so, I prayed that God would clear a path. Within a

few minutes, an unbelievable storm came up. The rain poured down, and everybody left, and I said, "Thank You, God." I had the deck all to myself.

Partaking of Grace

"…Knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17*b*).

"…In the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partakers of my grace" (Philippians 1:7*b*).

Paul said that in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, because he is a partaker of grace, we too can partake of his grace. I love how he made it personal. He said, "…*my* grace."

When he asked God three times to deliver him from his thorn in the flesh, Jesus said to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9). And later Paul said, "It is *my* grace." I am going to personally appropriate the grace of God for my life. Grace is not some abstract phenomenon that I know about, and it is not just a concept I heard preached about—although that is where it begins, with the preaching of the Word. But I can personally apply the nature of God in every circumstance in my life.

Charles Spurgeon, "the prince of preachers," once said, "The longest distance on the face of the earth is between the pulpit and the pew." The longest distance on the face of the earth is between the speaker and the receivers, and it is because of the lack of the application of the Holy Spirit. Many people are not available to the Holy Spirit to apply what is preached.

But the apostle Paul said, "It is my grace; and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, you are partakers of my grace." Grace is a vital factor in the life of every believer.

And then, in verse 17 he says, "I am set for the defense of the gospel." "Set"—what an awesome word that is. In the Greek language the word for "set," *keimai*, means I am providentially positioned, placed, established, grounded, and settled. I am *set*. And it is for the defense of the Gospel.

I Am Not Where You Think I Am

Paul was saying, "I am set in a place providentially by God." I am not just "in" Christ. I am not just in the Father's plan, but I am in the Body of Christ, and I have been established and placed here strategically, for the defense of the Gospel.

"You think I am in prison. You think I am in the middle of the Philippian trial, among believers who lack humility, and having problems with people contending with one another. You think I am in the middle of the Gospel task, which I am. You think I am in the middle of what seems to be an unbearable trial for my life. You think I am in prison. And maybe as you look at it, by sight these things are true. But," Paul said, "I would like you to know one thing: *I am set*. I am positioned by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit—set—for the defense of the Gospel."

For me, that means I am in a place where I am number one in receiving grace. I am in the place where I will be a receiver of grace. You can look at where I am by sight; you can look at problems, or difficulties, or say, "I'm a new student here, and I don't even know where I live." But listen: I am set for the defense of the Gospel. I said that to my wife one time. We had just moved to Africa.

We had been living six weeks in a hotel, and we had a second room with eight hockey bags with all of our belongings. And I said, "This room is eight by ten, and we are here, and we are in a small little room in Ghana, and we've

got two kids, and I don't even know what is happening here." She was cooking rice in a pan over charcoal in a coal pot, lighting the fire and cooking in the hallway because there was no place in the room to cook. One room had eight hockey bags, and the other room had us. It was a little bit difficult.

The way things looked by sight was strange. But you know something? We were set, placed there positionally and providentially by God for the defense of the Gospel. The Greek word for "defense" is *apologia*, which means "to give an answer." Our family was in a place where we were going to reveal not just the words of God, but the life of Christ.

Do You Know Where You Are?

So you may complain, "This hasn't happened," or "this is going on," or "I have this situation in the marriage," or "I have this problem with my health," or "I'm not so sure as a new student where I'm going to get the finances." Then there is this, then there is that—always something going on.

No. That is not what it's all about. I am providentially placed in a situation or a position where I am to receive grace. The place where I

am receiving grace also becomes the place where people are becoming disciples. That is the place where I am going to grow. That is the place where I'm going to be ready to proceed and to advance for the furtherance of the Gospel.

I am set. This fact comes with tremendous conviction. So, when the enemy comes in like a flood to lay accusation against the mind about what we think is going on, I just say, "Hello. I am set for the defense of the Gospel. I have been providentially positioned here by God."

And guess what! That might mean you won't like it. You might not like the fact that I've been placed here in this room next to you. "Why is it that way? I really wish for a better situation."

No. I am set. I am providentially positioned and placed in the eternal purpose of God for the defense of the Gospel. Therefore, I will bring forth a word of grace to people in the place where I am.

So rather than "I hope this situation changes," I know one thing that will never change. I have been set. I have been providentially placed by God.

I have been in fifteen cities in six countries in twenty-seven days. I am not set in those places. I

am set providentially and positionally placed where I am going to receive grace; furthermore, it is for the defense of the Gospel. It is to preach, and it is to teach, and it is to reveal, and it is to win the lost.

Chapter Two

MAKE IT ESSENTIAL

"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Philippians 1:12).

Since getting saved in 1977, I have been providentially placed in the plan, by God the Father, to be a receiver of grace and to be involved with the bringing forth of the Gospel. Isn't that what Bible school is all about? How many of you are students in Bible school? I am. I want to be a student this year. We all ought to be students of the Word of God.

I have been set in Baltimore for the defense of the Gospel. I have been placed here providentially, to be a receiver of grace for the sake of the Gospel. Yes, I'm aware of all these situations that are going on all around me. But guess what? Concerning the details of life, I can see more with my eyes of faith toward God than I can see

with my natural senses.

When Adoniram Judson was in Burma, he buried wife number one, wife number two, wife number three, and three children. Even when he came to the place where he was just about ready to have a nervous breakdown because of depression, after pacing on his wife's grave for almost thirty days straight, he suddenly received an illumination of God's eternal providence, placing his life in Burma. Today, the Bible they use in Burma is still the one that he translated back in the 1800s. The Judson Bible is the only one in the whole country. He was set for what? He was set for the defense of the Gospel.

Study the Heart of God

Whatever it is that you do, it is so important to know that God has placed you there. It is vital to be set in Bible college—because as I am set in Bible college, I am providentially placed there to learn the heart of God. It is not just to learn black letters printed on white pages and have notebooks full of information that I try to use until I find out that it doesn't work, apart from God.

I have seen people graduate from Bible school, and they can't even tie their shoes, spiritually speaking. They have a lot of head infor-

mation but they have no life information.

I said to a student, "How come I never see you on evangelism?"

He said, "I didn't come here to evangelize."

I said, "You should get on the plane and go home then."

"But I came here to study!"

"Study?" I said. "You know what you should study? The heart of God."

If you study the heart of God, you will want to reach the lost. If you study a book with black letters on it, and it's not life to you, then it is not the heart of God. "You seek the Scriptures, and in them you think you have eternal life, but you won't come to Me" (see John 5:39-40). No. You see, Jesus Christ said, "I come: in the volume of the Book that is written of me" (Psalm 40:7 and Hebrews 10:7). If I do not meet Jesus Christ, then what have I met? I end up with a piece of paper that says, *You have graduated.* Wonderful. That's just wonderful.

Life. Isn't that what it's all about? Isn't that what Bible school is all about? Life! And the apostle Paul says, "You know something? I am set." I've been placed here to receive life, and to receive the Word, and to go to Bible school, and to be trained. I am positioned here because I've

got to be positioned here before I'm positioned there. Do you understand what this means?

Be Set Where You Are

You say, "I want to go to Africa."

I was just talking with someone the other day. He said, "I think God's calling me overseas to work in the African ministry. What do you think?"

I looked him squarely in the eye and whispered very slowly but with great clarity and firmness, "Impact Baltimore!"

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Why don't you pick an area of Baltimore? Look at Pastor Brian Lange, one of the greatest examples of a missionary I have ever seen." He comes right out of France and Budapest, Hungary, seventeen years on the field, and he's got this big thing going on down in Patterson Park. He's got a storefront. He's got an English school there. He's got counseling going on there. But when he got here with his family, he didn't go on leave. He positioned himself in the ministry and went in to a local outreach area to do a work."

So I said, "Impact Baltimore. Be set here and someday you will be set there. Amen?"

I come here, to these meetings, to be a receiver of grace. And as I am set to receive the grace of God on a daily basis, then I am set, positioned providentially for the defense of the Gospel, the *apologia*, to speak the Gospel, to learn the Gospel, to be discipled, to disciple others to preach the Gospel, and this is what it's all about. I am set!

The Measure of a Man

What would it take to move you? An earthquake? Even that won't do it, because the earth will shake, but we will stay. It didn't move Paul, did it?

Richard Wurmbrand, a survivor of communist prisons, once said, "The measure of a man is what it takes to move him." Find out what a person is like when he loses his health, his money, his position, and everything else that is valuable to him. Find out what a person is really like when he has lost everything.

I don't wish that on anybody, especially myself. I don't. But you know what? I am set. My life, our lives. This is the place where I am growing in understanding that I have been set, providentially positioned for the defense of the Gospel. That is what my life is.

Chapter Three

MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE

I was traveling with my good friend Ivar in a certain country, and a guy was there ridiculing us because we were evangelizing. "So," Ivar said to him, "what do you do with your boring life?"

I thought, "That's a good comeback, Ivar. I like that."

The man said, "I'm just here to see how much money I can make."

He was after wealth. But, you know, God can do that with anybody's business. I preached to some businessmen in Ghana. I said, "I have a message for you. Put your money where God's heart is and watch God do something." I am set for the defense of the Gospel. This is the key.

When I was on that cruise ship, the first day on the upper deck this group from the Bahamas began to sing a little bit of soft music. I thought, "I wonder what this is all about." All the pas-

sengers were enjoying the day on the top deck—and few minutes later, a man got up and started to preach:

"You think you're just here," he said, "and you think you are just on a little trip. I'm telling you, you can go to heaven by receiving Christ as Savior."

Needless to say, some people were not happy with that. People had come all that way, from all over the country, to go on the cruise and not be bothered by anything and just gorge themselves to death with food. They were not happy at all.

The preacher continued, "I want you to know that if this ship goes down, you will hear me say you should have listened to me. That was the scene in Acts 27. The apostle Paul said, 'Don't worry, we're going to lose the ship, but every life will be saved, and not one hair of your head will be harmed.' He was preaching the Gospel, and he was saying, as I am today, 'You need to be born again.'"

I stood there listening next to some New Yorker who turned to me and said, "Hey, what is this guy doing in the middle of the boat? Isn't this ridiculous?"

I said, "It is not ridiculous. It's the truth."

He goes, "You too?" He said, "You too? *You too*??"

Yeah, me three.

He said, "Oh my God! I came here to get away. I just want to get away and have some pleasure, and this? Born again? Eternal life? A purpose? What's your problem? I don't want to hear this!"

Later I found out that the preacher and the men singing with him were all policemen from the Bahamas who were born-again. I realized something about them, because I saw that they also preached in Belize, our port-of-call, in the middle of the city. They were on a cruise, but they were set for the defense of the Gospel. Isn't that awesome?

Get This Straight

In the final analysis, is my work what matters most?

"Hey, I got a job with the New York Stock Exchange."

No. That's not it. It is that I am set for the defense of the Gospel.

"I worked eight years in a prison."

No, no. Nope. Wrong again. I am what? Set for the defense of the Gospel.

"I sell pools for a living."

No, no, no, no, no. I am set in any way I can do it, in any manner, through life, through the ministry, out of the ministry, whatever, this is all that matters: that I am set for the defense of the Gospel.

"Well, I don't know. What would it be like if I married that person?"

No, no, no. The marriage has to be set—providentially positioned—for the defense of the Gospel. That is what matters. It is not where I live. Is it Africa? Is it Baltimore? Is it Uganda? Is it Pretoria? Is it Ghana? Is it Morocco?

No. I want my marriage and my family to be positioned providentially for the defense of the Gospel, because that is all that matters. I'm not saying that other things don't matter. I know you've got to eat.

"Well, how's that going to happen?"

How about faith? If my life is set for the defense of the Gospel, I believe that God will take care of all the trivialities like money. Money? What's the big deal to God? Money?

What's the Big Deal?

C.T. Studd was called by God. He saw a sign that read, "Cannibals Need Christ." It was an-

nouncing a meeting where Carl Coomb would be preaching. So he said, "What the heck is that?" C.T. Studd had already done twenty years on the mission field between China and India.

Intrigued, he went in and heard Carl Coomb saying, "Liquor traders, Muslims, and Colonialists have been in the interior of Africa but no Christian has gone."

When this man of God with a missionary's heart heard that, he was angry at the state of Christianity. He walked out of the meeting and said, "This is ridiculous." He was fifty-five years old and ready to die. The doctor said he had a terminal illness. But he walked out of that meeting, and he was angry. "Why don't Christians go?!"

And the Holy Spirit said, "Why don't you?"

He went to the Mission Board, and they said, "Absolutely no." He went to the church, and they said, "No." He went to his wife, and she said, "Not only do I say no to you but I'm not following you." And he had no money. Four no's, and God said "go"—and he was fifty-five years old.

The doctors said that the trip from the coast to Khartoum would be enough to kill him alone. But thirty years later, at eighty-five years old, he

was still bicycling to tribes that would eat people. You know why? He was set for the defense of the Gospel.

His wife followed later. And yes, I know, we've read some stories about him. He was a little bit hard. God will use some of the strangest people. You know why? Because they are simply available.

There might be a lot more gifted people than some of us are, whether in this ministry or around the world. But do you know what? Availability is the key, not how gifted you are. God will gift the faithful person with exactly what they need.

Do you know what C.T. Studd was saying? "I am set for the defense of the Gospel," and he spent thirty years in Africa.

I am set in Baltimore for the defense of the Gospel. I am not set to do what everybody thinks I am doing. Now you are aware of my place. I am set.

"But I think I'm going to lose something else."

Well, what's going on, honey? I am set for the defense of the Gospel. I am set for the defense of the Gospel. None of these things move me, and neither do I count my life dear unto my-

self, that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry I have received with the Lord Jesus, to testify of the Gospel of grace.

CONCLUSION

In Acts 20:23, the Holy Spirit told Paul, "Everywhere you go, bonds and afflictions will go with you."

Do you know what Paul said about that, in verse 24? "None of these things move me. Even what the Holy Spirit tells me doesn't move me. He told me there are going to be trials everywhere. I'm not moved, because the Father has providentially positioned me. And even with what the Holy Spirit illuminates to me, that there will be trouble everywhere I go, I am set for the defense of the Gospel."

At home as a mother, you are set for the defense of the Gospel. In business, I am set for the defense of the Gospel. If I'm a pastor, I am set for the defense of the Gospel. I am set in the church as a member in particular, I am set in Bible school, I am set in outreach. I am set for the defense of the Gospel.

Father, thank You today for a people, and a min -

istry, and a pastor. No matter what happens, as Jud - son said before,

"In joy or sorrow, health or pain, my course is onward still.

We sow on Burma's barren plain, we reap on Zion's hill."

We are set for the defense of the Gospel. So bless each one. Bless in Jesus' name, and we will all say, "I am set for the Gospel." Amen.

Make God's Provision

Your Confession

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48).

One of the great problems people have is being and living in the place and the purpose God designed them for. God does hold believers accountable for the opportunities He presents to them. Some people treat those opportunities very casually and dismiss their commitments.

It is up to God to develop our potential. Every believer should recognize that God doesn't expect the same thing from every Christian. If He has given a believer one talent, His expectation is a one-talent return. The expectation for a two-talent Christian is a two-talent return, and the five-talent believer is expected to answer for his opportunities with a five-talent return.

God does not require the same results from every Christian. Someone once said that your

potential is your toughest competitor. So how do I, as a believer, allow my potential to be developed? In this booklet, we will look at opportunity and what God expects from us in relationship to our opportunity. You will see that God is just asking us to be faithful—and faithful is He who has called us who also will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24). He is true, and His provision can become our confession.

Chapter One

DO WHAT YOUR HAND FINDS TO DO

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

"And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

"And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

"To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

"To another the working of miracles; to an-

other prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

"But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:4-12).

How is my potential developed by God? It is very simple: I choose to do what God has given me to do with all my might.

If God opens the door for you to minister to two people, minister to those two people with all your might. If God gives you ten people to minister to, then minister to those ten with all your might. If the Lord gives you a Bible study to lead, then lead that Bible study with all your might.

Also, we should be available to receive ideas from other believers. I have made that a practice. When I hear a good idea from someone, I have to humble myself and receive it from the Lord. Good ideas should be implemented instantly and with all of our might. This is how a church begins to minister in all areas: to the deaf, to the

blind, to the homeless, to the widows, to the single folks, to the married folks.

Consider the mother who has to be responsible over her children. She takes the Bible and she prays. She receives all the provisions that are open to her and cares for her family with all of her might.

Some people think that certain types of jobs are beneath them. They become bored with life, they become familiar with God's provision, and they withdraw from fulfilling their potential in the power of the Spirit.

The problem is not the job. The problem is not the office that they are in. The problem is in their hearts. They despise the "small things" (see Zechariah 4:10). So many believers have suffered the loss of rewards through this brand of familiarity. What has gone wrong in them? They simply stopped understanding God's process of developing their potential.

Faithfulness and Fruitfulness

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

This principle has become lost to many Christians. God gives you three things to do and

you do them with all you might. The next thing you know, you have six things to do. You are faithful and God enlarges your area of service because of your faithfulness.

"Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

"Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

"For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God" (2 Corinthians 9:10-12).

There are two great Greek words I want to look at. "Ministereth" is epichoregeo, and it means that God supplies fully and abundantly. Then we have the word prosanapleroo, which appears as "supplieth" in 2 Corinthians 9:12. It means that God supplies according to capacity and expands capacity as needed. In other words, if I am being developed in my present capacity, He makes me faithful over many things. I develop skill and understanding in my obedience to Jesus Christ.

One the best things a Christian can do is to

find something to do in the church and just do it. That's much more effective than expecting someone to notice you and give you something to do. Find something to do and do it with all your might.

The next principle we need to see is that once God gives us something to do, do it and don't turn away from it. Don't quit the duty that God has given you to do. We continue with our hand upon the plough.

"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

God Finds More for You to Do

What does God do for people who are faithful in a few things? He makes them rulers over many things. Think on this. If a person is faithful in finding something to do for Jesus Christ through the grace of God, God will find more for him to do. He sticks with his Sunday School class, he doesn't quit in the summer, and he doesn't give up on his lessons for long periods of time. He is faithful, faithful, faithful. He studies, prepares, teaches, and ministers to the little

ones God has given him. He has done just a few things, but his humility and honor in doing those few things has led to God promoting him to be over many things.

Find something to do. Get yourself into a ministry and be faithful to that ministry, and God will enlarge your capacity and make you faithful over many things. Women, get together with a few women, get a vision to serve someplace in the church, and then run with it.

If you are a man and you feel as if God is calling you to be a pastor, why not start something right now? Find a neighborhood and start knocking on the doors. Just go for an hour and a half every weekend. Take that little bit of time and work with it. Find a home where they will let you have a short Bible study. Try it once a month or twice a month. Just get something going and stay with it. Then watch as your faithfulness opens up new opportunities for you.

Chapter Two

CONFESS AND BE MORE THAN A CONQUERER

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Psalm 23:1-6).

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

"When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

"Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple" (Psalm 27:1-4).

Jesus Christ teaches us how to make great confessions. In Psalm 23, David was making a great confession. He was running in the Judean hills, running from the armies of his son Absalom, who led a conspiracy to take the throne of Israel. Anything could have been going on at that moment. But David made a great confession: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."

The Lord was the strength of David's life and therefore he did not fear. He refused to confess the negative. He did not retreat into an emotional wilderness; he just confessed something about the Lord who is. There were no ifs, ands, or buts with David—just a positive confession rooted in faith.

God is the joy of our lives. The Lord is our wisdom. The Lord is our redemption. He is our provision. Our God supplies all of our needs according to His riches in glory (see Philippians 4:19). David simply confessed the faithfulness of God before the angels and the atmosphere, and he confessed that faithfulness to his own soul.

God can meet our needs. God is our supply. God is our life.

Believers need to confess the truth and not the problems that they find themselves in. Have you sinned? God forgives and forgets. The Lord saves forever and will take care of me. He hears and answers my prayers.

My confession today is that God will heal my soul. The Lord will care for my emotions. God will bless my business. What a great form of worship and praise.

Praises and Provisions

"For by the last words of David the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above:

"Because their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the

service of the house of God;

"Both for the shewbread, and for the fine flour for meat offering, and for the unleavened cakes, and for that which is baked in the pan, and for that which is fried, and for all manner of measure and size;

"And to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at even" (1 Chronicles 23:27-30).

Every morning and every night, the Levites were to offer praises to God. They started their day with praise and they ended the day with praise. All of them got together. Their confession was praise to the Lord.

We should confess the truth about God and not circumstances. I will confess who God is. I will confess that God is for me and that God is in me.

As we confess the truth, God forgives us of all of our iniquities and loads us with benefits every day. He removes our sins from us, He removes our sins as far as the east is from the west. God looks down and He loves to have His people confess the truth about who He is.

Are you in difficulties? Confess Christ.

Confess God's provision for your situation. There isn't one situation that we ever face where

God does not have a magnificent provision.

Mohammed died in A.D. 670. Buddha? He's gone too. Confucius had great intelligence, but that didn't keep him alive.

Our God? He is alive! Jesus Christ is risen. He was seen. He was heard. He ascended, and now He lives to make intercession for us and to speak through us and to us.

Chapter Three

THE MORNING WILL COME

"I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

"O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

"O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

"Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

"For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

"And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.

" LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.

"I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I

made supplication.

"What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?

"Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.

"Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

"To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever" (Psalm 30:1-12).

David did sin with Bathsheba. He was disciplined and chastised by his heavenly Father. He also sinned in numbering the people in an attempt to gauge the natural strength of the kingdom of Israel. He had reason to weep, but he understood that joy would come in the morning.

The night seasons of our life are troubling and trying. But they endure for only a season.

One of the most difficult things I had to do was minister to a couple whose 8-year-old was suddenly diagnosed with leukemia. This boy was the picture of health, and his parents had been saved for just three months. They were so new in the Lord. I watched them weep as they were filled with sorrow.

We just kept visiting and visiting and visiting the family. We prayed with them and loved them. We tried to be helpful. We offered the comfort of the Lord. We kept building them up. Then, God did take the boy home to be with Him.

This couple went through their time of mourning, but joy did come for them. They were soon baptized in our church and had two more children after the boy's death. Certainly, they miss their boy to this day. Still, they know the boy lives just as Jesus Christ lives, for Christ is the resurrection and the life. This couple became two of the happiest Christians I ever met.

After every night season, morning comes. God is there. He will help you. Weeping endures for a night; joy comes in the morning. Just as sure as you are breathing, the sunshine breaks through. The clouds part, and there is blue sky. A rainbow is on the horizon of your heart. God is faithful to you, and you can confess that morning will come. It always comes.

The prodigal son went through the night season of sin. But he came to himself and went back home. His father restored him gloriously. Weeping only lasts for a moment, but joy does come in the morning (Psalm 30:5). Maybe you

are going through financial problems—and some of these can be very serious. Can I tell you this? Morning will come.

Get Off the Shelf and Get Busy

Some of you think you are on the shelf. You think God cannot use you. Morning will come. It is the devil who is telling you that you cannot be used by God. It is hell that wants to keep you on the shelf collecting dust. Don't believe that lie.

Let morning come. Get up, get going, and get busy for God. He has called you and He will use you mightily.

I met one lady who was confined to a wheelchair at age 26. Her disease was terminal and she was really living in self-pity. It took some humor and some investment until she came out of her misery, but morning did come for her one day. She began to minister to people by writing hundreds of letters to people she picked out of the phone book. She just told them about Jesus and what He meant to her. She would also make phone calls that would go like this:

"Hi, my name is Susan and I am in a wheelchair. Do you have three or four minutes? I want to share with you the amazing blessings of Jesus

Christ and what He has done in my life."

Now, that's a confession. She found God's provision for her situation, and that became her confession.

CONCLUSION

Susan, the lady in the wheelchair, found something to do with her life. She put her hand to the plough and did not turn back. She was faithful in what she was called to do and she did it with all of her might. Bible studies were started because of the letters she wrote. God did not heal her, but He certainly used her.

Morning always comes, and you can be sure of this. You can confess Christ, you can allow God to develop your potential, and you can be ready to go forward in Jesus.

Do the little things with all your might. God will make a ruler out of you.

Confess who God is. Confess this truth in praise. Confess it in singing. Confess it to your friends. Confess it and let the angels hear of the great things God is doing for you.

Confess it out loud. Everything the Bible says about the Lord is true. You can be sure of it. Let it be known.

Be faithful in those small things and God will honor your faithfulness. Believe Him for those things with all your heart and watch for His provision in every situation. No matter how dark your night season, God has a glorious morning for you.

Make Love the Issue

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

The greatest people with the most effective ministries consistently and constantly surrender to the love of God. It is shocking how few of God's people express, experience, and communicate the love of God toward themselves and others.

In this booklet, we will use the Bible to teach you where we should be, with regard to God's love in the situations of life. I am doing my very best to do what I have always done for over four decades, and that is to fight the good fight of faith. Recently, I was considering this as I spent two long nights in prayer and did not go to sleep. My aim is to express to you the necessity that love must be the issue in our lives.

With God's love as our attitude, we can learn to trust in God—in the nature of God, in the Spirit of God, by the Word of God, and in the love of God, through the faith of God, by the mercy of God, in obedience to God, in the pro-

gram of God. We will conclude, as the apostle Paul did, that there now remains faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Chapter One

THE WORD OF LOVE

"Anew commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34).

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:47-49).

We do what we think upon. Therefore, when we think upon every single word of God, then we will live by every single word of God (Matthew 4:4). We must keep in mind that we will also be judged by every word that God has

spoken, therefore it makes sense that whatever we think, whatever we speak, and whatever we do, we should derive everything from the Word of God.

Every action of God can be summed up in this: "For God so loved the world…." (John 3:16*a*). Love will take care of every single problem.

What Is This Love?

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

According to 1 Corinthians 13, if I have the ministry of angels or of men and have not love, I am as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. If I understand all prophecies, and mysteries, and have faith that can remove mountains, and have

not love, I am nothing. Today, throughout America and around the world, scores of people come under the heading of being nothing because they try to perform the works of love from the basis of self. They do not understand that it is the Holy Spirit who sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts.

Love is kind. Love does not envy. Love does not vaunt itself—it does not draw attention to itself. Love takes on a great big death to self with Jesus Christ. Love takes on the Cross of Calvary and is revealed when we apply resurrection solutions.

All of our problems are resolved by God's love. But more than that—and man do I love this—love never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never quits!

Love Stands Fast

Hear me now, pastors. Some of you have been talking about change and talking about a desire to quit. That is not even Christianity. *Love* built this ministry in the last three and four decades. Love has always given grace. Love has always been faithful. Love has always been evangelistic. Love has always restored mar-

riages. Love has always worked its heart out in secret works, because love has its own vertical with God, and from there it is expressed to others.

Love bears all things.

Love believes all things.

Love hopes things.

Love endures all things.

Forget prophecy. Forget knowledge. Forget faith that can remove mountains. Enter into the love of God with quietness.

We do not always have to be talking, do we? The law of God was given that every mouth may be shut (see Romans 3:19). Have you ever thought of going to God first, before coming to me and asking me questions? When you are in a crisis, how about just doing what the Bible says to do? After all these years of preaching, I hope I have taught you well enough so that you can.

I want you to understand this in the sense of love. As individual Christians, we can never determine our future. It is the Holy Spirit who resurrects a soul in co-resurrection, co-burial, and co-ascension with Christ. Therefore, through the Word of God the Holy Spirit reveals to us what we are supposed to do. And guaranteed, He will

always operate out of love.

Chapter Two

FOLLOWING IN THE FAITH

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17).

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:" (1 Peter 5:5-6).

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Hebrews 13:7).

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they

may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews13:17).

Pastors who labor in Word and doctrine are to be counted worthy of double honor. These pastors rule well, having God's kindness and conviction from God's Word. In Hebrews 13, we see that believers are to follow those who have the "rule" over them in the local assembly. Teamwork, of course, must be the way of life in a body of believers, recognizing that all of us are tempted alike, in all points (Hebrews 4:15).

But along with teamwork, there has to be leadership. Paul considered the church at Corinth to be in a very low spiritual state. He called them "babes"—perhaps because the church members in Corinth had lost sight of the significance of godly leadership (1 Corinthians 3:1-23).

Remember Those Who Rule

"Remember them which have the rule." This is the Word of God, is it not? And are we to live by every single word of God? Of course, we are. So there is someone whom God has appointed to have spiritual rule over us. This leader is the one whose faith we follow.

Every believer is responsible to have a per-

sonal vertical relationship with God. Still, every believer is responsible to follow the faith of a godly leader. Why? Because God gives shepherds who will feed and guide His people in His kingdom (Jeremiah 23:4). The man of God loves God and loves the flock through the ministry that Christ committed to him.

When I am up all night and God shows me something, I am honoring my church and every single member. Each one has individual convictions. Yet, the Word instructs them to follow *my* faith as I labor in the Word and in doctrine. I must never invade a believer's privacy. All of us shall stand before God individually. God, however, has committed to me the ministry of the Gospel; so I am to speak the truth in love, without compromise (Ephesians 4:15). I am not talking about immorality or any gross sins. I am talking about the issues of unity and love and obedience and soul winning, submitting to one another in love, edifying one another, and building up one another as we pray for one another.

All I want is for us to be living epistles.

There is not a single thing God will accept in my life but one. I must love. These things are recorded in the Word that we may know the mind of Christ. People recognize that we have

eternal life when we love one another through the love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We think no evil, we study to be quiet, and our mouths are closed.

That is love.

Love is always praying, believing, forbearing. We know that love will never fail us and that love will always be consistent until we die if we allow the Holy Spirit of God to fill us.

Obedience and Accountability

Hebrews 13:17 says to obey them that have the rule over you. Obey? You mean that Christ expects you to obey? We obey in love, with respect, with honor, with communication. You have the final say about your life, but God has the final way! He determines the outcome of our decisions.

"Obey them that have the rule over you."

Come on, writer of Hebrews! You keep saying that. Are you trying to make a point?

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account."

Pastors will have to give an account for those who were committed to them in their churches. In the air, after the Rapture, each of us

will be introduced to Jesus Christ. When we stand before the Lord, an account will be given of our lives toward God and toward the local pastor given to us by Christ.

It makes sense, then, that we would operate from the basis of love—making love the issue in every relationship and in everything we do.

Chapter Three

DO ALL THINGS WITH LOVE

"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

"And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:11-13).

Every moment of my life, my attitude as well as my speech will be judged by that one word that is the solution to all problems: *love*. It is love that Jesus Christ used to change history.

Jesus said, "I am going to die on Calvary. I am going to pay for everybody's sins. I am going to do that because I love every single one of them. I am going to give an opportunity for everyone in the world to be saved by grace and through faith, because I love them."

He said, "There is one thing I desire: that

they would love Me and love one another. If they do so, they will know they have eternal life" (1 John 3:14).

Perhaps, you would rather not hear that somebody is to be over you. After all, you say, this is America, the land of the free. Yes, and the America of today is so filled with pride and self-exaltation. But in terms of love among people, there is a famine in the land.

First Thessalonians 5:12 says, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you…." There Paul goes again, admonishing us and talking about someone being over us.

This is what a pastor does. He admonishes. "But I heard that you preach Finished Work." We do, but that includes admonishing people in love.

Admonishment comes because of love. Furthermore, church members are to esteem pastors very highly in love for their work's sake. Why? So that we can be at peace among ourselves.

What Charity Does and Does Not Do

Consider this, in 1 Corinthians 13:3: "Though I give all my food to feed the poor, and though I

give my body to be burned, and have not charity…"—what happens to me?—"…it profits me nothing."

Charity suffers long, and is kind. Charity is not envious. It doesn't puff itself up.

Charity is a beautiful word that says, "I will not exalt myself." Charity. That is the issue.

I have always built churches that are filled with charity, with crowds that keep winning souls. So many still do such a good job of it. I want to thank them for that. Still, it is important that *all* things are done with charity. We cannot afford to do one thing in this ministry without charity.

When I read about charity in 1 Corinthians 13, this is the way I have always looked at it: "And though Carl Stevens bestows all of his goods to feed the poor, and though Carl Stevens gives his body to burned, and has not charity, it will profit him nothing. Charity in Carl Stevens suffers long, and is kind. Charity envieth not. Charity vaunteth not itself. And when charity is in Carl Stevens, he doesn't get puffed up. He does not behave himself unseemly. He seeks not his own," the Word of God says. "He thinks no evil, because he has charity."

Jesus Christ rejoices not in iniquity, but Jesus

Christ rejoices in truth. And the truth is, we must always make sure that love is the issue.

CONCLUSION

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. And charity in Christ never fails.

That is the Word of God. That is the dynamic of the Gospel. That is the provision of God's power. That is the nature of the Holy Spirit. That is the Word of God! Hear it, obey it, and go forward in a unique way, showing the nature of God by making love the issue.

I like to look at it like this. Picture Jesus Christ. The love of God is glowing from His face, and I get a suntan because I am looking at Him. His reflection is like a spiritual sunbath.

Do you know what we have to watch? We need to be careful of following a group that includes those who have been your friends for years instead of following after the truth of the Word of God.

Love will never let go. There are no limitations to how far love reaches, but love will al-

ways remain true to the Word of God. Finally, remember this: It doesn't matter what we say. What matters is how much we love.

Making an Invisible God Visible

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"No man hath seen God at any time…" (John 1:18*a*)

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

"For [Moses] endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27*b*).

To the natural mind, these verses may seem contradictory. How can we see a God who is invisible or love such a One with so much intensity—especially if *no one* has ever seen Him? The cry of many in the world is, "How can I believe in a God I cannot see?" In one way, their cry is a valid one. In a world where the things we *can* see offer no lasting happiness or hope, we need evidence of the true and living God. People want a God they can see and touch.

For thirty-three years, Jesus Christ walked on this earth as a man—the "God Man." People

saw Him, heard Him speak, and touched Him. After His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven in His glorified state and was seated at the right hand of the Father. But upon His leaving, He left us a hope. He sent His Holy Spirit to form the Church, an extension of His Body on the earth today.

This booklet reveals how important it is for every believer to live "as seeing Him who is invisible." We have been called to manifest the Body of Christ corporately, though we are gifted individually, with every joint supplying the whole.

Chapter One

TWO INVISIBLE GOVERNMENTS

Ezekiel 1:16 and 10:10 describe an extraordinary vision of "a wheel in the middle of a wheel." This is a picture of the government of God controlling the government of the Church. Have you ever looked at the mechanics of a clock or a watch? Inside are many interlocking wheels—small and large. The movement of the smaller wheels control the movement of the larger wheels. The government of God inside the Church works much the same way as the wheels inside a clock. We might say that the small wheel, often hidden from view, is the *primary cause* for all the other moving parts.

God is the primary cause of the universe, the wheel within a wheel. Everything comes forth from Him and returns to Him. Yet, He is invisible. This world cannot see Him, though He is the cause or originator of everything visible in creation. As Romans 1:20 says, "The invisible

things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

When Jesus Christ came into the world as the God-Man, He was the visible manifestation of the Father (see John 1:18; 14:7-9). The Father was the wheel within the wheel of Jesus Christ's humanity. Jesus confessed in John 5:19, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." Again in verse 30: "I can of mine own self do nothing." The Son's thoughts, decisions, words, and actions were all governed by the Father in Him. "The Father that dwelleth in me, *he* doeth the works" (John 14:10*b*). In this way, Jesus was the exact representation or mirror of the essence and nature of the Father.

The invisible government of God controls the visible government of the Church to make an invisible God visible to the world. Throughout the Bible, we see evidence that when the government of God moved, people moved. When the wheel stopped, they stopped. Everything is controlled by the government of God; it controls the government inside the souls of men, which forms the government of the Church. It should be the reigning government of every

marriage, family, business, and relationship. This amazing wheel within a wheel pictures the presence and power of the invisible Almighty God moving His visible kingdom on earth from within.

Opposition to God's Government

The earth, however, is also the temporary seat of the government of evil (the *kosmos*). By it, Satan motivates the forces of evil to come against the government of God. These forces do everything to throw God's government out of its right position.

For example, in Acts 8:9-11, an evil man named Simon "*bewitched* the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one …And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had *bewitched* them with sorceries." In both cases, the Greek word for "bewitched" is the Greek verb *existemi*, which means "to put out of its place; to confuse." In other words, Satan's purpose is to bewitch people and bring us outside of our place in order to control us, or to displace godly mental processes by pleasing the senses.*

The Bible says in Acts 13:8 that Elymas the sorcerer "withstood" Barnabas and Saul as they

preached the Word of God. That means he *opposed* them—psychologically, verbally, and even physically. Also, 2 Timothy 4:15 speaks of how Alexander the coppersmith "greatly withstood" the apostle Paul's words. But the manifestation of the invisible God—the "wheel" within the believer in the government of the Church—will always overcome opposition from Satan's kingdom.

Consider the provision we have. Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of every Christian. He sacrificed His life on the Cross in the unlimited atonement, dying for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2, 2 Corinthians 5: 19). When a man accepts the Son's sacrifice, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside and "seals" or confirms his salvation unto the day of redemption. This God is living in us, yet, He is invisible. Everything He is, everything He was, and everything He always will be cannot be seen by the natural eye.

That is why He said in Psalm 46:10, "Be still, and know that I am God." We could paraphrase that verse, "Be very still and know that I inhabit your humanity, and I indwell your soul." Then, "Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

**For more about these processes, read* Imaginations of the Heart, Dealing Precisely with Demons*, and* Exposing Satan's Armies*, a series by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

HOW DOES GOD BECOME VISIBLE?

The question is, how does an invisible God become visible? He has thousands of Christians in a world where many people say that God does not exist and where carnal Christians behave as though God is not relevant in their lives. The Bible says that the "natural man"—whether an unsaved soul or a carnal believer—cannot receive the things of God. Therefore, God must find a way to become visible. *How does He do it?*

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and *maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us* in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish" (2 Corinthians 2:14-15). God's plan is to manifest His presence through believers. The fragrance of His resurrection love and grace is manifested in *every* place we go. He is mani-

fested through our stillness and quietness, through our hearing the Word, and through the meditation of our hearts in a pure response of faith. We let an invisible God move through that which is visible to the world: His Church.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who was God in the flesh (John 1:14), said to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). In John 10:30 Jesus said to His disciples, "I and my Father are one." He was saying, "I came from the Father—We are One. I have made the Father visible in My humanity, but you have not known it."

In His perfect humanity, Jesus Christ chose to submit to the Father in every thought, every word, and every deed, making God the Father visible to the world. And yet, Jesus' disciples who walked with Him on earth for three years did not know it. Though they believed in His hypostatic union, they did not recognize that *this was God in action in human form*!

Often, we become so occupied with our problems and with the details of life that we do not take time to commune in proper fellowship with the God who lives inside us. God inhabits our humanity through the Holy Spirit, "borrow-

ing," as it were, our soul and our body—our eyes, our ears, our mouth, our hands, and our feet—so that He can become visible.

Satan's Counterattack

Satan hates any manifestation of God in the midst of his world system, so he devised a plan to counteract God's process of manifestation. The devil desires to displace God's presence in our lives by "bewitching" us. As a result, we manifest the powers of darkness instead of making God visible in temptations and in the details of life.

Even in the trials sent from God that were ultimately meant to bless us, Satan bewitches by attacking our senses with impulses sent through the central nervous system, thus displacing the purity of the filling of the Spirit. For example, to manifest division Satan wants to cause separation in marriages. By getting one party to instigate and the other to react, the battle of an incompatible relationship continues. *The devil uses division to manifest his own feelings toward God*. Sadly, many couples let him get away with it.

Throughout the world, thousands of people make their lust visible through immoral relationships. Demonic activities become the visible

manifestation of their inward need through *pharmakia* (literally "witchcraft," in Galatians 5:20, which is often demonstrated by drug abuse).

Acts 19:9 says that some who heard Paul preach "were *hardened*, and believed not, but *spake evil*." The Greek word for "hardened" is *skleruno*, implying that the heart becomes so hardened, a person is blinded and cannot see the invisible God through men who reveal Him. The Greek word for "spake evil" is *kakologeo*, from *kakos*, Satan's government of intrinsic evil, and *logos*, referring to something spoken. Satan is looking for people to speak for his government.

Acts 19:13-16 gives the account of the seven sons of Sceva, who tried to cast out an evil spirit. The evil spirit spoke and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but *who are ye*?" The invisible God was not made visible in the sons of Sceva, and "the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and *overcame* them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (Acts 19:15-16).

The word "overcame" is *katakurieuo* meaning "to control, subjugate, exercise dominion over." When Christ is not manifested in our humanity and we operate in natural strength, we will be

overcome and wounded by God's enemies. Suggestive language and lustful thoughts may control our conversation. Eventually, the believer will give in to his weakness as Satan bewitches and displaces the spirit of purity and the manifestation of God.

Proverbs 2:14 describes those who "rejoice to do evil, and delight in the [*perverseness*] of the wicked." Satan uses people—even carnal believers—to attack, accuse, and bring others down so that there will be no understanding of God made visible in the Church.

Deception and conspiracies are so widespread today because of the perverseness (*diastrophe* in the Septuagint) of people who rejoice in sowing discord. They rejoice in hurting Christians, thus preventing God from becoming visible. They keep attacking Spirit-filled believers; however, they are so deceived they don't even realize what they are doing. Eventually, no one can see God through these believers. Their enemies have given them a "global image," a label placed upon Christians everywhere through an evaluation offered by the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). Though the image may be justified at times by sight, it is not accurate according to the Finished Work.

Chapter Three

GOD BORROWS OUR HUMANITY

As the corporate Body of Jesus Christ on the earth, we are down here to make every one of God's attributes visible. That is what choices are all about. That's what the habitation of God in our humanity is all about. A Christian who manifests the love of God is not quick to jump to conclusions. He does not react or speak quickly without thinking, and he does not falsely judge or accuse. When confronted, he never thinks evil about another person, though he is quick to discern the reality of Satan's government.

Inside every Christian is an invisible God waiting to be revealed. Jesus, our supreme example, seized every opportunity in His humanity to make the Father visible. When He said in Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," the love of the Father was made visible through the verbal expression of His prayer, as He put God's thoughts into

words. When He wept over Jerusalem in Luke 19:41, the Father's love became visible through the tears that flowed from Jesus' eyes.

Nicodemus, the self-righteous Pharisee, came secretly one night to speak with Jesus (John 3). He became broken and was born again because Jesus made the grace of God visible to this religious seeker.

When Jesus came in the heat of the day to the woman at the well, He knew that despite her immoral condition, she was seeking after God in her heart (John 4). As He ministered, the Father's specific compassion, love, and grace toward her became visible. *God became visible through the humanity of Jesus.*

Humanity Committed to God's Purpose

I thank God for the many Christians who daily commit their humanity to Christ's divinity, using rebound when they fail. They redeem the time by winning souls and allowing Christ to build His Church through their diverse gifts and portions. But more than that, as they redeem the time in whatever they do, they are making an invisible God visible.

There is no greater fellowship than to spend time with someone who makes the invisible

God visible. Is it any wonder that 1 John 4:17*b* says, "As he is [in heaven], so are we in this [present evil] world." Think of it! Before we have been made perfect in our experience, while we still have an old sin nature, *we are as He is—now!*

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our [mortal flesh]" (2 Corinthians 4:10). As the Cross breaks us, the resurrection life of Jesus Christ is manifested through the human soul and body—through our eyes, our tongue, our hands, and our feet.

Romans 12:1 instructs us to present our bodies as living sacrifices unto God so our minds can be continually renewed through doctrine. Line upon line, precept upon precept, the doctrine we have received becomes a living epistle in our hearts. Now others can "touch" God because He has borrowed our humanity and uses us as instruments of righteousness to manifest His nature.

When it comes to marriage, two are better than one as long as the marriage is God's will. God's purpose in every marriage is for both the husband and wife to make God visible to each other. As they go to bed at night and get up in the morning, walking and talking and going for-

ward together in God's plan, they are to manifest the true God to one another. Then others begin to see an invisible God become visible through their lives. When they have children, this beautiful process is extended.

The Greek word *phaneroo*, translated "appear, declare, manifest, or show," means that God becomes so visible that people can see Him in believers' eyes and hear His wisdom from their lips (see 2 Corinthians 4:11). When the eternal nature of the Godhead and the characteristics of the Resurrection begin to speak through people, God's divine characteristics are clearly "visible," manifested in the temperament and disposition communicated by individuals.

On the other hand, some have used the grace of God as a license to sin so that the fallen man becomes visible. When we do that, we magnify our rights and reveal Adam to others, while still bearing the name of Jesus Christ as "Christians."

Fellowship in the Light

The Word of God says in John 17:6 that Jesus manifested His name to His disciples: that is, His lovingkindness, His mercy, His compassion, and His forgiveness. He made these characteris-

tics known to the disciples; so much so, they could *feel* it. Many years later, the apostle John would write of his experience walking with Jesus on the earth: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).

John was saying, "We touched Him, we felt His presence. He was here. He was the Christ, and we tell you now so that you may have fellowship with us, so that you may have the joy we have, and that your joy might be full; for He is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (see 1 John 1:3-5).

That is what fellowship in the light is all about (1 John 1:7), fellowship in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). It is simply making God visible. Jesus is no longer on the earth in His flesh, but He is on the earth through our humanity, through our physical bodies, and through His Church, the Body of Christ. My prayer is, "*God help us not to grieve or quench Your Spirit, but to rest in Your love through mercy and faith (Zephaniah 3:17). We just want to make You visible wherever we go.*"

Chapter Four

THE FRUIT OF MANIFESTATION

When there was strife between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen over lack of space for both herds to dwell, Abram allowed Lot to choose first and took what was left (see Genesis 13:5-12). What was Abram doing? He was making God visible to his nephew Lot.

Second Chronicles 34:27 says that King Josiah was tenderhearted. This young man, who became king at the age of eight, went to work when he was seventeen to clean up Israel. He was called "the tenderhearted" by the Holy Spirit because he made the tender heart of God visible as he cleaned out the idols and reestablished the spirituality of the kingdom of Israel.

Ironically, during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry prior to Acts 2 when Pentecost took place, the disciples did not have a living faith. *Though they walked with the visible God, they didn't make God visible in their own lives.* But finally, on

the day of Pentecost, with all the boldness, character, and courage of conviction and the conversion they had received by taking up their cross in the power of the Resurrection, they began to make God visible.

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus…" (2 Corinthians 4:10*a*). Many times, God would have us wait before He answers our prayer, because in waiting we make His patience visible. Romans 5:3 says that tribulation works patience. When that patience becomes visible, God is glorified, and He is able to accomplish fantastic works in us.

God wants us to make visible the nine-fold fruit of His Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. Let people hear it, touch it, and sense it in our lives. In the trials and details of our lives, let people see our faith. That is only possible when we become living, visible epistles of the Word of God.

Manifesting Christ through Reconciliation

Paul said, "We [beseech] you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For [the Father] hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of

God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). Christ is not here visibly. So, as ambassadors for Christ, we are here *in His stead*.

There is a great difference between those who have experienced reconciliation and those who have not. Those who have been reconciled through faith and quietness to God, reconciled to the Cross, reconciled to grace, and reconciled in their marriages are making an invisible God visible.

When a man agrees with Jesus Christ and begins to walk with Him through the filling of the Spirit, then he is no longer self-conscious. According to 1 Corinthians 2:15-16, this type of person can judge all things, yet is judged of no man. Why? He is filled with the Holy Spirit, and there is no room for the self-life to enter in. There is no darkness in him because he has the light of the mind of Christ.

Manifest Truth to Destroy Satan's Works

Eli the priest was very obese; he was too busy eating to be a good father. Because God's glory was not manifested in his home, Eli's sons went astray. God called them "sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord" (see 1 Samuel 2:12-17); and 1 Samuel 3:13 says that Eli did not restrain

Hophni and Phinehas when they "made themselves vile." Satan hardened their hearts and they began speaking for his government of evil (*kakologeo*) while they remained in the midst of the congregation. The sons were killed when the Ark of God was taken by the Philistines; and when Eli heard the news, he fell backward from the stool he was sitting on, broke his neck, and died (1 Samuel 4:18).

According to 2 Corinthians 4:2, "we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by *manifestation* of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." The infection of evil in Eli's home was revealed by the light of the truth and removed.

Without exception, when the invisible God becomes visible, His presence destroys the works of the invisible government of Satan. This nullifies the work of the devil, the work of demons, and the unseen powers in the cosmic world in which we live.

For this reason, we must pray for one another and walk softly. We must allow the invisible God to interpret the Word to our hearts through the power and filling of the Holy Spirit.

Then, we can begin to manifest God's vision and reveal His Person as we yield our members to be instruments of righteousness unto God.

CONCLUSION

What a thrill it is to say to God, "My mind and my soul are Yours. My body is Yours. Take my hands and my feet so You can become visible through my humanity." Remember, God makes "manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place" (2 Corinthians 2:14). There is no limit to what He can do through yielded vessels. God wants to become visible in every place and in every situation.

"Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" (Genesis 18:14). Absolutely not! So let's go forward empowered by the Word of God and the filling of the Spirit so the world can see Him "who is invisible" through our humanity.

Making Every Moment Count

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

I'd like you to do something for me. Blink your eyes. Do you know what that was? You just experienced a moment. That is all there is to a moment. Even when we have heard and read that God wants us to number our days, so often we are careless with moments. Each one goes by so quickly.

Only so much time is given to each of us on this earth. When that time has passed, our opportunities to serve God by faith in this earthly body will be gone.

Think of what happens when a devastating illness hits a husband or a wife. Moments suddenly take on value as never before.

This booklet reveals some of the very sacred moments I have experienced throughout my ministry. I have a great expectation that there will be many more moments to enjoy, but I am so glad that God has taught me to count every one of my moments as precious. My prayer is

that these words will inspire you to do the same.

Chapter One

TIMES AND OPPORTUNITIES

"In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

"In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.

"I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isaiah 27:1-3).

Moments go by so quickly. The one thing we must realize is that all we have is the time we have together right now. What is a moment? A moment is a time when the bird will fly, when the flower will bloom, when the sun will rise, when the chandelier of stars will shine brightly at night.

A moment is a couple gathering at the altar for marriage. Both of them say, "I do." Then, that

moment is done, and they go on their honeymoon and start a journey of life together. A moment is when a baby is born and a mother holds her child for the first time.

A moment is a time and opportunity given to us by God to be realistic, objective, and honest.

Great Dreams, Great Thoughts

I was thinking of some moments early on in my life. I remember being a child throwing the ball against the wall of the barn. I pretended to be all of the players—*and* the broadcaster! I would pitch nine innings. The Red Sox was my team, and, in my little dream world, we won the World Series. (Now that's really a dream world. The Red Sox haven't won a championship since 1918!)

Other great moments were the Saturday night specials—meals that my mother made every Saturday with pork and beans and hot rolls and homemade pickles. Everything you can think of, my mom made it. Those were great, great moments and I will never forget them.

I remember my daughter Pam wearing a little pink dress, and I would pick her up while she was sleeping and walk around the house with her. My wife would say, "You're going to

wake her up."

"No, I won't!" I'd say. "I just want to hold her. She is so peaceful and beautiful right now."

Before I was saved, I remember going down to the Baptist church in West Sumner, Maine. My wife and I were the only two there that day, and we sat way in the back. There was no electricity. The wood stoves were burning hot and you could see the flames through the grates.

The preacher never smiled, and he launched into a message on hell, fire, and brimstone. Now, that was quite a moment.

I remember being led to the Lord by my first wife. Later on in our marriage, she went home to be with the Lord after a battle with cancer. But I remember the moment she led me to Jesus Christ one Sunday afternoon—it was a beautiful moment right there in our home.

Saved By Grace

I want to say this. Before that moment when I received Christ as my Savior, I was a good person. But that would not have gotten me to heaven. Many people think that if they are good, they do not need God as their Savior. The truth is that no one is good enough to make it without Jesus Christ.

Self-righteousness is just as much of a sin as getting drunk is. Thinking that we are self-sufficient is just as bad a sin. We need to be saved. That is what Jesus said in John 3:7. The beautiful thing about salvation is that it is free: a gift from the Father. It cannot be earned. You can do nothing to merit it. None of us is good enough to earn it. Salvation comes as a gift, by grace through faith, when we believe on Jesus Christ.

What a great moment it is when a soul is saved! At that point, a new name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Sins are washed away forever, and a guaranteed ticket to heaven is issued. That is something beautiful—a precious moment for sure.

Oh, the moments God gives us to enjoy.

Chapter Two

AWAITING THE GLAD SURPRISE

We have a young fellow from the Ukraine going to our Bible College. Once, he was in a gang, and members of the gang had a plan to kill him. He escaped by jumping onto a train. He traveled to a new city, where he started living on the streets. One of our pastors was preaching on the streets of that city, and this scared little runaway kid was there. The boy had a pistol and was getting ready to rob a bank to get some money for food.

In a moment, right there, the boy received Jesus. Today, he is one of the most outstanding Christians you would ever want to meet. He has a great ministry with teenagers. And all of this started with one moment.

Oh, Lord, let us not waste our moments!

A young woman lost her husband, and she was trapped in a depression for nearly five years. She did not want to come out of her house.

She kept the curtains closed and lived her life behind these walls. Then, one day, someone sent her the booklet, *Just Let God Love You*.* This woman read that booklet, and Jesus Christ did an amazing thing in her life. She got gloriously saved, and one of the first things she did was to open up the curtains and go shopping. She was delivered from her confinement and depression in one glorious moment.

Consider the story of the Pharisee and the publican, told by Jesus in Luke 18. Publicans were not good people; they were crooked businessmen, thieves. The Pharisee went in and prayed what seemed to be a beautiful prayer, but it was not. That man, with all of his religious zeal, was a self-righteous hypocrite who offered up a self-righteous prayer. "I thank God that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers—even as this publican. I fast twice a week and pay tithes on all that I have" (see Luke 18:11-12).

The publican, who indeed was a crook and a sinner, could not even lift his head to look toward heaven. He just said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

Jesus said it was the publican who went home justified, not the Pharisee.

The thief on the cross next to Jesus had spent his life hurting and robbing people. Yet, in a moment, his destiny was changed. He was on the road to hell when he said to the Lord, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom."

"And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:40-44).

By the grace of God, a thief was saved—in a moment.

Changed in a Moment

Soon, there will be a glad surprise. Jesus will return, and those believers in the grave and those on the earth will be caught up in the Rapture. It will be a magnificent moment, and it could happen at any time. There will be a glorious resurrection. Souls will be transformed as they take on brand-new bodies—one of the most significant moments in history.

Oh, you think this makes no sense? When a farmer plants corn, eventually the corn comes up, doesn't it? The kernel goes into the ground, and it is covered with dirt and dies. But does it stay dead forever? No. The corn comes up. There is life in the kernel just as there is life in the tree in the midst of winter.

Did you know there is more life in the branches of a tree during the winter than in the summer? They look sickly and terrible for a time, but then Spring comes, and the blossoms come, drawing out the life that was hidden. When the leaves die, new life has a chance to come into the branches. Resurrection life is revealed in this process of the changing leaves.

Can you see how it works now? This is an intelligent and logical principle. By the grace of God, Christ died and was resurrected so that we might enjoy eternal resurrection life. His death made it possible for us to be saved. He paid our penalty by shedding His precious blood and dying on the old rugged Cross so that we could have our sins washed away and spend eternity in heaven.

Soon there will be a beautiful moment when we will take part in the great resurrection, that day of glad surprise—a time of glad reunion when we will all be gathered together in heaven with brand-new glorified bodies that will never die. Oh, it will be so glorious when that special moment comes. But just imagine it: That moment will last forever and ever and ever—it will never, never end.

Even if one of us were to die today, Jesus

promised that we will not even taste death (John 8:51). Our bodies may be put into the ground, but we will be absent from our bodies and present with the Lord—all in one glorious moment.

**The booklet* Just Let God Love You, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens (Grace Publications, 1996), is a remarkable message, personal and practical, to the saved as well as the unsaved, revealing the finished-work Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Chapter Three

SPEND YOUR TIME WISELY

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

The Word of God teaches us the doctrine of moments. Our afflictions are but for a moment. The Lord is deeply concerned about how we spend our moments. For this reason, we must make sure we stay confessed up to date.

Seize your moments. I remember well the moment I was saved. All it took was a moment. I recognized that I was truly a sinner, and all kinds of guilt plagued my mind. In that moment, I understood that the wages of sin is death and that there is a heaven and a hell. By grace, I accepted Christ right there.

The moment you believe Christ died, was buried, and rose again for you—at that very moment, you are saved. Your destiny is changed in an instant. It is a beautiful moment in the eyes

of God.

Let me say this: Every Christian should follow up his decision by making a public expression of salvation by being baptized. Go into the waters of baptism and identify with His death, His burial, and His resurrection. This is a public declaration before people, before angels, and before God. In doing this, you express your identification with Christ. You spend a moment in the water and come right out.

I remember those moments. My sons can tell of the time we baptized three hundred people one Sunday afternoon in Maine. I have never baptized that many at one time since—that was a real day's work! But it was a day marked with many beautiful moments.

Sacred Times That Are Never Forgotten

Let me give you a personal story about moments. I still remember very well coming home from a basketball game with the Bible College team, and having my wife say to me, "We must talk right now."

There on the couch she said, "I only have two months to live." Her cancer, which we thought had been healed, had returned. It was a very sacred moment as we looked into each

other's eyes at that moment. Then, we had to tell the family.

These were all sacred moments. Every moment was precious right up until the time she went home to be with God.

It was seven years before I remarried. Still, I remember my second wife weeping over the pictures of my first wife and saying, "What a woman she must have been—to go through what she went through while God raised up your ministry." That again was a sacred moment for me.

I remember laboring with my first church for years in soul winning and visitation, and then seeing it packed out for the first time. We built a new church building, and that one filled up too.

Sacred moments.

There are so many great moments, and we must reflect on them to keep our hearts warm. Husbands, can you remember when you asked your wife to marry you? And you were so surprised when she said, "Yes." It was a precious moment that led to more and more precious moments as you have grown more and more in love with her.

Think of all the great family moments. Certainly, there are bad situations, but they are all

practical opportunities for your growth in the Lord. That is what I want us to see in the difficult moments. For these, too, are very sacred to God.

God says that He waters His vineyard every moment, because we need that vineyard every moment. We are kept by the power of the Lord (see 1 Peter 1:5). We need to be kept every moment, and we need to be watered every moment.

Satan plagues and teases us. He teased Eve in the Garden. Watch for it, because Satan will tease you, trying to steal away your moments of joy, your moments of growth, and your moments of victory. In the face of it all, however, the Lord has left us a most beautiful promise.

Seeing Jesus Face to Face

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on

immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Soon the Rapture will happen, and what a moment that will be! Once during a visit to Bob Jones University, I heard this story. A woman in a certain congregation had a little problem understanding a message about the Rapture.

"Preacher, you said that God is no respecter of persons. If that is so, why do the dead in

Christ get to rise first?" she asked him.

He answered, "Well, my dear lady, the dead have to come up six feet to join those who will be alive so they can get caught up into the air together."

In a moment, we will all be gathered together for that meeting in the air. What a day that will be!

There will be more moments to come. We will meet Christ at the Bema Seat where we will be rewarded for the opportunities we responded to in grace, during our lives on earth (2 Corinthians 5:10). Those will certainly be precious moments if, by God's grace, we live a life purified by faith and we walk in the Spirit. For this reason, it so important for us to study the Word of God and obey His commands. Should we do this, I trust in God that the Bema Seat will be a day of rejoicing as we praise Him.

Then we will experience great times of reunion with all the loved ones who have gone on to heaven before us. What a time that will be, as we gather for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in our brand-new glorified bodies.

It all began with a moment, and each moment reveals God's purpose. Each is an eternal moment that will go on and on, forever. Trust

the Lord for the moments that may seem clouded right now. In a twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed, and we will know even as we are known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

CONCLUSION

There is one moment I am looking forward to. It is that moment when I will meet Jesus face-to-face for the first time. No more looking through the veil of the Word, I will be there with Him in my brand-new glorified body praising Him.

Jesus will call each of us personally, and He will stand to receive us just as He stood to receive Stephen in Acts 7:55.

Just keep thinking of what it will be like to meet Jesus Christ. We will kneel before Him, and I am sure we will weep. We may even want to kiss His feet.

There He is! Heaven will erupt with shouts of joy! This heaven is so real. Our perfect bodies will be real—so real that we will be able to enjoy forever the perfect presence of our personal Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Making "Nothing" Count

through the Power of God

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet presents a thought that could serve as a solution for every detail of our lives. It is meekness.

Meekness is understanding that all power in heaven and in earth was given to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). Meekness is seeing that Christ is all and in all: that we are nothing, yet in Him "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28*a*).

God is everything: without Him we can do nothing and are nothing. Therefore, the Christian servant who is meek recognizes that he who plants, as well as he who waters, is nothing because it is God who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6). But he also realizes that meekness is the *opposite* of weakness. As a nothing, a nobody, he hears the Word of God and is not offended. How can nothing get offended?

Having meekness is being strong in a position of surrender to God. It is knowing that Jesus

Christ is omnipresent and that He is going to judge every individual alone. People who operate in meekness can avoid projections, condemnation, and intimidation because they know they are nothing and can do nothing of themselves. These people know who God is, and they simply get out of God's way and let Him work. In this booklet, we will study the principle of how God can use nothings to do great things in His Kingdom.

Chapter One

ZEROES ARE GOD'S HEROES

In Christ we live and breathe. He has all power. He is everywhere present. Without Him, we are nothing—zero. Zero cannot be explained; its value is nothing. Therefore, how can zero become offended when it is already zero? A person who is a zero cannot be condemned because he has nothing to lose.

A person has to think that he is something or somebody to be condemned or offended. But, Psalm 22:26 says that "the meek shall eat and be satisfied." Psalm 37:11 declares that "the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" with His Holy Spirit (Psalm 25:9).

The meek eat the Word of God and are satisfied; they have an abundance of peace. What's more, God promises to guide and to teach His way to the meek. If we can remember these

things, we will never become offended.

The Danger of False Fellowship

In Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, Jesus Christ addresses seven churches, each one representing typical characteristics found among Christians in churches today. For example, in Revelation 2:9, speaking to the church in Smyrna, Jesus says, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

Because he saw that some people only follow God superficially as Christians, Satan has set up a false congregation. The father of lies has said, "If you want to follow God outwardly, then I will set up a religious system where you can do your thinking."

Revelation 2:13-15, referring to the church in Pergamos, says that Satan's seat is there. Though some in that church are believers who hold fast to the Word of God and to His name, others there hold on to doctrines of demons, committing fornication, disregarding God's doctrine, and corrupting others. They do not have the doctrine, so Satan dwells there.

In Revelation 2:24, Jesus confronted those in

the church of Thyatira, saying that those who do not have doctrine cannot understand the depths of Satan.

Here is how it works: Satan says, "If you want to live in areas of disobedience, I will help you out. I will give you a place to go where I will dwell, and there you can continue in your self-justification. I will always be there to help you go your own way, but you won't know that it is me leading you."

No one is ever taught or changed unless he understands nothingness and meekness before God. Without meekness, he cannot become mature because he will be offended. He may act like he is changing, but he cannot change, because it takes God's power to change someone who is a nothing.

To Will and to Do of His Good Pleasure

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling:

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

"Holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

"Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (Philippians 2:12-17).

The Lord Jesus Christ is getting us ready for eternity, taking us through trials in time that we will never have to go through again in the billions and billions of years we will live with Him.

Chapter Two

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that, if one died for all, then were all dead.

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

"Wherefore henceforth know we know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling

the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:14-21).

When congregations pray for their pastor several times a day in great faith, the pastor will get just the right message from heaven. The moment he gets up to preach, he will receive exactly what he is supposed to have for his people for that moment. If the pastor is prepared and the congregation is praying, watch out! There will be a real revival according to the Word of God (Psalm 119:154).

There are all kinds of people in the congregation, with so many different needs. Some of them are great Spirit-filled people. And though they are nothing, when they pray in faith, the pastor will be loaded. When a nothing prays by faith, that faith pleases God; He is a rewarder of nothings who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

For example, when individuals need reconciliation for a situation, if they are praying for

their pastor, he may get up and preach on reconciliation at the very next service. The only thing they have to do is to hear the Word of God without receiving condemnation, intimidation, or projections. Christ becomes all in all by grace toward "nothings," and they have a provision to be reconciled.

Overcoming Ought

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

"Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

Notice the point Christ is making here: It is not that *I* have ought against my brother, but that *he* has ought against me. The problem isn't my fault—it is the other party's. Still, I leave my gift and go to him to be reconciled. On the way, I agree with my adversary quickly (Matthew 5:25). In this case, the adversary is the Holy Spirit because He may have been quenched and grieved in an area of my life, perhaps due to resentment (see 1 Thessalonians 5:19 and Ephesians 4:30).

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that

I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

If I don't agree with the Holy Spirit on the message that the pastor preaches and work it out through meekness and faith, then I will be delivered to the Judge (Jesus), and Jesus will deliver me to the Word (John 12:48). The Word is the officer, and it puts me in prison because I don't want to receive the truth in that area. Instead of being a nothing, I acted like a "somebody," trying to change self.

Oh, if people could understand the futility of living like this, trying to fight and win battles on their own, when we have a Savior who has already won for us. If Christians would appropriate the Finished Work in our daily lives, we would revolutionize the world of Christianity.

We should not consider a division to be someone else's problem. Even when we don't have anything against anyone, we are to purpose to be reconciled to those who have ought against us. Reconciliation within the Body of Christ always glorifies Jesus (Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31). We have a ministry of reconciliation because of the love of God, because of the New Creation, because old things are passed away. How did we get this ministry? Christ died

for us and reconciled us unto Himself through the blood He shed on the Cross (Colossians 1:20).

God gives every believer a ministry of reconciliation, and then He gives *the* word of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Indicated by the definite article, "the word" refers to the precise words that will work in the situation at hand.

In the original text of 2 Timothy 4:6, the apostle Paul, soon to be executed in Rome, wrote, "I am ready to be poured out." If we hear a message and God works it in us, then we are ready to pour it out to others. We offer up the sacrifice of Calvary (Philippians 2:7-8) to serve others.

Jesus said, in Matthew 11:30, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." According to Romans 8:1, there is no condemnation. When a person believes the Word, he gets delivered—just by believing (Proverbs 14:15). And when Philippians 2:12 says to "work out your own salvation," that doesn't mean *you* work it out. Rather, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

God will perform what He asks us to do (Job 23:14). Let God work it out. We work out our salvation with reverence and trembling, for it is God who works in us both to will and to do of

His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

God works out what we call impossible, for nothing is impossible with Him (Luke 18:27). God not only does things through us, He also makes us willing to do them. He works these things out of nothings. But in Christ, a nothing is changed to a something.

Chapter Three

FROM GLORY TO GLORY, HE'S CHANGING US

A woman who had not been married very long was being beaten by her husband. She began going to church and listening to tapes and radio messages about the Finished Work, and she fell in love with God. She found out that Jesus died so that she could have His life in every situation. She also discovered that He loved her husband and had a plan for their lives. This woman, who could have continued to live as a victim, became such a servant.

After hearing a particularly powerful positive message, she went home, took her husband's hand, and said, "You are such a sweetheart—I adore you." As she hugged him, he broke and wept. The next Sunday he came to church and was saved. Now they come faithfully every Sunday.

What did this woman do? She left her gift at

the altar and went to be reconciled with a husband who abused her. In this case, the love of God she expressed was able to penetrate the old wounds that made him angry and hurtful. That love brought in an amazing deliverance.

Let me give another true story. In another situation, a woman was having an affair and her husband found out about it. Instead of becoming bitter, his heart began to be softened by the messages he was receiving in church.

He went home one night and said to his wife, "Honey, I am taking you out on a big date." They both dressed up and went out to one of the nicest restaurants in town. While they were driving home, he said to his wife, "I'm sorry that I haven't been a good husband, please forgive me." She was stunned. Later, in the middle of that night, she woke him up, got on her knees, made things right with God and with him, and was changed. They are always together in church, serving God faithfully now.

What did this husband do? He exercised a ministry of reconciliation through the Word of God as an ambassador here in Christ's stead. That is what Paul was saying to the Philippians, "I am ready to be offered up—to be poured out. I am going to offer the sacrifice of Calvary.

Christ laid down his life for me, so I am laying my life down for you" (see Philippians 2:17 and 2 Timothy 4:6).

Persistence Pays Off

Years ago, a little girl in Maine would wait for me after every service and ask me to come visit her alcoholic parents. I had visited a couple times, but the couple would not respond.

"Are you coming today?" the little girl asked one Sunday.

"No, I am not coming today," I said, and she walked away.

The next Sunday, she was waiting again.

"Are you coming today?" she said.

"No, I am only going to come once a month," I told her.

"You must come today!" she said.

"But your mom and dad aren't ready for Christ," I told her.

"How do you know?" she said.

Convicted, I went to the house that day. I had been going off and on for about a year. This time, however, the father wasn't drunk and the mother was still asleep. I started to share the Gospel to her daddy, but in the middle of it, I was broken by God. I said, "Sir, we just love you

and your family."

That man, who had been so difficult to reach, was broken, too, and he went to get his wife. They both became gloriously saved. Later they were baptized and have been coming to church for all these years.

That little girl had a ministry of reconciliation. Then, God gave *me*—a real nothing in all of this—a word of reconciliation that brought her parents to Christ.

Let the Veil Be Taken Away

"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

"Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:15-18).

When we look into the mirror of the Word, God changes us into the next step of His reflected image. This is what the original Greek indicates. And I love to sing that chorus that says,

"*From glory to glory, He's changing me,*

From earthly things to the heavenly….
The love of God shown to the world!"

You may not know it, but He is changing you as you read this. You may not feel changed, but I guarantee that the Word is going into your soul. The life of God is being processed in you, and the Holy Spirit through God's Word is changing you.

"But I make so many mistakes," you say.

What if you are making mistakes? When "nothing" makes a mistake, he is still nothing.

When we turn to Jesus, and gaze upon Him, and obey Him, and love Him, then the veil that stopped us from obeying God is taken away by the Holy Spirit. The mirror of God's Word changes us so that we reflect the attributes of His nature: reconciliation, forgiveness, peace, and joy. "Nothings" are changed into the image of God just to glorify the all-powerful One who is also all-knowing and everywhere present. He is the precious, holy, loving, and forgiving One. We are changed into His Spirit of glory. God changes "nothings"—simply by grace, through faith.

A man doesn't change himself; he just lets God do it. Oh, what this message could do for pretenders. Instead of always trying to please

God and people, do you realize how different life would be if, when you wake up, you would get on your knees, and fellowship with God to start every day? It doesn't matter how little or how long a time you spend. God will begin the process of change.

Emptied Out for His Glory

"Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed" (Jeremiah 48:11).

The problem with Moab was that when he heard the truth of God, he didn't let God work it out. Therefore, because God didn't work His nature out of Moab, there was no reflection, no pouring out.

The most glorious thing in the world is to receive something by grace, to get something through love and mercy, and just to let it flow out like a river to someone who doesn't deserve it. That is the most glorious thing in all the world for a Christian to experience. This is abundant life (John 10:10*b*).

"Come unto me and drink, and you will

never thirst again. The water that I give you will be everlasting water," Jesus declared in John 4:14. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, and out of his emotions shall flow rivers of living water" (see John 7:37-38).

All we have to do is drink His water. What comes in has to go out. These are wonderful, deep thoughts from the heart of God to us! All we have to do is let God do the work in us. It is the most precious thing in the world to understand.

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isaiah 44:22).

Even if we fail in our process of living, God is in control. Our failure doesn't go out to people: It returns to God, for He has redeemed us. It goes back to the omnipotent One, the omnipresent One, the One who redeemed us. And He supplies another opportunity of faith, another opportunity to be changed into glory, another opportunity to respond to forgiveness.

CONCLUSION

If you have come to this point and are still feeling condemned and intimidated by projections, you must understand that nothing has been asked of you. Exalt the One who lives in you; that is all you have to do. Let God work things out His way with your capacity, and stop being condemned.

Just reading this message over and over again would do amazing things in your heart. You would be shocked at what that kind of repetition will do to a nothing. We offer up the sacrifice—which speaks of Calvary. He laid down His life for us, and we do the same through the very same Spirit that was in Christ's humanity (1 John 3:16).

This principle could revive Christianity, regardless of the denomination. This message could revolutionize an individual, a marriage, and a business. It could transform the soul of any believer who has God.

This settles everything. According to Psalm 119:38, we become established by having His Word established in us—"nothings," used by God to do great things as we represent His kingdom.

Manifest the Treasure

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:7-9).

Think of this carefully. How is God going to get His treasure out of us? We are so busy with relationships, with duties, with making a living. How will God release this treasure? A Christian can be sure of this: God will do everything short of violating our free volition to get the treasure out of us.

You don't have to be a leader to have this treasure come out. "*We* have a treasure…"—Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the Father—in our earthen vessel, "…that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."

But, what would you do if you were God, and you couldn't get out the treasure that is inside a vessel you created?

Do you prefer the pleasures of this world to the treasure in your earthen vessel? Do you take your treasure up into the high mountains to live happily ever after? Do you have a soul-power relationship with someone? What comes out of you in these cases? You. Just you.

In this booklet, we will see that God needs to break people in order release the treasure within them. If the treasure is not released, however, only more problems can result. As we will explain, when the treasure is held back, blind spots and novice tendencies develop to keep the Christian from revealing Christ. But thank God, He has a plan to get the treasure out. And when it is released through our weak vessels, everyone will benefit.

Chapter One

BROKEN TO REVEAL GOD'S LIGHT

If you turn a glass of milk upside down, what comes out? Milk, of course. If you turn a glass of water upside down, water comes out. If you turn your flesh upside, what comes out? Flesh. If a Spirit-filled Christian is turned upside down, what comes out? The treasure.

God wants the treasure to come out, and He is going to find a way to do it. He will do it by breaking the earthen vessel, just as He commanded Gideon's three-hundred-man army to break the pitchers to defeat the enemy (Judges 7:16-21). The torches inside the pitchers couldn't shine in the night until the vessels were smashed.

This is how God does it. Either His Word will break you, a relationship will break you, or God will let the devil break you (Psalm 31:12). Otherwise, you will be broken by being miser-

able all by yourself. Which would you prefer? Settle it with God.

Types of Breaking

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

Shabar is the Hebrew word for 'broken' in this passage. David was broken in pieces by God. After he had sinned with Bathsheba, Nathan the Prophet came and told him of a rich man with all kinds of lambs, yet he took from a poor man the one lamb he had. David became angry and said that man should die. "Thou are the man," Nathan said to David. "Uriah had one precious wife, and you took her from him. You are the man who should die" (2 Samuel 12). And die David almost did, according to Psalm 118:17. He was under *shabar*—he was being broken to pieces by God because of his sin.

Another type of breaking is *meroach* in the Hebrew (Leviticus 21:20). This is when circumstances come to break a person.

Adversity and circumstances were threatening to break Israel, in Deuteronomy 1:21. *Chathath* (which is translated as 'discouraged') is when violence is allowed to break people. It is what

happens when people kill and murder. It is when a drunken driver injures someone. These things break people.

Then there is *dakah* (Psalm 38:8; Psalm 51:8). This is the breaking that happens when one collapses under pressure because of not being oriented to grace. "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice" (Psalm 51:8). This is what God brought upon David, who prayed this prayer.

If you are a Christian, I promise you that you will be broken. It doesn't matter whether you are a rebellious sixteen year old, a passive thirty year old, or a striving fifty year old. You will be broken. But God will find a way for you to fulfill your purpose by getting the treasure out of you.

Chapter Two

PERPLEXITIES, PROBLEMS, AND GOD'S PLAN

People reveal some strange defense mechanisms when they go through trouble, perplexities, and persecutions. When people are knocked down, it is very unusual to see what they allow themselves to go through. They don't understand that we are in a body of death, first, because of sin. Secondly, we are in a body of death so that we can find our purpose through the treasure that is in us.

I know of a girl who grew up in a very affluent family. But the father got very angry with his wife and tried to choke her. As the daughter grew up, the father would often hit her. She lived under terrible fear that her father would do something to her or her mother. Slowly, anger accumulated in her soul and she grew very angry.

The woman left home. She became very dis-

ciplined, but very angry nonetheless. She accepted Christ and the treasure inside became a tremendous blessing to her. But her anger was also still there, and she grew to become abusive to her children. When she was abusive to her children, she was bringing out the anger that built up toward her father. Genesis 5:2-3 says we are made in the image of Adam, and this woman was reflecting the image of the father who made her so angry. Though she had managed to cover it up and seemingly forget it, she took out her anger on her children just as her father did to her and her mother.

There are people who grew up in circumstances that were so perverted or violent that most of us could not fathom what they went through. The scars that remain often cause them to reflect and transfer their affliction to others.

This is often the case with people who have been sexually or physically abused, and they themselves become abusers. They may be well aware of the problem and desire a breakthrough. They may even let down their guard long enough to receive the Gospel and get saved. Very often, the road to recovery is rough. But thank God for His longsuffering, lovingkindness, and compassion that will turn the most

obstinate sinner who is willing to be turned.

Healing That Comes Within

I know of a case where a drug addicted mother allowed her husband to sexually abuse their daughter. "It's okay. Go ahead with him," the mother would say to her daughter.

This girl grew up and threatened to commit suicide on several occasions. She hated her mother and anyone who represented authority. A few years ago, this girl who suffered so much became a born-again Christian. She endured quite a process but has come through it wonderfully. Her pastor is so proud of her now. She is a wonderful mother, and she does not waste her life dealing with the anger that is within her.

Every time she opens her mouth, the precious treasure comes out. Why? Because the Lord draws near to them who have a broken heart. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds (Psalm 147:3).

"…the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound" (Isaiah 30:26).

This means that God heals all the areas in the nervous system affected by the breaking process. A person can hurt so much that he ex-

periences an emotional stroke. Just as a person is paralyzed from a physical stroke, a person can literally be paralyzed by an emotional stroke. But God heals the stroke of our wounds. He heals the brokenhearted.*

I have been through some very unusual times as a pastor. The only reason I am allowed to be alive is first because of the prayers of my people. I don't care if all that is said is "Lord, bless my pastor today"—that prayer is heard. I am also alive because God still has to get the treasure out of me.

God Is in Charge of the Results

Though He doesn't cause it, sometimes God *permits* us to sin because of our free volition. If He ends up getting out the treasure from us, our sin doesn't glorify God, but the results of getting right with Him do.

So many wonderful people around the world fight the trouble that comes to them. They resist the perplexities, and they can't understand the reason for persecution. When they are cast down by people, they are left with wounded spirits.

These dear people fail to understand that they are in God's will, and that His will is to get

the treasure out, so His light will shine in the world (Matthew 5:14) and the power of His resurrection will be revealed on the earth (Matthew 5:13). The whole thing with God is getting out the treasure.

The greatest lesson to learn is this: Don't fight the plan of God to release the treasure that is in you. The issue is not your husband, your wife, your kids, your ministry, or any of your circumstances. It is not any of those things. God will use people and circumstances, but they are never the issue. The issue is not your marriage. It isn't that you don't love your children or your partner. You can't love someone else if you don't love yourself. That is a law of God—it is the royal law of love, in James 2:8.

The point is this: We are on earth to show people that even in the midst of thick darkness (1 Kings 8:12), there is a treasure hidden (Isaiah 45:3) within us that is going to come out. The treasure is love, joy, and compassion. The treasure is wisdom, kindness, and edification. The treasure is identification with people whatever they are going through.

*Freely Receive from God, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998, discusses the stroke of a wound in depth.*

Chapter Three

OVERCOMING BLIND SPOTS AND NOVICE TRAITS

If you enter into competition with someone else, your flesh with be elevated and your treasure will remain locked within you and never be released. When the treasure is not allowed to get out, blind spots develop within us. John 12:40 says that whoever has blinded eyes hardens his heart. Deuteronomy 28:29 speaks of those who grope in darkness. Some were blind as they walked the streets (Lamentations 4:14). Second Corinthians 3:14 refers to those whose eyes are blinded because the veil hasn't been removed. Satan's plan is to blind people's eyes (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 2:11).

Blind spots. All of us have had them. Consider what happens with photoreceptors, which are designed to receive light as in process photography. The diaphragm of the camera lens opens, allowing light to enter a specific space.

The varying intensities of reflected light are received onto film at the back of the camera. That light transfers a discernible image of the reflected object to the film, which is developed and becomes a photograph. But if the lens is partially covered by a foreign object, such as a speck of dirt, the image will be marred and only partially visible.

In our bodies, we have specialized cells that are photoreceptive neurons. These cells catch light and transmit it through the specialized optic nerves to the brain, and we see things. Spiritually speaking, we have photoreceptors that receive the light of the Word of God. If, however, we have a blind spot, the spiritual photoreceptors cannot carry all of the information to the human spirit. As a result, there is always a part of the divine picture that we can't see.

If all of the information presented in the entire picture of the Word of God is not allowed to be transferred to our human spirit by our faith response in the power of the Holy Spirit, then we never see the whole situation and we are left with blind spots (2 Peter 1:9).

A blind spot is something that you can carry with you all the days of your life, unless your

heart is revived according to the principle of Isaiah 57:15:

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

God desires to enlighten the eyes of our understanding with the Word of God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:18).

Real Revival

Jesus Christ will quicken a broken and humble spirit. Blind spots can destroy individuals if they never become broken. They miss the whole purpose of what is going on in their lives to break them. Instead of becoming broken, they become miserable and they sublimate. Whatever their weakness is, they enter into it to withdraw from God's plan of action. As a result, the treasure is never seen by the husband, the wife, or the children. The treasure is not seen, but the earthen vessel is seen everywhere.

In 1 Timothy 3:6, Paul warned Timothy not to be a novice, lifted up with the pride of the devil. Pride can cause one to lift up his heart and

begin to criticize and condemn others. A novice trait is a beginner's trait. It is something that stays with you when you are older—at a point in your life when you really shouldn't have novice traits.

Blind spots and novice traits go together. The difference is that the novice trait has to do with pride, while the blind spot has to do with ignorance, willful or not.

Paul made a mistake in going to Jerusalem (Acts 21:13). He was warned not to go there by those who were hearing from the Holy Spirit, but Paul said, "Why do you weep? Why do you break my heart? I am willing to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus!" There was just one problem, the Holy Spirit was telling him not to go. He went anyway because he had a blind spot. But God used him, even though he was arrested and sent to Rome, because he rebounded. The faithfulness of God overcame the blind spot, and Paul went on with Him.

Peter had a blind spot when he rebuked Jesus, telling Him that He would not go to the Cross, in Matthew 16:22. Peter thought he was loving God; instead he was being used by Satan in his blind spot.

So many Christians are crippled by blind

spots. And if God isn't allowed to lovingly reveal our blind spots through the Spirit, prayer, the Word of God, our pastor, or godly friends, then a lifetime of novice traits may develop out of it. We end up defending our actions because we don't know that we have a blind spot.

Remember, "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17). When you are broken and on your knees, you will begin to realize that you have a treasure within. You are God's property, and He considers you a very wonderful creation. There is no creation like you anywhere. He loves you, and He desires more than anything to release the treasure in you.

CONCLUSION

When we really understand how much God loves us, we begin to be broken. The problems turn into solutions. Pain turns into joy. Wounds turn into liberation. And all of these things produce godly experience in us.

And to the experience, God starts adding faith. To that faith is added virtue; and then to virtue He adds knowledge. Godly knowledge—a real treasure—produces temperance, which is the ability to restrain through the Holy Spirit from, for example, reacting when we are unfairly accused.

Now the treasure is able to be released outwardly as a testimony to God's grace. To temperance He adds patience; and to patience, godliness. What does godliness produce? Brotherly kindness and charity.

These things make it so that we are never barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. (See 2 Peter 1:8.) This is why we can

glory in tribulation—"That I may know Him…" (Philippians 3:10).

Manufactured Storms

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INTRODUCTION

One of the big problems today that Christians face is in not understanding the storms that are manufactured by Satan. Over and over again, the father of lies is trying to produce and manufacture storms in our lives. He uses the atmosphere to produce various kinds of storms, outward and inward, to disturb and interfere with the natural order and functioning of man's humanity.

Once he succeeds in wearing down the natural man, the devil can attack the spiritual man within. We often end up trying to salvage the wreckage of our lives instead of entering into God's rest, where He is ready and willing to lead and to guide us into all truth.

In this booklet, we will examine the importance of rest, both in the natural and spiritual realms, and how to always be a winner, regardless of what things appear to be.

Chapter One

ENTER INTO GOD'S REST

"And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

"And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

"And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

"And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

"And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

"And they feared exceedingly, and said one

to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:35-41).

In this story, the Lord Jesus was sleeping on the back part of the boat. His head was on a pillow, and He was sleeping soundly. Sleep is a very beautiful thing. It is God's provision for the natural man so that he will not go insane. If a man could not sleep, he would go insane. God has a lot of good natural provisions for the humanity of man. One of them is sleep. And if a man gets his proper sleep (the normal amount that God would give him), then he will be better able to rest in the supernatural storms of the atmosphere.

In this particular story, the storm did not wake Jesus Christ. No matter how severe it appeared to be, it did not wake Him. It was not the storm that awoke Jesus Christ.

From the mountains of Galilee, tremendous storms would blow up. The sea would be calm and then a storm would come—a down-rushing wind with its fury, producing the intensity of waves that would beat upon the boat. These disciples were not novices. They were skilled and trained fishermen who had dealt with sudden storms. But in this instance, they went as long as

they could without calling upon the Master. And after going so far, they called upon Him.

Do not be unkind with the disciples. They did everything they could before they came to Jesus Christ. Still, it was wrong for them to come. He said it was wrong. I do not criticize them because I would probably have awoken Him much earlier than they did. However, they were fearful, and Satan's threat began.

Satan always tries to make people live under a threat, in fear, and he does it with storms he has manufactured in the atmosphere. He wants to constantly produce such fear that people will not be able to rest in the midst of a storm.

This portion of the Word of God describes what the storm was all about. Jesus Christ refused to allow the storm to take away His inner peace. He refused to allow the storm to change the natural provision of God's grace for His human body.

God has many natural provisions that He has given us for our human body. The devil's purpose is to produce storms that will completely take away the natural provision for our humanity so we will have to revert into fear from the threat of the storm. Over and over again, Satan tries to produce fear on our human-

ity. Whether it be marriage, our physical health, old age, or whatever it is, God has many natural provisions. Yet, Satan is always trying to produce fear, and he threatens the natural provision that God has established through grace because of His love for His people, for those that He created.

After doing all that they could, the disciples revealed that what they did was natural. Instead of accepting God's provision for the storm, they tried to work up their own provision to save themselves on the boat.

Again and again, God's people try to work up a natural provision instead of accepting rest, the rest of Jesus Christ, to take care of the storm. He was resting, and the Lord Jesus Christ, resting in His faith in the Father, would take care of the storm. But they were not occupied with His rest. They were occupied with works. They were occupied with doing something naturally about the natural storm.

Everything that Satan produces is natural. He uses the natural structure and the natural system, along with supernatural knowledge, to orient our hearts so that we will succumb by fear. Every single thing he does is to get us to react naturally to the natural provision of the

flesh. That is what he did with the disciples, and he was successful.

When they failed to be occupied with the rest of Jesus Christ, who was lying down on a pillow, they did what they could. Exhausted, fearful, and being threatened, they finally cried out, "Master, save us!"

Listen to this carefully. "Save us, lest we perish." The personal pronoun is in a plural. The objective case then turns into a nominative case. Jesus said, "Let us go over to the other side," and they said, "Save us, lest we perish." After three years of observing His ministry, after watching Him feed the hungry multitude, raise the dead, heal the sick, save the wicked, and bring grace and peace to their hearts, they were insinuating that Jesus Christ was going to perish with them in the storm and never reach the other side.

Quit Trying to Work It Out

When we work out a natural provision instead of being occupied with rest that comes from the Finished Work, we are insinuating that Jesus Christ cannot take us to the other side. We are saying that we are all going to perish, because if we perish, He has to perish, since we are

hid inside of Him (Colossians 3:3).

The implication that Jesus Christ is going to perish with us is saying that Jesus Christ is not God Almighty. Fear reveals that we don't believe in the character and nature of His omnipotence. Fear also reveals that we don't trust in the character of His promise. He said, "Let us pass over unto the other side." It was a promise: "We will reach the other side." But the storm said, "I'll challenge you." The storm said, "I'll threaten you." They became occupied with the natural results of fear and the flesh as they tried to work out their own deliverance. They were ineffective, and they ended up convinced that they were going to perish.

How many of you think that in your marriage you will perish and that you will not reach the other side? Do you think that in your particular sinful habits you will perish and not reach the other side? You are saying that His promises are not true. Secondly, you are saying that Jesus Christ and you will sink and drown because of a storm. Thirdly, you reveal that you don't understand who causes the storms. Fourthly, you reveal that you don't understand who quiets the waves. And fifthly, you don't have faith because you are occupied with fear.

No matter how severe the storm, it did not wake the Master. Now, you listen, and listen well. Listen carefully and don't let your minds wander. There has never been a storm that could make Jesus Christ fear. I'll show you why.

Rest in Christ, The Living Word

When Jesus says, "Let us go over to the other side," no matter how severely the wind blows and how tempestuous the waves that come against the boat of our life, the boat will not go down because of the Word of Authority that is resting in the back part of the boat, lying down in the green pastures of faith.

Jesus is teaching us that when the storm gets at its worst, be occupied with rest and never do a single thing in the flesh to save your life. Only rest and the Word of Authority can save your life—not the activity of the flesh, striving and straining and working to save those who were on the boat. Rest will save the boat, the Word of Authority will save the boat, but not the activity of Adam.

How many of you have been insecure, judgmental, critical, or harsh because you were trying to save the boat to reach the other side instead of resting in the Word of Authority to ex-

perience life in the storm?

Jesus got up after they awoke Him. He rebuked the wind and He said, "Peace, be still." Three times in the Bible the phrase "Peace, be still" is there, and it means, "Hush! Be muzzled." In Mark 1:25 He said it to demons. In Luke 4:35, He said it to demons. Are you getting the picture? The only other recorded times that Jesus Christ said, "Peace, be still," He was addressing demons.

So, Jesus Christ, using the same words that He used to demons, revealed to our lives that the storm was not caused by the natural elements but by demons who had control of the natural elements. And any time you let your elements, such as your emotional responses, depend upon the natural atmosphere, you will have a terrible storm in your life. Your Sea of Galilee may seem calm, but a storm will beat up against your boat until you're almost certain you will perish. When that happens, be occupied with the rest that comes from the Word of Authority so you can experience the muzzling of the demons according to the word spoken by Jesus Christ when He rebukes the waves and the winds.

Chapter Two

DEALING WITH THE THREATS

In Job 1:12, Satan asked permission to do things to Job, saying, "Job only serves You because You always give him what he wants."

And God said to him, "Short of taking his life, you have power to use anything you want on the earth."

So in Job 1:19, there came a great wind, and that wind killed the sons and daughters of Job. That storm was caused by the devil, and the devil used it to kill Job's own family. The storm and the demons were not muzzled because Job did not have a Body of believers with him, and there was no one to use the Word of Life and say, "Hush."

Satan is always using his threats. Many people in our Body, our local assembly, are constantly entertaining threats—suggestive threats from the enemy. They live with suggestion of fear instead of the power of faith, so they live in

bondage to the possibility of destruction.

"Perish!" That's what the demons say as they beat upon the boat of your life as it travels with Jesus to the other side. "Your situation will perish. Your life will perish. Your emotions will perish. You will never make it as a Christian. Your children will perish. You won't make it. You are going to perish!"

Finally, as the storm rages on, you agree with the devil and you tell Jesus, "Come on, Jesus, wake up! Don't You see we are perishing?" All you have done is quote the devil's suggestion. You confessed fear instead of faith in the rest of the Man who is lying down, trusting His Father.

It is unfortunate to have God Almighty on the boat of our hearts and yet to talk about something perishing. That is so unnecessary. Satan is always going to manufacture storms. Do you know why? He is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). He is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), and we wrestle against his principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12).

And that is why some people always live with the suggestion of a threat, in the fear of perishing in some area of life or some domestic

scene on the horizon. We will always be subjected to the voice that says, "Feel the waves. Feel the wind. You're not novices, but there is nothing you can do. Bail out the water! The boat is rocking. You're going down. It isn't stopping. You've got to do something. Don't try to rest. Don't rest in Christ. Get busy!" And we get busy. We bail out the water and the boat is rocking. The situation enters into chaos and we fear and have more fear. The word "perish" comes, and everybody acts in reaction to the suggestion that we are going to perish.

You will perish with alcohol. You will perish with lust. You will perish with lying. You will perish with emotional disturbances. You will perish with passivity. You will perish with your religious efforts. And the word "perish" comes. Then Jesus Christ finally gets up and says, "How is it that you have no faith?" Why was He troubled? It wasn't the storm that troubled Him. It was because they woke Him out of His sleep.

Listen carefully. For almost three years they had seen Him as the Master. When it came to the bread and the fishes, Jesus Christ multiplied them. They saw it. They knew He was the Master of multiplication. When it came to leprosy, they saw with their own eyes what the Master

could do to leprosy. He healed it (Luke 1). When it came to the hand that was withered and could not serve God, He said, "Put out your hand." And the man did, and his hand was restored. They saw it.

When it came to the twelve-year-old girl in Luke 8:54, they saw Him. They went in with Him. He was mocked and He was laughed at. But the disciples Peter, John, and James saw it. The Lord said, "Little damsel, arise." He was the master over death.

If you have been born-again, He saved you from spiritual death. You have already seen Him resurrect, because you are the one who was resurrected! He is the master over death in your life.

When it came to guilt and condemnation, He said to the woman taken in adultery, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). He was the Master over guilt. They saw it with their own eyes.

When it came to temptation, for a season in the early part of His ministry He was tempted by the devil for forty days and nights (Matthew 4). He related to men. He understood what it was like to be human and very weak, yet He didn't fail and He wasn't overcome. He was

master over temptation.

When it came to those who deceived Him and tried to stone Him and kill Him (John 8:58), He hid. He was master over a false effort by the enemy to destroy Him. He was master and He was able to hide Himself and be salvaged until, in God's time, He was to lay down His life to die on the Cross.

You see, by sight the disciples had seen Him do all of this. And may I say this? Sight never builds me up in faith for the next situation. The only thing that will build me up for the next situation is faith in a revelation of the Word of God. If God allowed you to see the dead raised (as some of you have probably wanted to in the past months), and if He allowed you to see everything that you call "spiritual" happen, that would never produce faith in you. It would only produce another desire to see it happen again.

What Jesus Christ wants more than anything is that when He reveals the Word of God, you would love it, treasure it, be occupied with it, and rest with it, no matter how bad the storm is!

Satan is always manufacturing a storm. He manufactured every single storm that Job had, taking his seven sons and three daughters, the camels, the oxen, the asses, leaving him with his

nagging wife, his boils, and silence from his friends. Satan manufactured those storms.

Goliath, the nine-foot six-inch giant, came out against little David. Before David took spiritual weapons to go against him, in 1 Samuel 17:23, Goliath constantly made the Israelites and Saul fear. He continually threatened and mocked and made them fear. They were occupied with fear, and they never looked to God. They kept looking at the giant and they never looked at faith. They looked at fear. They could not rest because they didn't give God a chance to reveal His Word. They were walking by sight, and their sight did not produce faith. It only revealed fear.

Please, remember that fear is produced by sight and opinion. But faith comes by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). And with the Word of God He reveals love, rest, peace, power, victory. The Word of God will always produce faith when received and responded to in grace. Sooner or later, sight will always produce fear, and you will live with the suggestions of a threat.

Satan will manufacture many storms in our lives. When we have our greatest victories and are established in God's love, he will still begin

to bring the storms. But when Jesus addressed him from the boat, the Greek text reveals that He spoke to him very normally like you would say "hello." He stood up and He said, "Storm, be muzzled." Then He used one more word in the Greek, "Hush." And then He went back down and back to His disciples.

I can deal with the demons and storms best when I've been resting in the Word of God's promise and when I am experiencing total rest in God. I do not need pseudo emotional repetition of vain rebuking to the demons like so many do. I can just say, "Peace," or "Be muzzled. Hush," and then go on. Why? Because the storm cannot be executed in the face of faith-rest. And when the words of rest come from a heart of rest, the storm has to be released back to God's natural order. Then, God's provision for the natural humanity of man can be experienced, giving us a capacity for God.

Our victory is so simple! It is being occupied with a faith in His rest, or "faith-rest" (Hebrews 4:9). His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. There is no storm that can challenge it. We will reach the other side, and the boat will never go down with Jesus Christ resting in His Word with us.

The disciples were saying in so many words, "The Kingdom is going to fail, and we are all going down. We've seen Your Kingdom authority, but now we're all going to perish." That's what they were saying. But Jesus said, "You're using a personal pronoun in the plural, and you're changing the objective case to the nominative case." Or, "What's the matter? Where is your faith in Me?"

"You have seen Me be master over everything, and if I'm master over everything, don't you realize that I'm master over this storm? Furthermore, I can master the storm while it's going on by resting against its threats, by resting against its noise, by resting against the feeling of its swift wind. I will rest. My response will be rest, not natural production. My answer will not be natural emotional disturbance striving to bail myself out and save My own life. My answer will be abiding on the pillow, lying down in the green pastures."

The disciples were trying to be their own Savior instead of letting rest in Him save them.

Chapter Three

HE MAKES ME LIE DOWN AND REST

When anybody in this congregation will not accept forgiveness, it means you will not accept the fact that God has forgotten your sins forever (Hebrews 8:12). You refuse to accept the fact that He is never going to leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20). You refuse to accept the fact that you've been sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption, the redemption of your bodies (Ephesians 4:30; Romans 8:23). You refuse to accept the fact that your gift is eternal life (John 10:28) because it was eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12). You refuse to accept the fact that you have been baptized by God into the Body corporate (1 Corinthians 12:12-13) and you were made to drink of the same spirit of faith-rest. You refuse to accept the divine provisions that God has for your natural humanity to survive.

God not only wants to save us spiritually, but He wants to save our natural humanity from disease, affliction, emotional problems, and physical hazards. Through total abstinence, He wants to save your body from cigarettes, alcohol, lust, and every disturbance that Satan can manufacture through a storm to make you fear. Instead of going on in natural reactions in your emotions, He wants us to have faith-rest in Jesus Christ's promise, "Let us go over."

Then the whole test comes. If you love God's Word, no matter what anybody says to you, you cannot be offended, but you will have great peace. Psalm 119:165 says great peace have they that love His word, and nothing shall offend them. That word "peace" is a magnificent thing.

Three times Jesus said, "Peace, be still." Each time He said it to demons because Satan is the prince of the air causing storms and winds. God has given Satan power over the elements and over the lower part of the creation. He has power over the lower part of the animal kingdom, which includes man's sin nature and wild animals, such as the lions and tigers. That's why they're wild. He has power over everything that is on the lower side of creation because he was demoted to the lowest sphere of the Kingdom

(Ezekiel 28:15-24; Luke 10:18).

When Satan said, "I will ascend," God said, "You won't. You'll go down." Satan said, "I will" five times, and God said, "You will go down. You will finally go down into Gehenna where you'll abide forever and ever. And one thousand years after you're put there, Satan, you will still be tormented day and night" (Revelation 19:20; Revelation 20:10-11).

Satan thought he was going to ascend higher, and the Lord showed him he was going to descend lower. He was in heaven at first, but he would be demoted and always go down. The only ones that he can have power over are those that choose to live in the lower nature of the soul instead of the higher nature of the human spirit through redemption and the Word of God.

Satan has all kinds of power over your soul nature. And unless you go to the Cross and lose your childishness, with regard to your fears, accusations, and suggestions, unless you get out of the realm of fear and self-pity, you will always be living under his kingdom, in his dominion, in self-condemnation. You will never ascend higher because you are aligned with him and he cannot ascend.

No amount of counseling or church services

will do it. No amount of social evangelical times will do it. Either you let Jesus Christ make you rest in heavenly places, seated above it all (Ephesians 2:6; Ephesians 1:19-23) and rest together with the Body of Christ above it all, or you will live below in your lower nature, always being a subject and an object for the manufactured storms of the devil at his will.

We have a choice. Having faith in His rest makes us ascend together with Him. By refusing to exercise faith, we allow the storm to make us react naturally in fear. By thinking we're going to perish, we live in the lower nature, trying to save our lives without the resurrection power of the Cross.

So, when the Lord Jesus said, "Be muzzled," no matter how much they feared (and they did), no matter how much they confessed that they were going to perish, the Word of God says, "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

"And he said unto them, Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith?"

Jesus was saying, "By sight, you have seen Me be the master over everything. And yet, you have no faith, but you are filled with fear." And

Jesus Christ said, "Why?"

That's what He asked. But do you know what He did? They enjoyed His rest without faith. Faith would have pleased Him, but crying out in defeat reached His heart of mercy.

Mercy Rejoices Against Judgment

How many times we have had no faith but we knew enough to cry out (which only revealed that we didn't have it)? And Mercy said, "Okay, listen carefully. You have no faith. I don't know why after all you've seen Me do, but I'll tell you what. I'll be your faith and you won't need to have any. Just rest in My word of command." "And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God…. who loved me and gave Himself for me." There it is, in Galatians 2:16 and Galatians 2:20.

So if you have no faith today, you'll still not perish. But be sure you cry out and use His faith with the Word of Authority so that the demons will be muzzled and you can simply rest in what He said to them as you abide in who He is, with Him.

The Lord Jesus has made it so simple. He doesn't want the body to be sick. He doesn't want the emotions disturbed. He doesn't want

us to be double-minded. He doesn't want our souls to reign unto Satan's kingdom in the lower animal nature. And the way that we are translated experientially is to call on Jesus Christ without doing anything except trusting in Him.

And when the disciples cried out, He responded, but He said, "You have no faith. But now My word will show you that I'll be your faith. And when My words dwell in you richly, then My faith will dwell in you richly, and you can execute the same authority that I have. You can enter into the same rest because you have the same life. And with the same words that produce the same faith in the same life, you can execute the same sentence over the demons—"Be muzzled!"

In the delegated authority of His faith, having read one testimony after another, we can say, "Be muzzled!" and "Hush!" because we've been raised together with Him to abide in His rest. He arose and rebuked the wind, and we have risen with Him. We are seated together with Him, elevated with Him, and so we can say, "Be muzzled, demons. We are above you."

Seated with Christ, far above principalities and power, we have so much more power than they do, they can't even begin to figure out our

next move. God's movement is eternal and not confined to time.

We ought to fast and pray because we need to learn how to rest in the future storms. Satan does not like what God's rest is doing in this Body of believers. He doesn't like our emphasis that it isn't natural reactions but it is Jesus Christ acting in our behalf. He doesn't like the Word of Authority that we have learned to execute and love. He doesn't like our persistence. He doesn't like the fact that we won't lie down in defeat. He doesn't like the fact that no matter how bad the situation is, we keep right on believing. He doesn't like that. He's going to manufacture storms.

He's going to manufacture more storms, but I'm not worried. Do you know why? Jesus is on the boat, and He's not working His way across. He's not rowing, He's resting. And if a storm comes up that threatens to end our journey with Jesus, I know it can't because that is impossible. His character reveals that all of His promises are yea and amen (2 Corinthians 1:20). And my response to that Word in 2 Corinthians 1:20 is a Matthew 5 response: "Let my yea be yea." And when Jesus Christ says, "We'll go on to the other side. Come on, let's go. We'll reach heaven," all I have to do is say, "Yes, Lord. Yea." I don't worry,

I don't question, I don't doubt, and I don't try to bail out the water. I say, "Yea, Lord."

But Satan says, "Can't you feel the wind and the waves? Don't you see that the boat is just about ready to capsize?"

Don't answer him. Let the Word of God answer him. And the Word of God answers him with, "Shut up. Hush! Be muzzled. Be quiet." And when Jesus Christ says that, he cannot do one single thing with the elements or with the lower kingdom. The only thing it takes to change the lower kingdom is the higher one. All it takes to change a conversation in the flesh is a heavenly one. All it takes to change a natural mind is a supernatural mind. And all we have to do to experience rest is to abide in the words of the One who is resting in us.

When we cooperate with the will of God, we do away with passivity and inactivity of our human will. Jesus Christ said, "Not my will but Yours be done." But we say, "Yea, Lord, but we're going to perish." And He says to the storm, "Be muzzled!" Then, He says to us, "Come on, let My faith rest in your hearts so you'll be able to speak the Word instead of Me. I'll let you do it if you'll let Me produce the word of faith in you."

You have two options tonight. If you don't have any faith, then let Jesus speak. But if you'll let His Word abide in you, then you use the authority He delegated, and you do it.

Manufactured storms? They manufactured fire, but they couldn't burn the three Hebrew boys (Daniel 3). The wild lions with their lower nature were starved, but they could not eat up Daniel. He rested in faith during the time they were the most hungry (Daniel 6).

You can manufacture the darkness and dungeon of a jail, but you can't keep Paul and Silas from singing. With his squeaky voice and his contemptible speech (2 Corinthians 10:10), Paul sang with Silas in the jail at midnight (Acts 16:25). They sang praises unto God. Satan manufactured some storms but it didn't stop the joy in their hearts because they had the power over their lower natures. That's when storms begin to cease, when you personally experience life because you are resting with the Master.

CONCLUSION

Satan will manufacture storms to get at your emotions, storms to violate the gift that God has given. He will come in and intervene with manufactured storms to get you to be occupied with the waves and the wind. He'll manufacture storms in your marriage, storms against your fellowship, storms against your healing, storms against your growing, storms against your progressing in sanctification and the Word of God, against your baptism in the Spirit, against the gift of the Spirit, against oneness with God and the Body. He will manufacture storms against your children. Storms, storms, storms! But thank God, it doesn't take a long time to stop it. It's simply "Be muzzled. Hush!"

Recognize rest and you will be released. But acknowledge the storm and you'll live a restless life in bondage. Leaving the place that God put you won't stop the storm in your life. That will only reveal that you have a cancer in your heart

that needs to go to the Cross in rest and in grace, through love and redemption.

Do not allow somebody to manufacture a storm in your life so that you're always relating to what they've manufactured instead of what Jesus Christ has done about it. Never be occupied with what Satan says about you. God has said too many good things since He saved you.

Don't be occupied with what Satan has done to you. People don't need to hear what Satan was successful in doing to you. That won't help them to realize what Christ has done for them.

If you are a storm that Satan has manufactured or you are in a storm that Satan has manufactured, it doesn't have to go beyond a sentence of faith. Remember, even if you don't have any faith, the storm will still cease if you call out to Jesus Christ. And if you do have faith, you can be the one who speaks the Word of Authority to make the storm cease. So, you're a winner even if you don't have any faith, but you are a victorious overcomer if you do.

Marriage:

A Personal Investment

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage as an institution is among Satan's primary targets. Ever since Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden and commanded to be fruitful and multiply, the devil has been at work trying to undermine this most fundamental of human relationships.

Sadly, he has been very effective with his attacks. Research reveals that nearly half of all Christian marriages in the United States now end in divorce. The result has been chaos in all areas of life. Families have become fragmented and the result has been a generation that has seen increasing degrees of promiscuity and lawlessness. Why? Because homes are out of order. The husband and wife have not submitted to God.

There are no hopeless causes in Christ's eyes. He can restore and revive any union if the partners will yoke up with His meekness and allow His truth to become their rule of life.

When this is allowed to happen, as this booklet will show, any marriage can really enjoy a continual honeymoon of life, love, and productivity in the plan of God.

Chapter One

YOKING UP WITH MEEKNESS

Proverbs 16:19 says, "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." Also, Proverbs 22:4 says, "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honour, and life." Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4).

Who are the greatest in God's eyes? Throughout the Scriptures, they are people who have humility and fear of the Lord and who live with the lowly instead of dividing the spoil with the proud.

"And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 23:12). This principle of promotion is especially true in marriage, as well as in single life.

Consider Isaiah 57:15: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

In every single case, success with God relates to humility. When we study the word "humility" as it appears in the Bible, we find different applications. *Tapeinophrosune*, one word for humility, means to think in grace. Another meaning for humility is simply "to be lowly." We are to express humility toward others, just as we express meekness toward God. When we can accept whatever God does, we are yoked up with His meekness (Matthew 11:28, Psalm 25:9).

Meekness allows the Spirit to teach me. If the Spirit does not teach me, I am going to have some ingredients missing from my life. For example, if you bake a cake and you leave out the baking powder, the cake will be flat. Some pastors become proud. They may be gifted, but their life is flat. There are areas in their lives that they will not deal with. Just one ingredient left out of the

cake will make it undesirable. Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt." The "salt" is Resurrection power.

More Grace, the Main Ingredient

"But he giveth *more grace*. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:6-8).

Notice the words "more grace." When a Christian gets to the "more grace" stage through the Word of God, he is able to edify others—especially the marriage partner—causing a dramatic change in their lives.

Submit to God first. Many people try to resist the devil before they submit to God. They are guaranteed to be knocked down many times. Rather, submit to God and *then* resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Rebound when you fail. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." This is what James 4:8 is

speaking of: learning how to rebound instantly when you fail.

Receive God's power. In James 4:10 we read, "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." We need to believe the truth that prayer can speak power, healing, and grace into people's lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

"I will speak into your ears," Jesus said. "I want to give you all of my power when you go" (see Acts 1:8). To the seventy followers in Luke 10:19, He said, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." God never sends His people out without the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two

DEVELOPING THE INNER MARRIAGE

What we must understand is that the Word of God must have a marriage with power. The grace of God must have a marriage with faith. Then, the stewardship of grace must have a marriage with the stewardship of faithfulness. (1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 4:1). There must be inner marriages in my soul before I can have an effective marriage with another human being.

In Luke 4:20, Jesus went into the synagogue and all eyes were fixed on Him. At the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus appeared in His glorified body with Moses and Elijah. But after a divine pronouncement by the Father, the disciples saw only Jesus (Matthew 17:8). When the people came to the feast, Philip asked them, "Who do you want to see?" They replied, "Sir we would see Jesus" (John 12:21). When our vision is fixed upon Christ, we will begin to understand that

Christ is all and in all, and a revival will start inside of us.

Before an inner revival, however, the soul lives in spiritual adultery and self-gratification with the emotions and feelings. When you live in your feelings, you live in self-gratification. When the old sin nature is in cognition with the free volition, the soul enters into spiritual adultery. We will then derive our values from the six lust patterns outside of God's love. The soul experiences an internal conspiracy and we don't even recognize it. This begins a cycle that can manifest itself in the marriage, causing us to live in spiritual adultery.

The Adamic Marriage

Imagine yourself sitting in the pew of a church. Your eyes gaze at the beautifully adorned bride and her groom about to take their wedding vows. The flowers give off a sweet fragrance and the music softens your heart for what is about to take place. The pastor states, "All right, just repeat after me,"

"I, Adam, in Adam's image, receive you Eve, expecting you to fulfill my needs. I will be a good husband—or the best I can be—but remember, I am the head! According to God's

Word, you should submit to me with all of your heart, all of your soul, and with all of your might. Never defraud me under any circumstances! I want you to know that I will love you conditionally. We will have our times with God. I will be sure to tell you when you are wrong because I am the head!

"We will go to church sometimes. We will even get religious. I'll even be good to you as much as I can (in the flesh). How much that is will be determined by your response."

"I say these things in honesty. Amen."

That is going to be quite a marriage in Adam, isn't it? It will be rooted Adam's image (Genesis 5:2), instead of the image of Christ (Genesis 1:26)

Now the bride takes her vows:

"I, Eve, receive you Adam, after the flesh. You are to love me and fulfill all of my needs. I don't want you to be passive, sitting in front of the TV all the time, especially when I want to go to church. When we were dating, you went to church with me, but I often wondered if you understood what was being taught. I want you to be a man of God. I want you to love me as Christ loved the Church; *otherwise, you will reap what you sow!* I will take care of you. I will do a good job and just hope that it turns out fine. We'll

know after the first ninety days."

Then, the pastor proclaims, "I now pronounce you the fallen Adam and the fallen Eve!"

Surely, it is difficult to imagine such a scene. But sadly, many marriages are in just such a state. The flesh rules.

A Marriage in Christ's Nature

Now, imagine attending a beautiful church wedding between two Spirit-filled Christians. For the sake of illustration, we will call them Mike and Claire. It would go something like this:

"I, Mike, receive you Claire, as my lawfully wedded wife. I will love you unconditionally. I will love you when it rains or snows. I will love you no matter if the business is good or bad.

"I will give you Christ. I will pray with you. I will give you the Word of God. I make a commitment to you with *God's* love. I will live in faith through application of the Word.

"Whether you are in a wheelchair or healthy, I will be true to you. I will be true to you mentally. I will be true to you in all situations. I will be faithful until death do us part. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Now the bride takes her vows:

"I, Claire, receive you, Mike, to be my lawfully wedded husband."

"I will be a responder to you and appreciate your initiations. I will pray with intercession for you. I will be a helpmate and hold you up every moment of my life. Together, we will worship God in our home and our local assembly.

"We will live by categorical doctrine. We will be faithful in our worship at the local assembly—a commitment which cannot be hindered by Satan. Because we have our self-image in the image of Christ, we are going to give each other Christ. I love you and say these vows to my own hurt in Jesus' name. Amen."

Can you see the difference? That marriage will stand because Christ is at its center.

Chapter Three

OUR MARRIAGE TO CHRIST

"Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

"For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

"So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:1-4).

The first husband we were yoked to was the old sin nature, but now we are dead to the old

nature—and to its dominion over us (Romans 6:6). Instead, we are married to Christ. Because of this, we commit adultery when we go back to the first husband—the old sin nature.

We are always producing "children" that are exposed to the eternal warfare between the elect angels and Satan's angels. Our Christian life is always producing results.

If we produce children in the old sin nature (mentally or otherwise), the children are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and revellings (Galatians 5:19-21).

If we recognize that we are married to Jesus Christ, who was raised from the dead, our children are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.

Connected to a Spirit

At any moment, we are operating either in the power of the Holy Spirit or in an unholy spirit. It could be the spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7), the spirit of lust, the spirit of pride (Isaiah 14:12), or the spirit of anger, just to mention a

few. Everything we do is connected to a spirit, either through the grace of God in our obedience or through the old sin nature in disobedience. A soul that isn't living in the compatibility of the grace and love of God is a soul that is not prepared for marriage.

Our souls must be filled with the love of God because the love of Christ constrains us. This truth is for a husband. This is for a couple in their relationship with their pastor-teacher. This is how a pastor-teacher relates toward them. This truth must be applied to every decision we make because we are only alive for a very short time.

The love of Christ must motivate us. It is the Holy Spirit who sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Receive What God Has Said about You

A believer can get alone before God and just dwell on God's promises. He may say to himself: "I'm saved."

"I'm filled with the Spirit."

"Yes, God does truly love me."

"If I die today, I am sure that I'm going to

heaven."

When a believer does this, he connects with heaven, and heaven hears, and heaven will answer. Gratitude will spill out as we thank God for all that He has done—for all of the acts of mercy and grace bestowed upon us.

In Song of Solomon 2:16, the Shulamite maiden said, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies." In 6:3, she said, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." But in 7:10 she said, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." You see, she just kept growing. She no longer wanted to possess him—she was just content to be his.

My wife waited for me through seven years of courtship. As we were driving away from the church after our wedding, she took my hand and said, "You're mine! *You're mine!*" All the way to our honeymoon she kept repeating it, "You're mine." But now she says, "I'm yours!"

In the same way, we can say to Jesus, "You are *mine*! You're mine. And I am *Yours*."

Remember 2 Corinthians 5:14, because this is where humility comes in, so we can also receive what God has to say about us.

Chapter Four

THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTMENT

We cannot live unto ourselves. God says that a pastor should invest in his people. Any godly pastor could go into the worst area on earth and plant a thriving ministry in a very short time. How is this done? By investment. Where does investment start? Monday morning, he knocks on doors. Monday night, he knocks on doors. Tuesday afternoon, he knocks on doors. Tuesday night, he knocks on doors, and on he goes. *Investment!* This is the way to build a church, and it's the way to build a home.

In a poll taken among married women from the general population, 50 percent of the women indicated that they have a poor self-image.

More than half of them felt unwanted.

They also complained of feeling unloved. Most did not feel as though their husbands found them attractive.

These women also made these statements: "When we have sex, I feel that he exploits my body. I feel that he has sex just to fulfill himself. It isn't mutual love that is flowing."

Half of the women surveyed felt exploited, unwanted, and undesirable to their husbands. They said that they often felt frustrated and bored with their lives.

The men surveyed in the same poll said they felt unappreciated. They did not feel that their wives were good responders. Many felt that their wives were hard workers and took good care of the family, but they did not feel oneness with them.

The problem in both cases is that the souls are not right. The problem is not in the marriage; the problem is in the soul. When you get the soul right, the marriage gets right.

The Lord said in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall *cleave* unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." In Mark 10:8, Jesus said the same thing. We can either hear, believe, receive, and cleave, or we can have an impersonal faith in the Word of God and leave our spouse—or, at least, leave mentally. The word "cleave" means to become so one that you are always there to support and

to love under all conditions. It speaks of being there in every situation. In Acts 2:1, the disciples were of one accord. In Acts 4:32, they had one heart and one soul. Why should it be any less in a marriage?

I believe that every single marriage can be the happiest marriage in the world! Every marriage can be one in which the fruit of the Spirit become the children. When there is abundant life in a marriage, there is not a single problem between the couple. The husband isn't proud and arrogant. He doesn't take advantage of his wife. She, in turn, feels wanted and loved dearly by him. She has self-esteem. He is kind to her. He communicates with her, and they walk together without keeping secrets from one another.

Husbands, there is nothing wrong with edifying your wife. Not only is a man to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, laying down his life in sacrificial love, (Ephesians 5:25), but a man ought to love his wife as his own flesh (Ephesians 5:28).

To love her as his own flesh means that just as a man would never, on purpose, pound his finger with a hammer nor hurt himself emotionally (unless he was deceived by Satan's vibra-

tions, projections, and pressures), he should never consider hurting his wife in any way. He should only consider how to nourish and nurture her with all of the love and creativity the Holy Spirit gives him.

A husband must come to the understanding that his wife is insatiable and that she craves leadership. She wants to be edified and she wants him to communicate Christ to her. She will respond and give her husband Christ in return, because what is invested in her is what will come out of her.

In God's order, the marriage comes before the assembly. Everyone ought to be faithful to attend services, but if a couple is having problems, they should take some time away for spiritual healing. A week together can turn a marriage around. They should go somewhere alone and find a place where they can have an intimate time with each other and with the Lord—just to pray and give themselves to each other under God's umbrella.

Beware of Sentimental Attachments

When a woman wants to spend excess time in a relationship with another woman, she may be entering into a soul-power relationship. This

kind of relationship is one based on sentimentality instead of truth.

A woman does not want to "marry" into sublimation: the husband plus the drinking, the husband plus his anger or his passive temperament toward her. She didn't ask for that when she got married. She was told that he would love her, and both parties are to keep their vows to their own hurt. But she didn't marry sublimation; she married a leader.

"…The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Jesus said, "I submit to My Father in every thought, in every word, in every moment. I submit to the Father, though I am God in My humanity. I will always submit to the Father." (See John 5:19, 30.) He also says to husbands, "I want you to submit to Me in your thoughts, in your words, in your deeds. Take spiritual leadership, spiritual initiation, and submit to Me."

When a husband applies these truths to his life, the wife's submission will be a normal response because what comes out of him goes into her. The wife responds because she was designed to respond. She appreciates because God designed her to appreciate.

The Bible says, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with [your wives] according to *knowledge*…" (1 Peter 3:7). Every endeavor requires knowledge. To be a scientist, or a teacher, or a doctor, or a nurse requires certain kinds of knowledge. To drive a car requires certain knowledge. To be a pastor requires certain knowledge. To be a good husband, you need to have knowledge about your wife, about marriage, and about God. You need to know what your wife needs. You require certain knowledge in order to be her spiritual head and to give her the abundant life.

The Scriptures do not say that *she* has to have the knowledge. It says that the husband needs to have the knowledge about sensitivity in sex, having mutual initiations without lusting and putting the woman on trial. When a man has sex with his wife in love, he should derive his pleasure from pleasing his wife. He must not lust after her in self-gratification; instead, he should enjoy coming together with his wife as one soul, one heart, one spirit, and one flesh without lusting.

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with [your

wives] according to knowledge, *giving honour* unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel…" (1 Peter 3:7). This means to esteem her highly. The wife is the husband's darling. She is precious to him. She is his queen, and he is to give her leadership. The verse closes by saying, "…and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

When the husband dwells with his wife in knowledge and gives her honor as the weaker vessel, they grow as heirs together of the grace of God. They experience the grace of life together, being equal, with the exception of God's provision for leadership in the home, which is for the wife's protection. When this is understood, hallelujah, their prayers are not hindered! They can say to the mountain, "Be cast into the sea." Their marriage is just one victory after another!

CONCLUSION

When two people enter into marriage, they become one soul, one heart, one mind, and one flesh. She came out of him; therefore, she is the glory of his body (1 Corinthians 11:7), which means she reflects what he gives her. She reflects the nature of God that he imparts to her, even as he is the glory of God.

What glory can be in a marriage when it is experienced in Christ's nature! There is no passivity. No sublimation. There is not an odd kind of incompatibility because of missing ingredients. Instead, a marriage that thrives in Christ's nature reflects all that God is to all of those who come in contact with it. It gives birth to the most beautiful "children": love, joy, peace, and contentment.

Measured by

The Book

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INTRODUCTION

I knew a man who worked as a laborer for a carpenter. Unfortunately, he decided to go into business for himself, and the first house he built was a disaster. Every wall was crooked; not one angle was right. Understandably, he had a difficult time finding jobs after that. His problem? Among other things, he didn't understand how to use a plumbline.

A plumbline is a cord with a weight at one end, used to determine whether or not a wall is vertical to the foundation. This kind of measurement marks the difference between a straight, stable structure that can withstand unusual pressures and a crooked, compromised building that could easily collapse, even on a good foundation.

As colaborers with God (1 Corinthians 3:9), called to build upon a firm foundation, we must learn how to handle the proper tools precisely (2 Timothy 2:15). This booklet defines how the

Word revealed by the Holy Spirit—God's "plumbline"—is not only the way we will be measured when we stand before God. It is the instrument we use to align ourselves with God's perfect will.

Chapter One

GOD'S PLUMBLINE

"Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise" (Isaiah 60:18).

"…and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.

"And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more" (Amos 7:7-8).

"For we are labourers together with God:…ye are God's building.

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:9-11).

God's people have walls of protection surrounding them, and He calls those walls "Salvation." The prophet Amos saw the Lord standing upon such a wall, and a plumbline was in His hand. For a wall to remain "plumb" or perfectly straight, it must be built upon a sure foundation. From eternity past, Jesus Christ is that foundation—the perfect foundation for every person's life (Isaiah 28:16).

Can Your Hiding Place Withstand the Truth?

Even where the foundation is sure, it is possible for a wall to be out of line. Therefore, every born-again believer must know how to measure according to God's standard, His Word. We are to build with the proper materials, according to 1 Corinthians 3:12. We are to build with silver (redemption), gold (purity), and precious stones (the aspects of God's character)—all having an eternal weight of glory—and not the unstable wood, hay, and stubble of our humanity.

The men in our building and maintenance department are faithful servants who know how to use a plumbline—personally and profession-

ally. They have taken rundown buildings and transformed them into great places of worship. But to do that, they needed a firm foundation, good building materials, and a measuring device with a plummet to make things square or "true."

Many people are very precise and particular about the standards they follow for everything they do on earth, yet they are not nearly as particular about following God's plumbline for eternity. Other people are careless and slothful, looking for ways to "just get by" without seriously considering that there is a day when every man and woman will face God.

Isaiah 28:14-22 tells the story of what happens to those who make their own standards and, by doing so, mock God. They make lies their refuge and think they will be protected, but their agreement is with death and hell. Their covenant is with Satan, the father of lies.

The Exchange of Love versus Lies

"Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and

righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place" (Isaiah 28:16-17).

This passage reveals Jesus Christ as the strength of every believer's life. (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6-7). He is the Living Word, and we are measured by no other standard. It also indicates that, spiritually speaking, many people have devised a plumbline to protect their lifestyles and their private interpretation of Scripture. When Eve saw the fruit on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, she remembered that God had said something about it, but her recollection was not precise. Satan told her, "You shall not surely die if you eat of it" (see Genesis 3:4), privately interpreting God's Word, our plumbline.

Still, God is not mocked. Though we may suffer the consequences of our behavior, God always comes through with mercy that withholds the judgment we deserve, and grace that gives us what we don't deserve: His love that goes beyond our fault and sees our need.

Chapter Two

GOD'S LOVE: OUR POINT OF REFERENCE

The members of the Trinity have always had the same attributes, the same nature, so they could freely exchange their love for each other. Billions of years ago, God the Father said to God the Son, "I love you." God the Son said to God the Spirit, "I love you." It was a mutual love—a love that they could exchange. When we were lost, God the Father sent the Son to die for us on the Cross, offering us the staying power of eternal security.

The point of reference for our relationship with God is love. The Bible makes that crystal clear.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"The LORD hath appeared of unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved with an everlasting love:

therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3).

God is love (1 John 4:8); He personally loves us just as we are. He saved us by grace and justified us while we were ungodly (Romans 4:5). Before we were saved, however, He could not exchange love with us. All He could do was offer us His love, but that was not an exchange. God *does* want us to have an exchange of love, and 2 Thessalonians 3:5 says that God wants a Christian to direct his heart toward the "love *of* God." According to the Greek text, however, it says "love *for* God."

A New Kind of Exchange

What God is saying is this: "I want to direct you into a love for Me so that we exchange our love according to My nature. Then, you can grow in grace and knowledge, and I will receive the glory forever" (see 2 Peter 3:18).

God wants us to have love for Him when we can exchange His nature as we receive it through His promises (2 Peter 1:4). The great thing is that God's nature never changes. It is the same from eternity to eternity.

If we sin, God has a solution: we are to confess our sin, and He is faithful and just to forgive

us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This means we make a decision to have a solution from God's grace at the point of reference, which is God's love. Then, God forgives us. That means He will forgive us without exception because of what He accomplished at Calvary as our reference point of love.

Love That Passes Knowledge

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

Now, I am giving you a little taste of Bible college training here. This is more than just a little Sunday School lesson. What I want you to see is this amazing principle of the noun of action, God's love.

The Greek syntax of this verse goes beyond telling us what to do. It tells us to *do* it! The dramatic infinitive is saying, "Start having a love that goes beyond yourself through the Holy Spirit's power, the Word of God, and the resurrection life of God working within you."

Many Christians know the Word, but they do not live in it. Go beyond knowledge and into *pleroma*,* which speaks of having all of your empty places filled by God. Then, we can be led

into the presence of God and into submission to His honor code for the royal family.

Next, we submit to proper delegated authority, whether it is dad, mom, the boss, or anyone else in the plan of God. We are led into practical obedience because we have a love for God.

Yet, according to Ephesians 3:19, instead of only having a love for God, we are able to have the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. I have the love *of* God and a love *for* God. He is free to exchange mercy, grace, peace, righteousness, holiness, and the execution of His justice with us. On a personal level, God and I exchange our love in a fellowship of light and life. My love is no longer just one way. I have a love for God. With regard to others, I have the unconditional love of God that is not based on what they do or how they respond.

A Mighty Forgress

An extremely wealthy man committed adultery, and his marriage was in jeopardy. When he accepted Christ as his personal Savior, this man said, "My business controlled me, my riches controlled me, and finally my lust controlled me. It is time for God to control me."

The Bible says, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Proverbs 25:28).

The walls of salvation, as we read in Isaiah 26:1, provide a fortress for us. God will do exceedingly abundantly above anything we could ask or think. We operate in who He is on the basis of what He has done. That way, we reveal His divine nature and character received through His precious promises (2 Peter 1:4).

**For more about pleroma, read,* The Greatest Reward: Go for It!*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Three

THE STANDARD THAT STANDS

In Luke 4, after Jesus had gone forty days without food, Satan said to Him, "Take this stone and turn it into bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Next, Satan said, "Bow down and worship me, and I will give You power over all these kingdoms."

Jesus responded: "It is written, you shall worship only the Lord."

Then Satan said, "Jump down from this building, and God will give angels to keep You from falling to the ground." He was trying to get Jesus to presume, which no one can do.

So Jesus said, "It is written, you shall not tempt the Lord your God."

Then Satan left Him.

What are we talking about here? Jesus Christ

relied completely on the accuracy of God's plumbline: the Holy Scriptures.

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

This message is repeated in Deuteronomy 12:32, Proverbs 30:5-6, and Revelation 22:18-19. All of these passages warn against either adding to or taking away from the Word of God. Furthermore, 2 Peter 1:19-21 says clearly that there can be no private interpretation of the Scriptures.

"Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, …them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30).

Then Jesus said, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:26).

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47).

What is God's plumbline? It is the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. It is eternal, impecca-

ble, and immutable.

Teach Your Children Well

"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12). This is the first and great commandment.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1-3).

God is saying to children, "I have a plumb-line of honor toward your parents. Honor them, and I will honor you." Children are personally accountable to the Word they have been taught.

Every parent I know wants his children to grow up to be responsible and accountable. We are so grateful when they turn out that way.

A couple recently brought two children for a baby dedication. For a time, these parents had been separated and were involved with drug addiction. They came to church one Sunday in desperation, and they were gloriously saved that day.

They have been clean for more than two years and are now ministering the Word of God

to others. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they are using the principle of rebound and recovery if they fail. They are working out what is written, what is contained in the Plumbline: the Word of God.

If you are living in sin, please repent now. These are not the words of a man; these are God's words. Get right with Him in any area that does not line up with His precious plumbline.

It is so crucial to understand that children, according to Psalm 45:16, are to be princes of the earth. The Lord wants them to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of Himself. From early life on, He wants them to be taught the Word of God and its value system. Children must be taught godly virtues so they can be winners in life.

A True Standard: Pure and Clear

"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (1 Corinthians 5:11).

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you,

as becometh saints" (Ephesians 5:3)

"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

"[Be] not slothful in business; [but be] fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11).

These are God's words. If two people are living together and they are not married, then according to the Plumbline they are in serious trouble. A person who uses pornography—even to indulge in mental fantasies of adultery—is going against God's Word. A person who is slothful and irresponsible with regard to work and finances is "crooked" according to God's plumbline.

"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thessalonians 3:14).

Consider the Scriptures and understand the purpose of a plumbline. We are not to add to the Word of God. We are not to take away from it. Furthermore, we are not to privately interpret the Word. This Word is what will judge us in the last days.

All that the Word of God teaches is to prepare us for anything that can happen in our

lives. A pastor prepares his people so they will be ready when they face God in heaven where every man will be judged according to God's Word. Therefore if God chastises us, He does it because of love, to bring peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:6, 11). Even chastisement is done from the point of reference of love.

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

When the enemy comes in like a flood, God raises up a standard against him (see Isaiah 59:19). This standard is the Word of life, the clarity and the purity of the Word of truth.

CONCLUSION

When we have love *for* God and the love *of* God, then we do not want to hurt Him. If we fail, we instantly use rebound by naming the sin and taking responsibility. As a result, God will bless us.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Who said this? Jesus did. It applies to all of us. Whatever we do, whatever part we play, we must be a part of a ministry that has this vision. God desires that we would gladly take up our cross and be diligent in everything we do. And in all of our diligence, He desires that we would never lose sight of the plumbline that is measuring our success: God's Word illuminated by the

Holy Spirit that imparts resurrection life wherever it goes.

God wants everyone to face Him as a winner with the virtues and values He gives through His Word, the plumbline for every area of life.

Meeting at an Even Place

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INTRODUCTION

In time, on earth, our true hearts are revealed moment-by-moment and day-by-day through how we treat one another. That is what it is all about. Our relationship to God is revealed in our obedience to His Word and in how we treat others. Unfortunately, many people do not learn how to relate with godly friendships or with consistent responses to spiritual authority, at work or in any other area.

I wish I could convey how serious this is. How we relate to the Cross is crucial to how we relate and respond to sacrificial love. How we relate to categorical doctrine is crucial to how we respond to thinking with God in positive faith and obedience. Our consistency in faith obedience reveals our consistency in taking up our Cross.

This booklet will show how our hearts are always revealed by our mental attitudes, by our emotions, by our confession, and, ultimately, in

our relationships. My prayer is that these pages will teach us how to relate to others from the even place of the Cross, where Christ died for the sins of the world.

Chapter One

THINGS TO PUT OFF, THINGS TO PUT ON

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

"For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

"In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Colossians 3:4-10).

Notice what God instructs us to put off. "Anger" is the first thing, because anger springs from a man whose flesh is running wild from depression and insecurity—a person with a poor self-image reacting against past relationships.

"Wrath" refers to a person's emotions exploding because of anger in circumstances and situations. "Malice" speaks of cruelty that would cause one who is insecure, who has a poor relationship with God, to malign others. Malice is the result of our moods and the way we think about how we are being treated by God and by others.

"Blasphemy" comes from being constantly distracted from the Cross, from the Word of God, and from the fruit of the Spirit. "Filthy communication" is from Satan's world. It does not minister grace to the hearers and it does not edify. God calls certain communication "filthy," not because it is lewd or suggestive, but because it originates from the devil's kingdom and because of all the harm it can do.

Romans 13:14 says to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." That means that I purpose to make no provision for my flesh. If I am walking in the Spirit, I do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). If I walk in love as a dear child of

God, then I will be humble before Him and broken toward others.

Elect, Holy, Merciful, and Gracious

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Colossians 3:12-13).

We are referred to as "the elect of God" because He chose us. God in His all knowledge understood that we would choose Him with our volition. Therefore, we are counted as "holy and beloved." *Hagios* is the Greek word for "holy." It means to be separated unto God's total program and His total purpose. "Beloved" refers to the deep love that God expresses to me personally.

After these declarations, this passage mentions first my relationship to God and His relationship to me. From there, it progresses to include my relationship to my wife, my family, my church, and so on.

"Bowels of mercy" refers to our emotions. The bowels receive and react to whatever we eat and drink, therefore God draws that parallel for

us. He desires that our emotions would receive and respond to mercy—that we would receive from Him what we really do not deserve.

"I want your emotions filled with mercy," God is saying. "Fill your emotions with mercy—not with yourself, not with your circumstances, not with what people are doing to you."

His mercy comes to us because we are His. We are separated unto all that God is, His total provision and His personal Cross. If we let our emotions receive mercy consistently, then we will not have emotional problems in our relationships or in our thinking.

Chapter Two

RESPONSES OF MEEKNESS

"Kindness" and "humbleness of mind" speak of having a Spirit-filled disposition and temperateness and an attitude of grace, respectively. Grace is receiving from God all the things I really don't deserve. Mercy is God not giving me what I truly deserve, which is judgment and punishment. Grace means I get all of His blessings—none of which I deserve at all.

In our relationships, God wants us to reflect His kindness and humbleness of mind. In other words, we obey Him when we share His mercy. That means we do not treat others the way we think they deserve to be treated. With an attitude of grace, we can give them what they don't deserve through a mental attitude of prayer and love.

All of this relates to how we treat each other. There are a great many reasons why God ordained marriage. It establishes a boundary line

for sex and a sacred way for God to replenish the earth. But one of the great purposes of marriage is to test hearts in a relationship.

I know of so many people who are just surviving in their marriages. They are simply not happy. They express no bowels of mercy, no spiritual disposition, no attitude of grace in giving to the other party what he or she does not deserve.

Why is this? It is because "meekness" is missing in the relationship.

Seeing Others as God Sees Us

"My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD" (Psalm 26:12).

Psalm 26:12 describes the essence of meekness: relating to each other from an "even place." Paul said he purposed to know nothing of anyone except as it related to the crucified Christ.

Every believer is crucified, buried, and risen with the Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ, you are just as good as I am, and I am just as good as you are. The person sleeping in the homeless shelter tonight has just as much value to God as I do.

This is meekness.

It means that I bow down in the presence of God. If He is crucifying my flesh through cir-

cumstances and people, I do not resist anything in God's plan. I refuse to fight against circumstances and I refuse to struggle with people. Crucified, I am not passive, but rather I choose to accept every thing and every situation as the perfect will of God for me.

In 2 Samuel 16, Shimei cursed King David who was fleeing the forces of Absalom, his son, who had usurped the throne of Israel. Not only that, Shimei began to throw stones and dirt at David. Some of David's men stood ready to kill Shimei, but David told them not to interfere, for "God has sent him."

That was a response of meekness.

Abraham, in Genesis 13, submitted himself to God and gave Lot first choice of the territory where their families would live. That was an act of meekness.

Christ on the Cross at Calvary prayed for those around Him. There He was, suffering for our sins and allowing Himself to be numbered with transgressors. The nails had been driven through His hands and His feet, yet He prayed, "Father, forgive them…" (Luke 23:34).

"…O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

This was the even place. This was where God was going to meet every sinner who called upon His name to be saved. In meekness, Jesus Christ preferred the plan of the Father. He made a way for us by not letting the cup of the Cross pass Him by.

Chapter Three

THE POWER OF PATIENCE, THE LONGSUFFERING OF LOVE

"My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

"The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever" (Psalm 22:26).

"The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground" (Psalm 147:6).

"For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation" (Psalm 149:4).

The meek are nourished by the Word of God. They are quiet. When they go to restore someone, they are not proud—they are broken. Those who are spiritual restore those who are weak, considering that they themselves could be tempted, too (see Galatians 6:1).

The meek person's exchange with someone

who has fallen is like this:

"I want to pray with you and help you get back to God. You have taken some false steps, but I could do this same thing tomorrow. Let me help you bear your burden."

Any defense of the Word of God should be done in meekness. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," (Matthew 5:5). "The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach in His way," (Psalm 25:9).

Our relationships are at their best when we meet at the even place, at the place where meekness reigns. The fruit of meekness brings no suspicion, no presumption, no negative reactions.

When you find yourself in a disagreement with someone, treat him in meekness. Don't fight back. Don't retaliate. Treat him in meekness and watch what happens over a period of time.

How you treat this person reflects your relationship with God. It reveals whether or not you have bowels of mercy, kindness, and humbleness of mind.

There is no reason to struggle in God's plan. We cannot fight Him and fight others. He desires that we have a spirit of meekness, which is first manifested only in the sight of God.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are

heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Waiting for God's Move

"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Colossians 1:11).

"Patience" and "longsuffering" are two different things. "Patience" is when I wait for someone or some circumstance to move. "Longsuffering" is when I wait before I make a move.

Patience is such a powerful thing. When pioneering a work of God, a man of God will wait upon the Lord as he reveals the fruit of the Spirit. He does the best that he can and refuses to get nervous about how things will turn out.

Suppose you are in a marriage that is not good. There is no need to react or to get negative and retaliate. Simply wait for something or someone to change. There is no need to struggle or fight when your emotions are full of mercy and your mind is filled with grace toward your spouse, even if there is no evidence of a change.

Noah preached while he built the ark over a period of one hundred years. God waited and did not move to destroy the earth until He had given everyone an opportunity to be saved from the flood. Thousands of years later, the people of Israel were taken captive in Egypt, where they were held for 490 years. God just waited and waited until the fullness of time. That is long-suffering.

The Timetable of Eternity

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

God is so longsuffering with backsliders, and not because He condones what they are doing, but because He is waiting for them to get right. He waits because He does not want to hurt them. One day He will do something, but it will be on the timetable of His longsuffering.

In our Christian school, our teachers are longsuffering. Yes, we have rules and standards of discipline, but it is so important to be long-suffering. The next Billy Sunday could be in one of these classes. Someone may be teaching the

next president.

With patience, we wait for people to change. We do not grow angry. We do not exhibit wrath. We deal with them from the even place of meekness. There is no malice. We are not distracted from God's presence. Our confession is of the kingdom of God. There is no blasphemy. We minister grace to the hearers, edifying with every word that comes from our mouths.

It is quite a thing to be strengthened with all might in God's glorious power. It is so great to serve in patience with longsuffering and joyfulness. And it all comes because we stand in an even place—at the foot of the Cross.

CONCLUSION

Recently, we received a beautiful letter from a couple who had visited our church. "Everyone just loved us so much," it read. "Your church is so full of loving people. I have never seen anything like it."

Our secret? We meet people at the even place. With patience and longsuffering, we love each other on the basis of the Cross of Calvary. This is where we were all made one by the Blood of Jesus Christ.

How we relate to each other is the test of the fruit in our lives. Our relationship to God, our relationships with each other, and our relationship to the Word of God will be tested on earth.

When troubles come, instead of withdrawing in the flesh, run to the loving God. This enables us to forbear and to forgive one another as we put on charity in the bond of peace.

Meeting God Every Morning

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet, a Grace Publications classic, was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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PREFACE

Please consider the following statements and the Bible verses that support them as a foundational premise for meeting God every morning:

Great men of the Bible met God in the morning.

"And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD" (Genesis 19:27).

"Jacob rose up early in the morning" (Genesis 28:18*a*).

"Joshua rose early in the morning" (Joshua 3:1*a*).

"David rose up early in the morning" (1 Samuel 17:20*a*).

"[The disciples] entered into the temple early in the morning" (Acts 5:21*a*).

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, [Jesus] went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35).

Jesus, though He was God, met His heav-

enly Father in the morning. God's provisions come to His people who seek Him early in the morning.

Strength comes in the morning.

"And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea" (Exodus 14:27).

We see God's glory in the morning.

"And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD" (Exodus 16:7*a*).

Joy comes in the morning.

"For his anger endureth but for a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

He wakens the believer's ear to hear every morning.

"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wak-

eneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isaiah 50:4).

His mercy and compassion never fail.

"They are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:23*a*).

He is the believer's refuge every morning.

"Be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble" (Isaiah 33:2*b*).

MEETING GOD EVERY MORNING

The principle of meeting and agreeing with God in the morning is as vital to sustaining spiritual growth as breathing is to sustaining physical life! Yet, many Christians do not agree with what the Word of God has to say about their lives. The reason they do not agree with God is that their souls cleave to the dust (Psalm 119:25).

Man has a natural tendency to go through his daily schedule without depending upon God for wisdom, guidance, and instruction. Therefore, he receives thoughts from the old sin nature, which are not God's thoughts. Isaiah 55:8 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."

As believers, when we wake up in the morning, the first thing we must do before anything else is to purpose to be in one accord with God about the day. This is what Proverbs 8:17 means when it says, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." The first

thing we will feel is emotion toward God in response to Who God is. God loves His children, and has a provision for every need, pressure and temptation that we will face. He died for us and paid for the sins of the whole world. This is the unlimited atonement. A believer cannot think about these things for too long without being overwhelmed with love for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "We love him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Secondly, we ought to worship and praise God. How could we fail to praise God when He has given us all spiritual blessings in heavenly places? (Ephesians 1:3). Then, we must listen intently to His still small voice (1 Kings 19:12b). It is not an audible voice, but one of the Holy Spirit communicating to our human spirit. By it, we can determine whether or not there is anything that God wants to call our attention to for the day. We should give God a chance to speak to us without interference from any preconceived thoughts that we might have. Carefully, we learn to spend the time selflessly listening to God.

Thirdly, if we desire to meet God in the morning, we will humble ourselves before God (James 4:10). Instead of dwelling on our respon-

sibilities for the day, in our hearts, we can say to God, "I believe You want to reveal Your priorities to me this morning. As Your representative and servant, I must seek You for wisdom today." Instead of allowing random thoughts to race through our minds, God wants to teach us how to be quiet before Him. First Thessalonians 4:11 says "study to be quiet." Is it any wonder that Isaiah declared, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15*b*)? Proverbs 8:32 and 33 illustrates these principles:

"Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not."

It is during the quiet times that God is faithful to give instruction and wisdom for the details of the believer's life. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

God is faithful to give wisdom, but are we faithful to ask Him for it? The believer's responsibility is to bring these areas before God. Immediately, we begin to agree with God, and the Lord is faithful to show us His eternal viewpoint.

It is so important to give God a fresh oppor-

tunity to speak to us each morning. Many people never start their day by meeting with Him. They live in self-assurance and false confidence, thinking they can get along without God.

In one of his darkest trials, David wrote, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed" (Psalm 57:7*a*). As we are reading this booklet, we should listen to God very carefully and discreetly with our attention fixed upon Him. Then, God will speak. During our quiet times with God in the morning, we need to listen to Him with full attention, mixing faith with what we hear (Hebrews 4:2). That way, with an attitude of faith-rest, we can easily and instantly implement what He says to do.

It is so convenient not to be a doer of the Word (James 1:22). The flesh, the old sin nature, and the world will give many reasons why we should not mix faith with what we hear. Rationalizing away obedience to God's Word will paralyze any believer's spiritual growth. Always remember that "the just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11*b*). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6*a*). "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

The time to deal with negativity in our

thought life is when we meet with God each morning. We can ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any pride, selfishness, or presumption that might distract us from God's purpose. That way, we can give every burden and distraction over to Him and have a fresh start for the new day ahead.

Preparing Your Heart before God

The Christian can be assured that he has prepared his heart for the day because the Word of God has secured his soul. It is impossible to determine the eternal value of a quiet time with God each day! Each believer must be ready to do whatever God says, not for man's sake, but for Christ's sake. As a result, he will not be in bondage to people, but rather he will submit to God. When Paul said, "…but first [they] gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (2 Corinthians 8:5*b*), that is exactly what he meant.

How vital it is to meet God in the morning! Meet with God *before* starting the day. When we are diligent in setting this time apart for Him, our inward attitude will be meekness from the very start. Meekness is a quality that God sees in a soul as our hearts are broken and contrite

before Him (Psalm 51:17).

Take the Old Sin Nature to the Cross Each Morning

Each day, before we try to handle any issue that comes up, we must learn to deal with the depravity of our souls. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint" (Isaiah 1:5*b*). As Christians, we are faced with the inherent evil of our own hearts. Still, we must remember that Christ's mercy and compassion are new and fresh every morning (Lamentations 3:22, 23).

Scores of men and women cannot break years of bad habits, all because they do not deal with their old sin nature each morning. Often reactionary and moody, they are insecure and lack spiritual maturity. As a result, they fall into sublimation, replacing godly affections with ungodly lust patterns.

Lust is the desire for anything outside of the perfect will of God. It is usually manifested as material lust (an inordinate desire for material possessions), power lust (desiring to have control over others), approbation lust (craving to be recognized and appreciated by others), sensual lust (craving for sexual fulfillment outside of God's boundaries as set forth in the Word of

God), pride (being lifted up with self over others), or excessive occupation with the details of life (thus, a failure to pursue a personal relationship with God).

But when we allow God to remove the barriers that preserve the "self" life in our hearts, then lust can no longer occupy our thoughts. Those six lust patterns that would try to take over are all dealt with at the Cross, before we even begin to make decisions, when we meet with God every morning.

Guarding Our Hearts

Once we give our self-life over to the Lord, we begin to guard our hearts with the Word of God. We are to mix the Word that we hear with faith (Hebrews 4:2) and immediately obey it. Then, through the power of Jesus Christ, we will have a tremendous advantage over Satan's genius. When we abide in Christ, we triumph, because, "...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4*b*).

We must guard our hearts against selfish attitudes and slothfulness, as well as against comparing self with others.

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that

commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Also, we must guard our hearts against religious emotionalism and unhealthy emotions, which will cause us to become unnecessarily subjective and easily wounded. Our souls must be protected by categorical doctrine in the Word of God so that subjectivity and wounds cannot produce negative effects. The Word of God, through grace, is the guardian of the soul.

Being Rightly Related to God

We will never be effective in the Body of Christ or in the world without experiencing the presence of God every day of our lives! Many times, people do not prepare their hearts to meet God in the morning because they are physically tired. Yet when, as Christian servants, we have a quiet time with Him in the early moments of the day, we will not be occupied with physical exhaustion. Instead, we will be quickened according to His Word (Psalm 119:154).

Though many of us do not realize it, at times we have problems in our souls because we do not make it a priority to spend time with God

every day. These problems stem from the fact that individually, we did not agree with the Word of God for the specific details of life (as *God* sees it!).

Some people are so adept in using their defense mechanisms to cover up their old sin nature, they will not admit that they have problems. Beneath their attempts to hide their problems, the real issue remains. They live in various forms of guilt because they are not rightly related to God. Lovingly, God tries to reveal that His Spirit is grieved (Ephesians 4:30) because they did not start the day by having a fervent relationship with Him.

It is an adventure to meet with God every morning. When a believer is humble before others and broken and meek before the Lord, with nothing to protect or defend, he will go to God several times a day to hear Him speak.

God Imparts His Divine Disposition

Even though all Christians are sinners, it is beautiful that we can meet with a perfect God as perfected saints. We can worship and reverence Him because of Who He is, acknowledging that apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5*b*). We do not allow moods or subjectivity to over-

take our dispositions, nor do we allow negative attitudes to linger. Rather, we yield to the meek disposition of God as He occupies our temperaments. God's divine nature will be reflected in our human personalities when we are totally occupied with Christ.

Purified by faith, we can face God each morning. As a result, throughout the day we will not initiate without thinking with God's thoughts first. Every person has natural talents and strengths—all of which must be controlled by the Holy Spirit. The Word of God says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). *Every* Christian should consult heaven before he starts his day on earth! After we agree with God, we allow Him to govern our minds by His categories of doctrine, through the Word and prayer.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

It is so easy to become overwhelmed by daily pressures and problems. Yet, Jesus does not want anyone to be occupied with the problems. Instead, He wants us to be occupied with His provision. He wants each believer to have a daily time when we receive His power to overcome pressures and difficult situations. During

these times, He will give us His love and patience to handle the misgivings of men.

What a provision these times are for busy Christian servants, business persons, mothers, fathers, children, and pastors. Meeting God every morning promotes a heart attitude to be occupied with a ministry of reconciliation instead of reaction. We will not be victims of circumstances, but victors because we recognize Christ's reign in our hearts each morning. Truly, God will direct our paths, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isaiah 30:21*a*).

CONCLUSION

As believers, we must trust God's timetable for His plan. We are to meet God in the morning and receive precise definition concerning our part in His eternal plan for the day.

Many Christians are not living a victorious life under the governing power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Having God govern our minds by His thoughts is the only way we can possibly meet the pressures and trials we face each day. And unless we have intimate communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, it is impossible for us to impart His life to others.

How can we represent Jesus Christ in life's situations when we do not spend personal time getting to know Him? This is a challenge to each of us to consecrate and covet our quiet times with God in the morning so that His presence will be manifested to others throughout each day!

Meeting God in Grace

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INTRODUCTION

The human race has so many problems with the mind. The greatest indictment that God could ever bring upon mankind is found in Isaiah 1:5: "The whole head is sick." It would be nice to think that it's not the whole head that's sick, but just part of it. God, however, properly diagnosed an entire nation—and us—as having the *whole* head sick.

Not only is the whole head sick, but the heart is deceitful and desperately infected (Jeremiah 17:9). To add to that, we live in Satan's world system. Every problem can be related to some form of mental sickness. So how do you solve problems with people when the One who made them says that their heads are sick? There is only one answer: it is to receive the gift of God's grace.

The Bible says in Genesis 6:8, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." The difference between Noah and the rest of the world at that

time was that he was willing to receive grace apart from works and human ability. Through the constant intake of the word of grace (Acts 20:32) and the filling of the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29), Christians are in the process of having their sick minds healed.

The book of Ephesians has been referred to as the "Alps of the Epistles," because it reveals how grace reaches into the depths of the ruins of sin and brings us to the pinnacles of love. We must understand that the processes of transformation, victory, hope, and faith all relate to grace.

Chapter One

THE PROVISION OF GRACE

Grace depends upon who God is and what He has done. It is God's method of dealing with man and his sin. God's equation of grace is based upon His divine ability apart from human merit. In God's program of grace, He desires for us to have a heart after Him and to *meet Him in grace.*

Positionally, God *has made* us to be like His Son; experientially, God *is making* us to be like Him; and eternally, we *will be* like Him—perfected in the fulfillment of His ultimate purpose: that we would be just like His Son (1 John 3:1-3).

The processes we go through in the journey of grace teach us to be conformed to the image of the Son through the inner working of God's government in *theantric action*—the Trinity controlling the soul through positive volition toward God's grace provisions. God's provision for every single detail of our lives is always grace. He can never deal with man apart from grace.

There are pastors from other churches who are in touch with our ministry frequently. They listen to our tapes and preach from some of our booklets. Though they have preached the Gospel, many have never before understood grace.

So many Christians live in ruptured or disconnected relationships because they do not understand grace. As a pastor, I don't understand it the way I should. When I preach a message on grace, I'm just like a little kid! I feel like I still don't know grace while at the same time I'm enjoying it and applying it. I want grace to teach me to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live quietly and biblically in this present evil world. Grace is the greatest teacher of holiness and practical righteousness for our human experience that we could ever have.

In Titus 2:11, grace has appeared unto all men; but verse 12 teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live through the orientation of the Word of God in a categorical perspective of divine viewpoint.

Grace is always from divine viewpoint—even for the unsaved who go to hell. Though they die *in* their sins (John 8:24), grace paid *for*

all their sins (1 John 2:1-2).

The Genius of God's Grace

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). We were conceived in sin through the genius of God. Before we were born, God imputed sin to us in the brilliance of His grace, foreknowing that we would personally sin. If we had personally sinned without God charging sin to our account first, He never could have imputed righteousness without works.

God is saying, "Because I imputed sin to the human race before they sinned, I can now impute righteousness apart from the works of the law to anyone who will believe" (see Romans 4:6).

Quickened, Raised, and Seated Above

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us…" (Ephesians 2:4). Love through grace found us in a triple state of human depravity: "And you hath he quickened, who were *dead* in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye *walked according to the course of this world*, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our

conversation in times past *in the lusts of our flesh*, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Before we were saved, we were spiritually dead (*helpless*), under the power of Satan (*hopeless*), and living in the government of the old sin nature (*worthless*). Because of this, we were alienated from the life of God, ignorant because we didn't have Bible doctrine, which is God's mind. We were proud, arrogant, and deceitful. And that's the condition grace found us in!

"Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:5-6). As helpless, hopeless, and worthless people, the grace of God *quickened* us together with Christ, *raised* us up together with Christ, and *seated* us together with Christ.

Verse 5 says, "by grace ye *are* (continuous action, according to the present active indicative verb) *saved*" (perfect passive participle—it happened in the past and has permanent results; you received the action of being saved). This means we *were* saved and we *are being* saved.

What more could we ask? We didn't deserve grace, yet Ephesians 2:7 says, "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

No Flesh Can Glory

In grace, God gets all the credit because God does it all on our behalf. 1 Corinthians 1:25-28 tells us the kind of people God can use—the have-nots, the are-nots, the helpless, the hopeless, and the worthless. The only difference between these and the people God cannot use is that the helpless know they are helpless. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

Verses 30 and 31 tell us *why* no flesh can glory in God's presence: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He

that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

While we honor each other, we have to remember that if any man glorieth, he glories in the Lord and not man. People who understand this will never take sides when issues come up between people. Instead, we will manifest the mind of Christ, which is full of grace.

Chapter Two

THE PROCESS OF GRACE

From the moment a person is saved, he is in a "grace process" of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8 speaks of salvation from the positive side, and Ephesians 2:9 speaks of it from the negative side. The positive side is, "For by grace are ye saved through faith….it is the gift of God." The negative side is, "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

"For by grace" in the Greek is *te gar chariti*—a subordinating conjunction (*gar*) and a feminine noun in the dative case of advantage. It can be better translated "for by the grace."

"Are ye saved" is *este* (present active indicative) *sesomenoi* (perfect passive participle of *sozo*). It is the same construction in the Greek as in Ephesians 2:5 emphasizing our once-and-for-all salvation having permanent, abiding results.

"Through faith" is *dia pisteos*. Here we find an instrumental case meaning that faith is the in-

strument that God uses to save us, while grace is the provision.

There are many internal conspiracies that go on in the hearts of people. The five parts of the soul—the mind, emotions, conscience, self-consciousness, and the volition—conspire against each other. The old sin nature in the soul acts as an instrument to draw the free volition into lust patterns through self-consciousness.

There is one place and one place only where all these problems can be settled: at the Cross. The solution to every problem is meeting truth in Resurrection power at the Cross of Calvary.

Calvary represents the fullness of grace and truth in Jesus Christ. We can think of grace as the husband in a marriage. The man does the initiating. The wife-to-be responds and says "yes."

Grace initiates the Gospel. Jesus Christ died, shed His blood, paid for our sins, was buried, rose again, and ascended into heaven. Now, grace says, "Okay, I paid it all. Will you believe it?"

The average person will accept grace through the instrument of faith. But do they accept the fact that it's *all* paid for? Or, do they just *say* they accept it? This is the difference between those who are just content to be saved from hell and

those who go on into the discipleship of grace.

Disciples of Grace

I believe that when a person is newly saved, their discipleship should not begin with the Gospel of John, though it's a wonderful book to read and study. But my conviction is that the first hundred sessions of teaching and discipleship should be on grace. Begin by teaching Romans 6, 7, and 8. New Christians should get right into the 'grace journey' and an understanding of their position in Christ. They need to hear these truths over and over again: "We are crucified. We are buried. We are risen. We have ascended. We are hid with Christ in God."

Many Christians live in Romans 7 for 80 percent of their lives, because they have never learned Romans 6 in a practical way. They don't understand how to utilize Romans 6 in temptations, trials, projections, or in the details of life. They may understand it theologically and doctrinally, but they don't understand it practically.

Standing in Grace

A pastor must be thorough in teaching grace. I used to think people knew grace, but I discovered that many do not. I'm not talking

about using grace as a license to sin, rather receiving grace to live purely and practically, using rebound when we fail (1 John 1:9).

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Faith is the instrument that gives us peace with God the moment we are saved.

Romans 5:2 says that we are standing in grace: "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This is the believer's position. The words "wherein we stand" are a gnomic perfect active indicative in the Greek. Gnomic means timeless. We stand in a timeless condition or state. We are saved and we are standing in grace. We'll always be standing there.

A synonym for the word "standing" is "eternally cemented." If somebody who doesn't like you put you in cement up to your knees and placed a guard nearby so you couldn't move while the cement hardened, then it would be safe to say that you were cemented in. Every Christian has been eternally cemented into the grace of God.

Established in Grace

The greatest premise to settle in our hearts is being established in grace *plus nothing*. Hebrews 13:9 says "it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." "Established" means to be secure. The verb for "established" is a progressive present middle infinitive. The progressive present tense points to continuous or repeated action without any reference as to when the action takes place. The middle voice means the subject receives the benefits of the action of the verb. We receive the benefits of being established in grace: confidence, inner rest, pure convictions from the Word. The indicative mood—an assertion of reality—means that we know we are in the reality of being established in a process of grace.

The Store of Grace

God dispenses the store of grace at His will (Ephesians 2:7; James 4:6). He stores grace in the memory, in the conscience, and in the self-consciousness of the soul. *Grace* is stored—not the law, not the past, not the effects of ruptured relationships.

This is a process that takes place when a Christian goes to Bible college. If in meekness

and humility he comes to be discipled and taught in God's perfect will, then grace will be stored in his soul—all because he takes advantage of years of experience from teachers who have been established in grace.

Chapter Three

THE PRODUCTION OF GRACE

Someone has said that "the language of the Bible is a language of grace." If there is no grace, there is no Gospel.

Every doctrine in the Bible has its foundation in the grace of God. Consider the following twenty-one doctrines as an example: *justification* (Romans 3:24); *faith response* (Ephesians 2:8); *salvation* (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8); *predestination* (Ephesians 1:11); *redemption* (1 Corinthians 1:30; Hebrews 9:12); *forgiveness* (Ephesians 4:32; Hebrews 8:12); *adoption* into God's family (Galatians 4:5); *sanctification* (Hebrews 10:10, 14); *spiritual gifts* (Romans 12:6); *deliverance* (Titus 3:5; Colossians 1:13).

Also, the believer's *election* is by grace. No one is ever rejected or predestined to go to hell, because it is all grace—something we don't deserve and didn't earn (Ephesians 1:1, 6; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5); *inheritance* (1 Peter 3:7); *our*

calling (Galatians 1:15); *suffering* (1 Peter 2:19); *thankfulness* (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Philippians 4:6); *repentance*, which is a change of mind and a change of heart that brings about a change of volition, a change of behavior, and a changed life (2 Timothy 2:25).

2 Peter 3:18 speaks of *growing in grace*—realizing that every step in the process of the Christian life is due to grace. You may have gone back ten steps but you went twenty steps forward. You may have gone back eight but you went ahead seventeen. Going back is not defeat; you're just getting ready to go forward more than ever because you are growing in grace.

Even our *obedience* must be founded in grace (Romans 1:5; 6:17); *perseverance*—through grace, not striving (1 Thessalonians 3:5); *overcoming sin* (Romans 6:14; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 12:13; Ephesians 5:26; Colossians 2:12; 1 John 5:4-5).

Effective *witnessing* is always done through grace (Acts 4:33; 11:23). After praying in the upper room, the disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit; and as they went out to witness of the resurrection of Christ, great grace was upon them all.

In the midst of life's occupational hazards, God is constantly waiting to be gracious to us (Isaiah 30:18), to show us what grace can do for us. When we, as Christians, enter into the death of occupational hazards in the devil's backyard, we often do not understand that God is waiting to change the situation or to change our hearts by being gracious to us.

The Bible reveals four occupational hazards of the grace life. The first one is *failing* the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15*a*). This means failing to appropriate grace—failing to receive and give it. The believer who fails grace is out of fellowship with God. He has negative signals toward Bible doctrine. There is a vacuum in his soul caused by religion, legalism, false doctrine, or preoccupation with the details of life. Finally, a root of bitterness springs up in his soul and he uses his tongue to defile those around him.

The second occupational hazard is found in Galatians 5:4, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; *ye are fallen from grace*." This verse has been misinterpreted and abused. The believer is standing in grace positionally. That has already been es-

tablished as a divine premise in the precept of revelation of the Finished Work. Falling from grace simply means that though a Christian is standing in grace, he falls from using it operationally. The believers referred to in Galatians 5:4 went back into the legalism of Judaism.

2 Corinthians 6:1 reveals the third occupational hazard of grace, "…receive not the grace of God *in vain*."

I could say to someone, "You know, God really loves you."

And the response might be, "No, I don't know that. I don't feel a thing."

Then I could say, "God wants to be gracious towards you."

Again the response might be, "I can't see it."

What is this person doing? They are receiving the grace of God in vain, and they don't have a ministry of stewardship under grace.

The fourth occupational hazard is abusing the grace of God in *antinomianism*—professing to know God but in our works denying Him (Titus 1:16). Grace is not antinomianism; grace is having a provision in the process of growth. There are also those who turn the grace of God into *lasciviousness*—a life without restraints (Jude 4).

Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

This verse is dealing with the production of the Christian life. "That we should walk" is *hina en autois peripatesomen* (an aorist active subjunctive of *peripateo*). This is one of my favorite forms of the aorist tense. The aorist tense is sometimes expressed by a solid straight line, but this aorist tense is expressed by a dotted line. In His foreknowledge, God saw that we would have isolated times when we would not walk in divine good so He gave us space to rebound.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). We confess our sin and then isolate it.

Some people say, "I get projections that I'm a homosexual." Or, "I get projections that I'm a lustful person." What is happening to these people? They don't understand that grace is so powerful that they can rebound and isolate the identification with those sins. And as they isolate the sin (Philippians 3:13), they forget it and

press forward. When we isolate sin and refuse to accept it, then it's out of our life forever! But if we don't isolate it, then it's possible for a person to rebound but still sublimate because of a root that remains in the subconscious mind.

Therefore, it is imperative that we isolate every sin and press forward, never identifying with it again. And if we don't identify with it, then we won't think about it or relate to it.

We must relate to the purity of God's grace, God's new creation, God's nature in us, and God's call on our lives. We must relate to being saints, as special people who are beloved of God. And in our thoughts, we must relate to who we are in Christ, not to who we are in Adam.

Keep saying to yourself, "I'm not in Adam; I'm in Christ." As we isolate the past and press forward, growing in the grace of God, then God's grace will purify us unto Jesus Christ as a people zealous for divine good (Titus 2:14).

CONCLUSION

God's grace is sufficient for the believer, in every detail of life (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul boldly said in 2 Corinthians 9:8, "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

We possess grace as a source of all blessings. While people of all ages have had the opportunity to receive the provision of God's grace, there has never been a greater time to be alive than in this present age—the dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:2). In this age, grace is multiplied to the humble believer (1 Peter 1:2). God gives grace to the lowly (Proverbs 3:34*b*).

There is never a place where we cannot find grace if we will just come to the throne of grace to receive it. In Jeremiah 31:2, a remnant in Israel "found grace in the wilderness" and God caused them to rest.

In Proverbs 1:9; 3:22, and 4:9, grace has an

esthetic quality of charm and beauty for the *head* (the mind) and the *neck* (speaking of the will). God said He would pour out the spirit of grace upon the house of David.

Grace is not just a subject that we preach on; it is the premise for *all* subjects! From Genesis to Revelation, God's plan for man is grace: grace to be saved, grace to grow, grace to be changed, and grace to be perfected in eternity!

Moods and Mental Blocks

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

I love the way certain Christians manifest Christ. They live as if they will meet Jesus Christ at any moment. They worship with that thought in their minds, their faces glowing with the evidence of an intimate relationship with Christ.

In everything, we need to learn to worship God with all of our hearts. Satan, however, works to hinder us from developing that kind of life. He does it through his promotion of concepts, moods, and mental blocks. The devil harasses Christians in attempts to prevent them from making positive decisions toward the Word and to distract them until they become detached from growing in grace.

As this booklet will show, overcoming old concepts and the moods and mental blocks they produce is not only possible—it can happen instantly. Christ died for us that He might live in us; He desires to have fellowship with us and to reveal Himself through us. In this relationship

established in God's thoughts by pure faith, we will grow as we are conformed to His image.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

Chapter One

DON'T LEAN ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING

"Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

"Holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (Philippians 2:12-16).

Receiving the Word of God with meekness is a supernatural work of grace. Meekness is re-

vealed in the condition of the soil of the soul (Jeremiah 4:3; Matthew 13:8), the positive faith attitude of the heart toward the Word of God, which lives forever and is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). By exercising faith, a believer who is meek allows the Holy Spirit to transfer the Word supernaturally through the Cross, to the human spirit, into the soul (which includes the memory and the conscience), and into the streams of consciousness.

Without meekness, people can only have a conceptual understanding of the Bible. Their faith is "conceptual" but not practical: They know that what the Bible says is true, but their actions do not reveal it.

For many Christians, moods and mental blocks are a result of having only a conceptual understanding of the Word of God. That is when what a person believes is detached from faith, obedience, and grace. For example, Christians who are habitually negative behave that way because of moods and mental blocks. If they continue in patterns of negativity, they will develop habits that become established response patterns through chemical impulses in the brain, which affects the physical body.*

Moody people are influenced by negative energy from a heart that has degenerated in its pure relationship with God and is operating against and overruling the positive energy of God available in the soul. Moods are usually revealed and triggered by adverse circumstances, by entertaining a traumatic experience from the past, by a series of wrong decisions, or by accepting concepts about life that disregard absolute faith obedience to the Word of God.

The norms and standards for our souls are established in the area of the soul called the conscience. For some it is a conscience of grace; for others it is lawlessness and carelessness. Even after hearing an uplifting message from the Bible, if the hearer received the Word according to his own understanding and not with meekness, what began as a mood could quickly become a mental block.

A mental block is a negative image in the conscience that can distract us from the truth. It is influenced by the past and will affect the present, and even the future, as it relates to the negative energy of a mood. A mental block hinders and nullifies what we know about Jesus Christ

in an area of life. Without objective truth, our will is prohibited from making good decisions, which are made only through proper alignment of the emotions with the initiation of the Word of God in our conscience and memory.

Ultimately, mental blocks produce reactions, rebellion, stubbornness and a heart that grows hard. Some people who live in rebellion get married because of a mental block. Later, they may be unfaithful to their partner. In fact, when that happens, the same mental block that kept them from being led by God into the right marriage is recurring in their present emotional state. An image in their conscience takes the place of a godly image. As a result, their volition can no longer operate under the divine spirit of God's mind and thinking. They make choices based on what "feels" right at the time, and not according to the Word and the Spirit.

Most people disregard a mood the way we brush away a fly—treating it as a minor distraction having no considerable effect. We often fail to see that it is part of a demonic scheme designed to undermine the testimony of a Christian and to blind the eyes of the lost to the light of the glorious gospel of grace.

**For more about the effects of negative and positive impulses and the chemical functions of the brain, read* The War against the Mind*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

HOW THE HEART BECOMES HARDENED

Satan operates through these three things: concepts, moods, and mental blocks. Wrong concepts cause us to be detached from the living experience of faith obedience. As a result, we become subject to moods—negative energy that dominates the emotions through a part of the heart that has degenerated. Moods are usually revealed on a person's countenance (Isaiah 3:9*a*; Proverbs 15:13; 17:22). When a mood reoccurs frequently through adverse circumstances and wrong decisions, the negative energy produces a mental block—an image in the conscience that fuels reactions, rebellion, stubbornness, and ultimately, a hardened heart (Mark 8:16-17).

These things are hindrances that delay spiritual growth, cause tremendous problems in a person's lifestyle, and become a reason why many marriages are ineffective and why the lives

of some Christians have stagnated. How does one honestly and fervently overcome these obstacles?

For the fifth time after His resurrection, the Lord appeared to Peter on the shore of Galilee. The Holy Spirit wrote the story in John 21:1-10: "Jesus shewed himself *again* to the disciples…." Discouraged, Peter had said to the disciples who were there, "I go a fishing." So they all got into a ship together, "and that night they caught nothing."

"But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus."

In the fifth verse, the drama of the evening took place. Remember, they were experienced fishermen who had earned a living from those waters. Yet, they could catch nothing as they took turns throwing the nets on the left side and the right.

"Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

"And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."

Then John said to Peter, "It is the Lord."

Peter jumped into the water and swam ashore.

"And the other disciples came in a little ship, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

"As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

"Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." It was time for breakfast, and Jesus was serving (see John 21:1-10).

The point here is that according to these verses, Peter had a mental block, a negative image in his conscience, the norms and standards of his soul, which caused him to run away from God. It began with a concept: Jesus was gone now, so he would have to go back to his old occupation. Furthermore, Peter was plagued by the fact that he had betrayed the One he called Lord (Matthew 26:69-75); he believed that his sin was unforgivable.

Wrong concepts, based on sight and feelings, produced a mood of discouragement and defeat. That negative energy entered Peter's conscience, where he tried to rationalize his rebellion as an acceptable provision for his flesh: "What else could I do? They were going to kill me! Anyway,

He's gone now. And after all, I have to make a living, even if I am miserable." Then Peter's mood turned into a mental block against following Christ.

Skewed Standards

If we are right with God, then grace, love, mercy, and the purity of the Holy Spirit are the norms and standards for our souls. If we are not right, then whatever pleases us determines those norms and standards. For a young person, that may mean staying out until three o'clock in the morning and being irresponsible toward a relationship with God and loved ones, instead of choosing to advance in the spiritual life. For some adults, it may mean becoming overly engrossed in work, missing church, and ignoring the spiritual needs of the family.

Many Christians stubbornly hold on to concepts that prevent faith obedience when they hear the Word of God. Many have difficulty in their jobs because of moods, forcing coworkers to be tolerant and flexible as they try to help. Many others are never free from mental blocks.

Recently, after a fervent message about evangelizing, a person remarked, "I don't believe in soul winning the way you teach it." The prob-

lem is that he doesn't believe in soul winning the way *God* said it! He has a concept that is against soul winning. The commandment to go and make disciples was loud and clear in Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:44-48, John 20:20-22, Acts 1:8. I don't know any other way to witness or to win souls.

Paul went from house to house (see Acts 20). The seventy were sent from house to house, in Luke 10. The twelve went house to house, and Jesus went house to house. Therefore, to say, "I don't believe in soul winning that way" is a concept that becomes a mood when the subject is brought up. It is a concept but not a spiritual concept. The end is a mental block against soul winning.

Spiritual Concepts

A concept is defined as an object conceived by the mind. These verses describe a spiritual concept:

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

"And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:17-21).

Verse 18 is conceptual, verse 19 is the experiential goal, and verse 20 is its fulfillment.

Often, partners in a marriage will have a wrong concept of the relationship and declare, "I am no longer in love." Sight and feelings lead them to say, "I am not in love any more," but that is a concept that is as detached from reality as it can be.

First of all, just saying it reveals that they do not know what love is. They think love is a feeling, when love is an expression of a fact through the will. Love is supernaturally receiving a divine capacity to experience the Holy Spirit's operation as He sheds abroad a divine manifestation of God's nature in the heart (Romans 5:5).

God is love. If I am filled with the Spirit, then I am filled with love. If I am filled with the Spirit, my love passes knowledge. I don't need

knowledge about my spouse to make love happen. Love passes by knowledge because it is a spiritual operation, a divine act of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Three

PUTTING THE PAST BEHIND IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE

A well-known pastor said recently that it would take at least five years for a spouse to get over wounds caused in a situation where a partner was unfaithful—and that is after the guilty party repented. This is an unscriptural concept. If allowed to take root, that concept will reproduce a mood that occurred when the infidelity was first discovered. That mood would produce a mental block—an image in the conscience that robs them of a godly image, prohibits the will from receiving grace, and prevents obedience to God through the Holy Spirit.

Do you want to know how long it takes to forgive? Blink your eye. That's how long it takes to forgive. What does it take to forget? Obedience to the Holy Spirit beyond a concept of the flesh. To illustrate it, look at Philippians 3:13:

"Brethren, I count not myself to have appre-

hended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before…."

Reaching Forward

"Forgetting those things which are behind" is, in the original text, a durative present middle participle of *epilanthanomai*. Simply, this word means that something that was in your memory is now gone—forever. It cannot be found. The Greek syntax indicates that though your will produced the action, it was caused by the grace of God working in you.

"Reaching for those things which are before" is a tendential present middle participle—*epek-teinomai*. "Tendential" refers to a continual process—something that is happening; though not completed, it is ongoing. The middle voice indicates that the subject produces the action of the verb "reaching" and thereby receives the benefits. The participle reveals that I receive the benefits because of a decision (in this case, a decision to respond to God).

We have before us a phenomenal future with divine goals from the eternal Spirit of the living Word. We can never be blocked from that as long as we continue to advance. We forget the

past, reach forth, advance, and then keep going forward.

An issue of immorality is settled in less than a blink of an eye when an individual repents. It's a choice of obedience in the will. From that comes liberation by the glory of God, with the Holy Spirit manifesting the nature of God through the capacity of a man so that God's divinity controls his humanity in the realm of human responsibility. This releases the eternal will of God and the power of His wisdom, grace, mercy, and love.

I love that "forgetting," in Philippians 3:13, speaks of removing something from the memory. If some failure ever tries to get back in there to accuse us, we can say, "It is gone from God's sight forever, and He is omnipresent. If it is gone forever from the sight of the omnipresent God, then why are you trying to bring it back up to me, Devil?"

Some people are actually entertained by getting counseled about things that were already buried forever by Jesus Christ. Oh, how much do people pay for the kind of counsel that magnifies the past?

So much counseling, even among Christians, denies the truth of the whole counsel of God. Would you want Jesus to remember your sins? He can't! "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," He says in Hebrews 8:12 and 10:17. And according to Psalm 103:12, our sins have been removed as far as the east is from the west.

Therefore, if we think with Christ, can we remember anyone's sins? No. So we have to keep thinking with Christ (Philippians 2:5). That is possible because we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Something else we see today is a tendency among Christians to live according to a form of Christianity that is practical and down to earth. The solution, however, to getting rid of moods and mental blocks isn't a process of time; it is a process of *faith*. By faith we choose not to go back to the mental block, to the mood, or to a concept of reality that lacks the supernatural relevant power of grace.

Many cannot understand this because they have a mental block that leaves them stubbornly confused when the truth is presented. They may

sincerely be in need of counseling, but their frame of reference is filled with wrong concepts. I would never recommend a book or even a Christian counselor who does not deal with the supernatural facts of faith revealed in the Bible.

'Ye Shall Have Them'

"…Have faith in God….

"…Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

"…What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:22-24).

Stop and consider what the Holy Spirit is saying. Receive the life of those verses in the context of the continuity of the thought in the freshness of the moment:

The mountain is gone. One person's unfaithfulness, an ugly disposition—they are gone. Even if the problems don't seem to go, as far as the other party is concerned, they are gone from our hearts. Our spiritual health does not depend on the other person's response. This is how it happens: We work out our own salvation—

which speaks of our human responsibility—with reverence and a godly fear toward the living God (Philippians 2:12).

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

"That ye may be blameless [without defect] and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life…" (Philippians 2:13-16).

It is a process of victory, not a process of retreating. We are to keep working out what God works within by receiving the Word of God daily under His government of grace, motivated by love, through the power of a divine impartation. We receive the Word with meekness and then, supernaturally, it is transferred to my human spirit. From there it goes into my memory center, conscience, vocabulary, through the streams of consciousness. God's government can now control my soul and use my body as a servant to reveal God in the whole man.*

To the blind man, Jesus said, "According to your faith, be it unto you." (Matthew 9:29). While the

ship Paul was on was being torn apart in a terrible storm (and by every indication, all hope for survival was lost), Acts 27:25 records the apostle Paul's confession: He believed it would be as God had said. Neither Paul nor the blind man entertained moods or mental blocks, and they did not become stuck in concepts that denied the power of God. They believed, received, and went forward in victory.

**Read,* Building Walls of Doctrine*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Four

DECIDE TO REVEAL HIS TREASURE

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not dis-

tressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

"Always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:3-10).

a His purpose is to keep us from understanding the glorious gospel. But God has commanded the Light to shine out of darkness into our hearts. Then, the knowledge of the glory of God shines unto us, so God can release His treasure in and through us to the world.

We make decisions to go on with God instead of going back into concepts without obedience, moods that bring negative energy to hinder the grace of God from controlling our liberation, or mental blocks that evolve and advance in the soul periodically. Though we have trouble, we are not in despair. We are distressed but not perplexed; persecuted, yet not forsaken; knocked down, but never knocked out.

"All these things may happen to you," God is saying. But instead of a concept, a mental block, or a mood, we are being delivered unto death that the life of Jesus be manifested in our bodies (2 Corinthians 4:10). This is how we keep

trouble, distresses, perplexities, and persecutions from knocking us down and driving us into insanity.

Choices for Victory

Do you know what it takes for people to get victory over drinking? A decision.

Do you know how long it takes to stop living in sin? As long as it takes to make a decision.

Do you know what it takes for you to be Spirit-filled again? A confession and a decision.

Do you know how long it takes to have the integrity of God flowing freely in your heart? Do you know how long it takes for you to love someone with God's love? It is a matter of a decision. That's how long.

I don't ever want to hear, "I don't love him, I don't love her" in marriage counseling sessions. That is the confession of a heathen, not of a Spirit-filled Christian.

Is your love based upon attraction? Upon sight? Upon behavior? Or, is it based upon the filling of the Spirit in the redemptive, creative work of God that is motivated by a divine enterprise? Take on the new positive nature of Christ, and by your laid-down life impart divine energy to the person who doesn't have it.

I read in my Bible that Jesus laid down His life for us and we ought to lay it down for one another. That is in 1 John 3:16. I have also read that we know that we have passed from death to life because we have divine love for one another (1 John 3:14). These are spiritual concepts based upon godly facts of life.

Surrender to the Supernatural

Thank God that redemption is not conditional. Eternal security is not conditional once you are truly saved. Confession of our sin and the filling of the Holy Spirit is an act of faith. In your prayer life, when you are connected with Calvary's death, burial, and resurrection, you are able to have a supernatural attitude in a supernatural way in the supernatural truth revealed in a supernatural life.

Unfortunately, because of wrong concepts, moods, and mental blocks, we are afraid of the supernatural! As Christians, we have lived in our humanity destitute of the supernatural for so long that we are afraid of the divine impartation of supernatural fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of God is pure only to those who respond in purity (Titus 1:15*a*). Every word of

God is an amazing promise—not one of them falls to the ground (see 1 Kings 8:56). We just receive it by faith.

Touching God

In Luke 8, the woman who was nearly dead, ostracized and divorced from her partner (she had to be); the woman who was excommunicated from the synagogue and who couldn't buy groceries except through a courier—that woman got the idea that she could be healed if she could just touch the hem of Jesus' garment.

Where did that idea come from? People don't have those ideas nowadays. She wasn't supposed to appear in public, but she came and touched the hem of His garment. She was healed in a moment.

"Somebody has touched me," Jesus said.

"We have all been touching You," Peter said. "No one special touched You."

"Yes, someone special has touched Me, for virtue has gone out of Me."

Then, the woman came trembling to Him because she knew that He knew her and she fell at His feet.

"And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in

peace" (Luke 8:48).

This woman had already confessed that she had been healed immediately. She believed that she could literally be healed through touching Jesus by faith. She had never seen Him, but she touched Him, and she was healed.

Healing is available. It is done in love, by grace, and by mercy. Healing is done through a dogmatic, dynamic faith that confesses it. Healing is a scriptural, spiritual concept, and that woman dared to believe it. As a result, she reaped the benefits.

Believe and Receive

"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

Why do we have to confess it? Because Mark 11:24 says we have to. Whatever things you desire, pray and believe that you receive them and you shall have them.

Let's be bold in our faith when we pray. Some people like to protect themselves in case what they ask for doesn't happen. They keep adding the phrase "according to his will" (1 John 5:14) onto their prayers. But we need to be bold and believe in His many promises, like Matthew

21:22: "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive," and John 14:13-14: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."

Trust Him

If we would walk in the power of prayer, the power of faith, the power of love, the power of God's glory, the power of God's grace, the power of divine activity, the power of God's will, the power of obedience, the power of just believing God's promises, then supernatural things could happen. The supernatural ways of God through supernatural truth, with supernatural life—this is the way to go!

God *can* be trusted. No good thing will He withhold from them that walk in His upper righteousness (see Psalm 84:11). To the preacher who is telling folks that it is going to take five years to forget an unfaithful wife's sins, I would read Galatians 5:16: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

Furthermore, if we put on the Lord Jesus Christ, we won't make a provision for the flesh. We will forget the things that are behind. We

will reach forth to the things that are before us, and we will receive the action of the truth in what God has promised.

I read in the Word of God that I can think with God, walk with God, love with God, have joy with God, and continue growing in God. I have read it. I know it is in the Book.

Many well-intentioned Christians have had their minds blinded through concepts, moods, and mental blocks. The glorious gospel of the light of Christ, who is the expressed image of God, cannot shine through their hearts. Therefore, His treasure cannot come out and shine forth to others because it is buried by moods, mental blocks, and concepts that are detached from God's truth.

Thank God His counsel is both true and absolutely free! If you don't have a capacity to live as one who has been set free, it may take time to build a capacity. Just receive the Word, and keep on receiving it. But if you have a supernatural faith, it takes only Jesus. Go ahead; touch the hem of His garment. He is waiting to be gracious to you.

CONCLUSION

Our times are in God's hands. Our lives are in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus (Psalm 31:15). What does God do? He redeems our times. He puts redemption in time and performs divine reversals—providentially and supernaturally, buying back what seemed to be lost opportunities.

There is much being taught about salvation today, and we thank God for that. But there isn't enough being said about the supernatural activity of God in any man who is willing to cooperate with God's will toward his soul.

"Awake thou that sleepest! Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light! Don't walk as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil…. Be filled with the Spirit…and make melodies in your heart!" (see Ephesians 5:14-19).

If you have setbacks, stay there only for a moment. The righteous man falls seven times in

a day, but he keeps getting up (Proverbs 24:16). Just go to God and get up. Don't get into a mood. Get up! Don't fall into a mental block. Get up. Don't become stubborn just because that's the way it has always been. Get rid of your old earthly concepts and get up. Get right up, and let God help you.

Let God heal your body, your soul, and your mind. Be healed in your attitude, no matter what God is allowing in your life through His sovereignty. Have victory, power, peace, capacity, hope, and faith in God only.

Dear Lord, may we have the joy of faith in the reality of life and not live in the discouragement of sight and circumstances. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Motivated by God's Provision

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

These are crucial times for Christians. More than ever, we need to be mobilized to serve God through His grace and love. I am not talking about trying to energize people emotionally—there is far too much of that going on.

What we need is a realization of the provisions God has made available to us through His Word and His Body. So many believers are casual in their approach to the Bible and to the local assembly. They do not discern their need to keep divine appointments in fellowship and study. Meanwhile, Satan, the roaring lion, seeks those whom he may devour; he is working hard to immobilize Christians by victimizing them mentally, emotionally, subjectively, and physically.

God's provision is to give us the mind of Christ so that we will be equipped to have victory in every situation we encounter in our battle against the trends of this world system.

Chapter One

FEEDING ON ASHES

"He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isaiah 44:20).

Feeding on ashes means living in human provisions. It is feeding on something that is under the serpent—dust. When a Christian deviates from the divine dynamics of truth, he must feed on ashes in order to be sustained in some kind of purpose for his life.

Satan claims control over the dust and the material of the earth. Because he has been condemned to eat the dust, the devil tries to give us the food that he eats—the rubbish and worthless powder of this earth. A Christian who has been deceived by eating the dust holds a "lie" in his right hand—he has been deceived in his heart, led away by an evil influence. The lie comes from the adversary, who is the father of all lies

(John 8:44).

Believers who maintain a diet of ashes are apt to end up as alcoholics, drug addicts, or neurotics. They may go through several marriages. Some of these believers may attain a level of success, gaining a portion in this life through logistical grace. These are the toughest ones to reach because they *think* they are doing better than ever since they stopped living for God. And because of free volition, God says, "Oh, you want your portion in this life? Go ahead, have it. I won't invade your rights."

Satan's Trend of Attack

The purpose of the kingdom of darkness is to victimize, immobilize, paralyze, and sterilize God's children. This supernatural, invisible kingdom has a strategic plan to *victimize* us through our human frailty, our genetics, our needs, and our past—feeding on the dust of experiences stored in our memory center.

The second attack is *immobilization*, a lack of motivation due to a lack of energy. I may be extremely sincere in my Christianity, but still not motivated in victory. I may be engaged in spiritual warfare and still not get anywhere, because I am not energized for the battle.

Paralysis follows immobilization. When a person is paralyzed, he cannot use certain parts of his body. Though the brain is sending messages to an arm or a leg, for example, the limb is physically unable to respond. Many paralyzed people are unable to walk. When spiritual paralysis sets in, a Christian will come to me for counseling and begin to sob, "I know what you're saying, and I know it's *me*. I just can't do it." This person is sincere. He isn't evil or mean, he just can't *do* anything spiritually.

The final step in Satan's strategic plan is *sterilization*. Most people know that to be physically sterile means there is no capacity for reproduction. The sterile Christian has no capacity to reproduce Christ in someone else. Therefore, he reproduces what he is like in his natural disposition, but he has no spiritual children.

The person who has been sterilized in Satan's plan finds Body life unattractive.The Body, which is the fullness of Christ, has no effect on this believer because he refuses to draw near. When he hears categorical doctrine, it has no effect on his life. The Cross, though historically true and experientially available, is of none effect.

Chapter Two

THE PROVISIONS FOR VICTORY

As an alternative to feeding on ashes, God offers a divine provision through an *elative conclusion*: eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:53). Jesus Christ is the "living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51). Eating the Bread of Life refers to a daily intake of doctrine. Drinking His blood means to apply the New Covenant in the Finished Work.

The principle of the elative conclusion is found in 2 Corinthians 12, where Paul prayed three times for the thorn in his flesh to be removed. But God would not do it. Paul was using prayer as a human provision at a time when he should not have prayed. In this case, God's provision was, "My grace is sufficient," not prayer.

God's elative conclusion means choosing a divine provision instead of a human provision; it means God will supply all my needs accord-

ing to His riches in glory. The alternative is seeking a provision for myself according to my own understanding.

God will not leave us victimized by the kingdom of darkness. His life is available to give us something above and beyond what we ask or think. The process of deliverance comes by adjusting to and being established in the grace of God (Hebrews 13:9*b*).

In the process of deliverance, learn to give yourself grace, even if you cannot achieve victory yet. I am not talking about antinomianism, professing to know God, but in your works denying Him; or lasciviousness, using grace as a license to sin. Of course, you must rebound as often as necessary until finally you are kept by God in your area of weakness.

First, you must be established in grace, then you begin to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). As you practice Proverbs 24:16, rebounding seven times in a day if necessary, you aren't continuing in sin, but you are simply obeying God until you become established in the grace for victory.

Growing in Grace

We grow into different levels of grace so that

situations will not become the controlling factors in our lives. First, grace for salvation is imparted to us the moment we receive Christ into our hearts. Grace for rebound enables us to recover quickly from failure and get back into fellowship with God. As we grow, we receive grace to suffer, grace to take up our cross, and grace to minister to others even when they don't deserve it.

God gives us grace to adjust to anything the plan of God brings our way. As we grow in the depth of grace, we receive the abundance of grace for deeper trials and deeper situations. Through this process, God is able to develop in us a capacity for greater grace, in James 4:6. Greater grace carries us through some of the worst situations that could ever happen to a human being. Once we have become greater grace Christians, we are promoted for warfare in the angelic contest as supreme grace believers.

Finally, in heaven, we will enter into perfect grace. "When he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2).

Little By Little

"And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts

of the field increase upon thee" (Deuteronomy 7:22).

We may win many victories all at once, and certain problems may be gone almost instantly. Still, sometimes God drives out our enemies "little by little." *Beasts* in Deuteronomy 7:22 speaks of unclean spirits. The enemies are driven out little by little so we won't become proud in the achievements of our flesh.

Many Christians condemn others when they themselves are failing in the same areas. I have been through many processes in my life simply because of my age and my experience. But I cannot be critical of someone else who hasn't had the same time to grow as I have. We are all in a process of growing in grace.

"By little and little" means there will be times when we will need to use rebound. We will need to go from faith to faith and from glory to glory. We will continue to grow in grace. We won't quit. We won't give up. If we fail, we won't stop and condemn ourselves, but we continue to go forward. God will honor this type of integrity and it will become our strength in the honor and dignity of grace.

Chapter Three

TABLES IN THE WILDERNESS

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the path of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:* thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Psalm 23).

God prepares a table in the wilderness in the presence of our enemies (Psalm 78:19; Psalm 23:5). He furnished a table for the nation of Israel for forty years by providing manna from heaven and water from the rock. Because of His

love for us, individually and corporately, God always prepares a table for us in the presence of our nearest enemy.

David wrote Psalm 23 at a time when his son Absalom was trying to take over the throne. David lost his kingdom, his scepter, and his polished boots. He was in the Judean hills on a moonlit night with just a bag of clothes. He had lost everything, and he felt he would die.

The most unbelievable things were happening to David—his son wanted to kill him and take everything away from him. But, in spite of it all, David loved Absalom so much that he would have been willing to die for him (2 Samuel 18:33). Even though David had contributed to the problem by not letting Absalom into the palace for two years, Absalom still made the negative decisions leading to his rebellion. In the midst of everything, David was inspired to write Psalm 23.

Green speaks of mercy and *pastures* refers to food. In the presence of David's enemies he was receiving merciful doctrines. *Still waters* speaks of divine quietness. In the Hebrew text, *shadow* is in the plural form. David had faced death many times. But in those shadows, he always found that God was with him. In other words,

though David had lost everything, he still had the *source* of everything: God. In the presence of his enemies—fear, insecurity, and Absalom with his army, which outnumbered David's twelve to one—God prepared a table for David. By grace through faith, David reached *into* God's elative conclusion, rather than settling for a human provision for his flesh.

Discerning God's Practical Provisions

When I seek God with all my heart, the Holy Spirit will guide me into the truth of divine discernment and I will realize God's provision.

Suppose I have the flu. I need to discern the source of the sickness. Does it have a natural cause? Is it coming from the air? Or, is it because Satan doesn't want me well? If I discern that my illness has nothing to do with the angelic conflict, my sickness *still* has a source. Have I been careless? Have I violated natural laws that God has taught me about good health? I must plan to be careful, and I must plan to be healthy. Don't be condemned if you're not healthy right now, but make a plan to have a lifestyle that promotes health.

Plan to be careful on the roads to avoid accidents. Expect people to run red lights; drive de-

fensively. Never take your eyes off of the road. Be extremely cautious. So many things can happen when we are not prepared. Every Christian should pray for wisdom from above. It is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. With this wisdom, you can develop a lifestyle of planning and preparation to protect yourself against the unexpected and the unknown.

Chapter Four

MOBILIZED TO SERVE

Growing in grace leads to spiritual mobilization in the faith, enabling me to utilize divine assets. As a result, I sin less and less. I am no longer occupied with what people think of me. I am not proud. I refuse to be occupied with weakness, yet I won't surrender to a natural lifestyle.

As I utilize divine assets, God produces divine motivation. This motivation brings divine energy from a divine source into my relationships. It allows me to deal with every situation with the creativity of faith in an attitude of love. Instead of a husband blaming his wife for certain problems in the marriage, he brings in the divine energy of unconditional love to produce in her a capacity for life.

Suppose my wife had a weakness in her schedule—she doesn't and I would never uncover her even if she did. Instead of criticizing,

intimidating, and indicting her, I would take her hand and say, "I love you. Thank you for being you." This makes her want to be around me. She has more fun with me than with others. She feels comfortable. This develops in her a capacity to please me without me ever indicting her weakness. It's not enough just to avoid saying something negative; I may say nothing and still be reactionary in my spirit. Rather, I must live in the Spirit of God and communicate something positive to her.

The Manifestation of Life and Power

As I am motivated through the release of divine energy, God begins to manifest His life and power in my soul. Then, and only then, will God do beyond what I'm asking or thinking, according to the power that works in us. His power doesn't just work *for* us, or *toward* us, but it works *in* us and *through* us.

When God's power is working for me, I thank Him that I am saved, even when I'm failing. His power is working toward me when another believer comes and communicates the truth to me in love. When I receive the truth in meekness, the Holy Spirit works in me. But, when the Holy Spirit works through me, I enter

into a manifestation of His life. The power that is working in me, now works through me, so that as God *is* in heaven, so I *am* in this world (1 John 4:17). I reveal the person of Christ in a spiritual manifestation (Galatians 1:15-16).

This manifestation develops my capacity for the Kingdom of God within me and, as a result, I become stabilized. "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times" (Isaiah 33:6*a*). We now experience the presence of God through divine realization.

I don't have to live in self-denial; I can stand naked before God (Isaiah 1:5-6; Jeremiah 17:9). I can say, "Pray for me, I am eight percent insane." You may laugh, but I am serious. I used to be twenty-five percent insane! In fact, with regard to Truth and the provisions of grace, every Christian is dealing with a measure of insanity—not human madness, but madness in the realm of the psyche as it relates to God. But through divine realization of God's presence, I can define my enemies and protect myself in the battle.

Spiritual Living

Instead of operating in psychological living, we can live in a spiritual provision. Psychological living is a most frustrating existence. In this

state, a person knows what he *should* do. He knows what he should confess, and he tries. But it's only a form of godliness operating in the human soul that is detached from the human spirit's provision from God.

Spiritual living is growing every day, living in the divine origin and image of Christ's life in our humanity. At this point, we enter into the process of 2 Corinthians 4:10-12: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you."

CONCLUSION

When God sees that we are stable and mature, and that we have been established in grace, He can use us in the angelic contest. Instead of fighting battles within, we represent God as we battle the demons without. We are delivered to the death of the Cross daily through circumstances and the details of life, so that we will manifest the resurrection life of Christ.

We don't condemn, criticize, or talk behind people's backs. We operate under another plan. As God delivers us to the death of the Cross, the life of Christ is manifested through our little mortal bodies. Death works in us, so that life may work in those who are not spiritual.

God wants each of us to advance into a greater grace life, using rebound when we fail. We are not there yet, but we are growing into it in degrees (James 4:6). That grace becomes the controlling factor instead of the situations we face. We can be relaxed and experience perfect

peace in the midst of adversity, pressure, and stress. Every Christian has the potential for this kind of life because the love of God honors our faith in the Finished Work—the faith that pleases Him.

Moving in Faith

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?

"They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

"For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

"The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

"But wisdom is justified of all her children.

"And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat" (Luke 7:31-36).

In true friendship, the function and motiva-

tion of God's character of love reveals the characteristics of God's heart. Sadly, this is one of the things that few believers understand.

Jesus was called the "friend of publicans and sinners." We know from Hebrews 7:26 that Christ was holy, harmless and undefiled. He was separate from sinners because He was born without sin. Throughout His life on earth, He knew no sin, yet He died bearing our sin. In fact, the Word of God says that He who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

He is the friend of publicans and sinners because, when we had no strength, He paid for all of our sins (Romans 5:6). He commended His love toward us. This love never includes compromise. It does, however, include the power of His endless life that motivates and changes us in the Spirit of God.

This quality of friendship does something to the believer. It gets him moving. It draws him out of where he is and what he is doing and into a deep relationship with God. This is the movement of faith. We are touched by God's love toward us, and that touch moves and attracts us in a love relationship that is stable, secure, and powerful.

Chapter One

MOVED BY HIS SACRIFICE OF LOVE

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

"And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

"Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

"But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

"And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

"But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their

city.

"Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

"Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

"So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

"And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

"Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:2-14).

In Matthew 22, Jesus was speaking a parable. In it, He called the man without the proper garments "friend." The Son of God was a friend to this man in that He took upon Himself all of his sins at Calvary.

Jesus did not die upon the Cross because people deserve it. Really, He is the only friend to every sinner. His grace took care of all of our sins. That is the promise from the Book, just as He has promised forgiveness and heaven and grace. He also promises that, in Him, He will perfect every single believer (John 17:23).

We have to start here in any move of faith. We have to stand on the promises of God our Savior, get a vision for our lives from the Lord, and then go from faith to faith and from glory to glory.

Jesus Asked Why

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" (Psalm 22:1).

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

I want to show you just how much of a friend Jesus was to us in His humanity. As a man, Jesus cried out to the Father, "Why? Why?" Think of that little question. Sometimes we say "Why?" We ask it often during any number of difficult situations, and He understands.

But Jesus gave us a great pattern to follow. Though He asked, "Why?" He also said, "My God, My God." The Lord understood that we would have times of difficulty and questions. He suffered through those things as the Son of man. His humanity was real in all respects. The pressures of life were there, but they never were allowed to affect His walk with the Father in His communion through the Holy Spirit.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

When we come to the place of the why, we must move toward the place of grace, the throne of God, where we will find mercy and help in those times of need.

Chapter Two
FAITH RESPONSES

"Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?" (2 Chronicles 20:7).

"But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" (Isaiah 41:8).

"And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (James 2:23).

Abraham heard God and got moving. He came out from Ur of the Chaldees, in Genesis 12:4. The call of the Lord drew Abraham away from family and friends to a deep relationship and to a land of promise.

His great obedience in moving with God reveals itself in Genesis 13. There, Abraham handled a contentious situation. The keepers of

Abraham's herds were having trouble with the keepers of the herds of Lot, Abraham's nephew. So Abraham moved in faith toward his nephew.

"And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

"Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

"Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

"Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

"But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

"And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine

eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

"For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

"And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

"Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (Genesis 13:8-17).

Answering God's Call

There were thirteen backward years for Abraham. During that time, we have no record of Abraham talking with God. But God remained Abraham's friend. Abraham failed, and the product of that failure was an affair with Hagar and the wild son, Ishmael, from who would come wild and contrary nations of people.

Still, God never altered His purpose for Abraham and the nation that would spring from Isaac, the son of promise who would come from his union with Sarah. Sarah was long past child-bearing age, and Abraham was ninety-nine years old. This conception was a miracle of God. It was a great move of the Lord, and Abraham

knew it.

So convinced of God's friendship and promise was Abraham, he did not hesitate in his obedience to a tremendous request from the Lord. In Genesis 22, God said, "Abraham." Abraham's heart leapt, and he said, "Here I am."

Faith friendship had developed the power of faith response in Abraham. So, when God commanded that Abraham take the son of promise, Isaac, and offer him as a burnt offering, Abraham answered that call. He headed toward Mount Moriah, bound Isaac on an altar, and raised the knife to slay his son. Then, God spoke again.

"And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

"And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son" (Genesis 22:11-13).

Chapter Three

SERVING IN FAITH, LOVE, AND POWER

"But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

"Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

"Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

"For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

"Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God" (1 Corinthians 7:17-24).

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

"For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Galatians 6:1-3).

This old world needs to see people in revival, in biblical friendships, moving in faith because of the drawing power of God. Friendship does not compromise. It handles these situations in divine love and divine order, in mercy, grace, and wisdom. We serve and restore others. We want to help them to move in faith.

Christ's ministry of reconciliation has been placed upon us. He removed all barriers to walking and moving in the power of the Spirit. We should be very careful not to erect walls or to allow hindrances that would keep others from moving in the faith of the Son of God.

Conditional, superficial relationships may come, but God will work in those things too. We

do not have to be controlled by them. Do not let those things change your walk with God. He moves you in faith. His Word fills you with faith, for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Hold fast to the convictions God gives you. Remain faithful and true. Avoid the temptation to alter your godly lifestyle.

Your call.

Your work.

Your marriage.

These all belong to God. They were given by Him to help you move in the faith of the Son by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Be fruitful where you are. He has planted you in a place of grace, and it is so crucial.

Little Is Much with God

A pastor once said to me, "I just want to be in a place where I can have a big church."

That comment really struck me because it revealed a deep problem. This man did not know how to move in faith. He had been called to a certain area. It wasn't an easy field to work in, for sure. But he was sent out and said as he went that God gave this place to him. Now it seemed things weren't working the way that he thought

they should.

Let me say this: There are no small churches. When God is in the midst of something, it is as big as all eternity. How many disciples did Jesus have with Him at the end? Some of you are saying twelve. I am saying zero—for all of them forsook Him as He went to the Cross. Now, of course, we read that all the disciples but Judas came back to Him, and Acts 2 reveals that they were all in that upper room when the Holy Spirit fell upon them. At that moment, God indwelt them, and the age of the Church was birthed.

It only takes a few people following after God to do mighty things for Him. When they move in faith, they make a difference. They go with power and authority, and people and places are transformed. All of this happens by presence of the Lord when God's people are moving in faith.

CONCLUSION

Let's think as God thinks. God looks at everything from His vantage point in eternity. He sees the end, the middle, and the beginning of all things at once. We have a future that is finished forever because of the Finished Work of Christ. He knows the way that we take, and He shall bring us to that expected end, the conclusion of the matter, that He ordained from before the foundation of the world (Jeremiah 29:11).

Knowing this reality should get us going. We have nothing to fear but human fear itself, to paraphrase President Franklin D. Roosevelt. God knows the way that we take, and we can say as Job did that when He is finished with us, we shall come forth as gold (Job 23:10).

We who believe in God have been made complete in Him. The praise and glory of the Father is that we have been accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6). The blood of the Lamb of God has washed us clean, once and for all.

Did Abraham work for his friendship with God? No. All that he did was believe and go, moving toward the land of promise.

Just believe and go.

Go into you neighborhood.

Go into your city.

Go to a country where no other Christian has gone before.

Move in faith in the call and leading of God, and it will prosper and reveal the power of His majesty and strength.

Move through your Bible and learn it again and again and again. Move in the finished faith of the Finished Work of Christ.

My Cross

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INTRODUCTION

After preaching the Word of God for many years, I realize that many marvelous messages, brought by different servants of God through the Holy Spirit, are effective only for a season. Though a message may support a need for a day or a week, it soon becomes something that we heard in the distant background of our lives, which temporarily released our emotions. There may even appear to have been a measure of healing in the soul, by God's grace. The message encouraged us, it stimulated us, but the effect was not lasting, strong, or eternal.

Picture a man—very strong, healthy, well built—bound by powerful chains of iron. With all of his strength, he cannot break the chains that hold him. That is a picture of the condition of many Christians today. As much as a person may desire to be released from the chains that keep him imprisoned, the chains are too powerful; he cannot break them. Someone could bring

unique, life-changing messages and build him up with Truth while he remains in his chains, temporarily encouraged and inspired, yet bound with chains of iron. Please understand that it does not have to be that way!

I call this message "My Cross." Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, and because I believed, God saved me. Inner healing, inner victory, inner peace, inner power, inner fellowship, identification with Christ—the new creation has been given to us as a gift from God. But we must claim it personally. To possess the gift of the abundant life in inner healing, I must claim it—and I must have my cross.

Chapter One

GOING IN CIRCLES?

Thousands of professing believers are born again, and they will go to heaven, but their minds are functioning in bondage. Their chains affect the entire mentality of their soul: mind, emotions, conscience, self-consciousness, and volition. What happened? In Numbers 21, the Canaanites had defeated the army of Israel. In three major journeys, Israel experienced marvelous victories, but not so with the Canaanites—victory from the Red Sea to Sinai, from Sinai to Kadesh, and from Kadesh to Transjordan. They were marvelous victories, yet, in the midst of these journeys, something happened to reveal what was inside their souls.

Israel coming into Canaan represented the advanced life that God had given them as a gift—life in a land that He wanted them to inhabit forever! God said to Joshua, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I

have given unto you" (Joshua 1:3). Canaan was a gift from God; yet He said, "The sole of your foot must touch it, or it will not be yours."

Water Tests

Israel murmured as they had at the Meribah revolution (Numbers 20) when an entire nation of people made negative choices against the plan of God. Every time Israel was tested, they rebelled with negative volition. They were never promoted because they couldn't pass the test that they had just been through. God allowed the water test in Exodus 15, and Israel flunked it. They had the water test again in Exodus 17, and they flunked it. Forty years later, they had the water test, and forty years later they flunked it. Heavy chains were around their minds and emotions. The Israelites were unable to live beyond their feelings, sight, or natural provisions.

Why would a whole nation of people spend forty years in negative volition? In Exodus 15, God made the bitter waters sweet. In Exodus 16, He gave His people manna from heaven. In Exodus 17, He gave them water from the rock, even though Israel complained. In Numbers 9:13-22, God led them with the cloud by day and a fire by night. In Deuteronomy 8:4, He kept

their clothes and shoes perfectly sound for forty years. God was their provision in the wilderness and all the way through it.

Then, Israel said, "Lord, will You help us defeat the Canaanites?" God would give them the victory, but Israel had to destroy the enemy. It was a marvelous victory (Numbers 21), but again Israel began to murmur. They were in a negative volitional cycle. Every time they were tested by sight, they chose to panic with negative reaction. If they were not tested, they were fine. But when there was no water, they murmured against their leader—and they always blamed their leader!

Negative Cycles

People who always blame others are in a negative syndrome. Why? The Lord said in Hebrews 3:10*b* "…they have not known my ways." In the original language, *known* is the indicative aorist active of *ginosko*, which means "to know, perceive, understand, learn." In other words, God is saying, "They have not learned categories of doctrine; they do not have a system of thinking with me." When the plan of God brought a perfect trial, they were ignorant of God's plan and ignorant of how to respond in

the trial. So, they rationalized the situation by sight (they were only being "realistic and practical") and blamed the man who led them!

The children of Israel did not understand the doctrine of faith rest. No doctrine? No grace. No grace? No peace. No peace? No benefits. No benefits? No growing. God sowed trials, and they reaped negativity. Each time, God revealed to Moses why Israel could not hear Him; they were ignorant of how to think with God. Many marriages are like that, and many individuals act like that.

The power of the old sin nature takes over when, acting with free volition, you allow your ego, with its self-consciousness, to hook up with a lust pattern. In bondage to a program of sin, you have chains, or attachments, that are not only psychological but physiological, controlling your mind, emotions, and body.

The Facts about Attachments

In the central nervous system, millions of tiny motor fiber nerves receive stimuli and conduct impulses that control every function in a human being. The brain receives, interprets, and correlates these stimuli in processes of thinking, forming impulses that produce action. The en-

tire muscular-skeletal system operates according to information transmitted from the brain through these nerve fiber attachments.

This is why habits are seldom broken—why the adulterer doesn't give up adultery, why the alcoholic often goes back to drinking. Though a person may be encouraged by a message, has hope, and is believing God, here is the problem he faces—and he needs to face it honestly.

Motor fiber nerves are attached to that part of the brain that controls certain emotional impulses, and the body, mind, and emotions respond in concert to the attachment. Let's say that you believe God, and He has set you free in an area that was plaguing you. You thank God for the healing and for the insight you have received. You may go on for a month, encouraged, stimulated, and blessed with the presence of God. Faith comes in. But after a short time, here we go again! Those motor fiber nerves start dictating impulses to your emotions. Your ego says, "Come on! I'm alive. Connect me to self-consciousness, the essence of my existence." A connection is made. Then the old lust pattern says, "You are having problems with the details of life, so this week let's activate some problems for you in that area." Then sensual lust says, "You

know you have been that way ever since you were seven!" Chains are being formed as old attachments are reestablished. Finally, you give in, and you do not know why it is happening.

The problem with many Christians, dear friends, is not that we don't know how to diagnose ourselves—we are specialists on that today! If I were to counsel you, you could tell me everything wrong with you and why, and you could even tell me the solution. But too often, you cannot continue in the experience of your healing. Why? It is because of the truth about the attachment.

When the Word of God is not living in your mind (I said "living," not just passing through!), you will be ignorant of God's plan and provision for that moment. You will be ignorant of grace, and you will not know peace and victory. You will not know the call on your life or your purpose on earth. You will not know the provision from God in your heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1) and that He supports you and me in that call with all of heaven.

As a Man Thinks

So this is what happens. Many Christians have a conversion reaction—neurotic disorders

characterized by physical symptoms. They go to the doctor, take medicine, and worry up a storm. The physical symptoms are without identifiable, organic pathology.

For the Christian, there are multiple causes, organic causes, and genetic causes. But 85 percent of the time, the problem is because you do not have God's thoughts to answer the problem. The impulses through the motor fiber nerves are controlling your mind, emotions, body, and will, which are under the attack of this powerful frame of reference in your soul. You can hear a thousand messages, read books, get new friends, and have new beginnings, but you will not get victory—unless you do it God's way.

Before we get into it, I want you to notice something else. Another problem caused by the negative syndrome is anxiety neurosis. Anxiety neurosis, in some form, controls 75 percent of all businessmen and women, many housewives, and retired people. Anxiety is characterized by unfounded fears, dread, and worry. Often, free-floating anxiety and apprehension in the subjective mind is not even recognized in the Christian's objective thoughts. It drains the energy needed to function normally in our daily tasks.

Then there is self-consciousness. A self-conscious person is easily embarrassed and upset, overly sensitive, and cannot stand criticism. This person is always looking for affirmation, trying to build up his self-image, fearing that he does not measure up. Eventually, he enters into "operation criticism," tearing down others for the temporary satisfaction of feeling "better" than someone else; but the truth is, he has a terrible and inadequate self-image. All of this behavior comes from a negative syndrome that develops under tests and pressures.

God has a special answer, a special provision, special grace, but too often it is not utilized because people are ignorant of how to implement what is needed to face problems. They do not really know that the relief is in looking at the Savior and recognizing that the cross was not His, but ours.

Chapter Two

ONLY ONE WAY OUT

"And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way" (Numbers 21:4).

Israel was living in a negative syndrome. What did God do about it? He is a loving God, a God of compassion, a God of mercy. In Numbers 21, God sent a whole army of serpents! Is that loving? The devil didn't send them—God did!

You say, "I don't believe God would ever send serpents." Well, He did. I understand that He has *all* power on earth. Therefore, because of the negative syndrome which led to the Israelites' bitterness, rebellion, and revolution, God finally said, "That's it!" and He sent serpents. One person after another became the victim of snakebites. Their bodies began to swell, and they began to cry out as poison filled their bodies. Once again, they went back to the man

they had blamed for the whole problem: Moses. God told Moses to form a brazen serpent and put it on a pole. He said that everyone who looked upon that serpent would be healed. Once again, God brought things to a critical, decisive point.

Eventually, we will have a crisis that will determine our existence on earth. For so many years, God gave mercy and patience. The time for crisis had come for the people of Israel; they could not accept the process, so God brought a crisis.

To get a victory in a process so you will not have to face the crisis, grasp what God is saying now. Do not allow your soul to be attached to negative decisions that caused the negative syndrome in the first place. Wrong decisions have caused the motor fiber nerves to be attached to specific areas of the cerebral hemisphere of your brain, from there controlling impulses that affect your mind, emotions, body, and will. How are you going to get out of it?

A Method for Overcoming

If you will listen and honor this message, you can break some of the most difficult habits in your life. Whatever church you go to, who-

ever your pastor is, or whatever pastor speaks the best message that relates to your need, buy the tape and listen to it ten times in ten weeks, all alone with no distractions. If tapes are not practical, there are many fine doctrinal booklets available.

Listen to one message ten times in ten weeks. The first time, it is encouraging; the second time, it is enjoyable; the third time, it is interesting; the fourth time, it is repetitious; the fifth time, it is repetitious. The sixth time, new things come out; the seventh time, it is encouraging; the eighth time, it is inspirational; the ninth time, something is happening; and the tenth time, for the average person, it is transforming.

The Word of God heals (Psalm 107:20) and delivers (Colossians 1:13). The Word is life (John 6:63) and power (Acts 1:8). The entrance of the Word of God breaks down attachments that developed through decisions in your negative volition; it takes care of the scars caused by the wrong decisions of others. The field of negative impulses that was attached through the motor fiber nerves is detached.

The Word brings in the mind of God, the love of God, and the grace of God. It is more

than encouragement, more than edification, more than stimulation, more than just a passing joy for a couple of days. By giving the Word of God entrance, you allow the mind of God to take over your soul! Now, instead of your ego having authority over your soul, the mind of God has authority. The Holy Spirit has authority. The grace of God has authority. You take in grace and truth, and you begin to reap grace and truth. By receiving the love of God with the Holy Spirit, you reap love and power. You invest your mind with the right attachments, and you will begin to reap the providential provision of God inside a man.

When you have completed this process in one area, then you get another tape or booklet and listen ten times. To break the old attachments, listening ten times works for most people. As you continue the process, you are breaking years of attachments between you, people, and the world system; and you end up with what I call a personal cross, where you can say, "It is my cross."

It is good to know that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. It is beautiful because it is true! But one day, Mary Magdalene looked at the cross and said, "He's my Savior. I'm going

back to the tomb." One day, Peter, as weak as he was, said, "I will follow you wherever you go!" and Jesus said, "You cannot follow Me now, but *afterward*, you will" (John 13:36-37)—after Peter came to know on the inside of his mind what a personal cross was like.

Thomas did not come to that first meeting on that first Sunday of the resurrection, and Jesus went to him directly on the second Sunday. We do not know what Thomas did with his hand when the Lord bade him to prove who He was, but we know that Thomas cried, "My Lord and my God." You see, Jesus became his personal deliverer, his personal healer, personally loving Thomas. You may think He is yours, but He isn't unless there is a personal cross.

Judgment

Jesus did not do a thing to merit death on the cross. He knew no sin, yet He hung there for you and for me, identifying with us, as a sinner. So what happened? In Genesis 3, the serpent beguiled Eve and she became negative in her volition toward the prohibition of God. From that time on, God declared to the serpent, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon

thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:14). God cursed the serpent. The Israelites were covered with snakebites. Do you know what that was? It was the judgment of God.

Deuteronomy 28:23 says the serpent that Moses fashioned for Israel's healing was brass. God declared that the heavens above Israel would be brass—which in this case meant judgment—because of their disobedience. It was a brazen serpent because Jesus was not a real sinner. He *became* sin, but He wasn't a real sinner. He was like unto sinful flesh, but he did not have sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), so the brazen serpent was a perfect type. Why did they lift up the brazen serpent? Jesus Christ would bear our judgment on the cross, and He would be lifted up. When Jesus was talking with Nicodemus in John 3:3, He said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In verse 14 He said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

The Perfect Substitute

Here is the serpent, lifted up. Now it is Jesus Christ on the cross. All of a sudden, as many

times as we have heard it, the Holy Spirit begins to teach us something through a simple, illuminating revelation. Here it is, so listen carefully: He is my Savior. Yes, every one of my sins was placed upon Him. Yes! He died for my sins. Yes, I am saved. Oh, glory to God! Forgiven. Cleansed. Purged. It is *my* cross because He didn't do anything to merit it. He was on it, but it is my cross.

Suddenly, just as I know that He saved me on His cross (that was really my cross), I realize that I am crucified with Christ. Everyone in the world who realizes that and receives what was done in their stead is saved.

Now I can see it! I have quoted it for years: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God" (Galatians 2:20-21*a*).

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6). My old man is dead! This is a revelation of my cross, breaking the attachments of the old sin nature—a process that breaks the motor fiber attachments that came from wrong

decisions and controls my mind and emotions and the muscular-skeletal functions of my body. It also breaks the supernatural negative effects of the world system, which is controlled by Satan through demons.

Personal Resurrection

Do you see it, friends? When we deny ourselves and take up our personal cross daily, we live in His personal resurrection. We have His power, character, and divine nature through His Word and through the filling of His Spirit. It is possible. It does work! Taking up my cross brings more than encouragement, hope, stimulation, or brief deliverance with no lasting results. The inner man is delivered, and I am free from bondage—psychologically, physiologically, and emotionally.

No wonder Jesus said, in John 8:31*b*, "If you continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." You will be disciples, disciplined learners. And He said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (verse 32). You will know *the* truth, not *a* truth. The truth will set you free. Jesus was not giving an emotional plea. He was saying, "If you continue in the Word and the Spirit, it will take over your soul, con-

trol your emotions and your mind, give understanding to your will, rule your self-consciousness with heaven and your conscience with grace and love. The truth will set you free to know the Son, and the Son will make you free."

It is *my* cross. It is my salvation. It is my grace. It is my love and my mercy. Psychologically, physiologically, and emotionally, it is mine; and it is yours; and it is true! It is the cross.

Chapter Three

A THANKSGIVING FEAST

I thank God that the Lord did not say, "Pray toward the serpent." I believe in prayer, but He did not say that. I thank God He did not say, "You ought to love people." Yes, we ought to, and we will, but He did not say that. I thank God that He did not say, "You must give Me something for your healing." He did not say that I have to do something to earn it. He did not instruct people to manufacture an ointment. That would have been a system of works. Oh, I thank God He did not require that.

I thank God that He told Israel to look away from themselves and their terrible condition and to look at His provision. Imagine looking at yourself and your children, seeing the swelling from the snakebites, and knowing that death was coming at any moment. You would look at others screaming and crying because of their pain and sorrow. But He did not say to look at

others or to look at yourself. He said, "If they will just look at My provision for their condition—if they will look to the extent of believing—they will be healed!"

Here is a precious verse. Isaiah 42:18, "Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see." The blind looked, and they could see. How could a blind man look? That speaks of one who is helpless, having no strength, no power, no inward possibility. If the worst homosexual, the worst alcoholic, the worst drug addict, the worst liar, the worst thief, the worst gossiper, the worst person in the world—though they are blind, if they will look, they will be healed.

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22). Look, and you will be saved. Eve's first sin was that she looked, and then she evaluated the very thing she was not supposed to have (Genesis 3:6). Because of that, the first Adam sinned, and all men became sinners. Therefore, the answer of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, was to look! By Him, we are made righteous and set free from the curse.

Look Away from Your Self

We talk about ourselves and about every-

thing that has happened. We talk about how people have treated us and how tough life is. But, that is all self-orientation. It may be true, but it is not the issue! The Bible says, "Look away from the wrong thing and be fully occupied with Christ" (see Hebrews 12:2). The grammar implies that we are to keep right on producing the action of looking at Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, and be occupied with Him. Keep on looking!

Temptation comes, and I am human. I have an old sin nature. But I have heard and received the message of the Word of God. It is *my* cross, *my* provision, *my* grace. He loves me! I am crucified, buried, and resurrected in my positional identification. I have ascended. I am seated in heaven. I look, by prayer and by singing, staying "near to the heart of God." I look, and healing takes place instantly. I am looking, but I am not looking at me. I have done bad things, but I am not looking at that. My sins were paid for. It is my cross, and it takes care of everything.

"Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin reign in your mortal body…" (Romans 6:11-12). The motor fiber nerves that came from negative decisions and all

kinds of attachments, old lines, and processes in the frame of reference—those lines are broken, released, and free. That is God's healing, in Jeremiah 17:14: "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed."

In 3 John 2, we read: "I wish that you would prosper and be in good health, even as your soul prospers." It is not by jumping up and down, by getting emotional, nor by operating in some kind of push-button, subjective Christianity. Having a soul that prospers is knowing how to think with God. It is having a soul that can say, "It is my cross, and these are *my* promises. It is my doctrine and my Holy Spirit. It is for me, and it is for others." Then, the soul prospers and the old attachments are broken.

Absolutely Free

Finally, I become free indeed. It is genuine. It is real. It is not just encouragement or stimulation. It's not just for a weekend, then back to the same old thing. It is God Almighty healing His redeemed soul that He loves.

Do not look within. I get so weary of people trying to discuss what's going on inside. You will never be satisfied with what you find because the old sin nature has not been eradicated.

You may say you are just being "real," but I read in my Book that we are to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

This message is for deliverance. Do not look within; do not look at the swelling. Instead, look at the brazen serpent and see the One who loved you enough to die in your place (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Do you see the possibility of having absolute spiritual freedom God's way? Go on from here with a personal cross—personal faith, grace, love, and healing. Let it all be personal. Real healing comes from trusting in the Word and looking, not doing.

CONCLUSION

This is the truth that *makes* us free. It doesn't merely suggest it. One subject, ten times, and attachments of the motor fiber nervous system over certain emotional impulses can be broken. That is what the Bible calls having the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). The next time temptation knocks, it must face the mind of Christ and no longer take advantage of your old historical record with all those attachments.

One thing Satan cannot deal with is Calvary's cross. The cross is the answer! The cross is not a burden—it is the only place of victory. You were saved there, and you will get healed there. Now do you see what Jesus meant when He said, "Take up your cross daily"? He did not say, "Take up your burden." It is not that He gets glory out of you having some disease. He said, "Take up your cross, and you will be free indeed." You know it is right. Stand fast in the liberty wherein the Son of God has made you free.

The cross separates you from the world, the flesh, and the devil. But if you try to go around it, you are not separated from those forces. No matter how much you go to church, no matter how much you give and shout and pray, you will not be delivered unless it is the cross—having a personal cross in every single area, every time.

My Yoke Is Easy,

My Burden Is Light

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, yokes were designed to harness the strength of animals to be used for and by men. The yoke is designed to manage the power of two or more untamed beasts of burden that would not normally work together. But when the yoke is placed on them properly, the animals will develop a sense of ease and security with each other and their master. In time, a gentle nudge, a word, and a slight pull of the reins will keep them in the way they should go.

But there are cruel masters who treat their beasts harshly. By reaction, their animals are particularly difficult to entreat and can become nearly impossible to handle. An unequal yoke, then, speaks not only of the size and kind of the animals but also of their experience. An unequal yoke is more than inefficient; it is destructive.

In some ancient cultures, yokes became implements of torture and enslavement of human beings. Every one of us has witnessed the effects

of a harsh task master who would break a person's spirit to control the will.

Satan is such a one, and we were all in his unrelenting grip until the Savior set us free. Today, Jesus still beckons to us:

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Chapter One

"TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU..."

Second Kings chapter three gives an account of Jehoram, king of Israel; Jehoshaphat, king of Judah; and the king of Edom: three kings who went to battle against Mesha, the rebellious king of Moab who had threatened Israel.

Often, we have considered this portion of Scripture in the light of the miracles of God who gave water in the dry valley and confounded the enemies of His people. There is, however, another aspect to consider as we view the subject of yokes and relationships. Right away we can see a problem.

Jehoshaphat was a king who kept the commandments of God as he reigned on David's throne. Yet because of sentimentality, he went along with Jehoram, the son of Ahab, and his backslidden kingdom of Israel who rallied his support. As a result, we see a godly king compromising with two ungodly kings to go against

another ungodly king. The problem? Jehoshaphat had entered into an *unequal yoke*.

The Root of the Problem

This is the trouble with sentimentality: It always supports an unequal yoke. *Sentimentality* is when a person is operating in natural affections instead of the mind of Christ. The sentimental person will make decisions based on feelings that come from thoughts clouded by emotions rather than by reason or reality.

When people forego the integrity of God's love, they often enter into sentimentality instead of entering into *tough love*. Tough love is just as valid as any other expression of the love of God. The Lord has commanded us to love our enemies and pray for them, but He also commanded us not to eat with brothers who are fornicators and adulterers. Although Jehoram had destroyed the pillar of Baal, the kingdom of Israel was living in spiritual adultery against God (2 Kings 3:1-3). Therefore Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, had no business yoking up with the leaders of Israel and Edom—two ungodly kings.

The Purpose of a Proper Yoke

The unequal yoke of 2 Corinthians 6:14

through 7:1 speaks of a believer being yoked up with an unbeliever. We are the temple of the living God, "and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"

Jesus said with so much love and compassion, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and learn of me; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Jesus Christ wants every individual to yoke up with Him. When I hear that people cannot trust God completely and consistently for the worst trial of their life, I must say solemnly and by the authority of Jesus Christ, *they are not yoked up with God*. Matthew 11:28-30 ends by saying, "My yoke is easy. My burden is light."

What if a believer does not purpose to yoke up with Jesus Christ? Depending on the type of personality involved, there may be a variety of reactions. One person may end up crying, stressed out by the problems at hand and internalizing the circumstances. Another person may become yoked up with his circumstances, but in fact he is yoked up with his old sin nature. Life itself becomes an adversary to his existence, but Isaiah 10:26-27 says the anointing breaks that yoke.*

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

What is the yoke? The yoke with the old sin nature and the yoke with Satan come through circumstances, through supernatural projections in the air, through sight, through cumulative experiences, and through natural reasoning.

Most Christians only consider an unequal yoke with regard to a believer and an unbeliever becoming partners, whether in business or in marriage. But we need to realize that when a Spirit-filled believer yokes up with a *carnal* Christian, that also is an unequal yoke. This is so serious. "Be ye *not* unequally yoked…."

There are many precious people who love God with all their hearts who may have married carnal believers. Those people should never feel condemned; they would be the first to say not to do that because it's not fun. It's a *finished* work, and God is in the business of redeeming lives.

To be yoked up with the Lord Jesus Christ is unique. His yoke is strong, solidified, and validated. It breaks the yoke of the old sin nature,

the yoke of the world system, and the yoke with demons. If you want to know how to overcome the demonic world and all of its strongholds in your life, it's by yoking up with Jesus. It is not what certain people do to you; yoking up with Jesus is the answer to everything!

Lose the Weight of a Heavy Yoke

A thorough study of Scripture reveals so much about yokes. Since ancient times, yokes have been used with animals such as oxen to help farmers manage the tasks of plowing and pulling loads. What is not so obvious is that when two oxen are yoked together, even though they are side by side, one is always leading the other. This is *always* the case. And when we are yoked up with Jesus, He is always leading us while we are very close to His side. He speaks as we go forward, "*My yoke is easy.*"

His yoke is easy. Has your yoke been easy this week? Has your burden been light? Jesus, being so close, knows every weakness, each problem we face. He speaks again: "You shall find rest unto your soul."

There is rest for the weary soul. When you want to ask the question, "What can I do in my marriage?" the answer is very simple. You yoke

up with Christ, and He leads you in any kind of situation, whatever that means. It is between the Lord and you.

Jehoshaphat, in 2 Kings 3:11-12*a* said, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him?…" This passage reveals where the godly king compromised. Having made an alliance with the world, he was not able to discern the voice of God. "…And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him."

It is very interesting that when we go up against evil, our first response is to go to *someone else* who has the Word of God. But this is the beautiful thing about men and women who are Spirit-filled. The Spirit of the Lord is with men and women who walk in the light; definition doesn't have to come through Elisha or the head pastor. The Word of God says we are to walk in the light (Psalm 89:15, 1 John 1:7), and the entrance of His words gives us light and understanding (Psalm 119:130). Yet, Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with *him*."

**See* From Chains to Freedom through God's Anointing, *Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Two

"…FOR I AM MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART…"

"So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom *went down* to him" (2 Kings 3:12). The words in this verse create a wonderful picture. They had to go *down* to meet the prophet Elisha, which speaks of condescension in an act of humility. (Geographically, it is questionable if the direction they traveled was down!) But the choice of words here is very deliberate. These kings, including the godly king Jehoshaphat, went *down* to see God's prophet; but more than that, the analogy reveals that the man of God had already condescended to a position of low estate.

"And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, what have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him,

Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee" (2 Kings 3:13-14).

Quite plainly, Elisha was saying, "I would not give you the time of day if there were not a godly king with you. I wouldn't waste my time."

An Invisible Yoke—the Weight of Oppression

First Kings chapters 11-13 tells the story of the divided kingdom of Israel. During Solomon's reign, because he allowed his emotions to overrule his excellent gift of wisdom, his heart was turned from God to wicked idolatry. After his son Rehoboam became king, secret covetousness and independence among the tribes of Israel flared up in rebellious accusations against his leadership: "Thy father hath made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee" (1 Kings 12:4).

It is so important to discern the yoke and to

allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts so that God can deal with it (Psalm 139:23-24). Unfortunately, the rebellion continued through many battles, within and without, but God's people repeated the sins of their fathers and refused to turn to God. The kingdom was divided, but ultimately all of Israel was led into captivity—in the plan of God.

Keeping Order in the Operations

Elisha, a prophet of God, agreed to serve the three kings (if somewhat reluctantly) to honor the throne of David, saying, "But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him."

This is why, in our church, we love to have the music early in the service. We encourage people to come to church early, to be ready when the praise and worship begins. In many cases, God has ordained that His Spirit will come over people through the anointing that comes with the music.

Worshipping God ushers in the presence of God. When people deliberately come in late, time and time again, they show no respect for the order of the service or the time of the ser-

vants who spend hours in preparation. Most importantly, they show no respect for Jesus Christ. Of course there may be times when being late is unavoidable, but otherwise it is a willful act of disobedience.

So, God's Spirit came upon Elisha through the playing of music. (In another example, the evil spirit departed from Saul when David played upon the harp, in 1 Samuel 16:14-23.)

"And [Elisha] said, Thus saith the LORD, make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand" (2 Kings 3:16-18).

Elisha entered into worship, and through his worship God spoke to him and told him what to say to the kings. In an area that was historically arid and without natural resources—the Arabian Desert—God told them to make the valley full of ditches. God was saying, "Get on your knees, dig out the dirt until the ditches are deep so they can hold the resources of water." These kings were being told to take on a task that was impossible by sight. And they obeyed the words of

the prophet.

Humbled in the Valley

It's a very humbling thing to dig ditches. For every person who knows Jesus Christ, being yoked with Him is a wonderful provision. But when a person does not understand the analogy in this process of 'digging ditches', he will not experience that Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

"Digging ditches" means to make a place for God's presence, God's power, and God's provision to supply what is absolutely needed for victory. For example, if a person cannot love his spouse, then he needs to dig ditches—on his knees—and let God fill the ditches with a provision to love his spouse.

The measure and the depth that we dig is the measure and depth the water will come in to the ditches. The measure that we condescend in the sight of Jesus Christ will be the measure that He fills us for the situation we are facing.

The Way Up Is Down

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). The way up is down. The way

to achieve is to lose. And *the way to gain is to admit that you have lost your self.*

There are men of God who continually convey a spirit of defensiveness in their messages. Their reactions reveal their insecurity. A man like this is refusing to dig ditches in his own soul. God didn't say, "I will dig ditches for you." No. He said, "You do it. You use your own volition and your own faculties to develop a capacity for Me to work."

There are great walls that divide thousands of Christians. Many don't have a capacity for truth. Though they hear the Word of God, they don't receive a capacity, because along with the Word of God comes the individual process of digging ditches—digging places where God can make a person new with His water of life.

He said, "You will not see wind, *neither* shall you see rain." Water will pour into all the ditches you dig, but you won't see it happening—you are not going to see it at all!

How can that be? How can water fill ditches without rain? They didn't hit ground water, or the men would have seen the ditches begin to fill. *It was a miracle*. You may not see God fill your soul. He doesn't come to you visibly or audibly. "For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see

the wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye and your cattle, and your beasts."

That is the invisible, inaudible work of God.

Chapter Three

"…AND YE SHALL FIND REST"

When the Bible says in James 4:10, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up," it is speaking of digging ditches. This verse also teaches us that we are not to walk by sight. Much of the time, God will not allow us to see anything, though He is doing a great work. And the Word is teaching us not to go by our feelings. You will not feel the rain, but you do have a promise that the ditches will be filled with water for you, your beasts and your cattle.

"And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water. And when the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on the armour, and upward, and stood in the border" (2 Kings 3:20-21).

Notice that when these armies were making a meat offering to God, water came *by the way of Edom*. Edom represents the flesh; it was the place where Esau fled in anger after he sold his birthright to Jacob. Water, the miraculous refreshing streams of God, poured into the area of the flesh to control it and to give victory—not *by* the flesh but *through* it!

The Battle Is the Lord's

"And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood: And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil. And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, *even in their country*, and beat down the cities" (2 Kings 3:22-25*a*).

Can you picture how God fights spiritual battles? In this case, *He deceived the enemy*. That's right: God Almighty deceived the enemy. By the reflection of the early morning sun on the water-filled ditches in the place where the three kings were encamped, God made it appear as though

there was blood flowing everywhere. When the Moabites saw it, they must have thought there had been a civil war. As they went in to gather up the spoils, they were ambushed by Israel, and Moab was sorely defeated.

As an analogy regarding the lives of believers, our victory is in the *Sun* of God's righteousness rising up on our behalf (Malachi 4:2), through the precious blood of Jesus being revealed toward our enemies. A godly king was yoked up in an ungodly alliance. But this king understood well the mercy of God (2 Chronicles 20:13-32).

Today, even when we are suffering the effects of taking on a grievous yoke, we need only look to the Son. When the devil saw the blood of Christ, he was deceived into thinking he had won the victory. But the victory is the Lord's! It came through the S-O-N and the literal blood of Christ.

At another time, the Moabites came against Judah while Jehoshaphat was king (2 Chronicles 20:10-22). The Lord instructed him clearly when He said in verse 17, "*Ye shall not need to fight in this battle:* set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you." When Jehoshaphat sent forth singers who were praising

God in front of the army, the tribes of the enemy were confounded and ended up killing each other. Judah simply went in to gather up the spoil! "So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about."

Ezekiel 44:18 describes the attire to be worn by the children of Israel when they ministered to the Lord. They were to be clothed in linen and not to gird themselves in anything that would cause sweat. Warring in the works of the flesh causes sweat (not to mention, an odor). But God desires an attitude of rest and the sacrifices of praise that rise as a sweet smelling savor.

Jehoshaphat was the son of another godly king, Asa. The Bible says that he walked in the way of his father and did not depart from doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord. His experience clearly reflects Lamentations 3:26-28: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* He sitteth alone and keepeth silence because he hath borne it upon him."

Although Jehoshaphat was removed for a time in an unequal yoke, he was easily entreated by the Lord. Because of the overruling yoke of God, he found rest for his soul. God's yoke *is*

easy, and His burden is light. Won't you come unto Him?

CONCLUSION

There are many points we can glean from the message in this booklet. To begin with, for the victory to be established it took a man of God. Even though Jehoshaphat compromised by taking on an unequal yoke, the ungodly king Jehoram recognized to whom he should go. Second, it required seeking out a prophet of God who requested a musician—Elisha understood the importance of praise in true worship. Third, the Word of God came forth with definition. Fourth, God Himself fought for them ("the battle is not yours, but God's," 2 Chronicles 20:15*b*). Fifth, the enemy was deceived.

In Luke 14:19, the parable of the great supper, a man who received an invitation used his purchase of five yoke of oxen as an excuse to stay home. Although parables are not given to impart doctrine, they do offer illustrations for practical application. Here, the yoke is an application of being yoked up with the animal nature.

According to this parable, such a yoke will hinder individuals in their walk with God and cause them to suffer great loss.

God has promised us a rest from the yoke of the old sin nature. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). The only way we can do battle with the enemy is to be loosed from his grievous yoke through humility and to be yoked up with the Lord Jesus Christ. He will lead us gently in the way we should go.

Never Accept Defeat

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Let me tell you a story about two close friends. One of them, Randy, was involved in a very serious accident that left him paralyzed. The damage was so severe that it seemed as if he would not even be able to use a wheelchair.

Jeff, Randy's friend, visited every day for nearly three months and checked up on Randy's wife and children. But at one point, Randy stopped eating because he wanted to die. When he heard of it, Jeff became angry and said, "Okay, you quitter, quit. Let someone else marry your wife and bring up your children. That's it! I am not coming back, you quitter."

With that, Jeff walked out of the room. Then, as soon as Randy heard the elevator doors close, he called the nurse and asked for a bologna sandwich. "I want to get well just to get even with him for being so unkind."

That exchange marked a decisive moment for Randy. Soon, he was able to get around in a

wheelchair, and he became a great soul winner and preacher of the Gospel. At one event where he was a guest speaker, Jeff introduced Randy by saying, "This is a *real* man talking to you from this wheelchair."

Winners never quit and quitters never win. In this booklet, we will see how the Word of God shows us that as Christians, we must never accept defeat, because according to the Finished Work that is the same as believing a lie. The devil, the father of lies, is the defeated one. So no matter what sight dictates, in Christ we are already winners. Therefore we can say, "In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Chapter One

STANDING FAST IN THE FAITH

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

"Let all your things be done with charity" (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).

In the Greek, the verbs in this verse are all progressive in the present tense, written in an active voice with the imperative mood. All of this indicates a continued state of attitude. Paul is telling his readers this: "Watch very carefully. Do not fall into the temptation of sin. Be careful and alert. If you will go through this process, you will be powerful and steadfast, and you will be enabled to stand fast in the faith.

"Be like real men. Stand firmly on the truth, and don't quit."

The whole principle being expressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 16 is that we are to stand like men. We are to never accept defeat.

God never made us to be defeated. We were

not made to quit. We may fall down, but we were not made to stay down. We may get lonely, but we must never quit. Depression may come, but we will not quit. Our hearts may get broken, but we do not quit. In the midst of sickness, we do not quit. We may be persecuted in the worst way, but we do not quit. Financial disaster and tragedy may come, but we will not quit.

Faith Heroes

Abraham never accepted defeat, even as he approached one hundred years of age and still had no son. Moses failed when he killed a man, but he did not quit, though he spent forty years on the backside of the desert. Elijah fainted for a moment, spiritually speaking, but when the angel woke him, he got up and went on, refusing to quit. In 2 Kings 6, Elisha was surrounded by his enemies, but he would not quit. The angels with him far outnumbered those against him.

Ezra and Nehemiah, despite the sad spiritual condition of Israel, purposed not to quit. Mordecai, Esther's uncle, was greatly mistreated and set up for a hanging. But, for the sake of his people, he would not quit.

There are so many examples throughout the Bible of weak men standing strong in the Lord.

Isaiah was at first a preacher who did not know the Lord. Still, he continued to serve God the best he knew how, and he did not quit. Ultimately, in Isaiah 6, we see this prophet getting to know his God. He saw the Lord high and lifted up and was filled with the presence of God.

Jeremiah was the weeping prophet. When he was first called as a young man, Jeremiah tried to convince God that He had chosen the wrong man (Jeremiah 1:6). He talked to God frankly, telling his Lord that he wanted to go out into the woods, let his beard grow, and stay away from everyone else for the rest of his life (Jeremiah 9:1-2). In Jeremiah 20:9, he said he was through with preaching. But the Word of God was like fire in his bones; he could not keep it inside.

Jeremiah went through so much. He had to stay behind when many in Israel were led off to captivity in Babylon. Still, he never quit. He was strong. He stood in the faith and let all things be done with charity, decently and in order.

Getting Beyond Failure

Think of people such as Ruth, David, and Solomon. None of them would quit.

Though her mother-in-law tried to discourage her, Ruth refused to go back to her familiar

homeland. She chose to follow Naomi to dwell with the people of God. Instead of listening to discouraging voices, she listened to God and He greatly honored her.

Throughout his life, David failed and got up, failed again and got up, failed some more and got up. David never quit. Solomon failed even more than his father David did. Yet, in Proverbs 24:16 we find the secret of Solomon's success:

"A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief."

You fall, you get up.
You fall, you get up.
You fall, you get up.
You fall, you get up.
You fall, you get up.
You fall, you get up.
You fall, you get up.

There we have it: Seven times you fall, seven times you get up. Here, the number seven is used as an idiom of speech. What it represents is that no matter how many times you fall down, you can always get back up and go on. Solomon knew this firsthand. After years and years of terrible failures, he finished his life by writing Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. God did not give up

on him, and Solomon—a winner in God's eyes—simply would not quit.

Chapter Two

WINNERS NEVER QUIT

Great missionaries are men who know they must never to accept defeat.

C.T. Studd came down with a terrible disease that kept him in severe pain. Still, he would not quit. He ministered on two continents and lived well into his eighties.

Hudson Taylor experienced failure for sixteen years. Yet, he went on and established the China Inland Mission. David Livingstone faced all kinds of persecution, hardship, and heartache. He even got lost in the middle of Africa—but he would not quit!

One of the great principles we must learn in our lifetime is this: Quitters are always losers and those who do not quit are always winners. The Bible college student should not quit in his freshman year. The sophomore should never quit. The junior should never quit. The senior should never quit. He should complete his

course of studies, being led by God all the way to graduation.

When it comes to marriage, neither party should ever quit. Remember when you do get married that you are being joined to another soul. It is vital that you never quit your marriage.

Think of the prophet Hosea. His wife left him and became a prostitute, but Hosea never quit on her. His love for her stayed strong. Hosea went to the slave market, bought his wife on the auction block, and brought her home. He loved her and was reconciled to her. Their relationship became an example of the way God loves Israel and reconciled her to Himself.

Grace Overcomers

When we know the grace of God, when we realize that his grace remains and that His love never changes, there shouldn't be a single thing that can make us quit. With an understanding of His provision of love, and by understanding how to go forward in Jesus Christ's mercy, there is simply no reason to quit.

Why should I quit?

If I am weak, then I just have to accept grace. If something comes up, I just have to receive God's love. If failure comes in, I will accept His

forgiveness. If I encounter heartache, I will simply accept the compassion of Christ's fellowship. The principle is this: *Never ever quit.*

If you lose the loyalty of those you love, don't quit.

Think of Peter. He kicked and fought and struggled with God's plan for his life. He fought as much as he could fight. He had every reason to quit, especially after he denied Christ three times, because he was so ashamed. But Peter received grace and mercy, and he did not quit.

Paul was stoned and was left for dead in Lystra (Acts 14). He suffered with a thorn in his flesh (2 Corinthians 12). Did he quit? No. He refused to accept defeat.

Friends Who Stand True

"It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling" (Proverbs 20:3).

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

"Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:16,17).

Of course, there are some things we should

quit. The things we do that cause contention are things we should quit. Job 3:17 instructs us to cease from troubling others. Now, that is definitely something we should quit doing.

Friendship, however, does not quit. People who love God and love their pastor do not quit their church. People who love the Body do not quit the Body. They draw near, and they refuse to quit.

There will always be something trying to get us to quit. There will always be someone who wants us to live in defeat. Armies of demons try to put us in situations that will cause us to withdraw, get weary, and faint. The powers of darkness want to infect us so we will quit.

Jonathan was placed between his friend David and his father Saul, and He became an amazing friend to David, and he never quit being David's friend, but he never quit loving his daddy. He was caught between two great men. Jonathan understood Saul's pride and arrogance, and still he went into battle with him, where the two died together.

In the Bible, Jonathan is not always associated with greatness. Yet he was probably one of the most wonderful and amazing servants of God. While Jonathan stayed true to his father, in

terms of going to battle with him and loving him, he still would not quit integrity, loyalty, honesty, and veracity toward his friend David.

A Victorious Destiny

Consider Samson—a miserable failure because of his weakness with women, even though God gave him much power and strength. He sinned with Delilah and lost his hair and his power with God. His eyes were put out and the Philistines brought him into their pagan temple to be mocked (Judges 16:25-30). But God had a plan. Samson's hair was growing back, and so was his power. God did not quit using Samson.

Samson didn't know how much his hair had grown out when he asked a lad to lead him to the pillars of the temple. There, he prayed and brought down the temple, killing more Philistines in his death than in all of his lifetime.

Yes, Samson sinned. He refused to repent about his situation with Delilah, and he was made a slave and blinded because of it. But Samson did not quit. In the end, he triumphed for God.

Chapter Three

THE BODY OF CHRIST: POSITIONED FOR TRIUMPH

Faithful men do not quit. Notice, I did not say that *good* men don't quit; rather, *faithful* men do not quit. Grace-filled men and women do not quit. People who have the Spirit of the living God refuse to accept defeat. I am not saying that we will not become weak and fail. I am not saying that there will never be times when we will want to quit. I am not saying we won't ever be wounded or hurt. The bottom line, however, is this: We refuse to quit.

God's righteousness never gets offended. God's love never lives in fear. God's grace never lives in striving or works. God's mercy never lives in condemnation. God's forgiveness never remembers the past. God's joy always has strength in weakness. Those who have the faith of God know that they are going to overcome. God tells them that they will overcome, so they

know that they will!

It is so crucial for those who come to Bible college not to quit. There will be trials and tests—we are supposed to have them. God cannot use us unless He takes us through trials. He preplanned for your trials and He prepaid for your errors. So no matter how severe the test, we can trust God and not accept defeat.

Walled in by God's Fire

"For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

"Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD.

"Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.

"For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye" (Zechariah 2:5-8).

I have made up my mind that the devil cannot knock me out. He cannot even touch me because of the wall of fire God has put around me.

A wall of fire surrounds believers who love

the Word. That wall is positional truth—categorical doctrine from the Word of God. This truth means that the fire of the living Word of God and the fire of the Holy Spirit is all around us. There is no place for the devil to get at us. Our wrong decisions may give Satan an opening here and there, but there is no way he can touch our destiny. He cannot touch our provision. He cannot touch our purpose. He cannot touch us to make us weaker than we already are. The devil just cannot do it.

God's people just do not quit. The more Satan fights us, the tougher we get. Psalm 84:7 speaks of us going from strength to strength. In Romans 1:17, we go from faith to faith. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, we go from glory to glory. We may even add love to love. This is how it goes for the child of God.

Divine Reversals

A drunken driver was in a terrible accident. He was dying and the doctors didn't give him much hope, but his wife and two children were praying for him. I went to see him, and God led me to tell him, "Now, you could quit and just die, or, you could come to Jesus, confess your sins, and start fighting the good fight of faith.

Why don't you make up your mind that you are going to come out of this place, face the music, and go all the way with God as a husband and a dad?"

The man could hardly speak, but he squeezed my hand and nodded his head, "Yes."

Three months later, he was out of the hospital, praising God. Here's a guy who was guilty and filled with shame. He was terribly weak and afflicted. Yet, he refused to quit.

Awoman had lived for seventeen years with an alcoholic husband. She attended a revival meeting that lasted until midnight and then went home to ask her husband for forgiveness. Her husband was stunned by the depth of her love. He got right with God that morning, and they have been going strong for thirty-five years. That woman refused to quit on her marriage.

Think of the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos, which was an asylum for the insane. There, according to Church history, he was tortured and placed in hot oil three times while in exile on this island. There, Jesus Christ came to him, saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty;" (Revelation 1:8).

The entire book of Revelation was communicated to John while he was a prisoner on that island. Did John quit? No. Instead, he received the final chapter in the canon of Scripture in the midst of severe and intense suffering and depression.

Depression cannot defeat us. Fatigue will not make us quit. The power of God's Spirit quickens us and enables us to go on. The most beautiful thing in the world is to know that God wants us to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58). He wants us to thank Him for the victory we have in Jesus Christ.

Fellowship in God's Light

I am so thankful for the people in our ministry. These are people who refuse to accept defeat. They never miss services unless they are on vacation or sick. Visitors come on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights and find our chapel packed. They wonder if there is some special event going on. The house is full, and they cannot figure it out.

Our house, God's house, is full because of the Word of love, the Word of grace, the Word of forgiveness, the Word of edification, the Word of

conviction, and the Word of power. Fellowship in the light of the Body of Christ is taught and lived here.

Who wants to miss the great things God wants to communicate to His people in this day and age? With this going on, few people want to stay home to catch a television program. The best place in the world is to be in church worshipping in song and in spirit with the Body of Christ.

Acouple started coming to our church about six months ago. They were having problems. "We never got along," the husband said. "Now, we just have so much fun in church together. We worship together and hold hands in the church services. We have never had this in our lives. This is the life!"

The reason is this: We are part of a church that will not quit—people who will never accept defeat.

CONCLUSION

As a ministry, we will maintain our vision. We will not quit our outreaches to our neighborhood, our city, our state, and our nation. We will continue to go into all the world as Christ told us to.

Christian leaders have visited our church and have asked us to teach them about evangelism. Our concept of reaching the lost is simple: We go and go and go. We just keep going and look to edify people in every realm. We choose not to quit.

Businessmen can apply the same principles. When they put in their hours, giving the work all of their effort, and refuse to quit—God will bless.

If you are the kind of person who withdraws into yourself, remember that Christ is your life, and for you to live is Christ. Streaks of anger, resentment, condemnation, and self-deception are from hell. Step across the line and stop being

that way. Refuse to accept the defeat that Satan designed for you.

Choose Christ.

Choose His life.

Choose to win.

Nevertheless, Thy Will

Be Done

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Every believer, at one time or another, has asked for something in prayer and never received the answer he expected. Whether it was for a loved one to be healed, for a financial need, or for the perfect partner in life, it *seemed* as though God did not come through. We don't realize how serious that charge is.

To even consider that God somehow defaulted on His promise to give whatsoever we ask in His name (John 14:14), is an attack against His character. To cover-up such an attack, we may look to ourselves and whimper, confessing that we really don't deserve God's attention anyway. But every rationalization ultimately impugns the nature of our Father in heaven and the sacrifice of His Son that made us heirs of His kingdom. It is the Father's pleasure to give us the kingdom (Luke 12:32), and that includes everything in it.

While He lived on earth, Jesus, who had no

sin nature to be dealt with, was still subject to the Father's will. In the garden of Gethsemane, when it seemed as though He would not be able to accomplish the task for which He was sent, He prayed, "*Nevertheless*…"—regardless of how things *appear* to be, in spite of the impossible mountain before me—"…*Thy will be done*." He trusted His Father implicitly and never doubted the outcome.

We have been made heirs, but unlike Jesus, we were estranged from our Father before we were saved. Now we are growing in sonship through the very things that bring us to our knees.

Chapter One

BEING COMPATIBLE WITH GOD IN PRAYER

Where does a child of God derive his power, his authority, and his provision? If I were to ask this, you would say to me, "From God," and, obviously, you would be right. God *is* the source, but how does a person come into a place in his life where he releases God's best, releasing the reality of God?

How does a born-again, blood-bought believer come to a place in his Christian experience where what God is doing and what the believer is experiencing are compatible? I want you to ponder this. For example, suppose you were married and your partner left you, saying, "I don't want you. I don't love you!" and you said, "I'm not going to accept that. I'm going to trust God. I'm going to believe God for our marriage." Then, what if that person divorced you and married someone else? Your feelings and

your heart were not compatible with what God allowed. You expressed faith toward God, and now there is a reason for being upset: Your partner left, divorced you, and remarried, and you respond to the situation by confessing, "The power that's in the Bible was not there in response to my prayer."

Perhaps you have prayed for somebody, and then you said, "God gave me a word that they're going to be healed." What if the person you've been praying for dies? Will your response be, "I can't trust God any more. I heard from the Bible that he would be healed, and he died! I'll never be able to trust the Word of God to speak to me again"? If that is the case, it is because your feelings and your experience are not compatible with what God promised regarding your prayers.

Pray According to God's Will

Here's a single man who announces, "I want that woman. *She* will be my bride!" He read the Scriptures until he found the verses that seemed to say he would get this woman, and he believes God gave him the exact date it would happen. "April seventeenth…God said!" Furthermore, he met someone in a restaurant who brought up something that was "right from heaven! That

confirmed it!"

But on May first, he reads the Word of God. (This time, "The Holy Spirit told me….") So he asks the woman to go on a date, but she turns him down. The next thing he knows, she's engaged and gets married to someone else. He feels cheated and defrauded by God; but worst of all, he can't trust himself anymore. He says, "I thought I heard from God!" and he ends up seriously wounded in his emotions.

Now, what was happening in all these situations? What about when my first wife came down with leukemia, and our church was having all kinds of healings, but God didn't heal her? In reality, I never claimed she was healed; I just prayed that she would be. That's the difference. I *prayed* that she would be healed, but I didn't *claim* that she would be. God is sovereign. My faith declared that unless God takes her, I will believe that she will be healed. That was my faith.

Don't Presume Against the Promises

I want you to see that in the Word of God there is *always* a reason. I want you to avoid going through experiences like I've mentioned. That is the purpose of this message. I'm very

careful in my prayer life—I'm very careful in all my life—yet God could take me tomorrow. If He does, it will be His perfect will. I'm not living in immorality, so if He takes me, it will be because it is His will. That's my attitude, and I know that many of you have that attitude also.

The average Christian lives in measures of presumption against the Promises. It's different than when God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He said in Joshua 1:3, "Every place the sole of your foot will touch *will be* yours," but that land had been promised to Israel years before they actually took it; Canaan was theirs already.

Receiving a Rhema

The first principle to understand in this context is that I can't make a claim on a promise like that unless I get a *rhema*. (See John 14:26; Romans 10:8, 17; Ephesians 6:17.) A *rhema* is a specific verse or passage in the Word of God, revealed personally by the Holy Spirit to the believer in order to meet a specific need for the details of his life. I had better make certain it's a *rhema,* and if it is, folks, it will happen.

The second principle is that you can't get a personal *rhema* unless you read the Scriptures,

unless you are filled with the Spirit, and unless you are void of presuming against God because you want so much for something to happen.

Here's the third principle: The more subjective I am, even if I'm spiritual, the more I'll presume against promises. Do you see that? My subjectivity will cause me to presume against the promises.

The fourth principle is that God does have promises to give us and to bless us, providing we understand how to live in His power. Then we can understand what it means to have the power of God's life, which is what's missing in Christianity today.

The 'God Factor'

You have heard of people who pray for finances to go on the mission field. Without telling anyone about their need, someone sends them two thousand dollars, and they are able to go overseas. It's a miracle! Then you hear somebody else who says, "I'm going! I'm going!" but the money never comes in and it never happens. What's the difference here?

I would suggest *God*. I would suggest the 'God factor'. Now, the God factor is one thing, but it must be compatible with something that

God wants to do with me. The God factor must be compatible with what God is doing in my life. God is trying to do something with every single life, and He *will* accomplish what pleases Him at some point.

Chapter Two

POWER AND AUTHORITY TO BE LIKE CHRIST

I need to understand that God's will is to make me like Christ. This is His primary purpose for me on earth. Now, you've really got to be spiritual to grasp this: God's primary purpose for me on earth is to conform me to Christ's image, and *not* to answer all of my prayers, because answering all of my prayers would not make me like Christ.

In Psalm 106:15, God answered Israel's prayer and gave them meat, but He sent leanness to their soul. You see, He answered their prayer, but that was a terrible thing for them because it made them carnal. Imagine, *answered prayer making people carnal!* Our life with God is not just asking and receiving. It's asking and, in Hebrews 10:35-36, *waiting*. It's asking and letting patience be worked in us for indefinite periods. It is asking and then waiting upon the Lord,

being conformed to Christ's image while we wait.

The Sovereignty of God

A woman called me on our radio broadcast, and she asked, "Would you pray for my cat?" The studio audience laughed, but I said, "I sure will. I have a dog, and I know what you mean." Then I asked, "Is it a male or female cat?"

She said, "It's a female, and she's very beautiful."

I said, "Does the cat have a name?"

She said, "Yes. Lucy."

I said, "Dear God, I pray for Lucy, this beautiful female cat. I really mean it. In Jesus' name." That prayer was so powerful, the cat was healed within sixty seconds. I'd would rather that it had been a man, or a woman, or a child; but, for that moment, I guess it blessed her that God healed her cat. It's a true story! The woman lives outside of St. Petersburg, Florida.

I want you to see that you might as well sort some things out about the sovereignty of God; you might as well get this straight. God does what He does—and doesn't do other things—for one reason: that I will trust Him with all my heart and not lean on my own understanding.

If anything tires me out, it is when I counsel people, and then they lean on their own understanding. A beautiful lady came for counseling today for the first time. She was precious. She was frail, and she needed help, but she was fun to counsel. I don't mind frailty, weakness, or problems; but when somebody puts rationalization ahead of the communication of faith, it tires me out.

The Bible says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). God wants to bring me to the place (and He has) and He wants to bring you to the place (and He probably has!), where you would confess to Him before the elect angels and the fallen angels, "Lord Jesus, I'm resting. I'm quiet. I'm peaceful. I'm trusting. And, though you slay me, I'm going to trust you. So, do what you want to do, but please be merciful and do the best thing for me." Can you see it? That's an attitude worth having.

The Power Source

Now I'm going to bring you into the heart of this message. In John 10:17-18, "Therefore doth

my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

Notice the first part again: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." Power comes from laying down my life. Power does not come from taking up my life again but by keeping it down with the Cross.

Authority comes from laying down our lives. Laying down my life conforms me to the image of Jesus Christ.

I could say, "I will take up my cross daily." And to that, God says, "If you will do that, I will give you special authority. Not special answers, not special promises, but special authority."

Jesus derived His authority from laying down His life. Whenever He spoke, the people remarked at the authority of His doctrine: "When Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:28-29).

In Matthew 26:53, Jesus was saying, "If I wanted to, I could pray to my Father for legions

of angels to come and deliver me right now, but I don't want that." The average person in His situation would say, "Please send legions of angels—and hurry!"

Chapter Three

NOT MY WILL BUT THINE

Jesus was so humble. He had the mind of God. Christians want so badly for something to happen, yet they don't have the mind of God. They become very frustrated when things don't happen according to their *preference*.

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15*a*). Now you know why the Lord Jesus Christ said so beautifully, yet with such conviction, in Matthew 18:3, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." I want to say something about this. This does not mean a person isn't saved. I have the Kingdom of God in me; however, there are lots of times when I don't enter into this kingdom. It's the same with you.

The original language in this text reveals something so interesting: "Except ye be *converted*." It didn't say "regenerated," did it? Ex-

cept you be converted as a little child, you cannot enter into God's kingdom. This means that you can't have the supply of God's kingdom. You can't have its authority. You can't have its power—that's what this means. But, it does *not* mean that you can't have eternal life.

Releasing God's Authority

He said, "Except ye become…as little children," and then in verse 4, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." The key to my pleasing God, the key to having Kingdom power, is *humility*—and that means conversion to humility. We must be converted to humility. Remember that humility means always placing God first—not thinking highly of myself, and not thinking lowly of myself, but just not thinking of myself. That's how we release God's authority.

You notice in John 10:17*a*, authority was released by Jesus' laying down His life: "Therefore doth my Father love me [in my humanity], because I lay down my life." We know the Father loved Jesus anyway, but He loved that especially. That was a special love. This is why the Word of God says, "whosoever will be great

among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all" (Mark 10:43-44). The greatest among you is the least, and the greatest is the servant of all. And then, in Mark 10:31, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."

Authority in Godly Humility

I would suggest to you today that, if there is anything I have learned as a pastor, I have loved counseling sessions when God's people agree with God. They simply *agree* with God!—and that is precious. No matter what their situation happens to be, they have agreed with God.

Humility also means that I agree with God's character. If I agree with God's character and trust it, then I still have every right to ask and to believe, but then, to totally accept the grace and love of His character to preserve me and bless me in whatever happens. And I will know this: If what I want to happen doesn't take place then, in the meantime, I am being conformed to Christ's image.

The Word of God says, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." And after you've asked God, you have need of patience, that you may receive

the promises (Hebrews 10:35-36).

God was saying, "I'm not going to give you everything you ask for, but I *am* going to give you patience. That means that I'm going to give you My character before I give you your answer, because if I were to give you your answer *before* I gave you My character, you would be a spoiled child!"

I was speaking with a very precious person recently about the issues of death. Everyone is going to die; no one will escape it (unless we are raptured). It is appointed by God when we should die, and the issues of death don't belong to people but to God (Psalm 68:20). They belong to God. I can't control the issues of death, and I can't control all the answers. I don't know why my dad died when I was three, why my first wife died in her forties, or why my brother died in his early fifties. I don't know why. But I know this: *It was God's appointed time*.

So God says, "He that shall humble himself shall be *exalted*" (Matthew 23:12). Do you know what that means? Promoted. Whoever humbles himself shall be promoted.

I *do* have that promise, and you have that promise. That's a promise for every child, man, and woman and for every marriage. That is a

promise to every Christian. It's an unconditional promise with the authenticity of God's immutable integrity: "He that shall humble himself shall be [promoted]."

Be Ready to Receive

Let's be honest. In this world of Christianity, do you realize how many shipwrecked lives there are because "God didn't come through"? All kinds of lives, shipwrecked because they didn't grasp the whole picture.

Here is a woman who lives with a man who isn't the best guy in the world; and though she prayed for restoration to a godly marriage, in this case, God never answered her prayer. In twenty-five years her husband has never gotten right with God; he's not even saved.

For fifteen years, this woman battled God because He never answered her prayer. She heard my message (more than once), that "if you are positive in your volition toward God and set Christ before your face, you will receive degrees of glory for every time your spouse is ornery to you."

Only in the last three years out of twenty-five has she been practicing that message. The fact that this character, who is such a thorn in

her flesh, was in her life will be the very reason she receives the Morning Star Decoration (Revelation 2:26-28)—and she finally understands it! She will have the Morning Star Decoration for living with the very terrible husband that she has and for remaining faithful to the truth. Her situation became the means for her to receive the prize—not that God wants her husband to be that way; but because he is, she will receive great recompense of reward.

CONCLUSION

"Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" (Isaiah 66:5).

1 Peter 5:5 says "be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Isaiah 66:5 says we "tremble" at God's Word. The Hebrew word for tremble is *chared*, and it means that they responded with holy reverence and a readiness to receive. Contrast that to Psalm 50:17, "thou castest my words behind thee."

Chared has a further meaning: It speaks of one who holds the Word of God in the highest regard, above anything that's going on in his life, and who enters into careful consideration with great motivation of heart, humility, mental concentration, and great faith in the character of God. That is what it means to tremble at God's

Word.

The Father knows our needs. He will send those answers, and we can ask that He would. But as we continue to humble ourselves before Him, we shall be exalted, and that is a direct promise to all.

No One Cares for Me

Like Jesus

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

I would love to tell you what I think of Jesus
Since I found in Him a friend so strong and true;
I would tell you how He changed
my life completely—
He did something that no other friend could do.

No one ever cared for me like Jesus;
There's no other friend so kind as He;
No one else could take the sin and
darkness from me—
O how much He cared for me!

"No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus." Charles Weigle wrote this song many years ago. He was a traveling evangelist with a wife and child. After one trip, he came home to find a note from his wife. Tired of their life, she left him and took their child with her.

Dr. Lee Robinson of the Tennessee Temple gave Mr. Weigle a little room near his office and

helped him recover from the devastating turn his life had taken. Later, Mr. Weigle wrote this great song.

It's a song that always gets me crying—crying because this was a dear, dear man of God. His wife left him for the world, but this song became Charles Weigle's testimony.

Oh, how God cares for us! I could have a revival if we just sang that song fifteen or twenty times and then dismissed the service. Real songs, when you allow them to penetrate your heart, are more than just words that you sing. Anyone can just sing a song and do a beautiful job of it, too.

But when we let a song like this penetrate our hearts, we end up very broken before God. These songs warm our hearts with the love of God. My prayer is that the words of this booklet will pierce your heart in the same way. God loves you so very much. May you really recognize today that *no one* cares for you like Jesus.

Chapter One

SET YOUR LOVE UPON HIM

"And he said, A certain man had two sons:

"And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have

bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:11-24).

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver

him, and honour him.

"With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation" (Psalm 91:14-16).

The Word of God says, "Because he hath set his love upon me…." Point to yourself and say that out loud: "Because I have set my love upon Him…." What a tremendous passage. It overwhelms me to think that God will deliver us when we set our love upon Him. Beyond that, He will set us on high because we know His nature of love, mercy, truth, forgiveness, kindness, and gentleness. We call and He answers and is with us in the midst of trouble. He delivers us with honor.

A person could be on "skid row," living like hell, but if he sets his love upon God, he will be delivered and honored. This message is not so much for the non-Christian; rather, it goes out to backslidden Christians.

God has a word for you who are backslidden. He says, "If you have failed, but you keep setting your love on Me, then I will deliver you in honor. I will make honor out of that dishonor. I will bring grace out of that disgrace. I will establish love out of your mess."

Born-again Christians are blood-bought and brought into God's family through regeneration

and the new birth. Once you have received Christ as your Savior, you should make a public declaration by getting baptized. Baptism never saves anyone, but Jesus still tells us to do it. We should do it because of what it means in our obedience to God and His Word.

"For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens" (Psalm 89:2).

A Son Takes a Bad Turn

The son in Luke 15 was troubled and bored, so he went to his father and said, "Give me my portion." People always want their portion. "Give me what is mine. This is what I deserve. If my brother gets this, then I should get this." There are problems in families with wealth because of the divisions it can create. Someone dies and then there are all kinds of heartaches after a month or two because people get upset about who got what. Everyone wants his portion.

This son got what was his and took a journey into a far country. Oh, those journeys into far countries—the drugs, the alcohol, the immorality, the homosexuality. People journey into far countries and it breaks your heart to see it happen. There, in the far country, the son wasted

his portion. He spent all his money in riotous living and was left with nothing. Then came a famine to the land, and he began to be in want.

Oh, the famine that can take place in our hearts if we are not careful. Our hearts begin to draw away from God. Yet, God never leaves us. Thank Him!

Draw Near To God

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:8).

The Christian's heart draws away from God because there is a famine in his heart and his mind is in a far country. Oh, the way a famine can make a person think, "Church is just not the same." Why? A famine in the heart has taken place. His mind has wandered far away from God's country of grace and mercy and truth and love. The son begins to be in want.

I don't care who you are, you cannot continue in sin against God if you are really saved and truly born again. You will find yourself in want. The famine will spread while you are in that far country. Your riotous living will get to you. You will go with your friends and waste some of your money instead of giving it to mis-

sions. You will have to go and waste that substance, and you can do that, but you will be in want.

And that want grows deeper and deeper.

Notice, the son joined himself to a citizen of that far country. That citizen gave him a job feeding pigs. But the want was still there. It just got deeper. It hit him in the belly, and he longed to eat the husks that he was slopping out for the pigs to eat. He gladly would have eaten the pig food, but none would feed it to him. Ultimately, the son did reach bottom. He came to the end of himself.

Secret sins and iniquity will wear out the backslider until he realizes something. The son realized that he had a home. "My father has hired servants. They have bread to spare, and I am out here with nothing and no one. I am in this far country. I am so empty and so hungry. This kind of life is not worth living. I will arise and go to my father and say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you. I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.' "

He arose, and he went to his father. I love the next part of the story. I love it because it reminds me of that song, "No One Ever Cared for Me

Like Jesus." The father saw the son afar off. Don't ever forget it.

Chapter Two

JUST COME TO THE LIGHT

Where did the son go? Afar off. Where was it? A far country. What happened? He wasted his substance. What came next? A famine. What happened after that? He began to be in want. What did that lead to? Unbelievable conviction. And his conviction led to a measure of condemnation. He was beginning to make right decisions, so his convictions did not have to bring condemnation. But at this point, he didn't know his father's nature and he didn't know God's nature. God sets us high above condemnation when we know His nature.

The father ran to the son, fell on his neck, and kissed him again and again. The son tried to make a confession. The father, instead, called to his servant, "Bring my son the best robe, bring him the ring, bring him some shoes. Kill the fatted calf and let us make merry. My son was lost, but now he is found; he was dead, but

now he is alive again."

That is God's love for the backslider.

"For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9).

I love this so much! Within us is the fountain of life, and in God's light we get more light. Luke 8 tells us to take heed how we hear. To him who has, more shall be given. Keep getting more light from God. The entrance of God's words brings in the light. God's light will love you. God's light will bless you.

Get Light and Then Get More Light

I thank God for those in our church who come out to three services, week in and week out. These folks just keep getting more light.

It doesn't matter what your heartache is. God's light will chase the darkness away and expose it. When you flip the switch as you enter a dark room, the light takes over and controls the darkness. It pierces through the shadows.

Draw near to God's light. Draw near to God's love and God's mercy. He is waiting to kiss you again and again, just as the father kissed the prodigal son. He is waiting to have a celebration on your behalf. No one cares for you like He does.

“Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God” (Jeremiah 3:22).

The backslider's problem is that he has been drawn away into darkness and away from the light. He is occupied totally with himself. He falls into famine. He is wandering in a far country. We don't have to go that way. I plead with you! Don't go that route. Don't be distracted into a far country.

No one will ever care for you like Jesus. He is just waiting for you to step toward Him.

CONCLUSION

I was part of a revival years ago, my first evangelistic tour. And I can remember that first time that I preached on the unconditional love of God. I had been a legalistic preacher. Someone told me that, and he was right.

That night, things changed. I realized something from this Book. I understood something from the Bible. I finally understood just how much God cares for each of us. There was a long period of silent prayer at the end of that evening, then we closed with singing. What rejoicing we had. We were all enjoying the great love of God.

Just consider that song by Charles Weigle one more time as we finish these thoughts:

I would love to tell you what I think of Jesus
Since I found in Him a friend so strong and true;
I would tell you how He changed
my life completely—

He did something that no other friend could do.

All my life was full of sin when Jesus found me;
All my heart was full of misery and woe;
Jesus placed His strong and loving arms around me,
And He led me in the way I ought to go.

Every day He comes to me with new assurance,
More and more I understand His words of love;
But I'll never know just why He came to save me,
Till some day I see His blessed face above.

No one ever cared for me like Jesus;
There's no other friend so kind as He;
No one else could take the sin and
darkness from me—
O how much He cared for me!

Notes to Young Preachers

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INTRODUCTION

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1 Timothy 3:1).

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21).

"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20).

"Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity" (1 Timothy 2:7).

The word "preacher" in 1 Timothy 2:7 is translated from the Greek *kerux*, which means "herald." *Kerux* comes from *kerusso*: "to make proclamation; to herald." Preachers are entrusted with the duty of proclaiming and an-

nouncing the Word of God. Therefore, it is very important that the preacher is properly prepared for his vocation. Preaching is an extremely serious commission. God has chosen it to be the method by which souls are won to Him (1 Corinthians 1:21). With these truths in mind, this booklet is written so that the young preachers might be more effective in the ministry of His Gospel.

This publication was taken from special sessions held for young men who desire to be preachers. I think you will find the information contained in these booklets to be highly practical. It is drawn not only from books and learning (both of which are very important in the education of any preacher), but also from experience.

My hope is that these pages will help young pastors avoid some of the difficulties and setbacks that often befall beginning preachers. The booklet is intended to give a broader picture of the pastor's office and his tremendous responsibility.

Chapter One

PREPARING TO PREACH

Seeing the Need

The first step in preparing a sermon, message, or Bible study is to find a need. It has been said that necessity is the mother of invention, and it is the factor that provides impetus for a message. In order to see a need, the pastor must know and love his people. He must understand that those who sit under his teaching are not there by chance or coincidence. Each member of the congregation has been appointed by God to the pastor's charge. This does not mean that he rules over them like a dictator. No, the members of his congregation are given so he can share the love and grace of the Lord.

After noticing a need, the preacher goes to the Word of God. Through the counsel of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, he will find the exact message to communicate. The power of

God cannot be underestimated. He is faithful and just. He hears and answers prayer. The preacher who prayerfully studies and considers the Word of God will always have a word in season for his congregation. Other resources (such as commentaries, word studies, and books) will be very useful, but it is important not to diminish or sacrifice the commentary and counsel of God's direction that impresses the heart through the Bible.

After realizing the need, the preacher is to make a simple outline. He should not be so detailed as to pre-write the entire message before reaching the pulpit. A rough outline will lend order to the message. Charles Spurgeon, who became the pastor of his first church at the age of 18, never preached from notes. He was called the "prince of preachers." Those who have read any of his sermons cannot deny him this title. His secrets? Preparation and prayer. This introduces the next point: The preacher should be consumed with the message from the first moment of study until the delivery from the pulpit. Spurgeon immersed himself in his sermons because he knew that the truth was relevant to his life as well. A preacher cannot effectively communicate the importance of his message unless

it is important to his own life.

Not with Wisdom of Words

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (1 Corinthians 1:17).

Throughout his preparation, the preacher must constantly consider those whom he will be addressing. He should allow the Holy Spirit to impress their names and faces before his mind's eye so that he can love and pray for them and think where they are coming from. As he does this, the pastor should concentrate on the one great truth he will present. It is a misconception to think that a message has to stimulate a person's intellect. The preacher's aim is to make available one great truth that will produce an eternal change in the hearts of the people. He will sacrifice the so-called great message for the privilege of communicating one great truth. The preacher should not attempt to be sophisticated or overcomplicated, using big words. His job is to make plain the Good News. Every pastor should be creative in his vocabulary. If, however, he uses an uncommon term, he must explain it for the congregation's sake. In short, he should

not emphasize words; rather, he should emphasize truth *with* words.

The pastor must remember that he is God's designated instrument to orchestrate His service. He must consider his responsibility and continually recognize the position to which he has been appointed. Looking over several verses and paging through commentaries is not proper spiritual preparation. One has to be hungry and thirsty after God. The heart needs to be prepared. Before he gives a message, the preacher goes to the Lord with humility and meekness in prayer. He considers his strengths and weaknesses, dealing with them at the Cross without intimidation or condemnation.

The preacher must have an awareness of the hour and a sense of urgency in his message. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:29*a*, "But this I say, brethren, the time is short." James 4:14 is even more explicit with the topic, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." With this in mind, the minister prepares as though it is the last sermon he will ever preach. It may be the last time an unsaved person hears the Gospel. No message can be treated lightly.

Sizing up the Setting

"For who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10*a*).

To some, the setting for the message may seem like a secondary concern. It is vitally important, however, that the preacher know his auditorium and platform. He should familiarize himself with each detail of the room in which he will preach.

First, he should size up the pulpit. This is his platform and he must feel at home. He should note the size and shape of it and the area surrounding it. He should examine the angle and structure. He should examine the audio system in the auditorium, checking to see if there are ceiling speakers. If there are, the preacher will have to choose a topic that he knows well and can dynamically expound. From this location, the speakers push the energy of the sound downward. Therefore, it does not seem like the preacher is speaking face to face with the congregation.

The preacher should also consider the size and shape of the hall. If the building is unusually wide or long, the preacher needs to choose specific spots to focus upon. He also needs to de-

termine the temperature and ventilation of the auditorium. In a hot and humid setting, the preacher needs to shorten his message.

Appearance Makes a Difference

"Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

The pastor should dress for his part. That is not to imply that he should be unduly fashion conscious, but he needs to look as good as he possibly can. Why? He represents the King of kings. Appearance is usually an outward manifestation of the heart. Decent attire and a neat appearance will project an attitude of integrity and order. Successful business people almost without exception take care to present themselves properly. Should not those about God's business do the same? A subtle distraction could prevent someone from receiving the message.

It is important that the pastor makes sure those who share the platform with him also display order in their dress habits. Certainly, the Holy Spirit can overcome all of these potential hindrances, but God also honors those who honor Him by having an appearance of integrity. A decent, orderly platform is impressive. If a pastor takes his call and message seriously,

he must be sure that his chapel projects an air of importance.

A good preacher considers how he felt as a member of the congregation. He remembers mannerisms and expressions that caused him to be distracted or uninterested in a message. He does not step timidly to the pulpit, but he walks with dignity. His message is from the eternal Word of God. Therefore, his countenance and posture should reflect integrity, fervency, and expectancy.

He should also practice making eye contact in his conversations so that it will be a natural part of his preaching style. All of these things will lend form and character to the preaching and enable the congregation to hear the message more readily.

Preparation at Home

"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" (1 Timothy 3:4, 5).

As 1 Timothy 3:5 clearly expresses, God requires that each man who is called to a leadership position in the church first exhibit his

leadership ability in his own household. He will not be an effective preacher if he is not effective in his own home. In his expanded translation, New Testament expositor Kenneth Wuest explained that the phrase "ruleth well" means "presides over in a beautiful manner." The primary authority in the marriage has been given to the man. When he uses this leadership office wisely, he and his family are greatly blessed.

The pastor, like every other man of God, is responsible to love his wife as "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). A husband should treat his wife like a queen, for she is a gift from God. He is responsible to invest in and edify his wife. If a pastor cannot practice this one-on-one in the home, he cannot expect to be able to do it with an entire church. The preacher must learn to love and cherish his wife as a part of his preparation to preach. As he develops a capacity in her for spiritual things, she will become a tremendous, faithful partner in the Lord's call.

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21). It has been said that preparation prevents prob-

lems. For the pastor, prayer and preparation create poise—a godly confidence founded on the precepts of the Word. "Prepared" is *hetoimazo*, a verb form of the Greek noun *hetoimasia* or "solid foundation; firm footing." *Hetoimasa*, found in Ephesians 6:15, speaks of the believer having his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The preacher who prepares properly with reverent respect for God will be on firm footing in the pulpit. He will be consumed with the needs of his people and the message from the Word. As he communicates the truth of God's Word, people's lives will be touched and changed.

Chapter Two

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Preaching is a necessity intended by God to draw men unto salvation. However, there are many who view preaching as foolish. Often, overemphasis is placed on verse-by-verse expositions and academic doctrine analyses, where the truth is explained in detail. This is teaching (*didasko*), which is the explaining and supporting of principles of the Word with an emphasis on their practical application. Of course, this is very much needed today, but not to the exclusion of preaching. Preaching (*kerusso*), as used in the New Testament, implies urgency and is designed to change hearts and lives.

Pastors must not limit their ministry to

teaching; they must preach as well. Preaching is the proclaiming of God's will in order to minister to the needs of the people in the congregation. This is not to say that the pastor singles out a weakness or problem area in a person's life, but there may be certain needs that should be addressed. For instance, perhaps members of the congregation are discouraged or going through a time of transition. The preacher who loves his people and prays for them will recognize these things. As he studies the Word of God, the Holy Spirit may impress his heart to preach on a certain subject or passage of Scripture.

The Responsibility of the Preacher

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:1,2).

The above verse provides an excellent picture of the preacher's responsibilities. The epistle of 2 Timothy is generally regarded as Paul's last correspondence. He writes Timothy toward the end of his second imprisonment in Rome, sensing that his execution is imminent: "For I

am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6). Here, he strongly commissions Timothy to take care of the churches he had planted. Paul stresses in 2 Timothy 4:1, "I charge thee"—*diamaturomai* in the Greek, which means "I declare emphatically." This charge, made before God and Jesus Christ, is holy and serious. How was he to fulfill it? According to Paul's instruction, he was to preach the Word of God in all situations.

In 2 Timothy 4:2, the word "preach" is *keruxon*—a form of *kerusso*. The latter Greek term refers to a proclamation made by the king's herald or messenger. In the ancient Olympic games held in Athens, there was competition among the heralds. They were judged in a variety of categories including voice and diction, punctuality, and most importantly, clarity and accuracy. In the last category, the messenger was graded on the precision of his proclamation. There was to be no exaggeration or alteration. The competition required the herald to deliver the king's communication clearly and distinctly, exactly as he received it.

Preaching What He Bids

"Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and

preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (Jonah 3:2).

This is an example of God communicating to His preacher. Nineveh was a city laden with immorality, but God had a plan to bring the Ninevites to repentance. Therefore, he told Jonah to "preach unto [Ninevah] the preaching that I bid thee." As it does in the New Testament, the word "preach" in this Old Testament verse means to make a proclamation. What was Jonah to announce to Nineveh? He was to communicate the preaching that the Lord had "bid" him to preach. "Bid" is translated from the Hebrew *dabar*, which is defined as "to prescribe." Keep in mind the ancient duty of the herald.

The preacher, God's messenger to the church, must declare God's message as it is communicated to him. This is clear in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation. According to the King James Version, the Spirit spoke to each of the seven New Testament churches through an "angel." "Angel" in the Greek text is *aggelos*, which refers to a human messenger. In consideration of these things, the preacher should realize the importance of the Holy Spirit's guidance in his presentation of the Gospel.

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:4, 5).

Every pastor must develop a faithful team that will prepare and preserve an atmosphere of order and expectancy in the service. The preacher's teammates should be mature believers, who are "nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:6*b*). Through love and investment, the preacher can put together a dedicated, sensitive crew of workers. Ushers, song leaders, soloists, musicians, and nursery workers all play major roles in the church. These are extremely significant positions. Those who diminish their importance lack a comprehension of the spiritual warfare that rages between heaven and hell in the midst of a godly assembly. Satan will stop at nothing to hinder the communication of God's Word.

The young pastor should begin forming his team immediately upon establishing his church. He needs to plan where the nursery will go. It cannot be in a place where the nursery will be a

distraction during the message. He decides who his song leader and soloists will be. He is not dictatorial or authoritarian, but through encouragement and edification, he develops his team so that it will best complement his preaching. Each of his appointments and administrative decisions are expressed in love through the Word of God. All of this is done to minimize confusion. No matter how small a church is, practical orderliness must not be compromised. The eternal destiny of a soul may be at stake.

Choosing the right ushers is essential to the maintenance of a sharp, attentive atmosphere in an auditorium. The usher has a challenging job. He is to dress neatly and be able to project confidence and integrity. He needs to know where and how to seat people. The usher is not a respecter of persons, but a protector of the congregation. People who tend to be noisy and disruptive should be seated toward the rear of the room or next to disciplined mature people who can help them concentrate. If a person is continually going out and coming in, the usher kindly deals with the situation. With love and understanding, he may suggest to the person that he sit in the back. What is he doing? He is preserving order so "that the word of the Lord

may have free course" (2 Thessalonians 3:1*b*).

The song leader should prepare himself for the service, for it is his responsibility to prepare the congregation for the sermon. If he can, the pastor should let the leader know the topic of the sermon beforehand; then he is able to choose songs that develop the congregation's expectancy toward the message.

A song leader should do just that: lead songs. If he talks too much, the minds of those in the congregation become wearied. All kinds of thoughts are racing through people's minds. Any singer or soloist should concentrate on singing, not preaching. They can make a comment or two, but not more than that, for it detracts from the mood of the service and the preparation for the message.

On occasion, a person will not do his job properly. When this happens, the pastor keeps an attitude of love. He does not rebuke, express his displeasure or criticize in his mind. Such thoughts will lay waste to all of his preparation. Instead, the pastor concentrates on the message, ministers the Word and leaves correction until another time.

Illustrations can be excellent tools that, when used properly, can bring home certain truths. Jesus illustrated many principles through parables, yet one should not allow them to become a crutch. Charles Spurgeon offers a good perspective on illustrations. He referred to them as "windows" that permit the light to shine in. Yet, as he pointed out, no house is made entirely of windows. A sermon cannot be built upon illustrations, for it must have the sure foundation of the Word. Too many illustrations in a message will leave people without the essential objective truth they need for their lives.

Testimonies should be treated similarly. The preacher should not permit someone to testify unless his testimony is legitimate and will benefit the hearers. Some people do not know how to behave when they are given an audience. They are not prepared and the testimony lacks content. Do not allow testimonies to ramble on uncontrollably.

The salvation invitation is the premier moment in any meeting. At this point, the unsaved are brought to the brink of decision. They now have a choice to make. Their volitions are ex-

posed to an opportunity to receive Christ. To some, the invitation represents an anticlimax, and they treat it as an afterthought. This is wrong. Lost souls have been brought face-to-face with their eternal destinies. Pastors must stress the significance of the invitation. There should be silence in the audience at this time. No one should be moving around. People are more likely to respond positively when a quiet mood prevails.

Facing Difficulties

Preachers must be careful not to use the pulpit as a sounding board. The pastor cannot afford to react to someone or to deal with a negative trend during a message. These situations should be dealt with individually and in privacy. An entire congregation should not be subjected to a long sermon concerning a matter in which only three or four people are actually involved. This may hurt others and could detour their minds into negative self-analysis.

At certain times, a trend may begin to spread to the point where it endangers the vision and purpose of the assembly. More than ever, the pastor needs to go to God in prayer in these situations. The Lord will direct him through the

Word and the Spirit toward a gracious, loving, and positive response to the problem.

The Importance of Identification

The effective preacher never grows weary of identifying with his congregation. He considers the expectant mother who is experiencing many transitions and emotions in anticipation of a baby. He thinks of the widow or widower who recently lost a spouse. They are battling loneliness and emptiness. Then, there are teenagers who are continually faced with pressure from peers and temptation. By reflecting on people and their situations, the pastor becomes deeply concerned with their needs and goes to God for something to meet those needs. Jude 22 says, "And of some have compassion, making a difference." The preacher who understands the concerns of his people will make a difference with his preaching. Fervency will characterize his message. He is humble before God, therefore people listen attentively because they sense his heart for them. The Holy Spirit ministers through him, and the congregation receives the Word.

It is important that the preacher keeps his heart warm. It must be tender to the Spirit's ini-

tiations through the Word. Paul told Timothy to "stir up the gift of God" (2 Timothy 1:6). This speaks of a rekindling in the heart. The preacher may think of Christ on the Cross, and it will cause him to weep. He may remember a person who accepted Jesus after a sermon and will quietly thank God for choosing him to be His instrument. Thoughts of the faithful laborers on the foreign mission field are likely to warm his heart.

Holding The Attention

Every preacher faces the difficult task of holding the attention of his audience. Capacities for concentration vary greatly from person to person. The college graduate has learned academic discipline, and can sit straight and listen intently. A person who works outdoors may be physically spent. This, combined with the temperature of the room, may cause him to be drowsy. Others simply do not understand the necessity of concentration for it is new to them. Such people may find it difficult to sit for a very long period of time. In this situation, the pastor has to be very patient and careful not to embarrass anyone. At the same time, unnecessary movement distracts and irritates those who

want to listen. Herein lies the dilemma. The preacher cannot turn anyone away, but he, too, must make sure that his sermon is heard. His goal should be to develop a church where anyone from any background can enjoy and receive the message.

The first step toward this goal is for the preacher to learn how to control his own attention. If he is not focused upon the message, how can he expect his audience to concentrate on it? He should decide where he will start and where he will finish. The intensity of concentration deepens as the message progresses. Even the slightest detour disrupts the momentum of the sermon.

The preacher, therefore, must learn to guard his concentration prior to the message. The last thoughts a preacher thinks before he preaches determine the force of his introduction. This sets the stage for the remainder of the sermon. Thus, he cannot afford to be unnecessarily distracted before he preaches. There may be an emergency on occasion, but generally the preacher should avoid anything that would take his mind off the message. He should not receive negative statements before preaching. He should not discuss serious business deals, since an eternal transac-

tion between God and the congregation is about to take place. Perhaps one who is lost will be faced with the Good News for the first time. Preachers must realize the urgency of their work. A lethargic, haphazard sermon could hinder someone from receiving Christ. A person may have come to church ready to hear. Yet, if the preacher was careless in his presentation, there was probably no power in the message. This person may leave the service without making a decision. Only at the Bema Seat of Christ will some preachers realize the extensive damage inflicted by these messages.

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

A preacher must have firm convictions about what he is preaching. As he steps to the pulpit, he should consider the importance of his sermon and its potential impact. The audience will detect his appraisal of the message almost immediately. People can sense when a preacher has not prepared himself. There is no urgency, and therefore, no power. How can a pastor convince people of the power of God and His Word if he himself is not certain of that power? People need

to see that a pastor believes what he preaches. If he is convinced of the reality of hell enough to weep for the souls who are going there, he makes hell more real to one who does not understand it. If he believes in heaven so much that he appears homesick for eternity, then he will describe it much more magnificently and lead people to want to go there. The more the preacher believes what he is saying, the more he will preach with power.

CONCLUSION

"And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him" (Luke 19:47,48).

Preaching, perhaps, has never been more necessary than it is today. Christ's return is imminent and time is running out. The preacher is to challenge men with truth. The message of the Gospel must be presented with urgency.

People need the Lord, but many have never heard the preaching of the Gospel. With a faithful team of workers, a solid belief in the Word, and an orderly atmosphere, the preacher can proclaim God's message with power. Even in the best situation, the preacher may face opposition as Jesus did in Luke 19:47 and 48. There will be many, however, who will hear and receive, and whose lives will be transformed. The preacher's faithfulness to announce the Good

News will not be in vain. God's Word will do its work.

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

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One Mind, One Heart,

One Spirit

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:20-23).

Oh, how God longs for oneness among His people! In reading this passage in the Gospel of John, I am always overwhelmed by the appeal of Jesus for His disciples to be one, just as He and the Father are one. Four times in this brief passage the Lord prays that those whom the

Father had given Him may be one.

Therein we see the key to oneness. It is something that must come from above. Anything manufactured by man is destined to be defeated by the enemy. Among many church denominations today is a movement toward oneness that is built on concepts derived from a natural viewpoint. It is the concept of the world. Compromise rules the day, as many believers are taught to relate to each other on a human level.

As this booklet will show, oneness in the Body of Christ comes from above, through Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Body. By the moving of the Holy Spirit, Christians can be unified in mind, in heart, and in spirit—godly oneness that produces real results throughout churches, communities, countries, and continents.

Chapter One

MEMBERS IN PARTICULAR OF ONE BODY

Consider carefully the apostle Paul's great communication on oneness in the Body of Christ:

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

"For the body is not one member, but many.

"If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

"And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

"If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where

were the smelling?

"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

"And if they were all one member, where were the body?

"But now are they many members, yet but one body.

"And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

"Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

"And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

"For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1Corinthians 12:12-27).

We, as Christians, are members of the royal family of God. This relationship goes beyond friendship. It goes beyond subjective love. When one member suffers, all suffer with that member; when one member rejoices, all members rejoice with him. We laugh with those who laugh. We weep with those who weep. We are members one of another in the Body of Christ.

This passage in 1 Corinthians 12 is so beautiful because this kind of oneness is a great manifestation of revival. It is the work of the Holy Spirit producing and promoting an unction that flows to every member in particular. A pastor who sees this happening in his church is very happy, I can tell you. He realizes that he has something special going because of God's intervention in the lives of ordinary people.

Revived in Oneness

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (Romans12:15-16).

One woman came to me and said, "I have to see you." She told me that her husband has cancer. The news came very suddenly. Tears came to her eyes, and in an instant, I was weeping with her. I wept with her because of compassion and concern. The tears revealed the oneness we have together as members in particular, over and above the unexpected news she had to tell me.

This woman made a statement, and then the Word and the Spirit revived us in a very serious moment. We were very concerned, and we entered into prayer. On my way home in the car, more tears came, and I said to God, "Please, God, don't let this dear man die."

I weep with those who weep, with tears of compassion. I rejoice with those who rejoice. Please remember that I am speaking for every one of us. We are one in Christ, and we have experienced this oneness over the years in serving God together. This goes for every one who has been knit together in the Body of Christ and has experienced the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit—one body, many members, all to give glory to God.

Chapter Two

SPEAKING THE SAME THINGS

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

I love this passage. "Beseech" is a very important word in 1 Corinthians 1:10. When I see this word in the Scripture, it means that God is exhorting us to put truth into action. "I beseech you…" means I am urging you with a special urgency to go from theology to application. We are to go from just knowing something to obeying it.

Paul was writing to this troubled church in Corinth, and he was saying to the people there, "You have the theology that I taught you, now let's see the application of it. Let's cross over the bridge from knowledge to experience."

I am so very thankful for all those with me who co-labor in love. There are times when I am so busy with the tasks that I have to handle, and the phone will ring. It is a dear friend calling to say, "I miss you. I haven't called you for such a long time."

Or, I will be in a business meeting and my secretary will interrupt to say that a certain person is on the line. "Wow, they still remember me! That is good," I will be thinking.

Seriously, I appreciate so much every call that I get. Every beautiful letter or edifying e-mail that comes to me is so precious to me. I enjoy the absolutely fantastic, loving relationships that God develops in the Body of Christ.

Be of the Same Mind

"By the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" is such a great phrase. Years ago, I fell in love with that name. I have always loved that name, but I am just now beginning to understand its real meaning. Those who love this name are those who speak the same things. There are no divisions with them. They have the same mind—the mind of Christ.

We have to be very careful when working with those who do not have the same mind. I

am not saying that there cannot be diversity. Some of my dearest friends do not attend my church. They love me, and they are led by God a certain way. We have times when we get together for coffee and just express our love and appreciation for each other.

Now, if I were to make demands and say, "If you love me, you'll come to my church," it would just be a matter of control and negative thinking. But I think it is so beautiful when the differences are just a matter of diversity. There is no scriptural dispute and no sin between. We just come to an agreement that we are different, and that is okay.

So many things go on out there. Pastors and church leaders are hurt when they have ministered in love and labored in the Word and in prayer, and those they have loved go against them. These are the things that really hurt a true pastor.

What is the problem? They are dealing with people who are not of the same mind.

There is more to it than just having the same mind. Colossians 2:2 tells us to have the same judgment and to be perfectly joined together in love. We have had that in our community for the past several years. I can honestly say that we

have been deeply loved by the people here, and it has been marvelous.

People have prayed. They have prayed tirelessly and fervently. They have walked with me in love and in compassion, serving our Lord together. God has given us His heart, and we have been made one in His body, therefore we speak the same things.

Chapter Three

THE SPIRIT IS THE KEY

"And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

"And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them" (Jeremiah 32:38-39).

We have received wonderful official honors for our work in the city of Baltimore. One group recently named us the "Church of the Year." Another organization has put us in its Hall of Fame. These are great things to celebrate, because we also have had our share of persecutions and attacks.

Now, you will not hear me get up into the pulpit and rattle off all of our accomplishments. I don't get on the radio and ramble on and on about how we have received this honor and that honor, this award and that award. But, very honestly, some of these things are really amaz-

ing honors for God to give us. I want to be honest and tell you that I am absolutely undeserving of any of it. Still, they are much appreciated. I don't want to boast except in the Lord, in what He has done through me by grace together with you in the unity of Christ.

I don't think our enemies talk about these awards when they get together, do you? But one day, God will have something to say about their attacks against our ministry. Let me just say that I am deeply grateful to overcome the enemy while we enjoy the oneness and love of being in Baltimore, having great people and great ministries supporting us.

Recently we honored a wonderful pastor from the local community. He flew in from California just to accept a special presentation from our body. "Just come on up, receive your honor, and go home to rest," I told him. "I know what traveling can do to a body."

"You are not getting rid of me like that," he said back to me. "You are not going to chase me away right now. We are one with you and I want my people to see this and revel in our togetherness."

I was so blessed by his statements. This is a man with a congregation of 3,500 people.

Many of our pastors have experienced these same things in their communities. These are unusual days for us because God is doing mighty things. There is a great oneness where we weep with those who weep, laugh with those who laugh, rejoice with those who rejoice.

Have you ever gone to church and just felt like laughing the whole time? I have had those moments. Usually it happens in the times when the pressure is the greatest, and if I didn't laugh, I would probably cry. I am sure people are thinking, "What is *that* all about?" but so often, God uses laughter just to shake off the dust of the atmosphere that is trying to get to us.

Great Grace upon Them All

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy [Spirit], and they spake the word of God with boldness.

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and

great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:31-33).

In this specific group, men were filled with the Holy Spirit. Here is the key to having one mind and one spirit. Even if some of them did not have the same gifts that the others had, they still had the same Spirit because they were in the same place for the same purpose.

This is a beautiful thing.

Even if some people lack the doctrine that others have, they still have the same Spirit with what they do know. This means so much to me. In Christ, we have the same Spirit.

This kind of quickening among us is the evidence of revival. This is what causes souls to be saved. This is what makes people feel free.

CONCLUSION

Oneness from God revels in the diversity of the Body of Christ. We are members in particular, and our unity is made stronger as each one lives in his call from the Lord and makes himself available to supply his unique portion in serving Christ in unity.

This oneness and unity is never based upon the "uniform"—that is, a sameness and a similarity developed through emotional rapport and soulish attachments. That which is uniform can appear to have unity, but it lacks the power and presence of the Holy Spirit that draws strength from every member.

As we grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer is that all believers will learn to continually consider the truth expressed in Ephesians 4:

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Open Doors

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

There is so much we could say about the will of God. As a pastor, as I go on, I see more and more people living in ignorance, deception, and neglect. They live in these attitudes because of a misunderstanding they had about open doors.

Here is how it goes with some people. They want to go to another country, and they pray. Bang! A plane ticket becomes available, and immediately they think that they know God's will. I am very, very careful when I discuss issues regarding the will of God for a person. It is totally personal. I cannot interfere in the decisions of people.

Very often people will go to pastors and leaders and seek their counsel, concerning very serious matters—jobs and relocations and marital choices. All of these are major choices that people make every day, every month, every year. Really, the only thing a pastor can do is walk before God and let his life serve as an ex-

ample of a living sacrifice and living faith. He should be "stingy" with his opinions and not allow his personal preferences to become the guiding force in the lives of others.

From the example of the apostle Paul, we discover a great deal about operating in the will of God. One thing he prayed for constantly was that God would open doors for him.

We have a message. God has told us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. There is no question concerning His will in this matter. He communicated this to the apostles, and that commission has been passed on to us. My prayer is that this booklet will lead many more of God's people to pray for openings in the areas of evangelism and world missions. God desires to use us, and He has made ready certain fields. Still, the laborers are few and the harvest is very ripe. May God touch your heart with these words and lead you in His call for your life.

Chapter One

THE MYSTERY OF FOLLOWING CHRIST

"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds" (Colossians 4:3).

Paul was seeking the will of God, but he wasn't asking about where he should go. At that point, Paul was going nowhere. He was in prison, and his prayer was that God would open doors for him to share the Gospel there in prison.

God answered his prayer and gave Paul an open door with Onesimus. His imprisonment also opened the way for him to preach to some of the member's of Caesar's household. That was a pretty good open door!

During his time in Roman custody, Paul also found doors open to preach to King Agrippa and to Felix, a Roman governor. Apparently these

exchanges grew very intense. During one such encounter, Felix was left trembling and said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25b).

Choosing the Right Door

Open doors draw us into a deeper intimacy with God. I remember years ago when I first began as a pastor. There were three doors open to me. One opportunity that presented itself was in Amsterdam, New York. A church there was planning to build a new sanctuary and offered to give me a big increase in pay, a new parsonage, and a car. The offer was very tempting. Just one thing was wrong: that door was not the one that God wanted me to walk through.

The door I walked through was to stay in Montsweag, a little town in Maine. In this place, there were about thirty people, a church room with a hole in the floor, and thirty dollars a week in compensation.

I didn't drive down to New York to check out the situation there. No, I stayed home and spent hours in fasting and prayer. What an answer came, and what a difference it has made in my life.

Consider again the words of Paul from 2

Corinthians:

"For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

"To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

"I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

"To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

"For we are not as many, which corrupt the

word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:9-17).

Open doors are there: God puts them before us. And through prayer and fellowship with the Lord, He shows us the way we are to go. The great thing is that it is God who always causes us to triumph in these choices and encounters.

Chapter Two
GOD TOUCHES HEARTS

"And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).

Early in my ministry, I made a commitment to go door to door with the Gospel. It was Jesus' way, it was the disciples' way, and it was Paul's way. In a little area of Maine, I just started walking and knocking. It was good exercise. For six months, I knocked on door after door, and nothing happened. Six months, I went alone. But then in the seventh month, seventeen people made professions during the first week. After that, for the next nine years in that area, people made professions to receive Christ every week.

Those first months were important. "But no one's door was open," you say. That's not true. All of those doors were open to me. I had to

keep walking through them. Did I quit? No. I went out every morning and every evening. I believed that God would touch the hearts of those people. Right where I was, God was doing something. First, it was happening in me. Then, I saw God swing open the doors of so many hearts and lives.

The open door does not refer to witnessing for Christ. We have been commissioned to do that. He told us to go, and we answer that call wherever we are. I am to witness in my Jerusalem, my Judea, my Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. I do not have to ask God when or where I am supposed to do it. I do it right where I am. That's how it must go. The open door is what I ask for as I go.

The Power of Prayer

Intercession and obedience to the Great Commission are so important. My obedience—my opening the door of my heart to let His command come in, and then my going in response to that command—makes all the difference.

When we have contact with God, things happen. Perhaps you are a salesman and you need to make a few deals or you won't be meeting your obligations. Get in contact with God.

Go to Him. Let Him close the deals for you.

This is the same way that it works on the streets and at the doors in evangelism. Go to God and let Him open hearts for you. The trick isn't to move to a new place for new opportunities. Hearts are right where you are. There is no secret formula. Methods are not the issue. Prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit do the work for us. We are empty vessels, and our obedience is God's success.

Are the hearts of your loved ones closed to you? Pray and believe God that those hearts will swing open.

To the church at Philadelphia, the Lord spoke in Revelation 3:8, saying, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." We have had a lot of people try to shut the doors of our church. We have people mock us and make trouble for us through slander and lies. But they could not touch God's ministry, so it still goes on.

When God closes doors, no one can open them. The Lord has made it possible for us to have thriving ministries in Maine, Massachusetts, and now Maryland. He opened doors and then He closed them. We moved forward in obedience to the will of God and we have seen the

fruit of His work in us.

Chapter Three

ADVERSITIES AND ADVERSARIES

"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:9).

"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10).

At every open door that I have seen, there have been adversaries. This verse has been true at every place that I have gone to. Open doors are given as a test of my faith.

Open doors are given to us so that we can learn to hear the still, small voice of God. Open doors address my faith, not my needs. This is not about walking by sight. This is about letting God teach us how to pray and show us how to walk on.

For sure, there will be challenges at every door that is before you. We don't walk through

the door that leads to comfort and convenience.

"This door takes me to more money, so that is the way I am going," you might think. Or, "This way is the way my best friend wants me to go, so this is the way I am going."

Those are adversaries to your call. Stand still and listen to God. Let Him direct your path. The Spirit will speak expressly. Your heart will hear.

Walk with the Wise

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Proverbs 13:20).

"And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was in Egypt, whither he fled from the presence of Solomon the king, heard it, that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt.

"And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came and spake to Rehoboam, saying,

"Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee.

"And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people departed.

"And king Rehoboam took counsel with the

old men that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people?

"And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever.

"But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him.

"And he said unto them, What advice give ye that we may return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us?

"And the young men that were brought up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.

"For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

"So Jeroboam and all the people came to Re-

hoboam on the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the third day.

"And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men,

"And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (2 Chronicles 10:2-14).

The Body of Christ offers us a great deal, including wise people who can give godly counsel. I can remember when I was considering all of those options in my early ministry. I went to an older, experienced man of God and asked for some advice. Now, he did not tell me what to do. Yet, I talked and he listened and then I listened. Mostly, we prayed together, and God led me in the way that I was to go.

We see in 2 Chronicles, Rehoboam sought some advice. He turned first to the men of experience—a wise move that brought wise advice. Then, he went to his buddies, the guys he grew up with. He asked them, but their advice was based on their selfish advantage. Secret adversaries were awaiting this young king. Sadly, he swallowed their analysis and it cost him part of

his kingdom. Rebellion came and God took ten tribes from Rehoboam's rule. Israel was split into two kingdoms, as it remains to this day.

Listen, if I become lost in the forest and I meet a couple of old hunters, I am going ask them how to get out of the woods. That's humility and it's just plain smart—that is, if I want to get out the woods alive.

Young preachers and young believers need help, and there are grizzled veterans who can help them. These are men who have been places, built churches, weathered storms, and stood for God through thick and thin. These men know the power of prayer, they know the Book, they know how to go to God, and they walk in faith. Use these men. Their wisdom is invaluable. It's priceless. They know how doors swing open and how decisions for God must be made.

Always Open

The door to the throne of God is always open. It is His will that we pray without ceasing. It is His will that we seek the lost and go soul-winning. Plan to go, and do it on purpose.

Any Christian who studies and prays will witness for Jesus Christ. He will do it in grace with love for His Savior. God's provision for our

lives is so amazing. If you are in a difficult marriage, let God lead you. Pray and love and serve, and let Him make a way. There is a door of hope, not necessarily an escape hatch. Swallow up the pride and don't play games with the truth. The door to the Father, the entry into His presence, is there. Go to Him. Live for Him. Stand in Him.

God picks up the weary. He strengthens and quickens them. He teaches His people how to walk in knowledge and in power.

CONCLUSION

"Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind" (Luke 14:21).

We have grace, love, and the glorious Gospel. What else do we need? Let's go. God wants His house to be full. Our church doors are open and our community's doors are open. We knock and knock, and we let God deal with the results. We pray and go, pray and go, pray and go. It is His work, His purpose, His power. Something is happening. We may not see it on the surface, but a work of the Holy Spirit is going on. It is going deep and people will respond.

Some are so faithful to see the open doors at their places of employment. These people work hard and work honestly. They give forty hours for forty hours' pay. This is a precious thing. We keep on loving and we keep on being available.

Open the Door

to an Abundant Life

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INTRODUCTION

We preach for one reason: to stir the hearts of men and women everywhere to see the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every heart needs to know that the Word of God is still quick and powerful, and that the efficacious Blood of the Lamb is still working today, cleansing and covering us.

The purpose of every message is to save souls, as the Word of God with the Holy Spirit draws those who do not know Christ. For Christians, it is that we would fall more in love with Jesus as we recognize that He has set us free forever, having delivered us from sin and death and the bondage of hell.

The abundant life of Christ is for us to enjoy. This life is beautiful—uninhibited by the fear of death and the weight of sin. Satan, however, would lead people to believe that as believers, we are the inhibited ones. Hell contends that *we* are the ones burdened with inhibitions, missing

out on the fun times this world has to offer.

Nothing could be further from the truth. As this booklet will show, Satan wants to keep people from living in the reality of Christ's life. The devil wants to drag souls to hell, luring them into his inhibited habitation of unending pain, want, and loneliness.

God desires that we would discover our unlimited potential in His habitation, the kingdom of heaven. His purpose is to establish us as kings and priests in His family. Our part is to go through the Door (John 10:7-9) into abundant life to experience absolute liberation in our spirit, soul, and body.

Chapter One

ETERNAL REALITIES

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

"Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations" (Isaiah 14:9).

Every person who has ever lived is unique. Not one of us has shared exactly the same disposition, opportunities, or experiences. So much goes on in a life, good and bad, but those things do not determine where we will spend eternity. Your destiny is determined by your response when Christ knocks on the door of your heart.

Picture a mother with her newborn baby in her arms. She smiles at the child as she places her in the crib. That woman is experiencing full-

ness; she has given birth to a child she reproduced. She is so happy and the child is so beautiful. When you consider it, it is hard to reconcile that scene with hell.

Consider a father playing on the front lawn with his son: he is so happy and the boy is so happy, and the daily pressures of life have become abstract. It is difficult to reconcile that scene with hell.

On the other hand, consider someone who has lived in terrible sin. He may have hurt many people in his life, yet he is forgiven, cleansed, and purified, and he is now living for Christ. He received the gift of grace and mercy when he opened the door to abundant life.

For some people, it is hard to accept that the sinner is on his way to heaven where he will live a beautiful life with Christ forever. It is even more difficult to reconcile the fact that someone who lives well, yet who rejects Jesus Christ, is going to hell (Luke 18:10-14)—but every moment of every day it happens.

Hell Rises Up to Meet Them

The Bible tells us that every time an unsaved person dies, hell is stirred up—moved to meet him (Isaiah 14:9). It is not the sort of welcome

people generally think of. There will be wailing and cursing and gnashing of teeth. Torment, guilt, and remorse will go on forever. Imagine the loneliness and the darkness that will overwhelm people who go there. They rejected the love of the Master; they never opened their heart's door to the life Christ was waiting to give them.

Oh, hell is full of souls. It is not empty, the way we think of a dark and lonely place. It is inhabited. But this habitation is totally inhibiting. There is no fellowship in hell. There is fire, yet utter darkness inhibits any opportunity for association. People who go there have only their consciousness of memories and unsatisfied desires to torment them.

No one in hell sits down with his family and enjoys a meal. All the jokes about meeting old friends there, having parties and wild times in hell, are forgotten. Why? Because in hell there is only anguish that never ends. People there will have the same lusts they had during their lifetime, but their desire just goes on and on without satisfaction.

Can you imagine what it might be like to inhabit a place where you are inhibited by the bondage of sin forever? Many of us have lived

in deep sin. We have had a taste of the misery that it caused us. I can remember getting so angry and resentful, living in sin and not liking it but not knowing there was a way out. Imagine being presented with a remedy and not taking it.

Unending Pain

Some of us have watched people with terminal illnesses deal with excruciating pain day after day. One dear woman in one of my first churches survived ten long years with cancer before God finally brought her home to heaven. She had days of tears, but I can always remember her victorious spirit. When death came for her, God received her into glory.

For the unsaved, however, death comes and the pain goes on. Their pain will never go away. Suddenly, they are in eternity with every evil soul who never received the Savior.

What is worse is that now there is no hope; there is no way out of their habitation in eternity. Memories of the times Jesus gave them to receive Him and be saved will keep popping up. Indeed, memory is one the chief torments of hell. Those in the fire always remember and can never forget. "Their worm dieth not" (Mark

9:44-48)—their conscience burns and is never quenched.

Who goes to hell? Only those who refuse to receive Christ. People do not go to hell because of their sins. All have sinned because we are all sinners. Jesus, however, bled and died so that no one would have to go to hell. By grace through faith, whosoever will can come, accept the love of Christ, and receive Him into his heart. To as many as receive Him He gives power to become the sons of God (John 1:12).

Chapter Two

GOD INHABITS HIS PEOPLE

Christians are people who have come to God and received Jesus Christ as their Savior and Advocate. We have allowed the love of God and the grace of God to work out a different kind of life for us. We live differently, act differently, and look differently. We present ourselves as believers who are followed continually by the grace of God. We know how to grow and how to enter into God's life. We have the uninhibited life of the Lord Jesus.

I am deeply blessed when I see people from various backgrounds praying and worshipping in our church. We worship Him because we love Him. It blesses me to know that people gather and pray every morning. We lift up requests to heaven and spend time praying and praising God. It is a great blessing because these people mean it. The intensity of their time before the Lord is beautiful.

God inhabits the praises of His people. This is an uninhibited habitation. It is free and glorious because it represents a release by the Holy Spirit. People raise their hands and come together in an exchange of the Word of God. With these things, we reveal our love for the Master and it is always a joy to see. We receive the grace of God and share Christ with each other because of what He has done in our hearts.

Show People the Real Jesus

I recall one service when we gave an invitation for salvation and seven adults raised their hands immediately. Three of them were what we would call "hippies." After the service, I found out that these young people had been going to a church that preached against everything that they were doing—and some of the things they were doing were very wrong. But that other place never communicated the love of God to them. They came to our church and heard a message on the saving grace of Jesus Christ. They heard about the love that sent the Son of Man to the Cross to save humanity.

"This is the Jesus we wanted to meet," one man said. "The other Jesus we heard about wasn't someone we wanted to meet. But this Jesus, this

One from the Bible, Him we want, so we raised our hands to be saved."

These young people walked through the open door to the abundant life of Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ loves you. He loves you enough to say that He will never, no *never*, no never leave or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). That is the Jesus of the Bible. That same Jesus makes it possible that you will never again have to fear going to hell.

He died on the Cross for me and for you. All who accept Him as their Savior can walk through that door into abundant life.

Chapter Three

BRING ETERNITY INTO TIME

"And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

"And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

"And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:15-17).

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

"And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:22-24).

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2).

If God would pull back the curtains that hide our eyes from heaven and hell today, I am sure our attitudes would change in an instant. We would make sure that we were in church for every service. We would find a way to get there under any circumstance, by the grace of God. Seeing what awaits us and considering those who are lost would prompt us to give beyond our tithes and offerings to reach others. We would pray like we never prayed before, saying, "Father, our Father, we are praying for souls. Please save them."

If we could pull back the curtains and see the reality of heaven and hell, our lives would take on tremendous new dimensions. Our experience would contain a new reality, a new love, and a new joy. We would no longer live in condemnation, but live in the abundant activity of

God's divinity through the grace and compassion of God.

We have love, we have grace, and we have the Body of Christ. We have the Word of God and a tremendous opportunity to live abundantly in Christ. We have the opportunity to be among the greatest messengers in the entire universe.

Pulling Them Out of the Fire

I remember the story of an 18-year-old boy who stopped at a burning house in Norway, Maine. He went inside, carried out two children first, and then helped the mother and the father find their way to safety. Four people were saved because this boy stopped. It was a freezing night. The family was snug in their beds, unaware of the danger around them. None of those people would be alive today if not for this boy. Today, that family and that man are very close friends. There is a friendship because these people owe their physical lives to him.

Think of what great friends we have in those whom we lead to Christ. We show them the way to be saved from hell. We reveal the grace of God with the Gospel. What abundant opportunities there are for us to save people from the

fire! Imagine what a difference we can make in someone's life by communicating love, grace, and life. We need only remember what a difference that made in our own lives.

Think of it: By leading people to Christ, we keep people from a multitude of sins—now and for all eternity.

Scenes in Heaven

Imagine some of the scenes we will see in heaven. Oh, the magnitude of the eternal significance of communication between those who witnessed and those who received their witness and were saved! Those who shared Jesus will rejoice with those they helped save from hell.

Just imagine the beauty of those eternal exchanges.

Is it any wonder that the angels of heaven rejoice when one soul gets saved (Luke 15:7, 10)? I can almost hear them saying to each other, "Look! That one is not going to hell. Thank you, Lord. These will not go to hell."

For this reason, God calls soul winning the greatest business in the world. It is a remarkable thing for the Body of Christ to have a worldwide vision through Jesus Christ. We do not want the lost to be cast into hell. We want them to hear

about the love of God through the Gospel of grace and the message of deliverance. We want them to open the door to an abundant life.

Over the years, our Bible college has raised up hundreds who go out with the message of God's love. Some will take it to places where no written language exists. Yet, God will provide a way to bring His grace to their understanding. Hundreds will be saved and transformed because they were willing to go.

Years and Years and Years of Joy

Consider what awaits people in eternity. First, think of hell and all the indescribably awful things that will go on there. But then, think of heaven and the joy that will go on for billions and billions of years.

I was thinking of how great it will be to march down those golden streets. We will live in a city with no darkness, no sin, no sickness, no defeat, and no death.

Beyond all this, heaven is where we will meet Jesus Christ and see His nail-scarred hands and His glorified body. There we will gather to praise God, to sing and shout of His victory. Billions of years into eternity, we will still be serving God.

Imagine a place with no resentment, no bitterness and no arguing. This is the way it will be forever and ever. We will simply experience the fullness of joy beyond anything we have ever seen on earth.

Heaven will reveal unlimited, uninhibited beauty, royalty, majesty, and power. God's divinity in perfection will be before us, around us, in us, and through us.

What's more, it will never end.

With this understanding of our destiny, it is so important for us to be filled with the Spirit because we have so much in Jesus Christ. We have it all by grace through faith, not of works. The law does not judge us, because we live in mercy. When we fail, we repent and rebound. We come to Him just as we are, and we are not condemned in legalism. Grace saves us, and grace has forgiven us.

We can experience the "eternal is" of God right now. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8) We can be set free from depression and condemnation and from agony. Things that threaten our emotions do not have to affect us. All we have to do is open that door to abundant life. We can enter into heaven on earth just by thinking with God.

Starting this moment, we can be free people, cleansed and forgiven forever. The guilt and condemnation will go away. We know our future, therefore we can live as kings and priests today.

The Holy Spirit is precious to us. We can make Jesus Christ visible in our lives that many can come to the knowledge of the truth. Jesus stands at the door and knocks. Whoever opens that door receives the abundant life He has promised (Revelation 3:20).

CONCLUSION

The compassion and love of God can define our purpose and give us an eternal value system. Some of us planned to live our lives in certain ways. Why not invest your life in souls? Why not invest time in going to Bible college, the highest form of education? Why not invest it in people by living according to faith and preparing for a life of ministry? Invest your life in Jesus. Become a pastor. Be a foreign missionary. Be a sound businessperson who supports the work of God by giving.

Heaven is real. Hell is real. Invest in the Master's ministry and redeem the time. Enjoy the abundant life He has for you.

Dear Lord, we need help with our ministries for all the different people we encounter. We go to the alcoholics; we go to the addicts. But we also go to the 'up-and-outers' and the businessmen so consumed by success that they cannot see their need for God.

God help us to experience your abundant life in

every way. Give us a burden to serve You in a specific calling. Give us Your compassion and constrain us with Your love. Don't let us be passive. Keep us divinely motivated through Your Word. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Operating in the Authority

of God's Kingdom

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INTRODUCTION

Too many people have problems with Satan. They may be sincere Christians; their motives are good, they hate sin, and they hate evil, but repeated failure continues as a process in their lives.

How can a good Christian continue to live without growing up in Christ? Though many Christians may be "good" in terms of loving God in the motives of their hearts, they may not necessarily be "good" in practical application of doctrine in their lives. On the other hand, some Christians who have only recently been saved grow rapidly in Christ, always using rebound when they fail. What is the difference?

While we never want to be preoccupied with evil, it is important for us to understand that every person living on earth is governed by one of two kingdoms: the kingdom of darkness or the Kingdom of light. As the truth of this doctrine is revealed, let the Word of God have its

perfect work, “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Chapter One

NURTURING THE INCORRUPTIBLE SEED

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that *heareth* my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

The Bible places such an emphasis on the importance of *hearing* the Word of God, even more than reading. When we hear instruction from the Word, the seed planted by the Holy Spirit is eternal life that is in the Word (Matthew 13). After hearing the Word, it is important to read the Bible in conjunction with what we have been taught, because the entrance of the Word through the 'eye gate' helps to establish truth in our thought processes.

Here is the problem: With all we have heard, the average Christian does not understand how to use Kingdom authority. Furthermore, most

believers do not understand that the Church is, indeed, to bring in the Kingdom of God. This does not mean that we try to perfect ourselves so that Christ will come back; however, there should be evidence of growth in a believer's life. And everything that has life must either grow or be rooted up.

Once the incorruptible seed of the Word of God is planted in the Christian (1 Peter 1:23), it is watered with specific categories of doctrine, line upon line. Ultimately, the seed grows and bears fruit. But if the seed is not watered with the proper understanding of spiritual authority, it will not grow properly, and there can be no harvest.

Function in the Authority of God's Kingdom

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10).

There is a tremendous difference among Christians, specifically between those who understand the kingdom of God and those who do not. And yet, it is through the churches that God

brings in the authority of His Kingdom. When Christ returns, His literal Kingdom will be established. But right now, the authority of God is demonstrated through His representative Kingdom, just as the authority of Satan is manifested through his kingdom.

Here is the principle: *Wherever the Kingdom of God is functioning spiritually, Satan loses his place, his hold, and his authority*. Redemption destroyed his legal rights. The Kingdom of God destroyed his authority, and he must surrender to the authority of God. Nevertheless, many Christians have no idea how to function in the Kingdom of God, so Satan is able to maintain strongholds through his kingdom, even in the lives of believers.

In Luke 17:20-21, Jesus said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is [*in your midst*]." Most Bible scholars agree with this translation; and Jesus was speaking of *Himself*!

Jesus Christ's humanity was completely submitted to the authority of the Father's words as being the Word of God (Isaiah 50:4). He received the Word daily to live a sinless life *in His humanity* and not in His hypostatic union as deity in a

man. His deity could never sin, though His humanity could if He failed to make proper choices toward the authority of the Word.

But Jesus kept confessing, "It is written….It is written….It is written…" *while* He was in the Mount of Temptation in the wilderness—the same place where thousands of Jewish people in the Old Testament died. And as He said "It is written...," He used the authority of the Word of God to make His own words Kingdom words. As a result, Satan had to leave.

Satan can never stay in a place, in a marriage, in a family, in a relationship, or in any individual's life where the Kingdom of God is understood, applied, and exercised personally. God's Kingdom will manifest more than just the fact that we are Christians, but it manifests the *government* of God. It manifests the Father's plan, the Son's execution of the plan in the Finished Work through His glorified position, and the Holy Spirit's precious revelation of the Son, glorifying Him through categorical doctrine.

Thy Kingdom Come

"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15*b*).

That, of course, speaks of the coming Millennial Reign. But in Matthew 6:9-10, Jesus told His disciples to pray this prayer, "...Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." This passage does not refer to the Millennial Reign; the Kingdom of God is established in our hearts *now*.

God wants His Kingdom to be brought in by His people. When God's people understand the relationship of the Church to the Kingdom, when they finally operate in heavenly authority, then they can exercise power over demons and have victories they have never been able to win.

Why did the demons hate to see Jesus Christ? Why did they say, "You have come to torment us before our time. We know we are going to hell, but *let us alone*!" (Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34). "Let us alone"—a prayer of the demons. And Jesus Christ in His humanity submitted completely to the authority of categorical doctrine in the power of the Holy Spirit of grace. He was so submitted to the Father's provision, the Father's words, and the Father's power that wherever Jesus went, the demons said, "Oh no! Here comes the Kingdom of God." With a word, the demons had to flee.

Some Christians spend hours in sessions trying to deal with demons. But when a church is functioning in the Kingdom of God, it is not necessary to preach lengthy sermons to demons, trying to cast them out. Jesus simply spoke a word (Matthew 8:32). If, on the other hand, the Kingdom of God is *not* operational, you can preach all night and the demons will play games with you and mock you. They may make you think that you have won, but the demons will not leave until someone executes the authority of God's kingdom over them.

The person who knows how to execute Kingdom authority can take care of his own demons privately in his believer-priesthood any time he feels the power of Satan coming on. It is the one thing demons cannot stand.

What is the Kingdom of God? The Father gives pastors to the Church—leaders who communicate the authority of the entire Bible in categories. Under the umbrella of grace with the motivation of love, the pastor simply executes the words of Jesus Christ as he obeys and proclaims them with total submission to the authority of each category in *virtue love*. Virtue love is that quality of love that demands nothing of its object. The subject (in this case, the pastor) is

motivated by the Holy Spirit to impart anything that will build up the ones God has given him, regardless of their response (Romans 5:5).

The Problem of Inconsistency

Some people do fine for a while, then they will have several months where they are "out of it," distracted by things of the world. We know that Satan's rule over any place in our lives is terminated the moment we come against him with the Kingdom of God and the proper expression of God's life. Still, I could be the best teacher in the world and not express the Kingdom. I could quote Scripture all day long and be sincere in my desires, yet not execute the Kingdom of God. A person who lives in repeated weaknesses will become strange and begin to judge others by magnifying their actions and misjudging their hearts. And when he does that, he is representing his 'father' from the devil's kingdom.

God has given us *energeia*, which is the power a person executes by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. That power gives us the ability to transfer doctrine by faith from mere mental perception (in channel A) through the human spirit that has been quickened by the

Holy Spirit (channel B) into the five parts of the soul (channel C). The Holy Spirit brings to remembrance the Word that was planted in the heart so we don't fall into temptation, though we are tempted repeatedly.*

Stay Out of the Fray

There is not one passage in the Bible that tells me I am to fight the devil. My opponents are *not* flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12). This is why we must understand the authority and power of God as well as the authority of the Church in spiritual warfare. *A good Christian may be using the Scriptures but not with the authority of God's Kingdom*.

Jesus Christ has washed us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings and priests unto God the Father (Revelation 1:6). He did that so we can receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness—but a different kind of righteousness. This is not speaking of imputed righteousness that was given at salvation but the righteousness of God that is imparted and revealed from faith to faith. This means that as we grow, receiving the abundance of grace, we implement the authority of the precise doctrine Jesus Christ brings for the precise

situation we face.

For example, I may need to deal with sickness or disease, so the Holy Spirit helps me to recall from my memory center the precise category of doctrine I need (John 14:26). Of course, many diseases are *not* the result of sin, and the cause may be natural or supernatural. But unless God is trying to promote me in the angelic conflict or to teach me a lesson about natural habits that need to be changed, I have much authority over that sickness. If sin *is* the primary cause, I have authority over the besetting sins that come by demons, because "we wrestle not against flesh or blood"!

**Read* The Hearing Heart, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

TAKING BACK WHAT IS OURS

Every believer has experienced the terrible frustration of being defeated repeatedly in different areas of weakness. Eventually, some people will even defend being defeated! But how did Jesus, utterly weak in His humanity, get rid of Satan after spending forty days and nights in the wilderness without food? He used the authority of the Word. Remember, it was the Holy Spirit that led Him in the wilderness. Jesus Christ—the Kingdom of God in human form—had the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the Father's love to go against the devil.

"If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matthew 12:28). "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke 11:20). *Satan's power was overthrown when the devil was unable to stand against the Kingdom of God.*

Today, God teaches us how to maintain *His* victory. This is how you can know whether or not you are functioning in the Kingdom of God (which is so rare among believers today): Have the devils that attack your life been driven away? Of course, we understand that it is impossible for born-again believers to be possessed by demons; still, demonic activity in our midst is not unusual. But Satan suffers the loss of his position when we take back the authority that was given to us before the Fall.

In Genesis 1:26, when God created man, He gave us dominion—and we lost it. Now through Redemption and the power of *energeia,* the Word and the Spirit are being transferred to our human spirit in precise categorical perception. We learn to live by every Word of God (Matthew 4:4) and are sanctified by every Word of God (John 17:17). Satan can no longer occupy the place he held all these years in our lives.

Stand

According to Ephesians 6:12, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." We have clearly defined the

enemy. But here is the strategy we need to incorporate: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able *to withstand* in the evil day, and having done all, *to stand*" (Ephesians 6:13).

"Withstand" in the Greek is *anthistemi*, an aorist active infinitive. It speaks of a point of time when an action of eternal purpose is produced as you are living in this battle. "Withstand" doesn't mean to fight but to stand in the victory that has already been won and to simply maintain it by a faith-obedience confession in action.

Then, "…having done all, *to stand*" *(histemi)*, is also an aorist active infinitive. A watchword for battle, it means more than just "to hold our ground." Rather, "to stand" means to abide in the declaration that you are complete, the work is finished, and you are hid with Christ in God!

So often this has been interpreted to mean that we are just holding on for dear life in a place of weakness. But that is not the picture! We abide, or remain, in the declaration to maintain the Lord's victory through the presence of the Kingdom of God. Also, we "stand" *after* "having done all," which means that we go from faith to faith to faith. Believe! Then, *use* what you believe.

By the way, many professing "believers" will go to hell because they have never been regenerated. They have an abstract, impersonal faith, and their belief doesn't go beyond that of the demons, in James 2:19, who tremble when they believe. Their faith is in vain because it doesn't produce results; there is no growth (Romans 1:17).

Preparations for Daily Battles

Ephesians 6:14-18 reveals the armor we are to stand in. First, we stand with our *loins girt about with truth,* clothed in categorical doctrine that protects us on the outside. Then we have the *breastplate of righteousness,* which means to have the mind of God motivating our heart with the compassion of His great love. Our feet are *shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,* which means to walk in the sharpness of categorical doctrine all the time, using rebound instantly when we fail, constantly adjusting to the grace of God.

Next, we take up the *shield of faith* to deflect and quench the fiery darts of Satan. We wear the *helmet of salvation,* which means more than salvation, but it is the grace of the gospel that produces categories of doctrine in our mind because of personal discipleship. And finally, we skill-

fully handle *the sword of the Spirit*, which is the Word of God, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

It is a tremendous experience when Satan loses his position because the Kingdom of God comes onto the scene.

In Luke 11:9, Jesus said, *Ask*. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Then, He began to cast out demons. Regardless of the labels attached to them or what their invisible and inaudible names suggest, the demons were successfully cast out because *demons cannot stand in the presence of the Kingdom of God*.

This is why it is so important to understand 2 Corinthians 13:5*a*: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." It does not say examine yourself to see *if* Jesus Christ is in you—not at all! "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ *is* in you…?" The Kingdom of God is in you! We are to examine ourselves, however, to see if we are *functioning* in the authority of the Kingdom that is in us, so we will not be disapproved of in warfare.

We are here in this world to enter into spiritual warfare by maintaining Christ's victory and

revealing His nature. *We are down here to take back lost territory!* Therefore, it is a beautiful thing to say, "Thy kingdom come on earth."

Can you see that our prayers are not going to get Jesus here more quickly? God already knows when the Millennial Reign is going to begin. It is an appointed time, and our prayers won't change that. So, when Jesus taught the disciples to pray "Thy kingdom come…" in Luke 11:2, He was not referring to the Millennial Reign. He meant, "Have the Kingdom of God on earth, in your heart, even as the Kingdom of God is in heaven."

Satan can't touch heaven! And when he goes there to accuse us, he is told to "shut up"—*even when we are guilty* (Zechariah 3). Joshua the high priest had so many sins that even we would blush to hear them, and Satan couldn't wait to go before God to accuse him: "This man is a high priest, and I'm not judging him—but I *have* got some facts."

But Jesus stood up and rebuked Satan. The devil couldn't mention even one sin, and this is why: *Satan can't accuse people whom Christ's Kingdom has covered by the blood of the Lamb*. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they

loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11).

Chapter Three

THE AUTHORITY OF THE FINGER OF GOD

"But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke 11:20). The finger of whom? The finger of God! That finger represents the precise authority of God's Kingdom. And when God's finger points to *you*, it is the authority of His Word.

How were the Ten Commandments written? By the finger of God (Exodus 31:18). What did Jesus do when the woman was taken in adultery? According to John 8:6-8, He bent down to the ground and wrote with His finger—and He wrote twice. The first time signified the finger of God that gave the Law to Moses. The second time represented the fulfillment of the Law, the finger of God giving the authority of grace to forgive the woman caught in adultery (John 1:16-17).

He said, "I'm using My finger. I am executing God's government. I am implementing the Finished Work. I am using My representation for My people, My Church." And when Jesus asked who would cast the first stone, the accusers, from the oldest to the youngest, walked out. The crowd who backed the kingdom of Satan walked out. And the woman they accused was *guilty*.

So if I cast out demons by the authority of God's Word and His Spirit, if my life is changed and I am a brand-new creature, and if I am growing in grace and knowledge under the headship of the King, then you can look at the results and say, "No doubt, the finger of God did that!"

The Strong Man Meets a Stronger Man

"When a strong man armed *keepeth* his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

"He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Luke 11:21-23).

Satan is the strong man Jesus is referring to,

and notice that he is just "keeping" the palace. That's all. The kingdom of Satan has had a play day with so many good, Bible-believing Christians. We don't have to run around saying, "Oh, Satan is after me, and I am going to confess to the world and my friends all he's made me *feel* and do." Where is the finger of God? Is the authority of the Kingdom operating in our lives?

"Neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). Don't let him have a place, because you have the Kingdom of God as your authority. We use the term 'theantric action' to describe the indwelling Trinity operating through a believer's humanity with the authority of the Word and the power of the Spirit. The government of God operates within a man who presents himself daily as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

But, what are Satan's "places" today? Drugs, illicit sex, pornography, homosexuality, lesbianism, lying, gossip, slander, accusations, and emotional illness are all in Satan's kingdom. In my human flesh and blood, I *cannot* stop my weaknesses, but I can make a decision to let the Kingdom of God do it! It happens by studying, appropriating, and executing the authority of the Word without making excuses for my old sin nature.

There is another place Satan likes to take that is seldom recognized. It happens when Christians enter into false spiritual gifts in a display of emotional self-gratification. People everywhere are entering into spiritual self-gratification through activities such as a false gift of tongues. These are expressions of religious lust and not a love for God. Remember, people do not need to be "coached" to receive a spiritual gift; God is the Author of all true gifts.

The Word of God makes it crystal clear that I cannot have victory unless I have the *whole* armour of God and use it. For example, when I am told to have my "loins girt about with truth," it does not refer to having doctrine inwardly, because that is already established through the breastplate of righteousness. Instead, it means that I use categorical doctrine as armor in every detail of life, wherever I am attacked.

Though a person knows the Book and uses it, if he is not operating fully in the Kingdom of God, with the authority of the Word *and* the Spirit, then he is functioning in the kingdom of Satan.

Established in a New Identity

Satan's kingdom will offer you all the rea-

sons in the world for "why you are the way you are," but the Kingdom of God can overcome that strongman and come right in to establish our new identity. Satan now has to relinquish the place that he has held for so many years. He knows he is defeated; the person he "kept" is no longer fighting the devil. This victorious Christian is standing in Christ, abiding in the victory Christ won, and the devil can't touch him.

According to 1 John 5:18*b*, "he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Why would God say that? And why would He say, "In all these things, we are *more than* conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37), and "Thanks be unto God which *always* causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14*a*)? These are Kingdom verses. *Always? More than*? Yes! We live in victory because of the finger of God: the authority of the written Word that becomes the living Word—the seed that bears much fruit.

When the authority of the written Word becomes a living Word, then it is Kingdom property. The Father's plan, the Son's eternal purpose and execution of the plan, the Holy Spirit's illumination, and the Word of God's definition for life go together inside the five parts of the soul.

We receive the abundance of grace and the impartation of categorical thinking directly from the mind of God through the pastor-teacher and through our personal study. Then, we discover that we are reigning by the authority of one, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).

Thine Is the Kingdom and the Power

In Mark 9:1, Jesus told his disciples that some of them would not taste death before they would see His Kingdom. Three of the disciples went with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration where He was transformed in front of their eyes, a brilliant light covering His glorified body as Jesus appeared with Moses and Elijah. They represented the government of glorification.

Today, the Church must recover everything we have lost to Satan's kingdom. Satan blinds the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them and they would believe (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Satan has blinded the minds of men by controlling them with his world's system, making them advance in the cosmic kingdom of Satan. Therefore, the only way to have an effective life with God is to understand His Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God can be described as a supernatural power plant. The Father's plan is like an electrical power source stored up in a generator, waiting to be tapped. The Son's execution of the plan is like the transformer that taps the stored up energy and sends it through the power lines of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to the heart, supplying us with the Holy Spirit's illumination. The letter of the Word we have received becomes life, and in the end, we have the mind of Christ to operate effectively in the specific situations we face, moment by moment.

So when the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Word function with us in the local assembly, we can understand why God said in Revelation 1:11: "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches…."

Why did He address the *churches*, rather than individuals? Because in the plan from eternity past, the main thing on Jesus' mind was the Church. That Church would be built as a body of lively stones upon Christ the Rock (Matthew 16:18), and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. His Church would be a corporate vessel to receive the authority of the Word of God

and represent the Trinity in theantric action as God's Kingdom on earth.

We have an enemy who will take whatever place is given to him. Satan will never leave his position or his place until somebody knows how to exercise the authority of the Word of God through the Kingdom. Remember, it is not that we examine ourselves to see if Jesus Christ is in us; rather, we examine ourselves to see if *we* are "in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5)—to see if the Kingdom of God is operating in us. This is the key! And God's purpose is eternal.

Chapter Four

CHRIST'S BODY: MANIFESTING HIS AUTHORITY

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

"For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

If you did not have a physical body, it would be impossible to manifest your soul on earth. The physical body expresses the life of the soul.

The Bible says that the Father gave Jesus Christ "to be the head over all things to the church, Which is *his body*, *the fulness of him that filleth all in all*" (Ephesians 1:22-23). This is a picture of God operating in His Church with Kingdom authority.

There are people who are active in their churches, yet they still have so many problems because *they will not honor the authority of God's Kingdom*. They don't understand that before the foundations of the world, God's plan for the Church included an eternal purpose: to recover everything that was lost to Satan's kingdom by the authority of God's kingdom.

That is why Jesus taught the disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, *as it is in heaven*." To be sure, during the Millennial Reign we will see a literal, physical kingdom, glorious beyond every description imaginable. But now we have the Church as a spiritual Kingdom.

The fullness of God that fills everything on the earth has a very special meaning. The only way *you* can be expressed is through your body. Once your body dies, "who you are" can no longer be expressed on earth. And the only way Jesus Christ can be expressed on earth is through His Body—not just a local assembly, but through the entire Body of Christ.

In practical application, 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 reveals that Jesus Christ and His Body are the same thing, just like your head and your body are the same. The life of your mind controls your

body, and the life of Jesus Christ's headship, if it is truly Kingdom, controls His Body. Therefore, "…We are all baptized into one body, by one Spirit…." By that one Spirit we have all been made to drink into the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The Head is Christ. The Body is Christ's. When Christians are Spirit-filled, confess their sins immediately, isolate the sins, and go forward, then they can experience the same life, same nature, and same love for each member of His Body in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27), placed in the Body as it pleased God (1 Corinthians 12:18).

It's quite a thing to realize you are part of a plan that was made billions of years ago. It was the central thought on God's heart when He framed the worlds through His Word (Hebrews 11:3). His Body was included in that plan. He *planned* to redeem fallen men. He didn't make people for heaven; He made us for the Church. *He made us to be His Body*.

Yes, we have been redeemed for heaven, but we were redeemed and regenerated to be His Body. And as His Body, for us to live is Christ (Philippians 1:21). Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4)—the fullness of Christ on earth, that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:23).

Unsearchable Riches

Paul prayed, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18). His declaration in Ephesians 3:8 was, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles *the unsearchable riches of Christ*."

Do you know what those unsearchable riches are? It is Christ living in a Body of believers who have His same life. It is the riches of eternity, of love, grace, and mercy—the riches of a life that has no beginning and no ending. We have this treasure in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7), eternal life in bodies of death.

An Eternal Purpose

"Every *purpose* is established by counsel: and with good advice make war" (Proverbs 20:18). According to this verse, every single purpose of God is controlled by His precise thought. God's purpose in every believer is a precise thought through His precise Word, received in the Holy Spirit. When we possess that form of purpose (Hebrew, *machashabah*), then we have God's eter-

nal purpose in our thinking.

In other words, God has a purpose in the way I should think. In Matthew 6, He was saying, "Don't think about material things. Stop thinking about food, clothing, and your career." It's true that they are necessary, but instead, seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness—the treasure of God in the Body—and all these temporal things will be added unto you. Take no thought of tomorrow, for it will be evil all by itself. But having your thoughts established in Jesus Christ will make His purpose sufficient for you.

In Isaiah 14:25, it was God's desire to remove the yoke and lift the burden from the shoulder of His people. "This is the *purpose* that is purposed upon the whole earth" (Isaiah 14:26). The Hebrew word for purpose here is *etsah*, which means wise counsel regarding a plan. Then, in verse 27, He said "For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" He said, "My purpose shall stand."

Ephesians 3:10-11 speaks of the precious purpose of God. Just as Solomon purposed to build a house for the Lord (1 Kings 5:5), when the men in Ezra's day were rebuilding the tem-

ple, people were hired to frustrate their purpose (Ezra 4:5)! Satan is always trying to frustrate our purpose. But because no one can disannul the purpose and the plan of God, the Lord will shut us up from everything, if necessary, so that we can fulfill His purpose.

When we begin to understand that we were on God's mind billions of years ago, and that every purpose is established through thinking with God's thoughts (Proverbs 20:18), then we will begin to understand this beautiful principle: *There is no room for one single Christian to seek anything but the Kingdom of God*. He has promised to add unto us the things that we need—all of them. He has purposed that we should be the riches of His treasure, because our souls will live forever. As born-again believers, we are espoused (engaged) to Christ now, and we will be His Bride forever. He is saying, "I want to be in your life. I want to be all in all (Colossians 3:11)."

Pray and Go as a Minister and a Witness

Jesus told the disciples, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11*a*). And when He sent out the seventy disciples in Luke 10, He said, "Tell them that the Kingdom of God is at their door."

Some people have tried to say that this means Christ was here to set up His Kingdom, but that is not so. It means that the seventy were given the authority of God's government to resist and rebuke the authority of Satan's kingdom, which is throughout the entire earth. And the kingdoms of this world *shall become* the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 11:15).

So I pray not just as an individual, but as a believer-priest who is a vessel in the corporate Body of Christ. I pray in the authority that was given to the Church. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus Christ gives us His authority and power to go in His name, teaching people everywhere and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He is saying, "I give you Kingdom authority."

It is sad to think of the consistent weakness of Christians who "acknowledge knowledge" but don't acknowledge the privilege of receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. It is by that abundance we are able to reign by one, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17), as kings and priests unto the Father (Revelation 1:6).

The Father is the planner for Kingdom authority. That is why Jesus Christ in His humanity always operated in the Father's Kingdom,

filled with the Spirit, learning categories of doctrine early in the morning (Isaiah 50:4).

In Acts 26:16, Jesus said to Saul, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness…." *What a verse!* The Lord didn't say, "to make thee an apostle," although that happened. But God's purpose was to turn a man who was a persecutor of Christians into a minister and a witness for the Kingdom of God.

In Romans 9:17, "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Though Israel was not a great nation, she was *God's* nation. And because of her, God sent plagues that revealed His overruling power and authority over Satan's world, and over kings and rulers who do not know God.

God has a purpose for our lives. He wants to fill us with His righteousness so that we will have the same life in our mortal bodies that Christ had in His humanity. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8*b*).

God's plan is to use the Church, His own

Body, to make all men *see* the "fellowship of the mystery." He would have us manifest the "manifold wisdom of God." And this is what we will do when we apply how God thinks with what God says in the authority and power of His Word (Ephesians 3:9-10). We shall not be moved!

CONCLUSION

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10).

In Deuteronomy 27, when Israel was about to enter Canaan, they built an altar of stones on which the Word of God was written plainly. The Levites read the Word, and all the people answered with a loud voice, "Amen." Today this means that everyone who operates in the Kingdom of God can put his foot on the ground and shout, "Amen!" recognizing that Kingdom authority works as it removes Satan from the position he has held in people's lives.

A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand (Matthew 12:25). Therefore, a husband and a wife who do not function in the Kingdom of God cannot stand the onslaughts. The accuser

divides within his own kingdom; that is why there are divorces and church splits. But when the Kingdom of God is present, Satan loses his place, his position, and his authority, and the Christian can say "Amen."

Father, bless us in this eternal purpose as people created to be Christ's Body on earth and Christ's Bride in heaven. Thank you that we were created to manifest the authority of your Kingdom and to take back the ground that Satan has lied about and stolen through his kingdom.

Use this message to quicken our hearts, minister to our souls, mobilize right motives, and conform us to your own image. Amen.

Others

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INTRODUCTION

Others

Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
That even when I kneel to pray
  My prayers will be for others.

Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true
And know that all I do for You
  Must needs be done for others.

Let "self" be crucified and slain
And buried deep; and all in vain
May efforts be to rise again
  Unless to live for others.

And when my work on earth is done,
And my new work in heaven's begun,
May I forget the crown I've won
  While thinking still of others.

Others, Lord, yes others,
Let this my motto be,
Help me to live for others,
That I may live like Thee.

– C.D. Meigs

This poem has always blessed me. It's also been a tremendous motivation for my ministry. People have often asked me, "Pastor, what's the secret to your ministry, to keep doing what you do?" My answer is always, "Others."

Jesus Christ came and died for us so that we might have His life, and so that we might become life-givers by sharing His life with others. May this booklet bless you and motivate you to live in "a self-forgetful way," by the grace and power of God.

Chapter One

JESUS CHRIST CAME TO GIVE LIFE

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am

the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:1-14).

Consider the key points in this passage: Jesus is the door; the multitudes around him are thieves and robbers; the porter that opens is the Holy Spirit; the sheep hear His voice; He calls them by name; He leads the sheep, they don't lead themselves.

"*I* am the door," Jesus says. Anyone who enters into the sheepfold must enter in by Him. A person enters in and finds pasture; he finds a local church that teaches the whole counsel of God, finished work Bible doctrine—the pasture of the Word of God. This is a provision of the abundant life Jesus came to give us. He is the

life-giver. You can always tell where someone is in his walk with God by how he accepts what God gives: abundant life.

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die…" (John 11:25-26).

Eternal life is the first gift that Jesus gives to a saved person. Just as the human body needs air in order to have human life, the believer needs the Word of God every single day to have God's life. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," Jesus said in John 14:6: "I am *life*! Be around me and receive it. Be around me, and you will know who to follow and what to do. You will not have an existence of striving and struggling in your emotions, lust patterns, and your old sin nature. I came to crucify and bury your old sin nature. Be around me and *you shall have life!*"

Meeting People's Needs

Jesus was very practical in dealing with people's needs. When He saw that the multitude was hungry, He made a way to feed them with the loaves and the fishes. Those who were sick, He healed. Those who were demon-possessed, He delivered. Jesus had great compassion for

every person in every walk of life.

Even upon the cross, Jesus thought of others. In John 19:26-27, He wanted to make sure Mary was taken care of, so He told John to look after her. For those who were cursing Him, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). He prayed for others; He lived for others.

"Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:27-28). Jesus was saying to the apostles, "I am chief, I am God, I am Creator, I am Redeemer, but my purpose is to be a servant for others."

Acts 1:1 says, "Jesus began both to do and teach." He *did*, and then He taught. We have too many teachers around today who teach but do not *do* what they teach. That wasn't how Jesus lived. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Jesus Christ wasn't a negative person. He came to give the fulness of life for each day.

He came to give His Word to others, to serve others. He came to eat with others. He came to individuals, to give them His life *personally*.

Jesus came to put power inside of us, to give

us an eternal purpose in serving, loving, laughing, and caring. He gives us an eternal purpose to build people up, to go where they are, and to reach them with His love.

Everything that Jesus did was for others. He died, not for Himself, but for others. He was raised up for *our* justification (Romans 4:25). He ascended to take His position as our High Priest and to intercede for us until we are perfected.

Doing the Will of the Father

In John 4, Jesus stopped to talk to the woman at the well. She was a moral wreck, living in adultery after having been married five times before. Beautifully, Jesus sought her out. He came to seek people who were moral wrecks. The Pharisees didn't—but Jesus did. And He came to give to this "moral wreck" life and forgiveness. That was His whole purpose.

I think this is the sweetest story. She left her waterpot—the waterpot was the most important thing in her life (after men!). I mean, you've got to have water. But she left her waterpot to go tell people what had happened to her. She didn't have to take a course on soul winning or baptism. She just went out, soul winning, saying, "Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did,"

and she came back with Samaritans who discovered Christ.

Now, the disciples said, "We've got some food for you, Jesus!" They didn't care about that woman, and they couldn't figure out why He was even paying attention to her. But Jesus said, "No, my food is to do the will of God. It's not to fulfill my lust patterns, or to satisfy myself."

Then Jesus told them, "Don't say 'four months and then a harvest.' Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; they are white, and ready to harvest." In reality, He pointed to the woman bringing those souls! What was He concerned about? Harvesting, winning the lost, soul winning, missionary work, outreaches to everyone so that whosoever will may come unto Him. He loved others. He was concerned about loving the Samaritans, whom the disciples did not love.

He came to heal others. He came to deliver others. He came to save others. Others. *Others!* Everything that Jesus Christ did was for others.

Chapter Two

REVEALING THE LIFE OF THE WORD

"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18).

"... And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision" (1 Samuel 3:1).

Satan, demons, and the flesh are life-takers. The devil comes to rob, steal, kill, and destroy. He wants to steal and rob the life Jesus has given by hindering our vision for others. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." The original Hebrew says that without a vision, there is no restraint. We get all caught up in fighting life, fighting the one that's robbing us! Finally, we get weary; weary of fighting the devil, fighting the past, fighting what we "think" people are saying, and fighting our sicknesses. Then, we grow weary in well-doing.

It is possible to have the truth of Jesus Christ and to not have His life. For example, there are some who have the truth about forgiveness, but they cannot forgive. Some have the truth about reconciliation, but they do not have a ministry of reconciliation. Any area where a person has truth but does not have the life to reveal that truth is dangerous area.

You have to be careful when you say to some people, "How are you doing?" One may hesitate, then say, rather soberly, "Uh, OK." Now, he knows the truth that every day is new, the truth about the filling of the Holy Spirit, the truth about how God's power works in us. He knows all these things, but he doesn't have the life—and he's not a life-giver.

Lamentations 3:22-24 reveals that it is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. His compassions fail not, His mercies are new every morning, His faithfulness is great!

We are only on earth to reveal God's truth, but we cannot do it unless we have God's life. It is extremely important never to neglect the life of the Truth, so we can reveal the way of God every day. The most fantastic thing is that God has made it possible for us to have an abundant life within.

God the Father said: This is the record that I give unto you, eternal life, and that life is in my Son. He who has the Son has His life (1 John 5:11-12). God's Son is a life-giver. Satan is a death-giver. God is a builder; Satan is a destroyer. God is positive; Satan is negative. It is God who gives fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). It is Satan who gives sorrow, anxiety, and fear.

Not of this World

We have not received the spirit of this world system, as it is defined in Job 4:20: "They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it." The world's system is controlled by the death-giver, Satan. Those who are under its control destroy themselves from morning to evening.

Eyes haven't seen, nor have ears heard what God has prepared for them who love Him. By His Spirit, God has revealed these things to our hearts. The natural man, who lives in the flesh, cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-14a). The natural man will probably forget everything in this message within thirty minutes; he's taken in the Truth, but he hasn't received the life behind it.

We have not received the spirit of this world.

No, we have received the Spirit of God, that we may know freely all things that have been given unto us.

I know a woman whose husband died and went home to be with the Lord. She had made a profession of faith and lived for God for years before falling into this problem. In her loneliness, she became an alcoholic, drinking every day. What was wrong? All along, she knew the truth, but she didn't have the life. She made a decision and a declaration: "I've got to have the right relationship with Jesus Christ to get the life I need." She was gloriously delivered.

The Joy of Giving Life

People who know the life behind the Truth can't help but become life-givers.

There was an affluent man who moved to the slum area of a city. He had a vision to help those in his new neighborhood. He held meetings with his neighbors and said, "If there's any work you need done, I'll do it for nothing." He and his wife just wanted to get in there and help the people. They fixed up houses, mowed grass, and planted flowers. When they were finished, the area was fantastically renovated. He and his wife revealed the life behind the truth. As a re-

sult, many of his neighbors came to know Jesus Christ.

Don't you love to hang around a life-giver? You'll always get life! A life-giver is always positive, always building people up. Anytime he opens his mouth, he ministers grace to the hearer (Ephesians 4:29).

Jesus did not come to condemn people. He didn't come to judge the world. He didn't come to cause divorces. He didn't come to accuse sinners, but to die for them. He came to receive sinners, to give us redemption and eternal life. He came to wipe away the record of our sins and to bless us with His life. Jesus wants us to reveal the life of this great truth to others.

Chapter Three

GIVING LIFE, MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Once, a woman came to me, crying and saying she was going to have a nervous breakdown. When I asked her why she thought that, she said "I cry all the time. I go home, I cry. I get up, I cry. I go to the bathroom, I cry. I feel terrible. Everything is awful!"

What was her problem? "I want to get married, but no one even asks me out," she said.

I had a solution. I asked her to contact a woman in our church who has a ministry with terminally ill patients. "My counsel is that you go to hospital visitation on Tuesday. Then, on Friday, go visit the pediatric clinic where HIV-positive children are cared for," and, I also said, "While you're at it, visit the nursing home." Within a week, she was back to tell me, "I've postponed my nervous breakdown!"

What captivated this woman? Others! She

learned how to minister to others and she forgot herself. In the hospital, she encountered a wealthy woman who had been in a tragic accident. With all her wealth, this woman's life was over at 35, unconscious and brain damaged. At the same hospital she saw a cab driver who had been shot in the head and was on life support. A young student, he drove a cab to help with his finances, until the night he was shot.

After seeing these people, this woman realized, "I don't have any problems! I am healthy. I am not dying. Now, I want to *live*!" All of a sudden, she had a desire to give God's life to others, to share the life of Jesus Christ.

Putting Others First

In Genesis 13, Abraham's servants and Lot's servants were striving with each other. They had such large herds, the pasture could not sustain them—someone had to move. Abraham resolved the problem by giving Lot first choice. "You take what you want, Lot," he said. "I'll take what's left. No competition!" So Lot chose the part that seemed best, by sight. But after the decision to put Lot first, the Lord spoke to Abraham: "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and south-

ward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever."

Later, in Genesis 14, Lot and his family were taken captive. Abraham didn't hesitate in coming to the rescue; he was a life-giver who considered others. Others!

In Exodus 32, the children of Israel, camped in the wilderness, demanded that Aaron make them "gods," idols, to take the place of Moses, who had been on Mount Sinai with God for forty days. They thought he wasn't coming back to lead them out. Aaron told the people to give him all their golden earrings from which he fashioned a golden calf. The people declared "These be thy gods, O Israel," as they worshipped and danced naked before the golden calf. In His anger at their backsliding, God told Moses that He would consume them all and raise up a new nation from him (Exodus 32:10). But Moses pleaded: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exodus 32:31-32).

Moses had a fiery indignation against what Israel had done, but he told God to blot his

name out of the Book of Life, too, if God would not forgive Israel. Why did Moses say this? Because his whole life was for others.

The same was true for the apostle Paul, in Romans 9:3. He cried that he would go to hell himself if it would help some of his Jewish brethren to go to heaven. He was thinking of others.

When we care for others, something beautiful happens. It makes a difference when a person knows that someone else really cares. Oh, some don't like it when you try to help *everybody*. But we are to love everybody—our enemies, our friends—because everybody needs to be loved.

Raised Up By Love

The poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning was an invalid; she couldn't even sit up in bed. But then, she met Robert Browning, another famous poet, and they fell madly in love. On the first visit from Robert Browning, Elizabeth sat up. She hadn't done that before. His love for her made her able to do something she couldn't do before. On another visit from Mr. Browning, Elizabeth got up and walked. Before long, the couple married and settled on the coast of Italy, where she was

completely restored to health. The amazing love of Robert Browning for Elizabeth Barrett got her out of bed. She sat up, walked, and was never an invalid again! She met someone who cared for her; someone who loved her out of her problem.

That's what Jesus does! He came that we might have *life*—abundant life!

Changed Church

I once visited a church and told the pastor, "Will you be upset if I tell you that your church is really good now?"

He laughed and said, "You sensed the difference! You know why it's so good? Look at that man over there. He came in here and got saved and baptized. God has given him a gift of love, a gift of personality, and a gift of work. He just came in here, loved everyone, and everyone in this church is changed. He did what my preaching didn't do. Now, it's easy to preach here."

I said, "That man is a life-giver, a builder," and his life affected—that's right—*others*.

Chapter Four

A MINISTRY DEDICATED TO OTHERS

"Others Lord, yes others; let this my motto be…." Can you imagine how many problems would be gone if everyone had God's life? We don't need to sell flowers at stop signs! We need to give Jesus' life away, for free! What has motivated me now for over forty years? Others. I love people! I never thought the ministry would get this big, to the point where I would receive telephone calls from Hungary, Moscow, Baku, and Ukraine, all in one night! But because the life of Jesus Christ has been given to others, God has raised up a great work.

Do you have a vision for the fields that are white and ready to harvest? Are you in a place where you are being trained to lay down your life for others?

I must have a schedule that is dedicated to others. If I were to begin giving up certain things

in my schedule that are important to God, it would affect my value system.

When a schedule gets extremely busy, usually the first thing to go is soul winning. But if I don't go soul winning, I won't pray for souls. If I don't pray for souls, I won't read my Bible, which tells me to go soul winning. If I don't read the Bible, I will have no hunger for God. Without a hunger for God, I will have a hunger for the world, and I will eventually fall into my areas of human weakness and rely upon my areas of human strength. Then I will sublimate, seeking fulfillment through things outside of God's will. In my sublimation, I will become reactionary. I will start blaming others, instead of living for them.

It's a downward trend—the moment I start giving up certain spiritual requirements in my value system, I will begin to lose experientially what I have gained in Jesus Christ. That is why I have purposed never to give up what I have gained, and I will not give up what I am doing now. On the other hand, if I add something to my present schedule, God will give me the power and the strength that I need to do it. I will grow closer to Him because I am serving others.

Living for others has brought prosperity into my life, into my marriage. I have a tremendous wife who lives in such a self-forgetful way. One of the five thousand reasons why I love my wife is that she shares in releasing me to serve God seven days and seven nights a week. Not one time has she ever said to me, "Who did you see? Where did you go? You're never home!" Instead, it's always, "I'm praying for you. I know you're doing something important, even if it's talking to three kids in an alley."

I accept the imparted righteousness of God through the Word and let Jesus rule my life. He motivates me and energizes me to do things for my Father in Heaven. When I'm living for others, the "old man" isn't allowed out of the closet. I leave him there! The old man is crucified and buried with Christ; he cannot come out, unless I give him permission. Do you realize if you don't wake up the old man, you won't have his lust problems? Now why would I want to give him permission to come out and make my life miserable? I'm too busy! I'm living for others.

If I love someone and I am willing to lay down my life for him, then I can't have prob-

lems with my old sin nature, which lives only for itself. If I live to love others, I will receive from the pulpit and invest in the Body.

A Vision for Life-Giving

Years ago, when I met Dr. John Rice, I wasn't sure what he would be like. With a soft voice and his simple way, he said, "You thought I would speak against some preacher. I will not. I'm going to speak about how to love Jesus." Then he spoke a message on soul winning. The next night, soul winning. The night after that, it was soul winning. He said "You think I'm gonna change my message, but I'm not. It's gonna be on soul winning." Tears came down his cheeks. He didn't say anything new, but everything he said was life-giving.

We must have a vision for others in our Jerusalem. …for others in our Judea. …for others in our Samaria, and in the uttermost parts of the world. We need a heavenly vision!

Jesus wept as He looked down at Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44). He was thinking of others there; others who would not receive His visitation, others who would not let themselves be gathered unto God.

We are living in the most crucial moment in

human history. Everything that's meaningful in our lives comes from Jesus Christ. Let's seize this moment by living for others. Life can be very competitive as we struggle in the midst of Satan's temptations, enticements, and sublimations. But as we fellowship with God in light and love, we all come out winners in the competition.

Let's commit ourselves to others. Let's make commitments to study and pray so that we can serve. Whatever we do, in word and deed, let's do it to glorify God. This way, we can have the maximum of maturity and stability; we can be Christians loaded with doctrine, love, life, and power. We can pray and see results. We can enjoy the manifestation of God and go forward in the victory of an abundant life as we seek Him and obey His Word.

When God gives us a commission, He also gives us the ability to carry out that commission. When He gives us a mandate, He gives us the power to obey it. When He gives us His Word, He gives us the provision to experience it.

If you were a death-giver before, after this message you won't be. I challenge you: Do not be negative for one week. Let God revolutionize your soul and make you a shining light in the

inner self through the gospel of the power of God's grace. If there was some way I could give you my son, and if I only had *one*, do you think I wouldn't give you the watch he's wearing, if I would give him to die for you? Do you think the Father, who gave His only Son, Jesus, to die for us, won't give us everything the Son is?

The Bible says the Lord wants to freely give you *all* things (Romans 8:32). If He spared not His own Son, would He not freely give us *all* things? Why? Because He's a life-giver, a prayer-answerer; He hears. He's a life-giver!

Start drinking, and continue to drink from the fountain of mercy, from the rivers of His compassion, and from the joy of His abundant life.

CONCLUSION

Sometimes, when we first get to know God, we ask Him for *things*. But after we have known Him for some time, and we have tasted and seen that He is good, we only want Jesus, and we want others to have Him in their lives as well.

Jesus wants to build up an army of resurrection life-givers, people who will seize their moments and redeem the time. He needs life-givers, not death-givers. He needs a building crew, not a wrecking crew.

Build yourself up in God. Build up others when you meet them. Edify your husband, edify your wife. Don't compete, but edify. And if you're not married, then edify your dog or your cat! or your funny looking bird!

Everywhere we go, we need to give others the life of Jesus Christ. There is more than enough negativity in the atmosphere today. What the world is giving people will only bring death. Only Jesus Christ can bring forth life.

Our Cornerstone

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

In Psalm 11:3, the writer asked, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" I believe the answer is that they will live in defeat.

Storms and persecutions and trials are promised to those who live godly in Christ Jesus. Yet, many people are building lives upon foundations that shift. Jesus warned about this in Matthew 7:24-29. If our foundations are not right, they are sure to crumble and collapse.

Thank God, we are being built upon the Chief Cornerstone—Jesus Christ. He is our foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), and what we build upon this foundation will be revealed in time. He is the One who was rejected by those trying to build a system and program of religion. The house that these builders were building rested on the changeable patterns of human obedience. Their programs were exalted above the Person of the Redeemer.

Everyone will face the Cornerstone. There is no other name under heaven whereby we can be

saved (Acts 4:12). There is salvation in no other. A spiritual structure that rests upon Christ is a structure that endures. It lasts and it stands.

As we will see in this booklet, God desires that all believers would be oriented toward this great tried and true Stone, this precious Rock. It upon this Rock that we must stand, and it is in the Rock that we are hid. Jesus Christ is our sure foundation. We live in Him and through Him, and by Him we are victorious in every way.

Chapter One

THE SURE FOUNDATION

"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

"And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it" (Isaiah 28:16-18).

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:11-13).

Hundreds of tons of weight rest upon the cornerstone of any major building. For this reason, that stone must be sure and tried. A cornerstone is not laid in haste. The lines that are established by it must be right and plumb. If they are not, the whole structure will have problems.

Once the cornerstone is laid, the location of every other stone in the building is oriented to that very stone. Every calibration must be relative to the position of the cornerstone, or else the building will be crooked. It all starts with the foundation, and our foundation is Jesus Christ. All that we do must be oriented to Him; otherwise, we will find ourselves out of order.

Good Materials Give Good Results

Once the foundation of our faith has been laid down—that is, once we put Christ as our cornerstone—then we start putting together a house. The materials we use are very precious, as we see in 1 Corinthians 3:12. "Silver" speaks of redemption. "Gold" represents the incarnation and the divine attributes of Christ. "Precious stones" refer to the doctrines that we learn and live by categorically.

Of course, the choices are ours. We can, like some shady contractors do, use substandard materials. We can make wrong decisions and start building our spiritual building with "wood,"

which speaks to us of the works of men. "Hay" is worse than wood. Spiritually, it refers to out-of-control human emotions. Lastly, we may sometimes build with "stubble," which is doctrine that we hear but do not apply to our lives. We hear it, but we do not actually have it worked into our hearts through meditation. It is the truth that we have not heard in meekness and humility, so it is lost to us.

The Purpose of a Foundation

Certain business or social organizations are labeled as foundations because they provide the support and direction needed for major efforts. Educational foundations have helped in many places that are have serious needs. They lead and direct and do the fund-raising necessary to keep things going.

The foundation of our lives as Christians is Christ—the Christ that is communicated to us through the whole Bible. Christ is not simply a dimension of Christianity. Christ ***is*** Christianity. Through the whole Bible, we see the Person of Jesus Christ expressed to us. From Genesis to Revelation, God shows us that it is His Son who is the one Redeemer and Savior of the world. The whole Word of God reveals this to us.

God has given us the foundation for healthy marriages.

God has given us the foundation for godly friendships.

God has given us the foundation for spiritually alive churches.

That foundation is Christ.

Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Christ and His righteousness. He is our Rock.

Chapter Two

THE ROCK OF TRUTH

"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.

"And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

"And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

"For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

"And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

"And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name

of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

"And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

"And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

"And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:

"And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen" (Exodus 33:13-23).

People read this passage so quickly and I think they sometimes miss the tremendous meaning that we have here. Moses recognized his great need for the presence of God in his life. He also expressed the need we have to find grace in the sight of God. No man can see God and live. The Lord declared this. Yet, this is what God so much wants from us. He wants us to come before Him—to come before Him boldly whenever there is a need in our lives.

God then said to Moses, "Behold, there is a place by me." How do we get to that place? That was Moses' big question. "Sure there is a place by you, Lord. But the way? Where do I find it? How shall I make it?"

The answer? Stand upon the Rock.

Christ is the Solid Rock on which we stand. Remember, the old hymn says that all other ground is sinking sand. We can build our hope on nothing but Christ. God is telling Moses—and all of us as well—this great truth.

After we understand that we can stand upon nothing but Christ, then something even more beautiful happens. "My glory shall pass by, and I will put you in the Rock." Jesus, the glory of God, passed by and walked through the human race as a human being. God became Man and took upon Himself the sins of the world. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. What a magnificent truth!

And why did God allow His glory to pass by? It was that we might be put into the Rock. Not only are we put into the Rock; we are also covered by His hand. God makes it so that we are hid with Christ in God.

Hid and Covered by the Hand of God

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3).

Every single Christian is standing in the pure, unadulterated grace of God. This grace depends upon God's character and His character alone. It is not our character that is the issue. We are standing on the Rock in all that we do here on earth. We are cemented in the Rock by the grace and purpose of God. We are covered by Him forever and ever.

Nothing shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. No one can move me from the Rock. Nothing can take me out of His hand. Not even myself. I cannot remove myself from His hand.

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" (Romans 3:3).

The foundation of the Lord stands sure, the Bible tells us this in 2 Timothy 2:19.

"And [Moses] hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.

"And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in

goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:4-6).

The glory of God reveals His graciousness, His longsuffering, His forbearance. We are hid with the blood of Christ. The wounded hands of Jesus hold us, and they hold us tight.

Chapter Three

THE TRIED AND TRUE STONE

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

"For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:24-29).

When Jesus spoke to people, the effect on them was so different. He was an astonishing

speaker. His words carried with them something so far beyond anything that had ever been spoken before. He spoke with the authority of heaven. The Father gave Him words of power and words of life. The Spirit made sure those words hit home. The result was and is that His words moved people.

Wise people build their spiritual houses upon the Rock. The wisdom of God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ keep us in any storm. At the center of any hurricane is the eye. It is a place of very low pressure and clear skies. Look at the satellite pictures of these big storms sometime. You can see a very defined, open circle. All around that circle—called the eye of the storm—is lightning and thunder and wind and rain. Things on the earth are being battered and blown away. But there in the center, the pressure is low and the sky is clear.

"And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

"And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders

of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.

"Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel" (Exodus 17:3-6).

The Rock was there for Israel all the way through the wilderness. It was there for them every time they were thirsty. It was a sure place. What came out of it was pure.

The first time Israel needed water, Moses was told to strike the rock. He did—in the plain presence of all the elders of Israel—and the water flowed right out. The next time, Moses was commanded by God to simply speak to the rock. Instead, Moses struck the rock, *twice*. God did supply the water, but Moses was prevented from crossing into the Promised Land with the nation of Israel because of his disobedience.

That may seem a harsh penalty to you, but God cannot allow His word to be trifled with. He told Moses to *speak* to the rock. There's a great picture for us. Jesus Christ was smitten once, for all men. His death on the Cross marked the beating and punishment that all sinners deserved. But the Lord absorbed that penalty. He only did it once. We cannot crucify Christ afresh. It will never happen again. When Moses struck

the rock at the second incident, God could not let him get away with it—and He will not let people get away with trying to make it seem as if Christ has to die all over again.

The Cornerstone Took the Pain

Jesus Christ was a tried Stone. He lived the perfect life and then gave it up for us all. Now He is our Cornerstone. Once beaten, once buried, now risen, and now ascended. Heaven is where He lives now, and we live with Him and in Him.

People may hold your sins against you. They are beating the stone again. But the tried stone is a sure stone. It is set and it cannot be moved.

Jesus was tried as He grew up in Nazareth. When He came to preach the Gospel in his hometown, no one listened and very few received the healing that He could have brought there.

He was arrested at Gethsemane. He was tried three times, and all of the proceedings were unlawful. A thick tangle of long thorns was pounded down upon His head. He was so wounded for our transgressions and so beaten for our iniquity. It happened. It had to happen. Someone had to pay for the sins of the world, and Jesus Christ was determined to do it.

The Foundation of the Lord is sure. On that tree, He was unrecognizable. This man of sor-

rows became such a precious Stone. Now the precious love of God permeates and penetrates every part of us. We live in total victory because of our Cornerstone.

In Exodus 17, Israel was fighting a great battle. As long as Moses kept his hands held up, Israel was in control of the war. The day wore on and so did the fight. Moses grew weary and had difficulty holding up his arms, so Aaron and Hur moved a stone under him and helped hold up his hands. That is the way the Body of Christ works. People get tired. They struggle. They need help. What do we give them? We sit them down on the Rock. We move the Cornerstone under them and we hold up their hands. In this kind of life, we all win.

CONCLUSION

First Corinthians 10:4 says that we all drink the same spiritual drink that the people Israel drank from. We drink from Christ, the fountain of living water. This fountain never shall run dry. It lives and flows in us.

When we have the right foundation, we have categorical truth and categorical thinking. Our revivals are Word of God revivals. We are not into the emotional stuff, the hay that lights up and then dies out in a moment.

We are in the Rock, and the Word is bubbling, bubbling, bubbling in our souls. It flows and it goes with us into all the world.

Thank God for Jesus' holy life. Thank God for His patience and grace and longsuffering. Thank God for His resurrection power. This is ours, and ours forever. Our God is a sure thing—the Rock, tried and true. Let us stay on our foundation. Let's hide ourselves in His love.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)*.

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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Our Heart is Revealed

by Our Walk

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INTRODUCTION

God wants to give us new hearts that reveal genuine love for people. Think of Jesus Christ's life and how His heart was always revealed toward the lost. His identity wasn't in His greatness, His power, or His glory. Instead, He allowed Himself to be associated with transgressors and to be called the friend of publicans and sinners. No one needs friends more than sinners! And the One who did not sin now stands as our greatest friend.

Job 41:24 says that Satan's heart is as firm as a stone, as hard as a piece of millstone hewn from the lowest places, hidden deep in the earth in the place of Sheol. He knows he will spend eternity in hell and that his time is short. Satan's only concern is to take as many down with him as he can.

Amaziah served God and did everything well. He followed the Lord, but not with a perfect heart (2 Chronicles 25:2). He didn't lie or

cheat and he was faithful as a leader. He did everything he was supposed to, but he didn't serve God with a mature heart that identifies in compassion.

God is after perfect hearts. One of the saddest things that can happen is that a person can serve God, seeming to do everything that is right, but not with a perfect heart.

Every believer needs to examine his heart. Is it toward the lost? Does he identify with the down-and-outer, the up-and-outer, and those who are in harm's way because of weakness? This booklet will show that when we walk with God, He will give us a new heart where the Holy Spirit will shed His love abroad. This love enables us to identify, encourage, and win those who are wounded, defeated, and lost.

Chapter One

PREPARATIONS OF THE HEART

"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

In 2 Chronicles 20:33, the Word of God says that the people had not prepared their hearts to serve the God of their fathers. What does it mean to have a prepared heart? The perfect life of the Lord Jesus Christ is our example. He said, "I do nothing of myself" in John 5:19. Jesus also said, "I receive not honour of men" (John 5:41) and "I did not come to do my own will" (John 6:38). "The teaching that you receive is not mine, but my Father's" (see John 7:16).

These are amazing statements by the one perfect Man. He was God, who came to earth in His hypostatic union. Here is the most unique personality in the universe, because though He was God, yet He was man. He was man, and yet

He was God. Still, even He had to say, "The teaching that you receive from me is not mine. The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself" (see John 14:10). In John 8:28, Jesus said "I do nothing of myself."

Jesus Christ Promotes the Humble

In studying the humility of Jesus Christ, it is easy to see why He never sinned. He wasn't seeking glory, and He derived His entire human existence from the life of the Father. If we would refuse to seek our own glory by living a derived life, even as sinners saved by grace, we would cut sinful behavior down to a minimum.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister (Matthew 20:27-28), magnificently taught this principle: "Let him that is chief among you be your servant" (Luke 22:26). Do you know who really gets promoted, from God's viewpoint? Those who are humble. Understanding the great humility of Jesus Christ, we realize that He will *always* promote the humble. Many Christians go through tremendous trials in life and do not get promoted because in certain areas they exalt themselves above the will of God.

Again, in John 14:24, Jesus said that the

words He spoke were not His but His Father's. The Lord Jesus Christ—the perfect God-Man, Creator of the universe—only spoke as He heard from the Father.

Can you imagine a life where the Christian can have preciseness with power, without subjectivity or hyperspirituality? As we grow in meekness through grace and in humility through love, we will prosper in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ to the extent that we do not seek a single thing for ourselves. There is no need for sublimation because we are not after anything to satisfy our flesh. There is no vanity, no self-glory, no demanding. Instead, we only enjoy the privilege of being a servant.

Identify with the Author of Love

I was told this story of a man who had written a book. He later met a woman and asked her out on a date, just as a friend. At the end of the evening, he gave her the book to read. Two weeks later, he asked how she liked it. She said, "Frankly, I didn't like it at all."

They went out on another date. She read the book again, and this time she said, "It's okay, but this kind of book is a dime a dozen. It was nice, but there was nothing special about it."

The relationship grew and he asked her to marry him. She read the book again and fell in love with it. On their honeymoon, the woman read the book a fourth time. Now, because her husband was the author, she loved it more than ever. What made that book special to the woman was its author. As she got to know the author and grew in her love for him, she was able to appreciate the expression of his heart.

It is the same with the Bible. The thing that makes this Book priceless is the Author. When we know the Author, we will love the Book. Every word will be fresh, every category will have it's rightful place as a wall of doctrine is established in our souls. Thank God for that.

Chapter Two

TRUE IDENTIFICATION: A HEART OF COMPASSION

As our love for God grows deeper, we begin to understand what identification is all about. I received a letter from a twenty-year-old girl who married at sixteen and was divorced three years later. At eighteen, she found out that she was an adopted child, given up by her mother who was a prostitute. Then she discovered that her husband was a drug addict. They had a baby who died at just eighteen months old. Now she lives in fear because of her ex-husband's deep problem with drugs and his large debts the creditors are trying to collect from her, even though she is no longer married to the man. In the letter she asked, "What can you do to help?"

Of course we can pray and send someone to help her and minister to her. But after I read a letter like that, all I can do is get on my knees in identification. Identification is a precious thing

because it is so rare today. People find it easy to identify when things are going well, but to identify with someone when things aren't going well is another matter. Have you ever identified with someone who has fallen, with someone who can't seem to make it through the trial? Is your heart broken to the point where you can weep when another weeps and rejoice when he rejoices (Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26)? To condescend to men of low estate (Romans 12:16)—*that* is identification.

I read Isaiah 53:12 during my private devotions recently, and I was so broken. "He was numbered with the transgressors." Jesus identified with sinners though He never sinned.

We can identify through prayer and through doing what we can to help those in need. If we ask him, Jesus will give us a heart to identify. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away your stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a [new heart]" (Ezekiel 36:26). The new heart is the heart of God given through the human spirit.

Identification means not being occupied with self, circumstances, or people. It is to be occupied with being a vessel that can be used as

an instrument of the Holy Spirit's love to glorify Jesus Christ on earth.

Caring for Souls

Another letter I received recently related this desperate situation. "I've been a Christian in a Bible-believing church for years. Three years ago, my wife left me to live with another man. I started drinking. Then I started using stronger and stronger drugs. Now I have no desire to live. Can you please help me?"

God raises up people who can identify with cases such as these.

The Psalmist cried out, "No man cared for my soul." He said, "There was no man that would know me: *refuge failed me*" (Psalm 142:4). But God raises up people who will minister, men and women who can do nothing of themselves, who don't seek their own glory, and who don't make any demands. They are people who simply follow Jesus Christ by walking in the Holy Spirit and agreeing with God. They walk in love (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:2). They walk worthy of the Lord in wisdom toward them that are without wisdom(Colossians 1:10; 4:5-6). They walk circumspectly (Ephesians 5:15), wise as serpents but harmless as doves,

before God in their fellowship with Him (Genesis 17:1).

As so many others, the people who wrote those letters have a tremendous need for someone to identify with them. They need to be around someone who will identify without compromise—someone who will walk with God.

Chapter Three

CALLED TO WALK WITH THEM AS WE WALK IN HIM

If I am seeking something for myself in this life, I am not walking with God. If I want a promotion, if I want to be noticed, I am not walking with God. Jesus didn't seek glory from men; He refused to even teach from His own perfect mind because He walked with the Father.

The Lord Jesus Christ wants His people to bear one another's burdens by entering into true identification (Galatians 6:2). For example, through the principle of transactional analysis, it is possible to counsel a woman who is arrogant and hateful toward people because of a father who hurt her and caused her to build walls of resentment. By role playing, asking her to put herself in the place of her father, the counselor can deal with her by describing things that her father might have had to go through, and then asking her to identify.

I might address the role of her father like this: "You were brought up with a screaming father. Your mother was an alcoholic and you had to do everything for yourself around the house. You didn't have any money. You never had nice things." I would then ask the woman to consider, from her own viewpoint, what was happening: She had "become" the person she hated.

From that place of identification, we would have a time of prayer. Usually, a problem like this could be taken care of in two or three sessions. I have seen people come through beautifully and no longer resent the other parties. The reason: They can now identify because they became the other person. Because of identification, this woman developed a heart of compassion for her father. She sat where he sat.

Christ, Our Example

Jesus Christ actually lived out this principle when He, who knew no sin, *became* sin for us. Everything He ever did revealed His compassion and love. Wherever He went, whenever people needed Him, Jesus Christ demonstrated all that He is.

In Luke 7:37-50, Jesus identified with the outcast prostitute when she fell at His feet in the

house of Simon the Pharisee. He let her minister to Him as a rebuke to those who were judging her. That was amazing identification.

Before a large crowd, Jesus saw Zaccheus, a crooked publican, up in the tree and said to him, "I'm coming to your house today" (Luke 19:5), and salvation came to Zaccheus' home. That was true identification.

Jesus stood still for the blind man whom the disciples tried to discourage as he cried for mercy from the Son of David (Mark 10:46-52). The disciples told Bartimaeus to shut up. "Leave Jesus alone!" they said. "Stop your crying for mercy!" But Jesus said, "Bring him to me" and said to the blind man, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith has made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."

There wasn't a case that Jesus would not identify with. The prostitute, the filthy beggar, and even Nicodemus the Pharisee. Jesus sat with every one of them. Yet, it is so unusual today to find Christians willing to identify as Jesus did.

"I am with thee, and I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest" (Genesis 28:15). This is a verse that I claim every time I go in an airplane—I think I should claim it when I get into a car, too. It has worked every time so far, and I'm never going to stop using it.

The Lord Jesus Christ wants to teach us how He keeps us. We are kept by the power of His Word. We are kept in every situation because of His identification with us. Even when a person falls seven times a day, Jesus identifies with that one and stands as his advocate with the Father. The prophet Micah said, "Yes, I have sinned, and yes, I am guilty." Then he made that beautiful statement in chapter 7, verses 8 and 9:

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."

It was as if Micah said, "Jesus Christ is down here with me." In other words, though Micah had sinned, the One who *never* sinned stayed

right with him. Though he was flat on his back, Micah could declare to his enemies "God is with me. You are mocking me, but God is going to pick me up shortly. I am going to get up." That is a picture of Jesus Christ forgiving us through identification.

In 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, a ministry is built on identification. Instead of reacting, instead of building up cases against others, we identify with every part, knowing that we are all sinners saved by grace and that each one has great value in God's sight.

CONCLUSION

God will give us a new heart and a new spirit as we begin to walk with Him, identifying as He identified. When we walk in the Spirit, we will enter into people's lives through identification. We do not go simply to minister—even though that is true—but because we actually have God's own love for them.

A man I know holds down two jobs and is busy raising a beautiful family, yet his heart compels him to go soul winning in his neighborhood at different times during the week. It is not unusual to find him weeping with a neighbor, and it is all because of a heart filled with godly compassion and love. As a result, thirty-five people come out to a Bible study in that area. That man's heart is making a difference.

Just think of what the love of God will constrain us to do. As His love constrains us to serve in identification, it will not seem to be a "duty" to us, even though it is required that we

be found faithful. The love of God develops our potential. We can do nothing of ourselves and we cannot seek our own glory. When the words a man preaches are God's words, his teaching is not his own. That kind of walk develops a capacity for us to lay down our lives and to manifest the nature of God. Best of all, we will not be conscious of what is happening. We simply fall deeper in love with Christ and people as it happens.

Our Part in God's Plan

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INTRODUCTION

It may be hard to imagine, but Jesus Christ has certain needs. It may be even harder to fathom that it is our part in the plan of God to meet those needs.

Jesus Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and then He was resurrected from the dead. He ascended to heaven, where He is seated at the Father's right hand, and He has promised that if we are saved, we will be with Him for all of eternity. But He left us here on earth to operate as His Body, to fulfill His purposes.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was under tremendous assault from demonic forces that were trying to keep Him from the Cross. In those moments, He, being fully human even as He was fully God, needed and desired the prayers of His disciples. Yet, the heavy atmosphere and oppression weighed on Peter, James, John, and the others. So they slept.

Jesus Christ had certain needs in the Garden

of Gethsemane. In this booklet, we will see some of the needs that the Lord Jesus Christ has today. Open your heart and allow the Holy Spirit to dispel the wandering thoughts of the common, mundane things, and realize that our precious Savior has needs—real needs that relate to His redemption, to His humanity, and to His divine attributes.

As born-again believers, we have the advantage of being filled with the Holy Spirit who was sent to quicken and empower us. Through the Holy Spirit, we receive the divine initiations from Christ, for He is our Head. Consider with me how that we, through grace, can fulfill our part in God's plan to meet His needs.

Chapter One

JESUS THE SON OF MAN AND HIS NEEDS ON EARTH

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

"And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

"Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

"And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

"And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the

flesh is weak.

"He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

"And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

"And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

"Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

"Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me" (Matthew 26:36-46).

In one of the greatest trials of His life, the Lord Jesus Christ taught us some valuable lessons. First, this passage reveals how He responded to the trial that was before Him. He went into the Garden of Gethsemane, a place He probably knew well, and there He prayed. In that garden, the Lord Jesus Christ got alone with God.

As He entered into this place of prayer, which apparently meant so much to Him, He fell before God and made a special request to

His Father for strength. He had fellowship with God in a very unusual but definite way. But notice that Jesus brought His disciples with Him, and He said, "Sit here and watch with Me while I pray."

The Lord Jesus Christ had a particular need, and He let it be known along with several other needs. Because He was a man as well as God, in a hypostatic union, operating in the full weakness of His humanity, identifying Himself with us, His first need for us was clear: His need was to have fellowship. So the Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "Sit here. Watch with Me while I pray."

In the midst of the trial, Christ had a need to have fellowship with God and with His disciples, because the Word of God says, "Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred shall put ten thousand to flight" (Leviticus 26:8). The Lord Jesus Christ needed fellowship to strengthen His humanity in the midst of the tremendous trial that He was facing.

Lonely and Forsaken

I received a letter from a servant of God, and in this letter he said that he was resigning from the ministry. He communicated that he planned

to withdraw from all evangelical Christian activity (even though he said he would not withdraw from God because he loved the life of Christ). He planned to go into a business and to remain true to God. Nevertheless, he withdrew from Christianity as far as being a pastor and a minister of the Gospel.

His story was that he felt alone and misunderstood. He stated that his church, the corporate Body, did not minister unto him, to his spiritual and emotional needs, even though he was ministering consistently to the needs of the congregation.

This is not new problem. The Lord Jesus Christ went to the garden. The disciples were with Him, but the disciples were not sensitive to His needs. May I say, one of the tremendous needs of the hour is for every true child of God to learn to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and sensitive to each other's needs.

Think about it. The world is filled with anxiety and noise and frustration. The world is filled with people who wonder what they will do next. There is so much focus on "self" that even many believers cannot see the tremendous needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ. We have a tremendous part in God's eternal plan.

He has a need for us to contribute.

God Himself longs for people to see *His* way of having their needs met. Instead of understanding the purpose of heaven, too many believers have a shallow, superficial attitude of caring that exists—a certain kind of concern, yet without sensitivity to the needs of Jesus Christ and to the needs of others.

Jesus took His disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane because He needed their fellowship. He asked them to watch and to pray, then He went on further, alone, and He fell on His face and prayed. He said, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, thy will be done." Then, when He went back to where He left them, His disciples were sleeping. They were not sensitive. They were not spiritually conditioned to meet the needs of Jesus Christ in the greatest trial of His life, and they went to sleep instead of watching with Him. They did not recognize their part in God's plan.

Chapter Two

FORSAKEN SO WE MIGHT BE FORGIVEN

"For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you" (2 Corinthians 13:4).

Jesus' first need was that the disciples would love Him. He began to feel lonely as He went down that trail through Gethsemane and to the Cross. He wanted Peter, John, and James to express their love to Him—the same love he had shown them since the day they began to walk with Him. He took them to the garden because He wanted a fellowship of love. He had a need to be loved with His own precious love.

The greatest need of every individual in this world is to receive God's love.

Operating in the weakness of His humanity in the unbelievable conquest of His trial, Jesus

Christ needed the disciples to love Him. But they went to sleep. They were with Him, yet they went to sleep. They were in the garden, but they were not sensitive to His heartbeat.

In a ministry such as ours, every one of us is becoming more sensitive, realizing that every church service is an opportunity to worship God, to fellowship with God, and then to be sensitive to the needs of God and the people around us. Every time we gather together—whether it be two or three of us or several hundred—it represents a time to be sensitive to God, to love Him and worship Him and become sensitive to the needs of others.

In so many words, Jesus was saying in Matthew 26, "I need you to love me. I need you to sit and to pray with Me. I need you to care, because right now I am beginning to operate in the fullness of My humanity, and I am going to be crucified in weakness (see 2 Corinthians 13:4).

"I am entering into the very lowest ebb of My human existence. I am getting ready to take the sins of the world upon My body. The sorrow and the suffering, caused by sin, of every individual throughout the ages will be on my mind. Love Me. Pray with Me. Stay with Me. Strengthen Me, because now I am personally

learning obedience by the things that I suffer (see Hebrews 5:8).

"In my humanity, I fear because of the nature of your sins and the nature of the trial. I fear what it will be like to be separated from my Father, even for a few moments. I sense all the demons as they begin to organize and mobilize and make Me the object of their attack. I sense it coming in, and I need you."

And, so, He said, "Pray. Pray with Me. For an hour—just pray."

Still, Jesus came back and the disciples were sleeping. So He went and fell on His face. A tremendous need was upon Him. He said, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, thy will be done."

But it wasn't possible. If we were to be redeemed, if our sins were to be covered, if we were to have heaven as a place prepared for us, it was not possible for the Father to let the cup pass from His Son.

It may be that when He prayed for the cup to be removed, because the physical oppression at that time was so great, He meant, "If it is possible, don't let the cup of death happen to Me here in the garden. Let Me go to the Cross, for which I am purposed to do" (John 17). In His

humanity, as He faced the torment of hell and being separated from His Father for the first time in all of eternity, Jesus Christ had our redemption first and foremost in His mind.

When Jesus went back to His disciples for the third time, they were still sleeping. So after letting them sleep, He finally said to them, "Rise up now, because the enemies are ready, and the Son of man is about to be betrayed. It's all ready. So rise up now, and let us be going."

The Father Turned His Face Away

Another need that Jesus Christ had during His time on earth was His need for fellowship with His Father. More than any time in His humanity, in His human existence as a man upon earth, He needed that. But the Father cut it off when, at Calvary, our sins were placed upon the Son.

The Son cried out in Matthew 27:46, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why, at a time like this—when I am weak, when I am hurting, when My body is bleeding, when I need You so much? You have never left Me before. You have always been with Me. Why hast thou forsaken Me?"

He was in need of the Father's fellowship,

but He couldn't have it, because our sins were upon Him. His needs were great, but He took our sins upon Himself, and He went through a time of being utterly forsaken. He did this all for us because He loves us.

When we enter into sin, into a place where we should not go, we have tremendous need for the Father's fellowship, but we cannot have it because sin separates us from that fellowship. We want to hear the voice of God, and we want to hear the Word of God. We want to experience forgiveness, but we cannot because of sin. Jesus was taking our sins upon His body, and the Father had to turn His back. The Son cried, "Why have You forsaken me?"

At that moment, the Father and the Holy Spirit completely detached themselves from intervention. They detached themselves from entering into Christ's need, from entering into His trials, from entering into His pressures. While He was operating in the fullness of His humanity, though Jesus was still fully God, the Father and the Holy Spirit detached themselves completely.

Christ identified with us when every single sin that anyone has ever committed was put into one package and placed upon Him. He desper-

ately needed the Father's fellowship but could not have it. Though He was sinless, He became sin so that He could make us the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Hanging on the Cross, in total desperation, the Lord Jesus Christ looked up to heaven and said, "I am in need. The disciples have forsaken Me (Matthew 26:56). *You* have forsaken Me (Matthew 27:46). I am in need! Won't somebody hear Me?"

The Lamb Suffered for Our Sake

Because of His submission to the plan of God, the perfect, spotless Lamb of God endured the Father turning away from Him at that particular time and with that particular mood. The Lord Jesus Christ, misunderstood and forsaken, with our sins upon Him, entered into a tremendous need that was not being met. His need was not met by God, nor by man, nor by His grace and mercy. And because He endured that separation, we will never have to face a time of being utterly forsaken when we cry out to God.

Even though we will fail and even though we will feel guilty, He will always hear and always answer because He can fellowship with us when we confess our sins to Him and repent. He

can fellowship with us because of what His precious Son did in our place, as our substitute, in the vicarious atonement at Calvary.

With worship, with appreciation, and with thanksgiving to God, consider Christ's sacrifice. Thank Him that He went through a period when His need was not met by God the Father. He went through a time when His need was not met by His close associates or friends or loved ones. His need was not met, and it was a tremendous need, an unbelievable need. But He went through it so that every single need in your life could be met by Him, by grace and through faith.

Chapter Three

HAVING COMPASSION THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

"And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14).

"Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way" (Matthew 15:32).

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41).

"Jesus wept.

"Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!" (John 11:35-36).

Jesus has a need for us to reveal His compassion to the world. He wants you and I to have the same compassion, because that is why He died. In our hurrying, in all the hustle and

bustle of life, He wants us to know that the hour is late and that the time is short.

Jesus Christ wants us to join with Him. He wants us to join Him in revealing His compassion to the lost, to the weak, to the sick, to the needy, to the lonely, to the suffering, to those who have heartaches. He wants us to do more than just acknowledge it. He wants us to enter into His divine heart of compassion. He has a need for us to do that so that we may share with others His life and His love, personally.

Jesus Christ has a need that we love one another as He loved us (John 13:34).

Do you realize His need—that we would love each other with the same love that He has for us? He has a tremendous need for us to express that love and share it. Sharing His life, which is His very nature, conditioned Him to have a need. And because He gave His life, it produced a need to receive love from His disciples and from us.

Jesus Christ, the precious God-Man in heaven—because He so loved the whole world, because He loved so deeply—conditioned His own heart for a need of love, a need of fellowship, a need to be ministered unto. This is our part in His plan.

This is why the priests in the sanctuary of the temple were to minister first to Him (see Ezekiel 44:15). This is why He said, "Be ye witnesses unto me first before you are witnesses in Jerusalem, and Judaea" (see Acts 1:8). He has need to be loved, a need to be worshipped, a need for your fellowship. He has a need because He is still a Person with a personality and a portion to share. Because He loves so much and loves so deeply, He needs that love returned. He needs to receive our portion. He loves it and enjoys it and cherishes it and gets so much pleasure and glory out of it (see Revelation 4:11; Isaiah 45:7). What's more, He wants it today.

Loving with His Love

Jesus Christ has a need that we love each other as He loves us. He wants us to share His character, to share His likeness, and to reveal His image. The Word of God says, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

He has a need that we forgive one another with a tender heart. When He sees us doing this, we are meeting His need because we are responding to His love. We are responding to His

own forgiveness, which was extended toward us personally. He has a need that we forgive and forget with a tenderhearted love that only has its origin in God.

That is His need. That is our part in His plan.

He has a need that we would be witnesses in every single area of life—not mechanically and methodically, but spiritually, as we communicate His life and His Gospel. He has a need that we look to India and their starving masses, and that we would get down on our knees and weep before God and say, "Lord, save souls and meet the needs of those starving for truth in India."

He has a need that we would consider the different mission fields in the world and be missions minded with a Christ-centered love for the world, with a heart that is honest and true and motivated by Him.

He has a need that we would build up one another and edify each other, that we would minister life and meet each other's needs in the sensitivity of His own Spirit.

He has a need that we would live as the "one new man" of Ephesians 2:15, that we would function as God functions, live as God lives, and love the Word as God declared it.

He has a need that we would come together

through His grace and through His mercy and band together with the same fervency—one heart, one soul, one mind, one purpose, and one heartbeat of love. He has a need that we would submit ourselves to the Cross and enter into His resurrection and ascension. He has a need that we would dwell together, not only in unity but much more importantly, in the union of the Trinity (John 17:11-26).

He has a need that we would pray fervently and earnestly for one another, for the lost, and for our enemies. He has a need that we would come together and let our hearts beat under the banner of heaven, and let our understanding have the knowledge of His wisdom. He has a need that we would let His fervency come into our hearts with the very earnestness of His divine attributes.

Walk in the Spirit

He has a need that we would be filled continually with the Holy Spirit. He has a need that we would walk by faith and not by sight, trusting Him for every detail. He has a need that we would share Him in every situation. He has a need that we would turn to Him and not circumstances or self for rationalization.

He has a need that we would minister grace instead of legalism, love instead of law; that we would minister heaven instead of hell, that we would minister His life instead of death.

He has a need that we would come before Him and then share Him in every situation and declare that He is beautiful (Psalm 48:2).

He has a need that we would study and grow in the Word of God, praying without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17); that we would allow circumstances to happen without murmuring, without doubting, and without rationalization, conforming us to His very image right here on earth in a progressive growth of faith while we operate in our humanity.

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Jesus Christ has a need that we would yearn daily for His Second Coming. Jesus Christ has a need that we would operate by every Word of God with faith in our hearts as circumstances give us needs (Deuteronomy 8:3). He has a need that every single child of God would join one another as never before in being sensitive to His needs.

Jesus Christ has needs and He has made us a part of His plan—that we would hear from Him, and by the Spirit of God we would meet those needs in this world. That is our part in God's plan.

CONCLUSION

Take time to love Jesus Christ. Take time to enter into your part in His plan. Take time to worship Him. Take time to meet His need, because He is meeting the needs of thousands. Do not forget that He has a need. He has need of your fellowship. He has need of you coming to Him and just plain loving Him for love's sake and worshipping Him for worship's sake, and talking to Him for fellowship's sake.

In your hearing, in perhaps the many things that you have to do, please learn to be very sensitive to understand your part in the plan of Jesus Christ. He needs us to love Him. He needs for us to initiate the love He sheds in our hearts back to Him, and He needs it constantly and continually. Even now, though He is glorified, and though He is in heaven, the Christ that is living in our hearts needs us to initiate this love to Him.

He has a need, and it is a need that we

would come to Him and say,

"Lord, I just want to take some time and minister to You and love You. In everything I do, I want to minister to you. I thought that because You are God, You have no needs. I started to think of You as a mechanical God instead of a Person with a mind, emotions, and will, just as You created us. You have the same needs but on a different scope. And Lord, by Your grace and through what You have done and through who You are in me, I want to minister to Your needs."

Father, I look to You now to teach me in the anointing of the Holy Spirit what Your needs are. Thank You that, as You have described in the Scrip - tures, I can see that You have needs, and Your needs relate to our needs, and our needs are Your needs. I thank You and praise You, and I ask it in Jesus' pre - cious name. Amen.

Our Quietness Reveals

Satan's Defeat

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33). The devil is the author of confusion. He hates a quiet spirit, and he tries to make us so occupied and busy with the details of life that we fail to seek what we really need: a consistent vertical relationship with Jesus Christ.

Having quietness in our souls does not mean that we are silent, but that we can stand boldly against the storm. It is not something we can attain through self-effort. Rather, divine quietness is present only in one whose heart is meek, one who is consistently God-conscious.

This booklet will reveal the glory of meekness that produces a quiet spirit. The Christian who understands it manifests the truth of Isaiah 32:17: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."

Chapter One

CONTROLLED BY GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

"But let [your adorning] be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of *a meek and quiet spirit*, *which is in the sight of God of great price*" (1 Peter 3:4).

"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3).

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance" (Galatians 5:22-23).

The first three fruits mentioned in Galatians 5:22 (love, joy, and peace) are inward qualities that adorn the one who is filled with the Spirit of God. The next three are outward qualities that we extend to others. But the last three are upward, to glorify God. Therefore, meekness is one way we give honor to God.

Behind the attributes of quietness, assurance,

serenity, tranquillity, peace, fellowship, and love—behind every tremendous relationship we have with others—is meekness, a production of the Holy Spirit. How is a Christian transformed into Christ's image? Meekness does it.

Meekness is a sacred quality, much different from humility. Humility speaks of our attitude before men. Meekness is the attitude of a heart before God. It means being God-conscious instead of self-conscious. No one can produce meekness. Meekness comes only as the fruit of walking in the Spirit.

The Lord Jesus Christ will supernaturally teach only those who are meek toward Him. The meek will receive His knowledge, which the Holy Spirit transfers through His power (*energeia*) into the memory center. There, Scriptures are memorized supernaturally and locked in by *ischus*, which is the power of the Holy Spirit that brings the Word to our conscious mind. The Word is then placed in the streams of consciousness. Then, through *kratos*, the Word that was in the hidden, inner man is manifested through us to others (Ephesians 1:19).* This hidden man is the new creation, which is incorruptible. He has the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is of great price in the sight of God.

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were only conscious of God, of each other, and of the work they were to do in the Garden. Before the Fall, anything could have happened to disturb them, and they would not have been conscious of it at all. Perhaps Satan tried to distract them daily. But because of meekness, they were only God-conscious.

Meekness means that we become so focused on the indwelling presence of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Lord Jesus Christ, that we see everything through God-consciousness. This produces a quiet spirit.

Acts 19:36 instructs us to be quiet and to do nothing rashly. We are to be controlled only by God-consciousness. Isaiah 30:15 says, "For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Quietness and confidence come from a spirit of meekness rooted in God-consciousness.

**For more about the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, read* Building Walls of Doctrine, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Two

GOD-GIVEN RESTING PLACES

The most precious thing in God's eyes is a believer with a meek and quiet spirit. The only reason we have problems with others is because we are not meek. When we lack meekness, we do not have God-consciousness toward others.

The key to success in any business, on any team, or in any organization is to always pray and live in God-consciousness, not in self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is not meekness. It is the opposite of love. It is selfishness that leaves a person trying to fulfill his own need for self, rationalizing it and justifying it in a vocabulary of self-preservation.

When God gives quietness, who can make trouble? Job 34:29 asks.

While you read this booklet, allow the Holy Spirit to instruct you. God teaches those who are meek (Psalm 25:9).

Do you become upset when you bring up a

good idea and someone acts as if they could care less about what you just said? You may think, "He doesn't appreciate all that I do." That is self-consciousness that is bringing you low.

If you have an idea and someone else has a different one, allow meekness to rule your emotions. Express your idea but remain God-conscious. If you get your way, fine; if not, the issue is not who wins but that we stay focused and remain God-conscious. Stay meek.

Demonic Disruptions

"For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land" (Psalm 35:20).

Understanding meekness means to understand what is referred to in this verse. The word *episeisen* is used in the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, describing an army of demons that comes to provoke restlessness (1 Chronicles 21:1). These invisible forces use restlessness to regulate our emotions to the winds of circumstances, the fears of failure, or the insecurity of the present. Another word used here is *anapeithetosan*. It means that Satan comes invisibly and inaudibly to defend your right to be wrong (Jeremiah 29:8).

It is entirely possible to live without a single negative feeling toward anyone when we live in the undisturbed quietness of God in the midst of the storms of human experience. Satan doesn't want Christians to discover how to walk in the Spirit and be meek. But 1 Chronicles 4:40*a* speaks of those who find "fat pasture and good, and the land was wide, and quiet, and peaceable." These believers are undisturbed inwardly. Instead of negative reactions, they have a meek and quiet spirit in the sight of God.

Sowing the Word in the Heart

I will always remember visiting a dear friend in the hospital who was 91 years old at that time. She was supposedly in severe pain and possibly incoherent because of her condition. When I went into her room, I found her quoting Psalm 91. Then she quoted Psalm 23, and Psalm 4, and Psalm 77. She just kept quoting Scripture!

I knew then that she could understand me, and I asked, "Are you in pain?"

"Do act like I am in pain?" she snapped back.

So I just prayed for her. Then, I said, "Now, would you pray for me? You have been laying there ministering to me all this time, so now please pray for me."

That woman had such quietness. She was in severe pain, but she understood what the Word of God said to Israel in Isaiah 32:17-20:

"The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.

"And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;

"When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass."

Those who are meek have quietness and confidence to go forward with God, regardless of the circumstances. They have quiet resting places—not just one place, but many.

Chapter Three

HEARKENING UNTO HIS WORD

"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8).

"The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness" (Psalm 41:3).

I gave these verses to a person who called me and said, "I just can't sleep at night, and I haven't been feeling well. What should I do?"

Then I said to her, "Do you believe these verses?"

There was a long pause. "Say them again," she said.

I repeated the verses to her. "You called me, and I am giving you God's solution to be able to sleep as you have never slept before. Now, do you believe that if you lay down and sleep in peace, God will give you quietness and let you dwell in safety? Only God can do it. Do you be-

lieve that He will make your bed when you are sick? This means He will give you rest. Do you believe that? Do you believe God will take care of you when you are languishing?"

"I will claim the verses," she finally said.

I wish that I could say that was the end of it, that she slept wonderfully from that point on. But the next day she called in on our radio talk show and asked, "Is there anything you can do to help me sleep?"

So I said, "Yes, there are two verses I can give you: Psalm 4:8 and Psalm 41:3."

I read them again to her.

"Those verses make sense to me. I know I will sleep soundly tonight," she said.

That was the first time she really *heard* those verses. A week or so later, she called to say that she was now sleeping peacefully. "It was the two verses you gave me on the radio. I had never heard them before."

This story illustrates what Matthew 13:13 means when it says, "Hearing, they hear not." It happens all the time. The woman was so occupied with self-consciousness that she was overwhelmed by the circumstances going on in her life. She had no capacity to hear those verses when I said them the first time.

A while later, I saw her again and asked, "How are you sleeping?"

"In peace!" she said. "Only God could do that."

Now she has these verses mastered. Knowledge was transferred and transformed into life, and once again, Satan was defeated. Her quietness was the result of something far better than sleeping pills.

God-Consciousness vs. Self-Consciousness

"But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be *quiet* from fear of evil" (Proverbs 1:33).

"Quiet" here is the Hebrew word, *shaan*. It describes divine quietness that comes from divine meekness, which is God-consciousness. Consider what God is saying. A Spirit-filled person lives in God-consciousness; a carnal person lives in self-consciousness (1 Corinthians 3, Romans 8:5-7). Self-consciousness produces self-preservation and restlessness in circumstances. God-consciousness produces quietness, assurance, confidence, and tremendous peace, in spite of outward circumstances against inward turmoil. Meekness and a quiet spirit have a great value.

Whosoever listens to God shall, in God-consciousness, dwell in safety and find divine quietness: quietness when the marriage goes bad, quietness when all kinds of unusual things start to happen.

Rejoice Always

I ministered to a woman who was severely burned in a terrible fire with her son and her daughter. This family was very special to me because of their hearts toward God. I went to the hospital to visit her and she quoted Proverbs 1:33 to me.

"God gave me that verse," she told me. "And I wrote down in my Bible the word *shaan* that you preached. I am calm, and quiet, and undisturbed in all these circumstances."

That's impossible, you say? Then you are calling God a liar. God does not lie. Quietness and confidence can be our strength.

Don't be sad when you get bad news. Know that God will take care of the bad news. You can't change it, so why should you get sad about something that you cannot change? Why become disheartened over something you cannot control? It is right to be concerned, but don't be sad; be God-conscious.

The Bible says we are to give thanks to God "always for all things" (Ephesians 5:20). "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). "Rejoice" really means "relax" because of God-consciousness. Relax because God is on your side. Relax because He is for you (see Romans 8:31).

The woman who went through the fire had burns on her neck. Her children had terrible burns. Still, she said, "God has promised me that He will make something good out of this. God is on my side, and this will work together for good. That's in my Bible. I am sure that His Word is just as good when my children and I are in the hospital, in this situation. I don't have any questions about why it happened. I only know that something good will come out of it."

Chapter Four

A VICTORIOUS NATURE EXPOSES SATAN'S DEFEAT

There are two beautiful Greek words: *tapeinos* and *phroneo*. The first word means to live through God-consciousness with grace to be humble. *Phroneo* speaks of thinking in God-consciousness in meekness and humility before God.

A compound of these words is *tapeinophrosune,* found in Philippians 2:3: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in *lowliness of mind* let each esteem other better than themselves." That means we are to be God-conscious as we think in grace toward ourselves and others. First Thessalonians 4:11 tells us to "study to be quiet."

Picture the devil trying to provoke you, trying to get you to react in the flesh, trying to get you to defend yourself, trying to make you become self-conscious. Here he is with his army of

demons, *epeseisen*, doing all that he can to get you to think you are right when you are wrong (1 Chronicles 21:1).

And here is God is saying, "If you will be conscious of My promises, My Spirit, My love, and My grace toward you, and if you will recognize that My plan is perfect (Psalm 18:30), the devil will be angry. If you are conscious of Me and focus on Me, Satan will come after you—because you are quiet in the land."

Satan doesn't want you to be quiet because quietness reveals his defeat. Contrast that to the revelation of Christ's victory and the nature of His Word. You have accepted His Word and your faith is derived from Him. You enjoy the nature of your resurrection life in Christ because of your spiritual death in Christ, which occurred first. By your quietness, you reveal Satan's total defeat, and he doesn't like that at all. He will do all he can to provoke you out of your quietness.

Avoid Conditional Reactions

Perhaps you get upset with a coworker. Maybe you have had a personality clash with a member of the church and haven't spoken with that person for months. "I get so troubled working with John," you complain. Well, just wait

until you start working with Jack. Then you will really be tested!

In either of these scenarios, there is no quietness; there is no assurance. These are the reactions of a conditional believer who is lacking the resurrection consciousness of God's meekness in the experiential relationships to the people around you. This soul has no objective love, which at least sees some value in another soul. But if you are not operating in meekness, you will also lack subjective love, which is love that has its source in God and does not depend on the object at all. Subjective love comes from you when you are filled with God-consciousness.

Imagine being in a troubled marriage. Instead of reacting, you trust in the Lord Jesus. You are not passive. You are just trusting in God, because you have discovered the secret of entering into God's viewpoint that produces quietness.

Maybe your finances are not good. Trust in God. Perhaps you have heard some bad news from the doctor. Remember, God is in charge of the plan, and His plan is grace for anything that happens to you. The plan of God is perfect. It is perfect now just as it was perfect yesterday, and it will be perfect tomorrow. You can remain quiet

and confident because you have strength through God-consciousness, through meekness, and your quietness reveals the devil's utter defeat.

CONCLUSION

"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalm 131:2).

This passage means that I am to live in *tapeinophrosune*—God-consciousness that produces meekness, so I will be totally undisturbed in outward circumstances. I don't internalize pressure because I am so focused on fellowshipping with God that the pressure cannot touch me.

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:18-19).

Satan cannot touch us. He is defeated and we are one with God. We are living in God, confessing God, fellowshipping with God, and expressing God. Therefore, the wicked one cannot

touch us. He cannot disturb our lives because of our vertical relationship with Christ.

"And [Jesus] said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while" (Mark 6:31*a*). Jesus wants us to take up His yoke and rest with Him (Matthew 11:28-30). In this verse, "labour" speaks of our own strife. "Heavy laden" speaks of burdens others have put upon us. Jesus wants us to give them all to Him and rest in His love for us.

Father, we pray that You would cover us with Your providential protection wherever we may go and in everything we do. Give us this quietness, which comes from the fruit of the Spirit and from God-consciousness. Bless our fellowship this day, this week, and all year in Jesus' name with the tremendous blessing of God's power upon our lives. Amen.

Overcoming Eating Disorders

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

"Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again…" (2 Corinthians 10:7*a*).

In a world where image equals power, and power equals control, people who want to succeed will take harsh measures to achieve their goals. For many people, however, success is not so much the issue as the love and acceptance that seem to come with it. Assaulted by cosmic images that promote worldly ideals, some people who already suffer from a poor self-image are caught in a cycle of destruction defined by eating disorders.

Food is a necessity, required by our bodies to function. Therefore, it is not surprising that food is at the center of a satanic strategy to keep people away from God and focused on themselves.

Only God can satisfy our deep needs and desires. He is always seeking us out, waiting to

be gracious and to reveal His thoughts of love and acceptance toward us (Jeremiah 31:3). Satan, on the other hand, has an exalted, angelic self-image that is grossly distorted from who he really is (Isaiah 14:16). In an effort to keep us from unmasking his true identity, he targets the self-image of Christians. John 10:10 says he comes to rob, kill, and destroy. One way is by keeping us from seeing who we are in Christ and from understanding that everything we have is because of God's grace.

This booklet exalts the "Bread of Heaven," our Savior Jesus Christ, as it exposes hell's conspiracy to promote disordered eating behaviors. Our intention is not to provide an exhaustive outline but to offer God's viewpoint of the spiritual activity involved and practical strategies for victory to the believer. Many excellent resources are available for those who wish to know more of the clinical aspect. Because of the severe complications associated with eating disorders, those who are struggling with this should consult their physicians concerning a plan of medical treatment.

Chapter One

SEARCHING FOR AN IDENTITY

A woman suffered through a childhood marred by sexual and emotional abuse. A man in her home sexualized everything about her life. "My body was ridiculed and violated, and it no longer belonged to me," she said.

Continually, this young girl was physically molested and criticized whenever she gained the slightest bit of weight. She complained that her cries were ignored and that her body, which she quickly came to despise, became her only means of expressing her anger and frustration.

Her story points out a primary facet in the mind of a person with an eating disorder. Unable to see herself as a trophy of God's grace, she struggled with accepting herself and how others would accept her. Because of years of mental and physical torment, she could not accept her physical appearance.

Eating disorders often evolve as a struggle

for power where there have been unrealistic expectations from self or others. A person who feels powerless and out of control in other areas of life may latch on to controlling his body through food. Many celebrities have stories related to eating disorders. Pop singer Karen Carpenter, who produced a string of No. 1 hits during the 1960s and '70s, died from heart failure—the result of years of anorectic behavior. The late Princess Diana of England battled bulimia; gymnast Cathy Rigby struggled for years. These are just a few of the many who seem to have had so much and yet suffered with eating disorders.

Often, when we think of eating disorders, we look for a sign that something is wrong. We have a concept of what someone with an eating disorder looks like. But eating disorders do not always relate to disordered appearances. Anorectics are not necessarily thin people, and binge eaters are not always obese.

Everyone has an area of natural weakness as well as an area of natural strength, and we have a choice in how we appropriate them. Eating disorders are behavior problems that involve much sublimation, withdrawing into a human provision to deal with very real conflicts.

Many sincere Christians bring this problem into their Christianity. It is their area of weakness, but the problem is the destructive effects. They do something in their natural strength outside of God's provision, trying to make themselves complete and to take care of their pain, guilt, or rejection. Even Paul used prayer as a human provision to deal with the thorn in his flesh. But God's provision in this case was not prayer but grace—grace to let God be his strength in his situation (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Anorexia and the Power of the Will

Anorexia is not a new phenomenon. In 1694, Richard Morton published the first medical case history of *anorexia nervosa*. The Latin term, coined by Sir William Gull nearly two hundred years later, means "a nervous loss of appetite." That name misrepresents the true nature of this disorder, since people do not lose their appetite until the late stages of the disease.

In the United States, one percent of all girls between the ages of 10 and 18 develop *anorexia nervosa*. Ten percent of these young women—nearly 20 thousand—will eventually die as a result of the complications. Vanity and an inordinate desire to be attractive are often reasons

for their behavior. Particularly at risk are those who come from families with a genetic history of major depression, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and anxiety. Nearly half of all anorectics meet the diagnostic criteria for depression, and almost as many are defined as obsessive-compulsive.

The behavior of people with anorexia includes a preoccupation with dieting and thinness that leads to excessive weight loss and masks underlying psychological problems. They develop an intense fear of becoming fat and have an inability to correctly perceive their body weight or shape. They may deal with food in strange ways, often collecting recipes, hiding food that they refuse to eat, cutting up food into extremely small pieces, eating alone (which is considered a sin in some cultures), or counting calories obsessively. These behaviors are kept very secret.

Anorectic behavior affects the entire body. Besides the less obvious side effects such as night vision impairment, a common risk is damage to the heart muscle, often resulting in an increase in the risk of cardiac arrest. Because digestive enzymes are depleted, the liver then cannot maintain the proper level of protein in

the bloodstream. This affects brain function, tissue maintenance, and a host of physical requirements, which in turn affect mental and emotional health. This is obviously a masterful plan of the enemy to starve and destroy a soul who was created by God to be filled with love, joy, peace—the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Bulimia

Bulimia nervosa is a disorder characterized by the purging of food, usually following an episode of binge-eating or rapid consumption. This purging can involve self-induced vomiting, the overuse of laxatives, and compulsive exercise. Unfortunately, people who are bulimic punish themselves because they cannot accept themselves as they are.

As with anorexia, the root of bulimia is a desire for control in lives and circumstances that otherwise seem out of control. Through sublimation, this disorder temporarily supplies a sense of purpose. A bulimic has usually reasoned out that his behavior is useful, because he can consume large amounts of food without the consequence of gaining weight.

Binge Eating

Binge eating involves uncontrolled overeating that is usually kept secret. People with this condition engage in frequent binges, but unlike the bulimic, they do not purge away the food. Their binge episodes are quickly followed by intense feelings of guilt and shame. As with the anorectic and bulimic, the intake of food is used as a dysfunctional means of coping with psychological problems.

Nearly 40 percent of obese people are thought to be binge eaters. And recent reports show that obesity is the second leading preventable cause of death. Danger signals include eating when one is not really hungry, frequent and varied stages of dieting, and a feeling of not being able to stop eating. High blood pressure, poor cholesterol levels, gall bladder disease, diabetes, and certain cancers are among the medical consequences of binge-eating behavior.

Getting Help: A Battle of Wills

As we have seen, low self-esteem, perfectionism, sexual identity confusion, abuse, depression, deception, and power struggles are seven leading causes of eating disorders. A myth about eating disorders is that they are primarily

a woman's problem; however, increasing numbers of men are being found to have them. An eating disorder is not a vain, attention-getting device. The people who suffer with it usually do not want to be found out. If anything, they are living in fear, struggling to cope with deep anxieties, seeking to avoid criticism at all costs.

A primary fear they have is that they will lose control and be told what to do. Their behavior patterns cannot be arrested by manipulation. In fact, those with eating disorders have become master manipulators with tremendous ability to hide their disorder.

Having looked at eating disorders from a natural viewpoint, we will go a step further to look at the supernatural cause behind them.

Chapter Two

CONTROLLED BY A LIE OR BY LIFE?

A woman in her twenties, who was bulimic for five years, recently testified that her condition is completely gone. She said that the problem definitely was too big for her and that alone, she was powerless against the projections that came against her.

"I was powerless, but there was a provision," she said. "God loves us enough to have a plan for a full life and to set us free from this addiction."

This woman grew up in a very legalistic home. First came thoughts that she was eating too much, and then the projections became increasingly worse. She explained how the devil searches out weaknesses and contrives ways to destroy our lives. But God had the victory through His Word, the Holy Spirit, and unconditional love revealed through the Body of

Christ.

Another woman felt that she had no control over anything in her life. Her husband was abusive and had saddled the family with numerous debts. She was constantly forced to spend days at home alone with her children. There was nothing she could do about it. She reasoned that the behaviors that caused her anorexia gave her a measure of control.

"Food—my eating habits—became the one thing that I could control," she said. "Everything else was out of my hands."

For this woman to suggest that she had "control" is a lie. Clearly, the devil was controlling her. According to John 10:10, the devil comes to destroy, and the one suffering from an eating disorder must recognize it for what it is—evil controlling the person. Anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating are dangerous and false counterfeits that substitute for the life of the risen Christ in us.

The Power behind the Attack

"Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly. He moveth his tail like a cedar:

the sinews of his stones are wrapped together. His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron" (Job 40:15-18).

"Behemoth" in this passage refers to demon armies that work to hinder and destroy our self-image and our immune system through alcoholism, gluttony, anorexia, and bulimia. The work of these armies is to bring about physical problems, notably to the kidneys, causing them to dysfunction and preventing the cleansing of toxins from the blood. This can trigger further metabolic collapse and can cause weakness associated with the decreased production of blood cells.

Generally speaking, eating disorders are the product of satanic infections. Satan sponsors such behaviors to steal, kill, and destroy. These disorders are designed by hell to afflict the emotions and wear out the body. For example, medical studies have shown that bulimia can take ten to twelve years off of a person's expected life span. Besides an increase in hair loss and skin problems, gum diseases and dental decay are accelerated because of stomach acids when vomiting is involved.

When we are caught in this cycle to the point where our physical health is impaired, the nat-

ural effect is mental then spiritual depression. Because they are so closely connected, the physical, mental, and spiritual effects are progressively intensified the longer the cycle continues. Nothing can provide the self-love needed so desperately by every person who suffers with an eating disorder—*nothing*, that is, but the personal love of the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, and the fellowship in His Body.

The Role of Cleaving Spirits

All of these disorders are rooted in a spirit of self-destruction. The person who does not surrender to Calvary and receive the exchanged life of Christ is trapped by a spirit of arrogance, disguised in the false humility of a need. They live in a lie that is being sold to people who think they need something beyond God's plan and provision for their lives. The spirits involved are called "cleaving spirits," demons that cling to the emotions and enslave people as they struggle to meet their needs through the flesh.

Eating disorders are a tool of the enemy in spiritual warfare. A satanic spirit causes many people to take on a form of guilt, blaming themselves for things that happened in their past. In truth, it is not about them but what Satan is pro-

jecting to them.

In James 3:14-15, this process is clearly revealed. First, demons want to make believers earthly minded, then take over their souls with earthly thinking. Then, specific demons will absolutely control and energize one or more areas of a believer's life with satanic projections. These projections are received as thoughts or impulses to reinforce bad memories of circumstances stored in the soul and to control that person's reactions to similar situations in the future.

We can be disciplined in exercising and eating properly and have fun doing it, free in who we are. There is nothing wrong with a desire to be fit, as long as that doesn't become our singular goal. Satan, however, promotes self-critical thoughts: "You're not thin enough" or "You need to eat more. *Fill up your emptiness*." We may become very critical toward our bodies and begin what seems to be a very beneficial exercise program. But with an already strong-willed temperament and a tendency toward perfectionism conflicting with a poor self-image, some people overcompensate. They develop an obsession with exercising that becomes a form of bulimia.

Balance is so important in every aspect of life. We need to eat, we need to exercise, we

need to work, and we need to rest. With all of it, we need order in our lives. The thoughts we receive can be so confusing, yet God, who created us, has not changed His mind (Malachi 3:6). His Word defines the criteria for physical, mental, and spiritual health. It is ours for the asking.

Chapter Three

DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE BREAD OF LIFE

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst….

"I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:35, 48-51).

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with

all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life from heaven. This is why Satan desires to corrupt our perception of food. Except we eat His flesh and drink His blood spiritually, we have no life in us (see John 6:53-58). Through wrong concepts about food, the devil seeks to promote wrong thinking about Christ. We only become complete by the spiritual provisions Christ has for us.

Choosing to Think with God

Even our failure is a small gap already accounted for in God's economy. Ephesians 4:23 says, "And be renewed in the *spirit of your mind*," or, "the mind that is in you." The change is not in the mind, as if it were a change of opinion; but, it is in the *spirit* of the mind, which gives the mind its material of thought. When our spirit is one with the Spirit of God, simply because we choose to agree that He is right, then we will have the right material to think with and to make right choices.

Psalm 37:4 says that when we choose to delight ourselves in the Lord, we are no longer involved in our "need." Instead, we focus on glorifying Him. Delighting in the Lord brings fullness (see Ephesians 3:19). Then, God gives us

the desires of our hearts. When we are operating from a place of fullness, whatever we do, whatever we eat, we do to the glory of God. We can exercise, not because we have to, but because we want to do it. We do it because we are complete in Christ, and we love what God is making us to be.

Being filled with the Spirit protects the body from satanic projections such as eating disorders. Without condemnation, the Spirit brings victory to us by God's way, with God's truth and God's life. Grace isn't given so we can serve the devil's provision in the flesh. It is given to keep us from falling and to receive forgiveness when we do fall.

It is important for us to remember that a person with an eating disorder is not his sin. We need to be shown how to see ourselves as complete in Christ and fully accepted as we are. Satan wants to rob us of the glory of God that comes from securing our lives in His Word and His promises. We must remember that no matter what we do, God will never leave us nor forsake us.

Seeing God's Way to Victory

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient

for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

If we struggle with eating disorders, we have to know what Christ has done for us. He died for all of our sins on the Cross (1 Peter 2:24), and His Blood washes us clean (Hebrews 9:14). He does not reject us at any time (Hebrews 13:5). There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Remember, He even loved us while we were still His enemies (Ephesians 2:3-4).

He loves us with a great love, and as believers, we are only complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). Even with all of our shortcomings and failures, we have tremendous value in Jesus' eyes. As He deeply cares for us, He also wants to take care of us (1 Peter 5:7).

We cannot win any victory apart from letting the Savior work in our lives. While Jesus walked on the earth, He was always occupied with people's needs. He helped many, healed multitudes, delivered untold numbers, and even fed thousands miraculously. He wants to do the same for our problems, addictions, and sins. He wants to deliver us, heal us, and make us complete in

Him.

This Savior accepts you, loves you, and wants to help you just as you are. You don't have to do or be anything; just receive life from Him through the Word and the Spirit (Psalm 116:12-13). Open your heart and let His healing love flow through you and deliver you. You will begin to realize the true beauty you have in God's eyes.

The Finished Work means that Jesus Christ shed His blood and died for us and as us on the Cross. He was buried, rose again, and ascended to His throne in heaven, defeating the enemy once and for all. As born-again Christians, we are heirs to His ascended life. We don't have to do the work anymore—just receive and believe.

Experiencing Our Victory

Furthermore, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the demons of the air, which are the energizing force behind those eating disorders. In understanding God's true heart for us and in experiencing the Power of God through the Holy Spirit and the Word, Satanic strongholds are broken.

The way to have victory over a bondage like an eating disorder is outlined in 2 Corinthians

10:3-7. The spiritual battle here is fought in our thought life. But we can experience the victory that Christ has already won for us (Romans 8:37).

In eating disorders, either we are feeding our body wrongly to fill the emptiness inside, or we won't feed ourselves to punish our guilt or relieve the rejection we experience. As believers, we have to learn how to feed our soul and spirit with the right spiritual food from the Word of God.

Second Corinthians 10:4-6 reveals what goes on in the mind when we continually feed ourselves the wrong things. For example, if we start thinking a wrong thought, it turns into a 'high thing', which exalts itself against the knowledge of God. This high thing consequently leads to a wrong imagination in the soul. We now believe our wrong thoughts to be true and real. Then, this strong imagination turns into a satanic stronghold, where the demonic atmosphere controls this area of our lives, and we are completely taken over by this behavior through demon armies.*

Practical Steps toward a Supernatural Victory

The first step to experiencing our victory in Christ, therefore, is when we begin to think

about and dwell upon right thoughts and Bible doctrines through our own study, through a godly pastor-teacher, and by attending a local assembly where we will be built up by godly believers. Instead of fighting an eating disorder, we begin to rest as we feed our soul and spirit with the right food from God's Word, the Bible.

If we experience certain problems, we should go on a crash-diet of the Word of God. Study specific doctrines and thoughts from the Word that answer our problems. For instance, if the problem is a feeling of emptiness, we need to study the filling of God. If we feel unaccepted or unloved, we need to study the acceptance and love of God.

As we learn what the Word gives as provisions for our problems, we can revenge disobedience with obedience. We are starting to learn how to implement the Word by faith. As Philippians 4:9 says, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." When we obey the Word of God by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be filled with the peace of God beyond our needs. And Philippians 4:13 adds, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

By acting on the Word by faith, we grow from strength to strength and become stronger and stronger in Christ and His provision for our lives. By taking up our cross, we can truly experience what Christ has done for us and in us, and we no longer have to live in bondage to any eating disorder ever again.

God Has Prepared a Table for Us

There can be such victory in Christ! Instead of living in bondage, receive freedom from a new kind of thought life, and begin to realize that you are *completely* loved by God. Categorical doctrine—specific and relevant words from the Bible—will become your hedge against enemy. The table of grace will be your provision in the midst of your battles (Psalm 23).

When Satan attacks, we have strategies in the Word of God. From his experience as a prisoner, Paul wrote about the release we can find in the worst circumstances by letting the Word dwell in us richly and singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord (Colossians 3:16). Barriers of oppression come down, and we are able to focus on the Lord and His provision. Then, seeing beyond ourselves, we will begin to minister to others.

Let's draw near to the Body of Christ and see the presence of God come in as we relax on purpose and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to our souls.

**Grace Publications has released several booklets that describe in detail the spiritual warfare being waged in the atmosphere between the Kingdom of God and Satan's kingdom of darkness. For more about this subject, read* Dealing Precisely with Demons, Exposing Satan's Armies, *and* Operating in the Authority of God's Kingdom, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens.*

CONCLUSION

As with everything connected to Satan and his plan, the problem of eating disorders was defeated at Calvary. It is a fact that every sin—past, present, and future—was judged in Jesus Christ's body as He hung on the Cross, where He bled and He died for every one of us. He took back the keys to death and hell from Satan. Now He lives and reigns in heaven because of the plan of the Father and the power of resurrection by the Holy Spirit. We can experience that same supernatural life when we draw near to Christ (Ephesians 1:20-23).

Every child of God needs to understand that we have been made to reign in life by one, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17). We have been sanctified, set apart as God's own, forever. Now, the issue is to believe and receive what *God* has to say about us.

In Christ, we have a new mind (Philippians 2:5) and new mercies every morning (Lamenta-

tions 3:23). If we fail, we get up and go on in a self-image that is based upon our heavenly position (Ephesians 2:6). God is for us (Romans 8). Everything is new, continually. In time we will see the fruit of His love toward us. We will manifest a new life style, a new response to negative stimuli, healthy emotions, and a cleansed conscience.

Because of God's goodness, we have an eternal purpose for our lives. His purpose doesn't include dealing with attitudes of resentment, guilt, and shame—it removes them. We are clean and our past is gone forever, never to be brought up again. By the grace of God, we will relate to ourselves in our position: hid in Christ and seated above.

Just let God love you with the truth, and He will set you free.

If you or a loved one has an eating disorder, we recommend Weigh Down Workshop because of their practical approach from a godly, Christian perspective. For further information, write Weigh Down Workshop, Inc., P.O. Box 689099, Franklin, TN, 37068-9099, or call 1-800-844-5208. Their website address is www.wdworkshop.com

Overcoming Fear

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INTRODUCTION

A recent newspaper article revealed that a certain county in Maryland has one practicing psychiatrist for every one hundred residents. It is a fact that most psychiatrists are extremely busy. "People have so many fears and anxieties they can't deal with," was the explanation of one government official for this staggering statistic.

Obviously, psychological torment has taken over in many segments of society, and it has no doubt affected even many in the Christian community. For Christians, however, there is an answer, a way to overcome these fears and anxieties. That way is found in applying the wisdom of the Word of God through the power of God.

In this booklet, we will examine how each of us can experience the power of God to overcome fear and anxiety. Our prayer is that everyone will enjoy the victory as God's love is shed abroad in our hearts.

Chapter One

TESTS AND TRIBULATIONS

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

"And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us" (Romans 5:1-5).

God allows trials to test what we have learned from the Word of God. They represent opportunities to experience what we have received. In the midst of these tests, the questions I must ask myself are these: Have I caught what I have been taught? Have I believed and received?

God tests believers to solidify what we have learned from the Word of God by applying it, or to show us where we are lacking in trusting the Word of God.

"The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts" (Proverbs 17:3).

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

"I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

God tries our "reins," which speaks of our emotions. God doesn't want the believer's life to be ruled by emotions, but He wants our emotions to complement our faith walk with God.

It is important to understand the difference between falling short and falling into failure. A runner may train diligently and earnestly, he may run with all of his energy, but then something happens and he doesn't win. He did all that he could do, but it wasn't enough, and he just fell short of the goal.

When we live by our emotions only and not by faith-obedience to the Word, we will fall short of living by every word of God. This will even-

tually lead to falling into failure.

God wants every Christian to experience, by grace through faith in love, what he has been taught.

Remember this: You will be tested on what you have learned and received from the Word of God. It may take some time, but you will experience a trial. As a husband or wife, everything you have been taught about having a godly marriage shall be tested to see if you will apply the truth in your marriage. Whatever the trial, if you react negatively, you fall into Satan's trap. By responding positively, you fall into the grace of God, and grace becomes your teacher (see Titus 2:11,12).

Experience and Expression

In Romans 5:3 and 4, we read that tribulation works in us patience, and that works in experience, which then gives us hope. "Experience" is *dokime* in the Greek, and it means that what I have learned I will be asked to express and appropriate through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Where would we be in eternity if we could not experience what we have been taught?

Our testing starts with obedience to the very basics, such as faithfulness to attend church ser-

vices (Hebrews 10:25). A Christian who is faithful as a representative of Christ to attend church services has caught what he was taught in this area. He has received what he has believed.

Our Worst Enemy

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18).

Fear is one of the most difficult things for anyone to deal with. When a person falls into fear, he falls into torment. When this happens, love is grieved, and it is not experienced nor expressed. He cannot experience fellowship with God's love. Fear can do so much to hinder a Christian.

Every one of us can experience a major victory over fear by receiving what we believe. Fear has been the worst enemy for so many people. In a very crucial counseling session, a man said to me, "I am not a good father. I am not a good husband. I have no confidence in my future because of my past." This man was living in fear and was resigned to failure. After counseling, he understood that he did not have to live in the fear of past failures.

Many people live in indescribable agony because of the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15). Every person has moments of experiencing this fear, but some spend their lifetime in bondage to it. There is no reason for the fear of death to control us, because we have been delivered by our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ who conquered death. In 2 Corinthians 5:8, the Word of God says that when we die, we are present with the Lord.

Fear, when properly understood and recognized, should always cause us to run and hide in love (1 John 4:16). Love always casts out fear. We love God because He first loved us, and His perfect love always casts out fear.

Chapter Two

WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW?

Tribulations should be expected in the Christian life. Some of the tribulations the Scriptures speak of are physical illnesses (John 5:5), human weaknesses, deficiencies in knowledge (1 Corinthians 8:7), inner poverty or incapacity (Galatians 4:9; Romans 8:3), and physical poverty (Acts 20:35). We will be tried in tribulations for what we know, tested on what we have been taught, and honored for the way we come through the tests. It is so vital to understand that tribulations are allowed by God.

If I hear a message on the doctrine of forgiveness, I will be tested until I experience forgiveness. If I hear a message on manners and hospitality, I will be tested until I experience hospitality and manners. If I hear a message on patience, I will be tested to see if I know about patience. I will be tested to see if I know what I have been taught so that I can express it in my

personal experience.

Experiencing Every Word

The ultimate purpose of the Christian life is to experience in a practical way every Word of God in life, light, and love. When we fail, we purpose to rebound and refuse to fall into the traps of fear, negativity, and reaction. We must begin to understand the Word of God through our experiences personally with God. Instead of withdrawing into self, sublimation, or emotion, we experience the very life of God in a personal, practical, intimate way.

Time and time again, things happen that cause people to fall into the trap of fear. I understand because I have been attacked by fear myself—and it is very real. In those situations, however, I have learned to lead the fear into love so that love can cast out my fear. The fears are taken over by God's grace as my teacher, and I can enter into faith rest and begin to enjoy a number of godly experiences.

"Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Our experiences must be according to the Word of God, using the knowledge we have in the order that the Word of God presents it. Too many Christians enter into

confusion instead of the application of the Word in personal experience, because they do not follow God's order. When divine order is not executed, confusion takes over and we lack godliness. As a result, we have no understanding of God's purpose for allowing temptation and testing.

The Power of Perfect Wisdom

"Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me" (Psalm 119:98).

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

The greatest victories we experience are the result of the provision and protection given to us by God. He supplies wisdom that is greater than that of our enemy through what we are taught from the Word of God. Not only do we have a wisdom that is greater than our enemy's, but the psalmist says we have a wisdom that is beyond that of godly men of old (Psalm 119:100), because of the practicality of the Church Age and the dispensation of grace (see Ephesians 3:2).

The work of Redemption is finished. We are perfect in Christ, and we have His perfect wis-

dom. We are seated above, hid in Christ, and there is nothing to fear.

Chapter Three

RESPONSES FOR VICTORY

"And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

"And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

"Then said he unto him, Acertain man made a great supper, and bade many:

"And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

"And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

"And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

"And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

"So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

"And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

"And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

"For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper" (Luke 14:14-24).

In Luke 14:19, a man wanted to be excused from the banquet so he could prove his oxen. He did not want to obey in faith to take advantage of the opportunity. An opportunity is never the issue; the issue is how I respond to opportunity. When anything comes up in my life, the key is what I do in my experience before God.

Hebrews 5:13 refers to a "babe" who is unskillful in the word of righteousness. This means he is unskillful in the experience of righteousness, because he lacks experience in the Word of

God. He has knowledge, but he cannot skillfully execute spirituality and put his knowledge into practice when opportunities come his way.

Magnify Christ

"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:20-21).

Everyone will face death. Many face physical and financial problems at some time. Others encounter persecution and division. Still, we can all experience what we have been taught in all of these situations.

In Philippians 1, the apostle Paul told us what he learned as he magnified Christ in his body. He said, "I understand that I must experience what I have been taught. If I do not experience what I have been taught, then I am really not appropriating the wisdom of Jesus Christ."

Apply the Truth

"Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.

"Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

"For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD" (Proverbs 8:33-35).

"Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end" (Proverbs 19:20).

Wisdom—the application of the knowledge of God in our personal experience—calls us to hear instruction, be wise, and refuse it not. In order to be wise, we must hear God's counsel. We must receive the testimonies of God's truth in the discipline of instruction in the school of wisdom.

Everything that is tested at the Bema Seat of Christ will relate to what we experienced here on earth (1 Corinthians 3:13). The fire of eternity will try our experience. Did we experience unconditional love? Did we experience forgiveness? Did we experience purity? Did we experience refusing to listen to an evil report? The answers to these questions will determine our eternal rewards. Why? Because, God glories in the fact that we express what we have been taught in our experiences.

The devil has no more power over my expe-

riences than what I give him. His power is restricted to those areas where I lack the wisdom to appropriate the Word of God when he comes my way. But when I confront him with faith in the pure Word of God, Satan will not only flee, but he is totally defeated, and I experience victory over his temptations.

The Beauty of Divine Diversity

"And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

"And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full" (Deuteronomy 6:10-11).

"But godliness with contentment is great gain.

"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and

hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

God has given us much to enable us to reign in the diversity of divine provisions. We didn't bring anything into this world, and we will carry nothing out of it. So many people think they are rich, but they really have nothing. The anxiety of this life has pushed them into temptation and snares. Many people are drowning in destruction because of foolish and hurtful lusts at work within.

God will supply our needs according to His riches in glory. If He wants to make us rich materially in this life, then He will. We just have to be very careful when we have such riches. Some people seldom come to church because they say, "I am busy making money right now." That is just fear at work. They are afraid that the opportunity to make money will not be there if they take time for church. The money isn't the prob-

lem. The coveting of money and the fear that comes with it are the real issues.

We overcome fear—in material things, in impurity, and in temptations—through managing our minds and emotions by the Word in the grace of God that is God's gift to us.

CONCLUSION

God wants us to understand that He allows tribulation into our lives in order to work experience in our walk with Him. This experience leads to hope. And with that hope comes the love of God, which the Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts.

When love abounds in our hearts, there is no room for anything else. Fear gets crowded out. The fear of failure and the failure that can cause fear are no longer in control. Fear has been shown the door and cast out.

All of this happens when we catch the Word of God in faith and we receive what we believe. Then, in practical ways, we will personally experience what we have been taught. This represents the ultimate way to glorify Christ through our lives.

Peace within Our Walls

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Every one of us is born with an old sin nature. As a result, we are born with walls. In fact, when the baby cries in the middle of the night, if he is not hungry and doesn't need to be changed, walls of manipulation go up against his parents. Those walls can be very effective, and the best of parents can become weary and tired.

Walls can serve as hindrances or fortifications. When we are operating outside of God's will for our lives, the walls of rebellion go up. Therefore, the first thing Jesus Christ must do in our lives is to break down all of our walls that are not of God. Until He is allowed to do that, He stands behind those walls. Notice, however, that Jesus will show Himself through the windows in our walls (Song of Solomon 2:9-10). If there is an opening in the doorway, He stands there.

Jesus seeks out a place where He can make Himself visible to us. He is always looking for a

way to communicate and to contact us through our windows, even though He remains on the other side of our walls. Having their foundation in the old sin nature established by Adam, Jesus stands behind those walls until we let Him in so He can break them down.

When a person invites Jesus into his heart, the Holy Spirit begins to demolish the walls that obstruct the believer's vision. He clears a way for God to establish love, mercy, and grace in the midst of the heart. The Word of God expressed in categorical doctrine produces a detailed structure—godly walls that keep back the enemies of the soul.

This booklet shows us how God's walls provide a place of peace—a place where we can grow and experience the reality of Resurrection life in any detail, in any situation.

Chapter One

OPENING UP TO ABUNDANT LIFE

"Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces" (Psalm 122:7).

"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Proverbs 25:28).

"In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks" (Isaiah 26:1).

Since Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, each of us inherits a number of walls that were passed down through the generations of humanity. Ezekiel 13:9-14 speaks of the lies and vanity found in the midst of the people of Israel. False prophets cried "Peace!" when there was no peace, and proceeded to build up walls. These walls preserve the self, hiding it from the light of Christ. In the shadows of those

walls, bitterness, envy, and jealousy take root, creating division and defeat.

After tearing down the old walls, the Lord begins to build spiritual walls within us. Salvation is the wall that establishes us in positional truth. It is a wall of forgiveness, a wall of salvation, a wall of cleansing, a wall of purging, a wall that can bring down the walls of accusation.

The process is so creative. Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth (John 1:14), and He has placed us under the government of grace (Romans 6:14). He stands behind our old walls when we don't understand how to personally receive His grace. When this happens, we put up a wall and ignore the sixty-eight things God gave to us freely the moment we were saved, such as a place in the beloved and the protection that comes from being a child of God. We deserved none of these things, yet He gave them to us.

One of the great things He does for every new believer is to tear down the walls that separated us from His love. That is the essence of grace: God giving us things that we could never deserve. Mercy is when He holds back what we really deserve as sinners, which is judgment and condemnation.

"If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.

"I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour" (Song of Solomon 8:9-10).

You would be amazed at how many people have walls that are not of God. A wife puts up a wall when she defrauds her husband in sex. Then, the husband immediately throws up a wall to counteract it. His wall is bitterness. He stops talking; he never communicates. Between them are a wall of defrauding and a wall of bitterness. And even if those people come to church three times a week, their marriage becomes established in those two walls.

But Song of Solomon 8 paints a beautiful picture of what God intends for His people. The "wall," in verses 9 and 10, speaks of the life of the Word of God and the life of the Holy Spirit, functioning together in the believer. Having "breasts like towers" refers to the bride's godly affection and the character of divine love, which produces a fountain of life. It is a beautiful thing to have the abundant life of Jesus Christ as the

line of demarcation for our thoughts, our emotions, and our confessions: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

According to Song of Solomon, if the bride has doctrine through the Holy Spirit within her, then a palace will be built upon her. Apalace is a place where royalty lives. It is a place decked with gold, silver, and ivory. Every believer has the privilege and possibility of becoming a palace for God on earth.

God is saying to the bride, "If you have the doctrine of the Finished Work, I will build upon you a palace. If you have a door, I will build upon you boards of cedar (referring to the believer's refined humanity through the Holy Spirit)."

The bride responds, "I am a wall—I do have doctrine. Furthermore, my divine affection comes out like a tower. I am filled with love, and I can express tremendous affections."

Chapter Two

WALLS THAT DEMONSTRATE GOD'S LOVE

"He overlaid also the house, the beams, the posts, and the walls thereof, and the doors thereof, with gold; and graved cherubims on the walls" (2 Chronicles 3:7).

Our spiritual walls must be "overlaid" with gold. We can't just carry around knowledge and tack it up on the wall as a display. We can't just have religion. Our walls of doctrine must be overlaid—covered by application—with gold, speaking of the inspiration, manifestation, and divine demonstration of Deity. Our lives manifest these godly walls as we redeem the time with silver. Our walls of life, of grace, and of love must always be overlaid through God's processes so that we do not live in the letter of the law or in the letter of knowledge.

The Word of God makes it clear that we have tremendous protection when the walls of

love and grace are in us.

The former NFL quarterback Jim Kelly, who led the Buffalo Bills to four Super Bowls, was recently inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. His son, Hunter, suffers from a terminal disease and Jim Kelly used his induction ceremony as a chance to share his heart.

"My hero, my soldier, my son—he is the greatest person next to Jesus Christ on earth," Jim Kelly said. "Hunter, you are my hero forever."

The Kelly family has established walls of abundant life in their circumstances. These walls keep back the devil and his demons, and they keep back jealousy, bitterness, resentment, hatred, and unforgiving spirits.

Reactions of Love

Awonderful man, Pastor Bob White, and his church in Maine have done so much to support the work of God in India. An orphanage and many churches have been planted in and around Guntur, where many missionaries have been so faithful.

Once when Pastor White was visiting there, he took a train through several areas where these churches have been established. There

were folks lining the tracks—some that had walked two hours in the middle of the night—*just to wave to him*. The train couldn't be stopped, so the only thing these people could do was to stand there and wave for a few moments as Pastor White traveled by. These people love him so deeply and are so thankful for his life. And all he could do was weep.

Later, another crowd came to where Pastor White was staying. He was looking forward to catching up on his sleep after the long journey. But, like those who stood waiting to wave as his train went by, these folks had walked miles and miles to greet him.

"I just started hugging each of them, one after another," Pastor White said. "I just kept doing it over and over again as I was sobbing over these precious people. I embraced them all, they all embraced me. We went through the line, and did it all over again. Then, we did it again! I still cannot get over what precious Christians they are."

Just a few dollars a month is all those people earn over there. Yet, look how rich they are because of the walls of love and thankfulness and peace and joy they have established in their lives.

Chapter Three

WALLS ETCHED BY MERCY

"And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, within and without" (1 Kings 6:29).

The walls of Solomon's temple were covered with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. Golden cherubim were also placed upon the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies (Exodus 25:22)—angels of protection and holiness. Their presence in the Holy place speaks of mercy rejoicing against judgment; it speaks of the glorious Gospel of grace, which the angels do not fully comprehend but which they "desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:10-12).

As Christians today, mercy rejoices against judgment inside of us. Jesus does not need to stand behind any walls. There is no condemnation in our lives. The walls of Adam have been broken down. In their place are now walls of

eternal security, walls of forgiveness, walls of imputed righteousness. We have been cleansed and purged as children of God. We now sit securely behind walls of covering and protection.

Healing, Shade, and Cords

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

"Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God" (Psalm 92:12-13).

The palm tree, which grows for years and years, was put to many uses. Medicine and ropes were made from its leaves. Its fruit supplied food, and the tree provided shade to the hot and weary travelers in Palestine. Again, we see a picture of mercy rejoicing against judgment. In the shade of mercy, we flourish with God's righteousness. Medicine is provided for my soul as an unction from heaven. God also binds us to Himself with the cords of His love, and He feeds us by leading us in green pastures. The beautiful palm tree typifies all of these things.

The flowers of the field on the temple walls point to the Resurrection. They speak of Jesus Christ blooming in the details of life. The field is

the world (Matthew 13:38) and flowers bloom everywhere in the details of this world. This is part of the wall God builds in us.

Signs of Resurrection

"The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

"My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.

"My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

"The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

"The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away" (Song of Solomon 2:8-13).

The Beloved One, Jesus Christ, leaps on the mountains and skips on the hills, and He asks us to rise up and come away with Him. What follows are seven signs of the Resurrection: the

winter passes, the rains come to an end, the flowers appear, the birds sing, the turtledove is heard, the tree brings out its figs, and the vines are ripe with tender grapes.

Resurrection life builds a wall in us. We have been raised from the dead, and now, Christ is calling us on to obedience. Obedience is God's training ground for us. Obedience guides us. Obedience edifies us. Obedience builds us up. Obedience purifies us. Obedience is what will keep old walls from going back up.

The Fruit of Obedience

I watched a woman say good-bye to her husband as he prepared for a missionary trip to a foreign field. Of course, there were many tears.

"I won't go if you don't want me to go," the husband said.

"I am crying because I am married to a phenomenal man of God," she said. "In obedience, you are willing to leave me and our family for this season. That is why I am crying."

The wall of obedience enables us to do the will of God.

When it comes to walls, let's allow God to tear down the walls that prevent us from growing in grace. At the same time, let's allow God

to build walls that He can dwell within. There, even though storms may be raging on the outside, we will have peace within our walls.

CONCLUSION

"Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" (Isaiah 49:16).

The walls of bitterness, resentment, and hatred have been broken down. They are not there any more. Instead, we have walls of love and peace for each other.

I cannot remember any negative thing another person has done to me because that wall is no longer in my life. Jesus Christ broke down that wall. He came right through and tore it away. He is our peace, and He is the only thing between us.

What a beautiful thing it is when a husband and wife, a mother and a father, parents and children have no walls between them. Our new walls are always before God.

"The doctrine of love is a wall that protects you," The Lord says to us. "It is before Me all the time. The doctrine of grace, the doctrine of for-

giveness, the doctrine of joy, the doctrine of laughter, the doctrine of brokenness, the doctrine of compassion. Those walls of doctrine through the Spirit are always before Me."

God knows what you are like. For you to live is Christ; therefore by choosing to build His way, you will have the divine walls of truth surrounding your humanity, covered in the gold of His divinity. So no matter how frustrating or frightening the circumstance seems to be, you can always have peace within your walls.

Perfect Strength

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ was crucified through weakness, according to 2 Corinthians 13:4. What does that mean? It means He stripped Himself from using the power of His deity. This most unique Man was at once fully God and fully human. Yet, as a man, He never crossed over the line to use His power as God for His own advantage. In His weakness, Jesus Christ's strength was drawn from living in connection with the Holy Spirit in communion with His Father.

In His humanity, Christ had to totally submit and trust His Father in all the details of the Cross. This horrible form of execution tested every measure of the Man, Christ Jesus. All of our sins were placed upon Christ at Calvary. Therefore, because He cannot look upon sin (Habakkuk 1:13), the Father had to turn His face away from His Son, and darkness descended upon creation for three hours.

That darkest day, however, was a triumph of

humility. The weakness Christ allowed Himself to live in at that moment led to total victory. Completely identifying with our situation as human beings, He knew that only in total human weakness can anyone be made strong. He died in weakness, so we are made strong in His strength. That strength, as you will see in these pages, is now available to give effectual power in all situations. Even when we see no answers and have very diminished capacities, God's strength is made perfect for us.

Chapter One

THE GLORY OF WEAKNESS

"It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

"And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

"How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

"Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

"For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above

that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:1-10).

"For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you" (2 Corinthians 13:4).

God's power is best revealed in our worst weaknesses. That may sound like a strange statement for me to make. But consider this: Even the dimmest of lights shines very brightly

in the darkest of places. Astheneo, the Greek word most often translated as "weak," means several things. This word speaks of human vulnerability—physical sickness or moral weakness due to a lack of definite conviction.

The apostle Paul wrote that weakness was important for his spiritual life. It kept him from exalting himself above measure, according to 2 Corinthians 12. He understood that the greatest revelation of God's ability in our lives comes out when we are most weak. Paul came to consider the "thorn" in his life as a gift from God—something that made the strength of God perfect for him.

This "gift" was by no means a pleasant thing. The Greek word for thorn, skolops, refers to an object that is like an ice pick. Paul also called it a "messenger of Satan"—some demonic attack sent to "buffet" him. Buffeting can mean that you are spat upon and beat upon with fists. It is punishment inflicted by another, and it hurts.

Three times Paul prayed that God would take this thing from him. But something else happened—something beautiful. Strength sprung up in Paul's soul and he viewed the thorn as a gift. God allowed it, and through it all

Paul learned the all-sufficiency of God's grace.

The "strength" the Lord developed in Paul is power for battle, which is what the Greek word dunamis means. Our battle is made perfect by God when we are weak and let Him do the fighting for us. The Lord fights for us (Exodus 14:14)! The battle belongs to Him (1 Samuel 17:47).

All of these principles are wrapped up in the Finished Work. Jesus Christ fought the battle to give us God's power. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. In our weakness, we realize that we can do nothing without Him. Those are the times when we just get out of the way.

In my weakest moment, the work is still finished. I have it all: the strength of Calvary, the strength of His resurrection life, the strength of His ascension, the strength of His Word living in me. I have the strength of His mercy, grace, and unconditional love. I have the strength of His forgiveness.

There are times when I stubbornly stand in my own strength, and I am simply missing out on all that He has for me. Paul wasn't this way at all. He didn't argue with God and try to prove himself. Look at his response in 2 Corinthians 12:10: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities,

in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

When we are weak, we can easily accept all that God has done for us.

Chapter Two
EFFECTUAL POWER

"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:7-8).

God's effectual working in me does something precious. It brings out unsearchable riches of Christ for all to see. Like Paul, I can let God show me that I am "less than the least." This self-perception brings great release. I fellowship in the mystery of what God is doing. It is a mystery even to myself. Christ brings me to the end of what I am so that I can reveal all that He is.

It is just so beautiful to live like this.

Jesus Christ met Paul while he was on the road to Damascus. "Paul, you murderer, why are kicking against Me?" Jesus said to him in so

many words. "I want you to preach My Word to the Gentiles, so I am saving you. You are accepted. You are forgiven. I'm giving you mercy."

Look at what He has done for us: Mercy takes care of all of our sins and gives us salvation. Grace then adds to me God's righteousness. The Lord puts His robe upon me, and I have a position in Him. Grace extends beyond mercy. God's love is unconditional, and He never leaves me nor forsakes me. His Spirit has sealed me forever.

When believers get this combination in them through the Holy Spirit, the world notices. The mystery of how we love each other gets people's attention. Others wonder at how we live in edification and the eternal purpose given to us by Jesus Christ. All of it comes by His strength being made perfect in our weakness.

Act on Your Belief System

Faith is really about acting on your belief system. Patient faith is faith that stands strong when you don't see immediate results. The reward doesn't come right away, and yet you go on, believing, and you keep going forward with God.

Then God brings other things into your life,

such as endurance and perseverance—qualities that are grace motivated, Spirit-operated, and Word of God oriented.

Even in failure, we use rebound and we recover. Our faith is entire. This doesn't mean that we are perfect in our lives. It simply means that we have a magnificent, mature faith. We know how to believe God and to receive His strength for this situation.

When did Jesus Christ appear to folks in the Bible? He appeared to them in their troubles. The three Hebrew boys were in the furnace, and then the fourth man showed up. The fourth man was the Son of God. Daniel was lowered down into the den where four hundred and ninety hungry lions waited for dinner—but God stopped up their mouths.

Peter was in prison and awaiting execution when an angel arrived and led him out. Paul and Silas were jailed and started a song service. The earth quaked and the walls shook and soon they were set free, but not until seeing the jailer set free from sin. Later, his whole family came to Christ.

A strong belief system brings big results in the lives of weak people.

Chapter Three
ANSWERING THE WHYS

We could speak with Paul the apostle about his thorn. Here's how I think the conversation would go.

"Paul, that thorn? Is it still bothering you?"

"It doesn't bother me anymore. I realize that it was from God and it was for me. I would have been arrogant and proud without it. Remember, I was trained as a Pharisee. My scholarship was without peer. But God taught me how to find strength in weakness by resting my entire life upon the Lord."

A broken and contrite spirit God will not despise. Human weakness marked the Savior's moments on Calvary. Listen to what He said from Psalm 22:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" (verse 1).

"I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou

art my God from my mother's belly.

"Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

"Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

"They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

"I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

"But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me" (verse 10-19).

There is not one real Christian living today who knows the "why" of how certain things happen. Jesus Himself cried out, "Why?"

Three measures of suffering were going on at the Cross. Men's hands were against Christ. The devil's hand was against Him. And, the justice of heaven, written with the finger of God, was being laid upon Him.

In His humanity, Christ could only ask "Why?" The answers were not there for Him because He had been made sin for us. He had become "weakness" itself so that we might become strong in Him.

Have you ever been in the midst of a trial and thought that God was very far from you? Sure, you have. All of us have cried out for an answer regarding our spouses or our children or some situation in our lives. We have cried out because of failure and heartache and defeat.

Let me tell you the story of a young girl who was beautifully saved in one of our summer camp meetings. On her way home from camp, she got the news that her older sister had been killed in a car accident. A few weeks later, her other sister was diagnosed leukemia and lived just three weeks more before she died. Several years later, when this girl was a teen-ager, her father left the family.

Why?
Why?
Why?

God comforted that young woman. She became a great Gospel singer, and today, she is a wonderful wife who has also served on the foreign mission field.

Jesus Christ brought mercy, love, and grace into her life. She once talked about how God had allowed her to become so weak. "This life is so real, and God has given me such strength through these things," she said. "To have a broken and contrite heart is so important to me. It is greater than any human strength we could ever have. His power comes through the weaker vessel."

CONCLUSION

God is the only answer when we ask "Why?" Our only option is to turn to Him, rest in Him, trust in Him. It is pointless to lean on our own understanding when we can acknowledge Him in all of our ways.

The record of the Bible proves that we can trust God. His Word has never been proven false.

In the dark nights of our soul, we can trust Him. We cannot think straight. We cannot feel anything. We may even be experiencing some emotional pain. Still, God is there for us in our weakness where He is so strong.

We have a great, big wonderful God. He is worth loving and serving with all our hearts. Jesus is right there for us in every situation. He always reveals Himself when we need to see Him most.

Plan to Resist Change

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

To change means to make something different in some way. Often, it implies a process. Seasons change, relationships change, values change. Change is good if we are talking about growing and maturing in our walk with God. Yet, change is never good if it includes turning back from following after God. Satan's attacks on believers are designed to make them change—that is, to prevent them from practically applying the truth of the Word of God.

God has not left us to fend for ourselves in this present evil world. God wants us to be strong in Him and in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10). He will never leave us nor forsake us. His Word gives light, and it will guide our steps if we let it. He has set up landmarks; He has made a way for us to cross over the Jordan into the Promised Land. That means that God has taken care of the sin issue for us, making a clear path to victory through His death on the

Cross.

In this booklet, we study how we can resist Satan's pressure for change. We will see how God's still, small voice can lead us into a glorious life full of His inspiration, integrity, and manifestation.

Chapter One

OLD PATHS AND ANCIENT LANDMARKS

"He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel" (Psalm 103:7).

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16).

"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Proverbs 22:28).

Psalm 103:7 says that Moses personally knew God's ways, but the children of Israel only knew God's acts. God's ways speak of His essence, His mind. God's nature is revealed by His habitual characteristics on a consistent basis of integrity. Jesus Christ embodied those characteristics as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). So Moses knew God's ways—who God really is—but the rest of Israel only saw the effects

of what God was doing without knowing His heart.

In Jeremiah 6:16, the Lord said to Israel, "Stand ye in the ways, and see." We stand in God's grace (Romans 5:2). Then, it says, "ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But [Israel] said, We will not walk therein."

In Proverbs 22:28 the old path is referred to as "the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." God said, "Don't remove that landmark. Find it, stand in grace, and there you will find the old path. You will know where to walk and find rest for your souls." But what did Israel say? "No. We will not."

Meddling with Change

Proverbs 24:21 says, "Meddle not with change." To "meddle" speaks of mentally playing around with a thought until it becomes a reality. One of the problems a pastor often sees in his ministry is when people change their convictions from the Bible and allow themselves to be removed from the ancient landmarks. When that happens, it becomes all too easy for a spouse to say, "I am going to leave my partner." The minute that attitude manifests itself, that

person will begin to add sin unto sin to mask the changes that he has allowed into his life.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23).

I must guard my heart by keeping it in the old paths and the ancient landmarks. If I become careless in my thoughts, in my words, and in my decisions, over a period of time I will begin to make "adjustments"—changes that do not include the whole truth and the Cross in their process of operation. These changes are not evident immediately. For example, if a clock lost a minute a day, after sixty days it would be an hour slow. The changes are slow and gradual, but the effects can be drastic.

Meddling with change almost always includes hanging around the wrong people and receiving the wrong influences. Satan brings in that "friend" to reinforce the ways of change. Then, a person starts to turn against precise doctrines in the Word of God and continues to change. Eventually, the process reaches its zenith in terms of a final decision either to leave God or to leave the call of God.

Keeping the Standard

Agood housekeeper hates the slightest bit of

dirt in the house. A clean mechanic doesn't like to leave grease all over the place when he has finished his work. A reputable landscaper hates to see weeds in his gardens. The impartial judge detests crime and will judge those who do it to the fullest extent of the law. A careful writer prevents grammatical errors from getting into his writing. And, a godly preacher hates to see sin creeping into people's lives.

The Word of God is very clear. God has a standard, and His standard does not change. His standard is the Holy Spirit and the Word of God (Isaiah 59:19*b*). This standard will cause the enemy to flee. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He doesn't all of a sudden agree that it is all right to indulge in sin, to indulge in something that is not scriptural.

Because a self-destructive pattern develops very slowly, as with the clock that is losing time, it is important for every Christian to have a carefully planned program to detect and resist deceitfulness and deception. There is no way to keep change from affecting us unless we have a carefully planned program to draw close to God, to go to church often to hear the Word, to be around godly people, and to have a practical Christian life.

Chapter Two

HIS EYES ARE UPON US

"A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12).

The land that God promised to Israel was now in sight. This land would be so different, compared to what God's people had known. But to get there, they had to deal with many obstacles and distractions along the way. It was the flood season when Israel was finally ready to go over the Jordan River. In Joshua 3:15-16, the people had to wait till the priests stood in the river with the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders. After this happened, "the waters…stood and rose up upon a heap very far from the city of Adam." In a spiritual sense, it means that what had kept us out of heaven was effectively pushed back because of Calvary. All the people passed over the Jordan as the priests who bore

the Ark of the Covenant "stood firm on dry ground" (Joshua 3:17).

This is what Christians must do when facing sorrowful situations in the details of life. There is no other provision but to stand in the presence of God on the banks of the flood. Sadly, many times people going through problems do not operate in the confidence of the Lord and in the quietness of trusting God. In the midst of a difficult time, they do not have peace. Furthermore, they will not stand in the presence of God for somebody else.

The Red Sea typifies Christ dying for us, and the Jordan River typifies us dying with Christ at Salvation. Christ's death secured a place for us in heaven, but only after we die with Christ can we experience our position. As beautiful as the land of Canaan must have looked to those who entered in, it still cannot compare to heaven, where there will be *no* enemies to fight.

Delivered unto Death

Second Corinthians 4 confirms the practical truth that we are always being delivered unto the death of the Jordan River so that the life of Christ can be manifested through our Spirit-filled lives. As we take up our Cross daily, there

is no need to express self-reaction, self-occupation, or negative energy because we stand in the presence of the Lord. Just as the Ark of the Covenant rested upon the shoulders of the priest, each of us is a believer-priest standing before God under the New Covenant. We take up the Cross to bring the Gospel to people who are drowning in the effects of sin and death, people who are afraid and don't know that a way has been made for them.

The only way Israel could have crossed over the Jordan was by the hand of God. The priests had to walk into the flood waters and resist the temptation to turn back, which would change the plan of God. There was no other way over to the other side. The Jordan never would have gone back far from Adam if the priests had tried to do it another way.

That very year, the Jordan went back, and Israel took over Canaan. There was, however, a defeat at Ai because of the sin of Achan (see Joshua 7). But the consequent victories were magnificent and beautiful because of the leadership of Joshua and Caleb.

A Beautiful Conclusion

Moses prepared Joshua to lead during the

last nine months of his life. Moses had sinned in Numbers 20 and God told him he would not set foot in the Promised Land. Yet, Moses repented and enjoyed a beautiful nine months, during which he wrote the book of Deuteronomy and also trained Joshua to take his place. It is a beautiful story that God did not just take Moses home to heaven right away. Instead, God gave Moses the most beautiful months of his life. The result is Deuteronomy—a book like no other in the Old Testament.

The eyes of the Lord were upon Moses, and the eyes of the Lord are upon every one of us. It is important for teenagers to understand that the eyes of the Lord are upon them. It doesn't matter whether they want to hear the Word of God or not, or whether they do or do not rebel. The things that they do with their bodies are being recorded in certain books that will be read in eternity. The eyes of the Lord see these things and record the deeds that are done.

The eyes of God are upon marriages, families, and businesses. The omnipresence of God's eyes, the omniscience of His wisdom, and the omnipotence of His power are always there. He is constantly watching over His creation and watching over us. We belong to God, and our

bodies are the temples of His Holy Spirit.

Chapter Three

FROM MEDITATION TO MATURITY

"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10).

"And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12).

It is very important for us to learn how to be mature in our silence. Meditation upon the Word of God produces divine silence. A person living in divine silence has an openness to hear God's still, small voice. No one fully understands what the still, small voice is saying unless he has entered into divine quietness.

Divine quietness is not passivity. Divine quietness means that you are totally cleansed, that you are studying to be quiet so the Holy Spirit can inspire meditation.

Meditation on the Word of God starts in-

wardly with a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great value (1 Peter 3:4). An inner reflection of every word of God and every promise of God begins to develop in your unconscious, subconscious, and conscious mind. Your silence begins to control your inner thoughts. The transformation of your inner man becomes evident because of an attitude of respect for the Word, because of the application of faith, because of the motivation of love, and because of a hunger and thirst to know God. As a result, you have an amazing inner peace (Isaiah 26:3) and your mind is stayed upon God.

As this happens, you become swift to hear, but slow to speak, according to James chapter one. Please learn to be swift to hear and slow to speak. The enemy of our souls wants us to speak out in reaction to everything we hear. We always hear things that could make us react or trap us into a rut of dialogue that is not edifying or profitable.

Inspired Imaginations

This all leads to categorical inspiration, which gives us the visionary track of God's purpose, God's Person, and God's Spirit through divine imaginations.*

This happened to me years ago at Worthly Pond, Maine. My meditation on God's Word and His Person brought in God's inspiration with a divine imagination. It was as if pictures where developing in the darkroom of my soul. God showed me that we would have Christian schools, radio and television ministries, and worldwide missionary operations, while I had only a small country church. All these things have come to pass. That vision imparted by God began as positive impressions that were developed by the Holy Spirit in the darkroom of my soul. But then they become reality in the plan of God.

Visionary imaginations are directed by our quietness before God, which enables us to receive His thoughts as we live in His presence with our feet in the Jordan. We are now completely cleared of judgment because of the Cross. Now, the waters are parted, and whosoever will may enter into the joy of the Lord without tasting death.

Visitation and Manifestation

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:7-8).

When God imparts a heavenly vision, He gives us a divine imagination. That way, we can receive an ongoing visitation of beautiful thoughts that only God can give us. They are very edifying thoughts. And, the visitation expands into a glorious and divinely directed manifestation of the love of God.

Nothing arouses Satan's anger more than a Christian entering into the manifestation of God's life. Just thinking will not do it. Just praying will not do it. Simply quoting scriptures will not do it. There must be the inspiration of meditation reflected when a visitation in a divine imagination becomes the manifestation of God's life. Once this manifestation is established, we have a process of growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through divine revelation.

Revelation comes because you are hungry and thirsty after God. You are not occupied with your problems. You are free to receive from God and His servants and to have the Holy Spirit

teach you. Revelation is simply the result of practical obedience to God's impartation. When we enter into the heavenly impartation of a vision by the revelation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, then Satan has to flee. We are prepared with a plan to resist any change that the devil may try to cultivate. Instead, we are changed by Christ's life, from glory to glory.

**Read* Imaginations of the Heart *and* Categorical Meditation: The One Answer to All Problems*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

The eyes of the Lord are upon us from the beginning of the year to the end of it. They are not on us to condemn us. They are not upon us to find fault. It is for our sake, because the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit will intercede on our behalf when we need it. His eyes are upon us because He loves us.

As a mother keeps her eyes on her newborn baby, the Lord keeps His eyes upon each of his children. Just as the mom guides her child through the normal processes of growth with protection and provision, so does God guide His children.

God's provision is always greater than any problem we encounter. His power always surpasses our weaknesses. His wisdom always inspires our knowledge. And, His love always helps us overcome any self-destructing self-image.

Resist the changes Satan wants to bring your

way. Do it by understanding that you are always in the presence of God. Do it by daily recognizing the fact that you were crucified with Christ two thousand years ago. God will bring us through each situation. He always sees us through, and He always watches over us. He will never ever leave us.

Dear Lord, make these words a practical reality in our lives as we grow more aware of your inspiration and revelation. More than anything, may You help us to express Your character, as we desire to manifest Your life and Your ways to the lost through our lives. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Planted by the Waters

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INTRODUCTION

I had the privilege of performing a very special wedding. The groom said beautiful vows that came from his heart. He was very broken as he spoke about the ring with such intensity. This ceremony marked an amazing victory, since this couple had been divorced from each other and now were being remarried. I was so thankful to see the Word of God work in their lives.

These two people were reconciled because they submitted to the guidance of the Word of God. The more they heard the Word, the stronger they became in their faith. Likewise, the more available we are to hear the Word of God, the stronger we will grow in Him for each specific day.

Our days will be according to the strength we get from the Word of God (see Deuteronomy 33:25). When Christians fail, it is a failure in the areas where they have not been planted in the Lord. They may have heard the Word of God.

They may have heard the doctrine. But, they have not been planted with it. Consequently they fail, and sometimes they go down hard.

A plant represents a category of doctrine from the Word of God. As we will see in this booklet, every plant that is not planted by the Lord shall be rooted up (Matthew 15:13), and every category not precisely planted by the Lord shall not take root.

Chapter One

LET THE ROOTS GO DEEP

"Then came his disciples, and said unto [Jesus], Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?

"But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:12-13*b*).

There isn't a single person—pastors included—who has all the categories planted, firmly established in his soul. All of us are in the planting process, and many plants have been planted; but in the omniscience and omnipresence of God, there hasn't been a deep enough planting of some plants. All of us have areas that need to be planted and rooted—*deeply* rooted in us.

The flesh can very easily fail, and God could allow a person to fail if he thinks that he has strength apart from God. We need to be firmly planted and rooted. For example, if someone has

a desire to lust, then they need to be planted in purity. Purity that is able to go in deep becomes deeply rooted in the soul. When purity is planted, then lust is dealt with and resolved.

Every plant that isn't planted by the Lord shall be rooted up. I watch as some young people go off to work in places where the schedule causes them to miss church services. I weep, not because they are working, but because there are areas in which they have not yet been planted. The world can slowly begin to creep into the lives of young people who have never been worldly. The love of the world gets in, a little here and a little there. The love of the Father deteriorates and the friendship of the world takes a grip on their souls. Slowly, they become God's enemies, according to James 4:4, and they do not even realize it. They start going after that which passes away (see 1 John 2:15-17).

If they were planted with categories of doctrine so that the Word of God could take root in their lives, this would not happen. Whosoever does the will of God shall never pass away.

Today, some will read this message and become more deeply rooted than they were before they read it, especially if they allow themselves to be Spirit-taught. Every time I study the Word

of God, whatever category I am studying, the roots of that category go deeper.

The Word Was Sent to Heal

I once received a great letter from a woman who had several nervous breakdowns. She began listening to our radio program, started listening to our taped messages, and started watching our videotaped programs. She came to our annual international convention and began to attend every event at our church that she could. She wrote that after having had three nervous breakdowns and having been placed in a psychiatric ward, she now is totally free. For two and a half years she has had no emotional explosions, no reacting to her husband, no blaming other people—and with no medication.

"Every day, I hear the Word of God through radio; every day, I receive the Word of God through tapes; every day, I praise God; every day, I worship Jesus," she said. "When I began doing that, I became rooted and grounded in God's love for me." According to Colossians 2:7, she became established in His love for her.

In time, the Word of God delivered her. Planted in God's love for herself, eventually that love was reflected in a deep love for her hus-

band. When it came, it was a reflection of loving herself and loving God first. She was planted in love and that planted her in joy—the first fruit of love.

Be Planted with Faith

I talked with another person about a very serious problem she was having. She said, "This makes me ill."

And I said, "Really, it does? That problem is very small as far as God is concerned."

"Well, it could all go wrong," she responded.

"I don't think so," I said again. "You are listening to the voices of strangers. You are listening to the voice of Goliath, but you don't have to do that."

This very dear Christian was missing something. She missed being planted in trust, because she was not planted in faith. When we are planted in faith, we do not waver (James 1:6-8). When we are planted in faith, we are not double-minded. When we are planted in faith, we do not have to worry (Matthew 6:30). We are rooted and grounded in faith.

Paul prayed that Christ would dwell in our hearts by faith, and that we would be rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17). That is our

prayer. Be planted in faith. Be planted in trusting God. Be planted, then be rooted.

Chapter Two

CATEGORIES IN ACTION

Every time we hear a subject on faith, the purpose of the message is to cause us to be planted and then to be more deeply rooted in the category of faith. The world cannot root it up, the devil cannot root it up, because we are planted. The "plant," or the category, is now deep in the streams of our consciousness. It goes deep into the memory center, and we are planted.

When the Word of God starts dwelling richly in us, that is when we speak with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to God (Colossians 3:16). That is when we are finally planted and rooted in faith.

Too many Christians think about what they need instead of thinking about God's trustworthiness. Their minds are on circumstances and not on the Creator. Their minds are on self and

not on Christ. Their minds are filled with anxiety, not contentment, because they have not been planted.

God will show you the areas in which you are not yet planted. It can be seen in how easily you react with anxiety, discontentment, fear, and insecurity. Yet, all these can be overcome by being planted in faith. Be planted in purity. Be planted in Christ's hatred for the world's system. Be planted in peace. Not just peace that the world offers, but the peace that the Word of God says comes from Christ Himself (John 14:27). Have godliness with contentment (1 Timothy 6:6), and be content in whatsoever state you are in (Philippians 4:11) by being planted in peace. Be planted in longsuffering, planted in gentleness, planted in divine goodness, planted in faithfulness, planted in meekness, planted in self-control.

The most magnificent thing takes place when you are planted. The roots go very deep in the human spirit, the human soul, the human will. You don't get disturbed, you don't get upset. You completely trust God, who sticks closer to you than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).

How many believers are established in forgiveness? Some are, I'm sure. Many Christians are taught about forgiveness. But if we are not planted in forgiveness, we cannot experience forgiveness. This forgiveness is mentioned in Matthew 6:14: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

For example, suppose I were to hear that someone said something that was false against me. Still, if I am planted in a timeless forgiveness, the moment I hear of it, my attitude is one of complete forgiveness without even asking about it. When I see that person, I have already forgiven and forgotten, so I can go to him and embrace him.

He was talking about me, but I am heaping coals of fire upon his head. Why? I don't have to ask him about it because his failure isn't the issue. The love of God is between us. The joy of God is also between us. Planted in forgiveness, I have God's peace, so that no root of bitterness can spring up, whereby I could use my tongue to defile and trouble many.

Every category is like a plant that needs to be planted so it can take root. If I have heard five categories of doctrine, and if they have been rooted in my soul, then I have been established in five ways to think with God, absolutely and dogmatically. I go to classes and study; I prepare and minister. I have fellowship around the Word of God. We all grow together, including the pastor and teachers. Then, I will be planted in a sixth category of doctrine; then a seventh; and on it goes.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). As a result of being planted, we live longer. Our health is better. Our energy level is higher. The aging process is repudiated. Someone who is seventy-five is more like fifty-five, because Jesus Christ sent the Word to heal us (Psalm 107:20). We receive all these benefits because of being planted.

Many others are planted by bitterness and mistrust. They are planted in doubt, planted in fear, planted in retaliation and reaction. The reason that negative cycles are repeated again and

again in their lives is because they have been planted in those sins.

I counseled a man who was having problems with women.

"I haven't committed adultery," he said to me.

I told him that I did not ask about adultery. "What I am saying is that you are running out of time with your weakness. Go to your study and read over and over again what God says about sexual sins—which include adultery and pornography. Even if it is only mental, and you do not act on your lust, you need to be planted with hatred toward that sin, which is your weakness."

More hell and shame come from adultery. And, if the Lord doesn't do the planting by the Holy Spirit teaching us, the devil roots up the right things with temptations from the world, from the flesh, and from himself; and he plants the wrong things.

Chapter Three

THE VITALITY OF BEING SPIRIT-TAUGHT

"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

"For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

"For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jeremiah 17:5-8).

A land that is "not inhabited" speaks of one who trusts in the flesh, yet he doesn't stay there. He keeps going back there, but he doesn't inhabit

the sin. It means one might commit the sin, but then he might have victory for three days. He doesn't inhabit the sin.

"Planted by the waters" speaks of the Word of God. It refers to someone who is planted in the Word, near the flow of the streams of the filling of the Spirit, and who will not yield to drought. "Her leaf shall be green," which stands for health in the soul and the body, and "neither shall [she] cease from yielding fruit." Why? It is because of being planted by the waters, planted by the rivers.

But consider what happens when people do not yield to categorical communication. A preacher will plant a category by precisely teaching on a specific doctrine, and in under five hours it is rooted up from the hearts of some people. Why? The hearers did not receive the message in meekness and faith.

Forming Foundations

"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace" (Psalm 144:12).

Our sons need to be planted in such as way that they grow up rooted with the Word of God.

Our daughters need to be polished by the Word as corner stones of palaces, which speaks of fantastic foundations for young people everywhere. This is a tremendous example of what children can become in families that are planted with solid Bible doctrine.

Ezekiel 17:8 refers to a vine "planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine." It was planted in the house of the Lord (speaking of church attendance), and it flourished in the courts of the Lord (speaking of personal fellowship with God in specific categories (Psalm 92:13).

Song of Solomon 4:12 speaks of a sister who is a garden enclosed, "a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." If we have been planted in the likeness of Christ's death, we will be also raised in the likeness of His resurrection (see Romans 6:5).

Thank God for the areas where we are planted. And as we thank God for them, let's allow God to show us where plants have not yet been rooted in faith, in love, and in good soil—places where we can let the fruit of the Holy Spirit be brought forth in a nine-fold manifestation (Galatians 5:22-23).

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19:7-8).

Precise thinking with God brings rejoicing to the heart. Thinking with God is the key, not thinking in your emotions toward a relationship. Do not think in frustration because of disappointments with people who have come against you with wrong decisions. Thinking with God rejoices the heart.

Some have defined the heart simply as the seat of affections. In fact, the heart is the premise of all of our motivational thinking with God. It is the basis for the manifestation of all human behavior through Christ, the supreme center for all communications. It is the arena where all motives and all of our thoughts that control our feelings become our confession. It is where all the decisions in the will are made. For this reason, it is necessary for us to have the application of truth in our hearts, precisely, with every plant becoming a category.

Second Chronicles 20:32-33 describes a people who had not prepared their hearts unto the Lord. This means that though they may have had knowledge about God, they did not receive the Word of God with the life of God through the love of God that produces the Light of God.

Because we have believed and received Christ as our Savior, He has given each of us a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26). That heart needs to be constantly fed with the Word of God by faith, because we belong to Christ.

God desires that our hearts would be planted by the waters, like trees planted by the rivers of the Holy Spirit—the waters of doctrine that flow through the streams of our consciousness. And, as we spread forth our roots, we will not see the heat when it comes. A drought will not bother us, and we will not cease from yielding fruit (Jeremiah 17:8).

CONCLUSION

Our hearts need to have the right premise, the right presuppositions, so that we can come to the right conclusions. If my premise is wrong, then my presupposition is wrong, and my conclusions will be wrong. But if I have a godly premise and a godly presupposition, then I will have a godly conclusion.

Remember, every plant that is not rooted in the Word of God, in its precise power of life, light, and love, will be rooted up by the temptations of the devil, the world, and our own lusts.

There is only one way to develop a divine premise in our hearts, and that is by being planted by God's waters. From Psalm 23, we know that though we may go through storms, His waters are still, meaning they are undisturbed by the circumstances that surround us.

His truth stands firm. He will lead us into all truth, if we will be determined to hear it and receive the Word in meekness and faith. Faith

comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). As we make ourselves available to receive the Word in meekness, we will be enabled to stand with pure hearts of faith.

Postponing Negative Reactions

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

God wants to raise a standard among His people today, and that standard is one based upon His grace and love. He longs to see grace and mercy applied in every situation we encounter on earth. Our God is a God of patience, and He readily applies it, waiting in grace, hoping to draw more and more people to Himself.

Vengeance belongs to God and God alone, but there are many people who take vengeance into their own hands. They are quick to judge and quick to react. In the end, they make more problems than they ever solve.

This booklet will show that it is always best to postpone negative reactions under the operation of grace. In doing this, we will see that it is by applying God's plan of redemption that we succeed and people are saved.

Chapter One

THE PENETRATION OF DIVINE GOODNESS

There are times when problems have to be solved, and times when accountability has to be expressed. But the Word of God has a specific standard to be expressed in those times. That standard is grace and love revealed through the Holy Spirit with the Word of God.

When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Lord raises up a standard against him through the Holy Spirit. We must allow the Holy Spirit to raise up a standard against our enemy in every case (Isaiah 59:19*b*). If God did not raise up a standard, none of us would make it.

Consider the first three chapters of Romans. Romans 1, 2, and 3 refer to the immoral man, the moral man, and the religious man. The moral man judges the immoral man; and the religious man judges both the moral man and the immoral man. All along, the immoral man just

rebels against God.

No One Has an Excuse

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

"But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

"And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:1-5).

Notice, Romans 2:1 says we are "inexcusable" because we do "the same things." It doesn't say "the same thing"; it says "the same *things*." No one has an excuse before God, because all of us do the same things. How does God handle this? Romans 3:24-25 tells us how:

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare this righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

The Greek word for "forbearance" is *anoche*. It speaks of a truce of arms under which God delays the expression of His anger. God sets His punishment aside because His Son paid for all the sins of the world. Therefore, God patiently waits and doesn't deal with men the way we think He should. He passes over sins through forbearance.

Having the character of forbearance is a most amazing way for us to operate. It means that if someone attacks me, then I close my eyes and suffer the pain of his attack without reacting. Still, no one could do this except for the fact that the Holy Spirit has raised up a standard. This is the operation of eternal life. By it, we know the only true God in Jesus Christ, whom the Father sent, that we might know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings as we are conformed unto His death.

Goodness Makes a Difference

Understood correctly, forbearance starts out with the riches of God's goodness. God gently penetrates people with His goodness, developing a capacity in them to know Him through His patience. His goodness is His mercy enduring forever, as He expresses 26 times in Psalm 136.

His goodness is expressed in Romans 5:20: that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. As far as He goes, God won't let us take the past and have it relate to the present. Divine goodness always sees Christ's payment for our sins. Christ is now interceding for us in heaven. Divine goodness gently penetrates us with the perfect patience of His love, mercy, and grace through His longsuffering.

Chapter Two

THE STANDARD OF FORBEARANCE

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Colossians 3:13-14).

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Ephesians 4:2-4).

"Forbearance" is one of the greatest words in the Bible. Martin Luther said that the mystery of God's love is His patience toward us and toward people like us. Forbearance postpones dealing with wide-open sin, setting aside pun-

ishment and discipline for a long time. God withholds discipline because of His forbearance, and He wants to raise up that standard in us.

An old evangelist who had converted from Judaism told the story of a Jewish friend he kept visiting. Fifteen times the evangelist went to the man's door, pleading, "Would you just let me tell you that Jesus loves you?" The first few times, the man slammed the door. On the twelfth visit, the man spat in his face. He did the same thing on visits thirteen and fourteen. The fifteenth time, the man not only spat on him, he also slapped the evangelist.

"You can do that all you want," the evangelist said to the man. "But I am going to keep coming back. Hit me, spit on me, do anything you want—but I will be back."

One year later that man was led to Christ. Forbearance was at work in the evangelist. God's standard raised up postponed negative reactions, postponed anger, and postponed punishment.

"Just Pray for Them"

Billy Graham, the great evangelist of our days, has been attacked many times in print and in broadcasts by people who did not like the

way he promoted cooperation in evangelism. He did not do things their way. Jesus, of course, preached in the synagogues, and Billy Graham has always purposed to be all things to all people. He does it because he loves souls and wants to win them to Christ. George Beverly Shea, a singer and one of Dr. Graham's right-hand men for years, said that Billy Graham has never once spoken a negative word against those who have come against him, nationally and internationally.

"Don't bring that up," Billy Graham would say. "Just pray for them."

That is forbearance in action.

Years ago, after my dad died, my mom was raising our family on thirty dollars a week. One day a couple of men dressed in nice suits came and told my mom that they were going to stop giving her the thirty dollars. Why? Because she let a couple hungry boys come over for a dinner of beans and biscuits. The boys didn't have a mom and dad. And she didn't back down in the face of the threat made to her. She was such a woman of forbearance.

In all of his suffering, the apostle Paul understood forbearance. He said he would die for his Jewish brothers and sisters, just as Moses

would have died for Israel (see Romans 9:3; Exodus 32:32). God told Moses that He would blot out Israel from the Book of Life and raise up a nation from his family. Moses refused the offer. He didn't operate in an eye-for-an-eye mentality. He did not remember the things his people had done against him. He lived in forbearance (Exodus 32:9-14).

Chapter Three

LIFE, LOVE AND LONGSUFFERING

When I see a young person who has failed, I try to love him through it. It doesn't matter to me what he might have done two weeks ago. I won't even bring that up. Why? Because I want to draw him with cords of love (Hosea 11:4). I want to get him to sense God's love for him and encourage him to be around the family of God until he becomes one of God's heavenly stars.

"For ye suffer [(put up with)] fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.

"For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face" (2 Corinthians 11:19-20).

Do you think you could pass the test presented in this verse? If anyone puts us in bondage, we are to show forbearance. If anyone smites us in the face, we are to forbear. If anyone

exalts himself above us, we are to forbear. If anyone steals from us or tries to devour us, we are to forbear. That is five different attacks that a Spirit-filled believer will forbear, according to Matthew 6:14: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

When we are so filled with God, we walk in the Holy Spirit, thus we walk in the spirit of forbearance. There is not a problem in our hearts because we are filled with knowing Christ's nature, reflecting Christ's love, and going from strength to strength (Psalm 84:7). This is the supernatural way of life.

Patience in Practice

Another great word in the Bible is "longsuffering" or *makrothumia* in the Greek (Romans 2:4). This deals with having divine patience toward people. You wait for God to deal with the situation. Sure, there are times when we would like to heap coals of fire on someone's head (see Romans 12:19-21). But by being so filled with God's patience as an attitude of the heart, we don't revile back because we know the blessings we will inherit for not reacting.

This said, we are not to ignore such things as

open immorality or instances of abuse and violence. Those things must be dealt with in accordance with judicial and governmental laws. There are options we must pursue in those cases. Still, our attitude of heart must be one of longsuffering.

Goodness, forbearance, longsuffering—God says that these things lead people to repentance. By the riches of His grace, God will draw people, one by one, into changing their minds about His nature, as He gently brings about a response to His love.

"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.

"Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth" (Jeremiah 31:18-19).

"Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

"Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy peo-

ple may rejoice in thee?

"Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation" (Psalm 85:4-7).

How great is His mercy. How marvelous is His salvation.

CONCLUSION

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

"Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-25).

Real Christianity lives in supernatural forgiveness, supernatural joy, supernatural peace, supernatural goodness, and supernatural longsuffering. Real Christianity is living in these ingredients of love.

As Christians, we have Someone who lives deeply within every part of our souls and unconscious minds. We have His power within us. For this reason, God can raise up a standard through the category of the power of grace and love. This doesn't involve striving or trying any harder. This is simply letting God take us over

on the inside and transform us into His image. As God does this, we have a supernatural grace in the New Creation that enables us to forbear and postpone negative reactions in any situation.

Power in Perilous Times

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Pressure is predestined by God to reveal our character. Things were planned billions of years ago to show how you would react in relationship to what you have been taught.

We are taught the Word of God. It is imparted to us, and then come the tests. These are the Last Days. America is in a state of backsliding. The fiery pulpits that made her great have been neutralized by complacency and familiarity with God and His Word.

During these times, God is developing a remnant among His people. This remnant consists of absolutely mature believers. Christians such as these possess great mental attitudes and waste no words. This group of believers, by their prayers and their testimonies, will hold back judgment upon nations.

God desires to raise up more people committed to His Word and His work. He wants believers who will not surrender to carnality and

lazy spiritual practices when temptations and pressures come.

This booklet is written to reveal the power available to Christians who live Christ-centered lives. Perilous times have come, and the Lord needs men and women who are expert in warfare and totally available to Christ.

Chapter One

THE PRICE OF POWER

"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:34-37).

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

What do you believe about victory?

What do you really believe about obedience?

What does it mean in Matthew 12 where

Jesus Christ tells us that we will have to give an account for every idle word that we speak?

Many things are being recorded in eternity. Our words are among them. In eternity, there will be a time when books will be opened. The pages turned will contain details of conversations and behavior. Precise, accurate accounts shall be read.

Iniquity is at work. It affects people, causing them to lose control of their evaluations, their ideas, and their reactions. Victory and power are directly related to our obedience to the Word of God.

We see a decided tilt happening. A yielding to what the world wants is infiltrating churches. Conservative and fundamental thinking is labeled as backward and out of touch.

My Bible says this:

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:24-25).

The Word of the Lord is what shall stand. It shall never return void.

There really is no excuse for living in contin-

ual carnality. Secret sins and heinous hypocrisy go on, and the power of God wanes in people's lives. Partial obedience brings nothing to pass. It just hinders the work of the Lord. Entanglements and dishonesty have corrupted businesses, families, and, ultimately, congregations.

Temporal value systems cannot produce eternal results.

Actions That Bring Victory

More than ever, I sense a need to enter into real obedience. Some things, Jesus told us, will not go but by prayer and fasting. For weeks at a time, my wife and I commit ourselves to times of intense prayer and fasting.

Why?

We desire power from God. Something serious is happening in our churches. Demonic attacks progress, and spiritual advancement is thwarted. Strongholds are thrown up by the enemy of our faith. Intensified, atmospheric interference is upon us. Perilous times, powerful assaults, tremendous oppressions: They are a part of our life now. People and personalities and workers and leaders are being affected. But no one wants to point to the real problem. It is demonic, and we have to take up the spiritual

weapons God has given us. Carnal responses will not work.

We need victory, we need discernment, and we need to recognize the authority God has given by grace through our faith.

Prayer and fasting: These things make a difference. We have seen it.

Chapter Two

POWER THROUGH DISCERNMENT

"My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

"Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.

"How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?

"For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jeremiah 4:19-22).

Please don't take this wrong. I am just trying to offer you a little help in walking with God. I have a bit of experience, and perhaps my expe-

rience—more than four decades worth—can be of some benefit to you.

We need discernment. This is a great ability that the Spirit gives to people who commit themselves to receiving the truth, line upon line and precept upon precept. For example, Christians should have discernment about the tone that presents itself during a specific church service. On communion nights, I am very quiet and reverent. Someone may sing as we are passing out the elements for this celebration, but I don't clap at the end of those songs. My mind goes to imagining what it was like at the Cross. I picture the nail scars and the crown of thorns. I want God to help me visualize the angry mob and the Roman soldiers, with all of their authoritative stances. So I am very solemn in these moments.

That is discernment. There is a sacred tone that surrounds communion time when it is celebrated in the right way.

In these perilous times, we want to have the faith that heaven has for us. The kingdoms of this world are going to go because the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ will be established.

God promotes those who are able to discern the hour. Pressure will come. The angelic conflict will rage on. As this happens, humble believers

learn discernment. They learn how to make right choices. They implement the truth that they have been taught.

Good Choices, Good Emotions

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

"For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

"I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:7-10).

"Reins" refers to the kidneys. Here, the word speaks of how human emotions respond in certain ways. The kidneys in our physical bodies do the important function of separating water and waste products from the blood stream. If there is a problem with our kidneys, then our blood supply becomes toxic.

The kidneys in our bodies discern the good

and the bad. They keep what's vital and beneficial for us and then purge out what is unnecessary and harmful.

In our emotional structure, wrong attitudes can back up and create troubles that linger so much longer than they should. What is the problem? There is a lack of discernment. Discernment only comes from learning the Word of God and living in the filling of the Spirit.

Terrible emotions are simply emotions that are out of control. Like bad kidneys, bad emotions cannot regulate what is being received. They are not separating out the good initiations from the bad initiations. Reactions are a choice. I can choose what God declares about me and my circumstance, or I can choose negative thought patterns and negative attitudes.

The tests God allows into my life reveal the extent of my discernment. Do I have a proper emotional function? That will be found out.

David had such confidence from his walk with God that he challenged the Lord. I think God loves that, but be careful! I believe that God will take us up on any such offer. Be sure you are ready if you pray a prayer such as the one found in Psalm 26:

"Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in

mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.

"Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

"For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth" (Psalm 26:1-3).

Chapter Three
POWER TO STAND FIRM

"I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

"I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

"Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:7-11).

It is important for me to implement what I hear from God, whether it is from the pulpit or from the Word or from a good spiritual book. The counsels of God can dwell richly in me. I should make a nice home in my heart for truth.

Truth should live the good life inside my heart. There should be no skeletons in my closets. That will be the case when I stay confessed up to date, I recognize my weaknesses, and I am quick to respond to the truth as I hear it.

In the home I am making for truth in my heart, there should be melodies—specific and well-written hymns and psalms and spiritual songs. A choir—"God's Grace Choir"—should live in me. The voices in that choir are love, mercy, peace, kindness, gentleness, meekness, and joy.

When the love of God dwells richly in me, I am not moved by the perilous things going on around me. In fact, out of me flows compassion—a compassion that makes a difference (Jude 22). 1 John 3:17 tells us that there are some who shut up their bowels of compassion. Love does not dwell richly in their hearts.

God gives us great provisions for what we encounter. Hear the messages God is giving to you in church. Read your Bible carefully and consistently. Ask the Holy Spirit to open up its mysteries to you and watch what happens. God always honors that prayer when it is a prayer from a humble heart.

Believe what God says. Especially believe

what He says about you. It is all true—every word of it. Get it. Keep it. Live by it. Stand upon it.

Set Your Mind on Truth

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2).

We are going to enter into some unbelievable days in the next few years. Things will happen that we will never be able to understand. Really, we have seen nothing yet. No one gets out of this world alive, unless the Rapture takes us.

Any intelligent, objective believer needs revival every day. Know God, love God, and be intimate with God. Let the Book be your foundation.

We preachers are most accountable during this era. We have to preach it just as it is. We cannot sugarcoat the reality of what's happening in our culture. TV, movies, sports, and music: Every segment of society is becoming more and more seductive. The air is charged with demonic energy.

Our churches need to know how it is. Hard things need to be said. Congregations have to be taught and made ready for the angelic conflict.

Job was in the middle of an angelic conflict,

and he endured some very perilous personal times. He stood upon the truth of Job 19:25-26: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

In his heart and mind, Job knew his Redeemer was alive and that the Redeemer would reign upon this earth. His difficulties were hard on him. He complained, he questioned, he staggered. Still, Job never forgot the truth about his Redeemer. He clung to the reality that he would see God.

Job retained his integrity. He stood on truth and ultimately let truth set him free. And then came blessing upon blessing for him.

CONCLUSION

Perilous times are here. The Church needs power, but some of her parts are trying to get it in all the wrong ways. Spiritual power cannot be contrived. Hypocrisy is always revealed in the light.

We need to pray. We need to fast. We need to study to be quiet. Objectivity must rule in our frame of reference. Let's be careful with our words. Our expressions can really influence people in certain ways. We need to be in the right places at the right times. By that, I mean that God's people should be in God's house whenever possible. God has a lot to say to us. Let's do things God's way and grow, grow, grow. Watch how the process goes: faith, honor, obedience, objectivity, conviction. Oh, how the world needs to see these characteristics in mature believers.

It is our call to be so prepared for the host of demons that will come at us. We need to resist them and then they will flee.

As a ministry, it is time for us to say some things:

Lord, we're going to be right.

We are going to think right.

We're going to respond properly.

We're going to be positive toward the Word.

We are going forward without secret sins, without hidden motives, without looking back. Surely, we all have flaws and hidden motives. But may we discern the hour. As we reverence the presence of the Lord, may You revive us in Your compassion, according to Your mercy.

Send down Your power, oh, Lord. We so need it in this perilous hour. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Praise Him in this Place

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

"This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD" (Psalms 102:18).

"Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD…" (Psalms 150:6).

When categorical doctrine from the Word of God is preached thoroughly and precisely on a given theme, as hearers, we are very responsible. The subjects of praise and worship are lightly esteemed by some believers. Others have placed an inordinate value on their expressions of praise and worship based on natural tendencies and moods. But, the worship God desires is in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

The Lord designed us to have healthy emotions, but our praise must go beyond expressions worked-up through soulish emotional response. Praise that glorifies God comes from a continual attitude of thanks that can well up from a prison in the darkest night (Acts 16:25).

Let God impart His thoughts on this subject to hearts that are being made humble and are willing to be broken so that we can be like Him in this present evil world—light in darkness, songs in the night.

Chapter One

INHERIT THE SUBSTANCE OF PRAISE

"I [Wisdom] lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: *That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures*" (Proverbs 8:20-21). Hear the message: You have *potential* to inherit a treasure now, but you need to have *substance*. "Now *faith is the substance* of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

To inherit 'substance' means to have the substance that comes from the Word of God (Romans 10:17), the substance that produces obedience and love. It produces what this message is all about—the reason why you and I were created: "This shall be written for the generation to come: and *the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord*" (Psalm 102;18). That's us!

So often people get married without having substance in their lives. Consequently, they

bring their needs, their flesh, their disposition in Adam, and their natural temperament into the marriage—but they do not bring substance.

People may go into business and sales work. When they have two or three bad weeks (as a test from God), they reveal that they do not have substance. They get mad at the boss, and they become so ornery, even the angels may wish they could go away for a couple of hours—out for coffee!

Some people will say, "I'm just not the type to praise God out loud. It's not my style." That is not a right confession. What does the Word have to say about it? "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise" (Psalm 100:4). "Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of the saints" (Psalm 149:1). We can express it because Jesus Christ, who is *not* ashamed to call us brethren, said in His humanity (as He was about to take on His glorified body), "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Psalm 22:22, Hebrews 2:12).

Psalm 63:3 says, "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." Verse 5 says, "…my mouth shall praise thee

with joyful lips." In 2 Chronicles 20:19, the children of Israel "stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high."

Five times we are commanded not to commit adultery, four times we are commanded not to kill. Five times we're commanded not to steal, and twice we are commanded not to take the Lord's name in vain. But twenty-one times we are commanded to praise God. Why? He created us to edify with our lips, with our mouth, to be creative in our communication, to be happy and joyous people—to be a people of praise.

The Word of God says in Jeremiah 13:11 that He caused His people to cleave unto Him "that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear." Psalm 150:6 says, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord...." That includes the young, the old, the rich, the poor. Psalm 67:5 says, "…let *all* the people praise thee." That speaks of the introvert, the extrovert, the down-and-outer, the up-and-outer. Let every one, all of the people, praise the Lord!

As You Have Been Taught

There are some who argue that the stand on praise in the congregation is too emotional, and I

agree that there are movements that put more emphasis on praise than they do on receiving doctrine from the pure Word of God. Yet, here is the difference: Psalm 106:12, "Then believed they his words; they sang his praise"; and Psalm 119:171, "My lips shall utter praise, *when thou hast taught me thy statutes*." There are so many precious verses pertaining to giving praise and thanksgiving because of instruction in the Bible. "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, *as ye have been taught*, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:7).

In other words, we are to praise Him because of categories, and because of what we have been taught! Not simply with emotionalism, but in doctrine, praise Him for the categories already in our minds that relate to specific situations we face.

God created us for Himself, not for ourselves. In Isaiah 43:21, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." Psalm 4:3, "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself...." And in Titus 2:14, God gave Himself for us and redeemed us from all iniquity to set us apart as a peculiar people unto Himself.

We were not created to get what we want in this world. Oh, we may get that, but we were created by God for one reason: to praise Him! It is not to criticize, it is not to find fault, but to praise Him. If you are in a situation and need to communicate something to deal with a problem, be creative and build the other person up as you successfully tell them what might be wrong. We call this *creative communication*. Make something good out of the situation.

God created us to be a happy, wholesome, vigorous, upright, relaxed people. Yet, in the flesh, people criticize destructively (in human evil), or they criticize "constructively" (in human good). But Spirit-filled people communicate creatively, and John 21 illustrates how this is done.

Here is Peter, backslidden; he has gone back fishing—and even after he has seen Jesus in His post-Resurrection state, Peter reveals his own sorry state. So, instead of saying anything to criticize him, Jesus says, "Peter, do you love Me more than these?"—and in the same breath—"Feed my sheep." That removed all the pressure Peter was feeling.

"Do you love Me more than these? Feed my lambs. Do you love Me more than these? Feed my sheep." That's creative communication. The Lord commissioned Peter; He didn't ask him for a thing.

In John 8:3-11, we read about the woman who was taken in the act of adultery. Jesus asked, Is there any one here who condemns you? "No, Lord." Then, He said, "Neither do I…"—creative communication. "…Go and sin no more"—creative communication.

Why do Christians criticize others? Not one time did Jesus Christ criticize His disciples. He asked creative questions to help them see where they were coming from, but He never used "constructive criticism." We need to learn to speak so that even if we are justified in explaining a difference we will do it creatively. It means to put the best light on the subject and make the other person feel good as you explain what's wrong. When parents correct their children, creative communication will make them feel loved while they are being corrected.

The Importance of Singing: God's Praise, God's Way

In 1 Chronicles 16:4-6, David appointed the

Levites to sing praises continually before the ark of God's presence. Then, in 1 Chronicles 23:5, David recounted that he taught thousands to praise God with instruments that he had made! Second Chronicles 7:6 says that David praised God by the ministry of the Levites playing their musical instruments.

In 2 Chronicles 23:13, it is mentioned that the singers in the House of God were *taught* to sing praises. God will honor a believer's gift when he lays it down in humility. Submitting to one another in love and receiving instruction in the area of praise as well as in doctrine, we will produce a sweet sound unto the Lord.

Some people are offended by lively music in the sanctuary. But 2 Chronicles 20:19 says the Israelites stood up and praised God with a loud voice.

Jehoshaphat appointed singers to "praise the beauty of holiness, *as they went out before the army*, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth forever" (2 Chronicles 20:21). The musicians were on the front lines! Then in verse 28, when the war was over, they sang praises unto the Lord.

Again we think of Psalm 106:12: They believed the Word, and then they praised Him.

And in Psalm 119:171, "My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes." The people praised God *after* they were taught categories! They praised Him with their lips, their mouths, and with a loud voice.

Psalm 148 says that the sun, the moon, and the stars should praise Him—and He also said the dragons should praise Him. (I don't know how that would sound, but God must know!)

Over and over again in the Psalms, the people were told to praise the Lord. From Psalm 146 to Psalm 150, "praise" is mentioned forty-four times. Are you beginning to see how much God values our praise?

Chapter Two

FULFILLING YOUR PURPOSE

Are you fulfilling the purpose for which you were created? Are you relaxed? Peaceful? You were not created to withdraw into your emotions, needs, reactions, or criticism. As mentioned earlier, there are three kinds of communication that happen when a person's behavior or attitude is being dealt with: destructive criticism (in human evil), constructive criticism (in human 'good' that is rejected by the Cross), and, finally, creative communication (in the Spirit).

Can you imagine what would happen if we were to fulfill the purpose we were made for? We would always give thanks, as we have been taught (Colossians 2:7*b*), because we have been rooted and grounded in love, giving thanks always for all things (Ephesians 5:20).

Here is something else to consider, however: It is possible to have a *good* thought, and yet if

you do not let that thought go, it will become a vain thought, which then becomes a subjective need. For example, a good thought may be that you want a wife or a husband or a baby—something that is not a bad thing in itself—but because you dwell on it so much it becomes vain and subjective. It is possible that after you get what you want that you would try to possess it and end up destroying the relationship.

Real Rest and Relaxation

In Proverbs 8:20-21, those who love God and allow Him to lead in the way of righteousness will "inherit substance." We inherit substance when we respond to God's first love. We don't lose the substance of the Word of God in our thoughts and emotions or in our communication and responses. Don't lose the substance of the Word that you inherited!

We were not created to have sex outside of marriage. We were not created to stimulate ourselves or to "unwind" artificially by using drugs or alcohol. The terrible thing is that if you do those things, you will never be satisfied. You will always need *more*.

But if you are relaxed and the joy of the Lord is your strength, and if you really have sub-

stance from the Word of God and the love of God is dwelling richly in your heart, *then you are fulfilling the purpose for which you were created!*

I love Psalm 50:23, where God says, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me…." You simply start praising God in everything. Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, whoever you are with, whenever you think of it, *do what God says!* "Let *everyone* that hath breath praise the Lord" (Psalm 150:6). Let *all* the people praise the Lord (Psalm 67:5). Regardless of your natural temperament or disposition—whether you are quiet and subdued, wealthy or poor—praise Him with your mouth! That is the Word of God. Why, even the trees and all of His creation praise Him.

Some people never fulfill the purpose for which they were created. And if those people were absolutely honest about it, they would agree. If we don't praise the Lord with our mouth, with our lips, with instruments, and with our singing in the congregation, there is only one reason why: We simply do not believe what the Bible says about praise.

Fill Your Mouth with Praise

When you praise God, you're not cursing, you're not being negative about your marriage,

you're not worrying about your finances or your health. Putting on the garment of praise takes away the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3)! Having a bad day? Praise the Lord—it's going to be better in the hours to come.

God will cause those who love Him to have *substance*, that they may inherit substance (Proverbs 8:21). People who live in immorality have lost their substance. People who are hateful to one another have become lost to the reason they were created. Because they have lost their substance with God, they are not fulfilling their potential with the Treasure inside—Jesus Christ. And *that* is why we were created!

Praise God *in* everything, *for* everything. Instead of crying and acting like a spiritual infant or acting like the world is coming to an end because you had three bad problems, shout and praise God. And unless you're going to praise God, *keep quiet!* But having substance means that the Word of God is operating *inside of you* through the grace of God and the love of God.

The Place for Subjective Love

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us…" (1 John 4:10), and "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). *God*

loves you! Now, you need to allow the Holy Spirit to shed that love abroad in your hearts (Romans 5:5). In return, you will have an objective love for God which becomes personal. He has His love; He gives you His love; you have His love; you respond to His love. As a result, you both have a personal love for each other. It becomes a personal relationship through personal obedience and personal praise on your part.

Even if you are married to someone who doesn't have this personal love, it doesn't matter. Although you cannot have objective personal love for your partner (meaning love doesn't *flow* between you because only you have God's love), instead you have the subjective love of God. It doesn't become personal, but it is subjective because it comes from God and is *given* to the one who cannot give it back.

Likewise, we have this same provision to love our enemies and to love the lost. *It is the supernatural love of God that flows from you like a river, without any person causing it to flow but only God.* As that river flows out of your emotions and out of your soul to the glory of Jesus Christ, you rejoice always (Philippians 4:4), and you "count it all joy when you fall into divers temp-

tations" (James 1:2).

When you give thanks *in* everything and *for* everything, you are a happy, wholesome person. You don't go around in your natural temperament with a strange countenance, confessing how you *feel*. No! You were created to praise the Lord!

Often in a message like this, people begin to feel condemned for their lack of praise or to strive to somehow produce it. But praising God is something we *learn* to do—*from the Word*, not because of an emotional movement. We all desire to grow in this area, and to do that, we need to practice it. If you are naturally soft-spoken, just say "Praise God for today!" You can just praise God for the weather.

It is beautiful when the emotions are overcome with joy and praise with thanksgiving as evidenced in the second chapter of Acts. The result? "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized....And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God….And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:41-47).

Chapter Three

PRAISE THAT REVEALS RIGHTEOUSNESS

"This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD" (Psalms 102:18). They shall be created to praise the One who made them. This speaks of a right relationship between the creature and the Creator.

"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psalms 22:3).

"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant" (Psalms 25:14).

As believers, we gather together to see the Lord Jesus proclaimed. And though we may have phenomenal love and appreciation for the Word of God, many of our problems stem from not having an attitude to fulfill the purpose we were created for. We were created to praise the Lord! And the Word says so beautifully in Psalm

106:47, we will *triumph* in His praise.

Psalm 7:17 says that we should praise Him according to His *righteousness*. Think of that! It is the gift of righteousness that gives us positional truth and eternal security, protecting our hearts and producing such quietness, tranquillity, and peace.

Imagine if you were alone for an hour and you were able to think upon every aspect of God's righteousness. Can you imagine the result? "My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day….I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only" (Psalm 71:15-16). We praise Him for imputed righteousness that is posted to our account, and for imparted righteousness that comes from God to protect us from self-righteousness.

We have God's righteousness. Any one of us can make the difference. Imagine, just ten righteous people could have prevented Sodom and Gomorrah from being judged.

The Greatness of God in Divine Appointments

Psalm 107:8 says to praise the Lord for His *goodness*, for His "*wonderful works* to the children of men." Recently we received a letter from a

woman in a part of Africa where we have not yet sent missionaries. She "happened" to find a tape with a sermon about John 3:16 that I preached several years ago. After listening to the message six consecutive times, this woman was saved. Not only that, God led her to a church where the pastor has been receiving our tapes by mail and corresponds with us regularly! She could hardly believe it.

This is the message she heard; and though this illustration from John 3:16 is not unique with me, God obviously used it to stir her capacity to be saved:

For God	the greatest Lover
so	the greatest Intensity
loved	the greatest Love
the world,	the greatest Company
that he gave	the greatest Sacrifice
his only begotten Son,	the greatest Gift
that whosoever	the greatest Opportunity
believes	the greatest Simplicity
in him should not perish,	the greatest Deliverance
but have everlasting life.	the greatest Possession.

Praise Him for His excellent greatness! (Psalm 150:2).

In a similar incident, one of our men was knocking on doors, telling people the Gospel. A young woman who answered a certain door, visibly shaken, said, "I can't talk to you now. My brother just died." This visitor said, "Was his name Tony?" She stepped back, began nodding her head and asked, "How did you know?" He told her that Tony was a member of our church who loved God with all of his heart and was going to Bible college. The men in the dorm where he had recently moved also received the shocking news that morning and announced it at the outreach meeting. Otherwise, no one could have known who was behind that door on that day, but it was definitely a divine appointment.

God is working so consistently, so continuously! He is worthy of all of our praise. The pastor in charge of our international missions department told me that $89,000 went through his office for missionaries in one month. *I will praise the Lord for His goodness, for His excellent greatness!*

Psalm 9:1, "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart"—with all of my heart! I will not hold on to anything negative or reactionary. I refuse to give a place in my heart to become

distressed or perplexed. I will praise Him with my *whole* heart.

Psalm 115:18, "We will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD." From this time forward, I'm going to start praising the Lord because He created me; and He created me to praise Him.

Behind the Scenes: Spiritual Men under Construction

So often I think of different ones in our midst whose lives behind the scenes are extraordinary. Years ago in our Bible college in Maine, I lived in a house on a little hill just behind the buildings that housed the classrooms, offices, and student dorms. Our winters were cold and we always had lots of snow. Several of the students worked long, hard jobs in factories to pay their bills. They studied hard and were involved in outreaches, and early on, many of them revealed amazing devotion to God in their manner of living.

I remember several occasions after late nights at my desk when I could see different ones out in the field or under a tree, all alone before their God—worshipping, giving praises to God on their knees, *in the snow*. They didn't know I could see them, but I would watch them

with much gratitude and awe, to see their young lives so set apart, so fervent in their desire to be whatever God wanted of them. It was a beautiful sight.

One of those men was Tom Schaller. Today he is a missionary evangelist who is also a pastor, still serving God as faithfully and fervently as he did when he began. Often away from his precious family, he has pioneered churches in Finland and Hungary, raising up disciples after his kind who themselves have gone into places that many would never dare tread. More than twenty years later, he calls me regularly from Hungary and he will leave a message on the answering machine: "I love you so much, Pastor, and I miss everyone so much. Thanks for never quitting." He is such a sweet edifier, and he has been triumphant in his praises.

"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:3). God does something special to motivate, activate, and energize those who have an attitude and spirit of praise. God does something special, because He inhabits every part of a soul through the human spirit.

It is no wonder that Psalm 22:23 says, "Ye that fear the LORD, praise him," speaking of those who reverence His presence. Psalm 22:26

says that those who *seek* the Lord shall praise him. And in Hebrews 13:15, "…let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

Along with the animal sacrifices, the priests in the Old Testament would offer up sacrifices of praise when they brought in offerings from the harvest of fruit. Today, we are believer-priests; but our sacrifice isn't to bring fruit or to kill an animal. *Our sacrifice is to trust the Lord.* In everything, give thanks! For everything, give thanks! We ought always to have an attitude of praise as the sacrifice of our lips.

Following Jesus' Example

We offer the fruit of our lips as our sacrifice of praise. So when we consider the verse that says God inhabits the praises of his people, it means we are to praise Him with our whole heart—yet, so many people do not.

Guard your heart. Do not live in your personality, temperament, or circumstances. Do not live in your physical frailty, making that your frame of reference. The Word of God has promised that God inhabits the praises of His people! Get up and follow in His steps. In Mark 1:21-38, after a city-wide revival where people

were saved and healed and where demons were cast out, the Word of God says that Jesus, rising up a great while before day, "departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

Can you picture it? Jesus wanted to be alone; and though His disciples were close, He didn't allow them to be with Him. Jesus went to a solitary place to pray to His Father. When the disciples found Him, they said, "People everywhere are seeking you!" And He replied, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also." That was His purpose. People were always on His heart—*always*. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

Chapter Four

THE HIGHEST FORM OF WORSHIP

Preparing for an evening service, I was thinking: "This is another night we have for worship, another night for Him to visit." Then I was thinking of what King David said as he gazed at the beautiful stars, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; *What is man, that thou art mindful of him?* and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psalms 8:3-4). Praising God for His excellent name, David was looking up.

The writer of Psalm 119:164 said, "Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments"—seven special times when he would stand alone, giving thanks and praise for the creature and the Creator.

All the heavens and the angels praise Him. The dragons from the depths of the earth were

commanded to praise Him (Psalm 148:7), and even the sun and the wind. God created everything for His glory (Isaiah 43:7) so that we would praise Him.

I encourage you not to be caught up with negativity, reactions, or details of life. Be occupied with Jesus Christ and praise Him.

The Substance of True Worship

We should train and teach our young people to have a life of praise and worship. True worship is to receive instruction through discipline in the classroom. It is to receive wisdom by listening with concentration (Proverbs 1:3-5). It is to bow down your ear to hear the precise words of God (Proverbs 22:17).

In Proverbs 1:3, after wisdom we receive *justice*, the result of the Finished Work. And after that comes *judgment*, which is now "No condemnation!", and *equity*, the ability to discern God's will and to know Him. Then, in verse 4, there is an unusual result of wisdom: "To give subtility to the simple." In the Septuagint, *simple* refers to those who have no foundation in the Word of God. They need to be taught how to worship God through categories of doctrine. Therefore, to give *subtility* to the simple means

to teach them concentration on the Word as the highest form of worship.

That is why the Psalmist said in Psalm 119:171, "My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes." And in Psalm 56:4, "In God I will praise his word...." "Then believed they his words; they sang his praise" (Psalm 106:12). This is a beautiful picture of praising God by centering on His Word. It reveals that worship also means to be thankful that Jesus Christ is our God and Savior, that He has forgiven and cleansed us. So we worship Him in Spirit (not in flesh) and in truth. Psalm 119:151*b* says, "all thy commandments are *truth*" (from the Hebrew word *emeth*, which means categorical doctrine).

We have the wonderful privilege of learning how to fulfill worship. Is it any wonder that the Word of God says in Psalm 48:10, "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth…." We worship God according to His name, and for the help of His countenance (Psalm 42:5). His "name" speaks of who God is: His meekness, His kindness, His patience, His long-suffering. We praise Him according to those attributes of His countenance which reveal His character because He is meek and lowly.

In Genesis 22:5, we find Abraham ready to offer his son Isaac, and what does he do? Before he offers his son, Abraham goes to worship God first. That's right; he goes to worship God's character, trusting Him to provide either resuscitation or a substitute. Abraham worshiped God! And God provided a ram in the thicket to put upon the altar.

Later, in chapter 24, we have the story of Abraham's servant going to find a bride for Isaac. In verses 26 and 27, the servant bowed and worshiped the Lord, then said, "I being in the way, the Lord led me…." In application, he was saying, "I am in the plan of God and the will of God; and *because I am in the way of God, He is leading me*." Furthermore, by virtue of his worship, the servant declared, "As I travel, with God leading me, I want to worship the Most High, the God of Abraham."

Worship is so vital. In 2 Chronicles 29:30, the children of God sang His praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped—and it made them glad.

Please understand: The secret of the Lord is with them that *fear* Him, that *reverence* His pres-

ence (Psalm 25:14). They praise Him for what He has done, and they worship Him for who He is, which is revealed in the Scriptures that reveal His mind. He is the Lord over death, over disease, and over everything we've ever done against Him. We hear His Words and we worship His character.

The Way of Worship

"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2). "In beauty" means the manifestation of the resurrected ascended life toward us today. "Holiness" means to be separated unto His mind, to be separated unto the way He thinks about every subject. What a beautiful passage! We give the glory that is due the Lord Jesus Christ.

We worship God in song. We worship Him by adoring Him. We worship Him for who He is. But always, worship is done with concentration, reverence, and godly fear for what He says to us, receiving it with meekness and responding with faith.

When we have a continual attitude of worship, we will see the blessings God has provided and the vision He has fulfilled, and we will rec-

ognize how good and how pleasant it is to dwell in unity with the brethren. Of all of the attacks that come against unity, nothing can ultimately prevail because the Lord Jesus Christ takes care of that which is His—protecting, providing for, and seeing that it accomplishes what pleases Him.

As never before, worship God with all your spirit and all your heart. Worship God for His righteousness, grace, mercy, goodness; for the way He deals with us; and for the way He forgives us—*for who He is*. Worship God for His provision and for who we are in Christ.

CONCLUSION

Learn to worship in your spirit. Worship God through the Word. Then, once you worship Him for who He is, you begin to *praise* Him for everything He has given you. Praise Him for the material things, too. Praise Him for everything, and just *thank* the Lord as you look upon the creation. Think of what God does to bless His people! As He provides, he honors his own—and we were made to praise Him!

We have the spirit of praise, of worship, and our Lord Jesus Christ, praising Him for what He has done and worshipping Him for who He is, as the quality of truth is revealed by the Holy Spirit in categories.

The next time you think of God, think: "He created me—and my purpose is to praise Him." Then, purpose to give thanks in and for everything. Know that all things work together for good because you love the Lord.

In the final summary, just as He did for

Joseph and his brothers, our God will provide for us. Though Satan meant his attack for evil, God works all things together for the glory of His praise.

Preaching the Gospel

Pastor Steven Scibelli is a graduate of Stevens School of the Bible. In 1988 he led a team that included his wife, Linda; their two children, Lysa and Peter; and twelve others to Ghana, West Africa. Today, Greater Grace World Outreach in Ghana has expanded to 18 churches that have sent missionaries to Nigeria, Togo, and Liberia.

Staying true to the vision to spread the Gospel and to make disciples of men in the uttermost parts of the world, Pastor Scibelli has ministered in more than 20 African countries and 50 other countries over the last 20 years.

In between church planting and his bimonthly trips to Africa, the Scibellis live in Baltimore where he teaches at Maryland Bible College and Seminary and serves in the Missions and Outreach departments at GGWO.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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In joy or sorrow, health or pain,
Our course be onward still;
We sow on Burma's barren plain,
We reap on Zion's hill!

—Adoniram Judson
(America's first overseas missionary.)

INTRODUCTION

A story is told about an evangelist in the 1800s and what happened on the day he got married. As they were traveling in their carriage, on the way to their honeymoon, he and his wife made a stop at a store. The man started to evangelize, and the people there sensed the power of God.

One man received Christ as his personal Savior right away. Then, he said to the evangelist, "Can you come with me? My brother is working in a factory nearby. You must tell him this message!"

"Oh, I don't think I can do that," the evangelist said, and then explained that he was on his honeymoon.

Still, the man followed him to the carriage, begging him to speak to his brother.

The evangelist's new bride agreed (knowing her husband's heart for the lost) and said, "Let's just stop by the factory for ten minutes."

They arrived at the factory and began to evangelize the man's brother. And before they left, the whole factory was converted by his message. Everyone got saved!

Finally, he sent his wife ahead to the place where they were to stay for their honeymoon, saying, "I will join you in a few hours. I sense that God is doing something special here."

It was days before this man caught up with his wife. He just kept preaching—preaching the glorious Gospel.

Of course, that is an extreme example, but this booklet exalts the glory of preaching. Preaching is a necessity to the furtherance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our hope is that many readers would heed God's call to preach the Good News in these days.

Chapter One

THE PREEMINENCE OF PREACHING

"But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour" (Titus 1:3).

"And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (1 Corinthians 9:23).

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul mentioned the word "gospel" ten times. To me, it sounds as if he wanted to be married to the gospel. What an awesome marriage that would be! To be married to the Good News, the grace news: the Gospel.

Titus 1:3 says that God "manifested"—*phaneroo* in the Greek text—His Word through preaching. That is the way He makes the Word, which before was hidden or unknown, openly visible and clearly evident. God opens His Word through preaching.

Charles Spurgeon, known as the "Prince of Preachers" in his time, once said, "People have a high value of the Word but a low value of preaching." People believe in the Word, that it is inspired, authoritative, and infallible. But the same people, for the most part, do not esteem preaching.

Put Preaching First

In much of Christianity today, programs are the emphasis—not preaching. It is education, and not preaching. It is business—not preaching. It is music—not preaching. It is miracles—not preaching. It is money—not preaching. It is everything but preaching. This is most evidenced by the fact that only ten percent of all American missionaries go to the foreign field to do preaching. Most of what they do is educational or agricultural, which are of great benefit to the people they reach.

I thank God that we have a ministry full of preachers today. All over the world, we have people who are proclaimers of the Gospel, messengers of the Gospel, preachers of the Gospel. We have developed farms in Africa, built bridges in the war-torn Central Asia, and raised up medical clinics and orphanages in many

countries. These are valuable and worthwhile endeavors we believe in. But they are never to be done at the expense of preaching.

Overcoming the Enemy

John Wesley, a great man of God from England, faced tremendous odds as a preacher in his own country. Seen as a heretic, he was under attack from the religious authorities who wielded political clout. Wesley was not allowed to preach in any public meeting places because of his message. They were attacking him everywhere he went, but he found a good place to preach—atop his father's tombstone! He got up on his daddy's tombstone and started preaching. The crowd around that tombstone grew into hundreds of people and eventually three thousand people were coming to the tombstone for his messages. Every week he was on the tombstone preaching.

One day while he was preaching, an enemy of the Gospel came on horseback. He threw a lasso around John Wesley and physically dragged him away. This man hated the Gospel, so of course he didn't like to hear it preached. After dragging the preacher for half of a mile, he told Wesley he was going to kill him.

Wesley asked, “Could you do me one favor before you kill me?”

“What’s that?” the man said.

“Let me go back and finish my message. Then you can do whatever you want.”

The man was overwhelmed, and he ended up getting saved.

Preaching did it. Don’t you love it? Preaching the Gospel!

Chapter Two

PROCLAIMERS NEEDED

"For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

"Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

"For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

"That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness,

which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Philippians 1:5-12).

The apostle Paul himself said that he had received a ministry. He did not consider his own life dear, therefore he could finish his course with joy and testify of the gospel of grace. Paul's life was devoted to preaching, testifying of the gospel of grace.

I once found myself in a discussion about tokens and rewards. We can go to heaven and receive a few tokens of grace, or we can get there and enjoy a mountain of rewards because of affiliation with a ministry that promotes preaching. Every thing I do in every direction as a Spirit-filled believer—in my home, in my family, in my business—all of it will result in a great benefit to me as a partaker of the rewards of a Gospel ministry. That is so awesome to think about.

Rather than receiving initiations from the kingdom of darkness, from the world system, or from the analysis of my flesh, I thank God for the place He has put me. I am sitting under

preaching, being taught the Word of God. I hear the Scriptures presented line upon line, precept upon precept. It is an awesome thing.

The Prize and the Crown

I can count about ninety problems that Paul addressed in his letters to the Corinthians. Yet, he continually edified the Corinthians, encouraging them to keep going with the Gospel. He emphasized that there is a prize and a crown for those who preach.

Paul was in prison. But rather than let himself be consumed with everything that was going on—his lack of provisions, problems with the church at Philippi, divisions among members in the Church, things going on with Epaphroditus, people preaching from the wrong motive—Paul simply stayed married to the Gospel. He kept talking about the fellowship of the Gospel (Philippians 1:5); he wrote of the defense and confirmation of the Gospel; he emphasized the furtherance of the Gospel (Philippians 1:12). He understood the incredible opportunities he had and the impact he and others would make on a dying world.

Preaching Brings the Cure

Marital problems in Christianity? I think they would all just go away if people were married to Jesus Christ experientially, living in the Body of Christ, and hearing preaching. Preaching is the answer. God wants to raise up preachers.

There are a lot of things people can do. No matter what we do for work, as Christians we must realize that God has called us to be proclaimers. As a preacher of the Gospel, I will never be unemployed. There is always plenty of work to do. There are lots of lost people everywhere, waiting to hear preaching.

God has called us to proclaim the message of grace. It is a privilege to go out to the lost today. It is an awesome privilege to be with the Body of Christ. As we are growing, we make an impact through just preaching the Word of God. We see people's lives transformed. We see people coming on the bus to church. People come from the docks, invited through the port ministry. People are personally inviting others. It is all happening because of preaching. God manifests His Word and reveals His Divine purpose for our lives through preaching.

Chapter Three

MAKING DARKNESS TREMBLE

"Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts 28:31).

"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

"Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (2 Timothy 4:16-17).

To this day, preaching causes the darkness to tremble. That is why difficult situations are brought into people's lives. There is no question as to why these things are happening. Preachers have an effect in cities and the world. Suffering is perfect evidence of being in the plan of God and living in His purpose.

A group surrounded a certain man while he preached the Gospel. Arrows were being shot into him. He just kept pulling the arrows out, snapping them, and throwing them to the ground. It took sixty arrows to kill him as he kept on preaching.

"What is going on with this guy?" they were thinking. So afraid of this man were they that after he was dead, they cut his body into twelve parts and buried each one in different parts of the country. They were afraid that something would happen with him after he was dead.

True to the End

Paul was preaching in prison. Toward the end of his life, Paul would not allow his mouth to be shut. When he said that he was delivered from the mouth of the lion, I believe Paul was speaking of satanic forces, evil, and demons trying to shut his mouth. Still, by Paul, "preaching was made fully known." What was he showing? That preaching shuts the devil's mouth.

I think that even as the Roman soldiers were leading Paul to execution, he was still preaching. I can see it. He is just about to be beheaded and he tells the guy with the ax, "Do you know Jesus loves you? Wait a minute! Before you do what

you have to do, I want you to know that Jesus loves you. You can be saved. You can be born again and enter the Kingdom of heaven."

He was probably still preaching as the ax fell on his neck. The objective of the enemy is to shut down the Gospel any way he can.

The Unstoppable Gospel

Yes, Paul did end up dying for his testimony. The kingdom of darkness knew what kind of threat Paul was, and it tried to rub him out. Yet, others were raised up by God to preach. Satan can stop one mouth, but he has never been able to stop the proclamation of the Gospel.

Let us never get familiar in any way with preaching. We must proclaim God's message in creativity and power. Think of the Moroccos, the Chinas, the New Yorks, the Washingtons—all places of incredible opportunities. What do they need? Preaching. They need the Word of God proclaimed beyond illustrations and stories.

We must herald the message. Proclaim it. We are messengers in our homes, our neighborhoods, our cities. We have the Good News that a lost and dying world must hear. Let us preach it.

CONCLUSION

Preaching! It is a privilege to be trained under a great preacher. Our conversation is the Gospel. Wherever we are—on the street corners, in a house—we are preaching, we are proclaiming the Good News. In cities, in states, in countries, in the whole world, we are preaching the glorious Gospel. It is an awesome privilege we have today.

Oh, if Christianity could only see it. So many people are involved in so many things besides preaching. Those things seem to be good. But God says this: "Preach the Gospel. Proclaim the grace news. Proclaim glad tidings. Proclaim the Person and the Work of Jesus Christ wherever you go."

God will open the doors for us.

The Gospel is fearless.

The Gospel is simple.

The Gospel is perfectly true.

Father, thank You today for the provision of

preaching. We thank You for the Word of God and for the message of grace and for the fellowship of the Gospel. We thank You for the defense of the Gospel, for the confirmation of the Gospel, for the furtherance of the Gospel, for the conversation of the Gospel, for the faith of the Gospel.

Give us open hearts and open doors wherever we go today. Thank You for manifesting Your Word through preaching. God, anoint us and give us Your power. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prepare for War

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

When I consider war, my thoughts always turn to the many people who have died while serving our country. I also think about what causes wars. Some wars are about liberation and giving people freedom. For the most part, this has been America's role in wars. As a nation, America has been faithful to bring liberation to people around the world. The U.S. did that in going against the Kaiser in World War I and against Hitler in World War II.

As Christian citizens of this nation, we should be prepared, as never before, for war—spiritually and literally. Certainly, Satan is at work to undermine the liberties that believers have enjoyed on these shores since 1776. But, sin is sin; and, as we will see in these pages, there are consequences to pay for sin. America needs our prayers and our commitment to live for God. Today, He is pleading for people to hear His Word and to turn to Him.

Chapter One

DECLARATIONS OF TROUBLE

Years ago, when I was a young preacher, I asked God to help me always preach it the way it is, whatever the cost. Still, the most difficult thing for me as a pastor is how easily some people get offended. For example, if I hear that you are against me, I would never get up and preach against you. If it seems to come out that way, just know that my mind isn't even on you. Yet, it often gets back to me that people I love and trust have said, "He was preaching at me because he heard something about me."

When a member of the congregation gets offended, he takes liberty away from the one who is preaching. I'm not preaching because I heard someone say something. I'm not that kind of a preacher. That kind of a preacher, to me, doesn't have integrity.

You don't have to agree with me. Furthermore, don't feel you are against people when

you disagree with them. I like to have people in my church who understand that they have the freedom to think, who are not puppets.

Having said that, I believe that America's next wars will challenge her iniquity and sinful ways as never before. These are different kinds of wars than we have ever faced in the history of our nation, because we don't know where the enemies are. When have you ever heard of so many people ready to kill themselves? Terrorists come in disguise, and they are more than willing to kill themselves just to kill us—in hospitals, colleges, you name it.

Thank God for the precious people who come in to our nation. I thank God that our country lets precious people come in, but I believe we also need to use caution. How do certain ones get in? How does a guy get on an airplane with enough explosives in the soles of his shoes to blow up the plane? How was he able to do it? How did he get through airport security?

We live in a country where three hundred people in our cities are slaughtered every day because of drugs, killed in cold blood. Most of those dying are between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. Murders. For some unknown

reason, very little is done to stop the drugs from coming in, even though a tremendous amount of money is spent trying to restore the drug users.

Immorality is running wild, spurred by the constant barrage of images in film and in the media that glorify sin and violence. In addition to all the problems with drug dealers and addicts, homosexuals are getting licenses to adopt children. America, in part, is under tremendous judgment, and God is speaking to her people. Billy Graham says it. Men of God everywhere say it. We need to pray.

I do believe that the terrorists struck on September 11, 2001, because we were being judged. I'm sorry if you disagree with that assessment. It remains my belief that those attacks were a wake-up call for America. Americans do not want to hear that. It doesn't bother me if they want to hear it or not. The truth is, what happened on 9/11 was a wake-up call for America, and it found us sleeping.

God Wants Our Attention

"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD" (Jeremiah 22:29).

This verse represents the only time in the en-

tire Bible that God gave a triple salutation. Never before and never after has He given such a salutation.

In the ancient Hebrew and Greek texts, the emotional height of a declaration is determined by certain marks, used to indicate to the reader where God raised His voice in the language.

"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD."

Just think of that! Here is Almighty God—Creator, Redeemer, Lord, Master, Savior—and He cries out three times, "O *earth, earth, earth,* hear the word of the LORD."

What was His cry? That we would listen to the Word. What is His cry to me? That I would hear the Word. I must hear the Word of God in order to prepare for war.

Chapter Two

PROGRESSIVE WARNINGS

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

"Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

"Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified

with ointment" (Isaiah 1:2-6).

Have you ever wondered why God said, "Hear, O heavens"? Heaven listened. As we read in Revelation 8:1, heaven was silent for one half hour. The angels stopped singing, the music stopped, and the praising stopped.

Heaven will be silent for one half hour before the terrible judgments begin in the Tribulation Period.

The Power of God's Word

Think of it carefully, study it prayerfully;
Deep in thine heart let its oracles dwell.
Ponder its mysteries, slight not its histories;
None can e'er love it too fondly or well.

The Word of God is incomprehensible,
The Word of God is unfathomable.

I am not skilled to understand
What God has willed, what God has planned,
But this I know, at His right hand
Is one who is my Savior.
That He should leave His home on high
And come for sinful men to die,
You count it strange? Well, so did I

Until I met the Savior.
Living, loving, let me bring
Strength and solace from this spring,
That He who lives may be my King,
Who died to be my Savior."

You have heard me quote these phrases from Dr. S. Franklin Logsdon of Moody Memorial Church. He treasured the Word of God and made these statements before his sermons. Dr. Logsdon was a great Baptist preacher, and he allowed me to speak at one his conferences because our little church had gone from six people to nearly a thousand.

He came to me on the last night of the conference and said, "Can I see you in the corner?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Can you forgive me?"

I said, "Why? I certainly have felt unworthy, but I've had the time of my life. This privilege of speaking as a guest here in this church with you, this probably has been the greatest highlight in my life."

He said, "Pastor, I haven't prayed with you one time. I have sinned. Please forgive me. I have sinned by not praying with a younger pastor."

That is how humble a man he was. He could quote all of Jeremiah, all of Malachi, all of Hosea. He'd quote them and give the Hebrew. He was a brilliant man. But I learned something right there. I learned what it meant to preach beside a brilliant *and* humble man.

Dr. Logsdon understood the value of prayer in the midst of warfare.

The Preacher's Portion

I can still remember how he explained the progression of God's warnings through the book of Jeremiah. The urgent tone of Dr. Logsdon's voice remains fresh in my mind:

"The Lord said in the sixth chapter of Jeremiah and the tenth verse, 'Hear Me. Nobody will receive My warning. Nobody will hear My voice. Nobody will listen to the judgment that is to come.' And Jeremiah cried out."

Oh, how we need preachers like Dr. Logsdon, who cried out the Gospel just as Jeremiah cried out the prophecy of God.

In Jeremiah 9:20, there was a domestic salutation. What Dr. Logsdon preached then is so true for our times. "O you women, your children will be in the streets, and you'll have to go out into the streets," he said. "Your children will

be taken into captivity in every inconceivable way." Then he went on to describe the terrible things that would happen to them. "My dear people, this is a domestic salutation to families," Dr. Logsdon taught. "And it happened. *It hap - pened.*"

Those who did not obey God's commandment (in Deuteronomy 6, on how to bring up their children) saw the consequences. We find entire families worshipping the queen of heaven (Jeremiah 7:17-18). Then, in Hosea 13:16, we see the results. Infants were dashed in pieces. Women with child were ripped apart.

"My dear people, it happened!" Dr. Logsdon kept saying that. He was emphasizing that things happened just as God had said they would happen.

Oh, America, hear me. It happened, just as God said it would. We need to wake up and hear the Word of the Lord.

Chapter Three

SENSING THE URGENCY

In Jeremiah 22:1, there was a royal salutation to the government of the children of Israel. This came after national salutations, in Jeremiah 3:14 and 3:22. The Word said three times to Israel, "Return." God had warned Israel that if they would turn from following the Lord, He would cut them off from the land (1 Kings 9:6-7). If they turned from the following of the Lord, they would be cut off from their inheritance and become a byword among the nations. Of course, my dear people, this happened.

"Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ru-hamah.

"Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;

"Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the

day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst" (Hosea 2:1-3).

Here we have an individual salutation. God began to so beautifully plead with the individual, and He said, "O you individuals, come to Me, come to Me." One individual after another will have to face the judgment of God.

In Jeremiah 22:2, Jeremiah went on to declare, "Hear the word of God, O king of Judah. Hear the word of God." He poured out terrible judgments (Zechariah 13:8, Numbers 22, Isaiah 5:4-6).

"Never be a stranger to my voice," says God. He is saying to believers, "I want you. I'm very jealous over you. It is a righteous jealousy. I have covered your past, and, oh, I want you. I want you to return to Me. I want you who are backslidden to come back to Me."

The Time Is Late

"Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon" (Jeremiah 37:17).

This is something very striking. Jeremiah was asked to go to God in behalf of King Zedekiah, who said, "Can you go and get a message from the Lord? I am pleading you, Jeremiah. Would you get a message?"

Jeremiah came back to the king and said, "I have a message from God. It's too late. It's too late! God will not answer. War is coming and you are going into captivity."

Eventually, Zedekiah saw his children killed in cold blood, and their heads were cut off, and Zedekiah was placed in the dungeon and stricken blind.

So America, hear. God will judge this nation unless her people turn to God and humble themselves.

We have started daily prayer meetings at our church. Why? "If My people shall humble themselves and pray, and turn from their wicked ways. I'll hear from heaven. I'll forgive their sins. I'll heal their land." This is what God tells us, in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

The Word of God mentions some tremendous warnings, and I have been thinking of those warnings recently. When I prayed for my country today, I thought of those warnings—of how warnings come before judgment, and of

how grace is poured out before judgment too. I thought about how much God loves us, and the fact that overall, believers are still a pivotal influence in this nation.

I don't want to be overly negative. We still have a pivotal group of believers in our nation, and the choices we make from this position can hold back judgment. If enough believers get together and pray, we will stop forthcoming judgment from God.

CONCLUSION

There is a true story about an attorney who went before the jury, and said, “I plead with you to let this man go free. If you do not let this man go free, you will not be able to sleep at night. Your heart will awaken you in years to come. This man is innocent. I am pleading with you. I beg you.”

And he would go back to his chair and sit, and he would put his head down.

Then he would go back and plead again. Then he'd go back in the chair and sit again. Then he'd come back and plead again. He said, “I plead with you. I plead with you to let him go free.”

The jury heeded him, and they let the man go free.

Judgment is coming to this nation. So many teenagers are going into barrooms, committing immorality, and are not faithful to church. Many have no fear of God. Hosea talks about the

pleading of God. We have mentioned several verses of the Bible that talk about the pleading of God. Now, you listen—and listen well. Listen, and be receptive, be serious, and be absolutely conscientious about the pleadings of God.

God is saying, "I plead with you! I plead with you! I plead with you! I don't want you to go through the terrible hell and the judgment that is coming, but if you will not hear me, My justice demands it. I plead with you," said God.

The pleadings of God come to us because He doesn't want us to face judgment. His Son paid the price on Calvary so that every one who believes on Him can go free. If you think hell troubles us, it troubles God more. God doesn't want us to face judgment. God does not want us to face the fierce wrath as someone who has rejected the mercy, and grace, and love, and salvation that came by the Blood of the Lamb. He does not want us to face that judgment, and He is pleading our case. Jesus Christ is pleading for our freedom and our liberation so that we will never have to face the judgments in store.

As believers, we need to hear and obey every single word of God. If we live by the Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit, we will continue to be a godly force that can help turn our nation

back to God. We need to be a living testimony, touching people's lives around us in these last days. God will be faithful to work in us and through us if we will continually set our hearts on Him.

There is a war being waged for the souls of men. Now is the time to prepare as never before. Hear the words of the Lord.

Father, we thank you for the gift of salvation. Thank you that with the warning, you have shown us the way to be free forever, through the Cross. By the precious Holy Spirit, use us to bring the Gospel to lost souls everywhere. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Preparing to Go

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

We have a call on our lives. The Bible calls it a high and holy and heavenly calling. Yet, some fearful Christians see it more as a warrant for their arrest. We are afraid of the commitment and ashamed of the reproach. Instead of Christ's yoke that is easy and His burden that is light, we prefer to carry our own load. We resist stepping out of the boat.

All of us have been there. And most of us, if we are honest, have gone back there from time to time, if only for moments. We choose happiness instead of joy, spiritual separation instead of the sweetest fellowship. Though we may have many accomplishments, there is no lasting fruit in our own agendas.

But, in the deep places of each heart, the Holy Spirit continues to call us: "With all of your getting, get wisdom!" He instructs us to have a life that is prepared to go. We are surprised to find that the first lesson, the first page, the first

words are, “It is finished!”

The Father waits, never ceasing to watch over us. The Son has made the way for us. It is very narrow, so we can constantly sense His presence, and it takes us to places we would not have gone otherwise: glorious places—where the true treasures are. This booklet is about all of these things.

Chapter One

FIRST THE NATURAL, THEN THE SPIRITUAL

"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

"He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

"And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

"Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first" (Matthew 21:28-31*a*).

How many times do we find that first son? "I will not be a Christian. I'll not serve God. I'll not follow God. I will not!" Afterwards, he repented and he did what he said he would not do. The second son said, "I will go. I'll go!" Then, later, he did not do it.

A very wise friend made a note of this para-

ble that I had never heard before: The Bible does not say, "A certain man had three sons…." It does not say he had three sons and one of them said, "Yes, father, I will do it," and he did it. That son is not in this parable, nor is he reading this booklet. There is no one—except One—who said yes *and* did it.

According to Joshua 24:19, we *cannot* serve the Lord. All of us say "yes" and we don't do it, or we say "no" and, later, we do it—by grace.

The only foundation for service is grace. Not our strength, not our ability, not our obedience, not our talent, not our fervency, not our sincerity, but grace. That is the only foundation for any service.

Malachi 3:13-16 is an important portion. I never saw it like this before.

"Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD." A modern meaning for "stout" is "arrogant": "Your words have been *arrogant* against me…. Yet you say, What have we spoken so much against you?"

They didn't know that they were arrogant. They did not know. In the book of Malachi, there are seven times when the people say against God, "What? Where do You get that? What do you mean, Lord! What?!"

God said, "You have offered to Me polluted sacrifices."

"What?"

"You have robbed Me. You have robbed Me, people. You have robbed Me."

Indignant, they said, "What? *What*? What did You say? What are You talking about? Wherein have we robbed You? How have we robbed You?"

And He said, "In tithes and offerings" (see Malachi 3:8).

Blind Deception

That is a picture of deception. Deception is when I believe I am correct, but I am wrong. I am wrong, and God tries to correct me. Then I answer back to God, "What are You talking about? I don't know what You're saying! I don't get it."

God put His finger on them, and they rebelled and resisted. Blind and ignorant, and would not be reproved. That is a dangerous condition to be in.

"And your words have been [arrogant] against Me." "Arrogant" is a powerful word. The Lord was saying, "You people are speaking against Me. In your pulpits and in your syna-

gogues, in your fellowship and in your attitude, you are against Me. And you say, 'Wherein have we spoken against You?"

"You have said, It is vain to serve God. That is what I'm talking about. You have said it is vain to serve Me." (See verse 14).

Afraid of Being a Loser?

Do you hear the voice of one of the sons in those verses? I hear the voice of the son who said, "No. I will not serve You. I will not do it." I hear him say, "I will not serve You. I cannot do it. I will not do it. I have a life to live. It is vain to serve You. I don't get much in return. Thank You very much, but You don't offer me a very good deal.

"Thank You, but I've got things to do. I've got a life to live. I'll go to church once a week, because it's good for me, and it's good for my family. But to me, it is vain to serve God, because I'll end up poor. I will end up lacking something."

"It is vain to serve God. You will end up a loser, or you will lose something. It is vain to serve God." That is what they said.

In Malachi 3:14*b*: "What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have

walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?"

What good is it? How many sheep did Solomon offer up? Do you remember? Solomon offered up perhaps one hundred thousand sheep—an enormous number. They offered up the sheep and burned them. "It is vain."

Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained

"Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency (Psalm 73:13). In other words, "I have washed my hands, but it was in vain to do it. It has not profited me at all. I have gained nothing in return, only destruction where I have lost." That is the complaint heard in the world, around the world, and also, unfortunately, in the Church.

"It is fine to go to church once a week. It is fine to read my Bible periodically. But when it comes down to really losing my life and giving everything, I do not think it is very profitable or useful, and I don't believe it really works. I really think that once you get out there walking on the water, you'll sink, and you will get all wet—and I would rather be wet in the boat than wet out there!"

"Really? Not me!" said Peter. And some of us will agree. "I would rather be out there on the

water than wet in the boat, afraid to obey when the Lord calls me."

Remember when Peter walked on the water (Matthew 14:29)? A pastor told me that before Peter went out there, Judas probably said, "Uh, Peter, do you want to leave your wallet in here? I'll take care of it, just in case you don't come back."

No Regrets

When we are following God, the devil will always say, "That is dangerous. It is vain. It is a waste of time."

I always think about the box of ointment that was given and poured out on Jesus (Mark 14:3). That box was precious—more precious than the oil. The oil was precious, though once it was poured out, it was gone. But the box: What happened to the box?

It wasn't a plastic container that was to be thrown away. It was a box, a vessel, *precious*. Probably it could have been put back together and reused. Yet, I imagine that Mary put it in the closet.

Five years later, when Mary looked at the pieces of the broken box in her closet, did she resent what she did?

Ten years later when she looked at those pieces and had nothing in the cupboard, did she regret what she had done? That box with the ointment was worth one year's wages, one denarii a day. Do you think she said, "I wasted the oil; it cost a lot of money, three hundred denarii"? I think not.

When you don't have anything to eat, and you look at the empty box in your cupboard, do you resent or regret what you did? You might.

"It is vain to serve God," people say. "And what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?" (Malachi 3:14). If they don't say it, they think it. Their feet are a testimony that it is vain to serve God, because their feet don't show up.

"It is vain to go to prayer meeting. After all, in a prayer meeting, you are just kneeling down, and there is nothing there. In a prayer meeting, there are no explosions in the sky, no tingly warm, fuzzy feelings, and there may be nothing of great value said. Nothing to provoke me intellectually. It is vain to kneel down in an empty building or in the corner of a closet: It is vain."

That was the boy who said "no," and later he did it. But he did it by grace and by the Spirit

of God. He walked in the Spirit of God, and he did great things. Yet before we do those great things, I guarantee you that in the hearts of men, we say, "It is vain. It is not worth it. I need a job. I need money. I need a life. I need a wife. I need a house. I need a future. I need an education. I need a diploma. I need another diploma. I need securities. I need bonds. I need health. I need convalescing. I need therapy. I need encouragement. I need. And I will do the rest when it's convenient."

The other son was saying, "Yes, yes, yes! Yes!" but he did not do it.

No one is in between. There is not a third son in the parable. "The way is narrow, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14).

Chapter Two

HOLLOW HAPPINESS TO JOYFUL HOLINESS

"For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

"For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.

"They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.

"Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment.

"Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish" (Psalm 73:3-7).

"Yea, they that work wickedness are set up: yea, they that tempt God are even delivered" (Malachi 3:15*b*).

This is all bad news. I'll paraphrase that for you: The proud are happy. So? The Christian life is not a matter of happiness. It is an issue of holiness. Christianity is not a purpose of convenience. It's a life of purpose.

I don't mind if I suffer as long as I have divine purpose. Really, I *do* mind, and I don't like it, but if I live in a divine purpose, I will suffer well. I don't care about happiness. I'd rather have holiness. If I have holiness, then I have joy. Then, even silence is not a bad thing.

Happiness versus silence? I'll take the silence if in the silence there is holiness, because in the holiness, there is joy. But this way is unfamiliar to people, because no one is the third son. Nobody says, "Yes," and then he does it automatically. No. This is what he needs:

According to Malachi 3:16, "They that feared the LORD spake often one to another." How often? In this verse, "often" means every day. How often did they get together? Every day.

Bible School: The Key to Missions

Consider Paul's Bible school in Tyrannus (Acts 19). The Greek philosophers lectured in that building during the day until it closed at eleven in the morning when the day started to get hot. If you know anything about the weather in Turkey, we are talking hot and dry—105 to 128 degrees Fahrenheit in the summertime. And from eleven in the morning until four in the afternoon are the hot hours. Normally during that

time, the people sleep. Do you know what Paul was doing? He was teaching in the school. Why? Because those were the only hours that he had.

He worked in the morning, from six until eleven, making tents in Ephesus. After he finished his job, he went to the school, and he taught them everything he knew. How often? He did it every single day. He started in the synagogue. Later, he was kicked out of there, so he went to a Greek school.

They that fear God meet together often. Do you know why? They are the sons that say, "No. No, I cannot do it. I cannot!" And then, afterwards, this doctrine enters into their lives, and they realize that it is grace, that it is the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said to His disciples, "You abide in Me, and I will bear fruit through you so you will glorify My Father" (see John 15:7-8). "I tell you, it is not you, but it is My grace through you, and you shall bear fruit. And I will give you My memory" (see John 14:26). It is an inner memory, where He will bring back to remembrance all things that He has said to us.

Then, we will have His joy (John 15:11), His fellowship (John 15:16-17). "You have not chosen me, I have chosen you. I call you not my ser-

vants, but I call you my friends."

It is a *New* Testament, a New Covenant, a new life, with new orientation: a powerful orientation of grace.

They that feared the Lord met often one with another.

A pastor who has pioneered many churches in the Near and Middle Eastern nations told me last summer, "I realize what is the key to our work around the world. It is Bible school."

That is exactly it.

What is Bible school? Bible school is meeting often, one to another, and saying, "It is not in vain to serve the Lord. It is our reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

Bible school is that if He gave His only begotten Son, then how much more ought I give my life? If He laid down His life, then how much ought I also lay down my life for the brethren (1 John 3:16)?

Bible school is where I get lined-up with the revelation of divine truth. In my heart, I say "no." Then I change by the spirit of grace. And now I do what I would not have done, and I do it by faith, and then I meet together with you. And I look at you, and I say, "Do you know what I know?"

And you say, "Yes! This is real. I can't believe it, but it is true."

Walking on Water

What is it? I am actually doing the will of God. I cannot believe it. I, the guy that would have no interest. I, the guy who had no ability. I, the man who is a sinner.

And you are over there, and the other man says, "I, too. I, too."

We have communion, and we just can't believe it. We are simply walking, and we cannot believe it. It is an awesome thing.

They met often, because it was motivating to meet and talk about the same grace, the same purpose, and the same Christ with the same message—spiritual communion, one with the other.

You say, "Do you believe it?"

And the other person says, "I cannot believe it. I am serving God, and I have found joy. I don't care so much about myself, still I cannot believe it. God bears fruit in our lives, and I don't know why. I actually enjoy sitting in the snack bar, drinking coffee, and talking about the things of God."

I would rather come down to the all-night

prayer meeting, or meet for prayer in the morning with a friend and not announce it but just do it. I have an inner motivation. I am the son who said "No!" and now I do it with such joy, and such fervency. I go out of the boat, and I walk on the water. I begin to think like Peter the disciple: "Are you jealous, guys? Look at that. I've got a spongy feeling under my feet, and I am not sinking. I am only a few inches in the water, and I can't believe that!"

Is it vain to serve the Lord?

There are people who say it is vain to serve God. They say it is vain to go to Bible school. It's vain to stay up at night reading the Book. It's vain to have a prayer meeting, vain to have a fellowship. It is vain to go to conferences and spend so much to get there. Still, some missionaries scrape their pennies together to travel across Siberia, to get to Budapest for a conference. Some people will travel nine days by bus from Central Asia and spend much money to get there—and they come. Siberia. Africa. And yet, some people will not even walk across the street to go to church.

It's Definitely Worth the Trip

In Matthew 12:42, Jesus told how the Queen

of Sheba traveled eight hundred miles with a camel caravan to Jerusalem—nine months to get there and to get back home—to meet King Solomon, the wisest man in the world. Not a bad investment at the time. "But," He said, "A greater than Solomon is here." A greater than Solomon—the Body of Christ—is here, yet some will not walk across the street to come to church!

A greater than Solomon is here, yet some won't even turn on their radio to hear a message that is transforming lives around the world. A great Bible school is here, doing so much work for so many years, and yet, people would stay on their farm in Montana, and go daydreaming in South Dakota, and be gambling in Las Vegas, and enjoy the pleasures of the flesh in Florida, and get into business in New York, and sell tires in Maine. They will not go to a school where they can get training that will change their lives, where they will meet often one with another.

Peter did not regret his decision to step out of the boat. Paul did not regret going to Bible school in the desert in Arabia. We do not regret taking long and perhaps difficult journeys to have a part in fellowship that is written in a book in heaven. It is holy—our joy and our rejoicing. It is how we know the Lord.

Chapter Three

THE SECRET OF FELLOWSHIP

"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16).

Every time we speak those words that are opposite the stout words, the arrogant words of our flesh, every time we speak the opposite with words of faith, God hears it, and there is a great "Amen!" in the fellowship. God hears it.

We talk, God hears it. The conversation is refreshing. It is with the tears that Paul speaks about when he thinks of Timothy. It is the fellowship. It is the secret. The majority of people are doing their own programs, but here is the minority. This is where you find the tough-mindedness that comes from a fellowship in the Spirit, a tough-mindedness where Paul was in an absolute minority.

He is counting his faithful people on one hand. He is in trouble (2 Timothy), about to die, and thinking of the people; and he has a lot of people to think about. But in the Bible, see what he is saying, "When I first answered, no man stood with me" (2 Timothy 4). Demas? He left. He loved the world more. He spoke stout words in his heart against God, and he did not have fellowship. Demas did not draw near in the places where he could draw near in his heart.

It is the heart that is so important—the fellowship in my heart. If we say, "Oh yeah, okay. All right. I can do that. Oh sure, oh yeah. No big deal. Oh, I can do that," then we will never do it God's way.

But if it is first "no" and then brokenness, we will listen and God will lead us. We will meet often one with another, God giving us words to build up one another in the faith: "Yes, you are able. Keep walking! You are able."

Where Questions Are Answered

The Lord says, "Come! Peter!"

Peter says, "Lord, call me."

"Come! Come on over here, Peter. Get over here! Come on."

(Judas is saying, "The wallet, please?")

And Peter goes out there.

I have a box of ointment. I pour it out on Jesus by faith. Years later, I have the broken box kicking around in the closet. I pull it out and look at it. Do I regret it? No. Not if I meet often with other believers. And when I am built up, my questions are answered by the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 3:13 says we are to exhort, or encourage, one another daily, "while it is called To day: lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." God's people saw His miracles as He led them out of captivity and through the wilderness, yet they grieved the Holy Spirit because they did not know His ways (see Psalm 95:8-11). In Malachi 3:14-15, they said "It is vain to serve God." Their complaint? "We follow His rules, we walk before Him, yet the wicked are prospering, and we are not." They had questions about God's authority, and they heard no answers. They were not following the Holy Spirit.

What Were You Thinking?

If we are led by the Holy Spirit, we are the sons of God (Romans 8:14-15). The Holy Spirit leads us in our thought life (2 Corinthians 10:5). Check your thought life. Don't speak stout

words in your heart against God. Check your thought life, casting down every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Every word of encouragement and edification that we speak, He writes in a book of remembrance. Malachi 3:16: "A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name."

They thought upon His name; they thought about His grace. God. God's grace. When we think about His name, it is written in a Book. What a thought! What a message this is! We thought about His name; we were just talking about God. And the Word of God promises that if we just think about His name, the Holy Spirit ministers to us the name of God.

The Right Kind of Tears

"To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

"I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers

night and day;

"Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy" (2 Timothy 1:2-4).

If we were to read that entire chapter a few thousand times, it would be transforming. Read it. Read it again. Then read it again, and get the message from there. In fact, some preachers read a chapter forty times before they preach on it.

This is a great chapter about a man who is alone in a crisis. He is a great man, so tough-minded in his convictions. It is one thing to be stubborn: that is not correct. But to be correct and humble, with strong convictions—that is spiritual. Paul is in the minority. Really, he is in trouble. And when he thinks of Timothy, he remembers Timothy's tears.

It is a great thought. Picture in your mind a person you love, and you see the person weeping the right kind of tears. When Paul remembered Timothy face to face, he pictured Timothy with tears. The right kind of tears. There were tears in Acts 20:36-38 when they heard that they would not see Paul any more. The people kissed his neck and wept when he told them they would not see him again—that kind of tears.

There is nothing more powerful than to have

fellowship with another person who has the same values, the same calling, the same purpose, and the same death to self. It is in this: "*I will not!*" Then I do it.

And then you meet that one who has the same purpose.

Paul looks at him and says, "Timothy!" And Timothy says, "Paul! I can't believe it. We are doing it! It is such a joy, this service to the gospel. What a joy. I can't believe it! It is awesome."

There are tremendous tears. Perhaps he cannot even speak because of the awesomeness of the moment.

And Paul says, "Amen. I can't believe it either. God has called me by His grace. Timothy, be strong in grace" (2 Timothy 2:1).

The True Treasures

"When I think of your tears, Timothy, I want to see you. I am greatly desiring to see you. I just want to see you."

We might not have some machine but we have a Person. Might not have a new car, but we have a Person. Might not have much of a house, but we have a Person. We may not have a lot in the material way, but we have a lot in God's

way, and there is nothing wrong with that. And if you have it all, awesome! Have it all!

But if you would have me choose, I would take the true treasures (Matthew 6:20). Spiritual treasures. The hearts of people, the love of people, and the fellowship. We have love in common suffering. Love in common communion. Love in common service. Let's take the evangelist's sketch board and go out there. Let's get on the elephant in Northern Thailand and go up there. Let's go live in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam and serve there. There is such a camaraderie in serving God together.

Let's go into Patterson Park in Baltimore. Let's have an awesome vision in neighboring towns and cities. Wherever it is that we are working and serving, it is all the same. It has nothing to do with external things. It has everything to do with this fact: I cannot. And yet, now, I do. This is the joy and rejoicing of my heart.

We get in the car, drive for hours, and someone is imparting something spiritual. Somebody is fellowshipping, imparting something from heaven, and it is so edifying. That is what Paul was talking about when he said he was "greatly desiring to see thee…. that I might be filled with joy."

I can't wait to see you, Timothy. When I see you, we're going to have a grand old time. We're going to have a great old time. If our foundation is right, we will have an awesome time when we meet together.

That is the evidence, the proof, that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there" (see Matthew 18:20). What name? The name of grace. The name of the Holy Spirit. The name of faith. The name of doctrine that says to me that I am wrong, but God is gracious. I am unable, but God is able. I cannot do it, but God does it.

Chapter Four

MAKING DISCIPLES: THE SWEETEST FELLOWSHIP

"When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, [that is without hypocrisy,] which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Timothy 1:5).

Timothy is a second or third generation believer. He grew up in a Christian family. He learned the Scriptures from his youth. But he was timid.

Sometimes it seems as if Christians who grow up in Christian families are timid. Timothy had that tendency. But Paul was building him up, because he would rather trust in the man's tough-mindedness in the truth of the gospel. The fact was that at times, Timothy was very sheepish—very timid, a bit shy, not so forth right, not so bold, not so courageous. But that was fine, because the basis of this whole thing is

"I cannot!" and then, "Yet I have received grace, so now I am able." That is the basis for our fellowship.

Paul was saying, "Timothy, you are able."

"There is a spirit in you, Timothy. Amen. Talk to me. You are able. Let us meet together often. Let us encourage one another often. Let us speak with content often. Let us build up each other often. And, as in Romans 14:19 and 15:2, let's edify one another often.

"Timothy, when I think of your faith, I marvel! When I think of your tears, I love you. I love you so much, I want to see you." We will break bread together. We will talk often. We will speak doctrine, and I'll tell you why we believe. We will go through the Scriptures. We will quote Isaiah. We will go back into Deuteronomy. We will look at what Moses said in Exodus. We will look at the tabernacle. We will talk about the priesthood.

"We'll talk about Jesus in heaven, what He said at the Last Supper, His resurrection, who saw Him, who touched Him. We'll talk about His Ascension and Pentecost. Remember what happened at Pentecost?

"We'll talk about the Church in Antioch. We will remember the walk that we had in Turkey

when we went through, and the time when I was stoned in Lystra."

Timothy will say, "Tell me again. Tell me again!" And Paul will do it. And Timothy will say, "Yeah. Yeah! That's what I want. This is the sweetest fellowship." And it is written in heaven, in a book of remembrance.

They don't speak stout words against God, and their feet are not an expression of mournful, reluctant servitude, doing something because we are supposed to do it. No, it is, "Let's go. Let's go! We believe! We have the truth. We have this treasure. Let's go. Let's go!"

No Need To Be Ashamed

That is why, when he was facing death, Paul wrote this letter to his son in the faith. He told it straight to Timothy: "Don't be ashamed of the gospel. Don't be ashamed that I am in jail. Don't forsake me, as all of Asia has forsaken me. But be like that little man Onesiphorus (see 2 Timothy 1:16-18). Be like him. He sought me out very diligently, and he found me. He was in Rome looking for me, and he didn't know where I was.

"I can picture him now: 'Have you seen a little Hebrew guy causing a lot of trouble? He's chained up with the Roman soldiers some-

where. Do you know where he is?' Everyone told him, 'No.' But he went again, and again, and he sought me out diligently, until he found me."

Why did Onesiphorus want to find Paul?

Because in him was the treasure and not stout words or familiar words, such as, "Oh yeah, I can do that. I can do it." Paul was a man who knew the gospel and the doctrine, and would establish us on another foundation. That is, "I cannot! But now, I do," and, "I do what I do by the grace of God," and, "All things are possible," and, "God is present here in our little meeting with two or three people." Paul is speaking to us, and he is so encouraging.

Onesiphorus went looking for Paul, and he found him. He went looking for Paul, and he was not ashamed of his chains, because chains are nothing.

The house I live in is nothing. What I look like is nothing. All those things that the world looks for are nothing compared to this great and awesome grace, the anointing, the fellowship, the messages, the purpose, and the Person, Jesus Christ.

Consider that for a moment. In 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul is saying. "I suffer: but I am not

ashamed. I know whom I have believed. It is not a problem with me. You know, I look pretty ragged, but I am not ashamed. I'm torn up a little bit, and I am not ashamed. I am a nobody, and I'm not ashamed. I know Whom I believe."

"I know whom I have believed. He is my shield, my glory, and the lifter of my head (Psalm 3:3). I know, and I am not ashamed.

Where did that comfort come from? It comes from this type of fellowship in the Holy Spirit. I know that what we have believed is not in vain. Our work is not in vain. Our mission is not in vain. Our giving is not in vain. I know it is not in vain, and we are not ashamed.

The Transforming Power of Fellowship

It is the power of God to change people. It is the power of God to build them up. It is the power of God to change their lives.

We heard a testimony from Budapest. This man, an alcoholic from a city in the south, was visiting. He owed some people money and he needed a job. Pastor Brian took him, and trusted him, and gave him an opportunity. The man made some money, and he went back down to his city. He paid his debt, then he came back up.

In one month, his life has been transformed.

He is a different person. In one month, redemption—after one month of fellowship. It is the fellowship that Paul was talking about, the fellowship that we preach about, the fellowship that makes such a difference in the world that we live in.

It is so important that I've started and I have said, "It is not in vain." I'm going to walk on water. It is not in vain. I'm going to see Jesus in Bethlehem. It is in not in vain. I will see Him in His resurrection. It is not in vain. I'm going to be there at Pentecost. It is not in vain. It will be written in a book. It is not in vain. Every time we meet together and we talk, it is written in a book. It is not in vain. It is not in vain.

The Harness of Grace

Paul said, "I'm not ashamed, Timothy. I remember your tears, and your faith, and your grandmother. I remember your mother. I remember when we met together. This is precious to me. The essence, the content of my life is in these precious memories in my mind. It is in those things that I have not followed cunningly devised fables, but I have embraced the gospel. I believed it and taught it every day—every day for hours. I have kept myself in the harness of

grace."

Grace says "Go!" and Paul did. And "Study!" and he did. And "Pray!" and he did. Grace says, "Stir up yourselves," and he did. "Go home at night with praise in your heart," and he did. Grace says, "Meet together, often," and they did.

And then, in chains, Paul said, "I've got it all in my mind. Yet, Asia has forsaken me. Demas has left me. But, wait—there is a knock at the door. Onesiphorus came and found me! He is here! Come on in."

Onesiphorus comes in. They weep together, they fall down together. They have a prayer together. They open the Scripture.

And Onesiphorus says, "Thank you, Paul."

And Paul says, "Really?"

"Yes, thank you, Paul."

"Really? Why? Tell me."

"Because of your life, churches have been planted in Colossae, and Ephesus, and Smyrna, and Laodicea, and Philadelphia, and Antioch, and up in Thessalonica, and Berea, and Athens—and they are still talking about you in Corinth."

"What are they saying?"

"They are saying that when Paul came, he

built us up, and the Spirit in us said 'Amen.' Grace was revealed, and we walked by faith. The Church was edified with a spiritual gift (Romans 1:11). You are the man, Paul! Thank you so very much. Your life is not in vain. But it took a cross, and it took faith. It required the grace of God and deliberate training."

Paul could not do it, but he did it. And now, he could see it.

CONCLUSION

"I'm going to die soon," Paul wrote. "Nero pronounced me a convicted criminal. I am going to die soon but that's okay. I know I have a treasure, a crown reserved for me in heaven (2 Timothy 4:8). And every time that we met together, it was written in a book. I know that. And I remember your tears, Timothy. Those tears are a reality, an expression of joy and gratitude. I know that. And so, thank You, God."

That is how Paul lived, that is how he faced his crisis, and that is how he died. It was in the reality of the Spirit that comes to us through Christ in our life and in our work. It is beautiful!

"Father, thank You for these thoughts. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Press On

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Think of what it means to press on, upward, with God. Understand that pressing upward means progressing exactly in what the grace of God provides us for strength. The love of God motivates us by giving us energy to continue, and the mercy of God follows us through every type of trial we encounter.

When our valleys are deep and the mountain is steep, we press on. When our bodies are weak, when we stumble and fall, we press on. In the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, we press on. In the essence of God's love, we press on. Before our eyes is the prize of God's high calling on our lives. We will win that prize if we consistently refuse to live in sin and decide by grace to ever press on. This brings an old song to my mind:

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day.
Still praying as I upward bound,
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

No matter what our situation, let us be focused on Jesus Christ, and press on.

How do we press on? As this booklet will show you, we press on by responding to God's initiations.

Chapter One

INITIATION, WORSHIP, AND RESPONSE

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

"God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

Unbeknownst to many, the highest form of worship is in receiving the mind of Christ with meekness, through categories of doctrine, in the preciseness of a divine provision. Then, the Holy Spirit, by the operation of divine transfer, carries doctrine into our memory center, to the streams of consciousness, so we can literally have the mind of Christ.

With the mind of Christ, a believer worships God with what he has been taught. There is no system of worship. There is no philosophy of worship. We simply are to worship as we have been taught (Colossians 2:7).

How do we worship God? We worship in our human spirits, which is our only God-conscious capacity, and in truth, which is categorical thinking with the Spirit of the living God.

Often in our church services, we have had beautiful seasons of praise and worship. These seasons, however, are the direct result of having the mind of God as we rightly divide the absolute truth of His Word (2 Timothy 2:15). As we live in the inner man of meekness and grace, we will manifest a revelation of the essence and nature of God. All of this is the result of our responding to God's initiations.

God Wants Our Attention

One woman told me of how she got herself all ready to meet her husband when he came home from work. She put on her best dress. She fixed her makeup and lipstick. She did all of this after making sure a wonderful dinner was waiting for him. Well, he came home and plopped himself down in front of the TV.

"Honey, dinner's ready," she called.

"Give me five minutes," he answered.

Now what kind of a response was that? Not a good one.

Did the husband respond to her initiations?

No. Did the wife react? Yes.

I gave that story to illustrate how we sometimes put God on hold. Imagine it! In the Bible, God initiates nearly eight thousand promises toward us, and He wants our response. Christ finished the work of our salvation on Calvary, and now He wants a response. In Isaiah 6, God said, "Who will go for us? Whom shall we send?" The prophet said, "Here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

Now, that is a great response.

Read through Song of Solomon, and you will discover that as the bride develops her capacity for love and begins to understand her beloved, she starts to respond to his initiations.

Brokenness Softens the Heart

There are many reasons why some people do not respond. One reason is that they have never been through anything. Therefore, there is no brokenness in them. They haven't watched a father or mother die. They haven't lost a child. They haven't had dear friends go home to Jesus. We all need to be broken, and God has different ways of doing it with each of us. Do you know why an average preacher can speak messages that are really anointed? It is because he is broken before God. There is a humility because of

what he knows and what he has seen.

Some mornings in my office, I will sit and think of dear ones who have gone home to be with the Lord, and I think of what their families are going through. At other times, I will consider the church and think about the various situations folks are going through. I think about every trial different ones are facing, and I become very broken before the Lord. It is real.

There is a reason that God allows things to break us. If you have never been broken, then the soil of your heart is not ready for the Word of God.

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:36-38).

"The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh" (Proverbs 11:17).

"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13).

What is God doing in these verses? He is responding to our responses. It is crucial that we understand His mode of responding to us. The original Hebrew text of Proverbs 11:17 indicates that when we give mercy, we receive divine goodness; however, when we are merciless, we trouble our bodies.

Mercy *rejoices* (which is a response) against judgment. God responds when we receive mercy, and then we give mercy as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). I receive grace upon grace according to John 1:16, so I have plenty to give to you. I receive it for my life, and I give it for your life, and God helps us both.

Chapter Two

COME JUST AS YOU ARE

Charlotte Elliott was born in England in 1789. At the age of thirty, she became an invalid and never walked again. At times, she was depressed, unstable, and discouraged. Then, she began a "spiritual correspondence" with Henri Malan of Switzerland. This man built up Miss Elliott, and she went on to write one hundred and fifty hymns, including one of the all-time favorites, "Just As I Am."

Just as she was, Charlotte Elliott pressed on to meet Jesus. In her sickness and her terrible pain, she came to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Every time I think of that story, I consider what it must have been like for John the Baptist to meet Jesus. He saw Jesus and cried out such beautiful words. "There He is! The Lamb that takes away the sin of the world." Some thousands of lambs had been slain in Passover cere-

monies and as offerings up until then. But on this day, the Lamb that saves was on the scene (John 1:29).

Charlotte Elliott refused to live in negativity. "I will not be depressed, because Jesus is in my heart. I will not live in exhaustion, and I will not live in negative energy. I am going to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. His strength will be made perfect in my weakness" (see Ephesians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9).

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

That beautiful song has been sung again and again by people everywhere. She was an invalid, bound to a wheelchair, but she kept pressing on in the upward way. She was gaining new heights every day with Jesus.

As she drew close to death, Charlotte Elliott, at 82, who had now spent more than fifty years in her wheelchair, wrote this, "What a thrill to fellowship with God in the state that I am in." She received such illumination and joy from writing hymns for those who would respond to God. She pressed on for the prize of His high calling.

Divine Distinction

One of the great reasons we are so encouraged to press on for God is because the Bible makes such a divine distinction between the sinner and his sin.

As God looks at you today, He sees you with divine distinction.

Yes, He sees you as hid with Christ in God. Yes, He sees you as a brand-new creation with all of your "old things" passed away. Everything about you has been made new (2 Corinthians 5:17). He sees you as seated above, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion (Ephesians 1:20-21). He sees you far above every thing in this age and in the ages to come. He went far above it all, and He has seated you above it all.

We are above the attacks that come against us. Sure, we get tempted, but we are above the attacks of the devil. Yes, we still have an old sin nature, and there are those times when we need to be corrected by love.

I love the principle of Romans 7:17-20: It is no longer I who sin. The life I now live is no longer my life (Galatians 2:20). Christ lives in me, therefore I live by the faith of the Son of God

who gave Himself for me. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:7-8).

Yes, He lovingly corrects (Hebrews 12:6-11). But, oh what a beautiful thing it is to know that when it is all said and done, God makes a clear-cut, divine distinction between what we do and who we are in Christ. This gives us great hope.

Great Hope Is in Us

I can remember a beautiful couple. After both of them came out of prison, they accepted Christ and were saved. I recall the moment they were totally delivered. Now they are running homes for men and women who need help. Hope came into their lives—not just a better day, but an absolute, eternal hope.

Another man, John, found Jesus Christ, and a tremendous hope came into his life to deliver him from drug addiction. Jay also experienced an amazing deliverance and is now an amazing servant of God. What hope he has now!

What an amazing, divine distinction God makes! Then, He gives us—sinners—a privilege to respond and act as stewards of His grace.

Some of us have left the graves of our loved

ones with many tears. But in the midst of those tears was an absolute hope. This hope becomes resident within us. And it is such a beautiful thing God gives us, even though the tears come back now and then.

Chapter Three

DO ALL THAT IS IN YOUR HEART TO DO

"Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father.

"And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron: and the people that were with him were about six hundred men;

"And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD'S priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.

"And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other

Seneh.

"The forefront of the one was situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.

"And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

"And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart.

"Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them.

"If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them.

"But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us.

"And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.

"And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come

up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.

"And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.

"And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow.

"And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling" (1 Samuel 14:1-15).

Jonathan was a courageous servant of God who knew how to respond. Saul, his father, was hiding behind the garrison, but Jonathan and his armor bearer were caught between two rocks. Bozez means strong and powerful, and Seneh means thorny and weak—and that is where these two guys found themselves.

But Jonathan had a word from God and was ready to respond. His armor bearer was with him, saying, "Do all that is in your heart, be-

cause you are filled with God." What a response that was. The armor bearer knew his leader and trusted him. "I want you to do what God tells your heart to do."

As a preacher, I love that, because the heart of a preacher must be to love. The heart of the preacher is to invest. The heart of the preacher is to establish disciples through Jesus Christ. The heart of the preacher is to have missionaries in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. The heart of the preacher is to establish and reproduce his congregation through obedience to faith (Romans 15:6; Romans 1:5).

Just Keep Climbing

In 1 Samuel 14:12-13, Jonathan said, "Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel. And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him." Jonathan climbed upward. He knew that God will win, even if there are just a few with you.

God moves when we respond and press on. Those two killed twenty, and the enemies began to tremble. No matter what the number is, no

matter what the problem is, we press on in the upward way. We are gaining new heights every day. We are praying as we are upward bound, and God will plant our feet on higher ground.

Charles Spurgeon pressed on in the face of sickness and depression. He had to spend three months a year in southern France to stay well. His wife also experienced health problems. But during these seemingly dark days, Spurgeon wrote his magnificent volumes on the Psalms.

Sick with gout, he pressed on.

His wife was also an invalid, but he pressed on.

Back in London, a couple of harassers hollered, "Fire! Fire!" in Spurgeon's crowded church, and some people were trampled to death trying to escape. The London Times story the next day put all the blame on the preacher. "Spurgeon Responsible for Deaths in His Church" read the headlines.

Isn't that the way it goes for Christians who are fruitful? Satan is always after the fruitful ones. Hey, if you are not fruitful, the devil doesn't have to fight you.

The only thing to do is press on.

CONCLUSION

I have suffered plenty in my life. There have been times of what I like to call "holy depressions." Paul the apostle experienced these very same things, and it was not sin at all. His "depressions" had everything to do with his love for people and sickness. Epaphroditus became sick because he thought he was never going to see his congregation again (see Philippians 2:25).

The only thing to do is to press on. God gives us grace. God gives us strength. It is mystical, and you don't always feel it, but God will be there for you. Respond and press on. God will give you the faith you need because of His nature. He will give you the power because of His character. He will give you the provisions because of His promises. And, He will give you peace because that is His nature.

There is one thing I know. God is for me, and I am never alone. Every time I respond to His initiations, I get blessed, transformed, renewed,

and conformed in another degree to the image of God's Son.

Father, thank You for Your faithfulness to Your people. Help every one of us to realize that You are for us. You are with us. You know our precise need, and You are so ready to answer us with Your provision, because of Your promises. We desire to be quickened more and more, to be sharp and ready to respond to your initiations. Recognizing that the battle is Yours, we press on, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prisoners of Grace

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners" (Psalm 69:33).

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1).

The grace of God is captivating. It does indeed set us free from the law of sin and death because of the price Christ paid on the Cross. Yet, the nearer we draw to the Lord, the nearer He draws to us. And increasingly, as His Word takes over our hearts, we come under His divine influence, being led continually by the Holy Spirit.

For this reason, the apostle Paul, who consistently lived this kind of life, called himself a "prisoner" of Christ to reveal His grace. God's grace had so captivated him that he was willing to go to any lengths to communicate the mystery of the gospel to the lost. Therefore, when Paul was literally imprisoned by Rome, his work continued from the dungeon where he wrote

numerous letters to the churches he had planted and visited across the Empire.

In this booklet, we will look at several verses from Paul's "prison epistles" and see why he counted it all joy to be a prisoner of Christ to reveal His grace.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:7-8).

Chapter One

THE DIVINE SENSITIVITY OF LOVE

"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Corinthians 12:15).

There is a tremendous difference between emotional pain caused by stress and the pain of a broken heart caused by love. From prison, the apostle Paul expressed this thought: "The more I love the less I am loved." If you love someone dearly, such as your children or your spouse or one who has been close to you for many years, and they hurt you, it causes great pain. This pain is not the result of stress. Neither is it because of unbelief. It is pain—but it is a unique pain because of love.

When Jesus Christ was on the Cross, He suffered unimaginable pain. Many have said that He died there with a broken heart (Psalm 22). The pain was not so much from bearing our in-

iquities. Instead, it was pain that comes from Jesus' loving and being misunderstood—the pain of not being loved in return. In one way, because He was God, Jesus did not need to be loved back. But in His humanity, because He had senses and emotions, He certainly wanted to be loved.

The Sting of Rejection

Divine love is unconditional, but it is still love; therefore, it is sensitive. Not hypersensitive because of petty differences, but it is sensitive because it feels the pain of rejection. People are in hell today because God's perfect justice precedes His perfect love. Therefore, divine justice without the benefits of Calvary must be executed against those individuals who reject divine love.

Jeremiah endured tremendous pain when Israel rejected the messages God delivered through him. He exhorted them, knowing the nation was about to be plunged into the fifth cycle of discipline, which included foreign invasion and captivity because of their rebellion. And in Jeremiah 13:17, he said, "But if ye shall not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore,

and run down with tears, because the LORD'S flock is carried away captive."

When someone betrays us, should the pain we feel interrupt our relationship with God? No. And that is the beautiful part of trusting God in all seasons. Does the pain turn us even more toward Jesus Christ? Yes. Does the pain go away quickly? Not necessarily. But pain is overcome first by being occupied *with* Christ and then by being occupied *for* Christ. When we are occupied with Christ and for Christ, we will not experience the feelings of pain, because pain doesn't have access to our minds.

God Stands with Us

"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (2 Timothy 4:16-17).

When he said, "no man stood with me," Paul was really saying. "This is very unusual. Here I am in prison, and no one is visiting me!" He knew people believed that if they were seen

with Paul, they could end up in prison. Still, in the midst of this, the apostle began writing a beautiful letter to the church at Ephesus.

Chapter Two

GRACE IDENTIFICATION AND THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles" (Ephesians 3:1).

Paul knew that he was not a prisoner to that jail, nor to the government that put him there. If he were asked, he would have said, "I am not their prisoner, for my God is able to deliver me. But I am a prisoner to God, and *not* because of something I did wrong. I am a prisoner for the sake of the Gentiles."

It is crucial in these days that we understand and have access to precise understanding of the Word of God. For whatever reasons, pain is everywhere. A man or woman who goes through painful trials identifies with others who are in pain. It is identification that often brings tears—tears not due to emotionalism but because of knowing how the one who is hurting feels. Identification causes a preacher to be broken. It causes

a husband to be extremely sensitive to his wife's needs. It causes a wife to study to be quiet instead of reacting to a problem in the home.

Paul was in prison for one reason. He was trying to reach the Gentile nations with the gospel of grace, trying to make sure the Good News reached even you and me. Often he was shackled with chains and tied to stocks. But every time Paul was placed in bonds, he would say, "Lord, this is Your will. I am doing it for the Gentiles, because You love them." What unusual things a child of God will do for others! And all because of God's love in us for others. Perhaps you are the only instrument God can use to show His love in someone else's life.

The Mystery of this Dispensation

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, (as I wrote afore in few words; whereby, when you read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,)

"Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the

same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:2-6).

The dispensation of grace that Paul referred to is being revealed over a period of time that is still in effect at this moment. It is a time when Christ is building His Church, calling out whosoever will to become part of His Body and, later, His Bride. It is a time when grace is amplified and magnified because the Law ended with Christ (Romans 10:4), and it has been fulfilled (Matthew 5:17). Now the law of righteousness reigns in the hearts of believers, dwelling there by the Holy Spirit through a gift of grace.

Paul said, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of grace, which is given to me toward you…." We *have* heard of it, and we are the objects of this grace! I am so grateful that it is a dispensation of giving us what we don't deserve. And it is given toward us! We are living in the age of it—the age of grace.

What It Means to Identify

What a passage this is! What an impact this can have on the Spirit-taught soul! Every single thing Paul is saying here carries such a dynamic, overwhelming, and precious spiritual penetration. We can identify with Paul in that jail as he

was writing. We may not identify so much with the physical pain of having his feet and body in chains or with the condition of the dungeon where he was imprisoned. Still, we can identify with Paul's heart. Consider this poem by Charles D. Meigs entitled "Others":

Lord, help me to live from day to day,
In such a self-forgetting way,
That even when I kneel to pray
My prayer shall be for others….

Let "self" be crucified and slain
And buried deep—and all in vain
May efforts be to rise again,
Unless to live for others….

Others, Lord, yes others,
Let this my motto be.
Help me to live for others
That I may live like thee

Paul now found himself a prisoner because of his focus on others—the "others" who needed to know the mystery of the gospel of grace.

Chapter Three

MINISTERING GRACE BY HIS EFFECTUAL POWER

"All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom" (Psalm 145:10-12).

"The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men" (Psalm 33:13).

The mystery Paul refers to in Ephesians 3 is something that for thousands of years was never known. God picked a man who was killing Christians and intervened in his life with a sign. The Lord came to him in person on the road to Damascus, speaking to him in an audible voice so Paul would have no doubt:

"And [Paul] fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

"And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:4-6*a*).

This is the mystery of faith, the mystery of godliness. It is the incarnation, the hypostatic union of God in Christ: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of the angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). The mystery of the Church Age is "Christ in *you*, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). The mystery is inside of every born-again believer: God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit making a home in us (see John 14:21-23).

Invisible? Yes, He is. But the results of this mystery are very visible. A man changes, a woman changes—everything changes because of this mystery. Faith is a mystery. It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1). Faith pleases God and brings a reward.

The Revelation of the Body and the Bride

Thank God that a Pharisee who was determined to help destroy the early Church, a man

who had nothing in his natural state to glory in, was chosen to be a prisoner of Christ to reveal His grace. The Father and the Son said to the Holy Spirit, "Show Paul that we want to form a Body of believers. Then, at the Rapture, we want that Body to be Christ's Bride. The Son will marry that Bride, and forever she will be His wife in the New Jerusalem."

Imagine Paul in prison writing these things. He knew he was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, using his own vocabulary. Line upon line, God was saying to him, "Put this in a letter. Now write this…." The apostle Paul was made a minister of the glorious gospel by the grace of God.

The Making of Ministers

"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power" (Ephesians 3:7).

A minister doesn't just happen. Something has to make a person a minister. Every Christian is a minister in terms of ministering life (2 Corinthians 3:3-6). We are all ministers of the New Covenant. We are all ministers of the Spirit, not of the letter. Even a young child, once he becomes saved, in some little way becomes a minister.

But Paul said he was "made a minister," referring to his office as a pastor and apostle, "according to the gift of grace." It wasn't because he had a tremendous education. It wasn't because he trained diligently to become an expert in the art of public speaking. Paul was saying, "The standard for me to become a minister was the gift of the grace of God."

Ephesians 3:7 says it was "unto me by the effectual working of his power." The Greek word used here for "power" in the original text is *dunamis*. It speaks of an impartation of divine ability. In other words, the power to minister was given to Paul according to *God's* ability, which is limitless. The Lord's divine ability gave Paul the gift to preach.

"Unto me, by the effectual working of His power, God gave me His divine ability to preach," Paul said. "Do I have an impediment in my speech? Yes, I do (see 2 Corinthians 10:10). My speech is said to be contemptible. My education isn't a problem, but my impediment is.

"Am I a fine physical specimen to look at? No. They mock my bodily appearance. Really, I have nothing going for me. I was once a Pharisee of the Pharisees; but because of my speech impediment, at times, when I have spoken in

public, I have been mocked."

In the face of all of that, Paul could say, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8).

The Small Made Tall

It was unto Paul, who was short and unattractive in physical appearance; unto Paul, whom the Corinthians didn't ever want to hear speak because his impediment was so bad: Unto Paul was this grace given. This grace took him captive.

Furthermore, he was "less than the least"—*elachistoteros* in the Greek, meaning smaller than the smallest. "If you can imagine whoever might be the least important Christian on earth," Paul was saying, "I am less than that person. Grace was given unto me, and I am less than the least."

Now we know why Paul was chosen. He left behind everything and counted it all as dung so he could win Christ. He didn't hold on to the security of natural things or position. He didn't cling to temporal values. He did not hold on to a single thing. He considered it all to be as dung—worthless and even despicable.

Paul wasn't always talking about his business and his job. He talked about pressing on for Christ. He never counted the cost of suffering. He considered himself called to suffer for the sake of the Gentiles (see Acts 9:15-16). He never argued his cause nor debated human propositions. And remember, he was writing this in prison.

"I am not better than any other saint," Paul said. "I am less than all of them. Unto me, who am less than all the saints, is this grace given."

Oh, how Paul loved grace.

Enabled by Grace

It was this grace that enabled Paul to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. These riches of grace are unsearchable, inexhaustible, unfathomable, past finding out (see Romans 11:33).

Paul, what are you going to preach?

"My message is the unfathomable grace of God toward us—something that I can't search out. It only comes by revelation. I can't get out a history book to explain grace and say, '*This* is why it is beautiful.' Once I delved into the riches of grace, I found that it can't be exhausted. It captured me because it is inexhaustible—an ex-

pression of God's unlimited, unconditional love.

"I flourish in it, always learning it, but never fully comprehending it. It is incomprehensible. Every time I get a little confused, I turn to this grace as a gift. Every time a problem comes up in a relationship, I turn to grace so that I can continue to preach something that is unsearchable."

The Poor Are Made Rich

Christ is rich to those who call upon Him (Romans 10:12). He who is rich was made poor for our sakes, so that we could be made rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). What's more, He wants us to enjoy all of His gifts freely and richly (1 Timothy 6:17).

When you read the phrase "unsearchable riches," consider this: What new thing is God going to reveal to the Body of Christ? We are learning and growing in the grace that through Christ has taken us prisoner.

God has promised that as we keep growing in the grace and knowledge that makes Jesus our Lord in our experience, we will begin to understand the Lord of all grace more and more.

The older we get, the more we will be amazed, and the more we will want to gaze into the mysteries of His grace. But as we do, we will

be relaxed, sharing the joy of God and the happiness of Christ, becoming partakers of all that He is.

CONCLUSION

Why has God taken us captive with these unsearchable riches? "To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9).

It was said of the disciples, "Oh, how they love one another." What were they revealing? They revealed Christ to each other. Wherever Christians are gathered in godly unity, the world is astonished at our testimony. They will say how they have never seen such oneness, such love among a group of people, that it must be what heaven is like. And whether they are saved or not, everyone longs to experience that intensity of love and oneness (John 17).

The unsearchable riches of Christ cause people to see something different about our lives. Rather than differences and indifference, they see the fellowship of Christ in you and in me.

Christ is formed in us, and His nature is revealed through us, so we can glorify Him with one mouth to the glory of God the Father (Romans 15:6).

It is one thing to have one soul and one heart, but it is quite another thing to have one mouth. Not two mouths—one for Adam and one for the Lord—but one mouth for God, glorifying the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as prisoners of Christ to reveal His grace.

Promises for a Great Future

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Few Christians really understand who they are in Christ. Many times we fail to recognize all that is available to us as His children. We read in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." But when we are faced with overwhelming opposition, do we really believe that?

God has given all things for our sakes. We belong to Him. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present. And with all that He knows about us, we are still His special treasure. But, how can we possibly have a personal relationship with One who is so great?

The way we get to know God intimately is by letting Him reveal who He is through His Word. The Bible is filled with promises for us to hide in our hearts. When we allow the Holy Spirit to illuminate the truth we receive, each word becomes precious and imparts life.

This booklet should encourage all of us to

recognize the reality of what God can do in us and through us. Let us take Him at His Word. Our potential in Christ is as great as we allow Him to be in us. He does all things well.

Chapter One

OUR CHAMPION: THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

"He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head" (Psalm 110:7).

Some people have contemplated suicide because they have failed and they think that life doesn't offer them what they need. For those people, we can be a "brook in the way." We can offer love and edification to those with great needs. We can give the Word of God to those who are thirsty, those who are under tremendous pressure.

We cannot always recognize the needs people have. But I want to say that if you are someone who is under pressure and longs for relief, *keep going on*. Keep going to church; draw near

to God and His Word. Contact a pastor, a family member, or a friend and receive love from those who want to help you.

In 1 Samuel 17:40, David was on his way to fight Goliath. He stopped to take five stones out of the brook. Those five stones speak of the grace of God. David, however, only needed one of them. With skillful hands, David took his slingshot and fired that stone at the giant, Goliath.

By divine guidance, the stone went right into the forehead of that mocking man who stood nine feet and six inches tall. Goliath had mocked Israel, then he mocked David. But after that shot, he wasn't mocking anymore. David declared, "the battle is the Lord's" (1 Samuel 17:47), and the Lord brought the victory.

Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone, according to 1 Peter 2:6. It only takes the Chief Cornerstone to bring down the devil. David performed a great exploit with one smooth stone, and we do great exploits through Jesus Christ, the Chief Cornerstone.

As just one church, one body of believers, consider all that has been done through Christ. I am broken when I think of the many outreaches, the Christian schools, the Bible college, and all

the things that individuals do in their daily walk with God. I think of the many missionaries we have sent to other lands and the fruit we have seen. This is how a ministry is to operate and expand—each one doing great exploits for God through the Chief Cornerstone.

Exploits of Those Who Stand Firm

"And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Daniel 11:32).

Israel did wickedly against the covenant of God and were corrupted by "flatteries." The Gentiles said of the nation of Israel, "You are a magnificent people; you are superior to us." Yet, the Jewish people began to worship idols because they listened to flatteries. These people did not know God.

Those who know the Lord in their experience will be strong—firm—and do "exploits"—great things. A study of the Hebrew text in Daniel 11:32 reveals that God has and will continually cause those people to go right on doing great exploits.

My adventure with God began in a little town in Maine. What days those were! They

were the beginning of our exploits. I am so thankful for where God has taken us from that little place. People who are strong and stand firm in the Lord will do great exploits.

Chapter Two

REALIZE YOUR GOD-POWERED POTENTIAL

If you are a Christian, there is enough power inside of you to venture in God's work and to venture in your business. I thank God for all the business men and women in our church. There is power enough inside of you to do things that you never dreamed of doing. Christ in you is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27*b*).

God empowers us, strengthens us, and gives us grace. There are things we can do in the business world and in every possible realm of life—things that others would not even consider doing. Why? Because the people who know their God shall stand firm, be strong, and do great exploits.

Our ministry is doing great exploits. This is not boasting, because we give all the glory to God. We are affecting lives everywhere through men and women of God who have given their

lives to glorify Christ.

A Great God, Great Exploits

Surely, some of you have heard the story of R.J. LeTourneau, a successful industrialist. After he nearly died in a car accident, he began to consider the purpose of his life. Eventually, that led him to receive Christ as his Savior. He established a company that manufactured special earth-moving equipment and construction vehicles. Seventy percent of the earth-moving equipment used in World War II came from his company.

As the company began to make money, Mr. LeTourneau started giving 10 percent of the profits to his church. Later, God impressed him to give 20 percent, then 30 percent, then 40 percent. Eventually, he was giving away 90 percent of his income and living off a tenth. His donations were used to start missions in Africa and South America. He said that the 10 percent he kept was more than he needed. He still had millions of dollars, even with giving 90 percent to God.

R.J. LeTourneau did great exploits, and a town and a college were named in his honor. But the greatest honor will come when he stands be-

fore God face to face.

Ideas from God, prayers, thought provoking things—*think big*. Think big. Pray big. In humility, act big. In every realm, continue on with God and do big things for God through Jesus Christ empowering you. Great things will happen when God is in it.

After his conversion, C.T. Studd inherited a great sum of money. Newly married, he and his bride prayed, asking God for direction in what to do with the money. Both of them believed that God answered saying, "Give it all away." That was before they went to the mission field.

Led by God, they gave the money to various missions organizations and to individual servants of God. These included China Inland Missions as well as the orphanages run by George Mueller.

In the years after, as they served God in remote places, Mr. Studd and his wife received much more in financial support than they had given. Without asking for it, people gave them money by the grace of God.

God did it.

Faith in Spite of Circumstances

Noah had neither previous experience nor

help from anyone outside his immediate family in building the ark. Still, he set about building it because of His faith in God's Word to Him. Abraham practiced faith without any encouragement from those around him (Romans 4:19-20). The Syrophenician woman displayed great faith for her daughter's healing, though she was getting no encouragement from Jesus Himself (see Matthew 15:22-28). The nobleman, in John 4:47-53, simply believed the words Jesus spoke to him. When he went home, his son was healed and his household believed on Jesus Christ.

There is not a reason under God's heaven that we cannot realize our potential. Since I started out in the ministry, I have been determined to love God, to obey God, to walk with God, and to rebound when I fail.

Chapter Three

LIMITLESS VISION THROUGH A LIVING FAITH

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

The Lord Jesus Christ honors our faith in the substance of His character and the evidence He gives us through His Holy Spirit. He honors those who walk in that faith.

Consider the following three principles that are evident in the life of a faithful servant of God:

First: Your success depends upon your character and hard work.

Second: Who you are is more important than what you do, because if you are right with God you will do great things.

Third: God is always ready to bless and use mightily a prepared man or woman.

Adoniram Judson, the first documented

American overseas missionary, was in a jail in Burma, shackled with thirty-seven pounds of weight on his ankles. Another prisoner started to mock him, saying, "You are going to win souls? What is the prospect of winning souls *now*, Mr. Judson?!"

He said, "The prospect is just as great as the promises of God."

Our future is just as great as the promises of God. Our power is just as great as the promises of God. The chance of seeing our vision fulfilled is just as great as the promises of God (Proverbs 29:18). There is no way we can limit God if we go forward with a vision, with faith, grace, power, love, mercy, and joy. Everything we want to do by faith can be done—because of the promises of God.

Our future is just as great as how much we claim the promises of God. Our families are going to be just as great as we claim the promises of God for them. Perhaps someone is discouraged. He is going to come out of that discouragement just by believing and marrying the promises of Almighty God.

Heaven Within

Anyone who has ever done anything worth-

while started out with a vision. Little faith may get me to heaven, but great faith will move heaven for me. Great faith will help me share my faith in God with thousands and thousands, so they can share heaven with me. Alittle seed is multiplied a hundredfold (Matthew 13:23).

No one can limit Omnipotence. No one can limit Omnipresence. No one can limit Omniscience. Our God has all power, He is everywhere present, and He possesses all knowledge. No one can limit His life in us when we walk by faith and not by sight—if we do not limit the Holy One of Israel with our unbelief (Psalm 78:41).

As individuals, we need to have a vision in our walk with God, in our vocation, and in our occupation. We need a vision to do greater things than we have ever done before. We need to have a great vision for souls and for making disciples. There isn't any reason why we can't do even greater exploits than we have already done. We know God in our experience, and we stand firm.

What Is a Real Man of God?

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians

16:13. This means we are to become mature and stay mature, showing ourselves as men of strength. The Word of God makes this crystal clear.

It is yet to be seen what faith can do when it is great faith that is based upon the Word of God. Often, great faith operates without any encouragement from God, from others, or from previous experience.

A woman treated her unsaved husband so beautifully. She loved him and did everything she could for him, even though he was unkind to her and rude to her Christian friends.

He was in his eighties and not feeling well when he asked her very seriously, "Why are you so good to me?"

She told him, "Because, honey, you have refused to accept Christ. Soon, if you die without Him as your Savior, you will find yourself in hell where nobody will be kind to you. It seems that you are only going to have this life, and I am determined to treat you well throughout the last years that you have."

You know, that man got saved just after that encounter. That woman operated in the power of God when by sight there was no way her husband would come to Jesus. A door opened, and

the man became a believer. She was a brook in the way for him.

Have a Vision for Great Things

When we have a living faith through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, we become brooks in the way, sources of life that people can drink from when they come under pressure and heat. We become individuals who have a vision and who love the Word of God.

Have a vision for your marriage. Have a vision for your family. If you are single, have a vision for your life. Have a vision of your potential through the power of God. Grab hold of the vision for something great happening in your life, something big with God.

Long ago, at a place called Worthly Pond, God gave me a vision of what our ministry would become. That vision included radio programs, TV programs, Christian schools all over the world, churches that would be packed three times a week, missionaries going into all the world.

I had a vision of these things and the power of God honored a simple seed of faith at a time when I was just starting out.

Today, nearly fifty years later, each day with

Jesus is as fresh and exciting as it was back then. But we don't stop there. We keep on going, because God has given the vision. It is filled with promises for a great future.

CONCLUSION

Picture what God did with Abraham. Remember what God did with Jacob, with Gideon, with Samson. Think of what God did with David and with Solomon. Think of what He did with Peter and Paul. Then, think of what God is doing for you.

We are part of a great, big, amazing work of God right now. Let's get a vision of victory, of expanding our coasts, for doing more and more things in God, and for our own lives. Let's go forward in the power of the omnipotent God, in the mind of His omniscience, in the reality of His omnipresence. Let's just have a ball and celebrate our victory in Christ.

We have the love of God that passes all knowledge. We can be filled with all the fullness of God. When we are filled with His Spirit, God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or think. Let's respond to Him, grab hold of the promises, and enjoy the great

exploits of our great future.

Protect Yourself

from Deception

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of deception can sometimes be very difficult for a pastor-teacher to approach. Yet, it is necessary to address this area. A pastor is commissioned to preach the whole counsel of God. Therefore, by teaching on this subject, issues will be brought to light, causing many to avoid the pain and destruction that can come from deception.

It breaks my heart to see teenagers and adults living with attachments to the world. Their manner and dress reflect the spirit of our sensual age. They have been entrapped by Satan in a dangerous deception—a path that is riddled with defeat, disease, and death. The worst thing about it is that they do not realize and will not acknowledge that they have a problem. They hear the Word of God on these subjects, and yet they continue in their ways.

This booklet was written because deception is a very serious matter. Satanic influence, with

its projections to the unconscious and subconscious mind, is stronger than it has ever been. Christians must understand the dangers of deception and recognize the consequences of living in it. But we must also recognize that God has provided a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). It is through the living Word, Jesus Christ —the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Chapter One

INTERNAL CONSPIRACIES

"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 5:6).

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

To be deceived (*apo planao* in the Greek text) means to turn away from and to depart from the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the grace of divine absolutes. It represents a departure from the mind of God and results in receiving wrong information. Those who are deceived enter into wrong interpretations of the Word. They hang around the wrong crowd. They defy and disagree with people who try to point out their deception, and they use defense mechanisms against God Almighty and His Holy Word.

Deception is a serious issue because it causes internal conspiracies. Some people hardly know

they are being deceived. They follow the wrong paths and are destroyed (Isaiah 3:12). They grope in darkness and never turn to the light (Job 12:25). Their hearts turn away from God (Deuteronomy 30:17). They will not hear. Ultimately, they withdraw from their local church and start railing against bona fide tables of organization, even when godly leaders are loving and kind to them. They lie repeatedly because that is the essence of deception.

Satanic Projections

I visited a man in the hospital who, at 29, had suffered a major heart attack. When he fell ill, he asked his wife to call me. He admitted, in so many words, that he had been deceived into thinking that he didn't need anything—especially God. On that day, however, he saw his need for the Lord, and he got saved.

Satan has armies of demons whose job is to deceive people through projections to their subconscious mind. Some of the most difficult people to deal with are those who are deceived. A deceived person will hear the Word of God and not practice it (James 1:22). He is like a man who beholds himself in the mirror, but forgets what manner of man he is. He is deceived, so he sees

nothing wrong in his reflection. Those, however, who look into the perfect law of liberty and continue in it are blessed in everything they do. They are not forgetful hearers; they are doers of the Word.

Negative Volition

In an internal conspiracy, the mind is deceived, the emotions are deceived, and the conscience is deceived. As a result, every relationship this person has is seen through a heart that has been deceived.

The conspiracy begins when a person's old sin nature works in conjunction with the volition and self-consciousness, stimulating the will to want something that isn't rightfully his. He desires something that doesn't belong to him and pursues a lifestyle that he shouldn't pursue. This person's conscience, with its norms and standards for living, has become perverted, distorted, and corrupted. His volition toward God is negative, and his mind is filled with mental attitude sins and deceptions.

Certain people see human frailty in another and tear down what is strong and powerful for God in a ministry: They attack unity in the Body of Christ. They attack strength because of their

over-occupation with frailty. They attack and cause division, and that is a very serious thing.

Chapter Two

DECEPTION'S DESTINATION

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:9-11).

Often, people never know that they are living in deception. That old dragon, the serpent, deceives the world. He accuses the brethren from morning to night. This accuser is the author of deception in the whole world.

Everyone has been deceived at one time or another. Perhaps we have withdrawn from God; or we have robbed Him by withholding tithes and offerings rather than trusting Him for His provision; or, we have said that we would do something and then do not do it. That is being a hearer of the Word, but not a doer of it. At those times, God spoke, but we were passive and did not apply what He said to us. That is deception.

Sin unto Physical Death

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:17-18).

"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

"But when we are judged, we are chastened

of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:29-32).

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16).

The Process of Discipline

God has a remedy for deception, and it is through a process of discipline. And in certain cases, that process can lead to an early death. This is what the Bible teaches. Those He loves, He chastises and disciplines (see Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6). But in every case, His purpose is not to punish but to reconcile the child of God to Himself, producing peaceable fruits of righteousness.

First, God instructs us with specific truth from the Word through the pastor-teacher. The truth convicts us either of righteousness, which is godly, or of unrighteousness, which is sin. Once we have been convicted in an area of sin, He will warn us repeatedly through the Word and the Holy Spirit. If a believer refuses to yield to the truth, God will chasten him through a variety of means. If he still does not respond, God

will bring in a severe form of discipline, referred to as scourging, usually only once or twice in his lifetime.

At that point, if the believer's heart is hard toward God and the truth, God will take him home "early" by allowing him to die ahead of his designated time on earth. Of course, only God knows what that time is, and it is not up to anyone to judge another who may be suffering for righteousness' sake.

Many dear people who have gone home to be with God lived as great Christians. They have gone to heaven because their time on earth was through; however, we will never know how many people have died ahead of their time. They may have died under discipline because they refused to deal with deception.

Some people are being chastised, but they act as if there is no chastisement going on. They become diseased, yet continue to sin outwardly and overtly. In 1 Corinthians 11:29, some were getting drunk at communion times. Because of this, some of them became weak and sick; and some did die.

The graveyard at Corinth was filled with saved people who had been taken to heaven early because of the sin unto physical death

(1 John 5:16). These people just kept on sinning. They would not listen! Instruction from the Word of God came. Chastisement came. Still, they would not stop sinning, so God had to take the next step. They were taken to heaven, leaving this earth early, and they will suffer loss of rewards in eternity.

Wrong Response, Right Response

In Acts 5:1-11, Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of land and gave part of the money to support the early church. But Ananias lied by telling Peter that he and his wife had given all the money from the sale to the church. It was a lie before the Holy Spirit, and Ananias immediately died. Awhile later, Sapphira (not knowing what had happened) came in, repeated the lie, and she fell dead. These two people died in their youth because they lied about money.

It doesn't have to reach that point, however. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul addressed a man who was living in fornication, saying he was going to deliver this man's "flesh unto destruction, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (see 1 Corinthians 5:5). This man repented, but the local church did not immediately receive him back into fellowship. So Paul

then had to rebuke the church at Corinth, telling the people to forgive the man and welcome him back (see 2 Corinthians 2:7-11). This man recognized his deception and got right.

Chapter Three

GOD'S PROCESS OF DISCIPLINE AND DELIVERANCE

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

"But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

"For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteous-

ness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:6-11).

God disciplines us for our benefit. His chastisement is meant to produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness in our lives. Like Job, we should say to God, "Cause me to understand wherein I have erred" (Job 6:24). "Show me, Lord, where I am deceived." God desires to deliver us, and instead of erring, we will seek understanding as we come out of deception (Isaiah 29:24). The Lord will deliver our souls from death (Psalm 56:13); He will deliver us from terrible afflictions (Psalm 34:19); and He will deliver us from many distresses (Psalm 107:6). His deliverance is always according to His many mercies (Nehemiah 9:28).

Micah offers an example of how to respond to God's discipline.

"Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.

"I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will

bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness" (Micah 7:7-9).

The Points of Discipline

The sin unto physical death is very serious. Before allowing this to happen, God goes through several points of disciplining the Christian who will not obey and apply the word of love, the word of grace, and the word of faith and mercy.

First, God warns the deceived person so that he can be brought under tremendous conviction. If conviction from the Bible only hardens his heart further, God allows him to react to his life. This person cannot stand his life, and he will grow weary, withdraw, and become angry. Then the Lord may deal with him through his finances, prohibiting him from being blessed. He may allow problems in relationships, especially with other believers who are walking in the light. Next God may allow a period of physical affliction.

If this person still hasn't gotten right with Him, God will allow the emotional and physical problems to intensify.

Hebrews 12:6 speaks of scourging, which is last step before physical death. Literally, it

means the person is flat on his back. The only place he can look is up, toward heaven.

If scourging doesn't bring about a response, then God says, "Come up with Me. Come to heaven. Your soul-body will be perfect, and you will be happy, though you have lost all rewards because you would not come out of your deception."

Recognition and Rebound

God loves us, and He disciplines His children in love. As a father deals with his child, so our heavenly Father deals with us. He needs to deal with sin that separates us from fellowship with Him. And believe me, He will deal with it.

Some Christians may think they are getting away with certain sins, but they are deceived. God will deal with these people—not to punish them, but to restore them to a personal spiritual relationship with Him.

The prodigal recognized that he was being chastised when he came to the end of himself (Luke 15:17). When he came home, his father ran to him and kissed him on the neck over and over again (Luke 15:20). That is how God responds to anyone who turns toward Him after being chastised.

CONCLUSION

If these words have brought conviction to your heart, confess your sin and immediately rebound. God is lovingly patient in this process. He has been waiting to be gracious to you. Let Him show you where you have been deceived.

Deception is always followed by discipline. But you have an opportunity to respond right now, to get right with God. Do not be insensitive to what is going on in your life. Ask God, and He will answer you. He will reveal any areas where you are deceived. Turn to Christ and experience the dynamics of God's grace. He will deliver you, cleanse you, and bless you again.

Maybe you think you don't have a problem with deception right now, but keep these things in mind. Many people today are living with a grieved Spirit because they lack definition in areas of deception and discipline. Be aware: Satan's armies are always out to deceive. Hear and obey the Word of God. Draw near to the

Body of Christ as it is represented by the local church to which you are called.

May God bless us all in the providential love and power of Jesus' name.

Protected by Angels

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

"And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

"And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

"And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORDopened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:15-17).

This passage shows just what lengths God will go to in protecting His people. Elisha's servant was fearful, but only because his eyes of faith were closed to what the Lord was doing.

Once God breathes life into us and our human spirit comes alive, He enters into a covenant with us. His promise is that He will

never leave us nor forsake us. He can never disown us. He protects us as His peculiar people, His personal and specific possessions.

This booklet will show how the Lord uses the angelic host by assigning them to specific duties, to serve Him in relationship to people. Because we dwell in the midst of a great invisible conflict, ministering angels are sent to keep and to guard us—even in those times when we are not obedient to His call and His Word.

Chapter One

GOD BREATHES LIFE INTO US

A.B. Simpson was a great minister for God. He founded the Christian Missionary Alliance. Every Wednesday night, A.B. Simpson prayed for the sick and people would come from miles around. Thousands were healed over the years. Then, Mr. Simpson suffered a heart attack and the effects left him in bed for four years. Many people, great prayer warriors, would come to A.B. Simpson's home and prayed for him, almost every day. Yet, he was not healed. The experience prompted him to write this poem:

Once it was the blessing,
Now it is the Lord.
Once it was a feeling,
Now it is His Word.
Once the gift I wanted,
Now the Giver own.

Once I sought for healing,
Now for Him alone.
All in all forever
Of Jesus I will sing.
Everything is Jesus,
And Jesus everything.

Do you what happened next? A.B. Simpson was healed. Four years he had spent in bed at home, a time that allowed him to be taken beyond his own concepts regarding Christian living to a place where he could love the Word first and lift up Jesus Christ above all else.

God was breathing upon A.B. Simpson's life, and He positioned His angels to keep him through the days of his illness. And though sickness was allowed to enter his life, God's purpose and plan was being served.

It is so crucial that we understand that God breathes on us. In Genesis 2:7, the Lord breathed into man the breath of life—the human spirit—and by that breath, man became a living soul. Then Adam sinned and the human spirit stopped functioning; thus he became a soulish person. As a result of the Fall, we all inherited that soulish sin nature.

Today God Almighty inspires every born-

again believer with His breath, and that gives us understanding (Job 32:8) and life (Job 33:4). The human spirit is God's candle, searching out the inward parts for us so we can live with God-consciousness instead of self-consciousness.

Dry Bones Come to Life

"Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:

"And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

"So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

"And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.

"Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

"So I prophesied as he commanded me, and

the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army" (Ezekiel 37:5-10).

The difference we see in preaching, in music, in planning, in living, and in marriage comes from receiving the breath of God. God breathed and the dry bones came together, and they became alive.

Psalm 150:6 says, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." This speaks of everyone who has received doctrine and life in the human spirit.

Every moment we are either inhaling or exhaling. If we were to stop, we would drop dead. Spiritually, we should inhale and exhale the breath of God every moment. In failure, we must repent, rebound, and keep going—inhaling and exhaling. The reason God enables men of God to preach as they do is not because of some magical gift. Trust me, it is just that they simply inhale and exhale the breath of God.

Gifts of Laughter and Joy

Sure, there are times when we grow weary and tired. We are human. At these moments, God is very faithful to bring in joy and laughter. I am speaking of godly laughter—not the fool-

ishness that is being promoted in some circles today. I am speaking of laughter and joy that comes directly from living in God's breath and in His presence.

God knows when a person needs to laugh. Joy is expressed many times in the Bible as a synonym for laughter. See Proverbs 15:13, Proverbs 17:22, and Nehemiah 8:10. God loves to have His people relax, even though we are in the midst of this world's system.

God's provision of laughter is better than medicine. For some people, laughter has taken away arthritis pain. People get healed because of what the breath of God is doing within them.

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy [Spirit], and they spake the word of God with boldness.

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:31-33).

But with all the provisions that God has

made available to His people to get us through hard times—the breath of life, wisdom, healing, and joyful godly laughter—we still have a need. There are battles being waged all around us, battles that we cannot see, and an enemy who wants to destroy us. So God in His perfect wisdom has set up armies of angels to do His bidding in our lives and to minister His life to us. Indeed, on many levels that only eternity will reveal, we are being protected by angels.

Chapter Two

ANGELS KEEPING CHARGE

"For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Psalm 91:11).

There exists an entire organization of demons that would love to provide material success to certain individuals. Satan knows that for some, it would become a distraction to prayer, to soul winning, and to Bible study. Those demons are trying to bring into unsuspecting lives success from Satan's kingdom. They would like couples to get divorced and seek out other marriages that carry the promise of being better. By allowing material success to come in to some believer's lives, the ultimate design of the enemy's attack is to curse our Christianity.

In response to these strategies of Satan, God sends ministering spirits—angels—to each of us (Hebrews 1:4). Since the work of Christ is finished, and because we are seated in heavenly

places in the dispensation of grace, seated far above principalities and powers, God has sent an angel to each of us. Our angels are under us, in terms of our heavenly position, and their whole purpose is to minister to us in the plan of God.

There is also a group of angels that minister during our times of backsliding. When we are not walking in the Holy Spirit and not obeying the Word of God within, God sends angels that minister from without. He does this very strategically with a purpose.

In His marvelous grace and mercy, God sends angels to us when we are not living right. They minister grace even while we are grieving the Holy Spirit by not following God.

Angels in Action

"And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

"And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

"And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed" (Genesis 19:15-17).

Who rescued Lot from Sodom? Angels. Was Lot living right? No. At first he hesitated when given the chance to escape, and the angels physically grabbed him and his family and got them out of the way of destruction.

Angels ministered to Elijah when he became depressed and wanted to die (1 Kings 19:4-7). An angel woke him up and cooked him a cake—angel food cake!

These angels excel in strength. They are so important because they are stronger than the demons that are after you.

In Daniel 10, one messenger angel serving Daniel was weaker than the demonic angels sent to attack him. As a result of the strategic warfare, Daniel's prayers were held up for three weeks. So, Michael, "a chief prince," among God's angels, was sent in to overcome Satan's forces.

"Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

"Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye minis-

ters of his, that do his pleasure" (Psalm 103:20-21).

Picture this: A man and a woman try to go out on the town for a season of sin. But God's hand is on them, and He sends in precise angels, specially selected for the task, in keeping with His commandments. Think of a teenager you know who is going through a time of loneliness, rejection, or rebellion. God's hand is on the teenager whose family is praying up a storm. It may look as though he is far from the shore and ready to drown, but God made a promise and He has a plan. Philippians 1:6 says that He who began a good work in you will also perform it.

Perhaps you are thinking, "How can angels help someone who is using his volition to sin?" The angels destroy the darkness of night that surrounds a person, spiritually speaking. God sends His angels to keep charge over us. They go with us along our ways, and they will lead us into a prepared place.

Moses went into Midian where a priest and a family were waiting for him there. Moses was backsliding, but God prepared a place for him so that he would not get into serious trouble. That is the wonderful reality. God is so faithful to provide protection for us.

Chapter Three

THE GUARDIANS OF GOD'S MERCY

"Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word" (Psalm 103:20).

Another group of angels hearken unto God's Word. This is an interesting phenomenon that is clear from the correlation, revelation, and explanation of Psalm 103:20. These angels do anything they can to get a Christian to focus on the Word of God. Since they are subject to the will of God, they may allow sickness to come in, or a fever that puts a person in bed. These angels help backslidden Christians to recognize their condition. In the case of A.B. Simpson, it was not overt sin but a form of legalism that was binding him. So these specific angels probably helped to get him in a place where Jesus and His Word truly became his all in all.

These angels have one job, and that is to de-

feat the demons that are distracting a Christian and to get him to hearken to the Word of God. When they get their job done, the Christian will be heard to say, "I went away from God, but now I am hungry to hear His Word." The angels did that. These people were going away from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but the angels ministered from the outside and got their attention back on the Word.

There are also angels whose specific job is to keep us from supernatural infections. If I go through a trial, God sends His angels. So even when I am weary, tired, and hurting, those angels protect me and keep me from developing satanic infections, such as wounded emotions. Angels cause me to focus, though I am weary, in those times when I have unintentionally grieved the Spirit.

"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isaiah 63:9).

The angel of God's presence is a very important part of our lives. This refers to our personal angel. Whatever angels are needed to help with my situation, my angel calls upon the provision

of God for my particular situation.

Safe in the Midst of the Conflict

"So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24).

"And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel" (Exodus 25:22).

Adam and Eve sinned when they partook of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, against the clear commandment of God (Genesis 2:16-17). If they had eaten of the tree of life, they would have to spend eternity in a godless, sinful condition, with no possibility for redemption. So because of the holiness, justice, righteousness, and integrity of God, the cherubim and a flaming sword were specifically placed to keep Adam and Eve from the tree of life.

In Exodus, however, as the plan of God was unfolding, the cherubim were made of gold, attached to the Mercy Seat, and placed on top of the Ark of the covenant. Inside the ark was a

scroll containing the law of Moses, but the lid of the mercy seat could not be removed. Those angels now protected the availability of God's mercy. Before, they were keeping people out; now, they were keeping people in. This was now the role of God's angelic host.

The invisible host of angels and demons are at war. And when we are not paying attention to God's plan for our lives, He sends angels to keep us safe.

God will continue to try to guide the backslidden or wandering mind with His Word, yet so often we will not listen. He will always try to lead us by His Holy Spirit, yet many times we continue to grieve Him. So, because He said He will never leave us nor forsake us, He makes sure that the angels have charge over us.

Who Can Stand against Us?

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ

that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:31-34).

The "whos" in these verses are speaking of Satan and his demons. Satan cannot condemn us. Christ died and was resurrected in victory. Once we have been born again, washed in the Blood of Christ, *nothing* can separate you and I from the love of God. Not even our own thoughts of condemnation can defeat us. Circumstances arranged by demons cannot separate us from God. People cannot separate us from Him.

We belong to God, and we are His forever. He sends His angels to protect us and to make sure it stays that way.

CONCLUSION

Oh, how powerful are God's angels! The angelic contest is real, and God wants us to understand and be aware of the warfare, though we are not to be occupied with it. Still the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit want us to know all that we have going for us.

Think about this: One angel of God killed 186,000 Assyrians in one night. Satan sends his angelic beings to confuse and kill and destroy, but God sends specific angels that excel in strength, and they protect and keep us in the midst of the battle.

In Exodus 14:14, God declared that He would fight for us. He knows that our greatest challenges come in the conflicts that we cannot see. David slung one stone in the name of the Lord. Who do you think made sure it smacked Goliath right in the forehead?

Even Jesus, after being viciously attacked in the desert by Satan's wisest demons, was minis-

tered to by the angels when it was all over (Matthew 4:11).

I believe that in eternity, God will reveal just how many times His angels have protected and kept us and our children when we were going through something difficult—as well as the many times we were not even aware of the battle. The Lord does it all, because He must remain faithful to His promise to never, never, *never* leave or forsake us.

Psychic Noises

Pastor Tom Schaller graduated from Northeast School of the Bible in South Berwick, Maine. In 1975, he led a team to Helsinki, Finland, where they established a church and the Scandinavian School of the Bible. That ministry has sent out over eighty missionaries to more than sixteen countries.

Pastor Schaller's family lives in Maryland while he lives and ministers 40 percent of the year in Hungary and 15 percent in other countries. The rest of the year he lives in Maryland, serving Greater Grace World Outreach and teaching at Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore.

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INTRODUCTION

The way in which God works with us is not in how great we are, but rather in how we hear through our spiritual ears. This is why I love the doctrine of "quietness versus psychic noise." Mental sickness is psychic noise. Psychic noise is also found in the Christian faith. It is the function of Adam, who hears God's thoughts and then allows distractions and confusion to enter because of a lack of concentration.

Those distractions are the projections of the enemy, and they are carefully crafted according to hell's supernatural wiles. In this booklet, which focuses on 1 John 4:1-6, we examine how that preaching the Bible in the anointing of the Holy Spirit is what will deliver us and set us free. It is this dynamic, divine combination that creates oneness in the Body of Christ and unites us in the purpose of the Lord. With this purpose in mind, the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. Psychic noise

is quieted in our spirits, and we grow in the knowledge of the truth and in the fellowship of the Body of Christ.

Chapter One

DISCERNING EARS AND HEARING HEARTS

"But they that wait [for God] shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

"Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10*a*).

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

This is beautiful. This is prayer, quietness, and worship in the Spirit, practicing God's presence. This is taking anything at all and bringing it before God, throwing it away, and keeping your mind on Him (Hebrews 12:1-2). Mind renewal (Romans 12:2) can happen in a service, in a step of faith, in prayer, in quietness, in reading the Word.

In 1 John 4:1, we read, "Beloved, believe not

every spirit, but [prove] the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

The word "spirit" could refer to angels. "Believe not every angel." That is Galatians 1:8—if an angel preaches any other gospel we should not receive it. For example: Joseph Smith with the Mormons. Why wouldn't we believe an angel? Because the devil appeared to Eve as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Could we see an angel and not know it is a demon? Could it give us another gospel? Yes, it could. The word "spirit" could also mean teacher.

I want all of you to know that if I, Tom Schaller, come and preach another gospel, you should know the difference and not receive my message or me. This is what Paul said: "If I or even an angel preach any other gospel, do not receive me."

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be *anathema*—accursed.

As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be accursed" (see Galatians 1:8, 9).

There is a man who starts well but changes his message. I should discern this with my ears, my spiritual ears. If somebody has an experience and because of this they change their message—I should discern that. "Many false prophets are gone out into the world." L. Ron Hubbard with Dianetics, Mary Baker-Eddy with Christian Scientists (who are not Christian nor are they Scientists), meditation movements, catholic Buddhists, the Rossarian society, the Masons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and so on.

The humanistic New Age movement is the old story by the old serpent and the old man with the old message—the lie: "You shall be as God, and if you eat this you shall be wise."

I met a Moonie (a follower of Reverend Moon). He said the light came and he tasted honey in his mouth. He was convinced of this. It is very possible that he did have this experience. But this is not the basis for my faith. My experience is not the basis for truth.

Be very careful with this. We are talking about Biblical truth, doctrine, and the historical foundation as the basis for our faith. John said many false prophets have gone out to the world. They do not use the word "prophet," but the word "professor," "teacher," "businessman,"

"counselor," "psychologist," "engineer," "mystic," "guru." Whatever name they use, they actually have another spirit.

The Spirit and Truth

In verse two of 1 John 4 we read: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." "Is come"—perfect tense: He has come.

Remember that Jesus said, "Touch me, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones," (see John 20). The Docetists believed Christ was a spirit, but not a body—that He only had an appearance of a body while being a spirit. He did, however, come in the flesh, the seed of David, born of a woman (Romans 1:3).

There are other views that were dealt with in the second and third centuries regarding the person of Christ. But this is the Christ who died on the cross, who lived in Israel. This is not the Christ spirit, but Jesus—human man, Christ—God, who is our Savior. He came and is present. He is still a man (Hebrews 7:24). He became a man forever. His flesh is glorified but still a man. He has come and is still present. He is the same person.

If a spirit or a teacher does not say this, then

he is not from God, 1 John 4:3—"every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God."

This is so refreshing for us because we have the Spirit of God. We know we have the Spirit of God. In 1 John 3:14-24, we read the fruit of it. It is not just philosophy, but it is spirit and the power of the Spirit in our life. In Philippians 3:3, "for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Chapter Two

TRUTH OVERCOMES THE LIE

"And this is the spirit of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already. Ye are of God, my little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:3-4).

This means that our fellowship is from God and we have overcome the lie. The lie is not here now. It is not in the pulpit, not in our heart, not in our spirit—we are living in the light (1 John 1:7). We are built up in Him and actually know Him. The light gets brighter and brighter unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18). We have direction, love, encouragement, and peace. Our lives are not so complicated. Our philosophy is simple. Our theology is pure (Proverbs 30:5). And Christ is at the center. The more we speak about Him, the better it is.

This is why the Finished Work is awesome—

it points to Him. It is beautiful. We love it. Even if our flesh does not, the Spirit of God does, and we are anointed. If we follow our flesh then the message, the ministry and the people all get confused, psychologically, socially, and so on.

In 1 John 4:4 it says that He is greater than the lie in the world. We should be very confident about this in the Spirit and not intimidated by the world and its lies. Very confident!

When we were in Finland years ago, we prayed for the Communist world. One part of us was afraid while the other part of us was very bold. It is the same with the Muslim world. One part is afraid, but the other part of us is very bold. The lie has no power, because we see Him. This is the lifting of our soul and the edification of the believer.

In verse five of 1 John 4, "They are of the world: therefore speak they as of the world, and the world heareth them." But we do not hear them—this is where the "ear" comes in. They hear them, but we do not hear them. Here is the world, and they are talking on the internet and in the newspapers. There are many voices and there is fear, but we do not fear (see Proverbs 1:33).

There is guilt, but we do not hear that be-

cause of Romans 8:1. There is trouble everywhere, but somehow we do not hear that. We know about it, but we do not internalize it, because we have ears for another message.

This is the key to the believer's life—what voice do I hear? What truth am I embracing? Am I reacting or am I responding? Am I worshipping and trusting? Am I quiet and am I listening to God and His truth?

Give Yourself to God

For example, there is a psychic voice in my soul saying, "I do not love God. I am sure I do not love God." What should I do about this? I should listen to the doctrine, be quiet and give this to God.

"Lord, here it is. I do not love you. Here I am," I say.

The Lord answers: "I am not surprised. I have told you that for years. Of course you don't love Me! That's why I came! Of course you don't love Me. Are you surprised? Don't you know the doctrine of depravity? Don't you know what the flesh is? Listen to Me!"

"Lord, I am listening."

"It's not that you have loved Me, but that I've first loved you. You didn't choose Me, I

chose you. You can't follow Me. I've saved you and given you My Holy Spirit. He'll reveal to you what I've given to you."

There is another psychic voice: "I am unholy. I am unclean, not like him or her. I am not good. I cannot do it. The pastor asks too much from me."

John 8:32 says, "The truth shall set you free."

This is how we live. We bring all the garbage to God. This happens over and over again and we are in fellowship with God and responding to His love. We are built up and now we can concentrate, and the devil has not stolen my ears and my concentration. Now I can concentrate and read the Scripture, listen, follow, rejoice, and live in rest, which is a rest that comes from God (Hebrews 4:9).

But there are many false prophets, and the world is filled with religion, "and the world heareth them." The world hears the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, the humanists and the philosophers. Who listens to the preacher? To the Bible teacher? We listen through the anointing. This makes all the difference. We follow God in the anointing—this is how we make it. This is how we finish, in Acts 20: through the anointing. This is how you and I grow: through

the anointing. “He teaches us all things,” (1 John 2:27), and we learn. Sometimes it is a very small thing that makes a great difference, but it makes the difference.

Chapter Three

WE KNOW GOD HEARS US

"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not," (1 John 4:6).

It is very simple. He that is of God hears us. We have seen that happen. A mother of one of the girls in our church in Budapest became a widow, and when we went to the cemetery, she loved the message. She is a very precious woman who is of God because she hears. She is deep enough and hears. I love when new people come and for them it is like there is an immediate "Amen." It is like they recognize truth and say, "Amen." When we go somewhere and listen, we also have this gift.

"Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (1 John 4:6*b*). It does upset me when someone who is in a Christian church becomes a Jehovah's Witness. How can that be? Who has been teaching them? What spirit are

they of? Maybe they were never of God in the beginning (1 John 2:19). They do not know the doctrine nor do they know the Holy Spirit. But there they are, very happy as they live in self-righteousness (Romans 10:2). They are very happy as they sit in Jehovah's Witness' Kingdom Hall. This is how we know the spirit of truth and error. The message does make a difference. We just had this dear girl from Scotland here, who really got saved. She talked with me:

"I got saved three days ago. I had an experience at the Thanksgiving Dinner. I was very emotional, very confused. I heard something and this peace came. I couldn't sleep, but now I sleep. I used to have to take medication, but now, ever since I came to Budapest, I sleep every night. I'm so happy I'm saved. I'm going back to Scotland."

"The traditional church, I said, has good doctrine to some degree. It's quite good, but it is dead. Is that correct?"

"It's very dead," she replied. "I don't like it. It's very traditional and there's nothing there and I never go."

"You don't have to go there, but you do need fellowship. You need other believers. We'll pray to God that you'll find some. Just feed from the

Word and have fellowship in the Holy Spirit."

The Anointing Breaks the Yoke

"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (1 John 2:27).

I do not go to church if it is not anointed. Why should I go there? Why should I listen to another voice?

Yes, I appreciate teaching, but also I want to hear from the Holy Spirit. Maybe I will—it could be that the man of God is preaching, but the congregation is dead. I know of one case like this where a man is a good man of God, but he makes a mistake by not confronting his people and saying to them "Wake up! Get right! Take up the Cross and stop it! You are legalistic. You are judgmental. Let's have a good prayer meeting and be humble. You guys are dead people!" The people are sitting there in church in self-righteousness. They are proud about learning the Bible, but they are not humble people.

I do not mind saying this. I would like to say it louder. This is what I love about our min-

istry—you are not supposed to live in the flesh, and if you do I should confront you by the Holy Spirit.

There should be the teaching that brings me to the Cross, then the Holy Spirit is released. We are God's anointed ones. This is why. Someone came here to Bible School from a branch ministry by simple faith. There is the anointing. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. They shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

Somebody else has a job. They come to Bible School by faith and say "God, help me." That is Body life. It is not by good messages that I minister to self-righteous people—that is just church. We are after something more, something that is life, like the believers in the first century. Believers who were persecuted for their faith, when life cost something. My faith in Christ is in my heart. I listen to Christian radio. I love these men, but honestly I cannot listen to some of them. I love my brothers, but I am hungry and thirsty and also looking for something.

I believe this is what God is saying here. Without pride, but just discernment, I must say there is a difference. I have listened to many different preachers—I love them. There are many

wonderful ones. Please do not misunderstand me. But where is the Ark of God? This is the only way I can live.

Where is the Ark? I am not a religious person. I do not like religion. But God! I'll take God! Give me God and I'll go all the way. We will by God. I cannot do the other thing. When God is there then there is liberty, love, joy, understanding, purpose, outreach, and everything else.

CONCLUSION

The Ecumenical movement says, "Let's all hold hands together. We are all brothers." We are not all brothers. It says in the Gospel of Mark 3:33-35, "Who is my brother and my sister? Those that do the will of God. Those that hear the Word of God and keep it."

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." (1 John 4:7). If he loves, he loves in deed and in truth, (1 John 3:18). It is not a superficial love, but rather a spiritual love. It is a 1 Corinthians 13 love. This is the kind of love we have. Give me the truth. Give me the doctrine. I love it! Teach me and minister to me in truth and in spirit. If you take the truth away, the Holy Spirit is not bearing witness.

If you have the Holy Spirit but not truth, then it is too abstract. I can shake hands with a lie because it feels good. If I have the truth, but do not

have the anointing, it is because my heart is not broken. There is a church that says it is alive, but it is dead like the church of Sardis (Revelation 3:1). But listening and having the truth, the Bible, we have our spiritual ears on. He will always, always, always set us free. He is always, always, always for us. He always, always, always has a Word for us through the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

Purpose to Be a Friend

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a message for today. It is really a very, very important theme for us as believers. Over the years, we have heard thoughts such as these, and they have gone into our hearts. These premises are really rooted in our spirituality.

True friendship is something that is very hard to find, even among believers. Sadly, personality rapport and a human frame of reference control so many of our exchanges, and very minor things can shake these kinds of relationships.

True friendship, however, stands because it is rooted in the things of God, the things that are eternal.

This booklet is a compilation of three messages preached during a Sunday morning service. Those who were there that morning marveled at the way the Holy Spirit orchestrated what was spoken by three speakers: Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Pastor Steven Scibelli, and

Pastor Thomas Schaller. The harmony and unity of these thoughts reflect just what God can do in the midst of true friends.

Chapter One

BORN FOR ADVERSITY

Pastor Carl H. Stevens

"Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:18).

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12).

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:1-2).

"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1).

In times of difficulty, I have realized the value and depth of real true friendship. If I were to ask you, "What is a friend?", most of the time the description would not be something divinely understood.

At times you may think that someone is your friend, and then—bang!—he's gone. The least little thing disturbed the friendship, which really wasn't a friendship at all. There was a relationship, but that relationship was conditional.

What is a friend? In Luke's gospel, we find these words: "Jesus Christ, a friend of sinners." That means He is friend to the adulterer, even though He hates adultery. The liar, the thief—these people are indeed sinners. Yet, His blood covered their sins. Jesus Christ is their friend.

The Best Friend of the Worst Sinners

Mary Magdalene had seven demons (Luke 8:2). Imagine that! Seven demons. But then Jesus came along. Seven demons, and then she met Someone who was her friend. I think that those "seven demons" speak of the worst sins you could ever commit. Jesus became her friend, and His friendship brought her out of the demon world into the beautiful world of His friendship. Mary Magdalene became the friend of Jesus.

When Jesus knew that His hour had come, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end (see John 13:1).

Think of all the churches in America and across the world today. These places are filled with every type of person—including you and me. Just think of it. Jesus said, "I love them all. Is there something I can do? I will go to the Cross and lay down My life. I will pay for everything they have ever done. I just want to be their Friend."

He is our Friend—the one who loves at all times.

Jesus doesn't say, "I will be your friend if…." No, He says, "I am your Friend. Period."

The Test of Friendship

Matthew 24:12 tells us that the love of many will "wax cold." What does this mean? It means that in some cases what appears to be friendship will reveal itself to be something else. The connection was not divine, and it did not have its roots in Calvary. It was not based on the filling of the Holy Spirit.

For many, love will wax cold. Even Jesus said that there will be hardly such a thing as faith when He returns to the earth.

I thank God for each one who has his friendship rooted in Calvary. This kind of friendship is unconditional. This kind of friendship is consistent and unchangeable. I thank God for friends who are faithful to the end. I love to be with friends and look upon their faces. I thank God for the Body of Christ and for the friends God gives me in it—friends from all across the world, from Maine to Florida to California, from Asia to Africa to Europe.

The Bible says that Jonathan purposed in his heart to love David (1 Samuel 20). The Lord was between these two men, and Jonathan wanted to do everything that would benefit David. He understood what God had called David to be, and he understood what it meant to be a true friend.

May each of us discover this truth in a new and deeper way today.

Chapter Two

CONSTRAINED BY LOVE

Pastor Steven Scibelli

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

What does it mean to be constrained by love? The word *constrained* speaks of being held in on every side. That is important when you think that Moses was called "the friend of God" in Exodus 33:11.

We can be involved in Christian activity in a ministry, and we can be busy with all the details of what that means in our life. But there is nothing that can compare to being the friend of God.

God also said that about Abraham (2 Chronicles 20; James 2). When you think of Abraham, you think of someone who was faithful, but only because his faithfulness was sourced in God's friendship.

The friendship of God—what an awesome thing!

Many times in our experiences, inside or outside of Christianity, there have been a lot of people we called "friends." Yet, really, many of these were only relationships. They never became more than relationships on the outside; they never became deep friendships from the inside.

I knew this even when I was overseas for many years. Regardless of personal contact with different people, something real existed where there was the oneness of the Holy Spirit and the eternal purpose of God. There was something that really brought us into eternal friendships.

Isn't this what it ought to be about when church and Bible college and Christian education and missions programs come together? We should go out just looking for friends. I love that. We go out on our outreaches Tuesday nights, Thursday nights, and Saturday mornings. We work our jobs. We are out there, and we are seeking friends.

Friendship is so much more than superficial, outward relationships. There has to be something deep within the soul. So many relationships develop based upon externals. I can relate to someone based upon what I like or what I dis-

like, my past, my interests, where I work. But all of these are based upon the exteriors.

Love Others as Your Own Soul

Between David and Jonathan, there was a love, and it was a love for the soul of the other. Jonathan loved David as his own soul. This included everything about their minds, their emotions, their choices, their consciences, their self-images—everything about them was united in an inward life that was tied to Jesus Christ.

Jesus could call Judas "friend." He looked at those who ran away from the Cross and called them friends. Peter the denier was His friend. Thomas the doubter—Jesus called him friend. All of these people deserted Jesus at the Cross. Yet, His friendship remained true because His source was in the very life of God.

Many of the great men of God I have worked with in Africa know the source of true friendship. We know that there will be situations that arise to test our friendships. There will be differences. There will be problems. There will be opposition. There will be things that some of them will not like about me. (I cannot imagine what those things might be, but it is very possible!) In spite of all these things, there is something

among us that goes beyond natural affinity one for another. What we have goes into what is known as true friendship that comes from God. We are friends in the love of God.

A True Friend Tells the Truth

A true friend in the love of God will always be there to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Our exchanges will not be about things that are very abstract, that are without definition. If I love you as a friend, I will tell you the truth in love. If I do not love you as a friend, then all we have is a relationship. And in that relationship I will be afraid, I will have fear, I will have an uncertainty about telling you the truth. A friend who loves can really show me what is happening in our lives together.

My wife, Linda, is more than my wife; she is my best friend. We have been together since 1965, and we have a relationship in which she can come to me and say that something is not right.

Our conversations go like this many times:

"That's not right."

"Yes, Lin."

"How about doing it this way?"

"Yes, Lin."

"What about this?"

"Yes, Lin."

"You should look at it differently."

"Yes, Lin."

Our relationship is more than a marriage. There is friendship between us. There are so many blind spots in me that she brings in the light.

Friendships sourced in the love of God sustain a marriage. This is what sustains a family. This is what sustains the bond between a pastor and his assistant pastor. This is what sustains a Bible college. This is what sustains a ministry. This is what sustains an outreach. This is what makes a church work. This is the motivation of God's love in pure, truthful friendships.

There is nothing like this type of friendship.

Who is there that I cannot be a friend to? Jesus could be a friend to Mary Magdalene, to the woman at the well, to blind Bartimaeus, to rich Zaccheus in the tree. He could be a friend to people who were so far from the character of God, and through His friendship He could draw people to the character of God. Christ would initiate the life of God to draw these people. Before they knew it, their eyes were opened. They saw something unique in this Man. There was some-

thing unique, and it was awesome. There was true friendship initiated toward them, and God brought out a response.

Love that is true does not need a response. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "The more I love you, the less I be loved. Yet, I will gladly spend and be spent for you. I am going to go all the way even though there is no response." (See 2 Corinthians 12:15.) That is friendship. That is what church is all about—friendship. That is what missions is all about—friendship. It is all about friendship from God, to God, to each other, and to the lost.

Chapter Three

A FRIEND OF GOD

Pastor Thomas Schaller

Spirituality, not personality rapport or common interest, is what should govern our friendships. Meeting at the bowling alley, going fishing, talking about computer programs are things that we may like to do. Any field of knowledge can establish some form of connection between people. But one of the phenomena of spirituality is that we can be very diverse and yet have a common source of life running through us. That source of life is the river of God.

I would say that I did not choose my friends; God chose my friends for me. Did David choose Jonathan to be his friend? No, God put it in Jonathan that David would be his friend, and a friend sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24). A brother will show up for a barbecue be-

cause he is part of the family. And we do love our families. A friend, however, will cross the hottest desert, climb the highest mountain, and cross the stormiest seas. A friend will show up on your doorstep in adversity, for it says that a friend is born for adversity.

I think of the spiritual friendships that we have in the Lord. I never want to forsake those friends who have been born in the battle. These are friends given to us from God.

But we need to be careful because Proverbs 16:28*b* tells us, "a whisperer separates chief friends."

Imagine the friendships we have developed over many years, and then these friendships are disturbed. Misunderstandings come by the whisperer who sows discord. We have seen it. Misunderstanding. Misrepresentation. Misinformation. These things put a strain on our friendships.

But that's okay because Jesus said, "I call you friends" (John 15:15). We would be in real trouble if God did not say, "I am your Friend."

Abraham is called a friend of God (James 2:23). Do you know what a friend of God will do? He will say to Lot, "Lot, that's okay. You go over there, and I will go over here. Lot, you go

that way. That's fine. I will go over there."

A friend of God has a great advantage because God shows him His secrets. Jesus says, "I don't call you My servants I call you My friends because I will share My secrets with you." This is a very important distinction.

The Depth of Intimacy

I am sure you have worked for someone who was just your boss. He says, "Sweep the floor." You say, "Why?" He says, "Because I said so! I am the boss." But have you ever been in a workplace where the boss is your friend, and you are a very important part of his life? Sometimes, I am sure, this boss will call you over and say, "I have something to tell you." He is going to tell you from his heart something he is not telling everyone else.

This is the kind of friendship God promises to us. There is a Hebrew word for *secret* that literally means "two pillows." It comes from an old Eastern custom of sitting closely on an arrangement of pillows. The setting would be very intimate and very close. God is intimate with you, and that intimacy goes very far because He shares His secrets with you. When He is your Friend, and you are His friend, you don't

relate to Him based upon the law or upon morality. You do what you do because of your intimate relationship. There is a spiritual intimacy, and your heart burns within you.

We can become very hungry spiritually. I get hungry for the Bible. I even want to pray! I feel like really reading the Scriptures and praying and then hearing more from the Bible. I can't wait to come to church and be fed. I am stirred up.

Why is this? I am alive. Live people get hungry. Dead people are never hungry. They don't need to eat. Living people are hungry, and they eat. We eat at the table of our God who is our friend. He sticks closer than a brother. A brother has to show up, but a friend has the option to be there or not.

God says, "I am your Friend." He did not really need to be. It was out of His own desire and His own love for us that He sent His only begotten Son to purchase us and to redeem us and to fill us and to feed us.

What happens is that we show up for each other because of Christ. I believe I have an opportunity to show myself friendly during these days. I have an opportunity to manifest the love that God has given me. This love can be ex-

pressed to others, even some who may be caught in a trap (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Some fail just because they are human beings. Being human is what human beings do.

"O, Corinthians, why do you walk as men?" Paul asked.

I would answer Paul, "Do you want to know why I walk like a man? It is because I am one."

But he would answer back to me, "Your calling is not to walk just as a man. Your calling is higher. You are to walk as a son of God" (see 1 John 2:6). Your calling is to walk in His footsteps. He who has friends shows himself friendly.

This means we must break out of the boxes of our wounds and our hurts. We must leave our flesh at the Cross and be Spirit-filled and edifying. Let's insist upon love and edification because love bears all things, even broken friendships. Love endures all things, hopes all things, and believes all things.

Friendships can be restored; relationships can be healed. Our fellowship is all about God, and He is with us. He is our Friend so that we may be friends to sinners just as Jesus was a friend to sinners. How much more can I be a friend to my brother or my sister.

Confusion and pain can happen when the

whisperer separates chief friends. This means I must be Spirit-filled. This means I must eat at the Tree of Life. This means that my diet must be doctrine. My mind must be enlightened. It means that if God is my Friend, then He is my Friend.

Security Opens the Way for Love

Consider this: Jesus knew that He had come from the Father and was going to the Father. All things had been committed unto Him and given unto Him. Yet, He took the towel and the basin and washed the feet of His disciples. How could he serve them that way? It is because He knew where He came from, and He knew where He was going. He knew that actually everything was His anyway. When you have that kind of security, then your love does not stop, and your attitude is one of love and edification and faith and encouragement and moving in a faith direction.

Now Lot went his way, and Abraham went his way. Actually, Abraham went God's way, for the Lord said to him, "Walk in the land in the height and the breadth and the length of it, for it is yours" (Genesis 13:14-17). But in Genesis 14, Lot was in trouble in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Five kings organized themselves to attack Lot and his people. When Abraham heard of it, he gathered his men together.

He said, "Saddle up, boys; we have to move."

"Where are we going?"

"We are going to deliver my nephew Lot."

"Oh, leave Lot alone. He made a bad decision. I mean, that's *his* problem. He got into it on his own, so let him suffer and live in the consequences of his poor decision."

That would be such a small way to think. We are not into giving an eye for an eye. We are not living under a system of legalism and law. These are not human affairs. This is not a relationship that is based on history. This is based on Jesus Christ.

Abraham and his men got on their donkeys and camels and whatever they were riding and went and delivered Lot. They defeated the five kings. As Abraham returned from his victory, he met the priest Melchizedek, and that was Jesus Christ. It says in Genesis 14, they ate the bread and the blood. That bread and blood speaks of the communion we have in the New Testament. We gather together and say, "God has blessed us. Break the bread and drink the blood, for

Christ is our life."

We can have a small world in a good way. We can have a world of love and a world of forgiveness, a world of mercy, a world of prayer and faith. Will we speak evil? No, because we live before the High Priest. Will we sow discord? No, not intentionally as far as I know. Hold us accountable, please. Those things are not in our world. We walk as friends of God. And when we are friends of God, we are blessed and we have the power to bless. When we are a friend of God, we show ourselves friendly and we do not give up.

I had a puppy in Hungary. His name was Bootsey, and he would just come and jump on me. I would push him off, and he would come right back. I just couldn't get rid of him. He would just keep coming to me. Often, I would preach with mud on my pants. Bootsey couldn't get enough of me. No way would that dog stop loving me.

When God is our friend, He never fails us. He never forsakes us, never gives up on us, never departs from us. All of His promises are yea and amen. The Finished Work applies all the days of our lives. Even if I fail, we fall into the everlasting arms of our God and our Savior. He

is able to save us to the uttermost. He ever lives to pray for us and makes intercession for us.

We have a fellowship with God who is our friend, and we can be friends—real friends, one to another. A friend will be there. We just keep loving and serving, loving and serving, and going and praying.

Maybe some day we will have to get on our donkeys and ride to someone's rescue. We will show up and deliver him from his problem. A friend simply does not give up. God is our friend, so we show ourselves friendly.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the reason we are here is that Christ is here. That is the only reason. That is how we started out in our faith, and that is how we continue. That is how we will finish. The basis of our relationships has to be nothing less than Him in us. That is the way we want it, and that is the way He wants it. That is the way we received it, and we like it that way. We don't want anything else.

The other kind of thing is very superficial. It is not fulfilling, and it is not satisfying. We want to be Spirit-filled and spiritually oriented in our relationships one to another with the Holy Spirit loving us unconditionally.

God never fails. We are hungry and thirsty for His reality. We want nothing but the Lord in our relationships. We have all failed. But the point is redemption, forgiveness, love, Spirit-led living, truth in the inner man, and spiritual content in our relationships. As a result, we have

doctrinal rapport based upon truth at the Cross.

By these things, we are healed and blessed. We have oneness that is organic. Our unity brings the miracles and healing and blessing and spirituality. The amazing leading of God in the Spirit puts truth and diversity in our Body. That is our calling and our privilege.

Purpose to Make an Impact

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

God created the mountains, the springs, the streams, and the rivers. The Creator of the universe, with the power of His Word, brought this amazing Creation into existence. Yet, in the minds of so many Christians, God is so small. Intimidated by what the world system has placed before them, many are afraid to take steps in any type of faith-adventure.

This booklet was inspired by God's call on our local assembly to reach deep into our city and community, to make a more powerful impact than ever before. We are going forward with a purpose, because we understand that our God is a big God—One who can go far beyond anything that we can ask or think.

Chapter One

LIVING WATER PRODUCES ETERNAL FRUIT

Picture Jesus with the woman at the well. She went to that well when nobody else would be there, probably to avoid being seen by the "respectable" crowd. She had a divine appointment. Jesus, walking twenty-eight miles during the course of this day, met her there and asked her for a drink of water—something that no self-respecting Jewish man would do. Then He said to her, "With the water that you drink, you will thirst again. But the water that I give, when you drink it, you will never thirst again," (see John 4:13).

She said to Him, "Sir, give me this water to drink."

The Samaritan woman was saved and filled with the Water of Life, and she became a soul winner that very day (John 4:28-30). She had discovered the value of her own soul, and now she

could see that value in others.

In John 7:37-38, Jesus stood up and cried out: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his [emotions] shall flow rivers of living water." In other words, the life of Christ will fill you, and then it will cause you to reach out to others.

The Shining Soul Winner

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, but he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). The word "wise" in the Hebrew text reveals a wisdom that reveals God Himself because he that winneth souls is wise like God Himself, for He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

"They that turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

A Christian who reveals Christ will suffer with Christ, because he is on earth as God's guest in Satan's territory (for the time being). Yet, when the Living Water springs up from within to glorify God (John 4:14), rivers of life go out, pouring out blessings into others. As a result, the believer becomes part of a special high

order in God's eyes: the Order of the Morning Star.* When I allow God to fill my mind I am a candidate for the Morning Star Order. God is my mind, God is my life, God is my emotions. God doesn't "help" my emotions. When I enter into the Morning Star Order, He is my emotions. Though I have a free will and use it all the time, God is my will, and my body is only for God. This is what the Order of the highest form represents.

Rivers of Life

The river of life is a spring inside us. It is God in every part of us. His life is ready to flow out, not drip out. People go on for years giving just a little here and a little there, but God wants us to be like a river.

Let the water of life flow from our hearts to our minds and to our emotions. We are going forth bearing precious seed. We have the promise, and we will doubtless come again, bringing a harvest of souls with us (Psalm 126).

**For more about this reward, read* The Morning Star Order, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

GO FORTH TO THE THIRSTY SOULS

In John 19:28, Jesus Christ was on the Cross and said, "I thirst." According to Josephus and other scholars, Jesus suffered through multiple demonic attacks during His life on the earth. On the Cross, he did thirst physically, but He also thirsted spiritually.

When Jesus Christ said, "I thirst," He had taken upon Himself the sins of the whole world. All of the thirsts of mankind were working on Him. Jesus was identifying with us, so much that when the Roman soldiers tried to give him a pain-numbing mixture called gall to dull His pain, He wouldn't accept it. Finally, they took sour vinegar, put it upon a sponge, and placed it upon His lips just before He gave up His spirit.

No Satisfaction in the World

"Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Proverbs 27:20).

Since the beginning of mankind, three "gods" have been at work: the god of drugs and alcohol, the god of lust, and the god of materialism. The god of drugs and alcohol causes people to thirst so that they will kill, rob, steal, and lie in order to satisfy their thirsts. The god of sensual lust and vanity causes anxiety in the human soul by setting up relationships that are outside of the will of God. People talk when they should be silent; they say things when they have no wisdom. They interrupt when they haven't heard somebody out. Yet, the worst thirst of all is materialism, or worshipping "mammon" (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:9-13).

Under mammon's rule, a person can never get enough. "I have a new car, but now I should build a new house." "I built a new house, but now I should buy a new boat." Everyone who lives under mammon's control is thirsty; they always need something more.

Anyone who lives under the power of these three gods is never satisfied. Some may quit

their addiction for two weeks, but they go back into it. They may go a month, but they will go back. There is a terrible thirst.

The one who lusts never finds love. The one who goes after more possessions is never satisfied and never fulfilled. The one who eats excessively is never full. The alcoholic never has enough. He always needs more and is never satisfied with what he has had.

This is why we go forth with the Gospel. This is why Christians everywhere who believe the Gospel need to get their hearts fixed, focus on Jesus, and receive divine power to make an impact. People are thirsty, and they do need the Lord.

The Last of the Last Days

These are the last days—not just the last days such as Peter sensed in 1 Peter 4:7. These are not the last days that Paul spoke about with urgency in Romans 13:12. These are the last of the Last Days.

God said to Noah, "Go forth of the ark" (Genesis 8:15-16).

The Lord said to Moses, "Go on before the people" (Exodus 17:5).

Samuel said to David, "Thou shalt go for-

ward" (1 Samuel 10:1, 3). Saul saw David go forth against the Philistines. Saul stopped going forth (1 Samuel 23:13).

David said to the people (2 Samuel 18:2), "I will surely go forth with you myself also."

The Lord said to Elijah, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD" (1 Kings 19:11).

The Lord said to Isaiah, "Go forth!" (Isaiah 7:3).

The Lord said to Jeremiah, "Go forth into the valley" (Jeremiah 19:2).

The Lord said to Ezekiel, "Arise, go forth into the plain" (Ezekiel 3:22).

He makes His own people go forth (Psalm 78:52).

"In that day shall messengers go forth from me…" (Ezekiel 30:9).

He will say to the prisoners (Isaiah 49:9), "Go forth."

In the New Testament, in each of the four gospels and in Acts 1:8, the same message is given: "Go forth."

Today, we may meet the people who serve the gods of this world. They are everywhere. They are thirsty, and they always will thirst. But if they drink of the Water of Life that we offer through the Holy Spirit, they will never thirst

again.

I would consider soul winning to be the most important thing I do, no matter what my profession. Many believers do not operate this way because they do not understand hell and what it means to be lost. They do not understand what it means to wake up morning after morning, thirsting under the influence of the gods of addictions, sensuality, and greed.

So often, the person controlled by alcohol or drugs keeps his addiction a secret. He needs more and more because he has not been satisfied by God in his emotions, his mind, and his will—so he thirsts. The drinking doesn't do much good for him, and he wonders why he does it. Still he does it, and he is never fulfilled.

The person who lusts never finds love. The person who has built many barns still needs to build more. And if he doesn't, he becomes depressed. He may have millions of dollars, but if he doesn't make more, he is still depressed, and he is driven to get more. That is his god at work in him.

The tragic thing in life is this: So many of us do not realize how to be fulfilled. Death isn't the great tragedy. Finding out you have a terminal disease is not a tragedy. No, the real tragedy of

our day is that there are Christians who appear to be fulfilled but who honestly are not fulfilled in their souls. They have to keep a little part of their lives under the control of these three little gods who are subject to Satan, the god of the world's system.

Chapter Three

OUR INCOMPARABLE GOD

God is ontological. Very simply, this means that God has always been everything He is and ever will be. Even before He created the angels and the human race, God was who He is now and who He will be forever. In contrast, God is not "economical," meaning that God does not operate on the basis of "relative administration." For example, because God created man, the economical approach to man's sin would have been for God to become love at that point. But God is not economical, and His love is not based upon the entrance of sin upon the earth. His love is not based upon the fact of man's failure and that He must now rescue us with love. God's love is based upon His ontological nature—the nature that He has always had and always will have. He is love, He always was love, and He always will be love, as He says is in Revelation 1:8.

Inasmuch as God is ontological, God is not

capricious, or arbitrary, toward the objects of His love. God is indeed love. God's love is a love beyond any love; His joy is a joy beyond any joy; and His forgiveness is a forgiveness beyond any forgiveness. His wisdom is a wisdom beyond any wisdom, and His power is a power beyond any power. This is what makes God the origin and the source of everything—from His power that is omnipotent, from His knowledge that is omniscient, and from His presence that is omnipresent.

As we put these things together and are trained to think with the Word of God, we are able to think beyond our experience, make decisions beyond our impulses, respond beyond our emotions, and evaluate beyond our reasoning.

A great man of God made this statement: "Man will never be able to excel beyond his understanding of the dignity of God." Whatever we consider the dignity of God to be will be where we stand in relationship to God. In other words, if I understand the dignity of God, I understand the ontological nature of God, that indeed He is not capricious. God does not change. Therefore, based upon my understanding of God's dignity—the mighty God, Lord of lords, and King of kings (Isaiah 9:6; Revelation

17:14)—I can enter into the realization of God's holiness and of God's righteousness, which cannot be understood by natural reasoning or intellectual knowledge.

Man's problem is simply this: We have no natural way to know who God is or what He is like. In the entire scope of human history, throughout all time, by any educational process, man has nothing to compare to God. If we had something to compare with what God is like, we would be able to come up with a reasonable understanding of God—but we cannot.

His Ways Are Not Man's Ways

A person's God is too small when he begins to consider that God is like some great man. The greatest intellectual in the world, the greatest doctor, physician, or surgeon, the greatest professor, educator, or historian—none of them in the smallest way can portray in his human capacity what God is like. Even a very good moral man who is considered very upright and highly esteemed and very much respected cannot give us any idea of what God is like.

If you go to church and hear a preacher communicate the Word of God, and he does a good job preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ,

you may get saved or edified but the preacher will never be able to explain, express, or reveal what God is really like unless *he* understands in his spirit what God is really like. The only way he can comprehend what God is like is through the Finished Work.

If, however, he preaches grace *and* works as a means for salvation, or puts grace in with a measure of legalism, or makes God's love dependent on a number of conditions, then he is not preaching what God is like.

Some Christians relate to God as a policeman—not that policemen are unkind, because they are not, but as representing authority and power of the law. Others relate to God as some very honorable and intellectual professor. That is *not* what God is like, nor can it ever be understood as God-likeness.

The Problem of Discontentment

As we purpose to make an impact on a lost world, we will meet people who are discontented. Therefore, it is crucial that we purpose to be contented in Christ, abiding in all that He is.

Some Christians will not serve God unless they can serve God by doing what they want to do rather than being a servant of God in all

things. If a marriage is not happy in Jesus Christ, regardless of the reason, God is not at the center (see 1 Corinthians 7:14-17). God must be our mind, our soul, and our will. God must be our heart. God must be our conscience. God must be at the center of our self-consciousness, and God must indeed be our focus.

Only as this is understood in the simplicity of divine revelation, in the dynamics of God's manifestation within man, will we see and then reveal God as He really is. In Galatians 1:16, Paul wrote, "God has been revealed in me—not just to me."

For this to be so, the first thing a man must have is the proper premise for thinking: that is, the Word of God. We will be only as effective as our thought life with God is. Once we are saved, the Bible says that we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). Yet, until we have this right premise for thinking established in us, we will never have the right thoughts for godly meditation; therefore, we will never have the right words for communicating nor the right life for living. Furthermore, we will never have the proper grace for responding or the proper action for initiating Christ's life.

In Isaiah 40, the Lord asks some questions: "Who do you think I am? What am I like? Have you ever in your life made a decision about what I am like?"

"Who will you compare with Me?" God asks.

I will answer that question. I have never found anyone that I can compare with God.

God said to Israel, "Do you think I am like your idols? Like your trees? Do you think that I am like you?"

Then the Lord said, "I am not like you. There is no one that you can compare Me to. So when you have a very good day, don't ever think that you are like Me, unless it *is* Me in you!" (see Isaiah 40:18-31).

Certainly, a person can be like God when God's Word is dwelling richly in him, when God's Spirit is filling him precisely, and when God's love is being shed abroad in his heart with its wonderful pertinent manifestation of the reality of life. But there is no way to know what God is like unless it is revealed to us through His Word.

The only revelation that God has ever given to man is the Bible in its totality—in its com-

pleteness as the full canon of Scripture. We digest the Word by masticating and assimilating it. The Word becomes resident in us and residual for us, ready to be recalled by the Holy Spirit in us, mobilizing us with divine energy as it circulates through us. That is how we operate in the classifications of biblical categories with the precise message of the Holy Spirit making His revelation known to us. Then and then only can we begin to be what God is like.

This is why all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called, according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). The whole purpose is that we might be conformed to His image. No one can ever be conformed to God's image as long as he has a vail of flesh, in any measure or degree, between him and Calvary (2 Corinthians 3:15-17).

Chapter Four

LETTING THE RIVER FLOW THROUGH US

When the members of the early Church looked away from Moses and the law, the vail went away because they turned to Christ, and the Spirit of the Lord took over. They beheld "as in a glass (a mirror) the glory of the Lord." Through the mirror the Word of God, we are changed into God's likeness by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The mirror or the glass indicate clarity with transparency. The Bible begins in transparency with its description of the four original rivers with their source in the garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10-14). The rivers typify the Holy Spirit coming out of the life of God and moving through the earth. Because sin had not yet entered the earth, the waters must have been transparent, crystal clear. But then Adam and Eve sinned, and things became clouded.

Finally, by the time we get into Revelation 21 and 22, God reveals once again that clarity which comes with transparency: the streets of gold, the light of the Lamb—everything is transparent, nothing is hidden. There is no darkness. There will be no need for the sun, or moon, or stars, or any lights that God created, because God Himself fills up His new Jerusalem. Then at last we will see the most amazing thing—the river of God and the Tree of Life in its midst, spreading out to each side, producing fruit each month with its leaves for healing the nations (Revelation 22:1-2).

The Cross is to us a tree of life. The Cross is for yesterday, for today, and for tomorrow. For all eternity, we will enjoy one great big fantastic river by the Cross. The Cross took care of the confinement of living in time and space, and it transfers us into the eternal value of eternal life and the eternal Person. There we are conformed to Jesus Christ Himself—the completeness of divine perfection.

If individuals in the Church of Jesus Christ would only come to the place of understanding that God is not like them. While I must decrease and God must increase and the Holy Spirit in humility and meekness enlarges my capacity as

I grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, then I begin to have an amazing attitude toward the dignity of God.

If I do not have the proper understanding with great reverence for who God is, there is no way I can resist the devil, and there is no way I can bring a clear message to the souls that need salvation. It is only through knowing what God is like and what the Cross has done that I will ever be able to make an impact. It is the people who don't know what God is like who have problems with depression that comes from the gods of addiction, lust, and materialism. All three represent three diverse appetites under the god of this world in which the whole world lies in his infections (1 John 5:19).

Under the Authority of the Word

Now, a person who does not understand what God is like will never understand what George Mueller meant when he said that "The authority of experience is always wrong, but the authority of the Word of God to control my experience is always right."

A great English pastor, said, "One of the great problems of our day is that people live in impulses, and feelings, and experience in their

emotions apart from the premise of God's truth."

When I evaluate the Word of God by my experience and by emotions, I will want counseling. I will stay home and withdraw from the Body of believers. I will be sick and tired of this and that, because my experience makes my God seem too small. But when I'm filled with the Word of God and filled with the Holy Spirit, then I live faith to faith. The righteousness of God takes me out of the faith I'm in today and into the next realm of faith that I need. Then, the Word of God and the righteousness of God take me into this new realm of faith and it keeps on going forward.

This is why God stresses the importance of hearing His Word daily (Psalm 119:97, Matthew 6:11, and Acts 20:31-32). The people in Ephesus assembled daily twice a day for three consecutive years during Paul's ministry there. Many people today don't want to hear every Word of God because it promotes discipleship through the Cross and on to the resurrection side of the Ascension.

So as the Word of God dwells in us, we continually go out of one degree of glory and into another, out of one realm of faith into another,

out of one realm of reflecting God's nature to another.

It all consummates in our heart as we discover what God is like (Psalm 84:7-8), and He takes us from "strength to strength." We go from divine strength to another area of divine strength. We face deeper trials as we pass the previous ones, revealing God's glory as we go. Glory is a reflection of some aspect of the nature of God. Joy, peace, obedience, faithfulness, patience, kindness, gentleness, meekness: These are the aspects of His nature (which is love) that we reflect as we are being conformed to God's image.

Finally, through the river of life that flows out of us, we reveal what God is like. We end up with the experience expressed in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ: It is no longer I who live, but Christ…."

True Sanctification: Life without Hypocrisy

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Remember that the Holy Spirit loves others through us and sanctifies us with how God thinks. When the Word of God becomes the premise of all of our thinking and the presuppo-

sition of all of our words, then Truth becomes the conclusion of our behavior. If we realize that, then we will see the error of movements today that promote a false system of works.

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:13-14).

While there are born-again Christians in these movements, they are deceived and will miss many opportunities for eternal rewards. They have accepted a counterfeit system that claims to have Jesus Christ but it doesn't have His way of thinking, confessing, and living.

To be right with God, we just keep growing, rebounding when we fail. It is amazing when God who is love shares His love with us by grace. Filled with the character of God, our lives become ontological. In other words, our lives become predictable, consistent in God's grace, because of who we are (and *Whose* we are), in public and in private. We are who we are in God.

CONCLUSION

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD" (Psalm 37:23).

We receive a special anointing to honor and glorify Jesus Christ as we make a real impact upon our cities, with eternal results.

In every city there are those who would be saved, and that is who we are going after. We evangelize everybody, but our purpose is to reach those who want to be saved. If our steps are ordered by God, then we are headed for a divine appointment, and no human appointment can interfere.

Father, we give You praise and thanks. You guide us, protect us, cover us, go before us, and go behind us. You are in us. You have given us gifts of wisdom. Lord, let us operate in the joy You have given as our strength, knowledge of the truth for wisdom, peace for relaxation, and faith-rest to abide in Your plan. We desire to manifest Your power as we go forth. Grant that for us, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Put God First

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

In everything, God deserves preeminence; He is to be first in my life. My relationship with Him is my most important relationship. As a result, I put His Living Word and His written Word first.

Because of the seriousness of the times we are living in, it is vital that we be in tune with God and give Him first place in our lives.

The Bible is sound, personal, and very relevant for the times we are living in. Our prayer is that the words in this booklet will inspire each of us to put God first in every area of our lives.

Chapter One

WITH ALL OF OUR HEARTS

"Amaziah was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.

"And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, *but not with a perfect heart*" (2 Chronicles 25:1-2).

There are many degrees of following God. In 2 Chronicles 25:1-2, we see Amaziah, a man who did everything right in the sight of God. Amaziah was faithful to go to the house of God. Yet, his heart was not perfect toward God.

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:30).

This verse first tells us to love the Lord our God with all of our hearts. That means we are to love with fervent and complete commitment in

our motivation, communication, personal application, response, dedication, consecration, and sanctification.

We are also commanded to love the Lord our God with all five parts of our souls, with all of our minds (speaking of our mental attitude), and with all of our strength (referring to our physical bodies). This is the *first* commandment.

The word "first" is the Greek adjective *protos*. We are to put God first wherever we are. He is to rank as the most important Person in our lives. And when He is first, we obey His Word.

In 2 Corinthians 8:5, Paul writes of the Macedonian believers who "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." Not only did they submit to God, but also they highly esteemed and honored their pastor-teacher who taught them the Word of God.

Matthew 6:33 says, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God." This means that the Kingdom of God is to be first in time and space, the foundation of the highest possible relationship we have in the world. Our King is the One who is most important in our lives. We are to seek the kingdom of God first, with its Finished Work righteousness, and then all other things will be added unto us.

Maintain a Doctrinal House

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

Spiritually speaking, there should be a sign over our houses that says: "This is a doctrinal house." The parents in Israel taught their children doctrine when they woke up in the morning, when they walked, and when they ate. Morning, noon, and night, parents placed the doctrines of God in the forefront of their children's minds (Deuteronomy 4:9-10; 6:4-9).

Some husbands let their wives operate as the head of the home. Some men have never been in charge. It is time for them to take charge and take on the consequences of obedience.

Going Where He Goes

"And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

"And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of

man hath not where to lay his head.

"And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

"Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

"And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:57-62).

The Son of man had no place to lay his head. Is this the kind of God you follow and put first? That verse spells "homelessness," which is what Jesus experienced on earth. Do you want to follow Him? If you truly want to follow Him, that is what it may come to.

Someone wanted to go home and bury his father. Jesus told him, "Let the dead bury the dead. You go and preach the kingdom of God." Another man said he would follow Jesus, but only after taking time to say farewell to his family. Jesus said to him, "No man who looks back is even fit for the kingdom of God." We are not even fit for the kingdom if we want to go home

first and follow Christ second.

Jesus Christ will accept nothing but first place in every Christian's life. He will not accept second place.

Chapter Two

COME TO GOD'S ALTAR

"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah" (Psalm 84:3-4)

In Genesis 13:4, Abraham went to the place of the altar, which he had made "at the first." The altar, in the Old Testament, spoke of the place where the believer bowed down, worshipped, and confessed his sin.

In 2 Samuel 11, we read how King David failed by committing adultery with Bathsheba. When David found out that she had become pregnant, he arranged the death of her husband, Uriah (a faithful soldier in Israel's army), by sending him to the front line on the battlefield. After David's sin was exposed, Nathan the

prophet told him that the child conceived with Bathsheba would become sick and die.

David fasted and prayed for the child's healing. But when he learned that the child was dead, David got up, "washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped" (in 2 Samuel 12:20).

Because David had begun to understand that God's altar was a place of the mercy and grace of God, he might have prayed like this: "Lord, I have confessed my sins and I surrender my life back to You. I am not going to stay at home. I am not going to think that I am not good enough. I am not going to withdraw. I will continue to go to the house of the Lord. That is where I will get right with You. I want to dwell with You, Lord, all the days of my life."

No longer in mourning, David chose to put God first—ahead of his sin and guilt. Then, he went home. Cleansing, redemption, rebound—that is what the altar was for. And as New Testament believers, we have a Finished Work altar that keeps us pure as we put Christ first in our lives.

"Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

"And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 1:7-8).

The altar had changed for the Jewish people. It was polluted and was no longer, as it had been, the most beautiful thing in Abraham's life. Exodus 40:33-35 says that after Moses finished the work on the tabernacle and had placed the ark and the mercy seat within, a cloud covered the tent of the congregation. Moses could not enter in because of the cloud and the glory of God that filled the tabernacle. The same thing happened when Solomon's temple was finished (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14). The presence of God is so holy.

Several scriptures in the Old Testament refer to the ark as God's resting place, His dwelling place. Specifically, the Bible says that the place of His presence was upon the mercy seat that covered the ark, between the golden cherubim

(1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 37:16).

According to 2 Kings 25:9-17, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed that temple by fire when he took the people of Israel into captivity. (Also, see Psalm 74:7 and Isaiah 64:11.) Articles from the tabernacle were carried away into Babylon; but there is no further mention of the ark or the mercy seat.

Later, according to Ezra 1:1, King Cyrus of Persia was stirred by the Lord, and he made a decree that the children of Israel should rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Even though Cyrus was not a Jew, he saw the importance of putting God first. He knew that if Israel was blessed, he would be blessed. The salvaged vessels were "restored, and brought again unto the temple," when the temple was rebuilt and dedicated (see Ezra 6:1-22); however, nothing is said about the glory of the Lord filling it.

Those who built the temple did everything right. They did everything just as the Bible said. Yet, as far as we know, the glory of God did not fill that temple. There was no ark of God's presence; there was no mercy seat.

Our Bodies: The Temple of God

Our bodies are the temple of God. Some Christians struggle so much with getting right with God because they don't have any glory inside of them.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

"Remember, therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:4-5).

God addressed this passage to the church of Ephesus. "I know how hard you have worked. I know your works," God said to the believers there. "I know that you hate those who do evil. I know you have tested those who say they are apostles and they are not, and you have found them to be liars. I know of your patience and your labors. I know you have not fainted. But I have something against you—you have left your first love. Repent, lest I come quickly. I want you to do your first works."

The people at Ephesus had lost their first love. They had stopped doing their first works, which are the works of faith. What is the work

of God? John 6:29 says it is but to believe. They had lost their first love. What is "first love"? It is God loving me as a sinner, dying for me, shedding His blood for me, being buried for me, rising again for me, ascending to heaven for me, and loving me just as I was when I was evil and wicked. I received that love. That is first love.

When something is going on in your life, don't do some other thing—do the *first* thing. God's Word should be first. It is God's place. God's work, God's provision, God's presence—these things must be first. The first thing we do is to live in the possibility of a limitless life with the glory of God, at the altar of God with its horns. Live in the love of God with the faith of God that produces the works of God.

God must be first. Serve God because He is first. Love God first. Obey God first. Honor God first.

Chapter Three

DRAW NEAR AND PUT FAITH INTO ACTION

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

"When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

"And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He

went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (John 9:1-7).

Jesus said to the blind man, "Go to the pool. I am not going to heal you right here. I want you to go ahead and do something by faith while you are still blind." To the man who had not walked for thirty-eight years, Jesus said, "Rise up and walk." He didn't say, "Stay home, sit still, you're sick. He did not say, "Because you are blind, you just stay there."

God wants faith. He wants faith. Go to God when you are tired. Go when you are weary. You will be filled when you are feeling discouraged. You will be quickened when you are feeling down, lifted up when you are feeling low, and blessed when you are feeling empty. There is power for you when you feel faint. Always draw near. Come close to God with character, conviction, communion, communication, obedience, and response. Honor the will of God in obedience.

Why had the altar changed in Israel? Why did the glory of God depart? Why is it that these things happened when they did everything right? They had lost their first love.

We need to trust God for our children. Trust God for them. "Suffer the little children to come

unto Me, for such is the kingdom of God," Jesus said. How can the children hear the Word if they are not brought to church? They—as all of us—need to sit down, take notes (if they are old enough), and listen as we are told that Jesus is God, Creator, Redeemer, and Forgiver. Children need to know that Jesus gave His life as a ransom for us and that He is all in all (Colossians 3:11). They need to hear that they are going to meet God face to face one day. Whether a child is five or seven years old, one day he will meet the Lord face to face. Children need to be told that God is everything. They need to learn to put Him first.

Children need to seek God first and love Him first, making Him most important. They need to know that God is first. Teen-agers need to know that attendance to a local church is first (over staying home and watching TV).

Most of us are smart enough to go to the doctor when we are sick. A person who is sick is not afraid to go to the doctor's office. The place David went after he had fallen was the house of God. He knew where to go when he was spiritually sick. For some, it would be good to come to the house of God, go down to the front, and make an altar for themselves. All of us should

kneel before God and humble ourselves before Him.

A person can leave his church, leave a body of believers; however, he can never sever himself from Jesus Christ's Body. Even if that person chooses to never talk to us again, we still will feel the pain of missing that member of the Body, for it is Christ's Body (see Ephesians 1:22-23).

Boldly Come to the House of God

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

"By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

"And having an high priest over the house of God;

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves

together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:19-25).

When a believer fails, he should come to the house of God. The Greek text of this passage reveals that church attendance was not a priority for those Christians because of the persecution going on at the time. Still, believers are to purpose to draw near through church attendance, even in the midst of the persecution.

As believers, we should draw near and have our consciences made totally clean. God will remove every single feeling of shame and guilt. He will cleanse our consciences and make us brand-new. Then, having our bodies "washed with pure water," the physical body feels well again, because the conscience is right again. When we put God first, hearing the Word of God will be a priority.

If you have failed and withdrawn from fellowship, go back to church and put God first.

I can guarantee you that one day, every knee will bow before the Lord, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is God. Our God is a jealous God, and He wants to be "all, and in all" in our lives (Colossians 3:11). This is why we are to seek Him first. Let's seek His Kingdom first.

Let's seek His righteousness first.

Staying True to the Truth

A pastor does not quote Scripture and serve God to manipulate anyone. The pastor with a heart after God desires to prepare his people, so he can present them to Jesus Christ with a smile, saying, "Here's a faithful servant." This pastor wants to present people before Christ's Bema Seat with joy (Hebrews 13:17). This is what this pastor lives for. It is his life. Therefore, he cannot be a respecter of persons. He has to serve God first.

When we love God with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength, then we draw nearer and nearer to God, holding fast to our profession of faith. Furthermore, we encourage others to draw near (Hebrews 10:24). We don't forsake the assembly (Hebrews 10:25). Whatever we do, we do all to glorify God.

God created the universe. He holds all things together by the Word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). By Him all things consist (Colossians 1:17). Therefore, the Lord must have preeminence in all things (Colossians 1:18). It is our Lord with Whom we must be intimate.

Christ died for us and shed His blood for us, taking upon Himself every sin we have ever committed, paying the penalty for it all. The One who gave us His righteousness deserves to have us come into His house. He deserves our love for the altar He prepared for us. He deserves our obedience in honoring His Church, the Body of Christ. He deserves to have us put Him first. He will take care of our families and everything else that pertains to us if we are reasonable in putting Him first.

The believers at Ephesus did everything right, but according to Revelation 2:1-7, they had lost their first love. They were not doing their first works. They were not operating in a faith that serves by love (Galatians 5:6).

The Need for Obedience

We need to have honor and reverence toward Jesus Christ and the Word of God. If God tells me to preach that drinking alcohol is wrong, then I am going to preach that it is wrong. It is up to those who hear the Word to obey it. That is between them and God, but no one will stop me from telling people what God says.

For this reason, I preach that believers

should be baptized as soon as possible after they are saved. Baptism doesn't save anyone, but God said to do it. Baptism is a confession before God and the angels and the demons of what has happened in the heart of a Christian. We go down into the water, representing Christ's death and burial, and we come up out of it in His resurrection. It is a practical expression that I have believed in the truth of God's Word, and it shows that I am not ashamed to identify with obedience to God's command.

We are living in an urgent hour. There is more heart disease today than at any time in human history. There is more and more cancer in people's bodies now than at any time in the past twenty-five years.

God's people need to become involved with intercession and prayer. Without being pessimistic, we need to have a measure of solemnity. Every morning we should present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to Him. This is our reasonable service. Let us not be conformed to this world, but instead be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Then, we will prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God with our measure of faith (Romans 12:1-3). Let us put God first in everything.

CONCLUSION

Great peace have they that love doctrine. Nothing offends them because they live by every word of God, putting Him first. Grace is not something that gives us license to act unseemly; Grace is our teacher, showing us God's ways.

Jesus Christ said, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, so that where I am, there shall this man be also. And, whosoever keeps on following Me, him will My Father honor all the time" (see John 12:26).

What would it take to cause me to stop following God's Son? The answer is "nothing," if God ranks first in my life. He is first in importance. His Word released in the power of His Spirit must be first in my life.

I thank God that He will be the first to stand and greet us when we die—He will stand to His feet before the angels even begin to carry us home (Acts 7:56).

When we are sensitive to put Jesus Christ first in every detail of our lives—in love, life, and light, using rebound when we fail—miracles of His power will be released. We have seen it in our church recently, because so many people have committed themselves to coming early and praying before the services. This new attitude and this new dedication to prayer and to worship have made a remarkable difference in our services.

We have seen such a moving of God and have learned that not a single thing is impossible with God when we put Him first.

Quickened by the Word

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Revival means to be quickened, refreshed, renewed, to be constantly filled with the Spirit, and to have God's Word as the norm and standard for your mental attitude, emotional response, confession, and behavior.

Through the grace of Almighty God, it is possible for anything to happen as the Holy Spirit of God visits each heart during this time. We are not using the usual textbooks for revival nor are we praying that God would send revival. That has been way overworked, it is often misunderstood, and it doesn't equate to the biblical premise for what the word "revival" means, generally speaking, in the Scriptures.

What Jesus Christ has done and who Jesus Christ is—being revealed in us and to us, being experienced by us, and being expressed through us—that's revival. What Jesus Christ has done for us is experienced by grace through faith according to the Word of God through the humil-

ity of the Cross. Many messages on humility preceded this series on revival, and not by accident nor coincidence, because God revives the contrite and humble heart and quickens us according to the Word of God as it is engrafted through meekness (James 1:21).

Satan wants Christians to be rooted and grounded in their circumstances, in their feelings, and in their knowledge, but without renewal, refreshment, and the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. Satan desires that we become familiar with the sacred.

For that reason, once a child of God has had much tribulation, and that tribulation works experience, then the Holy Spirit quickens the Word of God to his heart. That experience causes him to be quickened and renewed for the present circumstances that he faces. He takes seriously all the subjects that relate to the Word of God. So the Word of God says, "Quicken thou me according to thy word" (Psalm 119:154). That is our very special premise for the meaning that is brought out in this booklet.

Chapter One

GODLY MOTIVATIONS FOR THOUGHTS AND WORDS

"And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

"For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem" (Ezra 9:8-9).

Now that particular verse says, "To give us a reviving, to revive us while we are in a little bondage and to revive us out of bondage." That's what revival does.

I could be facing all kinds of mountains and walking before God in my heart and no one but

God might know it (Genesis 17:1). And the Word of God will be spoken by the Holy Spirit: "The flesh profiteth nothing but the words that God speaks, they are spirit and they are life."

Suddenly, the Word is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, and it pierces even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, and the soul and spirit, and becomes a critic of the motives of the heart.

One of the things that characterizes revival is having godly motivations for thoughts and for words. Constrained by the love of God (2 Corinthians 5:14), I am motivated to think in the relaxed attitude of God's love. Motivation in the quickening process of God is always an indication of the source of my life and the motives of my heart.

Let me say it again. Motivation is always an indication of the source of my life and the motives of my heart.

What can revival mean for you where you're living, or for me where I'm living? What can it really mean to be quickened immediately? It means that we don't lapse into serving God in the flesh. Instead, we serve God with knowledge through the flesh.

When Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians,

he said, "Are you foolish? You started out in the Spirit. Can you make yourself perfect in the flesh, you foolish Galatians? You started out in the Spirit through faith. Now can you make yourself perfect or mature through the energy of the flesh? No, you cannot, you foolish Galatians."

And this is where so much of Christianity stands: Saved by grace through faith, starting out properly with God, knowing that Jesus did everything, and that they received Him as a Person. Then suddenly, a problem arises in the family. Difficulties enter into the marriage—relationships get challenged. Security becomes a serious problem because of finances. Physical afflictions come upon people. Having started out in the Spirit, they use the same Scriptures that they had previously used to try to solve the problem in the flesh. They are not quickened.

Often, someone will have an affliction and it is not of God. They were quickened but they're not quickened now. They've been delivered from depression, but they stopped being quickened. They've been delivered from pride but stopped being quickened. They've been delivered from lust, but then they stopped being quickened.

Any time we're not revived, renewed, refreshed, and quickened exactly according to the Word and the filling of the Spirit, we will make cracks—even against the Word—and treat it with a familiar spirit. Revival is so necessary.

His Unfailing Love and His Abiding Loyalty

Revival is something that we experience by grace through faith in the Word of God. The first thing we must understand is God's unfailing love and His beautiful loyalty to every child of God.

The Ninevites were pagans. They were not under a covenant with God. Remember that. And Jonah did not want them to repent. So, in the second verse of the fourth chapter he said, "The reason I don't want to preach to them" (he finally revealed his heart) "is because I know that you are a gracious God. You are longsuffering, You are slow to anger, and You are a God of lovingkindness and mercy."

Can you imagine it? Jonah did not want to preach to these heathens who were not a covenant people. And the reason he did not want to proclaim the truth to these people is that he did not want them to repent. He knew that if they even so much as looked to heaven, they would

be forgiven.

See it for yourself: "And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."

What a reason to backslide!

We have heard they made a sport in Nineveh of flaying the skin of small children and babies. Spectators cheered for those who did it. They were a vicious, wicked, vile, terrible people. Some people feel that Jonah was so patriotic that he pictured them saying, "We'll accept God," as they became saved—only to backslide and hurt Israel. That seems to be the consensus as to why he didn't trust in their repentance.

But revival means to know God's character, to experience God's nature, to live in God's words. Revival means to accept God's promises. Revival means to keep being filled with God's Spirit. And revival means knowing how to be quickened.

I want you to notice in this principle of revival, how very beautiful and special this unfailing love of God is—this absolute love which just

will not quit. It will not stop reaching toward anyone who responds by grace through faith. Even though the Ninevites were not a covenant people, Jonah knew that God would give them grace and mercy for any type of response at all as they believed upon Him. This is the unfailing love of God.

Psalm 89:1 says, "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever." I will sing and show His kindness throughout all generations. I will sing of His unfailing love, His unfailing friendship, His unfaltering forgiveness.

Forever and ever, I will show forth His mercies.

Then revival centers around the precious Word of God. As we consider the Word of God, we will consistently see this. "I am He that speaketh," God says (Isaiah 52:6). "Let it be according to My word" (Isaiah 8:20).

In John 4:50, the man believed the word and his son was healed, perhaps thirty miles away. He believed the word. That is revival. He was renewed by the words spoken. "I am He that speaketh." He believed the word.

2 Corinthians 4:13b says, "we also believe, and therefore speak." One man said to Jesus, "You just say the word," and Jesus spoke the

word, and he was healed.

Now that's what revival is all about! Just hearing God speak the Word, believing it, and becoming revived, refreshed, renewed through simple childlike faith in Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two
WHO AM I?

Satan hates to see changes in the hearts and lives of God's people. Revival means to be constantly and progressively changed in the process of a response, through the process of a frame of reference, in the process of life, through the circumstances that face us. Satan despises this principle.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—liberty to lay down our lives; liberty through the Spirit to love with unfailing love. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." "Follow" in Psalm 23, speaks of relentless pursuit. Surely, divine goodness and mercy shall make their relentless pursuit all the days of my life.

That was a prayer of affirmation by David in the Absalom revolution. He trusted God's character. He trusted God's name. He was fellowshipping with God's Spirit. David was exercised

with love for his son. But in the midst of it all, he was revived. In that situation David said, "The LORD is shepherding me, and I shall not want any thing."

You see, he was being revived in the midst of a very difficult trial. What do you think revived him? The Word of God. In that case, the inspired Word of God. We read it today from the Scriptures, the full canon of Scriptures, and it's still the inspired Word of God, despite what the liberals say. It's all true.

Revival! David was refreshed. He was quickened. And he said, "Surely divine goodness and unfailing love will relentlessly pursue after me all the days." All the days, not some days. That's revival.

So, I take that verse and I walk along, and Satan comes against me with demons, and all kinds of things happen, and that verse comes to me. "Surely divine goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life"—relentlessly, a pursuit of God—"and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

This is what revival is. Revival is being quickened according to God's precious Word.

Think with me. When you called upon Jesus Christ to save you, the moment you believed on

Jesus Christ, you were quickened by the fact that you were saved. Isn't that strange? At least I didn't have any great feelings. I just had two Narragansett ales—only two—and I was arguing with my brother about baseball. My first wife, who went home to be with the Lord, said she got saved, and I said, "Big deal. Aren't you really proud of that?" It was terrible. And she said, "I don't care if you believe it or not. I'm saved and I'm going to heaven if I die." And then she walked away.

I looked at my brother and I said, "Well, look at that. We've really got the holy one in the house tonight." And within an hour I was in the living room, in our little room asking Christ to be my Savior. I just didn't want her to have anything I didn't have. I simply said, "Lord, I know I'm a sinner. I cannot save myself. I believe You died, shed Your blood, were buried, rose again, and went to heaven, and You're coming back. The Bible says it, and I really believe."

Now, I didn't have an experience like some of you. You've got to remember this. Some walked through the door, some crawled through, some jumped through, some raced through, some turned somersaults, but the important thing is to get through the door tonight. Some of

you had every experience in the book. You got every gift, but you're not one bit more saved than I am.

"For by grace are you saved by faith, and not of yourself. It's a gift of God and not of works, lest any man should boast." I got saved by grace through faith. In Romans 11:6, if grace isn't all grace, then it's not grace at all—just in case you forget that every once in a while because you're not revived and quickened by the truth.

I didn't really appreciate the great thing that God had done until I began to study the Scriptures and realized who I was compared to who He is—how precious He is and what a sinner I am. But then I understood the words of this song:

When I think of how He came
so far from glory,
came to dwell among the lonely such as I,
to suffer shame in such disgrace,
and on Calvary take my place.
Then I asked myself the question
Who am I?
Who am I that the King
would bleed and die for?
Who am I that He would pray

‘not my will, thine, Lord’?
The answer I may never know
why He ever loved me so.
And to the old rugged Cross
He’ll go for who am I?”

A while after I got saved, I realized what Jesus did, and then it began to enter deeply into my heart, and I understood the doctrine of the Word.

In Isaiah 53:3, Christ is despised as a man of sorrows and rejected of men. In Job 25:6, Job said he was a worm. And Jesus Christ, identifying with us, said, “He was a worm, and no man” (Psalm 22:6a). He was perfect but in identifying with us. Jesus bore our own sins in His body on a tree, paid for every personal sin, was buried and rose again (1 Peter 2:24).

I’ve seen some of my loved ones go through so much, and you have too, and they’re beautiful people, and I love them. But you always ask the question, “Who am I that I accepted Christ?”

“Who am I that the King
would bleed and die for?
Who am I that He would pray
‘Not my will, thine, Lord’?

The answer I may never know
why He ever loved me so.
And to the old rugged Cross He goes,
for who am I?

When I'm reminded of His words,
'I'll leave you never. Just be true
and I'll give you a life forever.'
I wonder what I could have done
to deserve God's only Son
to fight my battles until they're won,
for who am I?

The answer I may never know
why He ever loved me so.
And to the old rugged He goes,
for who am I?"

Chapter Three
LIVE LIKE A KING

I said, "Quicken me. I don't know how to say it to You, and I'm even afraid to, but quicken me. Just quicken me. Give me a hunger and thirst after righteousness. Help me to follow You and just work grace and mercy and love in my life. Help me to know You not after the flesh. Help me to serve You not in the energy of Adam. I'm just a creature, fallen and depraved. You're everything! Quicken me."

For salvation, that's the whole thing. Think of it with me. When you believed in Christ, when I believed on Christ, He bore every personal sin I will ever commit. If we sin now, we must repent and forsake it. It grieves the Spirit. It quenches the Spirit. And if we don't accept recovery, there'll be chastisement through grace.

But when you confessed your sins to God, do you know what happened? He remembered them no more. He removed them as far as the

east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). But He crowned you with unfailing love—He crowned you. Do you know who gets crowned? Kings. You know what a king is in the original language? Someone who can. He crowned you as a king (Revelation 1:6), made you kings and priests unto God and washed you from your sins in His own precious blood. You see, He crowned you with unfailing love as a king who can right now. That's what revival is.

In Micah 7:18-19, He passes by your transgressions. Psalm 103:13 says that God Almighty pities you as the father pities a child. In Isaiah 44:22, He redeems us. He redeems us forever.

Believe and Know

What is revival? It's believing that you're saved. It's knowing that you are saved, that your sins are forgiven and forgotten, that God remembers them no more. It's knowing He can't impute sin to you. It's knowing that if you examine yourself, if you'll recover, He won't even chastise you after you've failed.

Still, so many people don't live in revival, my dear friends. Let me illustrate it.

You failed. You sin. And the Bible says, "If we confess our sins (homologeo, name them), He

is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Then it says, "And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But that's not all.

Isaiah 43:25 is an Old Testament recovery verse: "I, even I, have blotted out your transgressions." "I, even I"—God Almighty who is everywhere present, who has all knowledge and all power—"I, even I, have blotted out your transgressions."

The next part of the verse says this: "For My name's sake. Because of My unfailing love. Because I'm the Father of mercies. Because I'm the God of all grace. I, even I, the One that has all knowledge, the One that's everywhere present, the One that has all power. I, even I, have blotted out all your transgressions for My name's sake because I'm unfailing love, and My justice was satisfied through My Son."

The next thing that God says is so precious. Oh, listen to what He says: "And I cannot remember your sins." It's in your Bible.

That doesn't tell me to go out and sin over and over. But the righteous fall seven times a day and get up and the wicked fall and stay in the mischief. Revival is for salvation, and revival is for recovery. It means to be quickened with no condemnation, with no guilt, with no reflections

of negativity, with no self-intimidation, with no indictment.

It means to go on and serve this God who said, "I, even I, have blotted out your transgressions as a thick cloud, and I remember not your sins. And I did it for My name's sake. I'm everywhere present. I'm all powerful. I'm Almighty God. But I did it. I did it." And that's what being quickened is.

Revival means to be quickened by the everlasting consolation of God's unfailing name. He said, "I did it for My name's sake." And He said, "I've crowned you with mercy. I've crowned you with grace. I've crowned you with lovingkindness. I've crowned you with unfailing love. I've crowned you as a king who can do it." And so in Romans 8:37, we can say, "We are more than conquerors through him that loves us."

CONCLUSION

God will revive our hearts. We can run and not get weary. We can walk and not faint. Revival is here. That means the Word of God is being quickened. Jesus Christ is being revealed to us, through us, and by us, by His spirit. These are great days, and God is so good.

Think with me. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted." I love that. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God for Christ's sake forgave you."

Do you know why we should totally forgive and forget one another's transgressions? Because God did it for us. Do you know why we forgive each other just the way God did and never bring it up? Because God did that for us. That's revival.

God did it for Christ's sake, and I forgive you for Christ's sake, and you forgive me and you forgive each other for Christ's sake because God forgave you for Christ's sake. It's so simple.

That's revival—being renewed, refreshed, quickened, transformed, and changed from glory to glory—being changed.

When you're being changed, Tuesday is sweet, Wednesday is sweeter, Thursday is sweeter, and Friday yet sweeter. The circumstances may not be, but the love of God motivates us, and the Word of God is resting in our hearts. It's all because we're being changed.

As we look into the Word, the Spirit changes us. You see, as we go from glory to glory, we are changed by the Spirit of God. Christianity is not wearisome. It's not boring.

Who am I? Nobody. Nothing but a worm in myself—but in Jesus Christ I'm a new creature and a saint. I'm a member of the royal family. I'm a king. I'm a priest. I'm more than a conqueror. God causes me to triumph.

As God's people, we are changed. This is the beautiful thing about revival. The Word says it, we read it, then we humble ourselves before God, and He revives us (Isaiah 57:15). He quickens us, and we're changed into a new, reflected glory—or attribute of the nature of Jesus Christ Himself—on the inside.

It is so beautiful to be quickend by the Word of God.

Rebound and Rejoice

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

There are two things that God desires. First, He desires that every person be saved. Secondly, He desires us to be content with what He has provided in life. That contentment springs out of a heart filled with joy. Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." The only way a believer can always rejoice is by understanding God's desire: "that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4).

In John 15:11, Jesus was saying, "I have spoken these things to you so that *My* joy might remain in you, so that *your* joy might be full." Have joy in everything you do. Not only is that the object of a life of faith-rest through the work that was finished on our behalf at Calvary, but it is also the object of rebound in the life of a believer. By rebounding—by getting up and coming back when you fall down—your joy will be full.

Imagine it! The object of Jesus Christ dying

on the Cross was to take miserable, wretched people like us and bring joy to our hearts by saving our souls. People who want to satisfy the need of their own souls may use escapism through various means, such as taking pleasure in drinking alcohol. Drinking alcohol is wrong, but it is also wrong when believers go against God's Word simply by being anxious. No matter what we may go through, God's desire is to bring joy to each heart.

In this booklet, I hope that you see the practical aspects of the principle of rebound. Many people think they have rebounded when they really have not. They may be doing everthing right, but they are fearful of failing again. As you go through these pages, my prayer is that you will come to understand that the purpose of rebound is always that your joy may be full.

Chapter One

JESUS PAID IT ALL

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

"(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

"And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the

truth:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:1-10).

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

"And he is the propitiation [(or Mercy Seat, which means the same thing)] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:2-4).

Notice how God addresses us in a transla-

tion of 1 John 2: "My little, small children—you are so little, so small in your thinking, so small in your hope and vision, so small in your aspirations, so small in your desires. You are *little* children." He said that these things were written so that we would not sin. But John also wrote that if any man *does* sin, we have an advocate with the Father in Jesus Christ, the righteous one. Jesus died so that not only the Church but the whole world might have the opportunity to receive Him as their Savior.

I once knew a woman who had no joy or happiness. She was sickly and she lacked motivation. She didn't want to be around anyone, and all she wanted to do was sleep. She wasn't reactionary toward any particular thing, but she just felt that everything was going badly for her. It got to the point where she didn't care if she were alive or dead. She finally went to the doctor, and after a thorough examination and some lab work, he told her that she was anemic. He prescribed medicine to help build up her blood and encouraged her to have nutritionally balanced meals, to get plenty of fresh air, and to have proper rest. As she began to follow the doctor's advice, she also began to feel better, and she started to make right decisions with the

Word of God. Her physical health began to rebound. Her blood tests showed that her blood count was up and her health had actually improved. Soon, everything began to add up and shape up, and everything was all right.

"I can't believe the difference!" she said, "I enjoy everything now. Everything makes sense. I'm beginning to live again. I actually enjoy cooking for my family. I enjoy being with my children. I enjoy eating, talking, listening—I enjoy everything. And everything is all right."

The Bible says that the life of the flesh is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). No wonder! Just getting her blood right made a tremendous difference for that woman. She also got her life right with God, and it made a difference.

Living with Divine Purpose

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Corinthians 11:28-30).

Every once in awhile I look myself over as I

am, and I consider what I used to be before I was saved, when I was outside of the will of God. I don't like to dwell on it. It is the peril of the victorious life to dwell on it. But once in a great while, I look myself over, and I think of what a wretched, no-good, miserable, blind individual I was! I thought I had the world by the collar, but all the time the devil had me by the neck. I thought I was going on the right path, but all the time the devil had me on the broad road of destruction. I thought everything was adding up, but all the while I was being subtracted from what God would want me to be through His Spirit. Everything was going poorly. There was no happiness, no real joy in my pursuits. But when I became convicted of my condition and received Jesus Christ as my Savior, that was when He became my reason to rebound and to rejoice.

Put the Past Away and Turn to Jesus

I was reading an article about a group of young people who had become rebellious and were involved with a motorcycle gang. They would go to a family recreation area every summer and cause havoc. When a policeman asked one of them why they did it, he said "Well, I

guess you're going to tell me that we don't have any purpose for living." He was saying, "We eat, drink, and are merry, for tomorrow we may die" (Luke 12:19-20).

Psychiatrists and psychologists are ever working, trying to get man's past out of his system, trying to get him to see something he did at the age of ten, the age of twelve, and the age of twenty. The analysis is an attempt to bring things out into the open and thus find a cure. He may respond for a time, but it will not last. Sooner or later he will fall right back in the same problems. Why? Analysis is not the ultimate answer.

Think of the great hymns and the songs about the power of the Gospel and the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. Consider all that God has done for people down through the ages and what He is doing today. *He* is the Answer.

When I think of what the Lord Jesus Christ can do, has done, and will do, all I can do is rejoice. Consider how He gives us joy, how He makes us rejoice. He has given us the Spirit of God, meaning in life, purpose in living, and a spring in our step!

When I think of what the precious Blood means, it warms my heart. I get as much joy out

of knowing that today as I ever did. In fact, He is more precious, more beautiful, and more wonderful than ever. I am a child of the King! I am not going to live as an impoverished individual, restrained by the devil and in bondage to sin. I am a child of Jesus Christ. I have been cleansed.

Because of what Jesus Christ accomplished for us on Calvary, we are free. We can have joy that is full, joy that is complete. Everything can add up. We can have a faith that rests in the Finished Work. Everything is going to be all right.

Chapter Two

STAYING IN THE RACE

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

In order to run this race, you have to be a Christian. You must be born-again. You need to be saved. You need to be an individual who has decided to go God's way. With your own free will, you have to choose Jesus Christ. You have to *choose* the Word of God. You need to choose God's way, God's commandments, God's standards, God's Spirit, and God's purposes for your life. That is the first thing. Repent of your

sins and accept Jesus by faith. It is all by grace. That is the first thing. Then, once you are a Christian, Jesus says, "I will start the race with you. I will run with you in the race. And when you get over that long road, I'll be at the finish line, waiting for you."

That is the way the Lord Jesus Christ thinks about you. It's a good race when *He* is helping you, when He gives you the energy. Look unto Jesus! We are compassed about—surrounded—with so great a cloud of witnesses. We have Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Enoch, Rahab the harlot, all the men of God—every believer down through the ages is included in the cloud of witnesses, in the grandstand of Hebrews 11.

Abraham's Story

I could ask Abraham what he thinks about running the race with God.

"Abraham, what do you think about the race?"

"Well, God told me to leave Ur of the Chaldees, but He didn't tell me where I was going. He just said to leave. That's all. So I left.

"I made a few mistakes along the way. I got halfway there and I stopped. Finally my father died. God had told me not to take him with me,

but I did what seemed right in my own eyes. After my father died, everything was all right. I was in Canaan.

"When I got down to Canaan, there was a famine. God was testing my faith. I had left Ur of the Chaldees, the Gentile nation, to go with God by faith to a new land. But once I got there, God wanted to test me to show me what I was going to do with my faith in Him.

"So down into Egypt I went, and I made a mess of things. I lied twice, and I got into all kinds of trouble. But every time, God helped me to rebound. God got me out of it. It was a shaky race, but it was a lot of fun."

One last thing Abraham would say is this, "Don't look unto me. I made a few mistakes. I looked unto other people, but finally I got my eyes on the Master. Finally, I finished my course. Now, everything is all right."

Jacob Wrestled with God

Jacob would make another good interview.

"Jacob, what do you think about it? You're in the grandstand in heaven. You are one of the heroes of faith, according to Hebrews 11. What do you think about it?"

Jacob would probably tell it this way:

"I guess I gave the Lord a lot of trouble. They called me crooked for a reason—I did crooked things! I cheated my brother out of his birthright by deception. Then my father-in-law cheated me, but I got even. I cheated him too. I made a lot of other mistakes.

"But one night, the Word of God came unto me, and the Lord wrestled with me (see Genesis 32). He put my thigh out of joint, and I was lame ever after. Every time I limped I would think, Oh, how God wrestled with me! God has allowed trials and testings and temptations. He has let troubles into my life to get me to where I am now.

"Listen, my thigh still hurts. But I remember that night. All night long, I wrestled and Jesus put my thigh out of joint. Still, I would not let Him go. I told Him, 'I won't let You go until You bless me.' I kept holding on to God and He blessed me. That is the way it works with faith. You fight the good fight of faith and wrestle with God. Every single time, God will bless you."

God wants to bless us. This is the thing God wants to do with mankind. God has never wanted to do anything but bring joy to the heart of man. All God has ever wanted to do is to bless the hearts of men.

Chapter Three

GIVE UP, GET UP, AND GO ON

Many people fall down and fail. Some get so discouraged and they fall so much, they can hardly go on. It is just as if they cannot go on anymore. That is what it seems like. They are so sick of falling down. They know what the Bible teaches. They know what the Word of God says, but they are so tired of trying that they give up, and then they go down again.

In Luke 17:4, in His tremendous lesson to the disciples, God said, "Don't forgive just once. Forgive seven times in a day if a person repents." In Matthew 18:22, "Seven times seventy," says the Lord Jesus on the subject of how much forgiveness we are to give others. God says in 1 John 1:9, "If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you."

David's Confession

Can you picture David in all of his sin? First,

he commited adultery with Bathsheba. Then he arranged the death of Uriah, her husband. And then he lied. Here was David, in trouble and confused. Did David go to the nearest psychiatrist? No, he did not. Did he get excited and take tranquilizers? Well, maybe he felt like it, but I don't believe he did. (I don't think they had them back then.) Did he go out and buy some liquor? I don't read that he did, but it wasn't beyond David. He had the capacity to do it just like you have that capacity, even if you have never done it.

Finally, David's sin was exposed and he cried out to God. Psalm 51 contains the details of that time when he poured out his heart in that confession:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

"Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when

thou judgest.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

"Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

"Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."

"Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

"O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise" (Psalm 51:1-12, 14-15).

Oh, what terrible depths of sin David went into. But thank God! Once he sought the Lord and poured out his heart to Him, David was

able to rebound and then to rejoice. If modern psychiatrists and psychologists would only show people that this is the answer for the convicted, corrupted conscience of mankind. This is the answer for a man who was so nervous.

Living in the Right Answer

This is the answer for the person who gets angry and moody at his job. He gets cross and he curses. He swears out loud. He hollers at his family. He has that habit as a sedative. He always needs to have something outside of Jesus. That is his answer.

The cleansing Blood of Jesus, confession, and rebound is the answer for the believer. It is a life of faith, full of rest, that is able to rebound. David said, "Everything is all right." He wrote some tremendous psalms after his situations. He said, "When I go down in the depths of sin, I don't understand how God puts up with me. I have hurt Him, and lied, and cheated, and lived in sin. Still He shows me His mercies!"

In Acts 13:22, David was called a man after God's own heart from the beginning (Psalm 89). He said, "After I was down in the depths of sin, in a moment of time, Almighty God in all of His lovingkindness cleansed me." David had a clean

mind, a cleansed conscience, and a purged heart, and everything was all right with David. He understood what it meant to rebound, and he rebounded God's way.

The Word of God teaches about the prodigal son, in Luke 15. In a critical moment he said, "I'm going home to my father." He realized that he needed to rebound, and he went home humbled. He repented and rebounded, and God forgave him.

John 21:15-21 describes how Jesus restored Peter publicly and gave him a public ministry. Peter had denied Him and cursed Him (Matthew 26:73). But finally Jesus said, "It's perfectly all right, Peter. Feed My sheep. Feed My lambs. Feed My sheep." He said, "Go and preach the Gospel—right now! Start preaching *now*."

Peter came back through the process of rebound, and God made him a preacher within ten days after he had sinned so great a sin. Oh, God is wonderful! God's mercies are bountiful. He has abundant mercy, and He is so good. When a person wills to sin as Peter did, as David did, and as Abraham did, God says, "I will help you. But don't go to tranquilizers. Don't go to booze. Don't get into sinful habits.

Just confess your sin, get up, and go on." God is saying, "You don't need sedatives. All you need is Jesus. Confess it. Apply the Blood. Believe Me, I will cleanse you inside and outside. Everything is going to be all right."

Chapter Four

WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE

Perhaps, you are way off the dock. Maybe the beautiful songs don't touch you. Maybe you are cold to the Scriptures and the fabulous application of the Word ministered in faith-rest. Perhaps the concept of rebounding and rejoicing don't touch your soul. Maybe you are just not tuned in. Perhaps there is no fire burning. You just don't seem to have the fire. You don't seem to have the life. You don't seem to have the fruit. You are not hungry and thirsty after righteousness. You find it easy to miss services. You find it easy to get out of the will of God. You find it easy to go the wrong way.

I want to encourage you. I want to tell you that you can rebound. You can come back with a rebound. You can come back and be determined to accept the Blood and its applications, and you can rebound. God does not want us to sin, and His gift of grace doesn't give us a license to con-

tinue in sin. If we do sin deliberately, willfully, we will not get away with it. But He also promised that if we confess our sin to Him, He is our provision.

"If any man does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

We have a lawyer standing in the presence of God for us. I can see Him there now, and the devil is there doing his part as the accuser of the brethren in the presence of God (Job 1:6). The devil says, "Listen, that person isn't living a very good life."

But Jesus says, "I am the Attorney, Father. I want to plead for that person."

And the Father says to the Son, "What is Your defense? That person is doing exactly what the devil says he is doing. You are his Advocate. You are the Attorney. You are the Lawyer. What is Your defense for that man who accepted You? Now he is sinning. What is Your defense?"

Then I can see Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as He puts out His hands, and He says, "These nail prints—these represent My defense. I shed My blood for him. My defense is the Blood! The Blood has cleansed that man of all sin (Titus 2:14)."

"You are a very good Lawyer," the Father says. "You are a skillful Attorney. You are a powerful Advocate. I have already agreed to accept that Blood as a payment. It is all right. He can go free."

Let Jesus Keep Your Feet Clean

"Wash me all over," Peter said to Jesus as He washed the disciples' feet (John 13:8-9). Jesus said, "No, I'm not going to wash you all over, just your feet." He said, "You are clean everywhere, but you will need to have your feet washed again and again. You will fall, but I want you to rebound, so let Me wash your feet."

We can rebound. We can get right so that we can enjoy the fellowship with God and with one another, to feel cleansed, to be pure, to be hungry and thirsty after the Word, and to enjoy Christian life with a heart that is full of joy.

The only reason people do not have a song on their lips and the fire is not burning in their bosom is that they have not rebounded. They do not name their sin. They do not confess their sin. Again and again, they follow the same patterns of fleshly, worldly, carnal life with no ability, no power, no determination.

But all they have to do is to rebound.

Is this where you are? Why don't you really rebound and say, "God, I don't know what is wrong. I am not living in sin, but I am just indifferent to those things. I am not happy. I do not have joy. I do not have it. Lord, I want to rebound."

Let the Blood of Jesus Christ be everything it wants to be. Let it cleanse you completely. You have an Advocate. You can be cleansed in a moment. Don't try to "feel" your way out of it. Just walk by faith and rebound by confession and start over again. You can rebound in a moment of time. God's salvation is perfect. His ways are perfect (Psalm 18:30). Just rebound, and walk on as one who is full of joy.

CONCLUSION

There is nothing like the Christian life when you get the true perspective on it. Jesus is so wonderful and so precious and so close. He is always dealing with us with wisdom, talking and witnessing to the spirit and the soul.

Every time I pray, the fellowship seems to be sweeter. The songs seem to be better. The preaching is so powerful. The services, my relationship to Him, and the fellowship that I have in Him just get better and better.

God is so good. God is so wonderful with every Christian. Many can say that as they grow in grace. Many can say, "That's right! That is just what I'm experiencing." I wish that everybody would, and I hope you will too. Why don't you rebound the revival way? Call any sin you fall into by its name. Confess it. Repent of it. Isolate it and go on. By faith, get right with God. Rebound and just let Jesus take you by the hand and uphold you with His free spirit (Psalm

51:12). We all need freedom in our lives. We need to be able to shout with rejoicing, “Amen and hallelujah!” Praise the Lord, for all that He has done.

Receive a Full Reward

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy [Spirit]" (Titus 3:5).

Whenever the principle of spiritual rewards is mentioned, some Christians immediately think of a program of works. They think that if they work hard, volunteer enough of their time, and give enough of their money, there will be a payback.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Our reward, as with our salvation, is according to God's grace, based upon God's mercy. At the point of our salvation, He washed us, regenerated us, and renewed us. We are now equipped to function as His representatives in the neighborhoods, cities, and countries of this world.

This booklet will show that to receive a full spiritual reward is simply a matter of responding to the Word of God as it is preached in the

local church and participating as a “member in particular” in the Body of Christ.

Chapter One

HEEDING THE WORDS OF WISDOM

"The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.

"The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.

"A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?" (Ecclesiastes 10:12-14).

"And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.

"The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

"The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies,

which are given from one shepherd" (Ecclesiastes 12:9-11).

The church is run as any well run organization. In our church organization, we have plurality of administration. This means that elders and associate pastors and staff members express their opinions and ideas; however, the overseeing pastor, like the CEO of a company, has veto rights. He is accountable to God and to the assembly God has given him. He preaches the Word in season and out of season, and he makes the final decisions that affect the organization. This is the practice of many churches that operate under many different denominational banners.

The Need for an Overseer

The important thing to understand here is that every local assembly must have an overseeing pastor, a chief executive. The pastor-teacher who God calls you to sit under is given by God (Ephesians 4:11). A pastor-teacher is never to invade your privacy. He instructs and guides according to categorical doctrine from the Word of God.

If a godly person is called by God to leave this church and attend another church, then I

wish him well and write a beautiful letter. Each of us stands or falls before God. It is not wrong to leave a church if God told you to leave it. It is very, very wrong, however, to malign and criticize and accuse whatever church that you might have left.

Spiritual Authority in Instruction

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:18-19).

I can well imagine that people gossiped about the apostle John for making such statements because he was very old when he said these things. Still, he was an apostle and carried his authority from God.

What I want to focus on is the principle of a full reward. This is why it is important to be in the right local assembly. A biblical local church has a pastor who lives clean and who preaches the whole counsel of God. The people in his

church should be involved in soul-winning—seeking and saving the lost—beginning at home but with a vision for world missions.

We have that involvement within our local church, along with the Bible college and three Christian day schools. Our missionaries have made an impact in 185 countries. To mention these things is not arrogant; rather, it is boasting in what the Lord has done. It is not a disgrace to rejoice over things that God has given us.

Everyone who participates in a godly ministry that serves God and others with the Gospel will share in the rewards God will bestow upon that godly ministry in eternity.

Chapter Two

THE PRINCIPLE OF ACCUMULATION

"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

People who are in heaven right now have yet to receive their full rewards. Jesus is going to bring those rewards with Him according to Revelation 22:12: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." There is a good reason for this: Rewards cannot be given until all the books are closed.

My first wife, who died from leukemia, is awaiting her full reward. She led me to Christ. And even though she is experiencing the fullness of joy in heaven, she cannot receive her rewards because those rewards are tied to what God has done in my life and in the lives God has touched through me. She will receive rewards based upon the results of my life and the results

of the lives of the people who have served with me.

A very wealthy man gave a Bible college a large sum of money to clear its debts. That man's full reward for the gift will not be realized until the last student from the last graduating class of that school has completed his course.

He started the company and hired a couple of salesmen, and he earned a profit from what their sales brought in. Those salesmen brought in other salesmen, and they in turn earned a percentage from what the new salesmen sold, and so on. According to the Bible, this is how our rewards accumulate.

Matthew 10:41 explains this principle: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." Sadly, this doctrine is not emphasized enough.

The Rewards Test

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay,

stubble;

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

Those who understand this truth recognize that leaving a fruitful church and not going on with God is a dangerous move. Can you imagine a person who knows this truth allowing some petty problem to drive him away from his church and away from God? At the Bema Seat judgment, his efforts as a Christian will be revealed as wood (human good, works of the flesh), hay (double-minded in the energy of the flesh), and stubble (knowledge of the truth that was never implemented). Though he is saved and will have a degree of happiness forever, he will receive no rewards to multiply his joy.

Relaying the Word

The two-mile relay is an Olympic team event. The first runner goes a half-mile, then hands the

baton to the second man. A half-mile later, he passes it to the third man who finishes his part and gives it the anchorman who runs to the finish line. What do the first three runners do? Stop and go off for a soda? No, they stay and cheer on the next runner, because what he does will determine their reward of winning the race.

Roland Lord was my first pastor. He was a good man and I got my start under him. He will receive rewards for what God has done in my life, as will several others who encouraged me and preached the Word to me when I was young.

Degrees of Judgment

As much as the Bible speaks of degrees of happiness in heaven, it also speaks of degrees of punishment in hell. That is, those who perpetuated evil will be punished according the number of people touched by their evil. For instance, the man who first sold drugs (assuming he didn't get saved at some point afterward) is awaiting the determination of his full judgment for all the lives ruined by his product.

The same thing goes for those in the world of entertainment who have promoted all the filthiness and suggestiveness sent out on TV air-

waves and in the movies. These people will show anything and everything to make money. Their judgment in hell will be determined only after it is revealed how many teenagers were infected by the seductive worldliness they distributed.

An unsaved father cannot have his punishment in hell determined while he still has children on the earth. That father's full punishment will have to wait until the books are opened before the Lord Jesus Christ at the Great White Throne Judgment for unbelievers. Of course, we know that everyone who has reached the age of accountability is responsible for his own decision to receive or reject Christ (Deuteronomy 24:16). Still, the degrees of punishment will vary according to whether or not he contributed to turning his children away from knowing God.

Matthew 25:30 refers to people being cast into "outer darkness, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth." This reveals that there are degrees of darkness. The people who are in hell right now are suffering, but they have no idea as to the extent of their suffering. They will get a full judgment for what they have wrought on earth.

Chapter Three

YOUR PLACE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

The more faithful you are to church attendance, the more full will be your reward. Church attendance should be a priority, because Christ is the head of the Church and the local body is a revelation of the fullness of Christ on the earth (Ephesians 1:22-23). The more faithful you are to church, the more you will hear the Word of God and grow with God, and as a result, the more you will be able to respond with faith obedience. In Hebrews 10:25, about assembling together, God says, "Do it more." If you gather more often with other believers, then you will get more rewards. It is just that simple.

It is so important that every Christian attend a church that has the right pastor-teacher for him. That pastor must preach categorical doctrine that emphasizes the Finished Work of Jesus Christ. It must be a grace, mercy, and love min-

istry—one that practices God's great commandment to love souls by seeking and saving the lost in its Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and in the uttermost parts of the earth.

Privacy Honored

The pastor must also be one who honors each person's believer-priesthood. He must respect privacy and the individual's right to walk before God. Once he has prayerfully studied and preached the Word on a given subject, the pastor must let each one live unto God.

Even in cases where immorality or other serious issues are brought before him in the table of organization, the pastor must confront the guilty party alone. If the pastor does not do it according to what the Word says (Matthew 18:15-17), he cannot confront anyone, though they may be living in sin. Again, each Christian stands or falls before God. But the church does have the right to exercise discipline.

Rebound and Recovery

It is also important to understand that failure never causes us to lose rewards. We only lose rewards when we refuse to rebound from failure. I could fail—God forbid—for an entire

year and not lose a reward, provided I rebounded. My rewards would remain if I were to recognize and rebound from my weakness and was not arrogant or proud about it.

Contributing to a Christian's reward are the messages he receives in faith obedience. Picture it: Two people can sit in the same church. One just appreciates the Word but is not transformed by it. He loses interest, allows his mind to wander, and becomes spiritually weary. The other person receives the Word, applies it, and becomes conformed to the image of Christ. He lives according to the value system of God's Word. He displays a willingness to surrender all, for the cause of Christ. As a result, he will experience the truth of Mark 10:29-30:

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

"But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

CONCLUSION

I would that every church in America preached about the full reward. I would that every pastor understood it. It is such a thrill to know what awaits us because of being faithful to God and to a godly local assembly.

My precious mother is in heaven right now. She was such a sweetheart. Because she was saved late in her life, she never had time to be a soul-winner. Yet, by God's grace, everything that I have done through grace and mercy, and everything that people have done with me shall be credited to her. This little woman will receive quite a reward at the Bema Seat.

And, I can just imagine what she will say to me after Jesus rewards her: "Thank God you preached, son. Thank God, you preached."

Receive God's Provision

Now!

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INTRODUCTION

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

In Jesus' life, it is evident that He was readily moved with compassion. We can read so many accounts of how Christ looked beyond any fault to see the need of the moment, and He was very quick to meet that need. God's actions of unconditional love brought instant healing and deliverance.

Nothing has changed about God. He is still doing miracles for His children. We are His righteousness, and He sees us as His fair ones, without spot. He is always ready to move when we call upon Him.

The point made in this booklet is that God wants to move—now! His provisions are available—now! As believers, we must see that we need not be afraid but only believe that He is a

“very present help” in our times of trouble (Psalm 46:1).

Chapter One

ONLY BELIEVE

"While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further?

"As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, *Be not afraid, only believe*.

"And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

"And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

"And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

"And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were

with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

"And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel (I say unto thee,) arise.

"And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

"And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat" (Mark 5:35-43).

"*Be not afraid, only believe.*" Consider those words carefully. Previous to this passage, a woman had been healed of an issue of blood that plagued her for twelve years. She was an outcast from her community, her church, and her husband. She touched the hem of Jesus' garment, virtue went out of Him, and she was healed instantly.

Then, Jesus comes to a home where a twelve-year-old girl had just died. People there mocked Him when He said the damsel was only sleeping. His words to the parents? "Be not afraid, only believe." The girl was raised up and they were "astonished with a great astonishment."

Frailty Begets Fear

Many things in our lives bring fear: the fevered brow of a little baby, news that you or a loved one has cancer, word that someone has been in a serious accident. Also, there is fear that comes because we don't believe. There are many reasons in this world why people fear.

Bona fide fears are not sinful; they come because of human frailty. When fear comes upon us after we have heard bad news, that is not a sinful type of fear. It is normal because of our frailty; yet, by God's grace the fear will not last long when we learn to look to Jesus Christ. The words of Jesus are so beautiful: "Be not afraid, only believe."

The potential for God to work in His people is indescribable. We are here on earth, and every day we are faced with trauma. Some of us refuse to turn on the news because of what we may see: footage from the latest deadly fire or details of a recent crime spree. Still, the words of Jesus remain: "Be not afraid, only believe."

Let the Spirit of God minister to you. If God spared not His Son, but delivered Him up for us all, will He not also freely give us all things? (See Romans 8:32.)

Chapter Two

BEHOLD, THOU ART FAIR

"Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

"Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.

"Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.

"Thy neck is like the tower of David builded from an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.

"Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

"Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

"Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards" (Song of Solomon 4:1-8).

In Song of Solomon 1:5, the bride is now married to the bridegroom, which typifies the marriage of Christ to His Church. The groom calls the bride His "fair one." Her teeth refer to the believer's assimilation of the Word of God. The chapter also talks of the bride's hair, which speaks of separation and covering (1 Corinthians 11). God made long hair as a sign to the angels that the woman's soul is right before Him. The hair represents the covering that comes through obedience in the soul.

Victorious on the Mountains

Next, the bridegroom speaks of the goats on Mount Gilead (see Micah 7:14). As this flock fed selectively on Gilead, so are we to feed on the Word of God.

Song of Solomon 4:8 speaks of the bride coming to Mount Hermon, which in the Word of God is representative of Satan's defeat and

God's victory through the manifestation of Christ's resurrection. "Amana" is referring to the integrity of doctrine, and "Shenir" points to the whole armor of God that is needed on that mountain with its lions' dens. Satan always has his lions on the prowl (Psalm 91:13).

So we have this picture of the Bride of Christ seated with Him positionally and hid in Him, but still living on this earth below while the roaring lion seeketh whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

In Song of Solomon 4:7, Jesus describes the Bride with this beautiful statement: "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." If only we would learn to see Christ's Finished Work in every degree of life. Our sins were imputed to Him, and our old sin nature was placed upon Him, too.

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

"And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

"That no flesh should glory in his presence.

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us *wisdom*, and *righteousness*, and *sanctification*, and redemption,

"That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:27-31).

Chapter Three

WE ARE HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS *NOW*

Think about what Jesus says about us. In our souls, we have been made the righteousness of God. There is no spot in us. "The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold" (Psalm 45:13). Our name is, as Jeremiah proclaimed Israel's to be, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (see Jeremiah 23:6; Jeremiah 33:16). We have an old sin nature that brings times of struggle. But, thank God, we have been made the righteousness of God.

In 1 Corinthians 1:30, "wisdom" refers to the application of the Finished Work; "righteousness" is imputed to us at Calvary when we believe; and "sanctification" speaks of our being set apart forever by Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10).

Every morning when we wake up and perform our daily duties, we *are* the righteousness

of God. It doesn't matter how badly we may feel about ourselves or how many mistakes we make—we are the righteousness of God.

"Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:17).

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:20).

It is no longer "I" who sin, but it is the sin that dwells in me. It is no more I, because I am "in Lebanon" with Christ; I am seated in heavenly places with Him. I am in Amana, living in the integrity of the truth in the Finished Work. God has given me Shenir; I have His almighty armor—all of it—to protect me in the places where there are lions and serpents (speaking of demons attacking us).

It is crucial that we understand these facts. We must realize that we are the righteousness and wisdom of God, and there are things He wants to do for us *now*.

"Hear me *now* therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth" (Proverbs 5:7). "I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people" (Psalm 116:14). This speaks of being present at church in time to worship and to sing with the

singers, to pray with those who are praying, and to edify other believers. That is what "now" refers to here.

This is what Jesus says to us: "Realize this: If you die, I am right now the resurrection and the life: and he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never, ever die. I want you to know that I take the soul out of the body and take you straight to heaven. I do it *now*. I don't wait until the resurrection of the body; I do it right away."

This Is the Accepted Time

When we get saved, there is therefore *now* no condemnation (Romans 8:1). "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: Behold, now is the accepted time; behold *now* is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).

Jesus wants us to know that He loves us *now*. He wants to help us *now*. We don't have to fear *now*. Simply believe Him *now*. He is present to deliver *now* (Jeremiah 1:8).

"I want you to know that I am filled with compassion and love for you now," Christ says to us. "*Today* is My day, and I want to deliver you now."

"Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity" (Psalm 118:25).

The psalmist wanted something to happen now. We can ask God for things now. He will providentially reverse any situation now.

You can pray with confidence: "Lord, you have been doing things for others. I am your child, I want something to happen now. I don't mean to sound offensive, but I need a deliverance now. God, You said, 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.' So please, Father, do it now."

Chapter Four

LIVING IN EXPECTATION

There is no spot in us. Not only were our sins imputed to Jesus Christ, but He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Now when I sin, it is no longer I, because my sin was imputed to Jesus Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20).

As Christians, we must realize that we are walking in the light of divine power, divine resurrection, divine love, and divine expectation. In Mark 5, Jesus said to the damsel's parents, "I know your daughter is dead—but don't be afraid; only believe."

Power belongs to God, our expectation must be from Him (Psalm 62:5). We must go to God, even when we haven't been feeling well. Go to Him and say, "God, You are going to have to do it again. You are going to have to do it now. You

are going to bring the blessing now—I am going to let You do it now!"

Now is our day of deliverance. *Now* is our day of healing. *Now* is a day to be touched by God! One of the great things we see in the Bible is how over and over again when He was on earth, Jesus wanted to help people right away. He is waiting to be gracious to us (Isaiah 30:18).

He Has Overcome the Wicked One

Don't be afraid of the pain or of the projections that might come against you. Don't be afraid in the times when Satan attacks. Jesus Christ is inside you to love you. Be not afraid—only believe.

Perhaps you are thinking, "But He hasn't done it in the past." Be not afraid. Get to know the Christ of the Resurrection now. This is the Christ whom Satan despises and fears desperately, because Satan is defeated, and he knows it.

In Song of Solomon 5, the Bride has reached the Resurrection side of life. She sees herself as seated in heavenly places. She is hid with Christ in God. Understanding that, she has amazing privileges and opportunities. We have these same privileges and opportunities now.

"But now being made free from sin, and be-

come servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:22).

Now we have the righteousness of God; now we have been delivered from the Law. The God of peace wants to give us joy now, through believing (Romans 15:13). God wants us to have the joy now, the love now, the happiness now.

We have not received the spirit of this world. We have received the Spirit of God, and we have Him now (1 Corinthians 2:12). Right now, we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

CONCLUSION

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:6-9).

The Word is near to us right now; it is even in our heart, the word of faith. We can confess it right now. God loves our confession of faith. He loves when we confess His favor and His love toward us. He loves to hear us confess our trust in Him publicly, in front of the demons that are trying to infect us. God loves to watch divine

confessions of His nature and character.

Let's not accept exhaustion and tiredness so easily. We can be built up in the energy and power of divine expectation. Our mortal bodies can be quickened. We can put our shoulders back, take a deep breath, and believe God by faith. Let's have an expectation with faith to receive results right now. Now we are members in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27). We are alive in Him *right now*!

Let's pray for each other now in the dynamic life of fellowshipping with a Person who has been raised from the dead, a Person who has ascended into heaven, a Person who has defeated every foe. Everything Satan brought against the throne of God, Jesus overcame. Now, He overcomes everything that comes against us.

Now is the moment for healing. The love of God is new right now and every moment. Let the spiritual law of resurrection work in you now. Believe and receive a touch from God—now. Receive it with all of your heart. "Now is the day, now is the accepted time," God is telling us. "I have heard thee—I want to do something now. Let Me love you, touch you, and heal you. Let Me manifest it *now*."

Receive the Gift of Repentance

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INTRODUCTION

If a person receives the Word of God without being instructed by the Holy Spirit, he will probably take on a tremendous burden, trying to make himself acceptable before God. Consider these verses:

"[God] commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30*b*).

"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

Now, these sayings are absolutely true. No one will go to heaven without repentance. It is true that God demands repentance, lest we perish. Furthermore, people who are saved cannot be Spirit-filled until they have repented. Repentance, however, is not something we do; rather, it is what we receive when God has redeemed us and changes us.

According to Jeremiah 31:18,19, Israel in her suffering cried out to God and revealed an understanding of the Finished Work position on re-

pentance: "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed."

Like salvation, repentance is not of works lest any man should boast; it is a gift of God to the believer. It means that we receive the gift of grace and the power of the Holy Spirit through the living Word to change us. Repentance is based on receiving and responding, not on trying and failing to measure up. God approaches change by revealing His changeless love toward the recipient. A person so motivated by God's Spirit will reveal a godly sorrow that works repentance.

When a person changes his mind about self and sin, he can then receive God's evaluation, provision, inhabitation, and impartation. This booklet will show that this is what indeed marks a change. Then comes a process and a reflection of continual change from faith to faith, from grace to grace, and from love to love.

Chapter One

CONVICTION: EVIDENCE OF A HEART AFTER GOD

"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

"And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2 Samuel 12:13).

Sin must be dealt with in the light of the Cross, the light of forgiveness, and the light of repentance. When this is properly understood and God's order is followed, there comes a brand-new creature, a real transformation. But until that happens, a person lives either in denial or in self-justification, hiding behind fig

leaves (Genesis 3:7).

David failed to deal with his sin of adultery with Bathsheba for a year. But during that year, he was convicted. He couldn't sleep and his bones waxed old. His sin was ever before him, producing negative physical effects. Still, he knew he belonged to God, though he was under tremendous conviction by the Holy Spirit. After one terrible year, David, a man after God's own heart, finally got right. David's repentance did not render void all the consequences of that terrible year of failure, but because of his deep understanding of God, David knew what to do. He drew near to God.

Acknowledging Our Failure

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

"Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

"For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

"I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine

iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah" (Psalm 32:1-5).

Psalm 32 shows that David was not lukewarm about his relationship with God. Lukewarm or Laodicean Christians can sin and say that they have never been so blessed by the Lord in their life (see Revelation 3:14-17). You could go to some of them who are living in immorality and confront them. They are not right and they know it. Yet, they can say to you, "I have never been so happy and peaceful with God in my life."

Never in all my years of preaching have I seen such a day when someone can absolutely and dogmatically live in known sin. They reveal a false peace. They have developed a Laodicean connection to an unconscious mind that has never been cleansed. These people have not acknowledged their sins and have never been honest about them. Therefore, they cannot have a clean heart. They are not upheld by the Holy Spirit. They do not have joy, and they do not win souls and lead them to Christ to be turned and converted.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multi-

tude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

"Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

"Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:1-10).

The Need for Absolutes

When parents bring up children without giving them absolutes to live by, ungodly con-

cepts become established in their unconscious minds. It doesn't matter how decent a parent you are. You contribute to the damage of the unconscious mind when you fail to establish absolute truth in your children.

The realm of the unconscious is the department of the mind that receives undefined information—the point of entry for every impulse, impression, and projection. That information is filtered into the subconscious where thoughts take on form. The process brings these thoughts into the conscious mind, which makes decisions based on the information it has received. If one lie is included in the mix of information, a person may contend that he is absolutely right and come up with all kinds of evidence to prove his point, though he is wrong.

So, the conscious mind may be extremely honest and sincere, and it may function practically and acceptably, following after God. But until there is a disconnection with sin and the unconscious mind is thoroughly cleansed and purged by the filling of the Holy Spirit, there remains a deep-seated problem that began with a lie.

God's cleansing process produces conversion, beginning on the deepest level. However,

until that process is allowed to happen, the unconscious mind is perverted. True, godly repentance is the only solution.

Chapter Two

UNCONSCIOUS IMAGERY AND THE ISLAND OF INNOCENCE

"Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth" (Ezekiel 8:12).

For application, the Word of God calls the unconscious mind "the chambers of imagery." It is that secret place where every negative thing is kept until it is thoroughly cleansed and rooted out.

John the Baptist spoke of taking an ax to the root of the tree (Matthew 3:10), referring to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil with its forbidden fruit (see Genesis 2:9-17). The knowledge of good and evil speaks of the weaknesses and strengths of the natural man who does not consider God. This knowledge, acquired through training, culture, education, and experience, is

filtered through the moral light that is in every man, forming the conscience. The conscience is like a measuring rod where the norms and standards for right or wrong are established, and where objective decisions in the soul are made.

It is the conscience that will prompt a person to have a dialogue as the psalmist had, in Psalm 42: "Why art thou cast down, oh my soul?" He had a dialogue with guilt, with the effects of sin, and with the pain of hurting others. He had a dialogue with his past, and he couldn't sleep day or night. His dialogue was stuck in the chambers of imagery in his unconscious mind.

That dialogue had to be disconnected once and for all (Hebrews 10:10). But it could only be taken care of by the Cross and by the Word of God, which is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. The Word of God and the Cross are necessary to cut through those deep connections in the soul. Severing those connections brings death, but out of that death comes God's newness of life (Romans 6:4), the newness of spirit (Romans 7:6), and a renewed mind (Ephesians 4:23).

Detached from the Old Man: The Mind of Christ

"He shall deliver the island of the innocent:

and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands" (Job 22:30).

An island is a detached piece of land. An island of the soul is an area detached from the world, from the flesh, from the devil. It is a region detached from anything that happened with the rest of the territory of our lives. Islands of innocence are formed in us when cleansing and purging come in through the Holy Spirit, by the power of the Word and the Cross. This new man operates with godly integrity, never trying to justify his sin. "Pure hands" typify pure thoughts and pure communication in his service and in his reflections as he meditates on the Word day and night.

When a Christian begins to reflect the nature of God, he no longer is having a dialogue with his sickness, with his fear of the future, or with what people have done or said to him. Instead, he lives on the island of innocence where he has a clean heart, a pure spirit, and a joy in his salvation. He can thereby teach transgressors God's ways and bring people to Him for conversion.

I know people who are living in sin, who will stand there and tell me, "I have never been so happy!" I don't believe that. When someone lives in sin week after week and tries to justify it

and never deals with it, he has not entered into the island of innocence. He has never entered into proper repentance, proper conversion, or proper communion with God. He has never totally disconnected from the hidden things in his chambers of imagery. He has never really repented by saying to God, "Cleanse me; purge me thoroughly. Make me white as snow."

Pulpits in church after church today fail to bring to people's lives the purity and godliness of old-fashioned God-fearing, sin-hating, Bible-loving joy that reveals the mercy and compassion that follow us. No one is perfect by nature, and at times every one of us has to rebound to experience that joy. But thank God, He has given us a provision through the gift of repentance.

I have made a decision to walk with God and with God's people. I am not going to be double-minded (James 1:8), and I am not going to have a divided heart (Hosea 10:2). I have made a decision through the mind of Christ that I will walk the straight and narrow way of grace and be blessed of God Almighty. I refuse to face God as a phony justifier of the sins in my chambers of imagery.

Every one of us needs to disconnect from the wrong things that reside in the unconscious

mind—and it can happen in an instant. It's just like unplugging a radio. Just like that, it is turned off, and we find we can live very well without this connection and its distractions. That is when, at last, He can use us.

Broken and Spilled Out

"And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

"He said, Bring them hither to me.

"And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

"And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

"And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children" (Matthew 14:17-21).

Here is the story of the five loaves and two fishes. Now, most people have five fingers, five toes, two legs, two ears, and two eyes. Five is God's number for grace, and two is God's number for separation. If we combine our five senses with two eyes, two ears, two legs, two feet, and

two arms, we have a human body. According to Romans 12:1, our bodies are what we bring to God as a "reasonable sacrifice."

That is a picture of us presenting our bodies to Jesus Christ to be distributed for the nourishment of others. We do it as we are separated unto grace. And when we present our bodies to Him, then God can break them and feed them to those who need to be fed. Just as He takes grapes and crushes them to make juice, the believer's life will be broken, and even crushed, in order to be shared with the multitudes in the world who are tired, hungry, and thirsty.

Chapter Three

FIRE FALLS FROM HEAVEN

"Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench" (1 Kings 18:38).

"Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

"And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:6-8).

"When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning" (Isaiah 4:4).

"I indeed baptize you with water unto re-

pentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy [Spirit], and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).

Fire is an interesting topic in the Bible. Before Lucifer fell from heaven "as lightning" (Luke 10:18), he walked "in the midst of the stones of fire" (see Ezekiel 28:14). Fire is symbolic of the Trinity of God, which purges sin and brings in energy, warmth, and light. Fire also destroys things that should be destroyed (Isaiah 28:16) and gives power to what remains.

It was fire that came down from heaven to reveal that Elijah served the true God. In Isaiah 6, fire from the coals on the altar purged the lips and tongue of Isaiah. The presence of the Holy Spirit is called the "spirit of burning" and John the Baptist said that Jesus would "baptize us with fire."

Dimensions of Sacrifice

"Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering: It is the burnt offering, because of the burning upon the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be burning in it.

"And the priest shall put on his linen gar-

ment, and his linen breeches shall he put upon his flesh, and take up the ashes which the fire hath consumed with the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar.

"And he shall put off his garments, and put on other garments, and carry forth the ashes without the camp unto a clean place.

"And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings.

"The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out" (Leviticus 6:9-13).

In the context of Scripture, which always points to God's perfect sacrifice, fire has such a powerful meaning. The priests had to construct a wooden altar according to God's dimensions. Then, they put the animal sacrifice over the altar. They laid a meal offering—speaking of the broken life of Jesus Christ—on top of the animal. Next, wine had to be put on the altar because everything Christ did, He did through the Spirit. There also had to be blood, because everything Jesus did at Calvary pointed to the sacrificial shedding of His spotless blood.

When everything was on the altar according

to God's divine dimensions, the fire consumed it—a fire that would never go out. The ashes of the sacrifice were then carried away to a clean place. This is a picture of every sacrifice for our sins. The ashes are carried away to a clean place by the One who knew no sin and yet paid for our sin with His Blood. That clean place for us—as we present our bodies daily as a living sacrifice—is heaven. There, we will receive our glorified bodies, decorated with degrees of light that will never dim, shining forever.

The important thing to remember is that this fire is always started by God. When we want to make a life-change, the fire must come from Him. We can't ignite the fire. This fire is from the Stone of the Father who planned our redemption. This Chief Cornerstone sends the Holy Spirit to burn truth into our conscience and the chambers of imagery where the mysteries of the unconscious mind are.

Like a Fire in the Bones

"Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jeremiah 20:9).

So many people want to give advice—people who want to help and to show their love. Often it is good advice. But until we allow God to send His fire and let His fire come inside of us through the Word, then nothing will change.

God's fire changes our lives, transforms our motives, and transforms our relationships. It gives us communion with God instead of a connection to Adam. It gives us fellowship with God instead of a dialogue with the historical Adam in the chambers of imagery. God's fire consumes the dross in our lives. We receive it and it purifies our lives. This is what repentance is all about.

David committed adultery and then had a man killed in an effort to cover up his sin. He really made a mess of things and lived in it for a year. Yet, the fire of God exposed his sin and convicted him. Then, according to mercy and lovingkindness, God changed him.

Remember, God pities us as a father pities his son (see Psalm 103:13). Lovingkindness represents God's brand-new covenant with His children. Once we are saved, we are saved forever, and God never leaves us. What's more: He never stops working on us until He perfects us.

This is the new agreement of the Finished

Work.

"Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.

"I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness" (Micah 7:7-9).

CONCLUSION

"Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments" (Psalm 119:156).

Tender mercies mean that when we fail or fall, God never just leaves us. He waits for us to let Him help us up.

Lovingkindness reveals that God is *for* us. But having and experiencing tender mercies means that God is *in* us, fully understanding what is going on, and ready to bless the moment we tell Him, "Start the fire!"

It is as if God is saying to us, "I will always stay with you. When you are ready, I will pull you up and we will go on together. In the meantime, I will not forsake you—ever. Our fellowship will be strained, but just give Me the word and I will start the fire of repentance in you."

This is a great, great gift from the Lord. I pray that all of us will learn to receive and believe it.

Reigning Through the Word

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

As a pastor, one of the saddest things is to see a marriage collapse for no obvious reason. There is no adultery, no abuse, yet the union falls apart because the individuals involved have become incompatible to God's divine provision. Neither party has the Word of God as the authority in their soul. Both of them can recite chapter and verse from the Bible. They could supply good theological discourse, and yet they have no power in their souls to apply the truth of God's Word in their marriage situation.

According to recent studies, I have learned that a great number of married men in America suffer tremendously from rejection by their wives. In return, their wives become the objects of verbal abuse in a negative reaction to that rejection. The problem for these couples is that they do not highly esteem the authority of God's Word in their souls.

Just as the pastor-teacher is delegated to

head the congregation, so is doctrine delegated to be the head over the soul. The pastor preaches and teaches, but after he is done, he does not invade the believers' privacy and follow people around to make sure they obey the Word. Inside the soul, categorical doctrine is given to direct the believer's thought-life, with the Holy Spirit continually leading.

In this booklet, we will examine the importance of letting the Word of God reign as the authority over our souls. When the Word is reigning, we can live in the breadth, the length, the height, and the depth of all that God has for us.

Chapter One

REAL HUMILITY

"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

What qualifies a person as "humble"? A humble person is not necessarily someone who doesn't own anything. A humble person is not always someone who is quiet. Quietness may be a personality trait or even self-effacement. A humble person is not someone who sits back and does nothing. That is a false assumption as it is often passivity.

Humility is represented in the person who has the Word of God as the authority in his soul.

I could be a preacher who has great perception, understanding, and awareness of the Word of God and not have the Word reigning in my soul. God seeks to give His people spiritual authority in their souls. Yet, if the Word of God—which I believe in, which I honor, which I hear

several times a week—is not reigning in my soul, then I will never exercise spiritual authority.

Oh, it is so important that authority from God be established in the human spirit of our new hearts and in the mind, conscience, self-consciousness, emotions, and volition of our souls. We must learn the great principle of letting God the Spirit store the Word of God in our memory center and have it become resident in our souls.

When this happens, we enter into the reflection of God's nature. As we respond to the promises of God in the Word, we claim them as our own. I am not speaking of a name-it-and-claim-it kind of faith. That kind of faith has no substance. Faith that has authority in the soul, which claims promises given by the Spirit, develops into a bona fide, living faith.

The Action of Submission

"And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 23:12).

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

If I have real humility, I do not think lowly of myself or highly of myself. Real humility

means that I am filled with God's self-life, the essence of God's nature—for me to live is Christ! That is the essence of real humility. God promotes the humble, but He resists the proud. He will always promote the person who is receptive to the Word of God, which produces the authority of Jesus Christ in the soul.

James 4:7 tells me to submit myself to God—that's the first action. The second action is to resist the devil. These actions bring about this provision: the devil shuns me and runs from me.

"Submit" is translated from the Greek word *hupotasso*. This verb form represents a mandate to receive greater grace by continually subordinating every part of my soul to God so He can bring in His authority. "The" is a definite article speaking of *the* only God, represented in the Trinitarian authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So we are to submit to God the Father's plan, to God the Son's execution of that plan, to God the Holy Spirit's revelation and guidance of that plan, and to the Word's definition of that plan.

Recognizing Authority

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though

it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:7-8).

How do we submit to the God we cannot see?

Consider the structure of the military. There are generals, and under the generals there are lieutenants, and then come captains and sergeants and so on. The average soldier takes orders from his sergeant. He may never see the general, but he receives the general's instructions through the chain of command.

God, likewise, has established a chain of command throughout His Kingdom. I haven't seen God with my eyes, but I submit to Him by submitting to the pastor-teacher of the local assembly where I am called.

A pastor-teacher has a very serious responsibility. Having a gift to communicate the Word of God, he magnifies God, and he never lords his authority over people, which would degrade them. The pastor-teacher motivates, but he does not manipulate. He is never to invade people's

privacy. He communicates the truth in love and exhorts them to obey God, but he does not legislate. His responsibility is to preach and to teach the whole counsel of God exactly as it is written. He is to say exactly what God leads him to say from the pulpit.

According to the Word of God, the pastor-teacher is God's delegated representative authority. He has been given one of the highest responsibilities in the world. Failure to carry out his responsibilities properly will bring him a double measure of discipline. Therefore, it is vital that he understands what it means to reign through the Word in true humility, preaching line upon line and precept upon precept, declaring the *whole* counsel of God.

Chapter Two

THE BREADTH, LENGTH, HEIGHT, AND DEPTH OF OUR VICTORY

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

God establishes a system of precise categorical doctrine in our souls so that we can clearly understand God's purpose, even if we do not know the details of His plan. To comprehend the "breadth" means that through doctrine I have a defense against internalizing the pressures that come my way. I am absolutely free from pres-

sure so I can function in the Word of God. With the Word living in me, with Jesus Christ rooted and grounded in me by faith, I am rooted and grounded in the love of God.

The second aspect of God's defense system is "length." From eternity past until I am perfected in eternity future, the Word of God preserves, promotes, protects, and produces godliness, giving me divine patience and endurance to go through everything I face in time.

The "height" speaks of our superior power over demons and the oppression they try to produce against our souls. We are seated above those things. Our conversation, our manner of living, is above all of these things as we live in the Holy of Holies—hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). The middle wall of partition is broken down. The veil has been torn in two and we live in the Holy of Holies as members of God's royal family and royal priesthood.

Deep Roots of the Mind of Christ

Finally, there is "depth" to our spiritual defense system. The mind of Christ is deeply rooted in our memory center, and, as a result, life is being produced in the conscience. We become self-conscious of the abundant grace of God

coming through, causing us to rebound when we fail. It is a great principle that gives us precision according to the Spirit of God's power in us. The deep calls unto the deep (see Psalm 42:7), and the love of God gives us comprehension of how deep His love goes in the spiritual kingdom.

This love surpasses knowledge. It doesn't live without knowledge, but it gives us the grace to go beyond knowledge, filling our souls with all the fullness of God, according to the authority of the Word of God. We are able to receive from God above all we ask or think because we have a love that goes beyond knowledge in its operation of grace, mercy, forgiveness, joy, patience, peace, kindness, and—most of all—wisdom.

These four dimensions of God's love work in helping us to stand against and oppose the devil. With Bible doctrine and the Holy Spirit's power, we have something in our souls that Satan fears. He is afraid of the power we have to reign as the Word of God becomes our final authority in whatever we are doing as believer-priests, standing before the Lord.

On the other hand, when we become negative and reactionary, we have no authority over our emotions. Anxiety and worry come in and

we lack the protection that comes from comprehending God's Word in its breadth, length, height, and depth. These absolute dimensions bring in a harmonious provision of protection from the amazing authority of the Word.

Inconsistency will reign in any area of the soul that lacks the authority of God's Word. The soul will eventually have emotional outbursts in the man who acts one way in private and another when he is around other believers. He may end up being moody because of something that happened in the past (which reveals that the past influences the present in the one who is not being protected by the Bible's categorically precise truth).

Steps Ordered by the Word

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:16-

17, 23).

Iniquity has no dominion over me when my steps are ordered by the Word of God (Psalm 119:133). The Holy Spirit leads me so that I experience the spirit of adoption in my life, and I never have to fear going back to the spirit of bondage again (Romans 8:15).

This is why Jesus said we must live by every single word of God. Without this kind of lifestyle, we are no match for what the devil throws at us through the invisible powers of the air. It takes having the Word of God inside as the authority of our souls to keep us from growing weary mentally. We must let the Word and the Spirit quicken us (Psalm 119:154; Romans 8:11).

A woman becomes a real lady and a man grows into a gentleman because of what he has in his soul. It is not about the appearance on the outside; it is about having substance on the inside. His whole value system—his virtue, his ability, and his capacity—comes from the soul. Having these areas in godly order is the key to having overwhelming victory through Christ (Romans 8:37).

Chapter Three

CHOOSE TO OVERCOME

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

"Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:8-10).

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

These verses speak about having the authority in our souls to pray and to bless others. It's about having the authority to claim the promises in God's name and to get things from God. Furthermore, it is about having the authority to be

obedient and to rebound when we fail.

James 4:9 ("Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness") is a passage that is especially misunderstood. This is not speaking about giving special merit to those who wear long faces and endure days of depression. This verse is simply saying that when we sin and rebound, we are not to be lighthearted about it. Instead, we are to draw near to God with reverential awe, cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts according to the authority that is in our soul.

Who Is a Greater Grace Believer?

"My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope" (Lamentations 3:20-21).

The greater grace believer is the one who advances after situations that involve failure. He humbles himself and receives the authority of the Word through his personal study and as it is preached and taught by his pastor-teacher. Christ dwells in his heart by faith, he is rooted and grounded in love, and he comprehends his system of defense, which is derived by categorical

doctrine.

The depth of the greater grace believer's character of love depends on his being transformed every day by the mind of Christ, which is always new. He is able to recall a precise word from God in the category of doctrine he needs because the Word of God has been transferred and retained in his heart, ready to be recalled by the Holy Spirit in his moment of need.

The Holy Spirit cannot bring to remembrance what we have not been taught (John 14:26). We cannot recall something that is not hidden in our soul. God can only bring to the memory what we have learned—and there is nothing subjective about it.

Moving Beyond Perceptions

"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19).

"For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed" (2 Corinthians 10:8).

Sixty-five percent of all sicknesses come from a source outside of God. Oppression is from

Satan, and the soul that cannot fight its negative influence is a soul that never understands how to use the authority of the Word of God. Furthermore, the Word is really never allowed to reach such a soul. The perception of the Word is there, but it never goes beyond a superficial acknowledgement of truth.* Busy schedules, details of life, and domestic difficulties come in and destroy the authority of the Word. This soul is helpless. He does not know how to use the Word objectively with spiritual authority.

Christians must realize that godly authority only comes from learning, receiving, and self-discipline. The Word must become the sergeant of the soul. They must refuse to be negative toward the Word of God and their pastor-teachers.

Paul showed us that real authority is meant to edify (2 Corinthians 10:8). Edification, the building up of believers, is what those in authority are commissioned by God to do. Pastor-teachers and other church leaders are not given by God to destroy lives. They are given authority to restore and revive lives.

Still, Jesus Christ has given every individual the gift of free volition. It was God's first gift to man. With this volition, each of us can choose what we receive and what we do with what we

receive; but as believers, we have a God-given responsibility to choose life.

No one has to take drugs or drink alcohol. No one has to lie or live in promiscuous affairs. But it is important to understand that a wrong choice may result in an ecstatic superficial chemical production of relaxation. As wrong choices are continually being made in sinful areas, the chemistry of the body develops a need and a demand. Soon, without these sinful experiences, the person becomes incapacitated. His wrong choices result in a state of mental confusion as he abuses the chemical balance of his body.

People who are like this need help. They need renewal. They need to have the mind of Jesus Christ reigning in their soul.

Lifted Up to Possess Authority

"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23).

The verb in the Greek text of this verse is passive, meaning simply that the subject of this sentence receives the action of the verb. In this case, the verb shows how a damaged soul can be healed, as it points to the process and the agent of change.

The agents of revelation and change are the

Bible and the power of Jesus Christ. The damaged soul needs to receive the Word of God continually as he develops a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in order to overcome wounds and problems in the soul.

This is part of humbling ourselves before God. Then, He lifts us up.

Remember God's chain of command. He is in heaven and we cannot see Him or touch Him, but we can submit to the authority He has delegated to the pastor-teacher in the local church where we have been called. As we submit to the Word that we hear, we allow the Word to become the "sergeant" of our souls. The Sergeant then orders our every step according to the Word. The words of the Bible show us how to think every thought (see 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Then, we can be led by the Holy Spirit of God, who gives us life.

We now enjoy the action of being built up in the most holy faith, a faith that is separated unto God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Word brings in definition about our relationship to Him. Because we come under authority, we *possess* authority. Subsequently, we can confess authority over things that are not of God, and we become overcomers by the Spirit

that is now reigning within us. Spiritual authority through the Word and through Christ becomes the agent of defense and offense within us. We recognize our position, which is high above our enemies, and the depth of doctrine rooted inside so that our subconscious mind never has its way over us.

Finally, we walk in the love of Christ that passes knowledge, though it never excludes that knowledge. Instead, our knowledge produces the fruit of righteousness, and we learn to excel in judgment and discernment as we reign with Christ through the Word (Philippians 1:10).

* *Refer to* The Hearing Heart, *a booklet by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

CONCLUSION

We have the privilege to make a fantastic difference with our friends, our families, our peers, and even nations. We can make an impact on the world because of the authority we have by the Word of God.

The Word of God is in us. We can apply those spiritual truths that reach back in length to eternity past but are now present in our experience. By this application, the Word of God can govern our souls. The Holy Spirit brings the knowledge of God into our memory center and lets it flood our conscience as it occupies our self-consciousness.

When this happens, Satan must declare his inferiority:

"That little person is executing Christ's authority that brought about my defeat. Curses! Now I have to flee. I can't be around this person at all."

Satan literally has to get out of our presence.

He flees, runs, and shuns us because he doesn't want to experience the embarrassment of showcasing his once-and-for-all defeat as a supernatural invisible being. He wants no part of us when we execute the authority of the One—Jesus Christ—who defeated him through His Cross, His Resurrection, and His Ascension. We have been set free, not just to hope but to reign with Him in life by the power of His Word. Amen!

Rejoice in Hope

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Christ the Solid Rock

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

(Refrain:)
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

—Edward Mote (1797-1874)

The words of this great old hymn are so true for us today. So often, we are tempted by Satan and the world's system to rest in something other than Jesus Christ. Nothing could be more dangerous.

The ever-shifting sands of human opinion, financial circumstances, and worldly popularity have swallowed up many believers. They pursue happiness according to the world's standards, and they end up confused and defeated.

But God has given us a different standard. The joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). In this booklet, we will examine how the Rock of truth is what supports our hope. Therefore, having that solid foundation for this hope, we rejoice, reveling with gladness at the reality of our position in Christ today and holding fast to the certainty of our future as citizens of heaven.

Chapter One

SURRENDERING TO THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

"[Be] not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer" (Romans 12:11-12).

In the original Greek rendering of Romans 12:11, the Word of God does not use the word "business". It would be great to use this for a business meeting, but unfortunately that is not what it says, according to the ancient manuscripts. What it really says is "diligence" or "busy-ness." So it says, "In regard to zeal, be not lazy but in busy-ness be fervent—burning in your spirit—in the Lord's service."

I don't know how many people have emphasized this one verse and delivered a wonderful message on business. As a business consultant for several years, I could have used it more than anyone; but I could not do it with a

godly conscience. Plenty of verses in Proverbs deal with business exchanges, but this verse has nothing to do with business practices. Rather, it has a lot to do with having the right kind of zeal in busy-ness, and it is talking about having the right kind of busy-ness. It is talking about being busy because of having fervency in the spirit as our motivation.

Christians need to understand specifically what it means to surrender to the truth of God's Word once and for all.

How does a person surrender to truth?

Jesus Christ teaches us that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Calvary is the place of "retroactive positional truth". Two thousand years ago, we died with Christ; then, we were buried with Him. In our position, which is *in* Christ, we have been raised from the dead, we have ascended, and we are seated above. That is retroactive positional truth (see Ephesians 2:4-10; Romans 6:6-10).

Now, let's just take those two facts: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and Calvary is the place of retroactive positional truth. I wonder how many times multitudes of believers ignore and neglect retroactive positional truth in dealing with people and with themselves as if it

were never written? But the Bible says, "I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). These facts are a part of the embodiment of truth.

Once you enter into retroactive positional truth, you then enter into *substantial* truth. Jesus said it to the disciples in John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." This verse is very interesting when you examine the Greek grammar. It is written in the aorist tense, active voice, and imperative mood. In effect, the statement He is making is this: "Once and for all, Father, You produce the action of setting them apart in Thy Word: for Thy Word is truth." So what is the substance of being set apart in truth? It is the Word of God in all its categorical doctrines.

The last time you had a marital problem, did you honestly look each other in the eye and say, "We have surrendered to truth in the area of our problem"? You see, most people have never surrendered to truth in specific categories, to the extent that truth governs every single decision in their life.

Surrendering to truth starts with humbling ourselves before God.

"But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Hebrews 3:6).

We are to "hold fast the confidence"—and that refers to the entirety of our being. It is in the constative aorist tense and passive voice, meaning that once and for all, in our entirety, we receive the action from God to hold fast through the Spirit of truth and through the Word of truth. This is a mandate, an order, to be governed by truth any time we assemble, any time we think, and any time we speak.

Therefore, any time I think, speak, respond, or have any kind of interaction, I am to humble myself before God, receive the action of retroactive positional truth, receive the power of the Holy Spirit that governs truth, and receive the substance of the Word of God that defines truth. I do this in my heart before God.

When we humble ourselves before God, we have allowed the word of grace to be established as an authority in our entire lives through humility. It means that we have humility in grace-thinking. So we can do everything through

humility in grace thinking (James 4:6). As this happens, truth begins to promote us. Receive in humility, and He will promote you (see 1 Peter 5:6).

Surrender Brings Promotion

We have a great principle concerning promotion that comes because of truth. When we face any situation that looks bad or indifferent or difficult, truth can promote us in it. But first we must surrender to truth.

Surrendering to truth means that we never take natural preference and place it ahead of truth. We do not let people or circumstances come ahead of truth or interfere with truth. Therefore, we must never sacrifice truth to bow down to our own purposes.

We must not ignore truth when it clashes with our personal interests. Therefore, we must never waiver in our convictions of truth but surrender to its government, to its provision and protection, to its power, and to its purpose. Our position must be in keeping with God's eternal purpose. We must never trifle with truth or justify ourselves in leaving truth because of difficulties.

So, the beautiful thing about truth is that

having a fixed attitude toward truth will protect me from compromising its content in details of life. Never consider how people react to truth. Only consider truth itself.

Chapter Two

TRUTH LIGHTS THE WAY TO FREEDOM

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

People should abide in the place that truth occupies. Why? If we continue in the truth, the Bible says that the truth shall make us free. *Truth* shall make us free! It will produce the action in the future, and we will receive its benefits. Here, the subject receives the benefits of the verb as the subject acts upon the verb; and in the future, because of the provision that we are storing up in our human spirit, truth sets us free, and we are free indeed.

We must never manipulate truth. This is so important. It is so easy to manipulate truth with natural thinking. But if we are set apart in truth,

then natural affections cannot manipulate us. People cannot manipulate us. No set of circumstances can govern us, because in all of our associations and all of our judgments, truth governs us.

"And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter (Isaiah 59:14).

Truth fell in the street, and it cluttered up the highway of God's holiness. As truth fell down, justice was afar off, and equity and mercy could not enter. Any time the standard of truth falls, every single thing is stopped: equity, mercy, and justice.

Caretakers of the Truth

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

I must be a responsible custodian of truth. Regardless of what people think, let's make truth as precise to us as the Word of God does. If the Word of God is truth, then the Word of God is a light unto my feet and a lamp unto my pathway—a precise illuminating light that is reflected from the Holy Spirit. That is what the original text declares in the ancient manuscripts. The Word of God is precise light: illuminating,

instructing me in my walk. It is produced by a specific act of the Holy Spirit. It is a lamp, meaning it produces all of its effects and all of its quality of life precisely in my human spirit.

That is much different than just getting up in a Sunday school class and quoting Psalm 119:105, as people are trained to do, and explaining it: "The Word of God is a light unto my feet, and a lamp unto my pathway." No. The Word of God is a *precise thought* from Jesus Christ, produced by the Holy Spirit accurately, and transferred to my "lamp," which is the human spirit, for a precise experience in an exact application.

As a Spirit-filled Christian, if the truth has set me free, then I will be absolutely exact in truth, and I will have the power of truth to accommodate my convictions—not just information from the letter of the Word—because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. That is where truth sets us free in our thought life. That is when we bring every single thought into obedience to truth. Jesus Christ is the truth (John 14:6). The Word of God is truth. The Holy Spirit is truth (John 16:13). So we bring every single thought into captivity to the truth (2 Corinthians 10:3-5), and we cast down all knowledge that

isn't truthful that exalts itself against precise truth. We do away with *everything* that exalts itself against precise truth.

Putting Truth into Action

Let me give you an example of the practicality of truth: You are fighting with your partner. Do you compromise truth to keep the argument going, even if the partner is guilty? Do you holler? Do you get upset? Do you get nervous? Do you react? Do you justify the fact that you are right? Not if you are walking in the light of truth. You see, truth never has to justify itself in its emotions. Truth simply expresses the facts and relaxes in its essence and quality of life.

That is why truth never depletes energy from the soul of a believer who is governed by truth. Instructed by the Word of God, if he were in a situation where his business partner did wrong, he would simply state it to him quietly, eyeball to eyeball, and then go away in the same quietness that he expressed it. He wouldn't react. He wouldn't holler. He would just express truth. You see, truth is more than information—more than just the letter of the law. Truth is the spirit of contentment in life, the spirit of contentment in living, and the spirit of contentment

in its expression in this troubled world.

Truth is something that is so precise, so specific, and so able to deliver, because you know the precise truth—and the precise truth will set you free. It is a precious thing that God has given us.

Truth Identifies

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Truth always requires identification with other members of the Body, because truth is not selfish. It is life-giving and self-sacrificing in nature. Therefore, truth weeps when people weep and rejoices when they rejoice. So truth is something that always identifies.

Very few are the people who can be talking about a subject such as a serious illness that has nothing to do with them personally, and yet they enter right into tears. Do you know why they begin to weep? It is because they identify with the truth relating to that subject. They are walking so much in the filling of the Holy Spirit that they identify with the person they are talking with.

The person may not even be right. He may be totally wrong. You do not agree with him, but you still love him, so you identify with him because of the truth of love, which is self-sacrificing and not self-indulging. The life of Jesus Christ on earth is the perfect, most beautiful expression of truth. He said, "I *am* the truth" (John 14:6). Truth, therefore, is ultimate.

Chapter Three

MEMORIES AND MOTIVATION

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Romans 12:10-11).

This phrase "fervent in spirit" refers to a person who is continually producing the action of a truth in his motives. Motives here pertain to the subject of motivation. Improper motivation produces an improper interpretation of truth. Objectivity and truth can straighten out improper motivation.

A person's subjective life has many "memory" seeds in it that were received over time. These memory seeds, if they are not positive and not properly related to truth, become like weeds in the soil, ready to choke out the seeds of truth (Matthew 13:7). As these memory seeds grow into weeds, because the soil has not been care-

fully cultivated, truth never becomes a motivator and fervency does not become the content of the spirit and the quality of the attitude.

People have to deal with weeds in the reflective storage areas of their minds. Some would refer to these "weeds" as damaged goods, wounds of a wounded spirit. Others would say they are areas of weakness in a person's life, ready to be manifested. The weeds can develop into anything. But they are weeds that become subjectively powerful in the reflective storage room of the unconscious.

Weeds choke a person's ability to rejoice in the hope that God has put into their hearts by faith. The only way to deal with these weeds is through God's truth in a godly motivation. In the subjective, involuntary, unconscious part of the mind, there is a wide area of reflected memory seeds. The weeds are buried as tiny seeds in the soil of the unconscious mind, causing the Christian to be motivated with improper motives, first in small decisions and then larger decisions, so that he does not receive the truth, and truth falls in the street. This Christian is no longer fervent in spirit, and he is unable to rejoice.

Why? He is living in a famine of truth.

Then Satan takes over because of these terrible weeds in the reflective storage room of the subconscious. And often, as this condition in that soil is repeated and reflected, it produces all kinds of personality problems because of those seeds.

Subjective Reflections of Weeds

Let's say that I have eight or nine bad "weeds" in the subjective reflective area of my mind. If these weeds have never been dealt with, they will become a part of my unconscious storage area. It is possible for those weeds and those seeds to correlate into a miniature personality. That personality becomes a powerful governing agency because it is living in the unconscious realm as an active force. It is possible for many of these miniature personalities to develop and begin to reflect themselves, taking over the real you because of their power.

Some people call these miniature personalities "demons," when usually they are not demons at all. This may be referred to as having multiple personalities. In reality, however, if you really study this out, a person has a miniature personality developing by repeating an often-reflected action of a "weed." When a seed be-

comes a weed in the soil of the soul and is not dealt with, it produces an emotional power, an improper motivation in the unconscious realm of the subjective part of the mind. The soul of that individual is simply overgrown with weeds from seeds in the soil that were allowed to magnify themselves into a miniature reality in that person's mind.

The multiple personality is just that. It isn't eight demons or eight people in the soul, but it can develop into an extreme case that appears to be exactly that. But these "multiple personalities" are simply weeds—tares that have grown up with the wheat (the fruitful, good seed within the mind) (Matthew 13:25-30). It can produce the effect of a realistic thought, which becomes a habitual thought, until it takes over the power and influence of the capacity of the unconscious mind. This pattern of thinking ultimately controls a person through its influence in the conscious mind, in terms of self-destruction, moods, cycles, reactions, reflections, and all kinds of confusion.

Homosexuality, lesbianism, immorality, anger, lying, cheating, stealing and all kinds of moods are areas that assume a superficial authority to defend one's immaturity or carnality.

These are not all related to demons. They simply are allowed to become miniature personalities that can put on the clothes of reality as a reflection of the unconscious part of the mind, and they become real.

Many people go to bed at night and the voices come. These are the effects of weeds that have been growing and growing and were never nullified, never crucified, and never dealt with.

A set of circumstances or a small group of people can produce and promote a weed to grow. The seed in the soil expands, and it becomes a part of you, until it controls you as a projection from within. A certain thought has been so internalized that you absolutely believe it has real power, because it is actively being reinforced by circumstances, by people, and by situations. It may be something that you have been doing lately, which causes you to think that you are never going to make it. That gives those weeds a very good opportunity to be promoted as a part of your mind in action.

As a result, the motivations of your life are improper. Truth is fallen in the street. There is no equity for your life. There is no equity for the truth you had. Then you say, "Oh, I know all this stuff. It isn't doing me any good."

Of course not, because any intelligent counselor (if he wanted to be honest and if he had discernment) could point out the areas where you allowed truth to fall down in your life, and you can't have equity. Listening to messages from the pulpit will not do it. Why? Because messages that are based on the truth will stand afar off. Truth has fallen. The integrity of truth has fallen, and this person is not fervent in busyness for God through grace and love and proper motivation.

Love Delivers Us from Weeds

My motivation must always be the love of God.

"I thus judge if one died, were all dead and I should not henceforth live unto myself, but unto God who raised Jesus from the dead. Therefore I do not know anyone after the flesh; no—not even Jesus. I am in Christ. I am a new creature. Old things are passed away. All things have become new" (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). The motivator is the New Creation love of God and the New Creation light of truth. The New Creation is of now—the Eternal Is—with nothing of the past interfering in its operation of truth.

This is a marvelous thing! I can be com-

pletely motivated in truth and I am free in the New Creation life. The New Covenant agreement between the Father and the Son is my umbrella when I fail. Therefore, if I fail, I use the principle of recovery through rebound, because it is impossible for God to change His mind or to lie about my acceptance and my position in Christ. So everything about my life is motivated by love.

Let's say that I fall flat on my face, God forbid, and immediately I look up to God and say, "Okay, I agree with You, Lord. I have a conviction through the Holy Spirit of truth." Then I name what I did, and I confess it. And God says, "What are you going to do now?"

"I'm going to get up."

"That's right. And what else?"

"I'm going to walk in truth."

"What's the truth here?"

"I have been forgiven. I've been cleansed. My sin is behind me forever. The New Creation guarantees me that my past can never interfere with my present life, which is a brand-new life. The New Covenant guarantees me total acceptance in the same position; and as He fills me, the Holy Spirit guarantees me the quality of life I had before I failed."

So what did the truth just do? It set me free and made it possible to be fervent as I serve God. The truth gives me substance to rejoice in. I understand completely that my hope is only in Him.

A soulish focus in a human application means that a particular weed from the particular person or situation in your past became your dominant personality. Then, you become compulsive in your disposition. This means that for a time, you are uncontrollable. You cannot stop operating in the force of some past personality influence, which has become your personality, because they domineered you under pressure. But the right motivation through the Cross in retroactive truth in the presence of the Word and the Holy Spirit will deliver us.

Serving and Rejoicing

Also in Romans 12:11, "serving the Lord" in the Greek grammatical structure includes the dative case in a present active participle—the dative case of tremendous advantage in a continued process of serving the Lord, motivated by truth in love. In the active voice, the fervency of Spirit motivates me. The participle is "I serve truth," speaking of the whole embodiment of

truth.

Finally, in Romans 12:12, we find the phrase, "rejoicing in hope" Here, "rejoicing" speaks of a positive sense of expectation—expecting something good to happen because of our complete surrender to truth. Totally surrendered to truth, I am relaxed and I am rejoicing. My rejoicing is in hope, because I have an expectation of something good happening. It is objective truth, and it is absolutely the content of my life.

In the New Testament the noun *elpis* (hope) carries that positive sense of expecting something good to happen because of the resource of grace. When Satan projects negativity, the greatest response is just to smile and expect something good to happen.

It all starts with truth. Once I have determined in my mind to have truth as a frame of reference, then I can always rejoice in hope. The truth sets me up. My hope is built on it. That great hope, resting in the reality of my Savior who gave Himself for me, inspires me, and always motivates me to rejoice.

CONCLUSION

Oh, what a great hope we have! How can we not rejoice? These unchangeable facts represent the details of the immutable truth of the Word of God. This is so much more than mere knowledge to us. This is the substance of our lives. As Job declared, so we too declare: We know that our Redeemer lives!

This booklet opened with a song and it I think it fitting that it should close with a song as well. That song is "Something Good is Going to Happen to Me." Read these words over and over. Even if you cannot recall the tune, I believe the truth of the words will still cause you to rejoice in hope.

Something good is going to happen to me,
Happen to me, this very day.
Something good is going to happen to me;
Jesus of Nazareth is passing my way.

Something good is going to happen to you,

Happen to you, this very day.
Something good is going to happen to you;
Jesus of Nazareth is passing your way.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)* .

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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Release the Treasure

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus said in John 6:29 that the work of God is to believe on Him. Ironically, many believers who are living in this dispensation of grace struggle continuously in their sincere efforts to "live the Christian life" (Ephesians 3:2). Yet, God never intended for us to live in a system of works; He intended that *Christ* would work His life in us.

Out of Christ's fullness we have received a great treasure: It is the positional truth of who we are in Christ and of all He has deposited on our account, grace upon grace. But this treasure was not given so we could keep it for ourselves alone; it was given so we would spend it.

Remember, God is not looking for a balanced account, but that we would be enriched in all things and keep drawing from the abundance of grace that produces a spirit of thanksgiving. This booklet examines the apostle Paul's approach to the carnal church at Corinth. By mag-

nifying their treasure, Paul prepared a way for the Holy Spirit to convict them of their bankruptcy and restore the wealth of doctrine to their souls.

Chapter One

AN ETERNAL DEPOSIT: POSITIONAL TRUTH

When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, there were serious problems in the church. First, there was the problem of their preferences toward certain leaders; some preferred Peter, others preferred Paul, and others Apollos. (There was even a group who preferred Christ—they wanted no pastor at all!) Then, though the Corinthians possessed legitimate gifts from the Holy Spirit, they used the gifts out of order, which caused confusion in the church services. Also, because the canon of Scripture was not yet completed, they did not have the final authority of the written Word to settle disputes.

So the church of Corinth, once wonderfully active in soul winning, had declined in their faithfulness, and the divisions were intensifying.

Pastors who want to learn how to approach

serious problems in their churches should study the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. In Paul's wisdom, he did not begin by rebuking them. Instead, he initiated the truth of their position according to grace—something they did not deserve. Though he would define the problems later on, Paul was the master of grace-initiation.

A Brief Church History

The first pastor of the Corinthian church was Apollos, one of the three greatest orators in the world at that time. There was just one problem: Apollos lacked proper knowledge of doctrine. Though he became more thoroughly trained after he met Aquilla and Priscilla (see Acts 18:24-26), when the divisions in Corinth began to intensify, he quit.

Timothy became the next pastor in Corinth. Raised by his grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5), Timothy lacked the investment of a father in his life. Consequently, the problems with disorder in the church took Timothy out of the race. Though he was a good communicator of the Word of God, emotionally he couldn't stand the division. It took its toll on him, causing stomach problems and other ail-

ments. Eventually, *he* quit the pastorate at Corinth.

Then came Titus, who, next to Paul, was one of the greatest Christian leaders in the ancient world. With great boldness and the wisdom and encouragement he received from his pastor-teacher, Titus was able to straighten out many of the problems in Corinth.

Though Corinth was a multinational center for trade, the church was overwhelmingly Greek. Culturally, the Greeks esteemed three things as essential: intellectual ability, oratory skills, and body building for strength in athletic contests. Notice how Paul, as a leader, approached this congregation, considered to be the worst in the history of the early Church. There were divisions, women running the church, and nobody doing anything about it until Titus came along.

Sanctified in Christ Jesus

"Paul, called to be an apostle of *Jesus Christ* through the will of God" (1 Corinthians 1:1). There is a reason for each form the Holy Spirit uses to refer to the names of God. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write "Jesus Christ" in this verse, referring to the humanity of God before His deity. Paul was saying, "I have been

called by the One who died on the Cross in His humanity though He also was Deity."

Then, Paul goes on to say, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified *in Christ Jesus*…" (1 Corinthians 1:2*a*). This time, the Holy Spirit prompted him to write "Christ Jesus," referring first to His deity that became humanity. Only Deity has the ability to sanctify sinful men positionally by placing them in union with Jesus the Savior the moment they become saved. Plus, the fact that we are *in* Christ is the premise for all positional truth (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

So, Paul's first approach to this rebellious church was, "to y*ou who are sanctified* in Christ Jesus." "Sanctified" is a perfect passive participle in the Greek text. In essence Paul was saying that he wasn't going to talk about the Corinthians' sins or problems right now. Using this form of the verb, he implied, "You were sanctified at the point of salvation, and you are continuing to be sanctified now (*perfect tense*). You have already received the action of being sanctified forever in your union with Christ (*passive voice*), and Christ Jesus is the One who did it (*causative participle*)."

That is how Paul handled the division, vin-

dictiveness, implacability, resentment, hatred, gossip, and criticism by a church that was as carnal as it could be!

Paul completes the thought by saying that the Corinthians were "…called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of *Jesus Christ* our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:2*b*). With the emphasis again on the humanity of the Savior who died on the Cross in our place, this verse shows that everyone who calls upon Jesus Christ is sanctified.

Thanking God for Grace

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. *I thank my God always* on your behalf, *for the* grace *of God* which is given you *by Jesus Christ*" (1 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Notice that Paul did *not* say, "I thank God for you Corinthians." Instead, he thanked God for the *grace* that was given to them by Jesus Christ. On the other hand, when he wrote to the Philippian church, he thanked God for them (Philippians 1:3), but he did not thank God for the church at Corinth. It is vital that we understand this. Paul was addressing this church in reference to their *positional sanctification*, without

regard for anything in their experience.

The grace we have received is a provision of divine reality. It was given when we met the Lord at Calvary by faith, for salvation. We received this grace "by Jesus Christ"—by virtue of His death on the Cross in His humanity and because of His Deity which gives Him the right to give us this grace.

My orientation to grace is measured by my thanksgiving. The measure that I have received and understood God's grace will be the measure that I will thank God for everything that happens in my life. Likewise, the measure of my thanksgiving is the manifestation of how well I understand grace.

When Paul spoke of the grace that was "given" to the Corinthians, he used an aorist passive participle (1 Corinthians 1:4). The aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb, which is "thank." This means that receiving the grace that God gives precedes the action of thanking God. Can you see how amazing Paul's response was? The Corinthians had received grace; but because of their rebellion, they had no capacity for thanksgiving. So the wise master-builder said, "I thank God, *on your behalf,* for this grace which is given you."

Because God placed sixty-five points of positional truth on our account the moment we were saved in addition to the benefits He loads us with daily, we can never stop thanking Him. In fact, throughout eternity we will be thanking God with singing, shouting, and thunderous praise for all that He is and all He has done (Revelation 7:11-12).

Enriched in All Things

"That in every thing you are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge" (1 Corinthians 1:5). This verse begins with a purpose clause, which shows the result of the Corinthians' receiving grace. Paul said, "I thank God, on your behalf, that you are *sanctified* forever, you are *in Christ Jesus,* and you have been given *grace*—three beautiful things—because you met Jesus Christ at the Cross." What was the result of receiving this grace? They were enriched in *all* things.

Think of it. Here is a carnal church, backslidden and fighting among themselves; but now they have been enriched in everything because of positional truth, because of grace.

"Ye are enriched" is an aorist passive indicative. This aorist is unique because it refers to a

point in time, that continues outside of time into infinity. In other words, the Corinthians were being enriched in all things, in time, beginning at the point of salvation. Because of grace, this enrichment would continue throughout all eternity. This aorist can be pictured as a dot, a space, a dot, a space, and so on (. . . .), instead of a continuous straight line (———). The spaces represent the times when we stop receiving grace in our experience. This is important because God, who knows everything, knew that men would fail. This aorist expresses the character of One who continues to give us opportunities for rebound, though we fall seven or seventy times in a day.

Remember, so far Paul has not rebuked the Corinthians. Imagine having to deal with all of these problems yet coming on like this, with positional truth, declaring their sanctification in Christ and their spiritual enrichment in all things. Oh, if pastors would only learn that *this* is how to deal with problems in their churches.

Chapter Two

THE WAY TO LIFE: GLAD SURRENDER AT THE CROSS

There were four things the Christians in Corinth needed to learn: No one can live the Christian life in the flesh; everyone will experience failure; trying to repress weaknesses is legalistic Christianity that does not work; and, a believer will never grow or be changed in any area of his life until he stops trying to get better.

Paul came to a painful understanding of this when he cried out in Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Then the Word of God resonates with its powerful provision: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord….There is therefore now no condemnation"!

The Battle is the Lord's

There are many hypocritical, deceived people in churches today—sincere people who do

not understand that though they may repress their weakness, it will pop up again. The struggle goes on (Psalm 18:43). There needs to be a death.

In Psalm 83:11, the writer asks God to make his enemies as Zebah, and as Zalmunna, referring to the Midianite kings and their host of fifteen thousand who were overthrown by Gideon's army of three hundred faithful men (Judges 8). They were taken at a time when Israel's small but mighty band, exhausted from the battles, were "faint, yet pursuing."

A careful study reveals that the name "Zebah" comes from the Hebrew word that means "to become the victim of a sacrifice." This Midianite king did not merely die in battle. He was taken captive, delivered up, and slain before the people (Judges 8:18). In practical application, Zebah represents our number-one enemy—*self*—who becomes the victim at last through crucifixion.

When we live in the strife of self-effort, we offend God and we offend the Cross. We fall, then pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and try all over again; but that is not at all what God intended for us, as Paul learned by the thorn in his flesh.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me" (2 Corinthians 12:7-8). The thorn in Paul's flesh was a demon—a messenger of Satan—sent by God to pierce and buffet his body. Paul had to live with a demon on his case day and night!

As he cried out to God for deliverance, the answer came: "My grace is sufficient for thee:" God said, "for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And Paul responded, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

These verses bring out what is known in the Greek as an *elative conclusion*. This simply means that Paul had a choice between a divine provision—God's grace—and a human provision, which in this case would have been deliverance

from the thorn. Paul chose God's provision.

The apostle learned a great secret: Apart from a divine provision, he could not live the life. He needed to be enriched by God's grace, or he could forget everything. He learned that when he was weak, he was strong through God's grace.

More pastors have tried to repress their weakness, and many become a reproach to Christ, all because they do not understand how to deal with weaknesses. When we finally say to God, "I quit!" then we quit trying to live the Christian life. A man can't even surrender to God apart from grace. We could go down the aisle and surrender to God at every service, but that is only flesh surrendering to *try* to do better. It won't work. This is the mystery of iniquity that has embattled sincere Christians everywhere who love God and whom God loves very deeply.

Chapter Three

THE TREASURE MEN SEEK IS IN YOU

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

We have a treasure inside of us. *People are looking for that treasure*. If an anointed believer were to talk to one hundred people personally, fifteen or sixteen would recognize the treasure and take hold of it. They can see it in our eyes. Their response reveals a hunger for what we have. In this cold dark world, we have a life that shines, reflecting the treasure.

Consider 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The treasure has value in itself; but to enrich another soul, it needs to be exposed. How does

God get our treasure to come out? It's very simple. *The only way the treasure will come out is when God breaks us*. So, He sends trouble on every side.

"…We are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus…" (2 Corinthians 4:8-10*a*). Why? "…that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." The treasure comes through our mortal bodies, revealing and dealing with any death in our lives, so new life can flow through us to others. "So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (see 2 Corinthians 4:10*b*-12).

The Christian life is simply accepting that the work has been done *for me* and acknowledging that the work has been done *in me* (Romans 8:4). Then, while I live in the process of growing in grace, I reveal that God is for me.

True Wealth

People do not like to face bankruptcy, and they hate to admit when they are bankrupt. But Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the [bankrupt] in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The King James says "*poor* in spirit," but "bankrupt" is a good application in this case. The next verse

says, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Because of our sins, we are so spiritually bankrupt that we begin to mourn. We are fed up with sinning. But God meets us where we are and comforts us through the Holy Spirit.

The transaction out of bankruptcy is made when we finally go through the Cross, and we begin to live a derived life through the transcendent power of the resurrection and ascension of Christ. No longer do we have to repress our weaknesses; *they will not go away*. But when we honestly and fervently believe that the work has been done for us and in us and that God is for us, then we suddenly discover a new kind of experiential power in our lives. No longer do we have to secretly strive, trying to make it happen. We are truly wealthy!

God describes this wealth in 1 Corinthians 1:5: "That in every thing you are *enriched* by him, *in all utterance*, and *in all knowledge*." Utterance means communication, and knowledge speaks of categorical doctrine. In principle, as we receive the truth, it is restored in our soul, line upon line, and we are enriched. Now, because we have been enriched by God, we are constrained by love to "spend" the wealth. It causes

us to give utterance, we communicate the truth to others, and, ultimately, Christ is formed in our heart.

Remember, at the time Paul wrote this letter, the Corinthians were not fellowshipping with God. Still, Paul had not brought up their wickedness one time! Though they were wicked people, they were still saved, and Paul's communication remained positive: "You have been enriched in all things and in all knowledge. Doctrine has been restored in your soul, and I thank God, on your behalf, that it is so. Now spend what you have by communicating the treasure!"

Drawn to the Treasure Within

"Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you" (1 Corinthians 1:6). At one time, the Corinthians had been great witnesses for Christ. So, rather than magnifying the fact of their poor witness now, Paul reminded them of the time when they were faithful witnesses. "You witnessed by your lives and by your confession (2 Corinthians 3:3; 5:14-21). Instead of rebuking them by comparing their present situation with what they used to be, Paul was able to minister truth without indicting them. He said, "The testimony of Christ was con-

firmed in you"—and it was confirmed through that treasure.

It is so important for us to realize that even if the people we witness to seem indifferent, complacent, or passive toward our testimony, *oh how they want to see the treasure that is inside of us!* They don't even know what they are hunting for, but they see something in us that draws them.

I spoke to a man once who told me, "I'm an agnostic, but I don't want to be. And I don't want to be that *other thing*."

I said, "What other thing? An atheist?"

"No."

Then I asked him what other thing he didn't want to be.

He said, "I don't want to be lost."

All this man had ever known of Christianity were rules, laws, and standards that the flesh was mandated to perform. After I shared the glorious gospel of the Finished Work with him, he prayed with me and accepted Christ.

Coming to Ourselves

God has given every believer a thorn in the flesh, a weakness that we cannot overcome with natural strength. You may not know what your

thorn is, but you do have one. God gives the thorn to crush us.

You can try to repress your weakness, but that won't work. Hide it and cover it up all you want to, but it won't go away. You must come to a place where you realize you are bankrupt, poor in spirit, then enter into mourning and say by the grace of God, "I can't handle this. I'm all done trying." Remember, when the prodigal son grew weary of his lifestyle in the far country, the Word of God says, "He came to himself" (Luke 15:17).

When we "come to ourselves," then we stop trying, we stop striving, we stop doing, and we stop pretending. Self-righteousness goes. Our religious efforts and relative righteousness, so quick to compare flesh with flesh, are gone. Now we become *real* men and women with God, and He begins to take His rightful place with the treasure in our earthen vessels.

Yes, God will trouble us on every side. Yes, we will be persecuted and cast down. But God does these things for a purpose, so we will never have a proud or critical attitude toward others. We find ourselves instead living by the grace of God and having a thankful spirit, as a representation of the measure of grace we have received.

We truly believe, and we begin to grow in this grace through doctrine. As we are being enriched, we retain doctrine through the Spirit. Then we spend the doctrine—releasing the treasure—by communicating it to others.

Confirmed Investments

In 1 Corinthians 1:7-8, Paul praised God for the Rapture of the Church. "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." He thanked God for the ultimate sanctification that will take place in the Rapture, knowing that God will confirm them—and us—unto that end.

Paul closed his greeting to the Corinthian church by saying, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9). He could have said, "You are out of fellowship with God, and you are wicked, evil people!" but he didn't. He gave them the truth of their position: "*God is faithful*."

After edifying the church, approaching them on the basis of what had been done for them, Paul said, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the

name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Still not outrightly rebuking them, Paul sums it all up. He said, "You are rich! God has supplied all your needs, and you can do all things through Him. Anything you ask in prayer, believing, He will do it." As we go forward with this treasure, we will very gladly spend and be spent for the sake of the Gospel—for others (2 Corinthians 12:15).

CONCLUSION

The simplicity of the Christian life is summed up in Jesus Christ's words in Matthew 10:8*b*: "Freely ye have received, freely give." Only when we release the treasure can we fully enjoy its enrichment and power in our own lives. David cried out, and God delivered him from the strivings of the people (Psalm 18:43). Likewise we must declare "self" as one of those from whom we seek to be free.

Paul said in Galatians 4:19, "I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you," that is, until the Word and the Spirit have become an attribute of divine nature indwelling us. In other words, "I want the words to become spirit, and the Spirit to take the words into your mind and form God's nature inside of your soul."

Paul knew the only way these carnal believers could live the Christian life was by having Christ's nature formed in them through the Word and Spirit, *not* by legislating rules to an

already struggling assembly. They would have to learn, as we must, that the secret to living the Christian life is in recognizing the treasure that was given to us. By cultivating positional truth in our souls through the Word and through an intimate fellowship with God, we can release the treasure and give freely to those who are bankrupt in Satan's world system.

Removing the Barriers

to Reconciliation

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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And all things are of God, who hath
reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ,
and hath given to us
the ministry of reconciliation;

To wit, that God was in Christ,
reconciling the world unto himself,
not imputing their trespasses unto them;
and hath committed unto us
the word of reconciliation.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,
as though God did beseech you by us:
we pray you in Christ's stead,
be ye reconciled to God.

For he hath made him to be sin for us,
who knew no sin; that we might be made
the righteousness of God in him.

—2 Corinthians 5:18-21

INTRODUCTION

So often when people are hurting, they will go to their pastor for counsel. He listens and will not interrupt because he loves them. With com*passion he understands that their hurt and wounds are often the result of damage inflicted by others.*

Sometimes, though, the tremendous suffering many Christians experience began with subtle negativity and rebellion against the will of God. It happened because they didn't go to the Cross in their situation; they did not reckon that they were crucified with Christ in the details they were facing (Galatians 2:20).

In this booklet, we will look at the barriers that keep us from experiencing reconciliation and God's provision for removing them. Whether it is sin, guilt, or the effects of living in a body of death, Colossians 1:20 says that reconciliation is impossible except it is done through the cross of Christ who made peace for us through His blood.

Chapter One

REDEMPTION: THE BASIS FOR RECONCILIATION

"Giving thanks to the Father…. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Colossians 1:12-14, 21).

When the apostle Paul was writing to the church in the city of Colosse, many forms of religious worship were going on there. Epaphras, the pastor-teacher of the Colossian church, was faced with the complexity and confusion of so many philosophical backgrounds among the new believers. He wanted Paul to come and help him, but Paul was in prison, so Epaphras went to him.

One religious philosophical group causing problems there was the Gnostics. These clever intellectuals would go to church, but they believed the pastor-teacher was not very bright, so they stirred up strife and division in the church. The fact was that Epaphras was a magnificent pastor-teacher with a good congregation. Yet, this group felt superior because of their knowledge, which contradicted the truth.

In his letter to the Colossians, chapter 1:3-14, Paul first prayed for the Colossian church. With every opportunity, Paul asked God to intervene in Colosse: "Epaphras is young, and he is disturbed, but he is doing his very best. Help him." Then Paul prayed for the assembly.

He Paid the Highest Price

But Paul did not just pray. He also clearly revealed God's truth about the doctrinal problems, such as the doctrine of reconciliation. In Colossians 1:13, Paul said that once we are saved, God transfers us positionally from the supernatural kingdom of darkness into "the kingdom of his *dear* Son." The Greek text brings out a deeper meaning about the Son, "whom the Father loves with a special objective love."

When Paul addressed the Savior in Colos-

sians 1:14, he wrote: "*in whom we have redemption….*" *Christ* is the One "in whom we have redemption"! This is a very important passage because the word for redemption, *apolutrosis* in the Greek, conveys a picture of buying back a slave or a captive; his situation is reversed and he is made free by the payment of a ransom. This principle is so important in the doctrine of salvation.

The Gnostics changed what God said about redemption. They changed the doctrine of salvation from God's viewpoint. They changed the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ's incarnation and hypostatic union as the God-Man. Still, they continued going to the church in Colosse for one reason: to divide and to influence its members by proselytizing with false doctrine.

Paul's answer to Epaphras' request for help was to bring in the truth that Christ has provided redemption through His precious blood (Colossians 1:14). In this passage, we have the doctrine of redemption, the "buying back."

Ransomed!

Just think of where we were and what we have been bought back from! According to Ephesians 2:1-3, "…you hath he quickened, who

were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air…." We had our conversations in times past in the lust of the flesh. We were fulfilling the unusual lust patterns that occupy the fallen nature of the soul of man.

"But," Paul said, "through the blood of Christ, by His vicarious death, burial, and resurrection, once you truly believed, you were bought back."

And so, God supernaturally quickened us, just as we were, when we were dead in sins. Justifying the ungodly, He raised us up together and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies.

When you think of redemption, only *you* know what God has delivered you from. But when God takes away lust patterns, He does it so that you don't even have them. At least, they have no dominion over you—no power and no authority.

You can now experience deliverance in your conscience because you not only accepted redemption for salvation, but you also received the divine standards of Jesus Christ (which become your norms and standards as you hear the

Word of God). This is what God is saying when He calls us a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Former Slaves, Now Adopted Sons of God

Redemption is mentioned in Job 19:25*a*, "I know my redeemer liveth." Here it also means to be purchased from slavery. The principle of redemption begins with the concept of bondage to the old sin nature and freedom from its domination and its damnation. No longer are we servants to the flesh, because Christ purchased our freedom from the slave market of sin (Psalm 34:22; I Peter 1:18,19) and redeemed us from the curse of the law.

Redemption through *expiation* (Christ's dying for us and as us) emphasizes the character of the Son, Jesus Christ, and the love that results from propitiation. *Propitiation* (the Son satisfying the Father's justice and righteousness by offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice) emphasizes the character of the Father who could not look upon sin. Though Jesus knew no sin, the Father made Him sin *for* us.

Redemption includes the precious principle of adoption. When He redeemed us, we became adopted children of God (Galatians 4:4-6). It is the basis for our eternal inheritance (Hebrews

9:15). It is the basis for our justification (Romans 3:24). So now being adopted as children on earth, whenever God leads us, we can say, “Abba, Father.” My Father!

Chapter Two

BREAKING THE BARRIERS

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:20).

The Bible says that at the Cross, we were presented with a clean slate. Then, the first thing God did was to make peace for us. Once we have been redeemed, it is forever; however, there will be times in our growth when we do not experience our new position as adopted children of God. For this reason, it is so important to understand the doctrine of reconciliation.

There are barriers that can keep us "alienated and enemies" in our mind, but they have all been taken care of through God's provision (Colossians 1:21).

The First Barrier: Imputed Sin

First we had the barrier of *imputed sin* that

would keep us from ever being saved, even before we personally sinned (Romans 5:12). It means that God simply condemned us by charging sin to our account before we had a chance to sin. This imputation was the genius of God, who knew that we would personally sin. It was a miracle of love!

You see, as long as He imputed sin to us *before* we committed personal sin, that gave Him a right to intervene for us before we ever got right. That is why, the moment we believed, He was able to impute His righteousness to us—adding it to our account, freely—apart from the law and without works (Romans 4:6). So, imputed righteousness takes care of the barrier of imputed sin.

The ungodly believed, and He justified the ungodly. We believed, and our sin was imputed to Jesus Christ—the precious, merciful, gracious Son of God! The barrier is gone, and we have His righteousness. When our sin went upon Him who knew no sin, it was called an 'unrealistic' imputation. Jesus never had an old sin nature, yet all of our sins were placed on Him. This means that none of our sins had a basis in Him because He knew no sin. That's why it is called an unrealistic imputation.

Because we now have God's righteousness,

He imputes many blessings to us. This is called a 'realistic' imputation, because there is a basis to receive the blessings. In other words, now that we are saved, you and I have His righteousness as a robe (Isaiah 61:10). Therefore, He has a basis to give us many other things by 'real' imputation. When a marriage or a business is blessed by God, it is because of the principle of God being able to bless His nature in us. It is a *real* imputation.

Sins, Death, Iniquity, Evil, Guilt: God's Way Out

The second barrier is the old sin nature and its production of personal sins. The first gift God gave to Adam was 'free volition': the ability to choose to obey God, or not (Joshua 24:15, Romans 3:12). Adam chose to sin, and sin came into the world (Genesis 3). God knew that once Adam fell, we too would choose to sin because we inherited Adam's nature (Job 5:7).

So, on the cross Jesus Christ bore all of our personal sins. As He bore them, that barrier was removed. It is now a "Son" question and not a "sin" question.

The third barrier we face is the fact of our natural birth into a body of death. Every one of

us has a body that will die some day. To overcome that, He offers us a supernatural birth into a new life with Jesus Christ where the soul never dies. The body dies, of course, but the soul goes directly to be with Jesus, carried by the angels into the presence of God. Christ offers eternal life to anyone who will receive it—and now, that barrier is gone.

The fourth barrier is iniquity with its production of evil (the infections of the serpent, Satan). Iniquity, as it was in Lucifer, is emotional rebellion against spiritual authority, combined with the belief that the one who represents that authority is unjust. Iniquity enters people's emotions, damaging them and causing people to rebel and to feel they have been treated unfairly. Iniquity caused Satan to go to the angels and enlist one third of them to rebel against Christ and against God (Revelation 12:4).

But through the Cross, where grace married faith, God took away iniquity. He took care of it by bearing our iniquity and not imputing it to us. In place of iniquity, He gives us absolute and total liberation through categorical doctrine, which is the mind of Christ revealed through Scripture.

When Jesus shed His blood on Calvary, He

paid for our sins and iniquities; however, He did not die for Satan's government of evil.

Most evil is the government of Satan and can be the result of living in iniquity. It infects the mind; therefore, it can only be healed by receiving the mind of God through categorical Bible doctrine. The person infected with evil needs to hear the Word of God continuously, to fill up the five parts of his soul (including the mind, emotions, conscience, self-consciousness, and volition). He needs to purpose to be around spiritual believers who will be faithful to build him up in the Word of truth and will not compromise with any negative communication.

Even as God took away these barriers, for many believers guilt is a tremendous barrier—the fig leaves, the fear complex. But He took guilt away with unconditional subjective love, and it is no longer a barrier if we give it to Him.

Through the Blood

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). Many ministries today teach that the Old Testament sacrifice doesn't mean a thing. There are those who say that when the Word of God speaks of the blood, it is just "a token of death"—

that the only thing that matters is the spiritual death of Jesus Christ and not the blood of Christ. *We strongly oppose that teaching!*

The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:18-19, that we have not been redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold that perish. Rather, we have been redeemed "with the *precious* blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." That blood was *precious*, meaning of the highest possible honor and value.

God killed an animal and blood was shed when He covered Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21). Abel offered the blood of a lamb before God, and his offering was accepted (Genesis 4:4). The Word of God says clearly that in the land of Goshen, when God was about to smite all the first-born of Egypt, He commanded Israel to put the blood of a spotless lamb on three parts of the door "…and *when I see the blood*, I will pass over you..." (Exodus 12:13). God didn't say, "When I see the dead animal," but, "when I see the blood." And everyone who obeyed lived.

The Effectual Work of the Blood

In many of the Old Testament sacrifices, the animals were killed in the outer court, but the priests had to take the blood and sprinkle it

seven times on the mercy seat in the holy place (Leviticus 16:14). Every vessel in the tabernacle had to be touched with the blood. In every case, it was the blood that did the work. Certainly, the spiritual death was necessary, the physical death was necessary, but *the blood was key*.

It Is the Blood of God

This is why we have the doctrine of the efficacious blood. The first thing to consider when you think of the blood is this: Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

Then, think of communion—the bread for the body, and the blood. We don't want to trample the blood of Jesus Christ under our feet, nor do we count the blood of the covenant, wherewith we were sanctified, an unholy thing (Hebrews 10:29).

If the blood has no redemptive value, then it has no value at all. And what did God use to purchase our redemption? Acts 20:28 says it was the blood of God. Was it in human form? Yes. But there was no old sin nature in His human blood. In the Virgin Birth, when Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit and no man, it was the blood of God himself in human form—perfect blood

with no disease and no sin in it.

Just imagine how Satan has deceived scholars and men who mock the Blood. Seventy-five years ago, it would have been unheard of to say that the Blood is not the issue, that it is only spiritual death. Guard your heart. Do not ever be influenced into compromising through rationalization the necessity of the blood of Christ for our atonement.

Chapter Three

UNLIMITED FORGIVENESS

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even the forgiveness of sins*" (Colossians 1:14). In the original Greek, the word we translate as "forgiveness" is *aphesis*, a compound derivative of the verb *hiemi*, "to send" and *apo*, "away from." As to our sins, forgiveness means "to send them away forever, legally."

Since he was cast down from heaven, Satan has been on trial, and Jesus Christ is the prosecuting attorney in the courtroom of heaven. For now, Satan is out on appeal. But every time he tries to use us as witnesses for his defense by accusing us before the Father, Jesus presents the Blood. Satan admits our sin as evidence, and Jesus answers, "Send it away forever!"

In this principle, God takes our sins and sends them away forever—all of them. So, forgiveness was provided on the cross when our sins were paid for. They have been blotted out

(Isaiah 43:25). Also, that Blood is always available for rebound when we have isolated times of failure.

Furthermore, the Word of God says that forgiveness is something that has happened forever (Psalm 85:2; Psalm 103:12). We have received limitless forgiveness for unlimited vengeance—that is the difference. The Christian has unlimited forgiveness; the unsaved person has unlimited vengeance because he never accepts God's forgiveness (Genesis 4:14; Psalm 99:8).

Fear and Guilt—Gone!

And here is the beauty in this principle of forgiveness: With the forgiveness, guilt is gone. With the forgiveness (when it is understood), fear is gone, and the conscience is spiritually cleansed (Hebrews 9:14).

Picture the difference between someone who is unsaved and struggling with very real fear and guilt, and someone who has been totally forgiven by grace, who can never have any sin or iniquity imputed. If we continue in sin, of course, we will be influenced by the knockout blow of evil. And if we continue in evil, God will take us home early, after a series of chastisements that result in the sin unto physical death.

God takes a Christian home early because they are hurting His testimony, misrepresenting His grace, and carelessly using His love for their own pleasures. God knows these believers will never get right and that it is better for them to be in heaven with Him.

The Beauty of Forgiveness That Forgets

Think of it: Hastings, a well-known Bible scholar, says that there is no limit to God's forgiveness. He wrote that there is no limit to the readiness of a Christian to forgive others who has received His forgiveness.* Bitterness, negativity, vindictiveness, and implacability all leave when we truly understand forgiveness.

Picture the number of people who said a prayer to God and sensed a release the first time they knew that they were truly forgiven. The beautiful thing is that God will never remember our sin (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17). People will search for the sins of Israel and the iniquity of Judah, but the sins will not be found (Jeremiah 50:20).

The only way this kind of forgiveness is revealed is when we are tenderhearted and forgive others through the Holy Spirit as God forgives us. In 1 Kings 8:30, the word *calach* says when you hear a negative report or accusation,

forgive.

Joseph forgave his brethren, as his father told him (Genesis 45; 50:16-21). The word *nacah*, used here for "forgive," includes the meaning of carrying a burden for others. In other words, Joseph said, "They have hurt me repeatedly, but I will carry the burden by totally forgiving them supernaturally through the grace of God as a good steward of grace."

Do you want to learn how to praise God? Just think of the Redemption, the Blood, and forgiveness.

As Soon As You Hear It, Forgive

A verse that is seldom taught in pulpits today is Matthew 6:14: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." When you hear that somebody is running you down, the moment you hear it, forgive.

I don't see Matthew 6:14 practiced often enough. Do you know what people do instead? We have tendencies that when we hear that somebody is on our case, we dwell on it for hours, or even days. But the attack is a test of whether we have the fruit of forgiveness.

About the things we hear that come against

us personally, a great man of God once said, "If it isn't true, thank God it isn't and be quiet. If it is true, get right and thank God they said it!"

*Hastings, James. A Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), p. 57.

CONCLUSION

When we discover what has already been accomplished for us, we can begin to walk in the fullness of our potential as new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Thank God that for many of us, the barriers have come down, and we have been reconciled to God and to each other. It didn't happen through a system of works in the flesh. It wasn't mandated by letter-of-the-law legalists. The victory was revealed by the spirit of reconciliation given to us because of the Blood.

Because God brought down the barriers, every Christian in the world can have a spirit of reconciliation. With no barriers left, all we have to do is to walk by faith in the nature of God's Word, in the life of His Spirit, in the wisdom of His knowledge, in the fervency of His love, in the preciousness of His faith, and in the mercy of His grace.

Dear heavenly Father, thank You for Your rem-

edy when we run into barriers. Your Word is Truth. Your victory over sin and death is eternal. Holy Spirit, bring these things to our remembrance whenever we forget. Lord Jesus, thank You that You reconciled us to God in one body by Your cross and Your own shed blood. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Resist the Devil

through Truth

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.

"He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

"He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.

"He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.

"Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble" (Psalm 10:8-12).

These verses refer to an adversary who continually looks for ways to bring us down as Christians. Satan knows that believers belong to the Lord and cannot be lost, but still he desires to minimize our effectiveness on the earth.

Hell's forces race around the world in search of those who can be devoured (1 Peter 5:8). Demons seek out Christians who can be swal-

lowed up by divisions and distractions.

In this booklet, we consider God's provision against Satan's organized armies of demons. Careful study of the original Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible reveals God's desire—that we would develop a system of faith built on unity. As God's precious people, we are instructed to receive the truth, precept upon precept and line upon line (see Isaiah 28:10). This way, we can become "sober"—quietly filled with doctrine.

Chapter One

ROYAL LOVE REQUIRES NO RESPONSE

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:12-13).

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

"Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in

your brethren that are in the world.

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:7-10).

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

A Word of God ministry builds its people up in grace and distributes to them an inheritance, as it rightly divides the Word of truth. We study to show ourselves approved so that we will not be ashamed at the Bema Seat in eternity and so that we are thoroughly furnished to do works of divine good here on earth.

Christ cannot be divided (1 Corinthians 1:10). He desires that His people speak the same thing, have the same mind, and preach the same doctrine. Yet, ministries throughout the world fail to operate in the unity of the faith. As a result, resisting the devil becomes difficult, because many do not know how to resist the devil through a system of thinking in the Word of Grace.

Consider the doctrine of unconditional love. This is a love that depends upon God and survives, even without the object giving anything

back. Christ *so* loved us that He died for us *while* we were yet sinners. He did not die because He saw some value in us as the objects of His love. This is His royal law of love.

Do you have this love? Are you so substantiated by the love of God and so filled with it that the object of your love does not have to respond at all for you to keep loving? Or, do you require some response from the object of your love?

Foxes from Within

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes" (Song of Solomon 2:15). This verse is talking about us. *We* are the foxes, not the things that happen in our lives. Little things within us spoil the vine. They spoil the tender grapes of abiding in Christ as our provision.

When division develops because an object of love does not respond, then virtue love is not in action. This kind of love is conditional love, the kind of love practiced by the Pharisees during Jesus' time on earth (see Matthew 5:46). As long as the objects of their love had something to give, they gave love back to them.

But that is not what it means to love through the Holy Spirit.

During counseling, I have carefully listened to people talk without rebuking them. As they are speaking, God often whispers in my heart, "They do not understand My unconditional love."

Without this love, there is no unity of faith in the local assembly, therefore God cannot command a blessing (Psalm 133:3). Churches stagnate because of this. In time, some people eat wormwood and drink poisoned waters (Jeremiah 9:15). Bitterness rears up in their souls, and they begin to wound others in the flesh (Lamentations 3:15). The wounds get deeper, and retaliation and reaction follow. One initiates this negativity and the other responds with hatred. They know each other after the flesh, and God is not between them.

Jonathan and David determined to have God between them (see 1 Samuel 20:41). And we who live in the shadow of Calvary—in the co-crucifixion, co-burial, and co-resurrection of Jesus Christ—should have God between us, in the unity of faith. There should be no murmuring, no criticism, no fault finding. Problems should be settled in the unconditional love of

grace and in the transparency of the light, in the meekness of sacrificial love, in the humility of mercy that rejoices against judgment. We should always be caring about meeting the needs of the guilty, loving the unworthy, becoming the victim for those who aggressively live in their flesh, and allowing the life of the Lord Jesus Christ to be manifested through our mortal bodies.

"For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

"So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Corinthians 4:11-12).

God's life must be directed toward the guilty. That is what really matters. It isn't that they are not doing right. It is not an issue that they are wrong. It is an opportunity for the unity of my walk with God to be manifested. Christ has been revealed in me (Galatians 1:16), and the guilty ones are my opportunity to manifest Christ as a broken vessel—one who does not live in any aspect of self-preservation.

Chapter Two

RECOGNIZE THE ENEMY'S DEVICES

God gives a pastor-teacher to an assembly (Ephesians 4:11). His personality may not appeal to some, and he may be deficient in some areas. However, in all of these things, the pastor is given to help the saints become mature and to edify the Body of Christ. God will even use his weaknesses to mature the saints for the work of the ministry. In those assemblies, God wants the believers to come together in the unity of faith and live by every Word of God (Matthew 4:4)—not through the pounding of knowledge, but through the brokenness of a love that reveals Christ.

Our lives are to be developed through the knowledge of the Son of God, not the knowledge of some defense mechanism through Scripture. Not a single thing less than Calvary and a ministry of reconciliation will protect us from

the cunning craftiness and doctrines of the demons of the air.

Protecting the Assembly

Demons lie in wait to deceive. They seek people who want to be like the Most High, who are available to be divisive. This can be prevented when there is a commitment to speak the truth in love. Then, the members of the body will grow up into Christ in all things. The whole body will be compacted together and each one in it will be effectual in the work he does. This will then make increase in the body, which is simply evangelism. God adds unto the body that edifies itself in love.

This is how an assembly can be protected from the traps set to catch men (Jeremiah 5:26). There exists a community of demons operating to search out iniquities. They make diligent searches (Psalm 64:5-6), and they set evil nets that catch some (Ecclesiastes 9:12). They overwhelm the ones who are going through something (Psalm 142:3). They oppress the unconscious and subconscious minds of those who wounded and open to deception.

"For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

"But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

"Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

"Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him" (Hebrews 2:5-8).

Unless I humble myself before God, He cannot lift me up out of the pool of demonic infections. I must choose life.

Certain demons are assigned to attack and destroy our minds. Others work in attacking our physical bodies. Another class of demons specializes in constant destruction of relationships. Therefore, we must be aware of what is going on in our midst. We must recognize and consider these demons and begin to understand what they want to do to us.

After all these years, hell has developed a very detailed monitoring system. Satan is not omnipresent, so he orders his forces to collect information on us. Armies of demons study our countenances—the faces we make in certain situations. Other demons record our confessions. They catalog every weakness, and they organize ways to push the buttons of our flesh. They have files spelling out the history of our responses.

According to their information, demons can project evil imaginations and wicked counsel. Craftily, they promote demonic doctrines that may even use the Scriptures. Their counsel has an impact on marriages, so certain issues never get resolved. Ungodly counsel works its way into businesses and reinforces division.

Avoid Preoccupation

Even after we receive the truth, demons will do all that they can to undo its effect in our lives (Matthew 13:19). A particular army will try to prevent believers from thinking things through. For instance, a specific message may really touch you, but before the week is over, demons interfere and distract your attempts to think on those things (Philippians 4:8). Other demons work to get you to reflect on yourself and your prob-

lems. You become preoccupied with yourself instead of Christ, and demons supply the rationale to justify your preoccupation.

"Oh, I went to church, but I just stayed to myself," you say. "No one really loved me." These are demonic projections. Hell is counseling you to say such things, and then you justify your negativity.

This is an evil, satanic confession. It reveals a life that has not been laid down at the Cross. If we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we reckon that all things are of God. We will see that everything is for our sake. With that, our hearts will be established in the unity of faith and God's precious love (Ephesians 4:5).

Chapter Three

DELIGHT IN DOCTRINE, MEDITATE ON TRUTH

"Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart" (Zechariah 7:10*b*).

Any time we make a negative evaluation, we are thinking evil against a brother or a sister. We are not everywhere present. We do not have all knowledge. We will never know all the facts—facts that would disqualify any of us from making any type of evaluation of another person's life.

Evil imaginations come from the image of Adam in the practice of self-preservation that followed the Fall (see Genesis 5:3). Such imaginations do not come from the New Man, whose knowledge is renewed and who is recreated in the image of Him who created us (Colossians 3:10).

Satan would love to have us be consumed with wrong meditations from the wrong source

so that we would live and act in self-preservation. God, however, has established a way to counteract his devices.

I love what the Word of God says in Psalm 77:12: "I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings." Through reflection and reiteration of truth, I will leave my normal patterns of thinking, my natural thought structure and constructs. Godly precepts will be established in my soul, and categories of doctrine will give me authority over Satan's thoughts and begin to rule in my soul.

True Testimonies

Ezra expressed in Psalm 119:99 that "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation." He expressed the characteristics of Christ—that is what a true testimony is. Christ's characteristics became his testimony and his meditation.

Through meditation, we gain experiential understanding (Psalm 49:3). Meditations from His Word govern our hearts, the words of our mouths are acceptable to the Lord, and we go forward in the precious strength of our Redeemer.

Satan flees the presence of such strength.

The devil recognizes the power of those who do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly and who refuse to sit in the seat of the scornful (Psalm 1:1).

Delighting in God's doctrine and meditating on it day and night makes believers fruitful, even in the worst trials that hell can bring about. The heat does not affect them. Not a leaf on his life will wither. Beyond this, everything he does continues to prosper.

Fountains for Victory

Twice in Proverbs, the doctrine of the wise is described as a fountain of life and the way to depart from the snares of death (see Proverbs 13:14, 14:27).

The Lord wants us to be a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed, a spring shut up, protected from the attacks of the various demon armies. He wants us to have such a supply of doctrine that our testimonies reflect our meditations. We actually live out the truth we have meditated upon through the Spirit of God.

The Lord says, "I create the fruit of the lips" (Isaiah 57:19*a*). He is the author of our confession and the source of our strength. The counsels and the imaginations of our evil hearts no longer control us. Daily, we purpose to think as

God thinks—even in the smallest details of life.

Hell will look and look, but our lives will say to the devil just as Jesus said to the devil, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

CONCLUSION

Let us be swift to hear and slow to speak, receiving the Word of God with meekness. As we are faithful to do this, the Holy Spirit will faithfully transfer to our memory centers the truth we have received. There it will be a supply to our human spirits.

Then we will have God's viewpoint, which establishes a conscience of grace and unconditional love within us. We can operate in the unity of faith, having oneness with the brethren. We can develop a supernatural ministry from Christ to those who are wounded, who have withdrawn, or who have gone against us, and we will have no lingering negative thoughts and no memory of what was done.

Now we stand in the dominion of Christ, under the covering of the Lord, and Satan must flee. He must flee because of our position in the New Covenant made between the Father and the Son and established by Christ's Blood. Satan

flees because we stand as new creatures under the covering of mercy that endures forever, the covering of standing in grace, and the covering of God's patience and peace.

We live under God's covering where we can build ourselves up in the most holy faith. There, neither circumstances, nor people, nor details of life will be able to rob our hearts from the fellowship we have in Christ.

Heavenly Father, in Jesus Christ's name, bless the Word of God that we have received, and send every one of us into the depths of understanding warfare. May we live in an image derived from You—an image that will give us a derived imagination that becomes the thoughts of our hearts and the vision of our souls as we resist the devil. Bless us in Christ's name. Amen.

Responding to God's Initiation

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

A very sad but relevant story is told in 1 Samuel 3:1-3. It says that the word of the Lord was precious—very rare—in those days; "there was no open vision." Eli, a priest in the temple where the ark of God was, had begun to lose his eyesight. As a result, the lamp that was to remain burning near the ark went out, and he never knew it. Soon after, the ark—which represented the presence of God—was taken from Israel (1 Samuel 4:11).

The Bible says that without a vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29:18). Like Eli, many have become dull to God's initiations. But when we have a vision of the Lord, as Isaiah did (Isaiah 6), the things that were distractions will become dim, while the things of God will become very clear.

When God speaks, we need to be quickened by the Holy Spirit with a hunger and thirst for Him. But once we are quickened, we must re-

spond by appropriating truth in our lives. This booklet will reveal the importance of Christians realizing how sacred, how relevant, how imperative it is to hear God speak and to tremble at His words.

Chapter One

THE ETERNAL PRIVILEGE OF GOD'S INFLUENCE

"For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things hath been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my Word" (Isaiah 66:2).

"Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" (Isaiah 66:5).

The only people who will receive the eternal meaning of the Word of God are those who tremble when they hear it. The Hebrew word is *chared*, This doesn't refer to physical trembling but to a supernatural influence through an eternal opportunity that will never come again. Whenever God's Word is spoken, that is an opportunity to prepare us for an event in time so

we can be blessed for eternity.

Problems exist because we do not seriously receive the initiations of God with trembling. Remember, this is not physical shaking. We are talking about coming under the influence of the presence of the Holy Spirit of God who made us, who imparted life to us, and who will determine when to take this life from us.

According to Isaiah 57:15, those who have a contrite and humble spirit are quickened by God, the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity. And in Isaiah 66:2 and 5, the Lord is near those who are broken and have a contrite spirit and who tremble at His Word.

In Ezekiel 44:15-18, the priests went into the Holy of Holies with special clothing. When they came out, they took off those clothes. This doesn't mean that these priests lived double lives, but that they had to take their spirituality into the practicality of life.

Be in Awe of His Presence

"Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonied until the evening sacrifice" (Ezra 9:4).

Some people do not tremble at the Word of God. The supernatural power of God is designed to prepare us for certain events and situations that will be recorded forever in eternity. To tremble at the Word of God leads to redeeming the time because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:16). It is to realize that the time is short (1 Corinthians 7:29) so that we live in great respect for God and His Word.

When a person is a sincere listener but does not tremble in his spirit, then the Word preached is not planted in his human spirit. Trembling includes being awestruck in the presence of God, highly esteeming that which is holy.

Paul was being mocked by some in the Corinthian church because his speech was "contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10). In 1 Corinthians 2:3, he said, "I was with you in weakness." The original text describes that he came as one who was insignificant, "in fear, and in much trembling." In other words, "I was awestruck by something I needed to do that was holy, while in the presence of carnal people," he explained. "I highly esteem the appointment because I was awestruck at God's presence in time, to prepare us for something eternal."

Any time a Christian does not receive the

Word of God in meekness by mixing faith with what he hears, the Word was not rooted. Therefore, it added to him no eternal value in the temporal system of life. This is true even if the person is just attentive but does not mix faith with what he hears.

Glorify God at All Times

Ephesians 6:5 speaks of employees and employers. The employee should work with his employer with respect and honor. We work in the presence of God as ones who tremble. We go to work to glorify Jesus Christ. On the way to work, we may meet the Master. So we go to work to honor our employer as we honor God and our family.

When people choose sides and decide to leave a local assembly because of something they don't like, they do so because they never trembled at the Word of God as it was taught (Ezra 10:3). They never allowed themselves to come under the supernatural influence of the living Word, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. By it, the human spirit has a capacity to experience the divine presence and essence of God in the human soul and body.

I want you to see the joy of living in the

reality of resurrection and having the Word of God so established that you are awestruck by the presence of Jesus Christ. This transforms both the speaker and the hearer. God is aware of everything that goes on in the earth (Psalm 94), and He is ready to help us.

Chapter Two

LAMPS IN A DARK WORLD

"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart,

"And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as light" (Matthew 17:1-2).

In this scene with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, the Greek word for "shine" is *lampo*, and the word for "light" is *phos*. The Holy Spirit did not say that it is was simply light that came from the garment that overwhelmed the exterior of Christ's body before Peter, James, John, Elijah, and Moses. Light is good—it can show us where to walk in the middle of the night. But God used two words that describe a lamp and its brightness, because in Proverb 20:27, our human spirit is a lamp for the light of God.

A lamp is something that you put on a stand

for all to see. You put it up high. This speaks of the divine heart of regeneration, the human spirit of God-consciousness. The Word is talking about something up high that shines everywhere in the world (Matthew 5:14-16).

The Holy Spirit communicated to Matthew and said, "Don't write that it was just light that covered Jesus' body. I always desire to teach specific truth, and I want people to understand that I am talking about their human spirit being a lamp that shines out into the world, not just down onto the floor."

Having the Word and the Holy Spirit within, every child of God has the privilege to be a lamp. We can be heavenly, brilliant, dynamic eternal lights that shine in Satan's world.

The Power of the Pulpit

When I speak a message on valleys, some people may think immediately, "I know the valley messages." There are valleys that each of us will experience through life, and we will reveal whether or not we received the message by faith. If not, the message had only temporary value to us. We heard it, we even were stirred up by it, but the Word was never engrafted in our soul through the power of the Holy Spirit, so we

were not changed.

God initiates to us, and He is looking for responders. When a pastor preaches the Word of God, we need to receive it as the Word of God (1 Samuel 8:7). The words are Jesus Christ's (Luke 10:16), and the pastor is communicating in Christ's stead. His mouth is God's mouth, his heart is God's heart, and his thoughts should be God's thoughts. What he presents is Jesus Christ in the holiness of the moment, and the listener should be awestruck by what he hears.

My attitude should be, "What is God giving me at this moment? What will He say to prepare me for facing demonic armies, sickness, death, and unexpected problems in relationships and the details of life? What is God going to say today?" Awestruck, I rest under supernatural influence from God's Word with supernatural faith, which brings a supernatural response that produces a supernatural lifestyle.

The Word Brings Life

This is the process of initiation and response. For example, God initiated the Creation over a period of seven days. For six days He created things, nature then responded, and on the seventh day He rested. He initiated the fish of the

sea, and they came alive. He initiated the birds of the air, and they responded. He initiated with His Word, which holds the universe together (Hebrews 1:3). The universe declared, "We respond." All of these things responded—not to science, but to God.

He holds everything together by His Word (Hebrews 1:3). When the Word—Jesus Christ—comes back, there will be destruction at the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19). He will destroy His enemies simply by speaking the Word. He created the universe by the Word, and He will destroy His enemies by the Word we are receiving today.

In the Garden, God came and said, "Where art thou?" to Eve, who responded in fear and did not answer. Adam hid because he was afraid. Before the Fall, they had Bible doctrine classes every evening. Adam and Eve didn't show up that day. They did not respond to God. Later they responded, letting God restore them by covering them with clothing made of skins for which animals had been slain.

In bringing offerings, Abel responded with the blood of a lamb, but Cain brought vegetables from the earth, which had been cursed by God according to Genesis 3:17. Abraham, after he

had failed in Genesis 12:7, built an altar. He responded with rebound.

Whether in trials or heartaches, God loves when He initiates that we respond with trembling, being awestruck without letting subjectivity overwhelm objective revelation. A person who refuses to be part of a local assembly neglects an opportunity to develop faith, which only comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Chapter Three

CLEANSED AND SENT

When Isaiah 6 was written, Isaiah had failed as a preacher. He was very patriotic and loyal to His king, who had been a decent ruler for nearly fifty years. Then the king burned incense in the temple, which only the priest was to do. As a result, he came down with leprosy and died. When the king died, the prophet Isaiah, who had lost his fervency for God because of his love for the king, finally could see the Finished Work. Patriotism is good, but Isaiah wasn't a sound prophet. He wasn't carnal, but he just wasn't godly enough to be spiritual.

After King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord Jesus high and lifted up on the throne with His train filling the temple. Everything was filled with glory. He also saw the six-winged angels—seraphim—with wings that covered their bodies and their faces. These seraphim had taken Lucifer's position after he rebelled. These four angels

now did what Satan once did alone as a cherubim. The six wings have nothing to do with flying. Just as the stripes on a soldier's uniform signify rank in the army, wings signify angelic rank.

The foundation of the temple was shaking, and the cloud of incense filled it. Isaiah didn't know what was happening, but he was finally getting a look at Jesus Christ in the Finished Work. Overwhelmed, he saw what was the will of God executed speedily by angelic creatures of high rank. He saw that their faces were hidden; they did not reveal themselves. They were glorifying Christ without making a show of themselves. They had a relationship with a commitment to God in their perfect creation.

Under tremendous conviction, Isaiah had to say, "Woe is me! for I am undone. I haven't been awestricken by the Word of God. I have never come under a supernatural influence. I have unclean lips, and I am just as bad as everyone else" (see Isaiah 6:5).

He had just finished that great confession when one of the seraphim took a coal from off the altar with the tongs. The coal speaks of God's fiery essence of cleansing. The coal purged his lips, and the tongs speak of living in obedi-

ence, the means of manifesting God's cleansing.

Free to Follow God

The Holy Spirit then declared just at that moment: "Isaiah, thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Just like that! God said, "I don't desire to put you on probation, Isaiah. I just want you to respond to Me. I am not asking for you to perform works. I am asking for a response to what I have done."

Immediately, the gentle-hearted question came, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The Trinity is so gentle, so creatively hospitable in approaching people.

"Who will go for us?"

Isaiah said, "Here am I—send me."

Then he was told of the difficulty he was going to face. "Everyone is going to leave town when you start preaching fervently. And, only ten percent will come back. But go."

Initiation and response.

Two disciples were with John the Baptist when John saw Jesus (John 1:36). "Behold the Lamb of God!" John said. "I don't want you to follow me any more. Follow Jesus. Follow the Lamb."

Andrew received the Gospel and took it to

Simon Peter—initiation and response (John 1:40-42). Jesus said to the disciples, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (see Mark 1:16-17). Friend, these men were not strong men. They were not godly at this point, but they followed Jesus. Do you understand? They were not mature; they were not noble, mighty, or virtuous. They simply followed Jesus.

This is what it means to respond. It doesn't mean that we won't fall. In fact, in the process of wanting to be like Christ, we may fall seven times in the same area in the same day. It has happened to all of us. But we don't keep doing it. We decrease wrong behavior until it is all gone (Proverbs 24:16).

What I want you to see is that God does not stop initiating to weak people. He just wants us to keep responding to His initiations. The Word of God says, "Out of weakness [they] were made strong" (Hebrews 11:34). The most beautiful thing is that we keep responding to God's initiation. That's all.

Defining the Profane

Esau was a profane person, according to Hebrews 12:16. He did not respond to God. He repented with tears, but not toward God. It was

sorrow because he got caught, but he did not want God. So by his own choice, he forfeited his right for salvation by grace through faith.

"Profane" is *chalal* in the Hebrew. Profane means to make common what is holy—taking lightly the eternal Word of God, living indiscreetly in the midst of a local assembly.

A man or a woman may marry a partner who is profane (Leviticus 21:7). This means the spouse is familiar with God, always taking the holy and making it common and preferring to talk about other things. You may have friends who are like this. Be careful not to have relationships with profane people.

"I am ministering to them," you say. In fact, you may just like being around them. Yes, it is possible to minister, and a few really do. But these worldly relationships certainly do not represent fellowship (Ephesians 5:11). Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Not many in the profane crowd will accept a ministry of God.

Profane people make God's house unholy because of poor listening habits. They treat God's people in an unholy way. The Law was given because some people are profane (1 Timothy 1:9). Profane people are familiar, treating the

things of God as normal and common, without a sense of awe, without placing themselves under the supernatural influence of God.

But God is waiting to bless us with eternal understanding, wisdom, guidance, and direction so that we can reflect the very essence and nature of our Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. And the Holy Spirit wants us to discern between the holy and the profane. Consider that for a moment.

Limiting the Holy One

Paroxuno is an interesting Greek word. It means to restrict the manifestation of the presence of God by limiting Deity in a person. This word is found in the Septuagint in Psalm 78:41: "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and *limited* the Holy One of Israel." And in Isaiah 63:10: "But they rebelled, and *vexed* his Holy Spirit." Our negative volition will restrict God from blessing, guiding, and revealing Himself to us in time, which is to prepare us for an eternal dividend.

Proskuneo is a great word. It means that they who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in doctrine (see John 4:23, 24). That means we come face to face with Him as He invisibly

breathes with His Spirit into our spirit. His eternal Spirit comes through the breath of His Word. God breathes in me the same life that created the universe. He breathes into me eternal power, eternal understanding, and eternal wisdom. This comes in when I worship Him in spirit and in doctrine (John 6:63).

Is it any wonder that the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a critic of the intentions and motives of the heart? (Hebrews 4:12.)

To worship God in spirit is to receive His Word with trembling. When we receive the Word through concentration, discipline, and being Spirit-taught, the breath of life is imparted through the Living Word. Then, we internalize truth through the supernatural ability He imparts. That way, we can retain the Word apart from memorization.

We thank God for praise and worship in their outward forms. But something much higher must take place before the other is profitable. We are to praise Him as we have been taught by His Word (Colossians 2:7).

Chapter Four

PLANTED BY THE RIVER TO RESPOND

Song of Solomon 4:12 makes reference to a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed, and a spring shut up. What this means is that God plants His seed in our little garden. It is enclosed because we are awestruck at the fact that we are saved and redeemed. We are overwhelmed because we don't deserve this salvation. Our garden is enclosed by God. This is what eternal security is. This is what forgiveness without the imputation of sin is, even though we will be chastened if we continue to sin (Hebrews 12:11).

The Father never sees our sin; the Son never sees our sin. The Father sees us as hid with Christ in God. We are a part of Him (Ephesians 5:30). The only One who sees our sin is the Holy Spirit, and that is only so He can convict us of it and bring about restoration of our fellowship with the Father and the Son. Please understand

that when God disciplines us, it is done in love to bring peace and fruit to our lives (Hebrews 12:9-11).

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

"But his delight is in the law [doctrine] of the LORD; and in his law [doctrine] doth he meditate day and night.

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:1-3).

The river represents the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-38). What delights the blessed man but the Word of God, the Law, the doctrine of the Lord. Where is this doctrine planted? By the river. "The flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63).

Whatever this man does shall prosper, meaning there will be blessings in time recorded in eternity. His leaf shall not wither—his energy, his strength, shall not fade. He will bring forth fruit in due season, his leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he does will prosper—and in that order.

The Weak Arm of the Flesh

"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

"For he shall be like the [shrub] in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

"For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jeremiah 17:5-8).

Even in drought, the leaf by the river stays green. In other words, this type of Christian is filled with mercy, energy, and power. God is saying that when we are planted by Him, we will be awestruck as we listen to His Word.

God's Plan for Children

Proverbs 30:11 speaks of a generation that curses their fathers and mocks their mothers. Teenagers who curse at their parents or show blatant disrespect toward them are spelling a

destiny of doom for themselves. If you have ever done that, please go to your mother or father and repent.

God wants children to be planted in Him, not just wandering around. He wants them to be awestruck in the presence of Jesus Christ and to have God breathe His amazing grace, mercy, love, and power into them. He wants to give them convictions, joy, peace, happiness, and confidence that comes only from Him.

More than just going to church, children need to be of the Lord's planting (Psalm 144:12). This speaks of an entire lifestyle established in the Lord Jesus Christ, including thoughts, words, parental training, habits. They need a hatred for the world system along with an ability to mark and avoid anything contrary to being planted in the Lord (see Romans 16:17), because those things are enemies of the Cross (Philippians 3:17, 18). It is also the parents' responsibility to lead through the Word and their lifestyle.

Eternal Calls from the Eternal God

When God initiates, He seeks a response. Malachi 2 speaks of Israel dealing treacherously with God. They made Him weary by not responding to His initiations.

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16).

God initiated, but they did not respond.

God wants believers who won't be so busy on their jobs that they only come to church when they feel like it. Nothing could separate me from being with God's people. And in hearing God's Word, I am responding to an eternal call from an eternal Person because of an eternal truth that is burning in my bones (Jeremiah 20:9). God is initiating, I must respond.

In Russia, a woman who had been in and out of mental institutions for more than five years received a copy of our booklet, *Just Let God Love You* (Grace Publications, 1996). She got to the last page, and the light of the love of God broke through and made her a lamp for Him. She was made completely whole. Today, a pastor does a Bible study in her home, and nearly thirty people are coming out. What happened? She began to tremble at the Word of God. She came under the supernatural influence of the manifestation of the Word that created the universe and still holds it all together. It is this Word

that takes care of situations, details, people, circumstances, health, and finances. It is a living Word with the living God manifesting the presence of His grace.

God wants a moment-by-moment relationship with us. Develop your own vertical with God and stop being influenced by supernatural darkness. The providential plan of God is perfect. The Christian life is sacred, serious, and solemn, but it should be filled with the joy of God. Christianity is overwhelmingly relevant to every thought, to every single thing that goes in and comes out of us.

Obedience and the Atmosphere of Faith

If I deny the truth, I lose my practical provision for a solution from God. Obedience is what reveals my convictions and my true belief system. Procrastination to obedience gives Satan a playhouse in my soul. The fruit of my life will reveal who I am occupied with in my life. Only God can love supernaturally, and only a man filled with God will be supernatural in his love.

A man filled with grace will always have reverence and a healthy fear of God in His holiness because he is so grateful for His presence. He will not live in condemnation, but he will re-

spond to God's initiations of love and recovery if necessary.

If you are one who has fallen, respond to God, repent, get back up, and redeem the time. Go on as His little child receiving what He gives you to be just like Him. Every child of God who is obedient to God's Word can bring an atmosphere of faith for God to work miracles. Obedience to His Word produces an atmosphere of faith that pleases God (Hebrews 11:6) and releases His power through us.

A Spirit-filled child of God in grace can never be too holy for this earth. We will only be as holy as we reveal Christ for the earth. A Christian *can* be too religious, but he can never be too holy, because to be holy means to be whole, like God. Christianity is Christ in a man and woman, conforming that man and woman to be just like Him in their foreordained purpose and in their character through the grace of God.

CONCLUSION

God is always initiating, and oh, how He desires a response! Not a reaction, but a response. Not fear and condemnation, but a response. God will take the weakest person, and all that person has to do is keep on responding to God. God will keep initiating grace and truth, rebound and recovery, peace and forgiveness. He keeps on initiating, and He is calling to us, "Respond."

This is the most serious time in history. There is such a sense of urgency. The message God is giving us is that we must understand what it means to tremble at His Word.

Whenever we attend a church service, we need to be in awe of the presence of God. When the music and worship begins, be in awe. Watch God plant the Word and make you a garden by grace. Then He will come and partake of the fruit produced in you by the Holy Spirit (Song of Solomon 6:11).

Tremble ye at God's Word. Be aware of His

supernatural presence for this moment, which you will never have again. Receive what He has for you for this moment. It will help you in time as it prepares you for eternity—a blessing to you forever.

Rest on Every Side

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years. And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God" (2 Chronicles 14:1-2).

"Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD." This is a beautiful and precious statement. So many people are trying to do what is right in their own eyes, just as the Israelites did, in Judges 17:6, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." As a result, they have no quietness in their land; they cannot enjoy the rest God has provided for them in the Finished Work.

On the other hand, I know many people who bow down before the Lord in prayer every

morning and live their lives in the power of the Holy Spirit. They live right, in the eyes of God, through the Spirit of God. Living right brings a certain conviction, a certain confirmation, a certain peace that nothing else can bring.

Why do some have joy, peace, and rest? Because they have ceased from their own works and have entered into God's rest. Why do some have their personalities changed while others do not? Why do some continue to live in the personality of Adam's nature? It is because they do not believe this message of freedom that guarantees us a life of rest on every side.

Chapter One

PUTTING UP THE FENCES

"For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him" (2 Chronicles 14:3-5).

"Strange gods" speak of anything that is strange to the Holy Spirit, to prayer, and to fellowship with Jesus Christ and His Body. Asa took away these things. Strange gods are things that are contrary to the perfect love of God that motivated Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins. Strange gods include negativity, criticism, negative moods and thoughts.

Asa broke and cut down anything that had been used or could be used as an idol. The Holy Spirit, in the same way, wants to cut down any-

thing evil in your life.

After all the high places and images had been removed, "the kingdom was quiet before him." When we get rid of sin—and the strange thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that go with it—our hearts become quiet. When we cut ourselves off from strange legalism and strange people who don't love Jesus, and we enter into fellowship with Jesus Christ and His Word, then we will be quiet. But, there is no quietness as long as there are strange things going on in our lives.

Selective Reception

"And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the LORD had given him rest" (2 Chronicles 14:6). These cities weren't opened to just anyone or anything. It wasn't easy to enter these cities because they were surrounded by high fences topped with sharp points. If a person wanted to get in, someone had to let him in.

This is the problem for many Christians—they have no fences around their cities. As a result, just about anything can come in. The garbage dump is only place I know of that isn't selective about what it takes in. But, if our city is

fenced, nothing can come in unless we go to the door and open it.

It is so vital for us to control what we listen to. For example, there are scores of Christians who live in soul power, using Christianity as a crutch to get what they want through fleshly relationships. Don't get involved in trying to minister to these people, because you will only get hurt by listening to them.

Put up your fences and be selective about what goes into your mind and fills up your emotions. Then, you will experience quietness in your land. When we let the wrong thing in, restlessness takes over; but if we keep the wrong things out, the presence of Jesus Christ remains and keeps us quiet.

A Barrier of Promises

The fenced cities of 2 Chronicles 14:6 speak of the Body of Christ, as well as individual believers. The fence is a picture of the promises of God all around us. These promises are what make up my fence. The devil comes knocking at my gate, saying that I should be discouraged because my finances are bad. But I have a promise that God will meet all my needs, according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19). This

promise is a part of my fence to keep the devil from making me depressed. When Satan comes along and starts accusing, I have a promise: No condemnation! (Romans 8:1). When he says, "You have tried before and failed; and you'll fail again this time," I have a promise that tells me I can do *all* things through Him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13), and that I am more than a conquerer (Romans 8:37). The devil may say, "Persecution will come and God will not intervene." Yet, I've got a promise that God will never leave me nor forsake me (Hebrews 13:5). These promises are my rest. All of the promises of God are yea and Amen (2 Corinthians 1:20). Give the devil a promise of God and dismiss any further thoughts.

Near the end of Jesus' forty days of fasting and prayer in the wilderness, the devil came to tempt Him. In Matthew 4:3, Satan challenged Jesus to turn the stones into bread. But, in verse 4, Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." What did Jesus give the devil? The Word of God! This is exactly what we are to give Satan. When he comes around, put up those fences. Then, glory to God, your land will have rest.

Chapters Two

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Some Christians seem to think it glorifies God for them to live in discouragement, fears, anxiety and frustrations. "I had a bad week, but I guess that's what God wanted for me," you may say. No, beloved, God did not want you to have a bad week. The Lord wants your land to have rest.

God wants my mind, my will, and my emotions to be at rest. God wants to see my mind change and be renewed, because I'm a Christian. He wants me to be quickened to enjoy the purity of the promises and the joy of defeating the devil through faith in Christ. God wants me to be able to see a situation change—because I'm a Christian.

The Spirit vs. the Flesh

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh

lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:16-17).

When the Holy Spirit is filling me, there is no lusting. If I am saved, I have the Holy Spirit and I can walk in the Spirit if I choose to. If I choose to walk in the flesh, there will be constant lust. I will pray, but I won't get an answer. I will sing, but my singing won't make a difference in anyone's life. I will testify, but it won't do any good. I will read the Bible, but it won't help me.

I must realize that the only way to be satisfied is to walk in the Spirit. If I don't walk in the Spirit, then the flesh will lust and the Spirit will fight against it. I won't be able to do the things I want to do. I can't live in the world because the Spirit won't let me; yet, I can't live in the Spirit because the flesh won't let me. I'll go back and forth, growing weak and sick, and I will want to quit being a Christian. I'll dislike my home and the people who try to fellowship with me. Eventually, I will just say, "I don't want to go on with God. It's not worth it. He hasn't done anything for me, even though I've really asked Him!"

The most miserable person in the world is

one who has the Spirit, but doesn't walk in Him. There is no other way to be free. Walking in the Spirit is the only way to be at rest.

Unfailing Provisions

Some people are always occupied with what they need, instead of thanking God for what they have. Hundreds of Christians worry about why they are not better, instead of thanking God, the only One who *is* better.

I don't know why so many count it such a privilege to be miserable. There has never been a problem in the life of a Christian that Jesus Christ's life didn't solve before it happened. In His unfailing love, Jesus has made a provision for every believer, before the foundation of the world. We don't have to be filled with the devil's garbage when God's provisions are on the table, and anything outside of God's provision to build you up is garbage.

"Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about them walls, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us; because we have sought the LORD our God, we have sought him, and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered" (2 Chronicles 14:7).

Glory to God! Raise your hands! By the grace of God, *there is rest on every side of the believer*. He is on my left and my right (Job 23:9); He is before me (John 10:4), and behind me (Isaiah 30:21); He is above me (Psalm 33:14), and underneath me (Deuteronomy 33:27). Still, there are dear people who don't want this kind of practical Christianity.

Chapter Three

BUILDING AND PROSPERING

The last part of 2 Chronicles 14:7 says, "so they built and prospered." When there's rest on every side, then you are able to build. Too many believers never get around to building upon their most holy faith (Jude 20). What would you think of a contractor who began tearing down an old house and was still at it, five or ten years later? He has the blueprints for the new house, but he hasn't started building because he's still tearing down the old one.

God wants us to thank Him that *old* things are passed away and *all* things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). He doesn't want us to keep trying to tear down the old things, but to start building on the foundation of our new life in Christ.

I know some people who are in such need of victory, but they are always trying to work on their old houses. Every time I have a conversa-

tion with someone like that, he gets mad at me for telling him he can have a *new* house. He doesn't come to church services regularly because he will hear how he's supposed to be victorious, while he still can't see the way to live in victory. He gets miserable, even though he knows Jesus Christ died for everything he's ever done. All he has to do is accept the Finished Work, enter into His rest by faith, and begin to build and prosper in Christ forever.

It is so important for us to confess every known sin. As long as we continue in sin, we are working on the old house instead of enjoying the new. You wouldn't believe how many people are always working on their guilt and the consequences of not getting right with God. I know there are those who are weak—God is very patient with all of us. But my attitude is this: Bring your weaknesses to an end through Jesus, and start building your life, building for other people, prospering in the Master.

This attitude takes on a whole different dimension. I leave that old building program and simply accept what Jesus said and did about it. I step into the land of faith-rest and, by the grace of God, I begin to build and prosper. 2 Chronicles 14:6 says that for ten years, Asa did not have any

wars. Why? Because he got rid of the things that should not have been in the land. The old things in our lives shouldn't be there any more, because they are what cause our wars.

I know times of persecution and trials will come, but many times it is not persecution for being godly. Instead, it's simply the ignorance of not accepting what Jesus did and a failure to enter into faith-rest. When the apostle Paul was put in prison, his heart was at rest. Persecution didn't do a thing against his faith-rest. In fact, it became an opportunity for Paul to manifest faith-rest. If we experience persecution because of godliness, then it will just reveal perfect peace coming through us. But if something about our old lives or our unbelief is bothering us, then we are going to struggle, strain, and react instead of entering into the land of God's rest.

Rest in the Valleys

In 2 Chronicles 14:9-10, Zerah the Ethiopian came to battle Asa and his army in the valley of Zephathah. The land had been filled with rest and quietness, but even this king would be threatened with a battle—and this battle was in the valley.

We may have faith-rest; we may have ac-

cepted the Finished Work of Jesus Christ, but we will all have our battles in the valley. Every one of us will have our valley experiences.

"And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee" (2 Chronicles 14:11). In 1 Kings 20:27-28, God proved that He was not only the God of the mountains, but also the God of the valleys. Asa didn't cry unto people; he cried unto the Lord. He didn't go to an arbitration board, or become anxious; he went to the Lord.

The enemy was coming upon Asa; he and his army were outnumbered. They had no power. But Asa said so beautifully, "Help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee." The Lord had to love that kind of language from His precious king! Every child of God has the privilege, just as Asa did, of coming to God in faith-rest, crying out to Him and resting his case.

Chapter Four

ENTERING INTO HIS REST

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Hebrews 4:1-3).

Every single child of God who builds a fence around his city by mixing faith with what he hears will have rest and a quiet heart. Even when there is a battle in the valley, God's rest is there. It is a rest that Jesus Christ has provided "from the foundation of the world."

"And on the seventh day God ended his

work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made" (Genesis 2:2). God rested on the seventh day. In Genesis 1, we find that on the first six days of Creation, there was "the evening and the morning" (Genesis 1:5-31). But there was no evening on the seventh day. This means that God entered into His rest, and this rest goes on and on.

Likewise, we enter into the rest of the Finished Work, "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14). We are not partakers of problems, trials, anxiety, or accusations. We are not partakers of Adam, religion, or lies. But we are partakers of the glorified Christ because of the Finished Work. We have entered into His rest because His work of paying for our sins has been finished. By the grace of God, we've been made partakers of the glorified throne ministry of Christ.

In Moses, we have a representation of Jesus Christ's ministry in His humanity. But Joshua pictures Christ finishing the work, as he entered into the Promised Land. Aaron, the high priest, represents Jesus' priestly work on earth; Melchizedek is a picture of Christ as our High Priest in glory. Following this analogy, I want Joshua, not

Moses, as my Savior. I want Melchizedek, not Aaron, as my High Priest.

Joshua went into Canaan, conquered the land, and rested. He completed what Moses had started. The glorified Christ has finished in heaven what He started on earth. We no longer know Jesus after the flesh; we know Him according to His glory as our High Priest. We are partakers of what has been perfected. We are partakers of Canaan.

As partakers of Canaan, we now cease from murmuring. We cease from complaining, from lusting after what our flesh wants. We have divorced ourselves from the life of the wilderness; we've entered into the Finished Work rest of Jesus Christ. His peace, joy, love, kindness, righteousness, promises, and quietness are all ours—when our land is at rest.

Rest: More Than Just a Day

"For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest" (Hebrews 4:4-5).

We are to enter into what God is resting in. He is resting in His Finished Work, and the shed blood of Jesus. When we become partakers of

the Finished Work, we graduate from an elementary Christian experience into a throne ministry, a reflection of the Master's glory.

Some people are hung up on an emphasis of the seventh day. I say, "How about emphasizing the Finished Work?" This is more than just a day, it's a *place* of rest—eternity, the empty tomb, the heavenly sanctuary, my heart, where Jesus Christ lives.

"Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day" (Hebrews 4:7-8).

They had a day, but we have Jesus. They had a day, but we have a place. Our rest isn't in a day; it's in the person of Christ. We are partakers of a living Person who brings in rest as a *life*, instead of limiting rest to a certain day. I feel sorry for those who limit the rest of God to a certain day. They are wrong. Seven days, seven nights a week, we can rest in Him.

Rest that Remains

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he

also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his" (Hebrews 4:9-10). God established His rest before the foundation of the world. Thank God it remains! Thank God the seventh day remains!

I cannot change circumstances. My works cannot bring home that unsaved nephew; they can't draw the backslidden spouse back to God. My efforts can't make the one I think I'm in love with fall in love with me. My emotions can't do it. My talking and my depressions can't do it. Only Jesus Christ can do it.

I have everything that eternity has, because I've got eternity in everything. I'm not going to insult eternity by being occupied with time to limit eternity. If God wants to take time to reveal eternity, I will glory in eternity while I am waiting in time.

He who enters into God's rest ceases from his own works. If I do the work and things turn out badly, then I'll be depressed with what I see. If I think, but don't think with God, I'll become awfully weary of my thoughts. If I pray, but don't pray in faith, I will become restless in waiting.

When I enter into God's rest, I enter into the mind of God which rested from before the foundation of the world. When I enter into His rest, I

cease from working, trying to define peace. Jesus Christ died for me. He was resurrected for me. He went to heaven and took me with Him. He sent the Holy Spirit. He lives inside of me. It's eternal life through an eternal work by the eternal Spirit in an eternal body. I have eternal joy because I've entered into an eternal redemption. I have an eternal purpose, given in grace for eternity. When I enter into His rest, I am a partaker of God's glory for ever and ever.

CONCLUSION

I have received the baptism of love by the Holy Spirit. I don't need added experiences, because I am at rest in the Finished Work. I rest in Jesus Christ who came into my heart, not in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I thank God for these gifts; I will experience them to the fullest—in the order and purpose of God. But I'm not going to make a doctrine out something *I* have done; instead, I am going to make a life out of Someone who lives in me.

I can picture the devil having a good time as he stirs people up to argue over the diversity of gifts God has given. These things aren't the issue. Simply receive Jesus. When I am filled with the Spirit and yielded to Jesus Christ, then whatever He gives will be glorious.

If I cease from my works and enter into His rest, which was accomplished from the foundation of the world, then there isn't much for me to worry about! God had everything about me

planned and figured out in a Person, Jesus Christ, before I was born. All I have to do is become a partaker of His life by faith, enjoy God's rest, and experience the glory of life in Him.

Resting Under the Cloud

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

These are days when "seeing is believing." This is a standard most people are taught to live by, to avoid being fooled or taken advantage of. When it comes to spiritual matters, however, the Bible teaches us to believe first, without benefit of sight or feelings. Then, in due season, we will receive the promise (Hebrews 10:35-39). Sadly, few Christians have developed a capacity to walk by faith. As a result, few adventure into the places where God wants to take them.

Israel was led out of captivity in Egypt, and they began marching through the desert. God's people were headed to His Promised Land. Through the pillar of a cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, the Lord led Israel, protected them, and gave them light.

In this booklet, we discuss the importance of recognizing God's presence, even when that presence is as a cloud, obscuring any form of evidence by sight that might be there. As we

learn to rest under God's cloud, we will find His perfect guidance for every moment.

Chapter One

BELIEVING WHAT WE CANNOT SEE

"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

"He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (Exodus 13:21-22).

"And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

"And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night" (Exodus 14:19-20).

"Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the

cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go" (Nehemiah 9:19).

"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

"And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

"And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys:

"But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.

"For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (Exodus 40:34-38).

There is so much said in the Word of God about this "cloud." God put a difference between Egypt and Israel, according to Exodus 11:7. Part of that difference was the cloud that separated them by day and the pillar of fire by night.

God has always had His way in leading His people, and in the desert He used a cloud. The cloud speaks of the presence of God. It also speaks of the Word of God, the faith we have in Jesus Christ, and the faith we take from the Word. We are to walk by faith and not by sight, according to 2 Corinthians 5:7. Therefore, we must have a pure faith in Jesus Christ, and that faith must be apart from the benefit of sight. Sometimes, a cloud may obstruct our view of the sun; and many times, the cloud of God deliberately obstructs our view of the Son of God. Yet, by faith, we follow Him.

When we follow divine guidance, we enter into faith-rest. Please remember that when the cloud was over the tent of the congregation, no flesh—not even Moses—could enter, for the presence of God filled it. But as long as His presence remained, there was rest in the camp.

God reduces every Christian's growth to the issue of faith. Sooner or later, we will come to a place of confrontation where we must choose to follow God *in spite of* what we see. To some degree, until we get to heaven, we will never understand some of the things we go through. But as we let God take us through, we learn to walk by faith.

Through Calvary, our lives are committed to God by faith. We were not present at Calvary, but we know that it happened two thousand years ago. We find the account in the Word of God that historically proves it. We were not there when Jesus Christ was upon the earth, but what a privilege Peter, James, and John had! They could literally walk by sight. The mystery about the disciples is that for three years they walked with Jesus while He was on the earth, yet many times, when the opportunities came, they did not exercise faith. Otherwise, Peter would have continued to walk on the water without sinking (Matthew 14:29-31), and Thomas would not have doubted Christ's resurrection.

Faith and Rewards

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

We have never seen Jesus in the flesh, and yet we believe. We did not see Him minister or hear Him preach. We did not witness the angry mob or hear the cries of evil against the Lord. We did not get a glimpse of the empty tomb, but still we believe it with all of our hearts. We were

not among the witnesses—more than five hundred all told—of Christ's eleven post-resurrection appearances. We did not witness His ascension. That is why our way of life as born-again believers is so unique. We have to walk by faith or we will never believe.

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Ultimately, every one of our moments must be reduced to faith—a living faith, an abiding faith that produces a rest for our souls. As long as we have the cloud, we can walk by faith with the Word and the presence of God. This kind of walk glorifies Jesus and pleases Him tremendously. It blesses the Lord when, in the midst of the angelic conflict, He is able to point to our faith the way that He pointed to Job's faith.

Through the first two chapters of Job, we are able to see what Job could not see when the trial of his faith came upon him. God told Satan, "Go ahead. You cannot take Job's life, but you may do anything you want to him. I happen to know that he will respond in faith." That kind of faith pleases God so much.

Many times as a pastor-teacher I have asked

God, “Why?” when I thought about certain people and the trials they were going through. And yet, I have always come out with peace, because the cloud of God’s presence is over our lives.

Chapter Two

WALKING IN DIVINE GUIDANCE

"And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.

"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

"And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:33-35).

There was the cloud that Israel saw by day. Then, at night, there was the pillar of fire, which really was a cloud of fire. In the night seasons, the Holy Spirit is revealed as a "spirit of burning" (Isaiah 4:4).

The cloud hovered over the tabernacle after Moses did everything according to God's order and completed assembling it. The cloud hovered right over the door, the glory of God filled the

tabernacle, and Moses could not enter it! He could not see what was in the tabernacle at that time. He was reduced to faith.

We have the presence of God and a faith that comes through hearing the Word of God. Yet, if we have that, and then we start mixing in sight, circumstances, and feelings, it would be so easy for us to withdraw from a faith that serves by love (Galatians 5:6).

Scorched or Protected from the Heat?

"He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night" (Psalm 105:39).

The cloud of God became a covering for Israel against the scorching sun. And just as God covered them with a cloud, He wants us to use faith as our covering. Faith is a covering that protects us from the heat of the trials and the pressures that come against us. Faith-rest delivers us from the terrible pressure of trials that would indeed hurt us and paralyze us.

From time to time, people stop coming to church because they have been wounded. As long as they avoid the Cross, they appear to be getting along just fine. They may even say they love the message and the pastor. But, if their wounds are not taken care of quickly with the

unction of the Holy Spirit, a demon may infect them with a plague (see Mark 3:10).

What every one of us needs is to agree with God. Though He was perfect, He bore our shame and took all the pain of every man's sin upon Himself. Instead of being offended, He humbled Himself and died on the Cross, in our place.

When Calvary isn't allowed to crucify our wounds and expose them, they fester and hurt even more. The preaching of the Word is a two-edged sword—one side exposes and convicts, the other side heals. Those, however, who will not accept the healing process that comes through co-crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection often mislabel conviction as condemnation. We need to settle that issue with God and recognize that He is *for* us, and whatever He allows is for our sake.

The Cloud Leads the Way

Imagine, in Exodus and Numbers, what would have happened if Moses had refused to follow the cloud. The nation of Israel would have become just like the Egyptian army: overcome by the power of God and lost for eternity. There would have been no divine guidance, no

destination, and no divine purpose for their lives.

God put a cloud between Israel and Egypt. He would not allow the persecution of Egypt to come upon Israel because God set them apart and supernaturally protected His people (Exodus 15:26). Those who would refuse to follow the cloud would lose their covering, their protection, their guidance, and their sense of the presence of Almighty God.

Though the cloud protected Israel from the sun, the cloud also gave them light at night. Psalm 119:130 says, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Our eyes cannot see Jesus Christ because we are reduced to faith. But our faith through the Word brings in light. It is so unique to think of a cloud that would bring in light and light up the night.

In 1893, surgeon Eleanor Chestnut was led by God to go into China. She used everything she had to build a simple hospital. With her own hands, she helped lay the bricks for the building during the day. At night, she performed surgery in her bathroom, which was the most sanitary room in the place she was staying.

One day, after amputating a laborer's in-

fected leg, someone noticed that Dr. Chestnut was limping. Several asked about the condition of her leg, but she wouldn't answer them. She had grafted skin from her own leg to patch the wound on the patient and enable him to live.

During the Boxer Rebellion, Dr. Chestnut—along with four missionaries—was killed by the terrible forces of evil revealed in men who stood against the good that God was trying to accomplish in China. Why, with all the great needs in China, did God allow this? John the Baptist was beheaded for simply proclaiming the truth, and that was God's plan for his life. Likewise, that was God's plan for Dr. Chestnut's life. Both went to be with God instantly. But the reason is God's, and in the midst of such things, we must walk by faith.

Overcoming Rationalization

"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

Let us begin to recognize the depth of God's love and the way God moves to help us. It is crucial that we understand that the concept of divine guidance is a very deep and provoking

thought. I must walk by faith. Occasionally, this may seem unreasonable, but to walk by faith is the greatest way to walk. This seems irrational to the flesh, to the old sin nature, to sight and reason, to need and pain, to sorrow and separation, to divorce, to hospitalization, and to death.

In His silence, God whispers, "Trust in Me with all your heart. That is all I am after. Trust in Me. Don't lean on your own understanding. That is rationalization, which feeds empiricism. Like Thomas, you only want to believe what you can see with your eyes and touch with your hands. This is not pleasing to Me. You are walking before elect angels and before fallen angels. The one thing I desire is your total trust in everything that I say and do."

Chapter Three

A FAITH-CONTROLLED BELIEF SYSTEM

"And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims: and he spake unto him" (Numbers 7:89).

In the Holy of Holies, God spoke to Moses from above the Mercy Seat, from above the cloud of mercy. Let me show how vital it is for you not to condemn yourself when sight and circumstance seem to have a victory. There will be times when your belief system will seem weak. Sight will appear much stronger to your soul than what you really believe.

Sight, however, cannot endure. Faith does. Sight can never really win, but faith has won. When everything seems to be gone from you, simply enter into a deeper understanding of the

faith of Jesus Christ.

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

"For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:16-20).

The Power of Trust

When I am not operating in the quality of godly faith that I desire, when my faith is not controlling my volition properly, when my faith is not controlling my emotions, I must instantly switch over and begin to derive the faith of Jesus Christ. This means I just trust Him, plain and

simple—without feelings, without evidence, and without sight. That is all it is. I trust *Him*.

For this reason, we purpose to hear the Word preached and to read again and again the promises of God, promises that never fail. We go over all these verses to strengthen our trust in these promises. No matter how many times we hear a preacher quote Hebrews 13:5 and say, "God will never, never, no never leave you nor forsake you," it should mean something to us every time we hear it. We may have heard or read it a million times, but we need to believe it at that moment. Our belief system puts everything into action. Our belief system takes a message that could be dry and meaningless and turns it into something beautiful, something meaningful, something wonderful.

When I believe that God loves me, and I recognize that I am the object of His love, then my belief system causes me to experience an active, living faith in the fact that He does love me. Yes, many times I do feel it. Though feelings are never required, they should certainly respond to truth and to initiations from God. This is why the door of my heart must be open for the truth to control my emotions.

"And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

"And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

"And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:20-24).

There are times when believing is very, very easy because the anointing of God is so heavy and sweet. But, honestly, there are other times when we have to say to God, "I believe, but help my unbelief."

I refuse to confess my unbelief because I know its source—I don't want that to have a place in my belief system as it becomes active.

Many times we have cried out for sight—for some tangible evidence that God is there, and

that He has a very definite plan for our lives. We may not do it consistently, but, of course, all of us have done it. In the reflections of our souls, we cry out because we don't sense the presence of God.

Perhaps, at that time, God seems to be hiding himself. When God does hide Himself from us, it is only because He desires that faith would become alive in us. God hides Himself for one reason: to give me an opportunity to please Him with my faith. With all that is coming against us, we can say, "I believe, I really do believe You, Lord. When the forces of hell come at me and I feel weak, I still believe You."

CONCLUSION

God blesses each of us according to our cries of faith. Faith cries out, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." And, God hears that cry. Furthermore, God answers that cry. There is never a time when God refuses to respond to the validity of a living faith.

Consider this: We have need of patience that we may receive the promise (Hebrews 10:36). There is never a need for faith after we believe. Our need is for faith to patiently trust Him more, to please Him in a greater way.

God is in the cloud. He is there all the time, waiting and watching our responses to His plan. His presence is constant and we must cling to the promises of His Word—promises that transcend sight and lead us into amazing victories, bringing joy and thanksgiving.

Resurrection Life

through the Cross

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

So much of what Christians do is done in the power of their own strength. With all we know and do, are we really being effective for God?

God is not interested in our efforts and our knowledge; His desire is that we go through the Cross and accept our death. Only then can we really be used by Him. Anything that comes from our flesh is doomed to be wood, hay, and stubble. It cannot produce fruit that will remain.

Bearing the Cross of Christ is not a burden; it is death, burial, and resurrection life—the kind of life that never dies. Once a believer has experienced the death of the Cross, there is no more dying. The effects of resurrection life carry on through eternity. In this booklet, we look at how we can decrease and let resurrection life take over, making us servants who serve with the Spirit of the Lamb.

Chapter One

THE CROSS IS NO BURDEN

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross*" (Philippians 2: 5-8).

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and *whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it*" (Matthew 16:24-25).

Any time we listen to a message from the Word of God, there are several points to con-

sider:

First, we are responsible for every single Word of God as we hear it.

Second, if the Holy Spirit does not sanctify the Word we hear, we will only have an awareness of theological truth—mere knowledge without power. This results in having a form of godliness that denies the power of God (2 Timothy 3:5).

Third, knowledge that is not experiential may be academically sound, but it does not produce a sound mind. It is simply *gnosis* (an awareness in terms of general knowledge) and not *epignosis* (the precise application and understanding of truth).

Fourth, reputation is how others see us, but character reveals who we are as God sees us. People may be very sincere in their natural temperaments, but sincerity comes from human good and an educated "Adam" nature. True character only comes from God.

So, keeping those things in mind, consider what Jesus was asking when He said we must take up our Cross if we would be His disciples. Taking up our Cross is not taking up a burden. It is not taking up a need. It is not taking up suffering. Taking up our Cross means fellowship-

ping with resurrection life to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ, especially through the fellowship of His sufferings. He made Himself of no reputation; He wasn't concerned with the opinions of men.

Taking up our Cross means we are being conformed to Christ's death that we might have resurrection life (Philippians 3:10). Anything in our lives that does not actually go through death is Adam serving God through knowledge, but not through the life of Christ.

The Dangers of Ministries of Death

In Numbers 16:1-14, Korah led a crowd against Moses. Their charge was that Moses was taking too much responsibility upon himself. They claimed that he was too authoritarian and that he should delegate more authority.

But in Numbers 16:15-29, after hearing from God, Moses said to the people of Israel, "You are going to see what is holy. You will see what is from God. Bring your censers with fire and incense, and gather at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." There, the glory of God appeared to all the people. He warned them all to leave Korah's camp, yet many refused to listen to God's words. After a final plea, God did a

new thing. He opened the ground, and Korah and his allies were swallowed alive (Numbers 16:30-33).

Why would God do that? All they did was criticize. All they did was murmur. All they did was gossip. Why did God kill people for gossiping? He did it because they were participants in a ministry of death.

Even a pastor can easily reinforce ministries of death when people refuse to honor the Word of God through grace, mercy, and love. Because of sentimentality, he may protect their carnality by withholding those things from the Word of God which would convict them of the truth.

A pastor must never interfere with decisions individuals make. Still, he is accountable to God—both for what he says and for what he *doesn't* say (Ezekiel 33:6). Every man of God is charged to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), which will always include preaching the way of the Cross.

Do Things God's Way

In 2 Chronicles 26:16-21, King Uzziah disobeyed God by burning incense in the temple. According to divine decree, only the priests were allowed to do that. Uzziah had nearly fifty-

two years of being a great king, but the Bible says, "When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to destruction." He was stricken with leprosy for the rest of his days. Because of patriotism, the prophet Isaiah loved and adored King Uzziah, but it wasn't until the king died that Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up (Isaiah 6:1). Uzziah had a good ministry, but it was not a ministry of life.

In 2 Samuel 6:1-7, after the ark of God was taken back from the Philistines, it was being driven back to Zion on a new cart. The oxen began to stumble and shake the cart, and when it looked as though the ark would fall off, Uzzah tried to steady the ark with his hand. But "the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God" (2 Samuel 6:7). In Numbers 4, God gave specific instructions on handling the ark. And in verse 15, even those who were permitted to bear it were not to touch it, lest they die. All Uzzah did was try to steady the ark, *but that was not God's way*.

The people of Israel knew the acts of God, but Moses knew His *ways* (Psalm 103:7). If you have a problem in your life, let God teach you how to solve it His way, through His truth and

His life. God's way is life.

Once we have been through the Cross, there is no more dying. Resurrection life is deathless. It is indestructible, immutable, and fruitful. When God chose a leader to assist Moses from among the tribes of Israel, the only one who could stand the test before God was Aaron (see Numbers 17:1-8). It was Aaron's rod that budded, and it was blooming and full of almonds. What does this mean? It was the only rod that bore fruit, and it was the only rod that could stand before God, representing God's authority.

So many people have ministries to people but not to God. A naturally gifted man or woman can minister to many. People will tell them what a wonderful job they did and flatter them in the flesh. Yet, though they are very gifted, their ministry is to men. When they are alone and they think no one sees them, they do not have a ministry to the Lord. Only when we have been through the death of the Cross and take up our Cross daily can we truly minister to the Lord.

Chapter Two

DEVELOPING A MINISTRY TO GOD

"But the priests of the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, *they shall come near to me to minister unto me*, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD.

"They shall enter into my sanctuary, and *they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me,* and they shall keep my charge.

"And it shall come to pass, that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, *they shall be clothed with linen garments*; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within.

"They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; *they shall not gird themselves with any thing*

that causeth sweat" (Ezekiel 44:15-18).

In this passage, God was saying to the priests, "I want you to come and minister to Me." That was so important, He said it twice. Psalm 73:28 says, "But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works."

He was saying, " I want you to come into My presence with the spirit of resurrection. I want you to be clothed in linen, which is the righteousness of the saints (according to Revelation 19:7-8). I want you to have linen breeches, and linen bonnets, representing an attitude of faith-rest. Don't come with anything that causes sweat (speaking of efforts of the flesh). Remember: Resurrection life is deathless. Resurrection life is indestructible, and it bears fruit. Bring to Me only what you have received from Me."

Some Christians would be far better off fellowshipping less with people and fellowshipping more with God. This does not mean we become independent and withdraw from the Body of Christ. Every Christian ought to spend *more* time ministering to the Lord. This is an area most of us need to pray for.

How can a believer minister to the Lord? By going before God with a broken and contrite

heart, tell Him what you think of Him. Say things such as, "You are precious, God. You are beautiful. I love Your character—Your integrity, Your righteousness, Your mercy, Your grace, Your love, and Your forgiveness. I love Your conviction and Your holiness—Your standards through the Holy Spirit. I love everything about you, Lord."

Living under Standards

In Israel, every individual had a standard—a banner that identified who they were (Numbers 1:52). Every family and every tribe needed to have a standard. Even when they were captive in Babylon, they had to have a standard on the wall that identified them as the children of God (Jeremiah 51:12).

It is so easy to get up in the morning determined to walk as a child of God and then two hours later to have something frustrating happen that threatens to set us back. Often, when faced with those details of life, we end up giving people the old creation—the old countenance, the old conversation. We end up serving God with strength, abilities, and gifts that have never been through death. We may even project a social status and educated communication that

is culturally acceptable. Yet, the truth of the matter is that if our rod has not budded, it is not acceptable to God.

To have a ministry of life, we must first be broken.* An unbroken vessel can deceive people but cannot deceive God. Unbroken people will give you reasons why they feel the way they do. They will neither have a ministry of reconciliation nor a ministry of forgiveness. They will not have a ministry of edification because they cannot release the life that produces Christ in another.

When we go to God in prayer with an intellect that has never been crucified, we must discourage our angels who have to listen to it! But when we approach God in humility and serve others in meekness, our lives will produce eternal fruit as we reveal the Cross—the standard of the Lord.

**Read* The Value of a Broken Vessel, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Three

CONFESSING CHRIST THROUGH FAITH

Let's consider what God has given us and thank Him for it. For three days, the Lord Jesus Christ was in the grave. Then the process of death was completed in Him, and resurrection power came from God the Father through the Holy Spirit. That same power dwells in us as believers (Romans 8:11).

Furthermore, Romans 8:12 says that we are no longer debtors to the flesh. We do not love people because of who they are as objects in the flesh. We don't let the people who are the objects of our love stop us from loving them, and we do not allow them to change us. Love that comes from resurrection life is often unrecognized and unreturned. Therefore, we must express our love according to the Spirit and remember that it is so much better to love than to be loved. Also, love doesn't always give the object what it

wants; but if it is true love, it gives the object what it needs.

The Cross is never a burden—it is always life. Yet often, our so-called crosses are manufactured in the flesh. But the Cross of Christ puts an end to our old creation, and our burial with Him settles the issue forever. Still, many Christians will "Amen" the message, then later reveal through their communication that they never went to the Cross to take it up.

When we minister life, it is because we have been through the Cross. Silent before God, considering what we go through—sometimes screaming frantically, seeking wildly to escape the fate of Adam in the roaring waters that end up at the Dead Sea through the Jordan River of death—we begin to acknowledge the truth of this next statement: We will never have a ministry that glorifies God unless every thought, every step, and every word has been through the Cross.

This is what is meant by Psalm 119:133 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Iniquity has no dominion over us because the Word of God guides our steps. As we bring every thought into subjection, we confess the Lord Jesus through faith (Romans 10:8-9).

The Cross doesn't analyze problems; it goes to the root of them. Instead of saying, "I am going through something," we can say, "I have been through something, and I came out on resurrection ground." The Cross doesn't leave us with Adam's need, it leaves us with God's life. I will say it again: Resurrection life is deathless; there is no more death to those who receive it.

The Cross never compares people, saying one is better than another. The Cross doesn't think that way. The Cross thinks in terms of Christ ministering to us through life: It sees value in everyone according to the gift of love that was paid for on the Cross.

Thanks be to God, many of us are growing and learning to say with tears of love and expectation from God, "I must decrease" (John 3:30). And we don't say it in self-condemnation. We don't say it in Adam's old creation. We say it in the new creation, where old things are passed away in the reality of holiness, in the relevancy of the ascended life.

The Cross wipes out the old creation and buries it. Then comes an eternal purpose, an eternal destiny through an eternal plan that offers

an eternal provision. Confessing that you are no good is not a solution for change. Confessing what Christ has done as you, as well as for you, is the beginning of a wonderful change.

It is one thing to "know" that our old man is dead (Romans 6:6*a*). But the thing that sets a person free is when he takes what he knows and lets it become his experience. That kind of knowledge is not just awareness, but it is experiential acceptance. It is to "reckon" ourselves dead by faith—an act of absolute trust and obedience. We present our bodies to God through His mercies, and we are on the "plain path" of Psalm 27:11, going from strength to strength. We leave behind us pools filled with living waters to give refreshment to the weary ones we meet along the way.

Chapter Four

SERVING IN CONNECTION TO THE HEAD

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

The Word of God says, "The joy of the Lord is our strength" (Nehemiah 8:10), and we can stop and say, "Yes, it is. It surely is." We have the joy of forgiveness, the joy of having our expectation from God (Psalm 62:5), the joy of walking in the Spirit and walking in love (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:2), the joy of building up the brethren as lively stones (1 Peter 2:5), the joy of edifying people with our speech (Ephesians 4:29), the joy of praying in the secret closet for the people you love, whom you wish you could help more. It is no wonder Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be

full" (John 15:11). That joy *no* man can take from you (John 16:22).

It is so crucial that our service would go through death. Most of us are so busy, and we work lovingly with motives that are kind and gracious. But we must continually be aware of what Paul said in Philippians 1:21*a*: "For to me to live is Christ."

Of course, everything we do is by His grace; and when we fail, we rebound. Still, it is remarkable when we can go forward and minister life by claiming Romans 8:11. We serve in the newness of the Spirit, not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:6). Though we may be physically exhausted, we believe that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us and quickens our mortal bodies. More believers should claim this promise and stop confessing the frail side of life. We live in temporal reality, but we can confess what God says, live in spiritual renewal, and walk in the newness of eternal life (Romans 6:4).

Resurrected Life for Relationships

If my right hand wants to share the pain of my left hand, it must go through my head. There is no other way my right hand can share the

pain with my left hand. And there is no way I can share someone else's pain and empathize with other believers without going through our Head, Jesus Christ.

Christ is the Head of the Body (Ephesians 1:22), and He desires preeminence. Someone who withdraws from the Head and the Body is a careless person who doesn't really believe in the value of the Body of Christ.

Beware of statements that sound right but have an undefined sting of the serpent. The wisdom of the world is fallen wisdom that has never been crucified. Therefore, though the serpent's head is crushed under the feet of spiritual Christians, he is still alive and able to hurt the walk of carnal Christians (Genesis 3:14-15).

We had a sentence of death on our lives, "that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9). But once the Cross has executed its sentence of death, we will manifest the power of resurrected life.

Having the Spirit of the Lamb

Saul witnessed the murder of many Christians, and he saw the Spirit of the Lamb in Stephen (Acts 7:55-60). As Stephen was being

stoned to death, his last words were, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Saul stood by and watched, and surely he began to sense the conviction of the Holy Spirit. He must have thought, "How can Stephen say that? They're stoning him to death!" But Stephen's life had been through the Cross. His negative reactions had been buried; his rights to his old sin nature had ceased to be. And because of it, Saul (who became the apostle Paul) saw the Spirit of the Lamb.

Oh, that men and women would be raised up, hid with Christ in God, and become members in particular of Christ's Body (1 Corinthians 12:27)! When we are bathed in resurrection life, there is no criticism or maligning. Instead, people can touch a life that has been resurrected.

Resurrection life! This is what brings hunger, thirst, and a desire for God. It's the thing that brings growth, grace, and doctrine into a heart. It is experiential power that manifests the devil's defeat, and "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8*b*).

CONCLUSION

Everything must go through the Head, Christ Jesus. Any ministry we do not perform through the Head may be intellectually correct and theologically stimulating, but it will not result in life. But when we are filled with God's eternal purpose that glorifies Jesus Christ, resurrection life spills out like a river and flows into the streams of consciousness of others.

Father, You have blessed us with Your presence, with Your truth, and with Your New Creation. Help us to feast with You as we eat the Lamb and drink the Blood of the New Covenant.

We stand at an even place, every one of us. No one is higher. No one is lower. No one is greater. No one is less. We stand at an even place in our position in Christ, ready to experience resurrection life, from faith to faith and glory to glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Revealing Supernatural Life

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INTRODUCTION

When pressures mount and we are faced with difficult, even overwhelming circumstances, we have a choice in how we respond. Though we did not choose the circumstance, each of us has an option to face it in one of two kinds of life: the temporal or the eternal. If we choose the temporal life, we will be occupied with our experience and with what we see and feel. But if we choose eternal life, we will draw near to God. We will get to know Him who is invisible, and we will follow Him.

When we enter into an eternal value system, we look at the things that are not seen, and we speak faith into the air by calling things that are not as though they are. It seems unreasonable to look at things that are not seen. This, however, is God's way to develop our faith. Too often, God's people get into trouble when they focus on that which can be seen. They allow temporal life to take precedence over eternal life.

Too many believers endure discomfort, displeasure, and pain because of temporal value systems. Some will prosper in a temporal value system, which is fine—but it may not be spiritual. How much better if they can get the same results with an eternal value system?

As this booklet shows, when eternal life moves in and takes over a person's soul, it moves him out of the temporal life and gives him an eternal perspective on everything. That is the way every one of us can reveal the supernatural life of Christ.

Chapter One

REAL PROSPERITY

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

We read in Psalm 112:3 about the upright man who has a wholesome reverence for God and who delights in His Word: "Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever."

There would not be a single missionary on the foreign field if it were not for financial blessings of some believers. If none of God's people had money, missions work would be cut down significantly. Therefore, it is important for God's people to pray for financial blessings. This is not

to say we should have a "name-it-and-claim-it" attitude, like that of some who misunderstand the sovereignty of God, and for whom everything relates to their own faith instead of the character of God. We have learned that God names the promise, and we claim it. We believe that it will be as God has said. In the meantime, we may have need of patience.

Many beautiful Christians do not understand the angelic contest that may keep us from seeing the answer to our prayers immediately. Job's friends challenged his faith. They suggested that he was not right with God, and that was why he was suffering so. But the Bible says that the Lord wants us to prosper even as our souls prosper, and wealth and riches in the hands of the right people could revolutionize evangelism.

The concept that Christians should be poor and beggarly with baggy old clothes is just wrong. Why should believers be fearful of financial blessings when Jesus Himself said to the two blind men: "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29)?

The Holy Spirit desires that we prosper, because in prosperity we can evangelize like never before. Imagine what it would be like to be able

to go to our missions director and say, "Here's a million dollars. Pray about it and spend it where it will be most effective." By God's grace, we will see these things happen. Wealth and riches in God's house can make a difference between souls going to heaven or to hell. Money used properly gets people saved and brings them into God's house.

Pray for Open Doors

As God's disciples, we can do more for Him with money than we can without it. That is why we should pray without striving in the flesh, but expecting God to really bless us. In our prayers, let's ask God to bless His people financially and to unveil certain privileges and opportunities that will provide us with the income and resources to open doors that have never been opened.

Great things can happen. Money can come in and we can give it to natives of those countries where we have gone. As people are raised up, we can send out teams of missionaries who have been thoroughly discipled.

This is a part of living in supernatural life. This is the higher form of life. We can approach any subject from the standpoint of a natural,

temporal life or of a supernatural, eternal life. We need to develop godly habits. We need to put into practice what we know so we can produce fruit through the supernatural life that flows out of an earthen vessel.

Chapter Two

THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7-8).

"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

God has established an irrevocable law of

sowing and reaping. We may need to learn patience, waiting before we can reap, but the devil cannot change the fact that we *will* reap. Some have experienced reaping bountifully—far more than they ever thought possible. But, they experienced that level of reaping because they did some bountiful sowing along the way.

It is crucial that we sow in the highest form of life. If we sow in the Spirit, we will reap the things of the Spirit that are produced by eternal life.

In supernatural life, we must be practical, but we are set apart from the frustrations of the natural life. Supernatural life always supercedes the frustrations of natural life. Supernatural life believes that the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Supernatural life produces supernatural faith. And, supernatural faith goes after supernatural victories.

For this reason, I make a stand against the demons of hell and Satan's strategies. How? I approach God in prayer, in a supernatural way, through the supernatural life and the supernatural faith that comes from the Word of God. In the car, at the supper table, everywhere—we can sow supernatural life without subjectivity and emotionalism. We sow to each other's souls with

supernatural life.

Incorruptible Seeds

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

"So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23).

"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Spiritual genetics is a fascinating topic for study.* When believers start speaking according to supernatural faith and supernatural life, incorruptible seeds are sown, and these seeds reproduce incorruptible spiritual genes.

We know that certain traits are passed through the human race via biological genetics —through certain DNA patterns in the chromosomes and all that goes with them. This principle applies to spiritual inheritance and development as well. A Spirit-filled pastor or teacher sows the things that please God (whatsoever is of faith, according to Hebrews 11:6),

planting incorruptible seeds of faith in those who hear him. Then, in the measure that the hearers respond, God blesses them.

Fruit-Bearing That Pleases God

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 1:2).

Those who hear and respond to the Word of God through a man of God will produce fruit after the same kind and sow seeds of faith back to the initiator. As the process continues, the blessings flow, and people will know who we are by the love that we have, one for another (John 13:35).

God will bless us in the measure that we respond to Him. So, if we keep responding, He keeps right on initiating. Then, our hearts become fixed on Him (Psalm 57:7), and we begin to live in the eternal realm of a supernatural provision. The soil of our hearts is beautifully planted, and we bear the fruit of all that has been sown in our lives.

This is where the true value of wealth and riches in God's house comes in. God's people who can be trusted with wealth and riches, who have passed the momentum test of prosperity,

can do a lot to turn those in need to Christ.

When I first started out as a Christian, back in the little town of West Sumner, Maine, I was taught by some that the more rust my car had the more spiritual I was. Wearing baggy old clothes was the evidence that I was close to God. That was *their* definition of humility.

Poverty would be wonderful if it glorified God. If God truly wanted us to live that way, I would accept it. But in fact, God said, "I want you to prosper as your soul prospers." We are called to reveal supernatural life to people who can only see with their eyes. Until they are saved, they cannot walk by faith as we can, seeing the weakest member according to the Finished Work. So we must not look upon wealth or prosperity as a tool of Satan. God will use whatever we sanctify and set apart unto Him, to promote His kingdom on the earth.

** For an excellent study of the principle of spiritual genetics, regeneration, and how God makes all things new in the life of every born-again believer, read* Re-gened, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1995.*

Chapter Three

THE POWER OF OBEDIENCE

God desires that our souls would prosper in the Word. When our souls prosper, we will be more relaxed. The soul that is prospering in the Word of God isn't tense or uptight. I could give hundreds of illustrations about people who had nothing and wound up prospering tremendously because of obedience in tithing and giving.

The law of obedience trains us, blesses us, and gives us wisdom. The greatest thing that we can have in prospering our souls is to be trained in obedience. As we begin to experience this training, we really begin to hear the still small voice of God, obeying Him in the details. We start planting incorruptible seeds in one another, revealing supernatural life in our marriages, our families, and our churches.

Through obedience, we become so hid with Christ. As members in particular of His Body, Christ is the only head we have. We don't make

decisions apart from Him. We become single-eyed. The Body prays and the Holy Spirit reveals the next move. In Acts 13, it was through prayer among the elders in the church that the Holy Spirit revealed where Paul and Barnabas should go. Unfortunately, we seldom see the Holy Spirit allowed to work this way today, because the understanding of the Body of Christ as a living organism through which God moves is not clear to many precious believers.

Sowing Brings Results

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:5-6).

I love this principle. He that sows in tears shall reap in joy. Sowing in tears when we go soul winning brings us to rejoicing when we gather in souls. We sow in faith, we sow in love, we sow in the promises of God. Just like that, we begin reaping exactly as we have sown. Whatever we sow, we will reap.

Still, we must learn to master what we sow. If we master what we sow, then we master what we think through Christ being our Master. It is

a very special thing to come to Him each night and say, "Lord, I want to go over my day with you. Show me if my sowing got a little off today. If it didn't, I will rejoice. If it was off, I want to correct it."

Let's sow faithfulness. Let's sow prayer. Let's sow edification and positive thoughts. Whatsoever we sow, we shall reap.

God's Great Provisions

Alady had beautiful chocolate cream pie she had made for a party. She lost her keys and the pie was stuck in the car on a warm day.

"God, send someone to help me," she prayed. Just like that, a man pulled up and asked her if she needed any help. It turned out that the man was a convicted car thief who had recently been released from jail.

"The thing that put me in jail was getting into cars, so I should have you inside it in a minute." And, he did.

Of course, as all good illustrations go, the lady shared the Gospel with this man. He eventually went to her church and got saved. It was a blessing to this woman to be able to testify, "I prayed, and God sent an ex-convict to help me!"

Persevering in Prayer

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

God gives us so many provisions in this way when we pray with perseverance. The more I learn how to persevere when I pray, the more fruit I shall receive because of the law of sowing and reaping.

I believe God will help us build a new church building without having to owe a penny for it. I believe He can help us send out and support far more missionaries. These things are possible when we sow in faith without wavering. I expect prayers to be answered and miracles to happen.

It will be a great day to be able to look at the results around us and say, "I prayed for this!" and to see the answer before our eyes. But when we walk by faith, without seeing the answer, we have an opportunity to reveal God's supernatural life as He reveals His life in us.

CONCLUSION

It is such a beautiful thing to know that the supernatural life is the only life that will supply what I truly need. The natural life is necessary from a physiological standpoint, but the supernatural life is what determines my ability to make right decisions and choices when faced with difficult circumstances.

Today, I can pray in the Spirit with perseverance. I have access to grace through faith. I can go boldly before the throne of God today. I have been given that privilege.

Whatever I pray for, I can persevere, believing that God hears and answers my prayers. This is what it means to have a fixed heart. This is what it means to live in and to reveal supernatural life.

Revival Is Here

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).

We have entered into climactic days; perilous times are here. What the church of Jesus Christ needs more than ever in these moments is a real understanding of revival. The very premise and basis for revival is humility. Contrite people are the only people who really experience the Word of God revival. In Isaiah 57, the Lord revives and quickens whom? Him who is of a contrite and humble spirit.

Yet, there are millions of believers—millions who will spend eternity in heaven—who are not revived today. Revival speaks of refreshment. It refers to the quickening and the renewal that the Holy Spirit can bring to a Christian. It means

being completely and totally changed in a moment.

When you think of such words as "refreshment" and "quickening," your mind rests on the ideas of relaxation and renewal. A transformation takes place when you are revived.

As these pages will detail, revival is when God's people, who are simply sinners saved by grace, experience the quickening power of the Word and the filling of the Holy Spirit—something that is so needed in our lives and in our nation today.

Chapter One

IT IS NO SECRET WHAT GOD CAN DO

"Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

"Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

"Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments" (Psalm 119:154-156).

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

"Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

"Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase" (Psalm 85:10-12).

Revival does not mean being quickened by outward stimulation. This kind of display is characterized by emotionalism. Happiness and good circumstances are not evidences of revival.

Real revival comes from the Word of God.

No one can be revived except by being made humble and contrite, according to the Truth. This is why there is so little revival in our world today. The Truth, the Word of God, is not preeminent in believers' lives.

Let me illustrate it. In Psalm 119:156, the writer asks God to deal with him according to His tender mercies. But then he asks to be quickened according to God's judgment. Judgment speaks of an expression of God's justice. But, God's mercy rejoices over judgment. There is a Greek word—exaleiphon—that refers to the way that God's mercy wipes out sin and goes beyond justice toward the believer because Calvary satisfied the justice of God (Acts 3:19).

No one can be revived without being humbled and broken through Calvary. Consider this idea for a moment. These thoughts need to be carefully expressed. We cannot afford to hasten this message in its communication. Think in this context and discover that revival is no secret if we will let God do what He can do.

The Word Is Powerful

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword,

piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

Think of the tremendous principle of being quickened according to the Word of God. Don't act as if you know that verse. We have not begun to know the verse. The Word of God is quick, and it has the power to revive. There is a refreshing quality in the Word of God; it carries a provision for renewal. Its quickening power speaks of its ability to instantly transform the heart and mind of a believer.

Revival also means to live in the motivation of God's viewpoint. When I am revived, my motives are right with Him. I will never decline from my position on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are moments when I falter, but I can instantly rebound and recover.

Our potential through godly motivation is unbelievable. Our potential for God to work is indescribable. It is no secret what God can do. Think of that old song with me:

The chimes of time ring out
that another day is through.
Someone slipped and fell.
Was that someone you?

You may have longed for added strength,
your courage to renew.
Do not be disheartened, I have news for you.
It is no secret what God can do.
What He's done for others, He will do for you.
With arms wide open, He will pardon you.
It is no secret what God can do.

I love the part of that song that says, "Someone slipped and fell. Was that someone you?" Do you long for strength and courage to be renewed? There is news for people in that situation. You see, once the engrafted Word concerning the doctrine of revival takes over our hearts, then—believe me—it is no secret what God can do. In His presence, there is no secret or limit to what God can do. It's no secret because it's all there in the Bible for us to see. It is there if we have the humility to see it.

There is no night, for in His light
you'll never walk alone.
You'll always feel at home
wherever you may roam.
There is no power can conquer you
while God is on your side.
Take Him at His promise, don't run away and hide.
It is no secret what God can do.

What He's done for others, He will do for you.
With arms wide open, He will pardon you.
It is no secret what God can do.

I think you will understand this a little bit more by the time you are through reading these pages. I have been praying specifically that God would speak to me and quicken me every second of the day.

Chapter Two
BE BOLD

"Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation" (2 Corinthians 7:4).

"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (Ephesians 3:12).

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19).

Personally, I am being very careful as to what I hear and what I read. I don't want to receive any information that would discredit or call into question the vision God gives me as a believer. All of us need to understand the problems that come when our hearts are divided. It is certainly important for us to receive different portions. I thank God for the whole Body of Christ, but what I receive must complement me where I am in the calling of God. All portions

that communicate the Truth are diverse and profitable. Still, I do not want to think on vain things, things that do not profit me or give me purpose in Jesus Christ.

Mixing contrary opinions that divide my mind and heart only serve to make me unstable. This means I will lack the boldness God gives. My confidence level in Him will be diluted because of the admixture of confusion. But when I am quickened by the Word, then I will have boldness.

The problem with many Christians who do not get healed is that they have no boldness. Their prayers do not get answered because they do not come boldly to the throne of grace.

Affirm God's Work in You

Recently, God showed me David's prayer of affirmation in Psalm 23. There are times when we don't ask God for something because this is just the way things are because of who God is in His sovereignty. So instead, we go to Him with a prayer that affirms His work in us.

When David wrote this psalm, Absalom, his son, had stolen the hearts of the people of Israel and had driven him from the throne in Jerusalem. David was out in the Judean desert, and

he didn't know what Absalom would do. He didn't know if his kingdom had been taken over. He didn't know where he stood. Yet he was not wavering. He had boldness as he prayed this prayer of affirmation:

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Psalm 23:1-6).

In that little place, having no possessions except what he had in his hands, David said, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

David didn't know about his son. His heart was broken, but he offered this prayer of affirmation. He had boldness. "This is the way it is,

Lord. You are my Shepherd. That's the way it is. I shall not want. That's the way it is." That is a prayer of affirmation. You affirm what you know to be true. There is no doubting, no wavering. There is not a question in the world about who you are.

Pursued by Mercy

The word "follow" speaks of something that relentlessly pursues. David was in the Judean desert, running from the forces loyal to Absalom. Yet he was not seeing those forces that were chasing him down. Instead, David's consideration was upon the divine goodness and mercy that were with him.

David had every reason to be defeated by his circumstances. He had every reason to be paranoid. Yet, he wrote a prayer of affirmation. He was quickened according to the Word. He was revived. He was refreshed and transformed. That is what revival is.

God's divine goodness and divine mercy will relentlessly pursue us all the days of our lives. This is the Truth. It is no secret what God can do.

Be revived! Be refreshed! Be renewed!

I don't know about you, but I cannot afford

to get up in the morning and live on yesterday's Christianity. I am too wicked, naturally speaking. I am too passive and too undisciplined in myself. I can be selfish and careless. I can do okay, but, apart from the Word, I am not revived, refreshed, and renewed.

I cannot afford to live on theology that I studied last week. I cannot live on the knowledge I have acquired. I can quote verses all over the place, but I cannot afford to do just that. I need to be quickened by God's Word—morning, noon, and night. I need to have the Word as the basis for the norms and standards of my thinking.

The issue is not what is happening around me. The issue is what's happening in my heart.

Chapter Three

THE UNFAILING LOYALTY OF GOD

"And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

"Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

"And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

"And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and par-

don our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance" (Exodus 34:5-9).

In Exodus 33:11-17, Moses talked with God and said, in essence, "I want to know Your character, Lord. I want to know what You are like. I want to know who You really are if I am going to follow You and lead these people in this journey. So show me Your characteristics. Show me Your name. Show me who You are." Moses understood just how crucial it was to know God. It was so very important to understand His mercy. That is who God is.

In Exodus 34, "mercy" speaks of unfailing loyalty. Others may be disloyal at one time or another. I may be disloyal to you, or you may be disloyal to me. God, however, gives you unfailing loyalty, unfailing love, unfailing grace, unfailing mercy, unfailing forgiveness. I can be quickened according to God's Word pertaining to His unfailing loyalty.

God's love never fails! What a beautiful thing that is.

I love to read Hebrews 13:5 in the Amplified Bible translation: "Let your character or moral disposition be free from love of money [including greed, avarice, lust, and craving for earthly possessions] and be satisfied with your present

[circumstances and with what you have]; for He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!]"

Look at all those "I will not" statements in this translation. Relax and don't go after things that are fleeting. Don't weary yourself trying to have your circumstances changed. God will never leave you helpless. You will not be forsaken under any circumstance.

Be quickened according to those words from God. That's revival.

Be renewed.

Be refreshed.

Be revived.

The very Christ who died upon Calvary and shed His precious blood for us gives us His word on every subject. There is not one subject for which God does not have a word for us. Look in the Book and get His mind on the matter.

Listen Like Never Before

When you hear a new topic from the Word,

listen with a new motivation. Listen as a little child would listen. Listen in humility. Listen in brokenness. Don't become overly occupied with the sinner-saved-by-grace who is speaking this message. Hear from God. Listen and be renewed. Be quickened. Be refreshed. Let the Truth go deep and be engrafted in your heart.

It will bless you and build you up. It will edify you. It will conform you, line upon line, to Christ's image. This Word can heal the sick. It may enliven passive marriages. Who can tell what God can do? A passive husband who clings to his insecurity may cut his denominational ties and rationalistic attitudes and get humbled. He will be broken and be made a brand-new creature as he gets rid of his jealousy, envy, and fear.

When I am quickened by the Word of God, my circumstances don't have to change. Jesus is enough for the situation. Christ is all I need.

"When I walk into the thick of trouble, keep me alive in the angry turmoil. With one hand strike my foes, With your other hand save me" (Psalm 138:7).

"O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy" (Habakkuk 3:2)

This is the prayer I pray for America and for all of us in the church of God. May we remember the Lord in the midst of the terrible sins being committed in our nation. May we ask Him to bring us His mercy in the midst of wrath. Let us ask Him to revive His work in us.

CONCLUSION

Please be praying for God to do His work in us by the Holy Spirit. Healing can take place by God's Spirit at any second. Believe God and be quickened by the Word of God. May there be no obstacles to the move of God. Let's not allow anything to inhibit the manifestation of His presence in our midst.

Pray and ask God to bless and move in your life. Let's allow the Lord to minister His Word clearly, purely, thoroughly, and completely in the togetherness of truth.

Years ago I would pray, "God, send down revival!" I am not praying that prayer just now. I am praying that God would manifest what He has done in each of us. I want every believer to get a fresh revelation of who he is in Christ and of what Christ has done for him.

I am not after God to send something. I want Him to reveal what He has done through you and in you. He cannot do any more but reveal

what He has done. Then we can agree with Him and be quickened in that truth.

That's revival. And it is here.

Righteousness

Pastor Thomas Schaller graduated from Northeast School of the Bible in South Berwick, Maine, under the tutelage of Dr. Carl H. Stevens. From 1975 to 1981, he led a team to Helsinki, Finland, establishing a church and the Scandinavian School of the Bible. That ministry, which grew to 9 churches, has sent out over 80 missionaries to more than nineteen countries. In 1981, he returned to the United States where he served as Missions Director for The Bible Speaks in Massachusetts and Greater Grace World Outreach in Maryland. Then in 1990, Pastor Schaller led a team to Budapest, Hungary, again establishing a church and Bible college. The Budapest church has established 7 new churches.

In 2003, Pastor Schaller came to Baltimore to serve with Greater Grace and teach at Maryland Bible College and Seminary. He is now the Presiding Elder and Pastor of the Greater Grace Church in Baltimore, working with Dr. Carl H. Stevens, the Founder and Senior Pastor of GGWO.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18).

"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me.

"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

"I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation" (Psalm 40:7-10).

"Think not that I am come to destroy the

law." Jesus speaking in Matthew 5 what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was always in the will of God. In every decision, with every footstep He took, in everything He said, in everything He did, in everything He thought, He was altogether perfect and absolutely righteous.

In Psalm 40, Jesus declared that He comes in the volume of the Book. The volume of the Book—all of it, every word of it—was written about Jesus Christ.

"I did not come as an accident," Jesus could say. "I came with perfect timing, in the perfect plan of God, according to the prophets—and the Book was written about Me before I came."

There are 333 prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. Christ fulfilled them all. Thirty-three came to pass in one day—the day He died. And on that day, He fulfilled it all.

Psalm 40 says, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation."

Jesus preached righteousness; He did not preach love, although God is love.

He did not hold back. "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared

thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation."

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Does the Bible say, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His love"? No. It says, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

This booklet is written to bring the reality of the righteousness of God into focus. This is as it should be. For without truth and righteousness, there can be no mercy, no peace, no love, and no joy.

Chapter One

GOD' S THEME OF HOLINESS

There is a word in our culture and in our day and our time that is in many ways, knowingly or unknowingly, being avoided. It is the word "righteousness."

We don't have any true righteousness in ourselves. We have what is called "relative righteousness." Relative righteousness is simply this: "I'm not a bad guy. I am not perfect, but I'm not altogether that bad. The police do not know my name. I've not been in jail. The FBI does not have a list with my name on it." I may even think, "I'm a really good guy. I'm on a board of importance. I'm accepted in certain circles. People know my name. I'm a man of integrity and honesty and truthfulness."

In every way, men are lost in their understanding of what righteousness really is, because we are talking about perfection. We are talking about something that we don't have—some-

thing we are totally ignorant of. A tomato plant knows nothing of a fish, and a man does not know God's righteousness. This righteousness is something that must be given.

This is one reason why we love the ministry of Jesus Christ. When He was here, He was righteous. He was the only Man who ever walked on the earth who was righteous. He was altogether perfect all the days of His life.

These themes in the Scripture come to the surface often: righteousness, truth, absolute truth, the nature of God, purity, and holiness. These themes run from front to back in the Bible. In the beginning of our Bible we have Genesis. Then the book of Exodus brings us into the wilderness, and the first thing that God does there is teach the people about His holiness. He makes a holy area, the tabernacle, and He puts the people outside and says, "I am holy. I'm asking you to be holy" (see 1 Peter 1:16).

A major theme in the book of Leviticus is the word "holiness", which means to be set apart for God. We do not realize the depth of our depravity. We don't understand that the imaginations of our hearts are wicked and evil continually (Genesis 6:3-4).

I drink iniquity like water (Job 15:16). I think

I know the way, but the end thereof is death (Proverbs 14:12). I am sick from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet (Isaiah 1:5, 6). Who wants to hear that kind of message? Who wants to go to church and hear about how sinful we are, and how utterly wrong we are?

But, it is very important for us because in this teaching is one of God's great secrets. This is the key to revival and this is evident all throughout the history of the church. The key to every spiritual revival was a deep realization by believers that there is something definitely and absolutely wrong with men.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

There are people today who are looking for love and accommodating their emotions and living in human affections and human love. There are people that have no discipline over their flesh and their earthly desires, over their hormones and their feelings, and they are falling into some kind of infatuation with another person.

It is not popular today to talk about righteousness. "If you talk about righteousness, it only makes me feel guilty because it accentuates another problem. Frankly, I have enough problems without going to church and hearing about

the problem that I have with God."

But this is right where the rubber meets the road. This understanding of my problem is what I need in order to come to God. And now, God will come to me.

When Jesus Christ came, He did not refrain Himself from speaking righteousness. There are a number of cases in the gospels where we see Him talk to people, and He is not holding back righteousness.

We are in a time of a "love" culture. It is a time of "understanding"—of being accommodating to people. It is a time of accommodating to whining and complaining and crying. If Jesus came here, I do not think He would be too popular, because He would not refrain Himself from speaking righteousness in the great congregation.

Jesus Christ was thrilled with doing His Father's will. He did not do it grudgingly. He possessed a spiritual momentum.

Momentum is involved in riding a bicycle. Once you get up on the bicycle and there is movement, then you have momentum. There is balance and motion.

When Christ was here, He was living in a spiritual walk with His heavenly Father. And

just like riding a bicycle, He was delighting in doing the will of the Father, and the Father was carrying Him by the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ was always doing His Father's will, and He was delighting in it. There was balance in His life, and there was motion.

The Great Congregation

"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation" (Psalm 40:9).

A great congregation is where two are three are gathered in His name, and God says, "there am I in your midst." That is the great congregation. It may not be great in number, but it is great in quality. The great congregation is one that is living in the Spirit of truth and God's imparted righteousness.

In Matthew 23, He spoke to the Pharisees with the disciples right there with Him. He was not holding back, and He called the Pharisees "hypocrites" and "sepulchres, full of dead men's bones." He called them thieves and robbers. He spoke to them directly from the heart and the mind of God. He was not very popular for doing this. But He spoke and the disciples heard Him.

I think the disciples were cringing and per-

haps complaining, “Do You know who You are speaking to? Do You know what it is that You are doing?”

Christ’s throne is established in righteousness. In Psalm 85, righteousness and peace have met together, and they have kissed. Truth springs up out of the ground and mercy looks down from heaven, and there is union. This is the great principle of how God is looking for righteousness on the earth.

Here is the awesome thing. We, as sinful people, have received the righteousness of God, not only by way of imputation (1 Corinthians 1:30-31), but also by impartation. We have received His righteousness by virtue of living in the Holy Spirit. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. We love the righteousness of God and we walk in it. Righteousness is now our nature, given to us from God.

Chapter Two
MERCY AND TRUTH

Jesus was here, and He did not turn to the right or to the left. He died and shed His blood on the Cross, where our sins went to Him and His righteousness came to us. Our names are written in heaven. Not only that, but we are perfect and one hundred percent righteous as God Himself. We've been born by the Blood into that holy place, into heaven itself (Hebrews 9:24). Jesus has gone on our behalf into heaven itself, and we are accepted there.

Now we have the Spirit of God in us, the Spirit of righteousness. Now we speak righteousness in the great congregation. Now we rejoice in the law. And Jesus said, "I will magnify the law, and I will make it honorable." Before it was a bondage but now it is our delight (1 John 5:4). Before it was something to avoid but now it is something to rejoice in. It is not our flesh living by the law, but it us, by the Spirit of God,

doing God' s will.

Doing God's will is something that we now delight in. This is the nature of Christ that is in us. We are now living and doing the will of God by His grace in our walk of faith. Before, we were far away and had no ability, but now Jesus did it, and now we are righteous and live in Him. We even seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things are added unto us.

When Peter said to Jesus in Matthew 16, "Do not go to Jerusalem," Jesus wheeled around and spoke to Peter and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that are of God." "Savourest" is phroneo in the Greek and this speaks of a mindset. Peter spoke from a mindset that was not after God but instead favored the things that are from men.

"But I am not here to please men," Jesus said. "I am a burning fire, a light in a dark place. I am the Savior who does the will of My Father, and I always do the things that please Him. I follow Him and I honor Him above all of the things on the earth."

The righteousness that is in Christ has now been given unto us, and the Spirit of God is now dwelling in you and me. Now we also delight to

do the Father's will. We actually live and fellowship in God's righteousness. We do not have this ability in ourselves, but we actually do His will, and we find great pleasure in it.

The Element of Righteousness

"Surely salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:9).

I want mercy, but do I also want the truth? God knows that we would like to have the mercy, but we don't always have a capacity for the truth. God also knows that we would like to have truth, but we don't have a capacity for mercy. We are people who are like sheep without a shepherd. We have turned every one to his own way, and we do not understand what it is to be living in the reality of a living God in a dark world with both mercy and truth meeting together, and righteousness and peace having kissed each other.

Jesus is on the Cross. He is righteous, totally perfect. When nothing really matters to us but this, do you know what will happen in our lives? It will become clearer and clearer to us that the only thing that matters in this life is His

righteousness, His way, His truth, His mercy, His lovingkindness, His reality. The Person of God is the only thing that matters.

I don't have any desire but only for Jesus. There are other desires, but in seeking Him first and putting that in order, then I have everything else.

Righteousness is one of the elements that is in that picture. This means that the Spirit of God has come into me. He will lead me in righteousness. He will set my steps in the way of righteousness. He will direct me in righteousness. I will delight in righteousness. Even if it hurts, I will make the right decision in righteousness, and then God will crown me.

Jesus Is Crowned

The religious leaders and the civil leaders of the day crucified Jesus, but He was the one that God the Father crowned. They threw Him out, because He didn't say the things they wanted to hear. But He was the one whom God promoted. The Lord anointed Him with an anointing that is above His fellows.

If that happened to Him as an example, how much more should we walk in righteousness? God will reward us according to that imparted

righteousness from the Holy Spirit.

When you make decisions before God, God will promote you and crown you. It says in Revelation 19:12, "His eyes were a flame a fire, and upon his head were many crowns."

When you are Spirit-filled, making right decisions, loving and giving grace and mercy and lovingkindness, you are living in the Spirit of God. And God will promote you and honor you in a very real and a very deep way.

Chapter Three

TRUTH SPRINGS FROM THE EARTH

"Truth shall spring out of the earth." Where did the truth come from? It sprung up out of the earth. The Father is looking from heaven and asking, "Where can I find truth?" He passes over all these people, millions and millions—three million in the time of Jesus in Israel, twenty million in the Roman Empire. He passes over and says, "Where is the truth? Where is the truth? Where can I find it?" It springs up out of the earth.

What springs out of the earth? The root of David. Out of Mary, Truth came up out of the earth. Out of a human being, Truth was born in Bethlehem. There is the Truth, the Son of God, born of a virgin. Planted in her womb was the Seed of our Righteousness. Our heavenly Father put in the womb of that woman the blessed Son of God, the Holy One of Israel. Out of the earth

came truth, and mercy looked down.

Mercy and truth have met together. The Father looks at truth and gives mercy. This union is a very precious one. Now we have righteousness by our new birth, for when we were born-again, God put in us that truth, that mercy, that reality, that Person of Jesus Christ.

In that reality, He is the only life we have, and we cannot compromise it. It is the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is not confused in the day and age that we are living in. The Spirit of God will lead us clearly through these days as salt and light. The Spirit of God is not tempted by anything that is at our door. The Spirit of God is not in conflict with anything, for there is no wisdom, counsel, or understanding that is against the Lord. There is no contest with God.

The Lord Between Us

Jesus is in the great congregation where two or three are gathered.

I'll tell you what a weak congregation is. It is the place where the question is asked, "Where is the truth and the mercy? Where is the power? Where is the Christ? Where is the message? Where is the forgiveness? Where is the holiness? Where is the conviction? Where is the persua-

sion? Where is the manifestation of His nature?"

That was a great congregation at the Last Supper when Jesus was with the disciples. The great congregation was at Pentecost when the twelve were upstairs praying, and the Holy Spirit came in as a rushing, mighty wind. Commentators say that it was the angels coming in. They were coming in because something was about to happen there that had never happened before. And that was because Jesus had given His righteousness, and His holiness, and His Holy Spirit to men. Those who were in that room started to speak with tongues of men—fourteen different people groups are listed there. Three thousand were added to the church in one day (Acts 2:41).

The disciples lived all their lives in that power. There were failures, but still they would get up and go on in the power and the memory and the thought of a risen Savior Who didn't just come and leave us but Who came and gave us Himself.

To love that righteousness and to walk in it is a key in the Kingdom of God. Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. God will care for you.

We love His way and delight in His way and we live by every word that comes out of His mouth. We do not compromise and take away from the great Book. We cling to what God wants to say to us even if it hurts us, and we are built up and established in a Kingdom that has no end.

Someday He is coming back. And someday we shall see Him, for we have believed and embraced His righteousness. We have been anointed of the Holy Spirit to live in the authority and the ministry of His mind on this earth.

Some people do fall off the bicycle. They get scratches on their knees and they cry. They want mom. "Mom, I fell off the bicycle, and I'm scratched." She comes running out and gives first aid, kisses the knee, and says, "Okay. You're good to go. Get up and get going."

Rebound and Recovery

You can't stay down. There comes a time to get up on the bike again. Get going. We've got a life to live. Let's go. The Kingdom of God is here.

Some people want mercy, and mercy, and more mercy, and God knows that we need it all the days of our life! But mercy is given unto us

so we might get moving in truth. Let's get back on the bike and get moving. Let's rejoice in mercy and also live in a non-sentimental reality that is God's mind and truth.

When things are right and peace is there, mercy and truth kiss each other. It is hard to kiss in unrighteousness. There is something deceitful in the kiss. It is hard to kiss when there is lying and deceit and treachery and gossip and maligning and backbiting. When righteousness is there and peace is there, they kiss. In the soul there is comfort, peace, and quietness.

It says in Song of Solomon 1, "Our bed is green." Green speaks of rest. We lie down in that bed of rest because when righteousness and peace have met each other and they have kissed, there is an awesome union that is unbreakable. It is invaluable. It is the very nature of our personality in Jesus Christ. God has given us peace, and He has given us His righteousness, and so we enjoy it.

CONCLUSION

Think about it. God sets me in the way of His steps. I can actually walk in His steps. That is what the Finished Work has done for us. It makes it so that righteousness and mercy are now a part of us. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. And there we are, walking in the steps, riding on the bicycle—and we're cruising!

Yet, we fall down. We need mercy, and we need to get going and get back on the way. He shall set us in the way of His steps, and we will follow and walk in that way, and we will be in heaven, someday.

Our brothers and sisters, in God' s perfect timing, are passing on out of this life and going to be with the Lord. There will be a time for you and I when that day will come. But we will delight in this reality, that God did the work, He made the law honorable, and we delight in it, and we enjoy it.

We are in that picture at the Cross, and now we live. It is not us but Christ in us. It is now our new life. We live in it. We fellowship in it. We preach it. We hear it, we believe it, and we make our decisions according to it.

Lord, may this message really be in our frame of reference, really build us up in the reality of Your Person. We walk with You because we really are called to know You. If we fail, we rebound and confess our sin, and we are restored and washed from all unrighteousness to live in the reality of Your Person. We are surprised by Your joy and Your peace and the reality of who You are and what You have done. Bless us today. Lead us in all that we do. Put a guard upon our mouths, Lord, that we would not offend You. Guide us in the way of truth. Keep us in temptation. Deliver us from evil. There is a supernatural authority in the great congregation where there is prayer that moves mountains and people that love—and love covers the multitude of sin. Amen.

Salvation: Profession

or Possession?

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INTRODUCTION

Thousands of people profess to be saved, saying they know Jesus Christ, but in reality, Jesus does not know them. They may appear to be religious. To know them, you would be positive that they are saved. They may do many good things, and may be very involved in church activities. But they are *unsaved believers* who have only responded to the presalvation work of the Holy Spirit.

I believe in eternal security. A Christian can never lose his salvation. Nevertheless, it is not up to me to judge anyone, regardless of outward appearances. Only God knows who is really saved.

The time is short and the days are evil. Jesus Christ's coming is imminent. As a pastor who is accountable before God and before his congregation, I must preach the truth, reproving and exhorting people to come unto Jesus before it's too late. These words will be seen as "hard say-

ings" to some, yet, this message is the product of much prayer, much study, much meditation, and many, many tears. While these words may prompt each reader to examine himself to see if he "be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5), my prayer is that the believer will be strengthened in his convictions. And, if there is one who is unsure, I pray that any doubts will be settled, once and for all, concerning this most precious gift—salvation.

Chapter One

FALSE PROFESSIONS

The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men (Titus 2:11). The Lord is "not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27). Christ died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2), and His body was offered "once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). God, in Christ, reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them (2 Corinthians 5:19). This is the unlimited atonement. There is no more offering for sin; therefore, becoming a Christian is not a sin issue. But only as many as *receive* Him are given "the power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12).

God is absolutely fair in His dealings with men. He has not raised a standard that can not be met. Every heathen, pagan, and atheist has a measure of God-consciousness (Romans 1:21). The Holy Spirit works in the conscience of the unsaved who are without the written Word (Ro-

mans 2:14-15). Creation itself is a testimony, to all men, of the reality of the Creator, for "that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:19-20).

The Danger of Mental Assent

Many people who profess to be saved have only given "mental assent" to the Gospel. They *agree* with what they have heard, but their lives are never changed. This is cheap believe-ism. These people have not been born again—mental assent doesn't save anyone. A person must receive Jesus Christ to be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Some ministries compromise with the world in order to get people to come to their church. Their attitude is, "We have to appeal to the world. If we compromise, they will come to our church." "Christian" rock music, men wearing long hair, promiscuity, and immodest dress are all examples of compromise with the world. This kind of church may attract crowds, but

most of these people are never born again—they merely give mental assent to the Gospel.

There are probably thousands of unsaved believers in churches today. They believe that Jesus Christ died, shed His blood, was buried, and rose again. They even believe that He is coming back. These "believers" have given academic consent to the *knowledge* of the Gospel, but the devil came and took the Word out of their hearts, "lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12). They are "forgetful hearers" (James 1:25).

Luke 8:13 speaks of those who hear the Word, and even receive it with joy, yet, "These have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." I meet these people all the time. They come up and say, "Oh, pastor, we love this message. We love your church. This is so wonderful." Still, they have no root. It doesn't say they have "little" root; it says they have "no root." When a trial comes along, these people are gone. "Bye-bye!" they say. "I didn't know it was going to be *this* way."

Verse 14 of Luke 8 talks about hearers who have "thorny soil" in their hearts. These people hear the Word and go forth as missionaries and preachers, but the cares, riches, and pleasures of

this life choke the Word. Distracted by the desire for temporal security, significance, and happiness, these unsaved believers "bring no fruit to perfection."

But those who hear the Word of God and keep it "bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). The key word is "patience." They can't bring forth fruit all at once. They may experience isolated times of failure followed by rebound (1 John 1:9), but they *keep* the Word and they are growing—they are *saved believers*.

"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:18-19). Demons "believe and tremble" at the reality of God, but they are not saved. They won't be in heaven; they will be in hell, along with every unsaved believer.

No License for Sin

Everyone who comes unto Christ by grace through faith is born again and washed in the blood of the Lamb. Grace, however, must never be used as a license to sin.

Some people profess Christ as their Savior,

but later return to their former ways of living. They came under the presalvation work of the Spirit, but were never saved. 2 Peter 2:20-22 describes their condition:

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of this world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

I believe in eternal security. But, I also believe that I cannot add to or take away from the truth of 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Chapter Two

"I NEVER KNEW YOU"

"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Every unsaved believer will one day stand before Jesus Christ in the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:11-15. As they plead their cases, they will cry out, "Lord, we have cast out demons and have done many wonderful works in your name." Yet, He will call them what they really are—workers of iniquity. These people will realize that they were never delivered from the power of the evil one nor trans-

lated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

In John 6:53, Jesus told His disciples, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." This offended many who had followed Him, and they "went back, and walked no more with him," revealing that they were never saved (John 6:60-66).

The Presalvation Response

Judas Iscariot *appeared* to be a disciple. He followed Jesus for three years and preached the Word of God. But Judas was never saved; he was the son of perdition. "Jesus answered [the disciples], Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve" (John 6:70-71).

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 11:13, makes reference to "false apostles" and "deceitful workers." "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). In the end, these self-righteous "ministers" will have to depart from the presence of Jesus Christ.

God will take away what unsaved believers

seem to have. Though for a time they bear the appearance of being saved, their only spiritual encounter was what we call a presalvation experience. As the Holy Spirit ministers common grace to the unsaved, all seems well. But if they do not respond and go beyond mental assent to become truly saved, their hearts progressively harden.

Eventually, they die in their sins (John 8:24), having committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—the unpardonable sin (Matthew 12:31-32)—because they never received Christ as Savior. They never received saving grace, which cleanses and washes from all unrighteousness.

Sinning Willfully

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an

unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

"For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:26-31).

The epistle to the Hebrews addresses trends that were going on in the first century Hebrew Christian church. Many in this church were drawing near with "true hearts" rooted in the assurance of faith in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:22). Their hearts were sprinkled with the Blood of the New Covenant, which kept them from Satanic influence in their consciences.

But many in that church were sinning willfully. There was a great persecution in those days. Temple sacrifices continued to be offered and Christians were under pressure to observe the Jewish law. Many who professed to be Christians went back to the temple sacrifices. In doing so, they rejected the one supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 10:26 calls this *willful* sin. The Greek adverb *hekousios* describes an act that is done deliberately, intentionally, and voluntarily.

A study of the Greek syntax in Hebrews 10:26 reveals that only the presalvation work of the

Holy Spirit had affected these professing Jewish Christians. They were sinning willfully *after receiving the knowledge of the truth*. The preposition *meta* (*after*) primarily denotes association and accompaniment. The word for *received* is an ingressive aorist active infinitive of *lambano*, which emphasizes the beginning of an action, and reveals that these people had entered into a relationship with the truth—they had an association or an accompaniment with it.

This becomes more evident when we examine the Greek word for knowledge, *epignosis:* the full, experiential knowledge of the truth. These people knew the Scriptures thoroughly and could quote them. They had perceived truth and it was transferred to their souls. Still, it had not passed through the human spirit, because they had not yet been saved. The Word did not profit them.

The truth of the Finished Work weighed heavily on their souls. On the other hand, the pressure of Judaism also weighed heavily on their souls. Ultimately, the persecution prevailed and many went back to the old temple sacrifices.

Full Justice

In Hebrews 10:29, the words "trodden under foot" are *katapateo* in the Greek text, a constative

aorist active participle. The constative aorist is a present continuing action from the past. They had consistently "trodden under foot the Son of God." This indicates that these people had never been saved. Some of them were testifying. They were winning souls. Others were preaching. But all of it was done under the presalvation influence of the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, Jesus will tell these unsaved believers that He never knew them. God declares that vengeance belongs to Him, in Hebrews 10:30, quoting Deuteronomy 32:35. Some scholars explain that *vengeance* actually means *full justice*. God isn't vindictive, but He must repay with full justice.

Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world and gave His life in the unlimited atonement. *His* name is the only one by which men might be saved. But God is just, and His justice requires that those who reject His one sacrifice will receive the recompense for that decision; they will go to hell.

As unsaved believers come before Jesus Christ to stand in judgment, He will show them all the opportunities they had to be saved. They had presalvation joy, presalvation knowledge, and presalvation experience, but they insulted

the Holy Spirit by not receiving Christ. They will come face to face with Jesus and will realize that they were never saved. What they "seemed" to have will be taken away.

Chapter Three

ADVANCING INTO REIGNING GRACE

"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:16-20).

The Holy Spirit's presalvation work begins with the conviction of sin—not personal sin, but the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ. Then, He convicts of righteousness—the Finished Work of Jesus Christ. Finally, the Spirit convicts of judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged. Through this conviction, the Holy Spirit grants repentance unto life (Acts 11:18).

True believers are those who receive the ex-

hortation to enter into the presence of God within the Holy of Holies. The way to this holy place was paved by the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:19). Anyone who accepts God's New Covenant and comes before His throne with boldness and confidence will be made holy through this "new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20).

At the point of salvation, forty-five irrevocable things happen to the new believer. Among them, he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) and baptized by the Spirit into a position of union with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). The Christian receives the indwelling and sealing of the Spirit (Romans 8:11; Ephesians 1:13), and his name is written into the Lamb's Book of Life (Luke 10:20).

God opens the eyes of those who are truly saved, turning them "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith" in Christ (Acts 26:18).

Also, God has a plan for the life of each believer. A true Christian receives saving grace and then enters into growing grace (2 Peter 3:18). As he continues in God's Word, he becomes a dis-

ciple of Jesus Christ (John 8:31). A disciple is one who hears, learns, follows, and adjusts to categorical doctrine. That leads him to a personal revelation of Jesus Christ.

Then, God leads us into reigning grace, by which we begin to conquer our habits. "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17). We reign because we keep on receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of imparted righteousness through the Word of God.

A conqueror isn't someone who never fails—all of us experience moments of weakness. A conqueror is someone who rebounds from his failure, recovers, and continues to grow in grace.

Examining Ourselves

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John 3:14).

These things are evidence of true salvation: loving the brethren, gathering together more and more as the day of Jesus Christ approaches (Hebrews 10:25), and having a willingness to receive correction from the Word of God (Hebrews 12:7). I can tell someone is on dangerous ground when he takes offense at creative encouragement; he reacts even though it is done lovingly and tenderly. "I know you are just trying to minister to me," he says with a sarcastic tone. This person is either seriously backslidden, or he is an unsaved believer.

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not" (Hebrews 12:6-7).

If a person who is really saved decides to go on a sin trip, it will not be a picnic. He will be warned by the Word of God through the messages he hears. He will be chastened by the Father. God will continue to deal with this believer until he repents. By ignoring chastisement and refusing to repent, the Father's discipline intensifies. The final stage of any divine chastisement is physical death without dying mercy. At this stage, God takes the believer home to heaven be-

fore his time. The believer will be in heaven, but he will suffer loss of all rewards.

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

This is the essence of the Finished Work. Jesus Christ works in us to produce His good pleasure. Through grace, mercy, and love, He is accomplishing His purpose in us. Let us seriously consider every class and sermon we hear. Let's listen with dignity, respect, and honor so we can operate in our free volition under the government of grace and mercy and in the faith rest of God's peace.

CONCLUSION

Through the atonement, sin was dealt with. Now, salvation is merely an issue of receiving the "one sacrifice," Jesus Christ. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29).

All Christians—especially new ones—need investment and grace. Every member of the body of Christ is a member in particular. Each of us needs great encouragement from the Word of God and the body of Christ.

Please do not take these thoughts and begin to evaluate people around you. Don't let yourself begin to wonder "Is that person really saved?" Don't ponder such thoughts.

For those who have read this and see themselves as unsaved believers, please come to Jesus Christ. Go beyond the presalvation state you are in. Receive the Lord Jesus Christ into your heart and begin to grow and reign in grace as an eternal child of God.

Sanctified

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Sanctify" means to set apart, to make holy. When a person, place, or thing is sanctified, it becomes completely dedicated to God, for His purpose alone. God takes what is His and makes it holy.

What God has sanctified, we are to sanctify. We grow as we learn to set apart our lives to God. By praying as we begin the day or saying grace before we eat, whatever the task, no matter how insignificant, those are opportunities to sanctify details to God for His keeping.

Our sanctified faith pleases God. When we come to Him and believe that He is, He is greatly honored by our faith. Without faith, we cannot please Him (Hebrews 11:6).

This booklet will show that when we sanctify our lives by believing God utterly and trusting Him thoroughly, our faith will become great faith (Matthew 15:28) and rich faith (James 2:5).

Chapter One

THINGS SET APART

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's: it is holy unto the LORD" (Leviticus 27:30).

"For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches" (Romans 11:16).

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18).

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it" (Genesis 2:17*a*).

Throughout the Bible we find that first things belong to God. Of all the trees in the Garden of Eden, God set apart one unto Himself. It was called the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and God told Adam, "That one is Mine. You can eat of the others, but that one is Mine."

In Genesis 3:6, when Eve partook of the fruit

from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, she took from God what He had sanctified only for Himself, which was to know divine good and to know evil from the standpoint of His holiness.

Lucifer had already rebelled against the throne of God through pride, and one third of the angels fell with him. God knew the devil and the demons of hell, and He knew the potential for evil to infect His creation. Therefore, to protect man from becoming self-conscious (knowing all the problems that would cause) God forbade Adam to partake of that tree. But Eve took that which was sanctified only unto God.

Adam and Eve were never in a mother's womb. Think of that! They were the first couple. They were sanctified in sinless perfection, set apart—*holy*. They belonged to God.

When they sold out to Satan and sin came into the human race, God did the best thing He could do. According to the plan of the Trinity in eternity past, the Father sent His Son to redeem mankind. He died for us on the Cross, shed His blood, took our sins upon Himself and imputes His righteousness to whoever will receive Him. Today, the Holy Spirit moves through sanctified men and women who proclaim the Gospel. He

convicts hearts of the truth, of the Finished Work judgment, of God's righteousness, and of the need to be born again.

No Room for Compromise

"And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

"And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God" (2 Samuel 6:6-7)

The Ark of God was holy. It was covered by the Mercy Seat (where the blood had been sprinkled) and contained the tables of the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod that budded, and the pot of manna from the wilderness. The ark was supposed be carried on the shoulders of the Kohathites (see Numbers 4:15), but King David put the Ark on a cart, and that was a terrible mistake.

The oxen pulled the cart along, but they stumbled and it looked as though the cart would tip over. Uzzah reached out to steady the Ark with his hand and he was killed instantly. That man touched what was holy to God; he did not sanctify what was holy to God.

The Ark belonged to God—it was sanctified to Him. Uzzah touched it and died because he touched what belonged to God. Dishonoring what God has sanctified results in measures of spiritual death.

First Things

"That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there" (Deuteronomy 26:2).

"And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD:

"Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God:

"And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all

the cities of our tillage" (Nehemiah 10:35-37).

Year by year, the children of Israel would bring offerings of the fruit of the trees, the fruit of the land, and the first of the flocks to God. The first of the wine, the oil, and the dough was brought to the priests. These things belonged to God. It wasn't a matter of giving God something. It was already His property, and this is what He required to be done with it. Every single thing offered became holy to God. God set it apart. It was His. It belonged to Him, because the first goes to God.

Honoring God's Word

The city of Jericho belonged to God. Everything about it was to be destroyed and burned with fire. Only Rahab the harlot, who hid Israel's spies before the attack on the city, and her family were to be spared. The gold, silver, and iron were to be brought into the treasury of the Lord; everything else was cursed (Joshua 6:18-19).

God intervened to bring the destruction of Jericho. Israel marched around every day for six days. They marched around the city seven times on the seventh day, and the walls fell and God gave the victory. Jericho was set apart for Him.

"Jericho is Mine," God said. "You do just as I

say. It is a first place, and it is Mine. You can have Canaan, but this first city and everything in it is Mine."

Not everyone heeded this word. Achan took for himself a Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold. He and his family were stoned to death, and all their possessions and remains were burned as a result. Achan took what was God's.

The Word of God was inspired by God Almighty in its entirety (2 Timothy 3:16). God set it apart. "The Bible is *My* book," God declares to us. "It is Mine. Don't add to it. Don't diminish it. (Deuteronomy 4:2). Lay it up in your hearts and in your mind (Deuteronomy 11:17)."

We are to live by every word, using rebound when we fail (Matthew 4:4). If any man adds or takes away from the Word of God, God will add unto him the plagues mentioned in it (see Revelation 22:18-19).

All sixty-six books of the Bible are God's holy Word. We are not to privately interpret the Bible (2 Peter 1:19-20). We don't dishonor God's Word, we don't mock God's Word, we don't say anything against God's Word. It is sanctified. It is holy.

When we give thanks in everything (Eph-

esians 5:20), we make praise holy. When the Word of God dwells richly in our hearts and we speak psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, and sing with grace in our hearts, then our inner life is holy. Then we do everything, in word and in deed, to glorify God, which makes our behavior holy.

Chapter Two

THE FIRSTFRUITS BELONG TO GOD

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

"And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:17-19).

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

The Bible says in Exodus 36:23 that God's name is sanctified. In John 17:19, Jesus sanctified

Himself for us. In 1 Corinthians 15:23, Jesus was the firstfruits. *God tithed Jesus to us!*

God has given us so much more as well—all things are ours, we are Christ's and Christ is God's (1 Corinthians 7:23). He gave an inheritance in Him and made us heirs forever after His promises (Romans 8:7). But by dying on the Cross at Calvary, Jesus Christ became the firstfruits of "them that slept" in death. He belonged to God and was God's tithe. It was God giving us His best, His only begotten Son.

When the Bible tells us to bring our firstfruits to God, it is because the firstfruits already belong to Him. For this reason, we are called robbers if we don't do it (Malachi 3:10). These firstfruits belong to the Lord, and He will get what belongs to Him!

Proverbs 3:9 says, "Bring in the firstfruit." Matthew 23:23 says, "Do not leave it undone." The firstfruit of what we earn belongs to God Almighty just as the firstfruit of the trees and the land. All things belong to God, and so does our tithe.

"Don't touch the firstfruit," God is telling us. "I want you to reverence Me. Give to Me what is mine first, not second or third."

Many Christians have problems today be-

cause they don't tithe first, so He cannot bless them. God owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10), and all the gold and silver of the earth are His (Haggai 2:8). Since this is true, God can provide for me when I, by faith, obey and put Him first and put His Kingdom first.

When the widow put in her mite, she gave all that she had. Jesus saw it and that money was sanctified.

Touch Not God's Anointed

God established Moses as His leader over Israel. When Korah went against Moses (see Numbers 16:32), rebelling against his authority and refusing to sanctify his office, God opened the earth and swallowed up the rebellious Israelites. Later, fire came down and consumed others. God sanctified Moses' office just as He sanctifies the offices of His pastors. Pastors are people and they are not perfect. But the office of a pastor is given by God and set apart for Him. Therefore, double honor is given to a pastor because of his office (1 Timothy 5:17).

Noah became drunk from drinking the fruit of the vineyards he planted. Ham, Noah's son, saw him naked and drunk in his tent and ran to tell his brothers. In doing so, Ham revealed that

he did not sanctify the Word of God in Leviticus 18:6; he looked upon the nakedness of his kin. Furthermore, he maligned his father, which means to spread evil reports about people even though it is true. Japheth and Shem entered the tent backwards and covered Noah, their father, without looking at him in that condition. They sanctified the Word of God (see Genesis 9:21-28).

Korah's crowd came under the curse because they didn't sanctify Moses. Ham came under the curse because he didn't sanctify his father.

We Belong to God

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Hebrews 11:23).

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

"And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

"From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10-14).

When God sanctifies something, He sets it apart. That which is set apart unto God is holy. What does God do when He saves us? He sanctifies us.

Do you know why the devil can't have us? Do you know why we can never be lost? Do you know why we can never be taken out of our position in Christ? It is because we are sanctified in Him; we are a holy people. God has perfected forever them that are sanctified.

We are members of a church of the firstborn, members of the New Testament Church. We are the apple of God's eye (Zechariah 2:8), a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a special treasure that shows forth the praises of God. We were brought out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). We are God's Body, His people, and the world had better not touch God's people because we belong to Him.

When a member of the Body of Christ fails, it is a family affair. God deals with those who fail. It is no one's business but God's. Everyone makes such a big deal about failure. But the

truth is, failure is only God's business, unless someone else was affected. Then, the person who failed must make things right. Even then, the matter should only involve the affected parties and no one else.

The reason why we can never lose our salvation is that we are God's; we are a holy people (1 Peter 2:9). Holiness doesn't imply sinless perfection (see 1 John 1:8). Holiness means that we are set apart and belong to Him.

Chapter Three

PUTTING SANCTIFICATION TO PRACTICE

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied" (1 Peter 1:2).

God takes what is His and makes it holy. Likewise, I can make something holy to God when I sanctify it by setting it apart for His use only. When I present my body to God, I sanctify my body. He sanctifies it at salvation, but when I give it back to Him on purpose, dedicating my life to Him, I sanctify what is His. When I pre-

sent my body to God, I sanctify it.

Every one of us has a calling. Certainly, we can "adjust" and become successful in the eyes of men anywhere in life. We can win souls anywhere. We can love God anywhere. We can be effective anywhere. And, God will bless us if we are right with Him. But we must remember that our calling is holy and heavenly. It is very crucial that we understand the sovereign, operational, geographical, and permissive will of God. God uses us according to our calling in dedication to His service.

Family Life and Relationships

When I love my wife, I sanctify my marriage. When my wife responds to me, she fulfills what a wife can do. She sanctifies womanhood in marriage.

Sex in a marriage is sanctified when a man has a single eye toward his wife and she has a single eye toward him. There is no fantasizing, there is no lust involved. What do they have? Pure love. They have sanctified sex because their bodies and minds are set apart to God.

A man who lays down his life for his wife the way Christ laid down His life for the church is sanctifying his marriage. He is also setting his

wife apart through the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26-27). He is a sanctified husband, and she is a sanctified wife as she shows him great honor (Ephesians 5:32-33).

When children obey their parents, they sanctify the family. When a father and mother sanctify their relationship to their children, they, too, sanctify the family. Can you see what God is after? This is why baby dedications are more than mere ceremonies. The time of dedication represents the *parents* saying, "We give ourselves to God to bring up these children in sanctification. Lord, You sanctify us and help us bring up these children in sanctification."

God sees our hearts and He knows our desires and intentions. He realizes our motives. Time and time again, God honors the parents' sanctification of the dedication of their children. The parents present themselves for the child so the child can be sanctified. Very often, those children become saved when they reach the age of accountability, and then they are set apart for God's use.

When I give God the first tenth of my money, then I sanctify the money. The money becomes holy. When I pray in the Holy Spirit of God (1 John 5:14) according to God's will, then

my prayer becomes holy in the name of Jesus (John 14:15).

When we forgive each other and forget, then we make forgiveness holy. Forgiveness must be extended to others. When we forgive and forget, we sanctify obedience in holiness.

When we enter into friendships and we love at all times as friends born for adversity, then we sanctify friendships (see Proverbs 17:17). We set these friendships apart and make them holy unto God.

The Assembly and the Great Commission

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

When we come to church faithfully as the Bible tells us to, then we sanctify our obedience to hear our pastor-teacher. By coming to church on purpose, we sanctify hearing the Word of God from the preacher (Romans 10:17). We make coming to church holy. Through worshipping God in spirit and in doctrine, our worship

is made holy. We make the Word holy in our lives by listening to the Word.

When we respond to God's call to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, what does it do for the people who go and for the church that supports God's Great Commission? We are doing something that is holy. Going into all the world sanctifies the Great Commission; we are doing our part in response to grace, and that makes these things holy, separated unto God.

Jesus went from house to house. He was a street preacher. He sent out the twelve disciples and He sent out the seventy. The Great Commission was being sanctified. I could have an all right church and still not fulfill the call to seek the lost. In that case, I would not be sanctifying the Great Commission. Where was the Great Commission given? In God's Word, and His Word is holy and set apart.

A teacher who, in obedience, teaches in the power of the Holy Spirit— whether in a Christian school or a public school—makes his office holy. It is no longer just a job or profession. It is something that is sanctified, set apart for God's use.

It might be difficult for you to believe, but one of the most beautiful things that can happen

is persecution. People will run down a church, making up lies, telling stories. Our part is to respond in love to our enemies (Matthew 5:24). In doing this, we make persecution holy. If we suffer with Christ, we will reign with Him (see 2 Timothy 3:12).

When we become the victim and reconcile with someone who is guilty of a wrong against us, we make reconciliation holy. When we put that into practice, reconciliation becomes holy in our lives.

When we love one another as Christ loves us (John 15:12), we develop something more than relationships; we develop holy relationships.

Sacrifices of Praise

"I beseech you…by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

To sanctify something means to use it in total dedication to God, set apart for God's purpose. Throughout the first eleven chapters of Romans, the mercies of God are expressed. Now, here comes the apostle Paul saying, "I beseech you that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." A living sacrifice indicates a sacrifice that was

raised from the dead. A sacrifice of praise is praise raised to God because we went through the sacrifice.

I used to wonder what "sacrifice of praise" meant. Did it mean that just praising God is a sacrifice? No, praising God is not a sacrifice; it is a privilege. We praise God because Jesus became the once-and-for-all sacrifice for our sins. That is why we offer the sacrifice of praise.

The living sacrifice is this: Jesus died, we died with Him. After dying, we were buried with Him, and now we are alive with Him because He was raised from the dead. We are alive from the dead spiritually and made brand-new creatures (Ephesians 2:5, 6).

This is what God is saying: "You have come forth from the grave. In your place, I did the dying. I took you to the grave with Me. Because of this, I want you to present your body to Me now and have your mind renewed every single day so that you can live as somebody raised from the dead."

"I beseech you brethren…." This is an exhortation to go from knowledge to wisdom, from knowing something to applying it, from having truth to revealing it. Christ beseeches us to go from a theological understanding to a practice in

our minds and bodies.

God is saying, "I want you to present your bodies a living sacrifice by My mercies. Don't be conformed to this world: be transformed by the renewing of your mind. When you do this, you will prove what is good. As you keep praying, you will prove what is acceptable. I will show you what is perfect, good, and acceptable through a measure of faith and a measure of grace" (see Romans 12:2-3).

In Songs, Sickness, and Affliction

Singing is sanctified when it is done in the filling of the Spirit. Christ sings in the midst of the congregation (Hebrews 2:12). Singing is beautiful when it is done in the Holy Spirit. It begins with the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs that make melodies in our hearts to God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

Sickness can be sanctified to God, as represented in the cases of Amy Carmichael and Fanny Crosby. Much sickness is not sanctified at all. Still, God allows sickness at times because of His perfect plan of Redemption.

Consider Job's afflictions. In his third trial, Job failed, but he came out a winner. His sicknesses were sanctified and so was his rebound.

Our rebound is sanctified, dedicated for God's use. When we fail and get up off the deck, it is a time of sanctification. God holds us up when we have fallen totally flat on our faces (see Deuteronomy 33:26-27).

Another thing that is sanctified is a cheerful countenance (Proverbs 13:15, 17, 22, 23). Our countenance can reflect our dedication and commitment to the will of God, the Word of God, the grace of God, the power of God, the love of God, and the fellowship of God. On the other side, a sad countenance testifies against us and is not sanctified.

Hearing and Edifying

Listening is another thing that must be sanctified. A sanctified listener is careful to make certain that what he hears is right. He knows how to hear (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18). Sanctified listeners are usually sanctified communicators. A bad listener will not be a profitable servant, and he is sure to say things are not in the proper perspective from the Bible.

When we are filled with the Spirit and the Word, all things are holy to us. God can look down and say, "There is a prepared vessel. He has some growing to do. At times, he will have

to rebound, but he is going to make it. He is a prepared vessel" (Psalm 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). God looks for people who are not prepared when He knows that they will get prepared as He deals with them.

Before I was appointed to my first church in a little town in Maine, two women prayed every morning for four years. I never met the women, but they wanted a man of God to come and bless their church. Their prayers were sanctified. They were praying in the Spirit, and their prayers were sanctified, dedicated to God's service to glorify Him.

The Power of Prayer

When we go to God in prayer, we are filled with the Spirit, filled with love, filled with grace. Everything is right between us and the Lord. We say, "Dear Father, You know where I am, and You know what I want for people. I am going to ask You for some things for my loved ones and my family, and You will hear me."

God sanctifies prayers such as these.

Each thought we bring into obedience to Christ is sanctified. Of course, we fail sometimes. But our next thought should be to rebound. This is thinking in sanctification because

our mind has been dedicated for the use of serving God.

Our tongue is sanctified when it is the tongue of redemption (Proverbs 10:20), when it is the tongue that edifies (Ephesians 4:29).

We must sanctify what God sanctifies through grace and by faith in obedience. There should be no familiarity with the things of God; we cannot afford to treat them with common understanding. 1 Peter 1:2 tells us that we are sanctified through the Spirit and the Word and the Blood. When we do things in the Spirit, we sanctify what we are doing because "faithful is He who calls us who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). He performs what He asks us to do (Job 23:14).

The Holy Spirit is sanctifying us and we dedicate ourselves to the Spirit, to the Word of God, and to Calvary to be used and dedicated for Jesus Christ in His service.

CONCLUSION

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1-3)

The day is coming when we will see the Lord and be just as He is. At that moment, we will be perfected completely—totally blessed forever. Everything about us will be holy.

Here on earth, however, we can have set-apart lives because we are sanctified through the Spirit unto obedience by the sprinkling of the Blood of Christ. The most beautiful thing we can do in this world is to make our bodies holy unto God. Let's make our tithe holy. Let's set apart

our marriages. Let us set apart our friendships. Let us make fulfilling the Great Commission holy.

In giving thanks for all things, we make our praise holy (Ephesians 5:20). When the Word of God dwells richly in our hearts, we speak psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts, then our inner lives become holy unto Him. When everything we do in word or deed glorifies Him, our behavior is made holy.

No matter where you are, turn to God in faith. Satan may be constantly tempting you toward depression. Yet, every time you act in faith, you turn your back on the devil. Instead of living in confusion, walk forward by faith, trusting God and hearing His voice.

God takes so much pleasure in watching us present ourselves to Him, spirit, soul, and body. He is so pleased when we are always available and always prepared. As we go forward with pure motives, pure thoughts, and pure words, we will glorify God in our bodies with good emotions and good behavior. Let's go forward. Let us present our bodies to Him every morning and be filled with the Spirit throughout the day.

Satan Meant it for Evil

But Is It?

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"*And we know* that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:28-32).

God's plan is perfect, and if I am to worship in the way of His plan, I must have the Word of God dwelling richly in my heart. But unless Bible doctrine (which is the mind of Christ in specific categories) is ruling in my soul, my con-

science will be occupied with people, things, and circumstances. The old sin nature will rule the soul that is not filled with doctrine. My emotions, designed by God to appreciate and respond to the things of God, cannot do so apart from doctrine.

When we were saved, we were placed into the perfect plan of God; no believer can ever be taken out of God's plan. Ultimately, we will be perfected in the plan (Philippians 1:6). But if we are to understand the plan of God, we need the Word of God so we can experience His provision, walk in His power, enjoy His peace, and fellowship with Him in His will.

This message does not glorify sin. Sin always breaks our fellowship with God and brings chastisement. Furthermore, God never uses sin to promote His Kingdom (Psalm 5:4). But a perfect God has to have a perfect plan, and that plan includes perfect provisions—even for our failures.

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good…" (Genesis 50:20*a*). The account of Joseph's life is a clear example of Satan's evil plot against our lives, but God has a plan to work it all together for good and to bring us to victory.

As you study this booklet, I hope you will understand that everything—even the things that are not "good"—will work *together* for good in your life.

Chapter One

"GOD MEANT IT UNTO GOOD"

"Now Israel [Jacob] loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him" (Genesis 37:3-4).

"And when they saw [Joseph] afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him" (Genesis 37:18).

"And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again" (Genesis 37:22).

"And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and

myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content" (Genesis 37:25-27).

"And the Midianites sold [Joseph] into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard" (Genesis 37:36).

Joseph was in real trouble. But we know that all things worked together for good for Joseph.

First, Jacob made a big mistake by favoring Joseph above the rest of his sons. Joseph's brothers hated him for it—and that wasn't good. Then they conspired to kill Joseph—and *that* was not good. Reuben intervened with a plan to put Joseph in a pit, intending to save him later; but before Reuben was able, his brothers sold Joseph to a caravan of Ishmeelites, who were on their way to Egypt.

In Egypt, Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. Joseph worked hard and was promoted as an overseer in Potiphar's house. But one day, Potiphar's wife—after failing to seduce Joseph—lied about what happened and had Joseph thrown into prison.

The things that happened to Joseph were *not* good.

But Joseph found favor with the prison keeper and was placed in charge of all the other prisoners. That was good! Later, as a result of interpreting two of Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph was released from prison and promoted as a ruler over all of Egypt, second in authority only to Pharaoh.

So far, everything that had happened to Joseph worked together for good—even though some of the circumstances were not good.

Sent Ahead to Save Lives

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt" (Genesis 45:4). A famine was coming, and God's plan was to bring Joseph into Egypt to save his family and preserve the nation of Israel.

Genesis 45:5 records some of the sweetest words ever spoken in the Bible: "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life."

"For these two years hath the famine been in

the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (Genesis 45:6-7).

God's grace, love, and forgiveness are perfect. He guides us in a perfect way. In His perfection, He overrules our sins and failures. Did Joseph's brothers sin? Yes. Was what they did good? No. It never pays to sin. Yet, God showed His goodness, love, mercy, and grace throughout Joseph's trial of faith. Through it all, God's plan was perfect. And His provision for Joseph was perfect.

God's Divine Reversals

The Bible is filled with accounts of how God worked things together for good. It wasn't good for Moses to kill an Egyptian (Exodus 2:12); but, after fleeing into the wilderness and settling for something less than God's best for forty years, one day God called Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. Numbers 12:3 reveals that Moses became the meekest man on the face of the earth.

David committed adultery with Bathsheba. That was not good. To cover their sin, David

sent her husband, Uriah, to the front line of battle where he was killed. Remember, God does not use sin to promote His kingdom. God chastised David by allowing the child born out of adultery to die. But after David repented, God gave them another child, named Solomon, and Bathsheba became one of the greatest mothers in the history of the Old Testament.

After Solomon became king, he disobeyed God by taking many foreign wives and setting up altars where they worshiped their strange gods. But late in his life, Solomon returned to the Lord and was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the Song of Solomon and Proverbs.

The night that Jesus was betrayed, Peter denied Christ three times. That wasn't good, but God worked it all together for good, and Peter became a faithful servant of God.

Saul of Tarsus persecuted Christians for their faith in Christ by arranging executions. Yet, he met Jesus Christ on the road Damascus, obtained mercy, and became a great servant of God. It was Paul who was inspired to write Romans 8:28, which we've quoted so often, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

In Genesis 45:5, Joseph said to his brothers, "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves"—it *will* work together for good.

Joseph could have said *many* things to his brothers, but he chose to edify them. Though they feared revenge and pleaded for mercy, Joseph revealed Who was ruling his soul when he said, "Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, *ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good,* to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:19-20).

Chapter Two

THE WORD DWELLS RICHLY

"As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him" (Psalm 18:30).

"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4).

"Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all" (1 Chronicles 29:11).

Think about Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that *love* God…." We love God on two levels: Positionally, "we love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19), and experientially, by allowing the Word of God to dwell richly in our hearts

(Colossians 3:16).

Without the Word dwelling richly in my heart, I can never understand the plan of God. The Word of God reveals the will of God for every believer. It allows me, as a believer, to choose to live in God's permissive will. But once I repent and forsake my sin, God overrules the consequences of those negative choices and works them together for good.

As the Word of God dwells in my heart, I will begin to understand grace and my conscience will control my mind. My conscience, when it is void of the grace of God, may be ruled by legalism, anxiety, insecurity, negativity, or lust.

Memories of being abused as a child, or memories of our own failures do not have to rule us subjectively. God's plan is greater than our sin, greater than our iniquity, greater than our mistakes, greater than our failures, greater than our successes. His plan is greater than every single thing about us.

Perfected in the Plan

All things work together for good to "them who are the called according to his *purpose*" (Romans 8:28). God's call always includes an eter-

nal purpose once I am placed into the plan of God through salvation (Ephesians 3:11). But if I'm not saved, then there is no eternal purpose for my life, and everything does not work together for good.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of his Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30).

God has a five-step plan to bring us to glory: we are foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified.

Billions of years ago, in eternity past, God foreknew every detail about your life. He also predestinated those details to work out in His plan for your life. Knowing everything that you would do, He planned to work it all together for good for the purpose of conforming you to the image of Christ.

We find two important Greek words in Romans 8:29—*summorphe (conformed)* and *eikon (image)*—speaking of a gradual process of inward and outward transformation. The verbs in Romans 8:29-30 are in the constantive aorist tense;

meaning, God saw our lives gathered up in completion before the foundation of the world.

It may take a long time to have your conscience built up and rehabilitated. Don't get discouraged when the process doesn't go quickly. When the Word of grace controls your conscience, your conscience will then rule your mind, self-consciousness, emotions, and will.

If God Be For Us ...

Romans 8:31 asks, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If you want to, have a pity party and confess things such as "Nobody loves me. No one ever comes to see me. Nobody cares for me." Go ahead. Join the other pity-partiers and have pity parties every opportunity you get. I'll even furnish the material, but I won't show up! You don't have doctrine hidden in your soul, you don't have grace in your conscience, and you don't have power in your will. There's no love in your heart; therefore, you don't operate in the plan of God.

But I have news for you: You are still in the plan of God—whether you operate in it or not. And you can never get out of that plan. Even if you believe not, He abides faithful because He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13).

In the phrase, "If God be for us, who can be against us," the relative pronoun *tis (who)* indicates that opposition will come. Often, we start by opposing ourselves by trying to get attention through manipulation, complaining, and being just plain miserable.

If God is for us—and He is—how can you be against yourself? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

Chapter Three

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Romans 8:33 poses the question, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Have you ever laid a charge against God's elect? If you have, you exalted yourself against God's plan. No one can lay any charge to God's elect, because each one is already justified and glorified in Christ.

Sin is not good; it may bring chastisement and even physical death years before our time. If a Christian backslides and refuses to get right after numerous warnings and much chastisement, God works it out for good by taking him to heaven early to get him out of the mess he's made of his life. This person will not receive any rewards at the Bema Seat, but he will still be in heaven.

Irreversible Blessings

No one can curse one of God's children, or

reverse the blessings He has commanded for them. Balak, the king of Moab, sent messengers to Balaam to ask him to curse the people of Israel. After much deliberation between the two, Balaam asked Balak, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?" (Numbers 23:8). When Balak persisted, God told Balaam to say, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

"Behold, I have received a commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them" (Numbers 23:19-21).

Through the years, people have tried to curse me and reverse my blessings, but it hasn't worked. In spite of the evil things that have been said about me, and the bad things that have been done, they couldn't reverse the blessing of God. All of these things have worked together for good to promote our ministry in a Word of God revival.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is

even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34). Jesus said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone" (John 8:7). No one can condemn a Christian—not even *another Christian*. James 4:11 tells us, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren" and Roman 14:13 says, "Let us not therefore judge one another any more.

Nothing Shall Separate Us

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:35-37).

We are sheep accounted for the slaughter. Nothing can affect us because we die daily with Christ (1 Corinthians 15:31). A dead man can't be stressed out about persecution. The Bible declares that we are "more than conquerors"—*hupernikao* in the Greek, which means *super victors*. We are people who have gone beyond natural victory and human understanding. Every one of us can experience this supernatural

victory because there is no way sin or iniquity can be imputed to us. Through rebound, even chastisement can be stopped in a moment. Even deserved suffering will work together for good for us because of God's glory, God's grace, and God's sovereign will of love.

Eternally Secure

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

These two verses teach the doctrine of eternal security. It is shocking to think that there are Christians who believe we can fall out of God's keeping hand.

Nothing can separate us from God's love. Demons can't do it. Sin can't do it. Failure can't do it. The pastor can't do it. People can't do it. And *you* can't do it.

Do you need more proof? Consider Psalm 145:14: "The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down." Psalm 37:23-24 declares, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his

way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand." Jesus said, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). And He who began a "good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

CONCLUSION

I want every Christian who reads this booklet to take Romans 8:28 and run with it! I want you to believe that *all* things work together for good. Because you trust God in your love for Him, He will continue to bless you. Furthermore, He will not let anybody or anything reverse your blessings, and He will not let anyone curse you.

Our time on earth is the only opportunity God has to demonstrate His great love toward us. Only here can God show us the depths of His love, forgiveness, patience, and mercy, because, in heaven, we will not have old sin natures. The former things will be passed away. But on earth, we are getting to know what God is like *before* we are perfected.

The time is short (1 Corinthians 7:29), so let's use the opportunities we have to receive God's love and share it with others. Help them to know that *all* things work together for good.

Satan's Limitations

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Satan doesn't want any Christian to understand his limitations. He tries to manipulate and project an air of fear in people's lives. With this, he can keep them from being effective for the kingdom of God.

Make no mistake: the devil is not to be toyed with. He is a roaring lion, and he continually seeks to devour and destroy. Yet, Satan is no match for almighty God.

This booklet is written to expose Satan for what he really is-a defeated foe. In these pages, we will show that whatever strategy the devil wants to use against God's people, he cannot do a thing without first getting permission from God (Job 1). And God will not give permission unless He can exalt Christ and accomplish His purpose in spite of the evil Satan intends (Genesis 50:20). Certainly we ought to be aware of satanic strategies so we can detect his methods before we are overcome in an attack. But our

first need, as believers, is to be built up ones (Colossians 2:7) so we can manifest Christ as more than conquerors.

Chapter One

JUST WHO IS TO BLAME?

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

"But without faith it is impossible to please [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

To have the quality of faith that pleases God, we need to engage five points of the law of faith. First, faith requires that we *hear* the Word of God. Second, we must *receive* the Word without hindrances (like "Yes, but….") (Colossians 3:16). Third, we must *believe* the Word without wavering (Romans 10:9-11). Fourth, we must *obey* what we have heard (Romans 6:17). Fifth, we must *act* upon the character of the Word (Colossians 3:17, 23), *abiding* in faith until the answer to our prayers for help or deliverance has come.

After God gives us an understanding of the law of faith, we will recognize that when we be-

lieve a promise given by God, we become owners of that promise. Every promise is given by grace. And every time a child of God studies and hears the Word of God according to the law of faith, he takes ownership of brand-new promises that will be kept by God's integrity.

The Bible declares that whoever touches God's people, touches the apple of His eye (Zechariah 2:8). The "apple" refers to the pupil-the very center of His eye. Think about how sensitive your eyes are. When the light is very bright, the pupil automatically responds by contracting until you adjust to the light. When darkness keeps you from seeing clearly, the pupil dilates to allow entrance to as much light as possible to be able to see. The Lord is extremely sensitive to anything that happens to His children, and His response time is immediate when we come into harm's way.

Because of His great love for us, God has put limitations on the devil. Though we may have been friends of darkness at one time, once we have experienced the glory of the victory of Calvary, we become a new creation. We have become children of the light. And once we experience the reality of the Finished Work of Christ, we can understand that Satan is very

limited in what he can do to us.

Satan's Disguise: An Angel of Light

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

"Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

"Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

"But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD" (Job 1:6-12).

When God asked Satan where he had been, of course the Lord knew what he was up to all along. God asked the devil, "Whence comest thou?" to identify for us the "angel of light" program (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Satan operates on the earth often transforming himself to appear as a supernatural angel of light. He loves to disguise himself in the midst of some religious movements to promote human goodness. Also, he may use work systems or cause people to use grace as a license to sin when they can't measure up to their own standards.

What's more, he runs to and fro across the world to promote the perception that he doesn't even exist. Satan communicates to the world, "Don't worry about 'the devil.' In fact, I don't even exist. Hell? It isn't real."

As a result, people scramble for an object to fix blame for their pain. They blame their problems on each other; they blame problems on what happened years ago during childhood. They blame things on human failure and weakness. It is very crucial that we learn to never place blame for our pain on God or people. Though there are natural causes and consequences that God may allow for His purposes, the ultimate source of everything that causes

pain and suffering is Satan.

According to God's Purpose

Satan is always thinking death, and he wanted Job dead. But God said, "Satan, you can't take his life" (Job 1:12; Job 2:6). Satan cannot do anything beyond what God allows.

This means that Jesus Christ, because of His marvelous victory, will not let Satan trouble you or bother you without a purpose. If the devil is allowed to trouble you, it is for a purpose: to grow in grace, to grow in faith, and to glorify God in the midst of the angelic contest.

Satan charged that God is not a loving God because fallen angels would be sent to hell. As a result of his accusation, one third of the angels followed Satan in his rebellion. God answered his charge with the creation of the human race. God created man so He could manifest His character, which is love, to the angels and all creation.

God fashioned the human race and has allowed each one of us to be born in sin. Without Christ, we are sick from the soles of our feet to the top of our head (see Isaiah 1:5). But out of this sin-sick race, God saves whosoever will, and calls us out to be a part of His Church. Because of

Calvary, every person has the opportunity to become a member of Christ's body. And whoever receives His free gift of salvation is being made ready to become His for all eternity.

Because of the work of Redemption in fallen sinners, Satan is constantly being embarrassed before the angels.

"He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death" (Psalm 68:20).

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

With the Lord's permission, Satan is often used to try our volition. Satan can never touch us without God's permission. Certainly, the mystery and times of some deaths seem so unusual. But we must understand that everyone has a time of death appointed by God.

This is why murder, abortion, and suicide are such serious matters with God. Though He does not overrule human volition, the omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence of almighty God ensure that perfect justice and righteousness will prevail (Psalm 85:10). Though there is a price to pay for taking a life, God's justice was satisfied on the Cross when Christ became sin for us. Therefore, He gives abundant

grace and mercy to all who are guilty of those sins when they look to the Lord.

Satan cannot make us go through anything without it serving a purpose for God. In spite of the charge from hell that He is unfair, the Lord will always reveal His nature of love to fallen men.

Satan couldn't stand it when he heard that God would give grace to sinful men while He would also send one third of the angels to hell. Lucifer rebelled against God's authority and plan, and became the god of this world.

Chapter Two

MANIFEST THE SAVOR OF VICTORY

God has all knowledge; Satan does not. God is everywhere present; Satan is not. God is all powerful; Satan is not. These are the limitations the devil desperately wants to keep secret. These are facts you should know.

What really frustrates Satan is when God's people exercise faith. He hates to see a Christian who stands against a disease and claims healing in the power of love and the power of the Spirit. The law of faith overcomes the strategies of Satan and the demons of hell. Just as an airplane through the law of aerodynamics defeats the law of gravity, so can we by the law of faith soar above the problems caused by the devil.

God's Policies Are in Force

"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan

standing at his right hand to resist him.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

"And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zechariah 3:1-4).

Satan despises, attacks, and accuses people because we are sinners. Joshua, the high priest in Zechariah 3, had sinned, yet God refused to hear any accusations from Satan. On the Cross, Christ paid the penalty for sin, and our sins are no longer an issue with God. And even from the beginning of time, Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God "slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Satan cannot bring up any of our sins to Christ.

The devil recognizes this extreme limitation with regard to us. Therefore, when we sin, Satan accuses us directly-as he has no possibility of accusing us before God. Using demonic projec-

tions, the devil attempts to stir feelings of guilt and despair. If you find yourself feeling this way, remember Satan's limitations.

The devil cannot change God's policy of grace (Ephesians 2:5, 8). Grace forgives and also teaches us to deny ungodliness. Furthermore, he cannot change God's policy of mercy that rejoices against judgment (James 2:13). He cannot change the unconditional love that God has for us (Jeremiah 31:3). The devil cannot change the fact that the Holy Spirit is constantly interceding for us with groanings that cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26). Satan knows that the Spirit of God searches the hearts of men to convict us of the truth (Romans 8:27). Also, he knows the heart of the Father toward all men (Ezekiel 16:6-8). Satan knows the letter of the Word of God, but he cannot do a thing against God's policy of love and grace.

When you are going through a trial, keep in mind that you will not go through any more than what will serve God's purpose for your life. God desires that you have a testimony before the angels of heaven and the angels who fell from heaven. As you go forward, always remember that Satan is so limited that he can never bring up a single sin to God. He has ab-

solutely no right to uncover what God has forgiven through the blood of Christ.

Always Triumphant

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

"To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life…" (2 Corinthians 2:14-16*a*).

The manifestation of Jesus Christ, the Word of Life, through the believer is God's plan to defeat Satan. He wants the devil to smell defeat as we reveal Christ, making manifest the love and aroma—the "savour"—of His presence. God reveals the savor of this knowledge through us, wherever we go. This savor goes to those who are saved and to those who are perishing.

Some days, we go out soul winning and find folks who just will not receive God's love. God reminded me that we are a savor even to those going to hell, because of our knowledge and the

Holy Spirit's power in us. Unfortunately, to them it is a savor of death.

"I don't need it, I don't want it, and you can't give it to me," one man said to me as I tried to share the Gospel.

"I am not going to give it to you, and God isn't going to, either, because you won't receive it," I answered back.

Still, the savor of the knowledge of God was in the air.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Another thing that really frustrates Satan is a Christian who rebounds after he has failed. The devil hates rebound. He despises it. The power of love, grace, and faith to restore one who has fallen drives Satan mad.

Why?

Because he is limited—and there is nothing he can do about it.

Chapter Three

WHO CAN STAND AGAINST US?

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:28-32).

This is one of the most magnificent passages. Each one of us has an old sin nature, but in the

eyes of God we are glorified positionally before we are glorified physically. God the Father sees us as justified and glorified even in our bodies of sin.

What a great salvation!

And how Satan hates it.

The devil despises the fact that you are already glorified. He despises you. He may try to have a drunken driver knock you down. He may send a thief to your home. He will try anything to hurt you because he is trying to hurt God who loves you, the object of His affection-the apple of His eye.

But Satan won't get away with any of his devices. God is for us, so who can stand against us? (Romans 8:31). By His Son, God has freely given us all things. Can anyone lay a charge against God's elect? No, for Christ has justified every believer. Who can condemn one of God's children? No one, for Christ died and is now at the right hand of the Father ever living to make intercession for each one who calls Him Lord.

The Final Legitimate Battle Was Won

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. We have been made more than conquerors through Him who loved us. "More

than conquerors" is a phrase that implies there are no more legitimate battles to fight. Satan was defeated by Christ once and for all at Calvary.

We can have sacred, beautiful, fabulous marriages: We are more than conquerors in our marriages. We are more than conquerors in our families, and we can reign over the demons that attack that area of our lives. He will give us success as fathers and mothers.

God will give us success in the exploits of our businesses. He will give us success in every area of our lives that we submit to Him. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us, and nothing shall ever separate us from the love of God.

Inseparable Love

People who have failed need to see that the grace of God will hold them up. They don't have to continue in failure. All of us need to realize that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, neither height, nor depth, nor any other thing shall ever be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39).

I can't begin to express how these Scriptures

bless me. I am so indescribably thankful for what God has done for us. These truths are incomprehensible to my own limited understanding, but I know they are true. I know the God who sees the whole picture at all times, and He sees me as glorified and justified in Christ.

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17).

Satan cannot bring up a single thing to separate us from God. If you feel separated from God, it's a lie. You can never be separated from Him. Satan cannot stop us from receiving the abundance of grace. He cannot stop any one of us from receiving the gift of righteousness.

Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound (Romans 5:20). The Greek word for "much more abound" is *huperperisseuo*. It is a word that means "overflowing; something that cannot be measured by scales." God's grace never ceases to flow out to us. Where sin once abounded through the fall, grace now does much more abound.

Reign As a King

"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:6).

One of the most precious things we can understand is that we have been made to reign as kings in the kingdom of God. We can reign over our emotions. We can reign in the midst of circumstances. We can let our faith become the owner of God's promises and go forward as never before in the grace of God.

Satan really fears this kind of manifestation of Christ. Jesus Christ was manifested to *destroy* the works of the devil! Manifestation simply refers to the life of Christ demonstrated in us. When we respond to Him by faith, others are able to see Christ in us and experience His character of love. To manifest the savor of His knowledge is the ultimate way to glorify Christ. It glorifies God and exposes the limitations of the devil.

In the midst of everything that Satan tries to bring against us this week, come right back at him with the manifestation of the law of faith, the manifestation of love, and the manifestation of peace. Always consider what Caleb declared

as he prepared to take the Promised Land by war in Numbers 13:30: “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.”

CONCLUSION

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:19-20).

As a born-again believer, you have a brand-new position of faith. You are loved with a love that will never give up on you. You have a brand-new manifestation, a brand-new savor. Get together with others and pray. As you turn to intercession, you will learn to overcome things that you have never been able to overcome.

We are more than conquerors. We can do things through Christ. God will supply all our needs. God has put a limit on Satan, and we will not be defeated. But when circumstances cause us to be discouraged or depressed, we

must exercise faith. We will experience God's unlimited grace and mercy when we trust Christ and His victory at Calvary.

We are here on earth to manifest exactly who God is, to manifest the savor of His knowledge. Live so that the world and the angelic realm can witness God's forgiveness, love, grace, mercy, and patience manifested through us. Let's allow people to see the fruit of the Holy Spirit through our lives.

Our God wants to bless us beyond anything we can ask or think. Let's manifest a personal faith that exalts Him and recognizes the fact that He has made us more than conquerors.

Securing Your Identity

in Christ

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Many of the tremendous struggles Christians continually face are related to the problem of identity. "Identity" speaks of exact likeness in the nature and quality of an object. It is who a person is and what he is like on a consistent basis. When we discern a person's identity, then we can pray accordingly in order to help them.

For some people, their cultural identity has preeminence. It is rooted in the conscience, which is where the norms and standards of the soul and mind have been established. Others have their identity in the world system. They love the things of the world. Others have identities derived from human good. These people are willing to give their bodies to be burned, but they do not have the love of God (1 Corinthians 13). All of their sacrifices are self-motivated.

As this booklet will show, our identity is derived from the Finished Work of Jesus Christ. Through His death, He made a way for us to be

one with Him. When we recognize the price that He paid for us, we can have an identity that is established in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Then we can see ourselves and others as God sees us—seated above.

Chapter One

ATTACHMENTS THAT ESTABLISH WRONG IDENTITIES

"And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

"But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:14-20).

People, even if they don't realize it, are constantly searching out their identity. For example, in Genesis 13, Lot sought his identity in materialism. He turned toward the green grass and fertile soil of Sodom because he had an attachment to money. On the other hand, Abraham, Lot's uncle, had plenty of money and possessions, but he did not let them become his identity.

Habakkuk 2:5 speaks of one whose desire is enlarged "as hell and as death, and cannot be satisfied." For example, in his materialistic identity, Lot was never satisfied. He sold his testimony to get material things. So attached was his identity to Sodom that he and his family literally had to be dragged from the city as God prepared to destroy it. Lot's wife had her identity in Sodom and Gomorrah. She just wasn't going to be happy unless she lived in Sodom. As she was fleeing the destruction God had delivered them from, she looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). Lot's wife should have put her identity, with its attachments to the past, behind her.

The Traps of Sight and Reasoning

In Numbers 13:31, ten spies on a mission to scout out the Promised Land returned with an

evil report. They said, "We cannot take Canaan, for the people there are too strong for us." Their identities were drawn from sight, comparison, and human rationale. These spies did not have a faith perception based upon the promises of God's character. Instead, they had an identity derived by sight that says, "I can't go there" or "I can't do this because…."

The men and women who have their identity in homosexuality aren't happy unless they can practice it. At that point, they have gone beyond the stage of wanting help. Similarly, a promiscuous person's identity needs to have promiscuous affairs to have fun. The drug addict's identity is tied to the next "high"—that is all he can live for.

You meet other people whose identities are trapped in being offended (Proverbs 18:19). A day doesn't go by without their being offended over something. Others have an identity of blame (Genesis 3:12). Nothing is ever their fault, and they are always caught up in the blame game because that is their identity.

Trapped in the Past: Problems in Marriages

Wrong identities open the doors to problems in many marriages. There are Christian wives

who will not enjoy sex with their husbands. Their identities leave them disinterested in sex because they misunderstand its meaning.

Studies have shown that nearly 85 percent of Christian wives are not good lovers. Unfortunately, the reasons are usually due to something that they did years before they were married. A past identity is controlling the soul when it comes to intimacy. Because their identities are stuck in the past, they can't enjoy sex with their husbands in the present.

It is true that Proverbs 6:32 warns that sex outside of marriage destroys the soul. But it is also true that God is in the soul-healing business (see Psalm 41), and He will heal quite quickly if faith is alive.

"I don't like sex," a wife may say. She did like it, however, at one time when it was wrong for her to have it. How about liking it now that it's right to have it in marriage? Just get right with God, and realize God's will and purpose for marriage. The problem is that many don't believe they can do all things through Christ who would strengthen them (Philippians 4:13). If a woman doesn't believe that God can fulfill the needs of her heart, she has to admit that she doesn't believe in God's promises.

This woman and others like her don't enjoy sex because they don't understand that it was *first* created for pleasure, even before the purpose of procreation. Adam and Eve had sex for pleasure long before Cain and Abel were born.

Sex isn't imperative, but when a husband loves his wife and he isn't demanding, she should be able to respond to his initiations. It may result in nothing more than kissing and holding. Still, there should always be a framework of love that produces a desire to be intimate in sex. Sex is a type of what happened when we were saved and Christ entered into our hearts. The husband enters into a union with the wife. It is an expression of the mystery of the Trinity in the experience of salvation.

The past is gone forever; whatever was done is done. You have been forgiven. Don't defraud each other (see 1 Corinthians 7). "I don't defraud, I just don't enjoy it," you say? Then get right with God in that area, as in any other area of life. Do not let your identity be in the past. You can be as free as free can be!

Chapter Two

RECEIVE A NEW IDENTITY

The apostle Paul said, "It is not I, but Christ." He realized that the only way to have a true identity is through the Cross of Calvary. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

In 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul declared, "I am what I am by the grace of God." Paul's identity was in the Cross and in the grace of God. His sins were forgiven, and God couldn't remember them. His identity wasn't in legalism; it wasn't to legislate righteousness. Paul was made a brand-new creature with a brand-new identity.

Criticism versus Contrition

Some people live in "critical identities." They may go to a church where they see souls

saved weekly, a full house with standing-room-only crowds, and people heading to the foreign fields month after month. Yet, they are always finding fault, and they never have fun in church.

The pharisee, in Luke 18:11-13, thanked God that he wasn't like the publican, an extortioner, who stood afar off at the temple. But the pharisee had his identity in being religious. He let God know that *he* tithed and fasted twice a week, yet he wasn't even saved.

The publican came before God with an identity that was in his sins. He couldn't look toward heaven and he wouldn't look to the altar. He stood afar off and beat upon his breast, saying, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." The publican came with an identity in his sins, but he found forgiveness and he went home justified; he received a new identity.

Facing the Crisis

Sooner or later, every one of us must face an identity crisis. We must admit that we have accumulated things that have made us who we are. Then, we must take care of those things by committing them once and for all to the Finished Work, where we have already been crucified with Christ. "And they that are Christ's have

crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24).

When your identity is in the grace of God and rooted in resurrection life, moods don't affect you, even when details of life and financial pressures come. You don't have to act weird and have people around you whisper, "Don't touch her today—she's had a good four weeks, but now she's back at it." Adam's identity does not have to be in control. God has made a better way.

Come to the Altar

The altar was central in the lives of God's people throughout the Bible. In Genesis 4:4, Abel brought a blood offering to God. Cain did not. Instead, he brought vegetables, which represented the works of his own hands. Abel's offering was accepted at the altar, which represented the house of God.

Abram went to Egypt because of a famine in his land (Genesis 12:10). When they arrived, he told his very pretty wife, Sarai, to lie to pharaoh if he asked whether she was Abram's wife. Abram told Sarai to say, "I am his sister." This meant that if pharaoh wanted to sleep with Sarai, he would have thought it was all right.

Fortunately, God intervened, warning pharaoh in a dream that Sarai was Abram's wife.

Abram lied three times in Genesis 12 alone, yet his identity was in faith. He is not a religious father—we don't go to him to confess our sins. Still, Abram, who became Abraham, represents a spiritual father. He is the father of our faith.

After everything that happened with the pharaoh in Egypt, Abram returned to Bethel, "to the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD" (Genesis 13:4). This would be like us returning to where we first had a great time with Jesus Christ: the first altar, first glory (Exodus 40:34), and first love (Revelation 2:4).

Chapter Three

GOD'S DWELLING PLACE: THE FOUNDATION OF OUR IDENTITY

In Genesis 28, Jacob, backslidden and afraid, was sent away from home after stealing his brother Esau's birthright. On his way he came to a place he called Beth-el, "the house of God." It was there in a dream that Jacob saw a ladder that reached up into heaven. Angels were ascending and descending on the ladder, and God said, "The same blessing I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I give to you. I will never leave you, and I am going to bless you so that your seed is as the sands of the sea" (see verses 12-15).

Remember, when God gave this promise, Jacob was backsliding. And when he left there, Jacob went on to Haran where he remained backslidden for twenty years! Then, in Genesis 32, God told Jacob to go back to Bethel; so, he

packed up his possessions and his family and started back.

Jacob was left alone with God. He wrestled with God all night (Genesis 32:24-28); the angel was Jesus Christ. Though Jacob prevailed, Jesus Christ touched the hollow of his thigh, making him lame for the rest of his life. Still, Jacob did not give up, but he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

What was the blessing? A brand-new identity. "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." That was Jacob's new identity.

God's Glory and the Assembly

The tabernacle in Exodus 40 was considered to be the house of God. It was a beautiful place where the glory of God filled the Holy of Holies, filling it up so completely that even Moses could not enter in.* While the tabernacle was moveable, Solomon's temple in 2 Chronicles 7 was immovable, and the glory of God filled it, too. Today, every born-again believer is the temple of God. He doesn't dwell in buildings—except where the believers are.

Now, when God invaded and inhabited the

tabernacle and the temple, do you think anyone thought of bringing whiskey inside of them? Do you think anyone considered committing immorality in these places? No, these were houses of God. In fact, people who tried to commit fornication in the proximity of the house of God were killed (Numbers 25). Why? It was the holy house of God.

According to Hebrews 10:25, wherever believers are assembled, *that* is the house of God. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit in him, along with the Father and the Son. As we gather together, His glory is in each one. Consider what Leviticus 26:8 says, "Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight." *This is what being part of a church is all about.*

Forsake Not the Assembly

A Christian may think, "I can be just as spiritual at home as I can at church." That is wrong. You cannot be as good a Christian when you purposely stay away from the house of God, from the assembly of believers. We have been told to assemble ourselves together much more. You can argue about it, but one day you will face God. You will be alone—without your spouse,

without your money, and without your pride.

In 1 Samuel 15:13-35, King Saul had his identity in pride, and deception ruined him. But when you humble yourself before God and allow Him to break you, you can be like Jacob with a new identity of power with God and with men.

**Read* Seeing the Glory of God, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Four

JESUS NEVER FORGETS WHO WE ARE

In Luke 5, the people pressed upon Jesus to hear the Word of God. So, He found two empty boats by a lake, while the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets. Jesus got into the boat that belonged to Simon Peter, and a little ways out He began teaching the people. When He had finished teaching, Jesus told Peter to launch out into the deep and let down his nets. But Peter said, "Oh Lord, we have toiled all night, and taken nothing. Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net."

Oh, *God help us to do what the Word of God says to do!* Jesus said, "Let down the net," and they caught so many fish that the net broke (verses 4-7).

Peter could only bow down, broken before Jesus and say, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He was saying, "Lord, You don't

know who I am. My identity is established in what I do. I am proud and impulsive. My identity is not in You. Depart from me." But Jesus said in verse 10, "Fear not: I don't want you to fish for fish anymore. From now on, I want you to fish for men."

Failure Isn't Final

Sadly, at the end of Jesus' life on earth, Peter followed Him afar off (Matthew 26:58-75). After the Lord was arrested by the Roman soldiers, a maid who recognized Peter as a disciple said, "You are one of his disciples." Peter said, "I am not." Another maid said, "You are one of them; your speech betrays you." He said, "I am not one of them." When someone else confronted him, Peter cursed and said, "I don't know the man!" Then the cock crowed.

At that moment, Jesus, being led away to be tried at the house of the high priest, looked upon Peter (Luke 22:54-62).Christ had to turn to him deliberately and stared him down with tender eyes. Then, Peter remembered the words Jesus said to him: "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Luke 26:34). Peter went out and sobbed. Jesus looked at him, but he looked at him in tenderness and sweetness because this

prophesy was now fulfilled.

In John 21, even after Jesus was crucified and appeared to the disciples in the Resurrection, Peter quit his calling. He said, "I go a fishing"—and the other disciples followed along. May I point this out: It is difficult to backslide alone. Someone else will always backslide with you. Peter *and* the disciples went back out fishing, and the Bible says they caught nothing (John 21:3). Then, Jesus appeared on the shore.

"Children, have you any meat?" He asked.

"No," they answered.

"Cast your net on the right side."

Peter was so backslidden that he couldn't even see that it was Jesus on the shore; he thought it was just a man addressing them. But John, remembering what had happened in the beginning in Luke 5, said to Peter, "No. It is the Lord."

Once again, their net was full of fishes—more than they could handle—and Peter was the first one to swim to shore. Jesus had brought Peter back to the place where they first met.

It is like someone who drifts away from church, away from the house of God, and then is brought back to the assembly. This time, the songs in church mean so much. The worship

and the messages mean so much. The love and smiles from the people in the church touch him again. The prayers and caring and help he receives let him know that he is *back* in the house of God. It is where he finds his identity.

This is what God always does. He brings people back to the house of God, if they will let Him. Their backsliding always corrects them (Jeremiah 3:19-22). He restores them to their identities in the Finished Work. What a beautiful thing—to be back in the house of God!

A Firm Foundation

Toward the end of his life, Pastor Bob Jones Sr. battled Alzheimer's disease. One of the last times he got up to speak, he began telling and retelling the story of how he was saved. "Years ago I was on a dirt road, and a domineering thought came to me: 'You've got to live somewhere forever, so you better learn how to live.' I was only twelve. God told me to go to a little church where my mom was. I stood way up back—my mom didn't know it. I went and got saved…."

After repeating the story several times, his son, in tears, tapped him on the shoulder and gently eased him off the platform. It was a sad

scene. Still, I can't help but think how this great man of God didn't remember much, but he remembered the day he came to Jesus. He remembered the house of God, the foundation of his identity.

CONCLUSION

I remember years ago helping a group of rebellious teen-agers to see the truth about identities. When called to my office, they expected condemnation. Instead, God led me to lovingly and tenderly communicate just how much each one of them meant to God. I told them that they were His temples; that He so loved them, He died to make a way to come and live inside of them.

"This is why you shouldn't have sex before marriage," I said. "Don't let someone else invade what belongs to God. Your body is His. You are His. Please don't hurt your temples."

They responded magnificently to those words. In fact, three girls came and confessed, saying, "We have been living in fornication, but now we understand how God sees us and we want His forgiveness. We just didn't understand it." They were ready to receive a new identity.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God,

and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

We are the temples of the Holy Spirit. That is who we are, our identity. Knowing this will keep us pure more than any list of regulations and rules.

Those girls received new identities, and a dangerous trend that was going on in their school at the time was reversed. They began to glorify God in body and spirit, which belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:20).

The same kind of victory can be yours. Just remember always that "ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:23). In Hebrews 12:2, we are to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Only when we derive our identity from Jesus Christ can we experience our heavenly position. What a glorious identity!

Seeing the Glory of God

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INTRODUCTION

Ezekiel 43:4-5 describes a most beautiful scene: "And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house."

Oh, how the world needs to see a glimpse of the glory of God! But that will happen only when Christians learn to let God be God. In Ezekiel 43:5, the glory of God *filled* the house. This means that God's glory shares space with no other thing. Therefore, when we allow God to fill us with Who He is, we will reveal His glory.

Since Christ's death and resurrection, and now that He is seated at the right hand of God in heaven, we are God's habitation on earth. We are the place where God's glory can rest. This booklet shows how each of us can be filled with the glory of His nature—with His mercy, grace,

longsuffering, lovingkindness, and truth—as lights to the world, so people will be able to see Him and be saved.

Chapter One

WHAT IS THE GLORY OF GOD?

"And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

"And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:33-35).

Five hundred years later, after the first tabernacle was destroyed, King Solomon completed and dedicated a glorious new temple in Jerusalem:

"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.

"And the priests could not enter into the

house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD 'S house" (2 Chronicles 7:1-2).

But, notice what happened over the next five hundred years:

"Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do you see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" (Haggai 2:3).

God Proclaims His Name

What is the glory of God? In Exodus 33:18, Moses made a bold request of the Lord: "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." God's answer, in the following verse, was this: "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy" (Exodus 33:19).

Understanding the glory of God is the key to subjective love, which goes from a believer (the subject) who is filled with the power of God's presence, His Spirit, and His words toward one who cannot respond (the object). That is what subjective love and subjective faith are all about.* There is no intrinsic value but there is potential value in the object who has not re-

ceived God's love. Therefore, the subjective love that I have for someone depends upon God and what I choose to receive from Him; it never depends on the object.

This is the picture: If we receive the Word of God so that it dwells in us richly (Colossians 3:16), and if the Holy Spirit fills us so that we sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord, *then* we possess an amazing subjective strength from God. We have value because we have *His* substance within, and by this strength we love God objectively. We are able to give and to receive His love as the Holy Spirit sheds it abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). Because we hear the Word of God and study it properly, through our faith in Him we can have His subjective love for others. That completely reveals His glory and the nature of His name.

The Nature of Doctrine

The moment Moses said, "Show me thy glory," God's answer was, "I will proclaim My Name." God's glory and His name are the same. His glory comes out of His name. His name reveals His nature. That is why His name is so crucial.

"Into thine hand I commit my spirit; thou

hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth" (Psalm 31:5). According to Luke, Jesus was quoting this verse when He spoke His last words on the Cross. From it, we understand that He redeems because He is the Lord God of doctrine.

Doctrine reveals how God thinks, what He has done, and who He is. In Matthew 7:21-23, after He spoke on the beatitudes about the blessings many would reap because of their faithfulness, Jesus declared "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven." Certain ones will cry, "Lord, we have done miracles and wonderful works in Your name," but Jesus will have to say to them, "Depart from Me for I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity." These are people who have used the name of Jesus without experiencing His nature. They constantly said words and did things related to the name of Jesus Christ without having His nature; *they did what He said without having what He had.*

The Doctrine of His Name

In Exodus 34:5, "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with [Moses] there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD." Remember, Moses wanted to see God's glory, and instantly

God said, "I will proclaim my name." In verse 6, "the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." *That is God's name.*

That is why, when we pray in the name of the Lord, we are praying in the nature of God. Let's say that you fail utterly, and you do what the publican did in Luke 18:10-14: You go to the temple, but you stand afar off and beat upon your chest. You can't even bring yourself to look up toward heaven because you feel so unworthy. So you say, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." The publican said a prayer in Jesus' name, and Jesus said that he went home justified!

The Pharisee prayed, "I thank God that I am not as other men or as this publican. I am not an extortioner or an adulterer. I fast twice a week and I tithe"—but he was not justified. He was doing things using the 'name' of the Lord but not with the nature of God.

Often, people who are either depressed or living in overt sins do not get victory. Many I have counseled are very sincere; they are not willful hypocrites, and eventually many come through. Yet for whatever reason, though they may be saved and sincerely believe in God's

name, they do not have the constant filling of His nature. But, to be filled with God's nature is the only provision for real and continual deliverance.

**We suggest reading* The Love of God, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

THE SPIRIT OF GLORY REVEALED THROUGH REDEMPTION

In Exodus 25, the Lord instructed Moses in every detail regarding the building of the tabernacle, and Moses did everything as God told him. He obeyed God and finished the work (Exodus 40:33). In John 19:30, before He gave up His spirit, Jesus said, "It is finished." What a great verse! There is a rest for the people of God because the work of salvation is *finished* (Hebrews 4:9).

Jesus Christ finished the work, and because of this He says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Satan despises the Finished Work. It is "finished" because of the nature of His name. The

attributes revealed in His name are mercy, graciousness, longsuffering, lovingkindness, and truth, which is doctrine. Doctrine is more than knowledge of the letter of the law. It is the Word of God operating in our hearts, controlled by the Holy Spirit.

The glory of God is in those five attributes as they work together, filling a person through the Holy Spirit. He is God, the "spirit of glory" (1 Peter 4:14), and He is everything that the name of Jesus Christ means. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ in us and brings the Word of God in to make us living epistles (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

The Holy Spirit takes over for those who cannot help themselves, though they may be sincere. When we believe Christ and receive life from Him, the Holy Spirit takes over, glorifying Christ and filling us with God's glory. When we are filled with God's glory, we are filled with mercy, graciousness, longsuffering, lovingkindness, and precise thinking in doctrine, so we can use the Word of God properly.

Who gets all the credit? Jesus Christ. Who receives the benefits? We do, as well as those around us, because we see the glory of God.

"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34-35).

"The cloud" speaks of faith with incense. Israel followed the cloud by day through the wilderness (Numbers 9:15-22). Today, we walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). The cloud is faith with the incense of God's glory. His glory—mercy, grace, longsuffering, lovingkindness, and precise thinking—filled the tabernacle.

Remember, when Moses went into the tabernacle, he had greater access to the Mercy Seat than the high priests did. Because there was nothing obstructing him, Moses went into the Holy of Holies and stayed. There, God taught him doctrine categorically (see Exodus, chapters 19 and 20). But even Moses could not enter the tabernacle when the cloud came down.

According to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We are His habitation, in Ephesians 2:22, and His dwelling place, just as Israel was, according to Psalm 90:1.

This means that when circumstances, adversity, success, or victory come toward you, the old man, Adam, who is in you cannot enter. Your flesh can have nothing to do with your new life in Christ. The new you, however, can enjoy everything about it through the Spirit of glory.

Through the Holy Spirit, the person who was depressed will be set free. Because his flesh has been taken out, God now dwells in him. When the cloud came, the tabernacle was filled with the glory of God. Even Moses could not enter in. And when the glory of God dwells in me, it is no longer "I" but Christ (Galatians 2:20).

Chapter Three

CHRIST LIVING WITHIN

All of us have a history of particular problems; some have long histories. Yet, the answer for every person is to be filled with the glory of God. Victory comes when the nature of God fills us. That is the full counsel of God for the meaning of Galatians 2:20, "It is no longer I, but Christ who lives in me."

Suppose that you have trouble loving a certain individual. You may have tried to overcome something that happened years before, and you just cannot let go of it mentally. But now, God does it in you and for you! As 1 Thessalonians 5:24 tells us: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Also, in Job 23:14, "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me." Now you can understand why Job esteemed God's words as better and more necessary than his daily food (Job 23:12): God's words are Spirit and life (John 6:63).

The work of building the temple was finished, and in 2 Chronicles, all of Israel celebrated its completion. King Solomon offered up a prayer, and the first thing he exalted was the mercy of God (see 2 Chronicles 6:14-42). After his prayer, the cloud came—faith with the incense, the Word with the Spirit of glory.

"…The fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And *the priests could not enter into the house of the* LORD, *because the glory of the* LORD *had filled the* LORD'*s house*" (2 Chronicles 7:1-2). The *priests* couldn't enter in because of His glory! That is a picture of redemption—our old sin nature has been taken out and God has been put in, replacing it with His nature.

Recently, a pastor from another denomination called me anonymously. He said that he had committed adultery, but because of conviction from the Holy Spirit, he quit the relationship on his own, repented before God, and he was clean. Years after he repented, however, someone exposed the matter before his congregation. Today, in addition to a list of stipulations, that church

wants him to stop preaching for two years as a penalty.

Jesus said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Everyone in that church has sinned, and this pastor had repented and was no longer living in sin. The glory of God is filling his temple: *No* flesh can enter in to judge. That congregation will bear the consequences of their reaction.

Stripping Away the Veil

Zerubbabel was working on rebuilding the temple in Haggai 2:3 when the prophet asked "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?" (referring to Exodus 40:34-35).

There is no record that the glory of God ever filled that temple. It is like the Christian who is saved and, therefore, is a temple of God, but who has never been filled with the glory of God. Ezekiel 43:5, however, describes a vision of the Millennial Temple being filled with the glory of God. There on His throne, Jesus Christ will be reigning over the whole world from the New Jerusalem. In our glorified bodies, Christians will be able to enter in to that temple.

In 2 Corinthians 3:14-18, when God's people turned away from living by Moses' law, the veil

was taken away. When that happens, we behold the Word of God as in a mirror, and we are changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. According to verse 17, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—but liberty for what?

The veil of our flesh was keeping us from seeing God's glory, so the letter of the Word condemned us. We were always guilty because we could never live up to the law. But when we simply turn from it to the Lord, then we have liberty to have grace, mercy, lovingkindness, longsuffering, and precise thinking with the Word taking over. *Then* we are changed from glory to glory!

We had mercy before, but now we know a lot more about it. We had grace, but we know so much more about it today. We knew something about lovingkindness and longsuffering, and we were thinking with God precisely a year ago, but it is so much better today because the Word of God is now Spirit and life to us. Our capacity has been expanded as we behold the glory of God.

CONCLUSION

We can behold the glory of God. What a beautiful thing it is. Without being self-conscious, we can be filled with the glory of God, having mercy, grace, longsuffering, lovingkindness, and precise thinking with the Word at work in us.

If His glory is not at work in you, you should know that as a Christian, your body is a temple that belongs to God. If you are saved, the Spirit has sealed you unto the day of redemption, and you *will* go to heaven (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30). But you could have so much more! You could be enjoying the experience of living in the nature of His name as you are changed—just by turning to Him.

Can you see why the demons hate to hear about the nature of God? Jesus, they know; Paul, they know; "but who are you?" they ask (Acts 19:13-15). The demons fear the name of Christ as it reveals the glory of God filling the believer, which proves Satan's defeat. Today, instead of

asking God to just show us His glory, let's say, "God, *give* me Your glory."

Self-Analysis versus God Is

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

"Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah" (Psalm 4:3-4).

Much has been said among Christian psychiatrists and psychologists concerning the proper analytical methods needed to help a believer discover how to experience the life of God. All of us, at one time or another, have been victims of our own self-analysis. But the Word of God makes it clear that self-analysis has no value at all in a believer's life.

In Psalm 4, the meaning of the word *sin* implies occupation with self: Commune with your heart upon your bed, and "self" not. Self-analysis is one of the most subtle activities, yet scores of misguided Christians do it frequently, communing with their own "selves," analyzing and

trying to discover a better way to live for God.

In this booklet, you will discover that the only real release comes in looking away from self and looking unto Jesus. He is the way, He is the truth, and in Him we have overcoming life.

Chapter One

ONLY GOD KNOWS

Jeremiah 17:9, in its description of the human heart, tells us the reason that self-analysis is not profitable. The heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The next part of this verse reveals the problem with self-analysis: "…who can know it?" A Spirit-filled person can never know his heart. You can commune with your self all you want to, but you will never be able to find release.

No one but God can ever know your heart. Trying to figure out where you went wrong profits nothing. Knowing how wicked 'Adam' is doesn't change Adam's wickedness. Knowing where you went wrong doesn't keep you from going wrong again. It takes more than knowledge about the old sin nature to keep you from sinning. Jesus didn't say, "Be occupied with Adam until I come, and try to figure things out." No, He said we are to be occupied with Christ

until He returns (Luke 19:13).

Jeremiah 17:10 explains why you never need to enter into self-analysis: "I the LORD search the heart." Hundreds have spent hours searching their hearts, but the Psalmist prayed like this: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me...and see if there be any wicked way in me." He allowed the One who has all knowledge to do the searching.

Satan has a field day as he causes people to search their hearts in the name of Jesus. We get frustrated searching for answers, and eventually we grow weary. We end up experiencing who we are in Adam. We may discover all the reasons why we sin, but we leave out one fact: We are desperately wicked, and we will never change! But the Lord searches the heart and tries the reins in order to give to every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings. The Lord does the searching.

In John 15:22, Jesus said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." Self-analysis is nothing more than a cloak for sin. Suppose you were able to figure out why you failed at the age of twelve, what your grandfather did to you when you were six, and how

somebody treated you at fourteen. Suppose you figured it all out, wrote it down, and rehearsed it until you had it memorized. Would it give you life? Would it make you jump up and down and rejoice in Jesus?

No Way Out

There has never been a time when God has endorsed self-analysis. I am not interested in deriving my reality from Adam's human viewpoint. The people who do usually end up on tranquilizers. When they discover what Adam is like, they start popping pills or going back into sin so they won't have to experience the essence of their old sin nature. Self-analysis can only make you see how bad you really are. Many men in this ministry enter into self-analysis, and they don't like what they discover, yet they are occupied with it.

Self-analysis will always lead to a dead end. Apart from Jesus Christ, there is no way out. If you were to think about twenty-five things that affect you, what would you have accomplished? Would it change your heart to discover how bad Adam is? No, it would not.

Many people live on fruit they have gathered at the Tree of Knowledge of Good and

Evil—the only tree in the garden of Eden that was prohibited by God. Through self-analysis based on self-knowledge, they discover the awful truth about themselves. After taking advantage of the knowledge gathered from the evil part of the tree, they go to the "good" part to find relief. They make a confession like, "Because of all I know, I will not fail again!" But they are still eating from the Tree of Knowledge, and the flesh will fail.

Even though a person is saved and receives good Bible teaching, he may still be lost in his old identity. But the answer is not in self-analysis. It is in humility through the Cross, obedience to the Word, and, like the prodigal, going home to the Father.

The prodigal son said in Luke 15:18, "I will arise and go to my father." He did not linger in self-analysis. He summarized his past with one sentence: "I have sinned." The issue was not what made him sin; he made himself sin. His desperate heart was the issue. The prodigal did not wait to discover the root cause. He said, "I did what I did and I am going home to my father, just as I am—bare feet, ragged clothes, and a terrible heart. I think I will have to work as hired help—but I'm going home! I am not going

to make my father meet any conditions. I am going on the terms of humility, on the terms of the Cross, and on the terms of submission. Whatever I must do, I will do it."

No self-analysis—just humble repentance.

The only one who can help me is my Father, who is God, so I am going home to my Father. Evil thoughts, adultery, fornication, murder, theft, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, blasphemy, pride, an evil eye, foolishness—all these things come out of the heart of a man (Mark 7:21-23). If I enter into self-analysis, I will just come up with relevant associations to these things, which mean nothing except that I have sinned. What's more, I am a sinner.

Knowing this, I go to my Father. I forget what I have done, and, turning around, I go to Someone who will be different, entirely new, and I am going to come under His headship.

Chapter Two

A NEW WAY OUT

Many people in the Bible said, "I have sinned," and every one of them had a different idea of what they had done. In Numbers 22:34, Balaam said, "I have sinned," and he meant it and got right. Achan said, "I have sinned" in Joshua 7:20. King Saul said, "I have sinned" in 1 Samuel 15:24, but he ended up wanting to take his own life. His self-analysis resulted in being suicidal. King Saul was occupied with self-analysis but not with forgiveness toward himself. He was occupied with who he was in Adam instead of who Christ is—with guilt instead of cleansing.

If you continue to live in self-analysis, you will never have a repentant heart because there is nothing about your self that can repent. Only your faith in God can make you turn. In Psalm 85:4, David said, "Lord, turn me." Only the Lord can turn us. Only the Lord can give us a new

heart. Only the Spirit of God empowers us in the authority of love. Not one single thing about your self can do it.

You can stir up members of a congregation to analyze why the church isn't more effective, and you'll come up with nothing but negative stimuli, even though what you may find may be true. But if you can get the same Body of believers to look at Jesus Christ, you will get them to look without self-analysis, and they will be victorious. If one sins, he simply says, "I have sinned."

The reason thousands cannot experience the yoke that is easy and the burden that is light is that Christians will not be simple enough to receive as a child and just look.

In Numbers 21, the Israelites were afflicted because of their sin. Still, they were God's people, not heathen. They were simply to look, not to analyze. They were not to ask questions, they were not to wonder "why," even though they had sinned bitterly. They were to do nothing but look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), the One who identified with man's sin in order to bear our sins, die, and bury the old sin nature. Just look at the Substitute, and be healed. John 3:14 is a New Testa-

ment commentary on Numbers 21, which proves that this applies to us. The Word of God says in Isaiah 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." People think this speaks only of salvation, but the connotation is, "Look unto Me, and be delivered as you look." The word *saved* also means *delivered*. I don't care what the problem is. Don't analyze it. Look—and be delivered.

Satan has a program. He says, "Come over here just a moment. Don't you want patience and understanding? You want somebody to love you, don't you? Remember your past, when you started getting strange? People don't understand you, do they?" Here you are on the earth, talking about Adam, communing with the devil, talking about the past (which you can do nothing about). Even if you knew every reason why, it would do you absolutely no good at all. You would only have more knowledge about how evil you are. All you would be doing is learning more about what makes you so evil—and that's all it is: self-analysis.

Forsake the Ways of the Old Man

"Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." When you are

involved in self-analysis, you are not forsaking your thoughts. That is why Ephesians 5:11-12 says we should have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, for it is a shame even to speak of the evil they do because those are Adam's thoughts.

The whole plan of God is for you to forsake Adam's thoughts. The whole plan of modern psychiatry is for you to analyze Adam's thoughts. It is a trick of the angel of light to deceive you by your knowledge of good and evil because of your "need." You begin to rationalize it instead of crucifying Adam. While *your* answer is rationalization, God's answer is crucifixion. Satan tries to get you to preserve your life through his influence at the good part of the Tree of Knowledge so that you do not forsake your adamic thoughts.

Though You Fall Seven Times in a Day

Instead, we need to turn, look unto Jesus, and say, "Lord, I can have mercy toward myself to the measure that I have forsaken my sin not only in deed but in thought. I will not condemn myself for my sin, nor will I rationalize why I did it seven times in a day, but I will accept the cleansing and the purging. I am looking right at

You—and that's all I see, Lord!" He will reassure you that you are being delivered. There is no other way. Start walking. And though you are looking in your heart, begin walking with your eyes on Jesus. Though you turn a hundred different ways, keep your eyes fixed on the Lord.

Forsake the thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, and have no cloak for your sins. They were gone the moment you confessed them. In 2 Samuel 12:13, David said, "I have sinned." The prodigal son said in Luke 15:18, "I have sinned." Both of them got right, instantly. In Luke 5:8, Peter confessed his sinfulness, and he instantly got right. He didn't analyze why he sinned; he didn't analyze the degree of his sins. He just said, "I have sinned." And then he looked at Jesus.

You know what most of you do? You confess your sin and then dwell on it. It haunts you that you do it so often, but there is nothing in you that can stop—except by looking at Jesus. Nothing else can stop you. What about Judas Iscariot? Jesus didn't take Judas' life. Judas entered into self-destruction and took his own life—because of self-analysis. Judas recognized his sin, and he was right on, just like the others who confessed, "I have sinned." Some meant it and got right.

Others said it just because they were caught, and they went into a godless eternity. When Judas Iscariot said, "I have sinned," his self-analysis was proper. Obviously, he wouldn't have committed suicide if he hadn't been sorry. After he analyzed what he did, he was sorry. But that didn't save him. Self-analysis and sorrow and confession won't save you.

Confession is necessary to purge a guilty conscience, but we are saved by grace through faith that comes by looking unto Jesus. "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved." Look at the brazen serpent and be healed. That is what saves you and heals you. Nothing else does. Self-analysis and all the sincerity of professional analysis will never stop you from sinning. Unless you look unto Jesus, these methods will only condemn you and reveal how bad you are and the guilt you should have because of what you have done.

The Word of God always has something to say once you have Jesus Christ for your provision. Don't be hard on yourself, even though you hate what you have done. Just look at Jesus. Don't condemn yourself and put on a cloak for your sins. Look unto Jesus and be made whole.

Chapter Three

THE ANSWER FOR FAILURE

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

"He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18-19).

In Job 11:14, the Bible says, "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles." If you talk about your past sins, you are not putting it far away. The word used for *far* is the same word used for what God did with our sins. He cast them far away, into the depths of the sea. If we put our sins far away, we won't analyze them because they are buried. It is a shame to dwell on your failures, resurrecting what has been forgiven and forgotten.

The answer to any failure is this: Christ keeps us from falling (Jude 24), not self-analysis. Jesus Christ is able to make us stand (Romans 14:4), not self-analysis. We look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). We don't look within through self-analysis. This is the only way that the weakest person can ever have victory. It is the victory of 1 Corinthians 15:57-58 that makes us steadfast and immovable and always abounding.

Don't Dig Up the Past

Self-analysis repudiates the mind of Christ and excludes any opportunity to reign in grace. So, put the iniquities far from you. Don't let them dwell in your tabernacle. If you are able to dig up what you did years ago, then obviously you haven't had a healing of the memory, and the Blood hasn't cleansed your conscience (Hebrews 9:14). This reveals you don't believe God's promise that He remembers our sins no more (Hebrews 8:12). But if you have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16), then you, too, will remember your sins no more!

Ephesians 4:22 teaches us to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful

lusts." Put off means to put it out of sight so you can never find it again. Then, be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man so you can live.

This is my provision to experience the abundant life: Forsake all of the thoughts of Adam; have mercy toward myself as I look unto the Father of all mercies; and partake of the divine nature, which is grace (2 Peter 1:4). Stand in that grace (Romans 5:2); manifest that grace as a good steward (1 Peter 4:10); and rejoice always in that grace because Jesus is grace (Philippians 4:4). Give thanks for everything and in everything (Ephesians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:18) because of that grace; and then, be content in whatsoever state I am in (Philippians 4:11) because I am always looking unto Jesus.

Receive God's grace and set it against your own concept of the law and Adam, which normally would have dominion. Let God's grace settle the truth in your heart forever.

If you fail seven times in a day, you can receive forgiveness seven times in a day. Why? You are looking at mercy and not at self. Commune on your own bed, and "self" not! Day and night, meditate on Jesus Christ and all that He is (Joshua 1:8). Psalm 1:1-3 says that through med-

itation on the Word, you will prosper and have good success in whatever you do. You will bear much fruit because Christ always reproduces His life through His people.

There is no way for you to get out of sin, except through Jesus. There is no way for your emotional problem to change, except through Jesus. There is no way for secret sin to depart, except by confessing and repenting as you look unto Jesus in grace and love, having mercy on yourself.

Don't ever try to search your own heart. I'll tell you what your heart is like before you search it out: It is very wicked! But remember, you can confess and go home to the Father just as you are. He is not waiting to rebuke you. He is there, waiting, with a kiss, a robe, a ring, a fatted calf, and a lovely place to abide. You will not be a servant but a friend. Don't stay out in the far country, trying to give up your sin and analyzing why you did it.

"What makes me do this, Pastor?" It is your Adam nature.

The root of all our problems is in Adam. Do you want another answer? Do you want to play games out there in the center-field bleachers? The answer is Adam. "What do I do about it?"

See Christ. The trouble is that people don't love Jesus Christ enough to trust Him. Your problem is that you don't love Jesus—and now you are trying to analyze why you don't love Him. "But," you may ask, "what do I do about Adam?" The answer is Christ. "But it's too simple!" Yes. Now don't waste time.

Embrace the Promises

The choice is either Adam and self-analysis or Christ and friendship with His promises. Embrace the promises, love them, court them. Kiss the promises. Walk with the promises. Fellowship with the promises. Sing, talk, and rave about the promises. Praise God for the promises. Worship, preach, glory, and go forward in the promises. You have Christ and the promises, and you'll be amazed at what He does as you mature in your experience. You could go ahead and live in your past, or you can get rid of it the easy way—with an easy yoke and a light burden. After you are delivered, you'll say, "I can't believe He did it!" But He did.

Don't you allow anybody or any situation to take your eyes off Him; just look right at Jesus, and don't flinch. The Bible says He is the way, the truth, and the life. If you try to enter in any

other way, you are a thief and a robber (John 10:1-5). When you go the way of self-analysis, you are a thief and a robber. You may be very wise at the Tree of Knowledge but very ignorant because you don't have God's life. According to the book of Ecclesiastes, earthly wisdom didn't get Solomon anywhere. Resting in God's life is the conclusion of the matter.

CONCLUSION

Many people love to hear speakers who are very fluent and wise in the flesh. But the Bible says that in quietness and confidence is your strength (Isaiah 30:15). While some people are raving and doing a lot of talking—and they may even say something good in Adam because they talk so much—somebody else may be quiet and come up with the answer in just one sentence.

Did you ever wonder why, when you have tried to find someone to counsel you, no one was available? Maybe counseling would have been the worst thing for you at that time. Jesus Christ wants to teach you to lean on His everlasting arms, to be hid in the Body of Christ as a member in particular (1 Corinthians 12), to stand on your feet in Jesus, and to go forward. But, if, in the name of being a friend, someone tries to counsel you according to their own understanding, they are doing you an injustice. God won't even give the answer because He al-

ready is the answer.

Romans 5:12-21 gives the whole answer to self-analysis. In Adam all die, but in Christ all are made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22). In Adam, all became sinners; in Christ, all were made righteous. Sin reigned unto death; but, when you go to Calvary and accept the end of sin's reign through Christ's death on the Cross, then grace starts reigning unto eternal life by Jesus Christ forever—and that is where your analysis begins. It begins with grace, executed in eternal life, and you end up being occupied with Jesus Christ.

Self-Love Versus

Self-Occupation

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INTRODUCTION

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3).

Many people who are trying to be "good Christians" struggle with the problem of self-occupation. If they receive a sincere compliment that is meant to edify, they are quick to say, "Oh, it's not me. It's Jesus." They know that pride is sin, so they try to cover themselves in a false humility that is not at all attractive to people who need to see Christ.

True humility or lowliness relates to how we live before men. It does not mean we compare ourselves with one another, thinking less of self or more highly of self—it means we do not think of self! Meekness, on the other hand, is how we are before God: Instead of being self-conscious, if we are meek, we are God-conscious.

"The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way" (Psalm 25:9).

This booklet reveals how Satan attacks self-love, which we must have to properly love God and others. Christians need to be saturated with this principle. In the details of the angelic warfare, it is "Christ in *you*, the hope of glory" Colossians 1:27.

Chapter One

THE IMPORTANCE OF A HEAVENLY PERSPECTIVE

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:36-39).

God's Spirit revealed His capacity to produce life when Jesus became a Man whose humanity was conquered by death. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, was raised from the dead and now lives inside of every born-again believer. Christians can derive the life of the Spirit of God moment by moment because we live in the Kingdom of God in the reality of the present tense. In other words, it is not "who Jesus was" but "who He

is" that makes the difference in us.

The Problem of Loving Self

Yet, when the focus changes and a person becomes occupied with himself instead of Christ, his capacity to love God and to love his neighbor as himself is severely limited. Capacity speaks of capability, and it is vital for those who want to grow beyond living in the status quo of Christianity today. Our capacity will never grow beyond the divine ability that God imparts to us as we respond in faith to His Word.

Faith is derived by hearing the Word with an attitude of meekness and concentration through the Holy Spirit (Romans 10:17). When the Word first enters the receptive area of the brain, it is purely academic. Then, the letter of the Word becomes spiritual reality as it is processed in our human spirit, and the faith of Jesus Christ is imparted to our souls.

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

What do we have that we did not receive from God? And if we received it from God, why

would we glory over it in the flesh? What reason could there be for differences with one another? There should be *no* reason, because we all have the same divine provision to be able to think with the mind of Christ in the details of life—and His mind is not divided.

Full of Self or a Fool for Christ?

"Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

"For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto *the world*, and to *angels*, and to *men*.

"We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised" (1 Corinthians 4:8-10).

Today's Christians are talking about how to be full, how to be rich, and how to be successful in the terms of the world. But in 1 Corinthians 4:9, Paul said that the apostles were "set forth to be last," to be a spectacle unto the world, to angels, and to men. Paul acknowledged that all Christians have been appointed to take the last place on earth. The believers who are willing to

be last don't consider their own rights, but they serve by love.

Completely distinct from others, this special group of Christians have been chosen to be spectacles to the world (the cosmic system), to the angels (both the elect and fallen), and to men. It is in those laid-down lives that we see the divine love of God on trial.

"But What About My Reputation?"

Paul goes on to say that not only are they despised, but, "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

"And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

"Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

"I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

"Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of

me" (1 Corinthians 4:11-16).

"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less [you love me]" (2 Corinthians 12:15). Here we see two kinds of people in the Church of Jesus Christ. The first group is occupied with self and their reputation among men:

"What do people think of me?" is occupation "self."

"How am I doing in comparison to others?" Occupation "self."

"Do I look good, or at least, as good as I used to?" Occupation "self."

"Does my conscious mind tarry with negative energy that comes from the conversation of others? Am I listening to satanic remarks and foolish jesting from insensitive people just to preserve a relationship?" Occupation self.

The second group is occupied with Christ. They enjoy healthy emotions, even in the face of adversity. Are we willing to be as the filth of the world in the eyes of others, appointed unto death along with a few that will be the pivotal force to hold back judgment? In reality, except for a handful of *pleroma* believers who live in the fullness of Christ, there is no pivotal force today.

Do we really want to be the last? Do we

want to be the offscouring of the world? to go through persecution? to be reviled? Or, would that be the last thing we would be able to do because we are so preoccupied with ourselves?

The Greatest Sin

The greatest sin in all the world is not about drugs, as serious and destructive as they are. The greatest sin is not immorality, as bad as that is. The greatest sin is for a Christian to go his own way, preoccupied with self. This person presumes that he is okay with God, and presumption is the great transgression (Psalm 19:13).

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6*a*). The people who don't get victory over self-occupation will fight with it for the rest of their lives. They violate the Finished Work.

Tetelestai—"*It is finished!* It has come to its end in completion. It is over." This is the declaration of a confession because of a conversion through Calvary and communion with God that enlarges our capacity to be governed by God in every detail of life (John 19:30).

As God allows situations in our lives to create greater capacity for Him, we develop divine adaptability because we are teachable. Adapt-

ability is when the letter of the Word becomes spiritual life applied in circumstances as they occur. Teachability is a result of meekness (God-consciousness instead of self-consciousness) because we are Spirit-taught (Psalm 25:9). As we derive God's life through God-consciousness, we have divine ability to handle difficult situations skillfully, which is prudence (Proverbs 1:4).

People who are preoccupied with self are so caught up in superficial details that they easily overlook real areas of concern. "How do I look?" "How did I speak?" "I wonder what they thought. Do they really love me?" This is not charity. It is false humility which reveals a lack of meekness, and, therefore, a lack of teachability. It is preoccupation with self and getting caught up in all the ramifications of impulses that dictate to the unconscious, subconscious, and conscious state of the mind.

Chapter Two

PREOCCUPATION THAT LEADS TO DISASSOCIATION

Satan was preoccupied with himself when he privately analyzed the essence of God on the basis of his opinions regarding the plan of God. As the chief angel guarding the throne of God, he became angry when he overheard the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit discussing the plan of redemption that applied to fallen men but not to the angels (Acts 2:23). That anger turned to pride, which led to his destruction (Isaiah 14:9-19).

In Nehemiah 2, we see how Satan consistently disassociates from God's love. For example, Sanballat and Tobiah were exceedingly grieved "that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Nehemiah 2:10). In verse 19, they openly mocked the men who were rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem.

Sanballat and Tobiah took on four aspects of

Satan's attitude against God's authority. First, they separated from the Source; second, they disassociated from God's love; third, they rejected what love does; and fourth, they declared God's love unholy because it is given to sinners.* In Satan's opinion, if God's love can't be trusted, then people will be preoccupied with evaluating themselves.

In Genesis 3:5, Satan was saying to Eve, "Please see things my way, because I have facts." And with his facts, he tried to open their eyes to the "truth" about God so that Adam and Eve would disassociate themselves from God's love.

"Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked" (Proverbs 2:14). Can you imagine what is going on in the spirit realm? The devil rejoices with those who do evil. He celebrates and has parties against love. The verb "rejoice" reveals that he is happy doing evil, infecting the capacity of the saints. Satan wants to have people agree with him through human reasoning, based upon sight and feelings. Satan gets Christians to confess, "This is how I *really* feel," as they uncover people and open old wounds, all in the name of being released.

Furthermore, Satan loves to celebrate his victories against God's love. The devil can infect many husbands and wives as He attacks an entire city, targeting them with a specific approach. Without their knowing it, he concentrates on getting couples to disassociate from Calvary *while* they continue going to church. They use the Scriptures as a defense but without power. They have only a form of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5) without the power of God's Kingdom (1 Corinthians 4:20).

So here comes Satan attacking love, promoting disagreements, and celebrating when each side takes on a party spirit. He watches as people develop support groups of those who will surrender their ears to hear why they should support one side in the problem. Satan comes in with a hostile attitude. The chief priests attacked Jesus (Luke 20:1-2). The Sadducees attacked Peter and John (Acts 4:1-3), and the Jewish people who would not believe attacked the house of Jason (Acts 17:5).

This is such a necessary message, because the thoughts that run through the minds of some Christians often attack love. Oh, not all the time,

and perhaps not with the true *pleroma* Christians who have gone beyond maturity to live in the fullness of a life that is seated above. In Romans 16:17-18, however, Satan deceives others about God's love with misleading viewpoints. "By good words and fair speeches" he causes some Christians to err regarding the pure, unadulterated love of God.

What's more, he has a special army of convincers called *ekledonizeteo*.** In Jeremiah 29:8-9, these demons convince the believer that Satan's viewpoint is valid. With four particular phases, *ekledonizeteo* is the most powerful of Satan's armies. These demons are not in the seven-army conspiracy against cities, families, and individuals, but they are above them. As planners for the seven armies, these demons have the power to break people. They establish a plan by convincing a person to be preoccupied with thoughts outside of God's purpose. These people become convinced by hypnosis through demonic impulses, which produce feelings and rationalization against the Word of God.

Beware of an Evil Eye

In 2 Chronicles 32:15*a*, the Word of God says, "Let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade

you on this manner, neither yet believe him." Satan convinces Christians by using this powerful army of demons. At times they split up into small segments. Then, when the plan is to destroy marriages or a group of families in an area, they go to that city united. As in Galatians 3:1, these demons use hypnosis to bewitch people, which literally means "to charm by an evil eye." Once their victims are effectively hypnotized and well-prepared to carry on in a lie, the demons are free to leave them alone. Because of a busy schedule (plus the fact that they are *not* everywhere present), this army moves on to promote Satan's interpretation of love (which is limited *and* conditional) in the angelic conflict.

What do they do? They come in to convince an individual to go his own way in self-occupation. When this happens, many people do not guard their lips. They will say things like, "I came to this church with my gifts, and I haven't been used."

If you want to be used, become available to evangelize and win souls. Find people who are going through deep trials and who need to be comforted. Become preoccupied with others, and you won't worry about whether you are being used or not.

When self becomes possessive and engages time and attention upon self-preservation, it is idolatry. When someone is always reflecting a need, Christ does not change that person from glory to glory, because He doesn't have access to their soul. That person will have a victory for a day or two, but then will go right back into self-occupation.

When self-occupation becomes part of a cycle, a deadly demon has hypnotized the memory center. The frame of reference will reflect on the temptations of the cosmic system toward Christians in general. The memory center will become hypnotized again. These people may be fine for a week, but then they will be right back at it again, going through something. Of course, they need to connect with others who are sympathetic to support them in their sin.

Weighed Down in Self-Absorption

When a person becomes occupied with the self-life to the exclusion of others it is called "self-absorption." This is a process that involves receiving a wrong thought, admitting it in the mind, retaining it, and finally reflecting it in the attitude and countenance *before it is ever confessed*. That is self-absorption.

Unless it is dealt with and resolved, self-absorption produces self-defense, which prevents self from being crucified. Every believer must go through a personal Cross, or they will live in denial, trying to protect self from the consequences of wrong decisions. These people react at the same truth that tries to help them.

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the *error of the wicked*, fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Peter 3:17). Remember that a person who is deceived is being led away by a group of spirits, not people. "The error of the wicked" is referring to a spiritual battle—the conflict against grace. Notice that the eighteenth verse says, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

**In the* Septuagint *(a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament), the prefix* apo *before the verb* stateo *defines these four aspects of Satan's attitude.*

***For more about the demon armies, read the following booklets from Grace Publications by Pastor Carl H. Stevens:* Can Anyone Overpower the Power of Demons? *1997;* Dealing Precisely with Demons, *1998;* Exposing Satan's Armies, *1998.*

Chapter Three

THE QUALITY OF LOVE

"[Love] doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5).

Love "seeketh not *her* own," referring to the Church Body, the Body of Christ, now being prepared as the Bride of Christ. The world is a spiritual battleground, and two kingdoms are always initiating to people. Because God designed us to be responders in the spiritual realm, we submit either to Jesus Christ (the Head of the Body), or to Satan (the god of this world) and his armies. If the Body is responding to the proper initiation, she "seeketh not her own."

Christians who "seek not their own," simply live as unto the Lord. We receive conviction which leads to conversion, conversion to have communion, and communion so that we can communicate eternal life. That life is derived from grace principles we receive as we acclimate

to a living Word and become living epistles who manifest a living Christ—the reflection of God's work being performed inside of us.

Vanity

"Love seeketh not her own." Every need we could have is met in Him.

Our part is to edify one another in love and not walk as the world does, "in the vanity of their mind" (Ephesians 4:16-18). They are alienated from the life of God through ignorance, because of the blindness of their heart.

There is so much hidden vanity in the Church today. Beyond the definitions of "emptiness" and "worthlessness," several times in the Bible vanity means "affliction." In God's eyes, vanity toward one's self is sickening.

But, the Christian who is filled with God's love does not seek his own, trying to satisfy himself. He realizes he will only be on earth for a very short time; therefore, his purpose on earth is not to be fulfilled by what the world offers nor satisfied with what the world gives. Nor is he a "people's person" who seeks to satisfy other people's flesh by compromising his convictions. With proper teaching and communication, every one of us can become Christians who love our-

selves and others because we let God love us first.

Provoked? Edify!

Love is not easily provoked. One army of demons called *Epeseisen* has a specific purpose, which is to provoke the Christian and sow seeds of negativity, reaction, and irritation by provoking. These demons will provoke a parent or a teacher to react to a child who is causing problems. Though the adult's initial response may be right, he must not be provoked to the point where the love of God does not rule in his heart. We need to deal with our wrong reactions at the Cross so they don't become a root of bitterness.

Being provoked is the opposite of being edified. Through the divine stimulation of thoughts inspired through the Holy Spirit, we can be a provision for people who are having problems caused by self-occupation. Instead of reacting, we begin to edify them to create a capacity for self-love or to penetrate the veil that obstructs it.

The power of God is released through human vessels—that is part of our eternal purpose on earth: We are being conformed to Christ's image as we glorify God and build up the Body of Christ (Romans 12).

"Not easily provoked" means that instead of becoming irritated with people and releasing negative energy in any form of reaction, we can privately edify them in our hearts through a prayer of intercession, and remain sincerely oriented in God with a communication of love.

Remember, we can be a channel of communication for God, a manifestation of His presence. As agents of His spiritual Kingdom, we can be used to produce a life that isn't otherwise known or experienced on earth—God's risen life that rests in the Ascension.

"Whatsoever Things Are Lovely… Think on These"

Love "thinketh no evil." Romans 16:17-18*a* speaks of people who are filled with self-occupation. It says to avoid those who cause divisions and offenses "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned….For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." But verse 19*b* says, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." That means, don't think of evil but only divine good.

Don't be occupied with evil even when it is going on. Deal with evil biblically in your heart,

but be occupied with divine good (which is the provision) instead of being occupied with the problem. Love thinks no evil.

"And Again I Say, Rejoice!"

Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6).

We must be filled with subjective love for people, even when we cannot have objective relationships. There are times when we are tempted to become sentimental in our relationships when we ought to be biblical. That means if Satan is controlling the person who is the object in our relationship, all we can do is give them mercy (by not giving them what they deserve). But we cannot have fellowship, because if they are involved with evil, there is nothing in them to fellowship with.

Self-occupation is often reinforced by relevant righteousness, comparing self with others. "Am I as spiritual as they are? Am I *more* spiritual?" Eventually, we develop a form of self-righteousness because of pride, the root of Satan's deception. And pride comes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18)—all because we did not love ourselves as God loved us. We did not see our value as broken vessels.

Self-love is wonderful when it isn't filled with self. Self-worth is precious when it repeats what God says about our new life and our new potential. Self-affirmation is not self-deceit when it honors the Word of God. And self-awareness is not self-absorption when it's done because we hunger and thirst after a divine provision. Let's have God's estimation of our value: Each one of us is worth the price God paid with the Blood of His Son.

CONCLUSION

Relevant righteousness. Preoccupation with self. So many Christians are completely outside of God in their experience—outside of the Spirit and outside of truth that sets us apart to grow and become mature in the Kingdom of God.

The only way we will be firmly established in our position as beloved sons and daughters of the King is by hearing, receiving, and believing what God says about us in His Word:

"Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (Song of Solomon 4:7). "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3*b*). "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Keep going forward. Remember who you are. When you fall, get up, shake off the dust,

and go on. A person who loves himself as God loves him is far more available to the plan of God for his life because he is secure. He is not caught in the snare of self-preservation that follows his attempts at trying to die to self. Remember? "It is finished!" Now, agree with God and go forward in His plan.

Set Free by the Blood of Christ

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

As men, we cannot identify with animals. We can enjoy animals, and we can be blessed by them, but though we share similar characteristics, we will never be able to fully relate to them. As believers, we can only identify in the sense of God's essence.

An essential characteristic of God is life. In all of creation there is life, and all life comes from God. But of all living things, He made only man in His image. And though we have all fallen short of God's original design, He still chose to identify with us by coming to earth as a man and dying on the Cross for our sins.

In this booklet, we will discover how man's biggest problem—sin—is the thing that keeps us from completely identifying with God. More importantly, we will find how God, in His desire to restore our fellowship, found a way to set us free of the effect of sin through the cleansing power of His perfect, precious Blood.

Chapter One

ULTIMATE IDENTIFICATION

Aperson said to me recently, "People tell me I have a guilt complex. How can I get over it?"

That person didn't expect the answer I gave. I looked him right in the eye and I said, "You don't have a guilt complex. You're just plain guilty!"

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." This is what the Bible says, in Romans 3:23. But what does it mean?

The glory of God is His nature. We all have sinned, therefore we have all come short of God's nature. God's nature is lovingkindness, compassion, and longsuffering. So, the problem with mankind is simple: We come short. We have missed the mark, failing to meet the standards of God's nature.

All have sinned and come short of being like God. That is what it means to miss the mark. "Missing the mark" doesn't mean sin as we

think of it—as something wrong we have done. Missing the mark is coming short of ever being what God is, far more than anything that we could ever imagine.

The reason God's people have so many problems is that they still have an old sin nature. When a person lives with an angry temperament, it is because of sin. Even if he tries to cover it up, a person with an old sin nature that has not been crucified will eventually become angry. The old sin nature is there to be troubled. Wherever there is trouble, it reveals that sin is still reigning.

When a person confesses, "I got so upset this morning!" he might as well have said, "I let my old sin nature have control this morning."

Because of sin, a person often finds it hard to forgive. Because of sin, a man or a woman can confess, "I do not love my spouse." But it has nothing to do with the other party. It is because of sin. Sin does not want to submit to the death of the Cross. It is only through death that Resurrection life can reign in us.

The Problem behind the Problem

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest

freely eat:

"But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).

From that day, sin (singular)—S-I-N—that is, the old sin nature, would reign.

The reason you feel 'funny' around certain people is this: Sin in you is meeting those people, and sin makes you feel strange around Spirit-filled people. Because of sin, you do things that you know are wrong. What makes you react? It is your sin nature. Your sin nature cannot be controlled to make you happy, so you get depressed living with your old sin nature.

But sin can only reign unto death. And when death takes over sin, sin's reign is over.

The Wages of Sin

"Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

God said in His Word that the soul that sins shall die. Sin can only be dealt with through death. The first death that occurred was the death of the human spirit, which is the only means by which the Holy Spirit can communi-

cate to and through men.

When Adam and Eve became self-conscious instead of God-conscious, they tried to cover themselves with fig leaves. They felt uneasy in God's presence. But they didn't need fig leaves. Fig leaves could not take care of the problem. There needed to be a death.

As God drew near to address the issue, Adam and Eve were filled with shame and with guilt. So, besides covering themselves with fig leaves, they also hid among the trees (Genesis 3:7-8). But God knew where they were.

Because of guilt and shame, people find things to hide behind. You would be surprised at what people hide behind today. Adam and Eve hid behind the trees, and they covered themselves with fig leaves. But now they were spiritually dead. At that point, in Genesis 3:21, the Lord very beautifully taught Adam and Eve about the only remedy for their sin. He declared, "I cannot accept your fig leaves. The earth is now under a curse, and anything that is cursed is unacceptable in My sight.

"Besides that, as large as those leaves are, as soon as you pick them, they will begin to shrivel up and die. In no time at all, your nakedness will be exposed again, and there will be no end

to your predicament. You will spend your lives trying to cover up with layers of dried-up fig leaves, but you will still be guilty. You have to die!"

Do you know what your fig leaves are? Drawing into depression, drawing into insecurity, withdrawing into yourself, hanging around the wrong crowd: These behaviors accomplish nothing. You don't need counseling. You need death. Sin cannot reign in the soul that dies daily (1 Corinthians 15:31). Instead, grace reigns through righteousness by one, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:21).

Sin cannot reign when it has gone through death. It is impossible.

Perhaps you know someone who is an alcoholic. How does he get victory? Through death to his sin nature. It is not death to the alcohol but to the sin nature. His problem is not the alcohol; his problem is sin.

If a man has a tremendous problem around the opposite sex, the problem isn't women; the problem is sin. Can you understand that? If he were to do away with sin, he would not have the problem with women, right? But if he were to avoid women altogether, he would still find some other way to sin. He might put some fig leaves on and go to church, but God says, "I

have to punish sin."

The Nature of the Old Man

It is interesting how quickly some people react with the least amount of provocation. Something inside causes them to drop their guard, sending them into an emotional nose dive. That "something" is the old sin nature.

I have a very high regard for the principle of confidentiality. "Never repeat a thing." That is my motto, except for the purpose of receiving godly counsel. Why? When you give a sinner something to repeat, you will have sinners repeating things. They do not hear it right, and they do not tell it right, though they sincerely think they understand. Now you are in a real mess. You didn't say what they claim that you said. You won't believe their interpretation of it all. The situation becomes very confusing, because now sin is abounding while the old sin nature is interpreting the sincerity of your communication.

God said, "Adam, I have to punish sin. You cannot deal with your sin by putting on fig leaves. That will not take care of your guilt. You hoped the fig leaves would come between you and Me—is that right, Adam?"

"Yes."

"I've got a better way. Since the wages of sin is death, I will kill an animal. I have to keep My word; My word is truth. Blood will be shed. But instead of your blood, I am going to provide a substitute."

When an animal was killed in an Old Testament sacrifice, except for the portion that was sprinkled on the altar, all the blood had to be buried in one place. It could not be scattered, because the blood is considered sacred. It was a type of the Blood of the Lamb—precious Blood, spoken of in 1 Peter 1:18 and 19.

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, made a way for every human being to be released from their sin and guilt. We are set free by the Blood of Christ, and we must never become familiar with the sacredness of this Blood.

Chapter Two

COVERED BY THE BLOOD

"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skin, and clothed them.

"And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

"Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken" (Genesis 3:21-23).

Consider the Source

"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

"And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:47-49).

When He saw their situation, immediately God saw to it that an animal was killed. Then, He covered Adam and Eve with its skin. Later, Abel received a gift from God, a gift of life, a lamb. Then he took the gift and presented it to God. But his brother Cain brought vegetables to God. The vegetables had come out of the ground, which was cursed (Genesis 3:17). Thus, Cain brought to God a gift that was unacceptable—a gift that fell short of God's requirements. When his offering was rejected, Cain was angry.

Cain said, "I will not receive a gift from God. I will give a gift to God that I produced by the sweat of my brow. Here are my vegetables. I give them to You, Lord. They have value. I could eat them, but I am going to give them to You." And God was angry at Cain for bringing something to Him that was cursed.

The Lamb of God, which was slain from the foundation of the world, was God's gift to man. This Lamb doesn't just cover sin. He *takes away* sin. Thank God, the Blood of the Lamb takes away sin. And now, between me and God is a Lamb, and that Lamb is a gift from God. I have a gift from God, and what do I present to God? I present the Blood of that Lamb.

In the Garden of Gethsemane the Lord Jesus

said, "I offer Myself as You have told Me. I will offer Myself on the Cross" (see Hebrews 9:14).

Beginning in the book of Genesis, lambs were brought to the altar. Those lambs could not offer themselves, so they were brought by others. But the Lamb of God? Yes, His Father sent Him, but this Lamb came on His own.

The Blood is between us and God. And through the Blood of the Lamb, we are cleansed and purged, even though we don't experience its cleansing when sin is reigning.

Do you know why you do not love properly? Do you know why you do not have the right feelings toward your spouse? It is because sin is between you and God, experientially. It is not that you are a bad person, or that you live recklessly. But any time sin isn't dead, we reproduce Adam.

So if I say, "I don't like that person," I might as well say, "I am living in my old sin nature today, and I don't like that person." It simply reveals that I need to be exalted above somebody else. I am saying, "I will not reveal the Lamb. I will give him sin—which is self."

"Well, do you want me to go around giving the Lamb's spirit to *everybody*? What do you think I am?" That attitude reveals that what is

between me and God is *me*.

God says, "Now that you have been raised from the dead spiritually, present your bodies a living sacrifice." Instead of a dead sacrifice, we offer ourselves, a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

The Power of a Living Sacrifice

Now, why does God ask us to present ourselves as a living sacrifice? Jesus Christ died as a sacrificial Lamb for our sin. Now we are made alive by Jesus Christ and His death. Therefore, we present ourselves alive—a living sacrifice. We have the same Holy Spirit indwelling us, but we did not have to die. He died for us.

When a man begins to realize the power of perfect identification through the Blood that washes away our sin and sets us free, he learns how to handle guilt. He realizes that what God gives him did not come out of the earth.

When a born-again believer goes through situations and he reacts in his earthy sin nature, *he* is not cursed, but what he is living in is cursed. Though he hates his predicament, he cannot get out of it. Every type of emotion comes over him because he is fulfilling the curse.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

When you get depressed, you are living in bondage, under a curse. But when you are liberated with joy, you are living in God's strength. Instead of withdrawing and crying over problems, you need to look at the big picture. What can you do about circumstances? Why hold on to circumstances and let circumstances overwhelm you with problems? You do it because you won't listen to what God wants to say.

What is between you and God? It is the Blood of a sacrificial Lamb. That means that you are clean, you are purified by faith (Acts 15:9).

Someone with ongoing personal problems is established in Adam's sin nature. But when we leave that establishment to be established in the grace of God, we are living in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free (Galatians 5:1).

People who have been delivered by the Cross to live inside the Kingdom of Jesus Christ are established in the grace of God. What makes the difference in their lives? They agree that the

Blood is between them and God. The life of God is in them—the life that made the flowers and every living thing. Even worms fulfill what they were created for. They may not have complex brains, but they do what they were created to do. Anyone who has rich soil in their garden beds will tell you it is so.

Yet, a man may go around not knowing what he was created for, and he ends up doing things that animals won't do. Your pet cat would never choose to smoke pot. No dog went to the bar last night and got drunk. Even if it's a bad dog, a wild dog, dogs live in what they were created for—to be dogs, that's all. Not drunken dogs, just dogs, because God didn't create animals to drink or to take drugs.

Every child of God needs to understand that God is Love, and Love became the One who would be unloved. Furthermore, all who represent His love will be unloved (John 15:18-19). Still, His love continues unfailingly as He says from the Cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Why do people have bad days? Anything outside of God's life is not a good day.

"Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that

cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin" (Isaiah 30:1).

What an amazing thing, to have a covering that comes from a Lamb. So many Christians get counseled, but not of God's Spirit. They have a covering, but it is not of Him. They add sin to sin. In the end, they go down to Egypt for help.

What does it mean "they add sin to sin"? People tend to add something out of the old sin nature to take care of the sin they just committed. This kind of chain-sinning cannot be covered except through the Lamb.

Covered with Fig Leaves, Hiding in the Trees

When the high priests prepared animals for the sacrifice, the blood had to be poured out of the animal—all of it. Certainly, there is nothing significant in the blood of animals. Still, the preciousness of an animal's blood is in the fact that it was their life. Animals cannot live without the blood; their blood brings them life. Therefore, it is precious, because it represents life.

Without blood in our bodies, we could not live. And though our blood is not sacred (as God's blood is) because of sin, still it is precious in that we know we could not live without it.

But far greater for us is knowing that with-

out the shedding of blood, you and I could not have eternal life. That is why everything about the Blood of the Lamb is more precious than silver or gold or anything on earth. The Blood is between God and us. And more than just covering all our sins, the Blood of the Savior took away all our sins.

If we could simply cover our sins, we could always uncover them later. And God knows that given the right circumstances, any one of us would eventually uncover something that we could have kept covered.

So what did He do? He said, "I am not going to stop with simply covering your sins; I am going to take them away."

Have you ever noticed that in the Old Testament, men's sins are mentioned, sometimes in detail? But the apostle Paul would not tell you what his sins were, because he understood that they were not just covered; they were taken away! Covered under the Old Testament, taken away in the New Covenant at the Cross.

Chapter Three

NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD

If our sins have been taken away and we have received Jesus Christ as our Savior, we will realize that the Blood is our precious provision from God, and we need a constant cleansing by that Blood.

When we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ his Son keeps on cleansing us (see 1 John 1:7).

As long as we are walking in the light, every moment the Father is cleansing us by the Blood of His Son and purging us through the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:14). It is constant and it is complete. God keeps right on purging and cleansing, dealing with thoughts and projections that come in through the unconscious mind. There is a continual cleansing flow of the Blood of Jesus Christ through every part of the mind—conscious, subconscious, and unconscious—as

long as we walk in the light.

The moment we do not walk in the light, the Blood is still efficacious, having saved us forever. It is still between us and our sins, positionally. But experientially, we will be living in Adams establishment, and we will go back to "sin (singular)" in the old sin nature.

Many people who do not commit terrible overt sins can still live in personal sin twenty-four hours a day, in Adam's old sin nature. They don't even acknowledge it, because they live in self-denial.

The problem is not with people, or circumstances, or your past, or what your father did, or what your brother did. It wasn't what your teacher did or what happened at your job. It wasn't any of those things. It was what sin did. Sin did the damage.

People can only do so much to us, but sin has done its damage. It is sin that caused the original damage and continues to damage people without ever defining it. It is sin having been thrust into the human race that has done all the damage. Therefore, your problem isn't first to get right with your father, or to get right with your mother or with your brother. Your need is to go to the Cross and get right with God, once

you recognize you have been living in your old sin nature.

Satan needs to have an instrument in order to use you. And the only instrument he has for his armies to manipulate is the old sin nature. If he can activate the old sin nature, his goal is to let it reign without death. As a result, people do everything to be counseled out of their problems, except to bring sin to the Cross.

Get the Facts Straight

You say, "But that guy is the problem; he's the one." In fact, you are thinking of sins (plural), but God is thinking of sin (singular)—*personal* sin. He is describing our nature, not what we do with it.

The alcoholic, the drug addict, the arrogant man, the proud man, and the religious man—of all the people in the world, sin has had so many different effects. It is possible for a man to put on fig leaves and be a good husband while he is hiding behind the trees. Yes indeed, he can have a nice quiet life in the trees.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

We have made a point that in the Old Testament sacrifices, the blood was sacred; no one could partake of it. The blood was buried and not scattered. Through these details, God is teaching us about the sacredness of the Blood.

When the Blood of Christ covers us, we are totally cleansed—spirit, soul, and body. We do not have to be condemned to die in order to pay for our sins. And the precious Blood of Christ keeps on cleansing us. What a magnificent life! I am not the one who keeps on cleansing myself. The Blood does it. I do not bring gifts to God to appease Him. Rather, I avail myself of the cleansing power of the Blood. This is God's gift to me.

Why was Cain so angry? Because God wouldn't accept his sacrifice of vegetables. God will not accept any efforts of the natural man. If He did, there would be no need for Calvary, and we, of all men, would face a hopeless, Godless eternity.

The Activity of the Cleansing Process

It's a very beautiful thing to be totally cleansed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, isn't it? We may fail God and acknowledge it before Him. But immediately, we must also acknowl-

edge God's provision. It is vital to keep that Blood flowing by having a spiritual application of eternal life. I let it go into my conscience and cleanse me so I can, in a moment of time, be totally liberated into the freedom that comes from divine emancipation.

"As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36).

Only believe.

"What do I do in this case?"

Only believe.

"But I can't believe."

That is one place I can't help you. I cannot add anything to God's provision. I can only tell you what it is. And what is God's provision? Only believe.

Why did He say "only"? Because, that is exactly what we have to do. "Only believe"—nothing more.

"What do I do about…."

Be practical. Do whatever you can. Pray first. But only believe.

Why should a situation that you cannot control take away your faith? Let your faith take away the negativity of the situation, even if it cannot take away the situation.

Revelation 1:5 and 6 says that Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, the prince of the earth. "…Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own [precious] blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Picture yourself this moment, totally washed with His Blood. Consider what that really means—to be washed clean as can be, comforted us with the oil of the Holy Spirit and clothed in His righteousness. We have truly been set free.

CONCLUSION

Think of these four words from John 15:3: *Now you are clean.*

It is so amazing to be free—free because we have been cleansed from any feeling of guilt. Though we are guilty, we have been made clean, once and for all, by the precious Blood that saved us. Moment to moment in our experience we can avail ourselves of its cleansing power.

Can you imagine what it is like to go from day to day without guilt or shame? Can you picture not being self-conscious about your personality or about anything you have ever done? When you are filled with God-consciousness, you are not self-conscious. You do not need to cover yourself with layers of shriveling leaves. Rather, you can put on Jesus Christ and be covered with His perfect robe of righteousness. Accept the fact that you have been set free by the Blood of Christ—the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Set Free from

Religious Concepts

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

I once read a letter written by a man who committed suicide in prison. He said that every night after the last radio in the cell block was turned off, the memory of his crimes would bring on stifling guilt to his heart.

As long as there was noise, he could survive. But in the quiet, condemnation filled his soul. "When it is silent in the prison, my sins visit me," he wrote and then he took his life.

I wept as I read the story. I wept because this man never found out that Jesus Christ would have been his friend forever. Jesus paid for all of his sins and washed them away with His blood.

This story represents an extreme example of the power of failure and defeat in some people's lives.

The thing that worries me—and the reason for this booklet—is that some Christians are held under the weight of their failures and defeats. Some churches and organizations teach about

the Finished Work of the Cross of Christ, but then they go on to practice something quite opposed to it. Believers who fail are placed under a form of probation and are often restricted in the ways they can serve God.

These pages will reveal that even though people fail, the love of God never fails. My prayer is that these truths will set you free from concepts formed by men.

Chapter One

GOD USES THE USELESS

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

"God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2).

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

"What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Romans 6:14-15).

I am weary with much of the way people represent Jesus Christ today on the earth. In Luke 15:2, the Pharisees said that Jesus "receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." That is true. He did do that. They called Him gluttonous and maligned Him as a "friend of publicans and sinners" and a "winebibber."

What these characterizations miss is the fact that while Jesus was a friend of sinners, He was also separate from them (Hebrews 7:26). He

knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), yet He commended His love toward us "in that while we were yet sinners, He died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The projection and evaluation that Jesus Christ somehow excuses sin is wrong. He hated sin, so much so that He gave His life for us to save us from our sins. His death took care of the sin issue once and for all.

Therefore, the sin issue is settled between the Savior and those He has saved. This is what I want to focus on.

Remade by the Master Potter

"And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

"Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

"O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel" (Jeremiah 18:4-6).

There is a feeling among some Christians, especially certain leaders in various denominations, that those who have sinned are second-rate citizens in the plan of God. These leaders

actually think that because they have not sinned in a certain way, they are better than someone who has.

God loves righteousness and hates iniquity (Psalm 45:7). God never planned for a person to sin just so that He could bless him (see Psalm 5:4). Yet, in a mystical way, by His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, God will take every single thing that happens, and He will work it together for good for the Christian who fails (Romans 8:28). The Lord who is all knowing, all powerful, and everywhere present will make something good out of a bad situation yet without violating His justice.

This is an amazing truth.

Jesus Doesn't Throw People Away

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

"He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

"He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he

have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isaiah 42:1-4).

By the river Jordan, all kinds of reeds grow. In the past, shepherd boys would take reeds, poke holes in them, and create pipes. They would play notes and the sheep obeyed the sounds of the music. If a reed was bent or bruised, the shepherd would throw it away.

During those days, people would use a piece of flax placed in a bowl of oil to provide light in the house. Sometimes the oil would run dry, and the smoking flax would create an unpleasant odor and fill the house with thick smoke.

These two illustrations indicate that Jesus does not get discouraged with people's lives, and He never wants to throw them away. Jesus does not fail people who seemingly have failed beyond repair.

Christ paid for everyone's sins, and He was judged by God the Father. Instead of judging us, God the Father judged the Son for our sins. God hates sin, and He cannot look upon it, but He died for sinners. Every one of our sins was placed upon the Lord Jesus.

We will not take up that bruised reed and use it again.

But Jesus can.

We will not use that smoking flax.

But Jesus will.

We might say, "You can never be used as you were because of what you have done."

Is that something Jesus would say? No! Some preachers may say this, but Jesus never will.

The Pharisees hated Jesus because He always hung around sinners. But Jesus wasn't excusing their sins. No, He wanted to forgive them and make them brand-new.

When a Christian fails, Jesus doesn't say, "You are a backslider, therefore you will never be the same again. You cannot do the things you used to do."

You cannot find this in the Bible, because that does not represent the character of God.

Chapter Two

HOW GOD MAKES A CHRISTIAN GREAT

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

"To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

In 2 Samuel 11 and 12, we find the story of David's terrible sin with Bathsheba. The first child born to them died. But then came another child. "We will call him Solomon," David said. But God said, "Solomon is a good name, but I want you to call him Jedidiah." That was a much better name—Jedidiah means "most beloved of God."

Imagine what must have been going through David's mind. "I do not comprehend

this. Lord, do You mean You are going to make this child king, even after my sin with Bathsheba and Uriah, her husband? You want this child to be known as most beloved of God?"

Everything that went on in David's life was the Father's business. It was between David and the Lord.

The Lord Jesus Christ wants to be known as a friend of sinners, not a friend of religion. There are a lot of religious folks out there, and I know a few of them. They preach a message they cannot live up to. They legislate righteousness in the flesh, and they cannot understand the principle of the bruised reed and the smoking flax.

Please do not misunderstand this. We have established the fact that God hates sin. Still, the people who have failed the most are the ones who have received forgiveness and have accepted the grace of God for their lives. These are the greatest Christians today.

We are not to go out and sin just so we can be redeemed and be called "great." That would be presumptuous, and that is the great transgression (Psalm 19:13). That is never in God's plan.

What is in God's plan, however, is mercy.

He deals with us according to mercy (Psalm

119:124). His mercy satisfies us (Psalm 90:14). With mercy He will lead us (Isaiah 49:10). He desires mercy to be at work in our lives (Hosea 10:12). Mercy rejoices against judgment (James 2:13). Mercy follows us all the days of our lives (Psalm 23:6). And twenty-six times in Psalm 136, the psalmist wrote that His mercy endures forever.

The thing that breaks a sinner's heart is when he finally understands that when he is down, God is with him.

Commit to Restoration

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me" (Micah 7:8).

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Several years ago, a woman came to my office and said that she was a lesbian. She cried and cried because she could not get herself out of her sin.

I made a commitment to pray with her morning, noon, and night for a week. She often called me on the phone and we would pray for

her deliverance. “Thank God that you are able to be honest with me,” I told her, “because now you are serious about deliverance.” Within a week, she was brand-new. Today, she is a precious woman of God, serving on the mission field with her husband and family.

What happened? She found that Jesus was the friend of sinners. Those old temptations do not come back to her. She is madly in love with Jesus and madly in love with her husband.

How We Can Help God

Another woman found out that her husband was having an affair. She moved into a separate bedroom and filed for divorce. God woke her up at the three o’clock in the morning and spoke to her heart, “I am restoring your husband.”

She didn’t like that at first. “You can restore him all you want, but I am not going to take him back.”

“Really?” God whispered to her. “I thought you might like to help Me. I am going to restore him with you or without you. I just thought you might like to help.”

That last part really got to her. Oh, did it get to her! She fell to her knees and received the power of the Holy Spirit for forgiveness. She

went right to her husband, woke him up, and said, "I am joining God in His plan to restore our marriage."

Today, this couple is on the mission field. He is a pastor of a great church, all because his wife joined God in the restoration business.

"For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after" (Jeremiah 30:17).

Chapter Three

GOD'S RESTORATION BUSINESS

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness

"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

"Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:5-8).

Here is a pastor who fails and then admits that he had failed. He did not have to admit his sin, but he did, and he was kicked out of his church. "You can come back and maybe we will let you drive the Sunday school bus," the leaders told him. That was wonderful, right?

No. That is *wrong*. That is not forgiveness.

God makes a Christian into a brand-new vessel just as much as He does when a person

first gets saved. A Christian who fails doesn't have a record.

Read over and ponder Romans 4:5-8.

A Christian who fails doesn't have a record that follows him after his failure. God is after men and women who will receive a gift of repentance and restoration. He desires that I would let His love flow through me, so I can have the same love He has for the one who has failed. He wants me to join with Him in the process of restoration—quietly, meekly, and graciously (Galatians 6:1).

Forgiven Much, Loving Much

"And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

"Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

"My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but

to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:44-47).

Oh, when we get to heaven, how I want to see this story replayed.

Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to dinner. A prostitute came in crying and fell at Jesus' feet. She washed His feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed them with oil.

Simon did not understand the love of God toward the sinner, and he began to judge Jesus for letting a sinner touch Him. The end of the story is that Jesus declared, "She loves much because she has been forgiven much."

Those who have been forgiven much, love much. Oh, how they love Jesus!

There are many churches where godly men who have served God faithfully but who have been divorced are not allowed to serve as pastors. We teach what the Bible says—that married people ought to stay married (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). We want troubled marriages to make it, by the mercy and grace of God. Each week, we have a class on relationships, teaching people how to make them work and how to keep their commitments.

But please understand that a divorcee is not a second-rate citizen in the Kingdom of God. He

or she is just as much a new creature as anyone else. The old things in their lives have passed away. People who judge them slander with gossip against the divine supernatural forgiveness of the love of God.

Failure Is Never Final

"Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem" (Acts 13:13).

"And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

"But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

"And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus" (Acts 15:37-39).

John Mark was a young man related to Barnabas. He started off traveling with the apostle Paul, writing things down and copying letters for the group. He could not handle the pressure, so he left. Paul was displeased with Barnabus' decision to take John Mark with him, so much that there was an argument between Paul and

Barnabas.

Barnabas, whose name means comforter, wanted restoration for Mark, but Paul would not restore him at that time. This opened the door for Mark to spend time with Peter.

Barnabas suggested that Mark go see Peter. *A Dictionary of the Bible*, by Hastings, says that Mark was a companion to Peter toward the end of the apostle's life and he wrote the Gospel of Mark to preserve his master's teaching.

Think of some of the conversations Peter and Mark could have had.

"Mark, I cursed and denied Jesus and kept right on disbelieving," Peter may have said. "Still, the Lord restored me to preaching (John 21:15). I preached the first sermon at Pentecost (see Acts 2:14). Yes, I did curse him, and I wept bitterly. Still, He brought me back, restored me, and used me. Young man, you are going to be mightily used for God. Take careful notes from me as we minister together."

The Gospel of Mark was written by the same young man that Paul did not want around. He thought that he could not trust Mark, but God would change Paul's heart. In 2 Timothy, Paul was in jail and facing his execution. In this difficult time, Paul asked for John Mark to come and

comfort him (2 Timothy 4:11).

John Mark was mightily used of God, because God did not hold his failure against him.

Just Come unto Jesus

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

"Labor" speaks of someone who has failed repeatedly. "Heavy laden" refers to people who been burdened because of the guilt trips that others have piled upon them.

None of that matters to Jesus. He is in the business of taking you just as you are. Yoke up with Him and find rest. Take His yoke upon you. Learn of Him. His burden is light and His yoke is easy.

Jesus is in the business of making you something you have never been. It is not His business to remember the things you have done.

"I have forgiven and I have forgotten," Jesus says to us. "On the Cross, with my blood, I paid for what you did, and I have done away with it

so that it never comes back."

The truth is that Jesus Christ takes a broken and bruised reed and a smoking flax that appears to be useless for anything, and He restores them both. "I am in the business of blessing you and using you because I have forgiven you forever." This is Jesus' word to us. "Just come to me. Come on! Come to Me."

CONCLUSION

Let me ask you a question: Does this type of message make you want to sin? You will fall, but it is not this message that will make you fall. This message makes you want to follow after God and to rest in His process of making you grow.

I am tired of hearing about churches that relegate people to second-rate status when they have failed. Oh, this kind of activity makes me so mad. These are citizens of heaven; people bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ—my Savior and your Savior. God, however, will see to it that redeemed men and women cannot be made less than they are.

Jesus is the friend of publicans and sinners; but He is not the friend to the self-righteous Pharisees.

Worship the Savior who forgives, forgets, restores, and renews, again and again. Jesus Christ is our Head, and He loves it when we

speak the truth about who He is and how He loves. Love Him with all of your heart, and thank God that this is the message that has changed lives forever, everyday, all over the world.

Severing Attachments

to Evil

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INTRODUCTION

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

The Word of God is very quick and very powerful. It demands our undivided attention. We never know when we will experience supernatural phenomena, as we have seen God work so often. At those times, where hearts are open, there is not only a supernatural manifestation of the Word but also a supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit.

Through this kind of operation, we can become attached to the Lord, totally delivered and detached from satanic deceptions, seductions, and attachments. I am so thankful for those who take a stand with the Word of God in their lives. I don't mean that we never fail. Certainly, we all

fall and need to rebound—that's not the issue. The issue is to *draw near*. Even though I have isolated failures, I continue to draw near. And as long as I am drawing near, I will have victory if I really want it. This booklet will reveal how each and every Christian can be free from the bondage of satanic attachments—free, indeed, through the Word.

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Often, a woman who loves God with all her heart finds herself in a relationship with someone who is in a process of *retrogression*. That person has gone beyond backsliding and is now deceived and in an arrogant complex. She thinks she will win him, but that isn't going to happen.

My suggestion for dealing with that kind of relationship is: don't get involved in the first place! But if you are married and in this kind of relationship, stay in it. And, while you honor your partner as much as you can, remember that the other side of it is tough love.

In any case, people who are in the process of retrogression are infected with evil. Because of the insidious nature of infections, it is vital that we understand the problem of evil to be able to guard ourselves.

I will list several points as premises for this discussion on the problem of evil:

First, the Lord Jesus Christ never paid for Satan's sins.

Next, the Lord never paid for the sins of the demonic kingdom.

Jesus Christ *has* paid for the sins of the whole world.

Only as many as truly receive Him, however, become the sons of God.

Jesus Christ paid for all of our *personal sins* (1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6), becoming sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

In order to be right with God, we need a thorough understanding of *rebound*: We must name our sins and let God turn us as we walk in the light of repentance, having our faculties and volition cooperate in submission to Him. Then we isolate the sin and go on—cleansed and purged.

On the other hand, *evil* has never been paid for. It is important to understand that when Christians enter into evil, God has not paid for what they are doing. Evil is the continuation of iniquity.

Let me reiterate that: When a person continues in iniquity, he enters into evil. *Iniquity* is when a person—either through deception or ig-

norance—consistently says "I will" against God, perhaps without even knowing God's name. It is saying "I will" against the Cross; against our cocrucifixion, coburial, coresurrection, and coascension in Christ; and against categorical doctrine.

In iniquity, people develop *complexes* in departments of related sin. When a person continues in a sin such as pride, he develops an *arrogant complex*. Arrogance is a department of pride. In other words, pride is an attitude of the heart toward a particular issue. When that attitude spreads into the various rooms of the soul, the complexes become related through arrogance. He has established an *arrogant department*.

For example, some of the people who come to our church have never submitted to the Cross. They will make comments like, "I don't know who my pastor-teacher is." They had better get one quickly. It doesn't have to be me—I'm already pastoring thousands. (So believe me, I am not soliciting!) It might be a pastor in another place, another country. If it *is* me, I'll do the best I can. But if you say you don't have a pastor-teacher and you *continue* as though you don't need one, you are in an arrogant complex. It's either that, or you are ignorant of categories

of Bible doctrine that make you accountable to have a pastor-teacher.

The next point to understand is that your soul can be possessed with *evil*, which is the government of Satan, without being demon possessed. (A Christian can never be demon possessed.)

Ultimately, evil in a Christian will be judged with the sin unto physical death, which means the Christian is taken to heaven early because he will not repent. It doesn't mean he dies at a young age. He may have been destined to live to the age of eighty but, instead, dies at fifty-eight. This is the sin unto physical death (1 John 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:22-31; Psalm 118:7; Acts 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 5:1-6).

From Personal Sin to Evil

To summarize, we understand that evil is Satan's government. Personal sins are what I commit by choice to bring myself pleasure. But when I continue in personal sin and refuse to be turned by God, I put myself under Satan's government of evil, which is not covered by Calvary. If I continue to reject the authority of God's Word, complexes and departments will be established in the rooms of my soul, which could

lead to physical death if I refuse to get right.

Let's say that you and I are Christians. If I were living in adultery and you knew it, you could come to me alone about my sin. At that point, if I refuse to obey sound doctrine and repent, then I have gone from personal sin into evil.

If you were abusing drugs and your pastor or another believer said, "Please, for your own good, give them up. I love you—give them up!" but you refuse, then you pass from personal sin into evil and Satan's government begins to control you.

If a husband will not love his wife as Christ loved the Church, even after his pastor has loved him and equipped him with the truth, that husband has gone from personal sin into evil. If a wife will not honor her husband according to what she has been taught in the Scriptures, and she refuses over a long period of time, she goes from personal sin into evil.

How to Get Out of Evil

I want you to see how to get out of evil. You do not get out of evil by confessing your sins. "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and *keep* you from evil" (2 Thessalonians 3:3). In Matthew 6:13, the Lord taught his disciples how

to pray. He said to pray, "deliver us from evil." That means, "deliver us from Satan's government, keep us away from it." But once you are *in* evil, prayer won't get you out of evil.

You and I can have differences but love each other and never say a word about it. That isn't evil. We have a right to have differences. You can come to me, state your difference, and still love me. If I don't agree with you or can't satisfy you with my viewpoint, then you can go away and love me anyway. It's not personal sin—we acknowledge that we are both growing. If, however, you go away from a disagreement and cause a conspiracy against me, you have entered into evil. It is normal to disagree; it's okay to have a difference. But if you sow discord, you enter into evil (Proverbs 6:13-19). Your differing with me is not evil, but you must keep the differences to yourself and come to me alone. And I must do the same with you. It's reciprocal.

Putting Off the Former Conversation

How do we get rid of evil? Ephesians 4:20-24 tells us how: "But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation

the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

I rehearse this passage all the time because I could get into evil more quickly than you could, and this is how. As a pastor, I study more. Because I've learned more, I know more, and I'm responsible for more. Therefore, the kinds of demons that would attack me are of the higher echelon. Satan would put angel-of-light demons on my case. I might think I'm doing a great job for God yet slip right into a stage of evil. That's why it is vital for you to uphold your pastor in prayer.

Being delivered from evil is a decision we make every morning. How many of you put your clothes on every morning? How many of you take them off every night? That's the analogy in Ephesians 4: "*Put off* concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye *put on* the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The Christian life can be reduced to this sim-

ple process: First, you take off the old man. Then, you put on the new man, every morning, just like you put on your clothes before you leave your house to go out in public. You put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). You put on the new man every morning so that, spiritually, you can enter into the angelic warfare in a public appearance. It's very simple.

Renewing Your Mind

"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23). Within the memory center there is a divine staging process. The Word of God enters into Channel A—the *nous*, or the mind—and goes through a staging process. Then the Holy Spirit operates and transfers the Word to Channel B—the human spirit or God-consciousness. Next, it enters into Channel C—the soul—where God-consciousness takes over our self-consciousness, using it to reveal God's character.

Also in Ephesians 4:23, "be renewed" is an iterative aorist in the Greek, which implies that I am to enter into a continual daily process of receiving the Word of God. *Daily*.

The question is: How do we get out of evil?

The answer is: I do not get out of it by rebound, prayer, or confession, but by first acknowledging that although I am a Christian, I am in Satan's government of evil through deception.

People who are deceived and are living under Satan's government of evil have so much to say. Some of these people act so strange and don't come to church half the time. They say they are sick—and they are. They are mentally ill because they are into evil, yet they will scream at you and swear they are not. Believe me, my forty-four years of experience tells me *they are into evil*.

You would not believe some of things I have had to deal with—some men, in isolated cases, who are involved with prostitutes. It is shocking that they would risk their health, their marriages, and their children by going downtown to hire prostitutes. Imagine it—Christian men who are happily married entering into self-indulgence with the whore world. They could end up with herpes, or AIDS. If they wanted to get right, it would be a wonderful and precious thing. We would lead them to Jesus and they would be forgiven. (By the way, your sin—whatever it is—*will* find you out according to Numbers 32:23.)

How do you get out of evil? It happens through a repeated process of letting Jesus Christ's mind work on your soul through doctrine and the Holy Spirit. You can't get out of evil in a day. You can get out of the *practice* of it in a day, but it will take you from several days to three weeks to come totally out of evil. You have to be accountable to the pulpit, to the body of Christ, and to someone (like the pastor) who will keep the matter private until you are out of it. There must be accountability, *personal* accountability.

Chapter Two

DEFINING THE PROCESS OF ATTACHMENT

I want you to see Matthew 12:30 carefully: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." This verse is written to Christians. What does it mean to be "with" Him? This is talking about the relationship between the head (Christ) and the body (His Church), in Ephesians 1:22-23. He is the head of the body. Give Jesus Christ pre-eminence (Colossians 1:18).

"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." A person in any local assembly who isn't gathering is into evil.

"Well, Pastor, so-and-so did this," people come and tell me. They come with all the details of what somebody did or didn't do. These statements are evil. Don't waste my time with evil unless you want to hear what I have to say to

you. Maybe I know more about the situation than you do, and maybe I don't. But if you are into evil, I certainly do know more.

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy [Spirit] shall not be forgiven unto men.

"And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man…" (Matthew 12:31-32*a*).

Do you know that if you speak a word against a Christian or a leader, you are speaking a word against the Son of man? Let's prove it scripturally. Jesus said, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16). In other words, "If you receive whomever I send, you receive Me. If you reject whomsoever I send, you reject Me." That's not only referring to the twelve apostles. This principle was established way back in 1 Samuel 8:7. In Luke 10:17-19, Jesus sent out seventy who were not even apostles, but they were *sent*. If people rejected them, they were rejecting Jesus. People don't want to hear that when you reject a leader—if he's God's man—you're rejecting Jesus. When Jesus said, "If you reject the one I sent, you reject Me," He was talking about the

seventy, not the Apostles. A word against the Son is a word against His mind and a word against His representatives.

Christians are knit together through doctrine and the Holy Spirit's love in Christ (Colossians 2:2). We are members of His body, His flesh, and His bones (Ephesians 5:30). We have been joined to the Lord as one spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). We have been sent to resist and stand against the devil (James 4:7). We have been sent to reveal the nature of God, and we are not to know *anyone* after the flesh.

Deception

What is Satan doing today? He is deceiving born-again Christians who will enter into his kingdom *while* they serve God.

D*eception* is, first, the act of misleading, or of cheating, with deceit as a habit of the mind. Through *planao* (the Greek word for *error* in 2 Peter 3:17) the devil leads people away into groups where they feel comfortable, where they can become like the religious crowd in Jesus' day who said, "Let's kill Jesus and get Him out of the way. We would be doing God a favor." (See John 16:1-2.)

Second, acts of deception are practiced with

a goal to injure someone.

Third, the strategy of deception is to achieve an unlawful spiritual advantage.

Fourth, deception produces false impressions through opinions, establishing emotional reactions that cause the emotions to control the volition without truth.

A deceived person doesn't know there's anything wrong with him. You can go to him and say, "May I see you alone? I love you, but I see a consistent habit in your life. I'll be your friend. I won't tell a soul, but you're deceived in this area."

The deceived person will react in his emotions and say, "I'm not, Pastor. I'm not!"

At this point, you're done—don't even try to go further. That person has exalted himself above the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). He will neither submit in obedience nor bring into captivity what Christ says through the pastor who is over him in spiritual authority (as a representative *only* because of a delegated position—not to manipulate or control, but to impart, to love, to invest, to edify).

Be able to recognize those who handle the Word of God deceitfully (2 Corinthians 4:2). Satan is skilled in cleverness (Genesis 3:1). His

deception includes temptation that leads to sin and destruction (1 Corinthians 10:9-10). Also, I want you to see that deception originates through *projections*—the representation of something in a perspective, or a prospective plan. It is a system representing a realm, a sphere of influence, or a kingdom.

Satan uses projections to manipulate your volition, making you honor feelings that were caused by his impressions instead of truth. If you are not hearing the Word of God daily, Satan uses your ignorance of categorical doctrine. Next, Satan causes you to forget what you have heard. (All of us forget far more than we ever remember.) Then, Satan deceives by using the influence of powerful people or the influence of someone you want to appreciate you, along with your desire to be "accepted." You forget that you are accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6).

Another method of deception is *demonic telepathy*—demons transferring their thoughts to the soul of a Christian who thinks they are his *own* thoughts (Isaiah 29:4; Matthew 16:22-23). Telepathy is caused by a specific demon known as *eggastrimuthous* in the Greek, which translates "familiar spirit" in Isaiah 8:19. It is a spirit that a person becomes acquainted with by close con-

tact, the human soul giving access through the volition. While this person thinks he is expressing his own convictions, demons control his vocal cords (Matthew 16:22-23). He never gets healed because he has refused to be accountable to anyone but his own emotions.

All of these definitions came from hours of study, exegeting the Word and pondering these thoughts from God in the middle of the night. I didn't get them from some other book.

Seduction

After deception, we have *seduction*, which means to lead apart, to draw aside, to entice away from the path by temptation. Satan will tempt you repeatedly in your area of weakness in order to lead you into iniquity. He inveigles you, meaning he blinds you, persuading you with deceptive methods to do something evil. He can cause people to surrender to an error by overwhelming them so they will cooperate with false needs.

Satan will seduce even the elect (Mark 13:22). Manasseh seduced people to do more evil (2 Kings 21:9). The way of the wicked seduces them (Proverbs 12:26). In the last days, seducing spirits will try to get us to depart from

the faith (1 Timothy 4:1). Seduction is taking a drink from the cup of demons (1 Corinthians 10:21) establishing a capacity to drink some more, while a person swears to God that he is still right on with Jesus.

Attachment

Seduction leads to attachment. In the study of law, to attach means "to take by legal authority." Satan does this by misquoting the Scriptures and using the Law (which we are not legally subject to because of the Atonement), judicially attaching us to himself in a system of legalism. An attachment is something that is connected to something else by force, affections, interest, or influence.

People can be bound up with the spirit of attachments until they become one with the attachment. Someone who goes out and commits a sexual act with a harlot becomes one with that harlot (1 Corinthians 6:16). In his flesh, controlled by his libido waves, this person must always think of pornography—thinking evil because he has become one with the harlot. Now, supernaturally attached to the prostitute or to the spirit of prostitution, his soul is destroyed. He will not lose his salvation if, in fact,

he is truly saved, but his soul is destroyed (Proverbs 6:32).

How can he get out of it? The only way to get out from under any form of evil is by following the divine blueprint of receiving the Word daily. When there is a constant intake of the Word of God, taking off the old man and putting on the new man, then the transfer is finally made. Before he knows it, this person is no longer interested in the attachment. He now has God's thoughts toward that act of iniquity, and he doesn't do it anymore—he doesn't even have a desire toward it.

Joined Hand in Hand

A demonic attachment is a joining in affinity to someone with whom God is angry. In Ezra 9:14, "Join in affinity" uses the same Hebrew word used for *contract*, such as a contract for marriage. The wicked are described as being attached hand in hand (Proverbs 16:5). That's why they are so powerful. They are closer than air because of a supernatural work (Job 41:16).

Isaiah 5:8 describes people who "join house to house." Someone who smokes pot wants to go to a house where someone else smokes pot. There is a pot attachment, a drug attachment.

Someone who drinks feels more comfortable around someone else who drinks. There is a house-to-house attachment, a hand-to-hand attachment.

Someone who likes to go to bars, pick up women, and have illicit sex—or at least try to—is living in a satanic attachment. He even uses grace as a license to sin—something God does not give him (Titus 1:16; Jude 4).

Enemies are attached, joined together (Isaiah 9:11). If you are a pastor, and you've never had a conspiracy in your church, you would be shocked at what can happen in three months. Every enemy you've ever had will join forces. If they had never met each other before, they will exchange telephone numbers and start making calls: "Aha, we've got him now!" they will say.

But if we attach ourselves to the Lord, we can have total deliverance from satanic deceptions, seductions, and attachments (Isaiah 56:6). I am so thankful for those who take a stand for the Lord with their lives. I don't mean that we never fall or use rebound—we will; but that's not the issue. The issue is *drawing near*. Even if we do have isolated failures, we continue to draw near. As long as we are drawing near, we will have victory—if we really want it.

Chapter Three

FROM DENIAL TO DETACHMENT

After attachment, the next stage Satan tries to get the Christian into is dependency. Dependency means that one thing is connected with and subordinate to something else, "subject to the power of; not able to exist or be sustained without assistance."

"You've got to have help," whispers Satan. (He never identifies himself by announcing, "I'm Satan.")

"I know I need help," the person replies.

"Do you know all the provisions that I have to help you?" the devil asks.

"No." The Christian thinks he is talking to God.

"I suggest you relax, have a few drinks, just a few. Go to a doctor. He has something that he can do to help, and he's very understanding."

"I will."

This person doesn't pray. He's not filled with

the Spirit. He doesn't walk in the Light. But believe me he is walking in another kind of light.

"Do you feel better after that person has counseled you?" Satan asks.

"I do," says the Christian. "He really understood me"

Sure he understood you. He never said a word to rebuke you. He really *understood* you.

Satan continues, "You've got to keep going to him. You may even have to keep going to him for three or four years. Oh, by the way, didn't he help you more than the pulpit helps you?"

"Yes, I've got to admit it," the person says.

"Wasn't he more understanding than your closest friend in that church?"

"Oh, I know he was. God bless him, yes!"

"I am answering your prayer."

The person might as well say, "Thank you, *Satan*."

This person is in a state of hanging from a support system that is not based on the promises, the love, or the character of God's nature.

Satanic Support Systems

Often when one person is dissatisfied with a program or department of a large, soul-winning

ministry such as ours, they will "mysteriously" find someone else who agrees with their position. When three or four of these people find each other, the first thing they will do is get together and have a "discussion." It's all demonic. They should never get together, but they're not humble. They exalt themselves against categories. They are deceived and they are into evil.

It's not wrong to have disagreements. I've said that before. It *is* wrong, however, to have a support system against something that is God's provision for us. For every individual they can get to speak out for their side, I can bring up hundreds who would applaud and thank God for the blessings they have received in that area. When there are legitimate concerns, there is a table of organization ordained for the purpose of hearing the matter. We purpose to be humble, gracious, willing to grow and open to change, but the spirit must be right.

"Thou hast [depended] on the king of Syria, and not [depended] on the LORD thy God" (2 Chronicles 16:7). "Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him" (2 Kings 18:21). In

other words, these people are trusting in Pharaoh; they lean on their own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). There are those who have a divided heart and have not been restored by the Word of God. They may profess God is with them but Micah 3:11-12 reveals the truth. Yet, for those who lean on the Lord, evil cannot come upon them (1 John 5:18*b*).

Representation

Once a person becomes dependent upon Satan, he becomes a representative of Satan's kingdom *inside* the Church. This person is inside the Church, he's been saved for years, but he represents Satan in the local assembly.

Representation is when someone impersonates another or represents another's character by action, by appearance, or as an ambassador. Impersonation means to perform in the character of another, to represent another's character in a planned strategy. Representation also means to show or exhibit the image or likeness of another, his kingdom, or his sphere of influence.

"A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health" (Proverbs 13:17). The life of Jesus Christ was made manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). In other words,

it was *represented* in mortal flesh. We were created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). We have represented the earthly, and we will also represent the heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:49).

Peter was representing Satan in Matthew 16:22 when he said to Jesus, "You're *not* going to that cross, I'm telling you now!"

"You're okay, honey, you don't have to get right. Those people at church just don't understand you." When people say things like this, they are representing Satan.

"You don't need a local church or a pastor." Such a statement not only represents the kingdom of darkness, but it violates thirty-four Bible doctrines. If you want to challenge me on this, why don't you meet me alone instead of discussing it with others.

After months and months of study, you have to decide who your pastor-teacher is and where your church is. It could be anywhere, but you need to make a commitment to God in that local assembly. Don't try to get away without submitting to bona fide spiritual authority that is delegated for your sake and for your accountability.

Denial: The Final Stage

The last thing a person does when he is rep-

resenting Satan is to live in *denial*, declaring one thing outwardly while trying to cover up the truth and living in a lie. Denial means to reject or disown the truth. A person living in denial will not receive reproof but will disavow or deny a fact regarding himself.

On the other hand, godly *self*-denial is not denying but *detaching*. Self-love is *not* selfishness; self-worth is not self-worship; self-affirmation is not self-deceit; and self-awareness is not self-absorption.

The person living in *un*godly denial says, "I'm not selfish. I'm not worshipping myself. I'm not deceived. I'm not involved in self-absorption." They say these things because they deny the truth of God's Word. For the Christian, it's the last stage before the sin unto physical death. Retrogression to this point is a process, of course. God is patient. He will do so much—He warns people with the Word, repeatedly. Over and over, God lets the truth be known. He uses people to send forth His Word, in season and out of season. He will be so patient! Do you understand that? God's long-suffering is salvation for us (2 Peter 3:15). But if we refuse to be turned, then He will move with something else.

Recently I had to tell someone, "You are de-

ceived." As their pastor, I believe God wanted me to say it, and I said it to the person privately. The problem had nothing to do with me or my church. It had to do with long-term attitudes. Unfortunately, his response was to exalt himself above my exhortation. Even in the midst of a revival, where the Holy Spirit is so close to us, there was no discernment on his part.

Jesus said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself" (Mark 8:34; Matthew 16:25-26; John 12:24-26). Let him deny himself instead of living in denial. Agree quickly with your adversary (Matthew 5:25). When you are living against the truth, the Holy Spirit is your adversary.

Let's ask the Father to help us. We must thank Him for those who are not in these processes of retrogression into evil. But even for those who are, we can ask that through conviction they would understand how to be attached to Jesus Christ, dependent upon Him and His Word. Then they will break free from attachments and truly reveal Christ.

CONCLUSION

The Lord Jesus Christ in all of His uniqueness and beauty wants us to understand in divine perspective that no Christian is ever to "get in touch with himself" in order to be free from satanic attachments. You don't have to search yourself, as many psychiatrists teach. The Lord Jesus, the God of all mercy, the God of all grace, does the searching. If the Holy Spirit reveals that something is wrong in my life, I agree with Him and let Him turn me.

Following Christ becomes a matter of putting on the new man every day. Put off your old conversation and rid yourself of your old way of living. Take it off just as you would take off your dirty clothes. Then, simply put on the new man and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Shout “Grace, Grace!”

to the Mountain

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy [Spirit] also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

"Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the

blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:10-27).

This passage of Scripture is dealing with the one offering of Jesus Christ. Through this offering, Jesus Christ put away our sins forever, crucified our old sin nature, and seated us in heavenly places, positionally, with Him the moment we believed on Him. This offering makes it possible for the worst backslider in the

world—once he has confessed his sin—to have the effects of his sin removed and fellowship with God restored instantly. He can come back with boldness and confidence.

By one offering, we are sanctified and perfected forever and given permanent access to the throne of mercy. The blood of Jesus did all the work.

There are three points I want to communicate in these pages: The frustration of Satan over the believer's victory in the one offering; the release from carnality for the humble child of God; and the spiritual shout of faith that cries "Grace, grace!" to the mountains and obstacles in the Christian life.

In order to glean from these three principles, we must receive the Word of God in the exhilarating refreshment of the Holy Spirit's contact with our hearts. If we don't take the one offering seriously, we will never be able to live a quiet, Spirit-filled life before God.

Chapter One

THE ONE OFFERING

The subject in Hebrews 10:10 is the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. It was Jesus' *body* that was offered and it was offered "once for all." Hebrews 10:11 refers to Old Testament priests who offered many sacrifices. But, in Hebrews 10:14, we see that the *one* offering of Jesus "perfected for ever them that are sanctified." One offering was made for the remission of sins.

For this reason, Hebrews 10:22 tells us to "draw near with a true heart." We can draw near because God can't remember our sins. We draw near because where there is remission of sins, there is no need for any more offerings. "For in that [Jesus] died, he died unto sin *once*" (Romans 6:10*a*). We now have a new and living way through the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:19-20).

As we draw near with confidence and full assurance of faith, our hearts are "sprinkled from an evil conscience" and our bodies are

"washed with pure water." All guilt, fear, and insecurity is removed and we hold fast to the profession of our faith without wavering, for God is faithful.

Seated Above, Perfected Forever

Jesus did away with all of the Levitical sacrifices by fulfilling them and giving His life as the supreme sacrifice. He then rose from the grave and ascended to heaven where He is now seated forever at the right hand of the the Father. From this position, the Lord boldly declares to everyone who will receive Him, your "sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17). He will never mention them again because they were all transferred to the one offering.

The moment a person believes in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he is perfected forever before the Father, accepted in Jesus Christ the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6), and seated in heavenly places with Christ (Ephesians 2:6).

Exhort the Brethren

How can any believer be indifferent toward God's precious mandates? No Christian can afford to forsake the assembly of believers through neglect, disobedience, apathy, passivity, arro-

gance, or pride.

Because of the truth of the one offering, God wants us to "exhort one another," to pick up those who have fallen. We are to assemble together as often as we can to receive the Truth. We must assemble more than we ever have and pick each other up with what we have learned. Oh, how the church needs more picker-uppers.

Chapter Two

WHAT IT MEANS TO SIN WILLFULLY

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26).

Many times during my 40 years of preaching I have been asked what this verse means. Christians who lack precise doctrine are very confused by this verse. Willful sinning isn't going out on the town, or picking up a cigarette. These things are sin, but they are not what this verse is talking about.

Willful sin is refusing to rest in the truth of the one offering. The Christian who sins willfully will not allow the same offering that dealt with his past sins to deal with his present sins. He neglects to draw near to the throne of mercy where he can find grace to help in his time of need (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Sinning willfully is living in depression, discouragement, guilt, fear, judging, and condemnation. Because of the one offering, we have no right to point a finger at ourselves or at any one else.

Willful sin for the Hebrew Christians, to whom this epistle was written, was the reinstatement of the Old Testament sacrifices, because they did not accept Jesus as the complete sacrifice for their sins. The Bible tells us the Old Testament "worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Hebrews 10:2).

If I am conscious of my sins, which were paid for by the one offering, then I am sinning willfully. If I do sin, I name it, forsake it, forget it, and move on. Why? Because the one offering took care of my sin and perfected me forever.

Adversaries of the Offering

"But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sancti-

fied, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:27-29).

Those who add to grace and make unconditional love conditional are adversaries to the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They do not understand the principle of the one offering. Therefore, they do not accept it. God says that because they are His adversaries, they can expect fiery indignation.

Though no one could keep the Mosaic law in its entirety, David and many other Old Testament saints loved it (Psalm 119:97). God has always preserved a remnant who love His Word. Yet, there were those who despised His Law, and they died without mercy. The problem was not that they broke the Law—everyone broke it—but that they *despised* it by neglecting it and lightly esteeming its worth.

Anyone under the New Covenant who doesn't respect the one offering can expect worse punishment than the Old Testament saints. We are more accountable than them because we have received a greater revelation of the Finished Work. This is completely misunderstood by many, many Christians who think that an isolated failure is willful sin. This is a terrible interpretation of truth.

Those who do despite to the grace of God will not accept the blood of the New Covenant—the Finished Work agreement between the Father and the Son. They have trodden underfoot the Son of God. The blood of the covenant isn't *enough* for them. They have to add to it. They have to judge and criticize and dictate to people. They trample under foot the *very* blood that sanctified them. This is the worst sin anyone can commit because it's a sin against the Finished Work. To me, this is so clear.

I cannot understand how someone can teach that willful sin refers to overt sins. Not one word in Hebrews 10 supports that view. By not accepting the blood of this covenant they insult the Spirit of grace.

Recently, I heard a radio sermon. I didn't listen for very long—just long enough to hear that sinning willfully meant to go out drinking and smoking. It was a hideous, stupid message; even a mannequin should have had sense enough not to fall for it.

These people get all worked up. They are frightened and they are teaching others how to live in fear. They don't know the first thing about being liberated. They don't know how to frustrate the devil. They live in defeat—all be-

cause someone with a seminary education preached a weird message without one iota of truth in it.

Do you suppose there could be a little bit of legalism in you? Are you thinking that you are doing God a favor by staying pure in your legalism? Let me tell you that people who receive the truth about the one offering will live purer lives than you ever could hope to live in your legalism.

Chapter Three

SHOUTING "GRACE, GRACE!" TO THE MOUNTAIN

"...This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it" (Zechariah 4:6-7).

In the book of Ezra we find the miraculous history of the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem. Zerubbabel was the civic leader of Israel at this time; Zechariah was the spiritual leader. Cyrus, a heathen king, was stirred by God to rebuild the temple, and he declared it to all the nations, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah.

The children of Israel went back to their land and laid the foundation for the temple, but were unable to complete it due to great opposition. Friends and relatives stood against the work. A

spirit of religion came against them, as well as many visible enemies.

God taught His people how to handle the mountain of opposition: He told them to shout, "Grace, grace!" He declared, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain" (Isaiah 40:4). "And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted" (Isaiah 49:11). By shouting, "Grace, grace," the mountain became a way for Israel. Their darkness was made light and the crooked places were made straight (Isaiah 42:16).

Israel had sinned deeply and had been led away captive into Babylon. They were asked by their captors to sing one of the songs of Zion, but they could not. They wept and hung their harps on the willows, saying, "How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" (Psalm 137:4). They thought about their days in Zion; but now, they couldn't go back. Through their own deceit, their way had become crooked. They had no joy, no song, and they could not experience grace.

Finally, after 70 years in captivity, Cyrus sent them back to Jerusalem. They had learned from

God how to shout, "Grace, grace" to their obstacles and eventually, the temple would be rebuilt.

"And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king" (Ezra 6:14-15).

Abraham and Jacob

After Abraham sinned with Hagar, there was a space of 13 years that he did not speak to God. He was miserable. He was wretched. The father of our faith was silent. Now he was in a valley facing a terrible mountain. It was a dark and crooked place and Abraham had no grace, no joy, no song.

But then, God visited him. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations" (Genesis 17:1-4). Through this personal visitation from God, Abraham received the strength to cry "Grace, grace" to his mountain.

Jacob made one mistake after another. He was deceitful, crooked, and double-minded. He couldn't overcome his mountain. He wavered back and forth. Like his grandfather Abraham, Jacob found himself in a valley. How would he ever get out of it? By shouting, "Grace, grace!"

"And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land" (Genesis 35:9-12).

Every mountain, every hill, every crooked place, must bring us to God. Instead of turning our backs on Him, we can come to Him and

hear Him say, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isaiah 30:21).

Shout to the mountain. Shout to the valley. Shout in the crooked places. Shout at failure, sin, and guilt. Shout against those who criticize and judge. Shout against the legalists who add works to grace and make their religion a hindrance to true Christianity (Romans 11:6). Shout, "Grace, grace!" to the mountains. It is the only answer for our problems.

The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail

Jesus said, in Matthew 16:18, "…I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." How in God's name can the gates of hell prevail against Jesus Christ's perfect offering? They can't. And the gates of hell cannot defeat the man who is in Christ forever as the object of His grace.

Why worry when we are free to go to God through the blood of Jesus Christ? Why should we feel guilty when His Blood will instantly wash away the guilt? How can we ever be accused when we stand justified in Christ before the throne of mercy? How can we be condemned when there is now no condemnation?

We don't need to be double-minded; we can

have a single eye of faith. There is no reason for restlessness when we have the God of all peace living inside of us. The God of all patience can help us when we are impatient.

Don't fret about what your spouse might be doing. Let God bless *you*. Go directly to His throne and watch the all-powerful Christ release heaven's power through grace.

After the foundation of Zerubbabel's temple was laid (Ezra 3:10), Israel faced a cunning attack from their enemies. Public enemies and government officials stood in the way, hindering any further progress on the temple. In the midst of opposition, the Holy Spirit told Israel to start shouting because it was through the Spirit that their victory would come, not by their own power and might. Shout to those mountains of opposition in your life.

Shout to the mountains of guilt.

Shout! and watch God remove the obstacles.

Shout! about God's victory over the devil.

Shout, "Grace, grace!"

The shout of victory frustrates the devil, releases the carnal Christian, and makes a person spiritual the moment he approaches the throne of mercy through the appropriation of the shed blood of the one offering—Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Please keep in mind what Hebrews 10:26 really says about willful sinning. If we sin, we break fellowship with God, but repentence will immediately restore that fellowship (Psalm 51:17). What does despite to the Spirit of grace is rejection of the one offering, *not* isolated failure.

The Word of God says that if we walk in the light, the blood of Christ keeps cleansing us from all sin. It will wash away any defilement as we keep coming to Him. Let's simply accept His one offering. When we try to add to it, we insult the spirit of grace. The gift of grace depends completely on the character and nature of the Giver, and never on the character and nature of the receiver. We must simply receive it.

We cannot ignore the Finished Work and go around mentally upset and emotionally injured. The purpose of the Cross was to get rid of the effects of everything we have done wrong and to give us a new life. Sin and guilt have been taken

care of; we stand *in* Christ—permanently. Satan, however, is waiting for us to deny the Finished Work so he can cause us to live in frustration.

May each of us continually receive the truth about our position until it shakes us, moves mountains, and makes us free in our experience.

Show Me Your Way

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The clear, Finished Work message of the Gospel of Christ is so important to our lives. Many appreciate it and love it, but it is really made evident in how believers relate to each other.

It is the love of God that must constrain us and motivate us, not human effort. The way of God is seeing that our sins and the sins of the whole world were nailed to the Cross. The Bible says clearly that because Christ died for all, we are all dead to our flesh.

This booklet is written to show that God's way is a narrow way—a way that, if followed, enables us to see the things that are of God. It is also a way that leads to a ministry of reconciliation, drawing all men to Him.

Chapter One

BLOT OUT THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died then were all dead:

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we him no more.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling

the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:14-21).

The Ten Commandments are really God's love expressed ten different ways. The entire law of God is summed up in one word: love. "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:13-16).

Here is the principle. If Jesus Christ died for all, does He have any record of sin? No. Does Jesus know us after the flesh? He doesn't. He does take some saved people to heaven early because of the sin unto physical death (Romans 6:16; 1 John 5:16). But He takes them to *heaven*, because He covers us with His Blood*

Know No Man after the Flesh

The Word of God says, "Know no man after the flesh." Knowing people after the flesh is a real sin that Christians commit over and over again. When someone fails, but then repents and gets right, many believers are tremendously merciful and don't even want to hear about what happened. Others are not that way, because they know people after the flesh with regard to their failure. In fact, those people who judge others are living in the flesh (Romans 14:4).

It takes living in our flesh to know someone after the flesh. Really, the reason we would want to know someone else after the flesh is so we don't feel so bad toward our own flesh (Job 34:8; Psalm 35:11-12).

When God says, "I, even I, have blotted out your transgressions for mine own sake and I remember not your sins" what does He mean? He means that He has blotted out all of our transgressions, and He no longer knows us after them. He cannot remember our sins. As far as God is concerned, the sins are gone. They do not exist.

If we bring sins back to remembrance, we lie against God. We reveal that we are not living in

the principle that says our transgressions have been blotted out.

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins: I remember them not for I have redeemed you," God declared in Isaiah 44:22. This means that God has erased our sins as if they had never happened. They cannot be found.

If this is true (and it most certainly is), does anyone have a right to bring up a single sin? No, other than to make people accountable to judicial law and God's established table of organization. For example, people who practice physical abuse must be held accountable and be reported to the authorities. But this principle is referring to the situations that go on in our lives. It is not an excuse to continue to live in sin. If we do, God will start disciplining us to restore us to Himself (Hebrews 12:5-11).

The Blood and the Scapegoat

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sancti-

fied, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:28-29).

One who tramples the Blood of Christ under his feet and considers it unholy takes the Blood and makes it common. They become very familiar with it, and it has no sacred value in their hearts and in their souls.

Those who reject Jesus Christ trample His Blood under their feet, and the unlimited atonement is of no value to them. He paid for their sins, even though they will go to hell.

A Christian tramples the Blood under his feet when he doesn't see that the Blood was shed to cleanse everyone from all of their sins. If we walk in the light as Jesus is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). The Blood is precious. In the land of Goshen in Egypt, God declared, "When I see the blood, then I will pass over you" (Exodus 13:12). Through His Blood we have redemption (Ephesians 1:7).

In Leviticus 16:8, we see the principle of the two goats.** The blood of the first goat was shed for God. The second goat, called the scapegoat, was sent alive into "a land not inhabited"—abandoned by God. According to Leviticus

16:21-22, all of Israel's sins, iniquities, and transgressions were placed upon the second goat. A fit man—a picture of Jesus Christ, the only truly fit man to ever live on earth—took that goat away, cut the rope, and sent it off.

The message is this: The blood of the first goat paid for all of the sins that were placed on the second goat, which was never found again as it was sent into the wilderness. Therefore, none of those sins can be used to accuse those who receive the sacrifice of the first goat.

**For more about the sin unto physical death, read* The Great Detective: Sin*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

***For more about the scapegoat, read* God's Greatest Gift: The Lamb*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

THE SPIRIT'S ORDER: THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE

"[God] made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel" (Psalm 103:7).

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Why did Jesus say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life?" Why didn't He say, "I am the life, the truth, and the way"? Everything arranged in the Holy Spirit's order is of great importance, and God knows that we can never know the truth of a person unless we know their way.

There is a broad way and a narrow way. The narrow way is a Person—Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has a way, and this way is through His Blood. When God sees the Blood of redemption applied to our lives, He passes over our sins because the Blood has paid for them.

The narrow way is through the death of God's Son. I must find the way in order to know the truth. And, I can never experience the life if I don't know the way that comes before it. Being in the way, the Lord can lead us (see Genesis 24:27). There is also a wrong way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is eternal hell (Proverbs 14:12).

What is God's way? It is the Son dying in our place and then representing us in heaven to the Father, even while we have an old sin nature. He does not allow one sin to be charged to our account (Romans 4:7-8). If we sin, our fellowship with God is broken. But once we repent and confess it, He can restore fellowship with us immediately.

Get to Know Him

God's way is the way of the Cross. When you know that Someone died for you on the Cross, then you want to get to know that Person.

He died and commended His love toward us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8), and He did it while we were astray (Isaiah 53:6). This is God's way. God's way reveals God's truth that produces God's life. He receives us just as we are, and He has placed us inside His Son, Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We must understand that God's way is the way of grace, mercy, forgiveness, cleansing, faith, purity, peace, and joy. God's way is never imputing sins to us. If He died for us while we were yet sinners, won't He do much more for us now that we are His children (Romans 8:32)? So first we need to know God's way.

Often, people get married when they don't know the way of the person they are marrying.

We can't know people unless we have been around them for quite a while, in a variety of situations. We get to know their ways when we see them under every kind of pressure and watch how they respond. If they are betrayed, will they pray for their enemies? In spite of adversity, do they obey the Great Commission and obey the Great Commandment to "love thy neighbor as thyself"? Are they honest? Do they work hard and pay their bills?

Imagine if someone you had never known

came to you and said, “I have $10,000, but I need $20,000 to start a new business. Give me $10,000, and we will go into business together.” You may seem to like this person, but you don’t know him. No sound businessman would take such a risk with his money. Someone else may say, “This person is a wonderful Christian with great integrity. He loves God and his character is good.” Still, you cannot trust anyone beyond what you know about him.

Chapter Three

PLANTED IN THE WAY WE SHOULD GO

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

If our sins are blotted out, and if, according to Romans 4:7-8, God's way is to never impute a single sin to us, then God's truth is that He died for us. God's life is that He sent His Holy Spirit to live in us when we believe and receive His truth. Genesis 1:11 says that if you plant a certain seed in the ground, whatever you plant is what will come up. God's life is planted in us so we can get to know God's way and live in God's truth. The more that I hear about what Jesus has done, the more I can trust Him, because I know He will be consistent.

In Exodus 14:13-15, Israel was told to "stand still, and see the salvation of God. The Lord will fight for you. Now, move forward." Then He

parted the Red Sea, and they walked through. He led them with a cloud by day. They were baptized into the cloud. The cloud speaks of the presence of God. This is a picture of each of us being baptized into Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit at the point we are saved (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

Three million people faced the bitter water. They were thirsty, and they all needed to water their animals, and they all began to murmur. In Exodus 15:25, God showed them a tree. The tree was put into the bitter waters and the waters were made sweet. The tree is a picture of the Cross.

In Exodus 16:4, God sent manna—food from heaven. In Exodus 17, there was no water, so the Lord told Moses to smite the rock (in verse 6) and water came out of the rock. This is a type of the Holy Spirit bringing in floods of living water because Jesus Christ was crucified on our behalf.

As Israel wandered through the wilderness, their clothes grew with them. They didn't have to get new shoes, because their shoes never wore out (see Deuteronomy 29:5). God provided because there was no other way. That was the way God led them, and He made His nature and His character known to Moses.

Know Him by Obedience

The more we study God's Word and pray and see God's blessings, the more we trust Him. The more we follow His Word by faith obedience and through prayer, the more we will get to know Him. We can trust Him because we know His ways.

But if we don't hear His Word, which produces faith (Romans 10:17), then we won't get to know how loving, forgiving, and faithful God is. If we don't know that He is a forgiving God, then we can't trust Him when we have sinned. Now, because we know He is a forgiving God, we can name our sin, turn our back upon it, isolate it, forget it, and go forward with Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14).

We can never trust someone we don't fully know. This doesn't mean that we mistrust him. It just means we can't trust him. We just don't know him enough to trust him.

Spiritual Training for Children

God would have a believer marry another believer so that they can train up children for God (Malachi 2:15). Thousands of parents who are basically good people fail to train up their children in faith. Instead, by failing to train up a

child in God's way, they are allowing the world to train up their children to spend eternity in hell. Imagine a mother giving birth to a child, providing for the child physically and materially but not providing spiritually. Most likely as this child becomes a teenager, he or she starts living in sin, falling into drug addiction, and living for the devil because he or she never knew about God. Eventually, the child dies and goes to hell. The truth is that without someone investing and spiritually leading him in God's way, the child will grow up and go to hell.

If children are trained spiritually and they do wrong, the parents are not accountable for their choices (Deuteronomy 24:16). If the children are not trained spiritually, then it is the parents' fault—they are accountable and the blood of those children will be on their hands (Ezekiel 3:17-20).

"For the redemption of their soul is precious" (Psalm 49:8*a*). By the grace of Almighty God, we must train our children in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6).

This is why we have Christian schools as part of our ministry. They are there to help parents train their children for God. The teachers and school leaders will get phenomenal rewards

in heaven for the sacrifices they have made. Many of them could get twice as much money doing other things, but they have chosen something else. They have chosen to prepare children for eternity and make an emphasis on living spiritually through God's way, His truth, and His life.

"For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things" (Zechariah 8:12).

CONCLUSION

God wants people everywhere to be blessed of the Lord, but He is the only way that we can be blessed. God's truth is the only truth by which we can ever know Him. He is the only life by which we can live. He is the way, the truth, and the life. God wants us to accept the Blood and to see everyone else as under the Blood as well. Everything we do must be in the love of God—and the Ten Commandments represent ten ways to love your neighbor.

"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight, and consider that this nation is thy people" (Exodus 33:13).

Moses prayed this prayer: "Show me now thy way." He wanted to know God and let grace teach him and deliver him from himself. The key is in receiving the Word of God, which, when it falls on "good ground," brings forth

fruit—some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, and some thirty-fold (Matthew 13:23), depending on the capacity of the hearer.

"Good ground" speaks of an honest heart (Luke 8:15). When the Word of God falls on an honest heart, that heart is changed. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God's grace lets us retain and recollect even what we seemingly can't remember. We can be changed for the next week and the next month by what we have heard today from God's Word. But as we faithfully hear the Word, we will be continually changed, from glory to glory.

Sing a New Song

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

I want to be very careful with what I communicate here because I really need to present a balance. We have a treasure in our earthen vessels. This is a reality for every believer. Once he asked Christ into His life, the Christian became the habitation of God. The Spirit moved in, and the Holy Spirit shall never move out. That is the great comfort we find in Hebrews 13:5: "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

The treasure that God puts in us is not of us, nor is it from us. It is from Him, and its purpose is to reveal Christ to the world. The excellency of the power that we live in must belong to Him. It cannot be of us. One day, God will change these mortal bodies—every one of which was conceived in iniquity. Our glorified bodies will not be rooted in and poisoned by sin and death. We shall be raised in incorruption, thanks to the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

God has chosen to reveal Himself through people. I have always found this an amazing

mystery. Earthen vessels crack up. People have problems. Backaches, earaches, sore joints, sprains and bruises: These things let us know just how frail and temporary these bodies of flesh are. Even seemingly young people struggle with the aches and pains that come during the courses of our lives.

God, however, has given us something that ministers to these bodies of death. That something is song. In His infinite understanding of humans, who were first formed from the dust of the earth, the Lord ordained songs to touch something in every one of us. Listen carefully the next time you are in an elevator. The background music that you hear probably sounds very, very familiar. The rhythm gets you; the beat and the notes trigger a train of thoughts. Before you know it, the words of what you thought was a long, lost song are coming back to you.

In this booklet, we will examine just how important songs are to our hearts and our minds. My prayer is that by the end of reading this booklet, you will have a new song in your heart—something precious from the Lord that will keep you and comfort you in the storms of life.

Chapter One

OVERCOMING THE BODY OF DEATH

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

"But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of

God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:1-10).

Death is at work in us. Why? It is so that the life of God might shine out of us. God really wants to get the natural part of us out of the way so that His supernatural power might move in, unhindered and unfettered. Certain situations that we are allowed to endure are used by God to wear away the thorns and thistles that spring from our flesh.

I can remember counseling one man who had married a woman who became tremendously obsessive. She washed the bathroom doorknob dozens of times a day. She flushed the toilet again and again, even though there was no reason to.

"I don't know why God has allowed this," the man started out during our session. "Why must I put up with this?"

"God is delivering you unto death," I said.

"Why doesn't this go away from her? I think this marriage was great mistake."

"Really?" I responded. "If you weren't delivered to death in this marriage, then God would have delivered you unto it some other way. Your boss or your health would become troubling issues."

"Well, what can I do?" the man asked.

"Let God give you a song in this night season."

That was the counsel I got for this man from the Lord. He went out from the office and began to search the Scriptures. He came love the book of Psalms. There, among those one hundred and fifty poems, this man found the words of people just like him. Morning and evening, he began to read and sing to the Lord. It gave him great comfort, and he has become a great minister to his wife, who is getting delivered. Victory is in his heart, and his love toward his wife is making a difference.

When we are put into a place where people rub us the wrong way, we learn how to die to ourselves and become alive unto God.

The Sounds of Victory

"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will

sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

"The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

"The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name" (Exodus 15:1-2).

This song is the first song that was ever recorded in the Bible since the day Adam came out of the Garden. Great victories come with songs. Israel was down by the Red Sea. The Egyptian army bore down on the people of God, who seemed to be trapped between the water and the Pharaoh's chariots with no way of escape.

God instructed Moses to tell the people to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." The waters were parted, Israel walked through on dry ground, and the sea swallowed up the Egyptian soldiers with their horse-drawn chariots when it closed over them as they pursued the people of God. Miriam, Moses' sister, then picked up an instrument and began singing. The people of the nation lifted up their voices, and there was singing and dancing before the Lord.

I have seen some of the dances that the Jewish folks do. They are modest and they are not sensual. This celebration was an expression of

praise to God and to His power, which is the reason for all of our triumphs.

In the book of Judges, Deborah and Barak sang out after the defeat of the Canaanites (see Judges 5). Certainly, there is nothing like a good, loud song to cap off a day of victory.

Chapter Two

MUSIC MAKES THINGS HAPPEN

"And from thence they went to Beer: that is the well whereof the LORD spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.

"Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:

"The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah" (Numbers 21:16-18).

"And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

"And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

"And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said,

Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

"And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.

"And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

"For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

"And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

"And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much" (1 Chronicles

20:18-25).

The nation of Israel was in need of water. It was time for a song, "Spring up, O well." The people began to sing, the princes did some digging, and there was a well of water.

Sometimes when I am in the pulpit, I have to start singing, and I've been know to make up some pretty good songs. When I sing, the water starts to flow. The words come a little easier. Now, my voice is not what it once was when I was a country music "star." I get a little hoarse now and then. One man came to church and heard me sing a little song during my message. He was quite upset, but not at the quality of my voice. His problem was that he wanted me to do more preaching. Well, I told him it was just what God wanted me to do at that moment. That man calmed down, and he's still coming out to church! Now, that's a great little story, isn't it? But here is my point:

Songs can make things happen in the power of the Spirit.

The Jehoshaphat story gives us a great picture of where singers fit into the plan and purpose of God. The singers were the front-line warriors in that battle. That is what a good worship team can be for a Spirit-filled assembly. When the singers go out and praise the beauty of God's holiness, the enemy has to flee. Songs can usher

in the intensity of the presence of the Lord, and it does wonders.

The army of the enemy had an overwhelming advantage over the army of Israel. There was no way that this victory would come unless God did something amazing. I can just imagine the discussion that might have gone on among some of Israel's battlefield leaders.

"Who's going first?"

"The singers!"

"Are you serious?"

"Godly serious," said the king.

The singing did the fighting for the nation. After hearing the songs, the enemy soldiers turned against each other and the slaughter began. When the dust settled, three days' worth of spoil was left for the children of Israel to carry away from a field where they never had to fight.

God has never lost a fight. He has always done right by His people. He fights their battles for them.

The Sound of Freedom

"Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.

"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and

proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

"A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed.

"For it is the jubile; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field.

"In the year of this jubile ye shall return every man unto his possession" (Leviticus 20:9-13).

A good, solid trumpet blast also means a lot of things in the Bible. Here, in Leviticus 20, the horn announced that it is the Year of Jubilee. Every fifty years, Israel was instructed to celebrate their freedom from Egypt. In this year, every man was to return to his possession. Lost things were restored. It was a year of rest. All debts were forgiven. Every captive was set free. This year represented what God does for a lifetime in those who receive Jesus Christ.

Christ Jesus paid the debt He did not owe. As for me, I owed a debt I could not pay. His blood washed our sins away. That's a great song in itself. Now we sing new songs. We sing songs that exalt the blood of the Lamb. We have been washed clean. All of our obligations have been

fulfilled in Him.

Jesus is our Jubilee, as He Himself read from Isaiah 61 in Luke 4:18-19:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

"To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

In that "year," with the moments of His life on earth, Jesus Christ made us acceptable in Him. He took upon His body the sins of the world. He hung upon the Cross and became sin for us. Because of perfect holiness, the Father cannot look upon sin. Therefore, for the first time in all of eternity, the Son of God willingly endured as the Father turned His face away from Him for a period of darkness. All of these things He did to make it so that we can sing a new song unto the Lord, a song of redemption and transformation.

Chapter Three

MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

"And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.

"Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.

"Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee" (Isaiah 12:2-6).

"Sing unto the LORD, all the earth; shew forth from day to day his salvation.

"Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations.

"For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods.

"For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

"Glory and honour are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place.

"Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (1 Chronicles 16:23-29).

In Psalm 100, the people of God are told to come into the house of God with a joyful noise. That is such a great thing. God wants to hear the songs of His people, even if their voices are not so good. This is great passage for a pastor to use when he is encouraging people to get into the choir. A couple dozen universal voices can come together nicely and make quite a joyful sound unto God when they have the right leader. Anyone who feels led to join the choir should be consistent and get instruction and glorify God.

As we have seen, singing brought water out of the rock. It delivered the nation from the infections and diseases of the enemy.

Even the enemies of Israel recognized just how important the songs were to the people of God. In Psalm 137, the Babylonian captors tried to get them to sing.

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

"We hanged our harps upon the willows in

the midst thereof.

"For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

"How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" (Psalm 137:1-4).

Melodies in the Heart

The Lord has always communicated the importance of songs. He knows that they mean so much to us as people. Look at what the Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to write to the Colossians:

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:13-

17).

Singing songs is way to solidify the words of wisdom in our hearts. If you read on in Colossians 3, this passage implies that this kind of singing within us will help us to love our spouses and to submit to them. It can help children to be obedient to their parents, and it can help fathers to love their children with gentleness and kindness.

In 1 Chronicles 15, David assembled the Levites and set up rotations of singers who would praise the Lord before the ark of the Covenant. David's son Solomon followed up on this instruction and gathered groups of singers that were paid to bring songs before the congregation and before the Lord (see 2 Chronicles 5:11-14).

After Israel's time of backsliding and captivity, Nehemiah led in the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. The singers were restored to their place of participation in the temple services.

"For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.

"And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified holy things unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified them unto the children of Aaron" (Nehemiah 12:46-47).

CONCLUSION

"Sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

"The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

"He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

"Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.

"Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.

"With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

"Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

"Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together

"Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the

world, and the people with equity" (Psalm 98:1-9).

I believe that God enjoys it when we just make up new songs to sing to him. If you get a new car today, sing to the Lord—"I got a new car today, thank the Lord." Perhaps, your marriage is going through a new honeymoon time. Sing to the Lord about it! "God has made my marriage new, Hallelujah." Reconciliation is a cause for celebration. Get before God and let your voice go wild. David danced before the Lord, and likewise we can sing with all of our might before the Lord. Remember, He loves the joyful noises that we make to Him. Of course, if you are little embarrassed about people seeing or hearing you, get to someplace where you can be alone and sing to the Lord.

God is worthy of our praise. Praise Him for all of His Creation, including your voice. We might as well get in practice because, from what I read in Revelation, we are going to be doing some singing for all of eternity. The songs we sing there will be beyond new; they will be eternal melodies. And the great thing about it is that heaven and earth and sky will all be in harmony in making a sound unto God.

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God

Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Revelation 15:3).

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith, trusting His character and love for you and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)*.

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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Social Drinking:

Opinion or Conviction?

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

A pastor must preach the Word of God in season and out of season. That means he must deal with trends on the basis of truth, no matter the strength of the opposition that may come against him. The Bible is true, and a pastor cannot compromise himself on this point.

Today's Christianity is deep with half-truths and practices that are rooted in opinions that have a partial scriptural foundation. One such trend is social drinking and the idea that one can take wine or strong drink in moderation and still consider himself to be obedient to the Word of God.

This is a very pointed booklet. Jesus Christ was a friend of publicans and sinners, yet the Scriptures show that He never compromised His obedience to the plan of the Father. When a cultural practice comes in conflict with the Word of God, one needs to weigh heavily the importance of obeying God.

A servant of God reflects the One Whom he serves. What is pleasing to God should be the only issue. You will see in these pages that to obey is better than sacrifice and that to refuse social drinking is a small price to pay for not offending God.

Chapter One

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT WINE AND STRONG DRINK

"Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

"They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.

"At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

"Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things" (Proverbs 23:29-33).

"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest

him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness" (Habakkuk 2:15).

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1).

Let's do away with some of the arguments developed regarding social drinking. Look carefully at the Scriptures and take them to heart.

The verses are clear. According to Proverbs 23:31, not only should we not drink the wine, but also we should not look upon it. Will you argue with that point? Do you want to start cutting things out of the Bible? People who drink socially make good evil and evil good. This is what the Bible says.

There is a difference between the fruit of the vine and fermented wine. According to isagogics, which is a study of the historical frame of reference, there was the most fantastic fruit of the vine, and it wasn't allowed to ferment.

Fermentation is a process of enzymes breaking down, causing naturally sweet, harmless juices, for instance, to become alcoholic beverages. Often, yeast, which is leaven, is used to promote the chemical breakdown. Unless the fermentation process is controlled, the substance ultimately becomes extremely bitter and un-

palatable.

What Christians refer to as the Lord's Supper was a Passover meal (Luke 22:15-20). Nothing in the Passover meal could be fermented. No leaven was allowed. Where, then, do people get the idea that drinking fermented wine and other alcoholic beverages is all right, when the Word of God says dogmatically that it is *not* all right?

Zephaniah spoke of Jerusalem as a city that did not obey the voice of God, a city that did not receive His correction, and a city that would not draw near to Him (see Zephaniah 3:1-5). Turn this around to God's people today. If we are His people—or if, at least, we desire to be His people—we must observe these things: Obey the Word of God, receive instruction, trust the Lord, and draw near to Him.

That is all that God asks. He isn't asking us to be perfect. He asks that we would be willing to be corrected. We need to be willing to be corrected in every area of our lives.

Stay in Tune with the Word

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

"That the man of God may be perfect, thor-

oughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Great Commission is in the Bible. The last thing Christ said before He ascended to the right hand of the Father was "Go!" Go into all the world, starting in Jerusalem then Judea and Samaria (see Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16; John 20:20-22; Acts 1:8).

Why? Because our God is looking for fruit—not just at home but all over the world. But first, He is looking for fruit in our own lives. We have to learn obedience. If we fail, we are not to quit—we are to rebound by confessing our sin to God, isolating it, getting up, and walking on with God. We make a conscious decision to be willing and obedient.

Be Ye Filled with the Spirit

"For [John the Baptist] shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy [Spirit] even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15).

Why would the Bible make this point about John the Baptist? Of all the things that could have been said about him, the fact that he did not drink was number one on the list.

Do you find it strange that God would say this? John was one of the greatest men born among women, and the thing that characterized him is that he would not drink wine or strong drink. You cannot argue this point without arguing against the Bible.

It is better to obey God than people. If someone offers you a drink socially, tell them right out that you have a conviction against it (Acts 5:29).

Why is this issue so important? God wants obedience from His children. A pastor is required to preach the whole counsel, and this trend in His Church is one that God wants to end today. Many people drink, supposedly in private, but they are doing something privately against the Truth. There are dear people who do it at home, alone and in quiet, but they have a real problem and end up missing church often.

Does this seem as though I am plucking corn on your Sabbath? Well, I can tell you that it is better that you are confronted with the issue now rather than at the Bema Seat of Christ. Would you rather that it not be mentioned at all and then have it brought up when you stand before the Lord?

Wouldn't you rather a pastor and a church take the best approach against possible evil?

Face it, if no one ever took a drink there would be no alcoholics and no drunken drivers killing people on the highways. As a pastor, I have to lead people into the best possible choices for their lives. I am not going to gamble with people's lives and take risks with interpretations.

I must present the Word of God as it is. If, because of our obedience, some have made the right decision to stop this practice, then we have made a great effect for the Kingdom of God.

Chapter Two

OBEDIENCE PRODUCES FRUIT IN OUR LIVES

"Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?" (Ecclesiastes 7:13).

In Mark 11:12-13, Jesus was looking for fruit from the fig tree, and He didn't see fruit. He saw only leaves, and He cursed it. The next day the disciples saw the same tree and it was cursed, withered to its roots.

Dear friend, it is only normal for the Lord Jesus Christ to look for fruit in our lives. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

"Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit

is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:16-20).

The good tree cannot continually bring forth evil fruit; neither can the corrupt or evil tree continually bring forth good fruit. What does God do with the tree—not the person, but the tree? He takes it up and casts it into the fire.

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

Consider the amazing work of God. The whole key to our lives is obedience to the will of God. Obedience brings fruit to our lives.

When I was young, our family planted gardens every single year, and we took good care of them. We raised every kind of vegetable, such as corn, string beans, cucumbers, and peas, for the local factory. But every once in a while, animals would attack the garden and destroy the fruit. At other times, it wouldn't rain; and even though

we worked so hard, no fruit was produced.

Every Christian will be tested for fruit. The day will declare it, and the Holy Spirit will reveal it. What isn't fruit shall be cast into the fire. For what is fruit, we shall receive rewards—gold, silver, and precious stones. But even if we suffer loss, we are still saved, if by fire.

Obey from the Heart

What is God after? Fruit. This does not mean that you have to get so many souls saved, but that there has to be fruit from your life. In Romans 6:17, Paul thanked God for those who "were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." He went on to say that these people *were* servants of sin but having obeyed, are now servants of righteousness. They bring forth fruit unto holiness and everlasting life (Romans 6:18-22).

God is looking for fruit from every single Christian—the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.

Every parent should look for fruit in their children without legislating righteousness. There should be fruit unto holiness and ever-

lasting life.

"But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries" (Exodus 23:22). If God is acting on your behalf, you will last a long time.

Chapter Three

REVENGING DISOBEDIENCE

"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isaiah 1:19).

If we will obey God and His Word, we shall spend our days in prosperity. But if we do not, we will die without experiencing knowledge (see Job 36:11-12).

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;)

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

"And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

Jesus, in His humanity, learned obedience by the things He allowed the Father to work in His life. Therefore, we can also learn obedience. Do

not be occupied with failure if you have disobeyed God. Do not be condemned if you have disobeyed. Just purpose in your heart to learn obedience.

We are to revenge disobedience with obedience. Revenge it. Have you ever seen anyone who is revengeful? Though we are not to practice revenge toward people, that is how we are to act towards disobedience. We are to come against disobedience with a forceful, purposeful attitude.

Purpose to honor every Word of God and learn obedience. Obedience to God's Word is the thing that pleases God. It pleases Him when we are willing and obedient. When we fail, we are to use rebound.

In other words, if you go through a hard time, use the principle of rebound (Proverbs 24:16). Mean business, and sincerely commit the matter to God (Proverbs 16:3). Rebound instantly and turn your back on your sin, even if it requires a process of discipline for a season. And remember that our faith obedience brings glory to God.

Risky Positions

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;

but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

The Word makes it clear that this will happen. No one wants to risk being in this position. The Bible tells us in Mark 12:30-31 to "love the Lord thy God will all thy heart, with all thy mind, soul and body [(meaning strength)] and love thy neighbor as thyself." In this passage, "love" speaks of unconditional love toward the will of God—whether you understand it or not.

When we make God Almighty the object of our lives, then we are filled with His subjective love through the Holy Spirit. Obedience to His desires will be our desire. God's power in us always causes us to triumph.

CONCLUSION

Obedience means yielding and serving (Romans 6:16-17). There is no rebellion in obedience (1 Samuel 12:14). Obedience purifies the soul like no other thing can (1 Peter 1:22).

Obedience is not a works program. In Romans 1:5, it is a grace program through faith, which ends up taking the Gospel to all nations. Obedience is a grace program. It is receiving grace in the living Word of God through the filling of the Spirit. It is not difficult. It is fun, because you have no guilt or shame. If you are going through a process of transformation, a pastor should not condemn you. He is there to help, not to legislate righteousness, but to point out how to receive righteousness.

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.

"And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet

resting places" (Isaiah 32:17-18).

Obedience is not performing works such as keeping Saturday as the Sabbath or doing something to earn a blessing. Obedience is receiving God's life and having it become abundant; bearing fruit in your own soul and having it produce fruit in others through you. That is obedience: the progressive sanctification of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

May God give us the understanding to stand against trends such as social drinking as He gives us the power to live moment by moment in complete agreement to His Holy Word.

The following is a list of scriptures that relate to the issue of wine, strong drink, and drinking:

Genesis 9:20-24: Noah became drunk and was found uncovered in his tent.

Genesis 19:30-38: Lot was made to drink wine and then had sex with his daughters, which produced the Amorites and the Moabites—two rebellious groups of people.

Genesis 27:25: Isaac drank wine and then was open to deception. As a result, he gave away his firstborn's blessing.

Exodus 32:6: Drinking leads to partying and idolatry (also see 1 Corinthians 10:7).

Leviticus 10:9: Conduct prescribed for priests: do not drink wine.

Numbers 6:3: Law of the Nazarite was to stay separate from wine and strong drink.

Deuteronomy 21:20: A rebellious son compared to a drunkard.

Deuteronomy 29:2-6: Children of Israel did not drink wine or similar drink.

Deuteronomy 32:14: Drink the pure blood of the grape (grape juice).

Judges 13:4, 7, 14: Drink no wine or similar drink.

1 Samuel 1:14-15: Hannah did not drink wine or strong drink.

1 Samuel 25:32-38: Nabal was drunk.

2 Samuel 11:13: David got Uriah drunk in an effort to cover his sin with Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 13:28-29: Amnon became drunk, and then he was killed by Absalom.

1 Kings 16:8-10: Zimri was drunk and killed a man.

1 Kings 20:12-21: Ben Haddad and the kings were drinking.

Esther 1:5-22: King Ahasuerus was drinking.

Job 1:13, 18: Job's children were drinking wine before they were killed.

Psalm 107:27: Drunkards can't walk right.

Proverbs 4:14-17: Wicked men "drink the wine of violence."

Proverbs 20:1: Wine is called a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

Proverbs 21:17: He who loves pleasure is called a poor man. He who loves wine and oil will not be rich.

Proverbs 23:21, 29-33; 26:9: The sorrowful consequences of drinking.

Proverbs 31:4-5: It is not for kings and princes to drink wine.

Ecclesiastes 2:3: Giving oneself to wine is folly to the wise.

Ecclesiastes 10:17-18: Drunkenness causes decay.

Isaiah 5:11-12: Woe to those who drink early in the morning and throughout the day.

Isaiah 5:22-23: Woe to strong men who drink.

Isaiah 19:14: A drunken man staggers in his vomit.

Isaiah 22:13: Folly of a life filled with eating and drinking.

Isaiah 24:9, 11, 20: Bitterness comes to those who drink and are left crying for wine in the streets as punishment.

Isaiah 28:1, 3, 7: Wine makes glory become as a fading flower, becomes a crown for pride, causes those who take it to err in vision and stumble in judgment.

Isaiah 29:8: Drinking results in an empty, faint soul.

Isaiah 56:10-12: The blind watchmen only slumber and drink strong drink.

Jeremiah 23:9: Wine overcomes a drunken man.

Jeremiah 35:5, 6, 8, 14: Rebellion related to drinking of wine.

Jeremiah 48:26: Drunkenness is related to magnifying self against God.

Lamentations 4:21: Drunkenness leads to nakedness.

Ezekiel 44:21: Priests were told not to drink wine before they entered the inner court.

Daniel 1:5, 8, 16: Better youth and health for those who avoid wine.

Daniel 5:1-31: Mocking of God and judgment results from drinking wine.

Daniel 5: 23: Drinking wine leads to idolatry.

Hosea 3:1: Wine associated with idolatry and whoredoms.

Hosea 4:11: Wine and whoredoms steal away the heart.

Hosea 7:5: Wine associated with scorners.

Joel 1:5: Animal desire for wine.

Joel 3:3: Girl sold for wine so that others might drink.

Amos 2:8, 12: Wine linked with idolatry.

Amos 4:1: Drunkards oppress the poor, crush the needy.

Amos 6:6: Those who drink are insensitive in identifying with those in distress.

Micah 2:11: False prophets speak of wine and strong drink.

Nahum 1:10: Drunkards are devoured.

Habakkuk 2:5, 15-16: Wine related to the proud, the enlarged desire of hell, and to nakedness.

Habakkuk 2:15: Warnings against those who give their neighbor strong drink.

Matthew 24:48-51: Wine associated with violence and with those

who have portion with hypocrites.

Matthew 26:29 Jesus drank of the fruit of the vine, which is grape juice.

Mark 15:23: Jesus did not drink wine.

Luke 1:15: Jesus Christ would not drink wine or strong drink.

Luke 12:45: Wine again associated with violence.

Luke 21:34: Warning against being out of control under the influence of wine.

Acts 2:15: The disciples were not drunk.

Romans 13:13: Need to walk soberly and stay aware of the needs of men and of God.

Romans 14:21: Wisdom involves staying away from wine so as not to cause a brother to stumble.

1 Corinthians 5:11: Christians cannot keep company with drunkards.

1 Corinthians 6:10: Drunkards "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

1 Corinthians 11:21, 29: Drunkenness at the Lord's table is sin.

Galatians 5:21: Drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 5:18: Be filled with the Spirit rather than be drunk with wine.

1 Thessalonians 5:5-7: People drink in darkness because their works are evil.

1 Timothy 3:3, 8, 11, 12: Elders, deacons, women, and leaders in church should not be given to drinking wine.

So Loving the World

through Christ

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INTRODUCTION

"For God so loved the world…" I never want to be familiar with this message. Through the Holy Spirit of God, as the fruit of our lives, is this the normal mental attitude of our hearts? Or, do we say, "This is difficult" or "That is difficult" (which means we are far, far, far from even being spiritual)?

Jesus Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden is light. That is what the Word of God says, in Matthew 11:30. If, however, after exercising faith, a person finds that the yoke is not easy, and the burden is not light, then there is some resistance going on in his soul—either through a sin of ignorance or through a sin of commission in the flesh.

God so loved the world that He sent us His Son. In this booklet, we will consider the awesome love of God that is for us and can go through us to a world that needs to rest in His everlasting love.

Chapter One

THE TEST OF THE SPIRIT'S FILLING

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16-18).

The test of whether or not I am Spirit-filled is determined by this: Is my yoke easy and my burden light? If it is not, then the Word of God makes it very clear that I am yoked up with my soulish animal nature rather than with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The people who say "This is difficult" and

"That is difficult" have not entered into faith-rest. I cannot twist the Scriptures, neither can I privately interpret them. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The encouragement is to come, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light. If you are yoked up with Jesus Christ, you shall find rest unto your soul. That is what the Scriptures teach. If, however, we know what Jesus Christ says, and we desire to fulfill it, but we are not yoked up with Him, then we will be extremely frustrated and have divided hearts.

There is a rest for the people of God. But people who do not yoke up with Jesus Christ experience what Isaiah 28:20 says: "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it." Anything other than yoking up with Jesus Christ is like a bed too short and a covering that is too narrow. There will be no rest, no matter how sincere our confession, how proper our theological understanding, or how desirous our heart is.

Sadly, that is where a lot of Christians live their entire lifetime, especially when the trials of life are sent through Jesus Christ's plan. They re-

veal Isaiah 28:20 because Matthew 11:28 is not a reality.

No Greater Love

"For God so loved the world." First of all, notice that God did not come just to love Palestine. God did not come just to love the Jewish people, even though He certainly loved them. God did not come just for America. God so loved *the world*. When the Word of God teaches this, it is imperative that we let it affect every part of our being.

He came into the world that He made, but the world knew Him not (John 1:10). In Matthew 13:38, the field is the world. In Matthew 24:14, the Gospel shall be preached to all the world. In Mark 16:15, we are told to go into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature. There seems to be one thing on God's heart, and that is the world—"For God *so loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

A Surrendered Life

When a life is surrendered to Jesus Christ, when the Cross completely takes away the old nature of a man in experiential Christianity, and when the Holy Spirit begins to shed love abroad

in his heart, then his life changes entirely. He is no longer occupied with personality clashes. He no longer has any problem with indifference. His daily life does not render to him a yoke that is difficult or a burden that is complex. Instead, he begins to experience a love for the whole world. His life is occupied with the passion of Jesus Christ.

When a person is on a missionary team somewhere in the world, and that person complains that he is not being ministered unto, he misses the whole point of how God ministers to people. Jesus Christ did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister (Matthew 20:28). This does not mean that, as sinners saved by grace, we do not receive portions from others in the ministry. Rather, it means we have no demands to be ministered to by people, besides what God gives through His providence. So, I have no demands outside of what happens, because all things are for my sake, according to 2 Corinthians 4:15.

A person who is discontent and sows discord is operating in a total misunderstanding of why he is saved. Probably, over the years, this person will never be satisfied with any one leader or church for very long because his de-

mands are greater than the plan that God has provided for his life. This person doesn't understand what it means to "so love" the world as God "so loved" it.

What "So Love" Does

"So loved" means that God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). "So loved" can perhaps be best explained like this: The Bible does not say only that God loves. In fact, the Bible says that He loved and that He loves. He loves *because* He loved.

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3).

Is "so love" selfish? No, it is not. Is "so love" indifferent? No. Does it claim certain rights? No, it does not. Is His "so love" just for America? No. "So love" will go beyond the comforts and conveniences of America and will lay down its heart in a passionate love for the whole world.

God did not just *say* He loved the world. He so loved it that He gave His only begotten Son! Jesus so loved the world that He came Himself. He wasn't like churches that have a missionary budget while they remain totally comfortable in

their Christian lifestyle. He didn't just have a prayer meeting. He came Himself. He didn't just talk about it and have a few missionaries (to whom people were indifferent) in the pulpit. He came Himself. Many in this congregation should be in the world preaching the Gospel within a few years, and not just in America, for God so loved the world that He gave Himself for it.

Chapter Two

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

In 1979, a report numbered 33,000 ordained pastors in the United States of America, a nation which has only six percent of the world's population. Ninety-four percent of the world has just a small group of pastors, compared to this country with its 33,000. Most of the major Sunday schools in the world are in this country. Three-quarters of a billion dollars was spent in one year to get the Gospel to this country through television. Three-quarters of a billion dollars was spent to overly saturate the United States! More than 150 million dollars was spent to build edifices—church buildings—in the United States.

The United States of America had 33,000 ordained pastors, and yet hundreds of languages have no Scripture translations. Half of the world's population still has never heard the Gospel, while churches in America play their

games. The more rights we have, the more complicated our lives become. The more that we are given to push-button ease, the more we want. The more we get, the more independent we tend to become.

Yet, God "so loved" us in our wicked, sinful condition. He died for us even before we thought of responding to Him in any way. Is that the kind of love you have toward people? You have a personality clash. You are indifferent. Is your life difficult? It is because there is a part of you that is very selfish. There is a part of you that is not converted. There is a part of you that is wicked and filthy, and you won't face it with God. You go on with some confessions, but you remain the same person. The more you get the light from the Gospel, the more you react to the messenger or to the ministry that is producing it, because you live in comfortable America.

Oh, we can afford millions of dollars for nice buildings so we can really enjoy a church service in the beauty of a pleasant environment. World Literature Crusade reported that there are 30 multi-million dollar churches within a radius of 30 miles in one little section of the U.S. Yet, hundreds and thousands have never been told there is a Christ who loves them.

For God so loved the world that He gave. This means that the character of His love was sacrificial. He gave His only begotten Son. He didn't keep something for Himself. The scope of His love was the whole world.

What does it mean for the Father to give His only Son? It means that when the Holy Spirit sheds abroad that love in my heart, I won't stay home from church for the sports show. I will be learning doctrine. I won't stay home from soul winning. I will plan in my schedule to go. It means that if I am an elder or a deacon I won't wonder how much authority I should have. I will be available to love, to soul-win, to pray, and to give at every opportunity. I will "so love" as a real leader.

A real leader is always laying down his life. He is not worrying about his authority because he is a slave forever to the commands of the Scriptures. He has no authority other than to implement and to share the commands of Scripture. That is his only lawful right.

Please see this with me. People need to be born with the "so love" of the Gospel. God gave a sacrificial gift, which was His Son. Likewise,

every one who "so loves" gives his most precious possession if it means it will help others. The interest of others is the highest interest in his heart. "So love" in a man finds out what the needs and interests of others are, then it submits to the Holy Spirit and to the Word of God. Then it becomes a slave to Christ—not to the person—to be an instrument to meet that need through his life with God. That is "so love." For God *so loved* the world. He didn't just love the world; He *so* loved it.

A woman so loves her husband that she remains faithful for many years, never murmuring, being a tremendous wife while he has spent most of his life being a wicked person. We have seen cases where the husband gets beautifully transformed after many years of receiving the "so love" of God.

A man so loves his wife and family that he will do everything he can for them and for the church by remaining faithful to the Scriptures.

"So love" is a friend who loves at all times, He will do everything possible for that friend, because he understands that he was born for times of adversity. He doesn't run others down with words or become negative because of projections. No, he builds up with the "so love" of

God.

It is a person who, in the will of God, will "so love" his enemies that he will turn the other cheek. He will not compromise, but he will turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, and give the other cloak. He does it for his enemies because he has been "so loved" by God.

God so loved the world! Instead of smoking or listening to rock music, teenagers should be planning what kind of mission field they will go on. They should get every single thing out of high school to fulfill that goal now so they can be better trained. They may be living in the decade when Christ comes back. Oh, how we need to grasp the "so love" of God.

Chapter Three

GOING INTO ALL THE WORLD

What are we going to do about half of the world's population? What are we going to do about millions who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Are we willing to "so love" that we go ourselves? Are we willing to "so love" and be so committed at homebase that we love and build up the Body in our local assemblies, so that every one who can go will be able to go?

Are we willing to be constrained day and night by compassion that is God's "so love" for the world? Or, are we going to be occupied with details? Are we going to be occupied with little things? Are we going to be occupied with a hundred details about people? Or, do we just so love the world that we go?

I remember speaking to an alcoholic. He was very soft spoken and he said, "I am an alcoholic, and you are doing a good work. But I am an alcoholic." Within two or three minutes, I wept,

and he wept. He prayed the sinner's prayer. Though we were total strangers, the Holy Spirit came between an alcoholic and a servant of God and interacted. The Spirit bore witness with him, and he saw my tears when I said, "Oh, God help him and deliver him from alcohol." That man responded to love.

Creating and Redeeming

I believe that when we go out with the "so love" of God, it does two things: It creates a capacity, and then it redeems. Love is creative before it is redemptive. It is creative, meaning that it creates a capacity so a person can leave the bondage of Satan and the bondage of the flesh to choose what he wants. God gave us His love, and we love people individually, intimately, and specifically. Ultimately, that person you have prayed for and ministered to has tasted the love of God as it should be, and he has a capacity to choose. He may choose the wrong way. He may choose the world or he may choose to be a carnal Christian in church. He may choose to be egocentric. Nevertheless, you know he has had a clear opportunity to be delivered by the "so love" that was ministered to him through you by the Holy Spirit.

Next comes the redemptive love of choosing Christ. Through this kind of love, a person is brought back to the place where he makes right choices with Christ. So many of our ministries are ministries first of creative love through Christ, then of redemptive love, imparting a capacity to choose Christ.

The Bible says that Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it. There was not one single thing about Him that would reveal anything but love. Here is a whole world full of sin, yet Jesus didn't come into the world to condemn it but to save it. Will you understand that the character of "so love" is that it does not condemn?

We do not go to Europe or to any country to condemn anyone or to point fingers. We are not going to some of the filthy immoral countries to expose their sins. We will be honest about the truth, but we are not going to condemn them. Nothing we could say could add to their condemnation. They are condemned already. We can't add to that. They are condemned already because they do not believe. But we go to "so love" them.

And in those moments, the Holy Spirit will take the Word of God, and people will be standing before you, and the Holy Spirit will come

down and use your physical body as an instrument of righteousness to weep in front of them. Someone will stand and say to them, "God loves you. Do you understand? He loves you so much that He died and shed His blood on Calvary and paid for all of your sins. Please don't reject Him! Please don't, because you are so loved." This is called "so loving" the world through Christ.

I am not occupied with relationships. I am not occupied with materialism. I am not occupied with my comfortable lifestyle. I am not occupied with incompatiblility with a wife or husband, with insecurity because of loneliness because of being a widow or divorced. I am not occupied with selfish motivations. I am occupied with "so love," accompanied by a constraining passion to minister to the world.

The Call of the Field

Unless there is a special call of God, we don't need another pastor in another city that already has a hundred pastors. God only knows we need "so love" for the hundreds of people groups who have never heard the Gospel.

Some of you are so unhappy at times because you are trying to find a place outside of God's perfect will. You are trying to find a min-

istry rather than being one. You want to be blessed rather than to be a blessing. You want things to be better rather than taking things to Calvary.

You worry about your plans being interfered with rather than getting into the plan of God. Some want to fall back on their personality for security rather than lean on Jesus Christ for life. Some want a certain kind of ministry that isn't in God's will, but that is not "so love." That is a selfish motive and a wrong direction that is going to hurt the ministry, hurt your family, and hurt you. Get on your knees in prayer and say, "I am available, Lord Jesus, for the world."

Chapter Four

STIRRING UP THE FIRE

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16).

Some want to go back to their Egypt (Numbers 11:4-5; Acts 7:39). Egypt represents the places where it is comfortable and easy for them and their families. In those places they may have a kind of family unity, while God wants them to take a step of faith that is bold and courageous in the character of Christ. That faith obeys the Great Commission and makes a person willing to give his life to fulfill God's heartbeat.

Your Bible college classes are designed not just to give you Bible knowledge. They are designed to impart a burden, to stir up a fire within you that can't be put out, so you will be happy in nothing short of complete obedience to God's will. Graduation from Bible college is

more than a diploma. It signifies the responsibility of a worldwide commission, a commandment to go out in the world and make disciples, teaching them and baptizing them as Jesus commanded.

That is the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20. We are to win people and be there on the mission field to disciple them. And then, after we have really discipled them, we go and do it somewhere else while they stay and minister in their native land. That is "so love" in operation.

"The Gospel should be preached in all the world before I come back," Jesus Christ is saying to us. "My burden from the very beginning of the world is this: I came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

In Luke 15, the parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son are all trying to tell us that Jesus has always been seeking the lost. The field is white and ready to harvest, but the laborers are few. Do you understand that you must get your mind, your heart, and your soul geared to Christ's heartbeat? The "so love" of God must take over, and the Great Commission must become paramount.

You will never be happy competing in

America. You will never be happy in your mundane problems. As for those of us who might be led to stay here to make it possible for others to go, we need to give our lives to prayer, to each other, for the lost, and for the lukewarm Christian society that exists in this country. We must give our lives to Truth and sacrifice our lifestyles. We don't need to murmur and react and complain and have an independent brand of Christianity, which is arrested by our own ego in our consciousness.

The Time Is Short

Everyone needs to stand up and be counted and say, "I know the time is short. I know the hour is late, and we have only reached half of the world's population." The factory job that you have, the office work that you do, the sales position and the teaching position you hold—all are jobs that can be filled by men and women under adverse conditions.

Many people who go out as missionaries come home as casualties. They can't take it because they lack "so love." Everyone feels bad because they are going through so much. Well, they haven't been through so much. They haven't died on a tree yet. They haven't been

through a scourging or six illegal trials the way Jesus was. They are still alive.

A ministry will never be of any value with God unless His "so love" operates in every heart every day. Nothing else matters to those who "so love."

The angels could say to Jesus, "Most of the world will never accept You."

"But," He would respond, "I am still going to die for them."

"But some of them are going to reject You. In fact, all of them are."

"But I am still going," He would say.

"Jesus, the world won't even recognize You, and those who interpret the Scriptures will crucify You."

"I am still going."

"Jesus, Your own family won't even consider that You are God-sent. They won't believe. Even when You go to the Cross, Your own loved ones won't accept You."

"I am still going."

It wasn't difficult to make the decision. No obstruction could stop the "so love" of God from giving His life selflessly for the highest interest of others, no matter what we would do. That is "so loving" the world.

CONCLUSION

I don't know precisely how long it will be before Jesus Christ comes back. But, I do know that life is a very fragile thing. I know that in 1 Samuel 20:3, there is one step between us and death. I know that while you are reading this, hundreds will die. I know that many in the world during this hour will perish and go to hell. America has let it happen. She has stood by.

Many are saying, "I need more money. I need more security. I need a bigger house." Meanwhile, the Word of God is not going out, and souls are perishing in hell.

When are we going to let the Holy Spirit come down with a baptism of love and sweep away our egos at Calvary? When are we going to let God change the world that He died for? When are we going to let Christ change the Church and make it a Church where we can speak freely and go forth boldly with the Gospel?

Satan has hindered us in proclaiming the old-fashioned Gospel for too long. The reason is that people have not even begun to understand John 3:16. So many do not know the "so love" of God.

Dear Father, never let us get familiar with this love—this "so love" that continues to us and through us today. As we face circumstances and trials, let us see You in each aspect. Let us carry Your heartbeat to the world because the time is short and the fields are ripe. In Jesus name we pray this. Amen.

Something Good Is

Going to Happen to You

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

Just what are you expecting from God?

Perhaps you are a Christian, and you are going through a trial. You serve the living God. He has made you in His image, and His thoughts toward you are of peace, and not of evil. Therefore, He desires to give you hope for your final outcome (Jeremiah 29:11, Amplified translation).

Are these the thoughts you are thinking? Or, is your expectation one of defeat? Are difficulties and circumstances keeping you from seeing what God wants to do in your life?

The God we serve has a great plan, and He wants to bring good things into our lives. When our expectation is from Him, we will not be disappointed. If we will rejoice in the Planner, we can also rejoice in His plan. Let's allow the words to this old chorus be the focus of our expectation:

Something good is going to happen to you!
Happen to you, this very day.
Something good is going to happen to you:
*Jesus of Nazareth is passing your way.**

God wants to bless us and help us today. He is our help in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1). The Bible is filled with promises of blessings for the believer, so take this message personally. Believe that something good is going to happen to *you!*

* *Author unknown.*

Chapter One

DEALING WITH WOUNDS, BRUISES, AND PUTRIFYING SORES

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isaiah 1:6).

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14).

There are many reasons why some individuals do not have good expectations for the future. Often, a negative outlook is the result of having a wounded spirit. So much may have happened at different places and times of their lives to cause deep wounds. Because of those wounds, many people become deeply troubled emotionally and mentally.

To those who are struggling with a wounded spirit, God wants you to trust Him. Something good, something everlasting, is going to happen to you as you receive and believe the Word of God.

Many others are battling a spirit of fear, which can also paralyze their expectations for the future. A spirit of fear represents something that has never been cleared out of the soul 'complex'. Think of a complex as a house with many rooms in which to reside or hide. Fear lingers in these rooms of the soul, persuading people that something good will *not* happen to them and that their problems will not change.

God has not given us the spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). He wants to drive away the spirit of fear. He wants you to know that something good is going to happen.

Another problem that can hinder our capacity to expect something good from God is cosmic loneliness.* Beyond the loneliness a person suffers due to separation from loved ones, cosmic loneliness is stimulated by the demonic atmosphere and is marked by an inordinate awareness of ones frailties and vulnerability. Cosmic loneliness can paralyze the ability to

function in day-to-day routines. People who suffer from it may have difficulty receiving and comprehending preaching from the Word of God—words that were sent to be a provision for their deliverance.

Thank God that He is the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3). At a recent service, several people raised their hands for prayer to be delivered from the undefined oppression that comes with cosmic loneliness. That night, they were gloriously touched. Something good happened to those who were lonely.

Sometimes, disease hinders our expectation from God. Perhaps you are battling some form of cancer. You may be very ill, and you have a great desire to be healed. Something good is going to happen to you. Evoke the law of faith by accepting the royal law of love in expectation of God's promises. Every one of them is yea, and in Him Amen (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Confess through the Power of Christ

Still another reason that people may have poor expectations for the future is that they live in continual sin. Romans 1:18-32 clearly addresses categories of willful sin that will grieve and potentially quench the Holy Spirit. When

that happens, communication is cut off to the human spirit—the only place where God communes with man. Professing believers who live in sins such as adultery, homosexuality, or continual negativity are not able to hear from God personally.

In the church, there are some people who are troubled with old sins of homosexuality and lesbianism. It is very serious. Many confess their sin—usually right after they do it. Of course, confession is a wonderful thing and it is necessary; but, confession does nothing unless the power of Jesus Christ is allowed to take over the soul.

Don't accept adultery. Don't accept homosexuality. Don't accept lesbianism. Don't accept fornication or pornography. Don't accept habitual sin and call it your weakness. Be dogmatic and declare victory in these areas. Declare that this is the day that something good is going to happen to you.

**Read* Cosmic Loneliness*, a Doctrine Weekly classic by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2001.*

Chapter Two

SOMETHING GOOD WILL HAPPEN DESPITE OUR FAILURE

"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

"They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

"Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

"This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

"And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

"And they which heard it, being convicted

by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

"She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:3-11).

No Man Condemns Us

The Pharisees brought before Jesus a woman caught in the act of adultery. According to Moses' Law, they were within their rights to stone the woman. The Pharisees wanted to have her killed. But something good was going to happen to her.

Jesus said nothing at first. He stooped down and began writing with His finger on the ground. When they continued to test Him with their self-righteous questioning, He stood and said to the Pharisees, "He who is without sin, cast the first stone." Then he stooped down again and continued to write on the ground.

The Bible doesn't say what Jesus was writ-

ing. Still, from time to time I have pondered this scene and wondered what it was. My personal conviction is that at first He stooped down and wrote the word that means "LAW." But then I imagine that the second time, He crossed it out and wrote "GRACE."

In any case, their conviction was so great that no one dared throw a stone, and they all went out, the oldest to the youngest.

Keep that picture in mind if you find yourself eager to hear a bit of gossip or read an evil report about someone. You had better make sure you are without sin before you get involved in accusations.

Finally, Jesus asked the woman, "Does anyone condemn thee?"

"No man, Lord," was her answer.

And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." Despite her failure, God loved her and blessed her with something good.

With that situation, Jesus introduced the principle of spiritual morality.

Spiritual Morality: Law versus Grace

There is a great difference between legality, morality, and spirituality. A nation that is regu-

lated by laws can be sustained by morality, even if spirituality is lacking. Many Christians in our country honor the value of life. Still, more than a million and a half abortions are performed each year. Abortion may be legal, but it is not moral.

Morality, however, is not sufficient in itself. It is like trying to uphold the law in yourself. Spiritual morality is totally forgiving someone who fails and wants to accept help. Yet, one who condemns and accuses is not spiritually moral. He is, in fact, spiritually bankrupt.

Morality is "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Matthew 5:38). Spiritual morality is loving someone who is unlovely. It is forgiving the one who has hurt you and praying for him to be blessed. Jesus changed the understanding of morality, commanding us to pray for our enemies and to do good to those who despise us and take advantage of us. Yes, God wants something good to happen to our enemies, and He often uses us to make it happen.

Most Christians do not understand spiritual morality. Spiritual morality is based on Redemption: the just dying for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18). It is based upon Jesus taking our place on the Cross and shedding His precious Blood. Because of His shed blood, we are able to enter

into a new royal law of love. The royal law goes beyond morality and becomes spiritual morality. Because of the work that was finished on the Cross, spiritual morality has become the foundation of God blessing us. Something good *will* happen to us.

The Finger of God versus the Power of the Serpent

"Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said." (Exodus 8:19).

"And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18).

"But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke 11:20).

It is the finger of God that defined His holiness (Exodus 31:18). Demons are cast out by the finger of God (Luke 11:20). Jesus spoke and then wrote on the ground with His finger, and self-righteous men were convicted of sin (John 8:3-11).

One of the great privileges we have as born-

again Christians is to enter into the power of the finger of God. The finger of God as explained in Luke 11:20 refers to God's Kingdom, which is the government of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit through the Word of God. This government operates through believers—members of His royal family—who have received His mind by the Word and the Spirit.

In Genesis 12:9-13 and Genesis 20:2-6, we can see two instances of Abraham lying to save his neck, making men think that Sarah was his sister and not his wife. But God protected them and something good came out of it. He didn't deserve something good to happen; his sin was terrible. Yet, God is filled with grace and truth.

The Law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). This is where we see the highest form of spiritual morality. Despite Abraham's sin, God made something good happen to him. A spiritual law became a moral act of the Finished Work of Jesus Christ!

Chapter Three

GOD PROVIDES FOR OUR NEEDS

"And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

"Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

"Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

"Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and

pitched his tent toward Sodom.

"But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

"And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

"For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

"And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered" (Genesis 13:8-16).

Witnesses of God's Goodness

Let's talk to some people in the Bible who had something good happen to them:

Abraham, God gave you a promise and you believed. When the pressure was on, you let Lot choose—so God chose for you. And something good happened to you, Abraham. God gave you a family that covered the whole earth, and you became known as the father of our faith. By sight, God's promise seemed impossible. But something good came out of it all.

Joseph, your brothers wanted to kill you, ac-

cording to Genesis 37:20-21. But Reuben intervened, and instead you were sold into slavery to the Ishmaelites. You wound up in Egypt and faced all kinds of trouble in Pharaoh's house. Yet, while you were in prison, God gave you the interpretation of a dream for Pharaoh and you were promoted. Imagine it, Joseph! You became the number two man in what was the world's most powerful empire at the time. Yes, when you were sold into slavery, your brothers meant it for evil. God, however, meant it for good. Something good did happen, Joseph, and many lived because of it. What's more, something good also came to those who meant it for evil.

Hannah, you so longed for a baby. You cried before God because you didn't have any children (1 Samuel 1:6-20). God was waiting to let something happen to you. When you finally were given a child, what a child he was! Samuel was born to you. He became a boy who heard from God and a man who anointed Saul and David, the first kings of Israel. Something good happened to you, Hannah.

Our God Has Never Failed

"…Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the

good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Joshua 23:14).

Trust in the Lord. Believe all of His good promises. As the psalmist said, "…the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11). Get ready! Something good is going to happen.

CONCLUSION

"And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you" (Deuteronomy 26:11).

"There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:45).

"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing" (Psalm 34:10).

We have a great privilege to know that something good is going to happen to us—this very day! God hears our prayers.

Even though you may be suffering from an illness, something good is going to happen to you. Something good is going to happen in your business and in your finances.

Though you may be living in a negative psychological reflection of a problem that happened

in your childhood, your adolescence, or in your marriage, something good is going to happen.

Just believe and receive from our loving God right now. We serve a God who wants to bless His people. Seek Him now. Practice His presence. Believe in His promises. Confess His Word. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). When you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill your lusts (Galatians 5:16).

God has targeted you for a blessing. Believe God, point to yourself, and begin singing:

"Something good is going to happen to me!
Jesus of Nazareth is passing my way."

Song of Love

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The writers of the New Testament epistles often used the following phrase: "We know… ." I like that! Just for a few examples, read Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 5:1, 1 John 3:24. The Son of God gives believers both understanding and experiential application—a full comprehension of truth—which keeps us from following idols. A Christian who is truly born again and who has learned doctrine with a categorical emphasis knows he is of God. He also knows that the cosmic world system lives in demonic infection (1 John 5:19), which can only be overcome by seeing ourselves in the Son and living by every word of God, through God, in eternal life.

By studying the Song of Solomon, we come to know what love is all about. This is the song of all songs. There are many, many, songs in the world. Even in the Scriptures, we have Moses' song, Miriam's song, and David's songs —all inspired and very beautiful. Yet, we call Solomon's

the "Song of Songs." It is the song of Bridegroom to His Bride. It is the great song of Jesus Christ to His Church. Some try to rationalize and make this poetic story relate to King Solomon and his competition with a humble boy from the hills. But this is the song of Jesus to the Redeemed, the ones He bought back from the slave market of sin through His death upon the Cross at Calvary. It is the song of songs.

This booklet was written to reveal the heart of God toward His Church, His people who have been called out from the world to serve and to worship the Lord by lifting Him up so that men would be drawn to Him. When we know that heart, when we have this understanding and can apply it in our circumstances, others will know Him too.

Chapter One

IT IS NOT GOOD FOR MAN TO BE ALONE

"And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

"And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

"And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

"And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:15-25).

As we read the account of the Creation in Genesis 1 and 2, we see that God declares what He made as "good." God saw that the light was "good" (Genesis 1:4). The land separated from the water, the herbs grew, and the fields budded, and God saw those things as "good" (Genesis 1:10, 12). "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the

evening and the morning were the sixth day" (Genesis 1:31).

Yet, in Genesis 2, God saw that Adam was without a helper meet for him. And that, God said, was "not good." So He put Adam to sleep and took a rib from his side. From that rib He fashioned Eve to be Adam's wife and the mother of all living.

This is a picture of what God did in fashioning the Church to be the Bride of Christ.

Submission and Surrender

The Bride in Song of Solomon learned the great process of how Jesus Christ approaches His people.

"The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.

"Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

"Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.

"I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains

of Solomon.

"Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept" (Song of Solomon 1:1-6).

First, here we see that the Bride loved the kisses of the Bridegroom's mouth. The kiss speaks of submission. By letting Him kiss her, she was saying that she would listen to what He says. But then she became overly self-conscious. She kept other vineyards, but she could not keep her own vineyard. She saw her heart as dark, filled with shame. Resentment and rejection scandalized her because she could not produce what she thought she should be producing. She was consumed with thoughts of her weakness.

Then the Bridegroom spoke to her: "…Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone" (Song of Solomon 2:10-11). Yes, her heart was dark; her failure was causing feelings of rejection and resentment. Others were not edifying her. But the Bridegroom said to her in so many words, "You are the best!"

What was He doing? He was awakening her

to a consciousness of her position. She is His Bride!

The Bride of Eternity

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" (Revelation 19:7-9).

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

Just as God saw that it was not good for the first Adam to be alone, so God the Father saw that it was not good for the Second Adam—Jesus Christ—to be alone. He fashioned a Bride, the Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of men. Now the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." Together, in the purpose of God, they announce that whosoever will may come to the water and drink freely. Those

who are hungry and without money can come buy and eat (Isaiah 55:1).

Chapter Two

NOURISHED AND CHERISHED

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:25-33).

What does the Lord do when a believer lives in failure and weakness and shame? He sets in motion a process to awaken that person to the reality of his position.

The Bride in Song of Solomon was very nervous. She felt uncomfortable about her appearance, but the Bridegroom always referred to her as His fair one. "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks (Song 4:1). He knew something beautiful was in her. Her eyes gave it away. What kind of eyes were those eyes? They were eyes of the Holy Spirit. Her position was secure, just as our position as members of Christ's Church, His Bride, is secure.

She was seated at the King's table. She was brought to the banqueting house, and the King raised a banner over her—a banner of love. Now she could rest in the presence of the King. His approach to her sense of rejection and pain was to love her and to let her know how much He

loved her.

Fed and Comforted

Ephesians 5 reveals a picture of a man nourishing and cherishing what is a part of him. No man in his right mind would damage his own flesh. According to Genesis 2:24, a bride and her husband become one flesh: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." To do damage to his wife, a husband is really damaging himself.

In his right mind, a husband nourishes and cherishes his wife. The Greek word for nourish is ektrepho, which speaks of helping a child through the transition from milk to solid food. The idea of the word contains the element of loving care. Children are force-fed by parents who love them. Their capacity for solid food is developed with great care and great love. "Cherish" is thalpo, and it speaks of keeping someone warm and protected from the elements.

Jesus does that with us. He died for us, and now He intercedes for us. He covers us and protects us so that the wicked one touches us not (1 John 5:18). He builds us up so that we will not focus upon our weaknesses and shortcomings.

We are brought to His table, and there He gives us an understanding of who we are to Him.

There is a grand design in all of this.

"The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

"My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.

"My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone" (Song of Solomon 2:8-11).

He leaps on the mountains, He skips on the hills, and He reveals Himself through the walls, through the lattice. In giving His people the proper sense of security, Christ challenges us to go beyond—to move outside of our walls. As with Peter, who stepped out of the boat and onto the water, we can do miraculous things with and for Christ when our sights are set on Him. We can be drawn out into new things. We take risks because we know that He is there to save us should we begin to sink.

Chapter Three

THINKING ABOUT THE BELOVED

"I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

"What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

"My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

"His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.

"His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.

"His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with

sapphires.

"His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

"His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" (Song of Solomon 5:8-16).

In chapter 5 of Song of Solomon, the Bridegroom comes to the Bride's room and seeks to be with her. At first she does not want to move from her bed, and so He goes. Then her heart turns, and she goes to the door, but He is gone. Out into the street she goes looking for her beloved. She missed an opportunity for intimacy, and now she is desperate to redeem the moment.

Many of us suffer in this way. We miss out on chances to be near to God. Bad choices, busy schedules, or details of life cloud our vision for a moment, and we lose our way.

But note that the Bride's response is a right one. She realizes her mistake and gets going. It is just like the prodigal son in Luke 15. He came to himself in the pig pen and said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will

arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:18-19). The prodigal son recognized his position. He also knew the heart of his father. He would be welcome at home, despite all that he had wasted.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:20-24).

This is the way we welcome people home. In Song of Solomon 5:7, the Bride meets watchmen in the streets who smite her and wound her. The keepers of the wall of the city strip away her

veil. Sadly, there are believers who treat weak and defeated people this way. They say harmful things and, even worse, they uncover and leave exposed those who most need the care and protection of the Body of Christ.

The Ministry of the Body

See how the daughters of Jerusalem minister to the Bride in Song of Solomon 5. This should be the pattern for us in the Body of Christ. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" (Song 5:9). No accusations, no wounding, no uncovering. The daughters turn the Bride's mind back toward her Beloved.

Now the Bride begins to think about all the wonderful characteristics she can remember about the Bridegroom.

His head is like gold, she says, pointing to the way Jesus Christ thinks.

His eyes are the eyes of the dove: The Holy Spirit controls the way He sees things.

His hands are gold rings, showing us how Christ's everlasting arms are under us in the plan of redemption.

His legs are pillars of marble. Jesus stands with us in the midst of everything we go through.

His lips are like lilies, and His mouth is most sweet. Twice the Bride makes reference to her Beloved's mouth. Oh, the words of God and what they mean to us! They are so precious. Truth is what keeps us. The Bible gives us what we need to succeed and to overcome failure.

As the Body of Christ, we should be asking the right questions. Our communication should turn the hurting and foundering to thoughts of peace and not thoughts of evil. These wounded ones need encouragement.

God meets us wherever we are. He uses His people to comfort and cover and edify one and other. No matter what place we are in, we should come boldly to the throne of grace. There we will find help in time of need. Let's draw near together and be blessed in the plan and purpose of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

In these pages, I have taken the Song of Solomon and have given it a New Testament commentary. This great book is the song of God's Lamb to His sheep. We are the sheep of God's pasture, and we hear His voice. The Scriptures correlate for us a spiritual application of spiritual phenomena whereby we know that we are of God.

We know how precious His thoughts are toward us. We know that we are in Him—in the Son, in Jesus Christ—and we are living through God's eternal life. Resurrection power is ours, and we know it. The Holy Spirit, the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, dwells in us to quicken us in our mortal bodies.

Christ is our friend forever. His is a divine friendship that always does everything it can for the object of this friendship. As I grow with Christ, I learn of His Song of Love toward me. I serve Him through His Spirit, through His

love. He will give me love beyond anything I could ask or think. This is the song to remember in whatever circumstances I face. This is the song of songs!

Songs and Laughter

in the Battle

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

During wartime, some unusual songs are written, and many of them become very popular. Soldiers tell stories about how certain songs (like *"K-K-K-KATY"*) got them through long days and nights when they were hunkered down in foxholes, with bullets flying around their heads.

One tune that I remember was sung by Jimmy Durante during World War II:

"You gotta ac-cent-u-ate the positive,
Eliminate the negative,
Latch on to the affirmative,
And don't mess with Mister In-between."

It was a catchy tune with a great message of how to think happy thoughts all the time.

Another thing that has been very important in wartime is humor. Comedian Bob Hope organized shows near the scenes of the battles, just to provide some comic relief for soldiers.

Really, it's all right to laugh. Try it sometime! It will not make lines on your face. Old age will, but laughing will not. Laugh a little bit now; you may not be alive tomorrow. Somebody said he could laugh because he can pay his bills, and somebody else said he could laugh because he is alive and still owes them! But it is one thing to laugh, and another thing to have joy beyond the laughter.

This booklet was written to reveal to us just how full our joy can be in Christ. The Holy Spirit lives within every born-again believer. He was sent into each heart because of a decision of faith. Jesus Christ will never leave us, and He will not forsake us. In times of trouble, even in great sorrow, He instructs us to speak to ourselves in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Ephesians 5:19). In these pages, I believe you will see that living this way will bring rejoicing and triumph, no matter how desperate the situation seems.

Chapter One

THE SOURCE OF OUR JOY

"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

"Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with

singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.

"The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

"Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:1-6).

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope

of the glory of God.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

"And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Romans 5:1-5).

I love this passage. James 1:2 says, "Count it all joy when you enter into divers temptations." Here, the verb "count" in the Greek means to be led and guided into all joy when you enter into temptations. Good health did not bring joy to George, a man in our church who battled leukemia for several years and received over one hundred blood transfusions in the process. He thanked God for the medical effort to make him well. But it was Jesus Christ and Him alone who brought joy to George.

I thank God when the sun shines, but the sun shining is not the cause of my joy. Neither is the rain a cause of my losing it. You see, no matter what the situation, this is what the Word of God teaches us: The joy of the Lord is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is

given to us.

Enjoy Your Labors

"Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isaiah 65:22*b*).

"…Every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor, it is the gift of God" (Ecclesiastes 3:13).

Someone said to me, "All I do is work." Well, the Bible says, "Enjoy it!" You are working much of the time you are awake, so you might as well enjoy working. Your work does not bring joy to you, and it is not going to take it away. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, and peace… (Galatians 5:22). Therefore, as the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in your heart, He also gives you joy: the joy of God—not of your work.

"At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth" (Job 5:22).

Don't take life so seriously. Do you know that right now, heaven has the date of when you are going to die? It could be interesting to find it out, but that would not bring you joy.

It is a beautiful thing when we understand the privilege that we have in knowing directly from the Word of God that God gives His peo-

ple joy. Because of salvation and our eternal security, because of the Finished Work and the impartation of Jesus Christ, we understand the Father's plan, we see the Son's execution of that plan, and we experience the Holy Spirit revealing to us what the Son knows as He works the details of that plan into our lives (John 16:13-14).

Chapter Two

SONGS SET US FREE

One of our missionaries was on his way home. It was a long trip and he just started whistling on the airplane. He whistled, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" and "There Is Power in the Blood." An older couple, both quite ill at the time, started weeping. The husband said to our missionary, "We have to return home from the mission field ourselves because of cancer, and we were so happy that you were whistling 'What A Friend We Have In Jesus.'" Then, the man started to weep again, but his face revealed the presence of joy in the midst of his sorrow.

It is so great that God gives us songs in the battle. In Acts 16:19-33, Paul and Silas were beaten and locked up in a prison, but at midnight they prayed and they sang. Paul did not have the best voice in the world. The Greek texts indicate that he probably had a raspy, squeaky voice. There he was at midnight, singing with

that squeaky voice. They were locked in stocks, facing judgment that would come the next day, and both Paul and Silas were praying and singing. The guards heard them, the other prisoners heard them, and suddenly, the earth began to quake. God opened the doors of the prison and loosened their bands.

The prison guard was ready to kill himself, but Paul and Silas didn't flee, nor did any of the other prisoners. As a result, the guard and his whole family were saved and baptized.

In spite of a terrible situation, Paul and Silas were just counting it all joy. They were rejoicing in tribulation. Why? Because this is how a Christian derives his strength.

I thank God for good health, but good health is not the cause of joy. Amy Carmichael, a missionary to India at the turn of the century, suffered an accident that left her bedridden for the rest of her life. For a time, she battled her condition, questioning God and not understanding why. But when she did understand why, she let God put a song in her heart. At the foot of her bed were the words "Every day is sweeter than the day before." She was bedridden, but she came to understand that the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). She continued to

serve God in India for many years, until she died. Today, we have volumes of poems and encouraging words that she wrote in that time because she let God give her songs in her battle.

A Time for a Song

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

"We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

"For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

"How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" (Psalm 137:1-4).

The Israelites put their harps on the willow trees, and the Babylonians said to them, "We want you to sing." But they said, "How can we sing when we're in a strange land? We can't sing here in Babylon. We can't play our harps. We're blue. We're depressed."

And the Israelites would not sing.

But the Word of God says, in Psalm 126, that when their captivity was turned, Israel became "like them that dream. Then our mouth was filled

with laughter, and our tongue with singing," and even the heathen saw it and said, "The Lord hath done great things for them."

The people of Israel said, "The LORD has turned our captivity, and because of that we are glad." But for us, we can sing in the midst of captivity. Jesus Christ delivers the soul, delivers the mind, and delivers the emotions. *That* will make a person extremely happy in any God-given situation.

Chapter Three

LAUGHTER IS GOOD MEDICINE

"Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

We were on the radio back in 1987, when a woman called from New Orleans and said she had a gun to her head. I still have the letter from that woman, whom we have never met. She was extremely depressed. Everything was going wrong for her, and she was ready to end her life.

It just so happened that on that day we had a "joy" anointing. I mean, you could not say a thing that day that didn't make us laugh. Everything was so funny to us.

I forget the details of what was said back then, but we were just joking and laughing and saying how good life is, and how good God is,

and how good everything is, and how fun it is to be alive. We spoke of how the Blood delivers us from all sin, and how the power of God cleanses and takes over our life, and how God's strength is made perfect in our weakness, and that Jesus Christ is alive today. We laughed and joked and laughed and joked again.

This woman got on the air and said, "If anyone can have that much fun, then I guess life is worth living." She accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior, and today she is still listening to our program.

Do you know what delivered her? God used songs and laughter in a time of trouble.

Did somebody take your security away so that you are not happy anymore? Your joy was in your circumstances that made you feel secure. Did something go wrong in your life and take away your joy? Is that what happened? I believe Jesus said, in John 15:11, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." That is exactly what He said. He gave us His joy, so that our joy may be full.

Don't walk around feeling sad. Let God give you a song. Laugh a little. Recognize that the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Imagine a person who gets up at five o'clock in the morning to study for his Bible class. Then he goes out, and it's raining and it's cold. He goes to work. He has a mean, ugly boss. He turns on the radio and somebody on the news says the government is corrupt. A new study says there will be a famine within the next decade. Another group forecasts more trouble to come within the next year.

This guy cannot help but think, "My God, what's going on here? Everything about life is negative." Then he goes to the doctor and finds out he needs a test for cancer. He can't pay his bills properly. In fact, he has all kinds of reasons to cry.

He is all beaten up in his mind and emotions, but then this man comes to a Wednesday night church service and hears a sermon about "Everything's All Right in My Father's House." Now that's a great song! And the Word of God revives his soul and renews his strength in the midst of the battle.

God says that *He* is the source of our life. He has an eternal purpose for us. The Holy Spirit guides us and leads us. The Word of God is the mind of Christ. His redemption is real. The Holy Spirit's power over sin is absolutely wonderful.

Whoever you are, wherever you are, you can have the joy of the Lord with songs and laughter. It is a beautiful thing when God's people begin to see that the greatest thing in all the world is to be saved and filled with the Holy Spirit and simply to love God.

Decide to Live in Joy

George, the man with leukemia, said, "Hey, I made a decision. I am not going to die, just not going to die. I'm gonna live." In his soul was the joy of the Lord. And though he eventually died, he never showed any brooding or self-pity. He always had a tremendous spirit of life and blessed anyone who came around him.

I don't know what your situation is, but everything is going to be all right.

Famine and tribulation cannot take away what the Holy Spirit gives me. And the Holy Spirit gives you that joy of the Lord. It is God's joy. And the purpose of that joy is to fill up your joy. Supernatural joy fills up human joy.

Human joy comes from circumstances. It comes from good things that happen. But God's joy comes from the source of Jesus Christ and the Finished Work and the fact that you are a saint, a child of God on your way to heaven.

Your sins are forgiven. You have been redeemed. God is with you. He will never leave you, but He will bless you. You cannot run away from His blessing. Some of you would have much happier lives if you were joyful.

Glory in Tribulation

The unique thing is that we are justified by faith. We have peace with God. We have access to Him by faith through the grace wherein we stand. The Bible says, in Romans 5:3, that we glory in tribulation. That word "glory" speaks of rejoicing in tribulation, and this is what I believe. I will do everything I can do to be responsible. I will do everything I can do to be accountable. But I am not going to be sad about life.

We sometimes get misunderstood at funerals. Everyone is sad because they are in mourning, then I get up and speak on resurrection. I try to bring in a measure of joy to some funerals. (I'll do it for your funeral if you'll tell me in advance when you're going to die and what you want me to do!) But seriously, the important thing at weddings and funerals is that first I want to honor God and His promises to you, and then to honor you.

One thing is for certain. There are things we

cannot change, so why worry about things we cannot change? Why get depressed about things we cannot change? There are plenty of things we can change and we should change them. But why worry about the things we cannot change? Why not understand that we derive strength from the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit?

Chapter Four

HUMOR AND HALLELUJAHS

In Genesis 18, God visited Abraham and Sarah. She had wrinkles, and she was so old. Abraham was impotent. Then God said to her, "Sarah, you're going to become pregnant," and Sarah laughed up a storm. She looked at those old wobbly hands and she laughed up a storm. She had looked at those wrinkles so many times, wondering what it would be like to be young again. She laughed, and laughed, and laughed as God visited her and said, "You are going to have a child."

Can you picture her in a hospital with twenty-five-year-olds? They say to her, "What are you in for?" And she says, "I'm pregnant."

"Ah, sure you are!" Of course, no one believes her.

But I've always pictured Abraham waiting out in the hallway. He is one hundred years old, and the doctor comes out and says, "It's a boy."

And Abraham remembers the promise of God, and says, "And his name shall be called Isaac."

"Isaac" means "laughter." How about that? Whenever Abraham and Sarah looked at Isaac, the promised child, they rejoiced. The Messiah would eventually be born through his seed. God allowed a wonderful thing to happen through the supernatural intervention of grace. And every time they looked at him, they remembered that his name meant "laughter."

Joy Brings Victories

Heavyweight boxer Evander Holyfield was in the midst of a difficult fight. Now, I know some say that preachers are not supposed to watch fights, but here is one who did and liked it. About the eighth round, it looked as though the other guy had won. But Holyfield came back and had a couple of decent rounds, and the last round was about even. In the end, Holyfield won.

But the difference about that fight was this: If you could have heard the managers in Holyfield's corner, they were saying to him, "We are going to church and praise God tomorrow. Now get this thing over." They encouraged him in the

midst of the battle.

The joy of the Lord brings strength into your bones. A merry heart brings a cheerful countenance, and it does good like medicine (Proverbs 15:13, Proverbs 17:22). But an old, dried-up spirit withers the bones.

I once read the story of a man who couldn't walk. He was all crippled up with pain, and then he started laughing. He looked for reasons to laugh and to be happy every day. Doctors concluded that he was healed through no other treatment than laughter, and he kept getting better. He couldn't walk. His hands were filled with arthritis, the crystallization of waste in his joints. But he found ways to laugh out loud on purpose, and he became well.

There was a Red Sox pitcher who would watch The Three Stooges movies, and then he would go out and pitch a tremendous game. The laughter relaxed him so he could pitch without stress. And if Bob Stanley didn't watch the Three Stooges, he'd get knocked out of the box. I really never appreciated the humor of the Three Stooges. But they helped him!

The Three Stooges can't bring joy in my life. They can make me laugh sometimes. But when it's over, they cannot bring joy into my life. Only

the Holy Spirit can bring joy into my life.

Stop thinking about your problems. Stop thinking about your life and your circumstances and your adversity! Stop thinking about the way things are going, and come to God and receive the filling of the Spirit continually. Use recovery if you fail, get up and go on, and begin to really enjoy the Lord.

Enjoy the Lord! He has promised never to leave you or forsake you. Let God give you songs and laughter in the midst of your battles.

CONCLUSION

When you read the promises of God and receive the filling of the Holy Spirit, you enter into a new kind of derived strength, a new kind of power. It is good for your bones, and it will help you just as medicine helps you. The Word of God makes it crystal clear that this joy not only gives Christians a relaxed mind and relaxed emotions, but that it is also a stronghold against demons.

With a song in your heart, tribulation can come and you can glory in it. Problems come and you rejoice in them. You face difficulties and you rejoice in them.

To me, when Satan tries to come in, it is a lot of fun to go for a ride in the car with my wife. She has a great sense of humor, and we just joke around until both of us are laughing. We see people and things that just make us laugh, and we purpose to relax and be happy.

This world needs to see Christians in a vic-

torious life conquering their problems, overcoming temptation. This world needs to see Christians smile and be happy. As we face trials and troubles of every sort, we ought to be able to relax with God's people and be happy in Christ, through the love and joy of the Holy Spirit shed abroad in our hearts.

Spend Your Life

for Christ

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour", an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6).

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

I want to examine the psychology of being consumed for Christ. Again and again in God's divine program, the Holy Spirit will call upon our hearts to be totally and completely consumed upon the altar of the Lord. Our lives are laid down and become as ashes to be carried out to a clean place. In one sense, this happens once, when we recognize the truth of Romans 6:6 and Galatians 2:20. Then we experience this reality by grace through faith. Yet, in another sense, over and over we will be consumed.

My future as a born-again believer is unique. In order to realize what God has in mind, I have to realize God and then have His mind. To be consumed readily means that everything not of God is burned out of me and purged away.

Sentimentality is one thing that must be purged from us. The best test for sentimentality is revealed in my attitude toward a good Christian friend who does not want to be consumed in Christ's purpose for his life. My attitude should be to love that person in truth. Truth and the convictions truth brings into my life will govern my exchanges with this person.

The Bible does not make a single provision for a believer to live outside of the process of discipleship. It doesn't matter if you are pushing seventy years of age, God has called you to be a disciple, a disciplined learner of the truth.

God wants divine viewpoint to consume each of us so that we can realize God and have the mind of Christ. In these pages, we will look at just how important it is for us to burn for Jesus and think as He thinks.

Chapter One

OFFERING UP YOURSELF TO GOD

"And the sons of Aaron brought the blood unto him: and he dipped his finger in the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar, and poured out the blood at the bottom of the altar:

"But the fat, and the kidneys, and the caul above the liver of the sin offering, he burnt upon the altar; as the LORD commanded Moses.

"And the flesh and the hide he burnt with fire without the camp.

"And he slew the burnt offering; and Aaron's sons presented unto him the blood, which he sprinkled round about upon the altar.

"And they presented the burnt offering unto him, with the pieces thereof, and the head: and he burnt them upon the altar.

"And he did wash the inwards and the legs, and burnt them upon the burnt offering on the altar.

"And he brought the people's offering, and

took the goat, which was the sin offering for the people, and slew it, and offered it for sin, as the first.

"And he brought the burnt offering, and offered it according to the manner.

"And he brought the meat offering, and took an handful thereof, and burnt it upon the altar, beside the burnt sacrifice of the morning.

"He slew also the bullock and the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings, which was for the people: and Aaron's sons presented unto him the blood, which he sprinkled upon the altar round about,

"And the fat of the bullock and of the ram, the rump, and that which covereth the inwards, and the kidneys, and the caul above the liver:

"And they put the fat upon the breasts, and he burnt the fat upon the altar:

"And the breasts and the right shoulder Aaron waved for a wave offering before the LORD; as Moses commanded.

"And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings.

"And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and

blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people.

"And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces" (Leviticus 9:9-24).

The burnt offering beautifully displays the singularity of divine definition. The animal was taken, every part of it, and brought before the Lord. The ears were cut off and placed into the hands of the priest. That pictured the principle that the one making the offering was committing himself to hearing only the words of the Messiah. With the head, the eyes of the animal were put before the priest, and this spoke of people seeing only with the eyes of Christ. The process typified the truth expressed in Romans 12:1-2:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

No longer do I present my offering before the Lord. Instead of the substitute, I present my body before Him. As the parts of the animal were presented before the Lord, so are the parts of myself presented to Him, and the entire offering is consumed before God.

A young man came to me once and said, "I want to give myself to the ministry." What was He saying? He was saying that he was ready to be a burnt offering. He was ready to have Jesus consume every part of his life.

Numbering Our Days

We only have a few years here on earth. For some of us, those years have been reduced to months, or even days. The only way to live here is to enter into the psychology of being consumed. The fire of the Holy Spirit will come into us and consume our hearts and lives as we present our bodies.

We need to let God handle every detail of life by allowing God's will to be established in our conscious minds according to His Word. When I have entered into the psychology of being consumed, then there is not one speck of flesh that can hold on to anything.

The greatest thing that can happen to any-

one on earth is for him to get hid in the Body of Christ and make every moment count for God.

Here's a young person contemplating college. He could go to a secular college and prepare for a career and still be a good Christian and serve God. But what did Jesus say to His disciples? "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Luke 14:33). No one can answer this call unless he is willing to leave his nets by the water and allow himself to be consumed in the purpose of Christ.

Some never learn how to offer up their lives as burnt offerings. They never present themselves upon the altar. They live life according to the letter of the Word but not according to the power of the Spirit.

Chapter Two

PUTTING AWAY THE NATURAL LIFE

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy [Spirit].

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

"And they continued stedfastly in the apos-

tles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

"And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

"And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:37-47).

Read through the book of Acts. Three thousand were added to the church, following Peter's sermon in Acts 2. Three thousand were baptized with love. Three thousand shared their property and had all things common and broke bread together daily. Three thousand people were in that group, and not one of them counted anything as his own. These three thousand people made their lives as burnt offerings.

Three thousand brought their eyes before the Lord so that they could see with singularity. Three thousand people brought their ears to

Him so that they could hear with an anointing. Three thousand offered their tongues and began to speak with grace and with peace. Their feet walked in righteousness and their hands served in holiness. Three thousand people were saying, "We will live as living sacrifices. We will allow the fire of the Lord to come and consume us."

A Christian cannot consume himself. He cannot even crucify himself. He cannot enter into the psychology of it, the study of it, the mind of it, unless the fire comes. Being consumed is a humiliating thing because all that we are is burnt up by all that He is. We are left with nothing to hold onto.

Renouncing Our Rights

Every believer needs to get to the place where he does not have a single right. He comes to where his mind has been crucified, his tongue has been burnt with fire. Adam, the old man, has been totally cut off in this condition. No longer does this believer look at his yesterdays and its comforts and conveniences. That is all put behind him. It is all gone, gone forever. He has been crucified. He has been buried. The fire comes in to take what he presents to God. He enters into the process, the progress, the life, and

the reality of being consumed.

This individual has said goodbye to sentimentality. He counts everything about his natural life as dung that he might win Christ and be found in Him and His righteousness (see Philippians 3:8-9). This believer has renounced his rights to everything. He did not do this according to the Law. He did not resign these things in an effort to measure up to some standard. No, he just put everything about himself on the altar and let the fire of God consume him.

He is totally and completely God's, and this is the way that he lives. He acts like it, he plans like it, he thinks like it, he responds like it. There is not a single thing in his mind and body that is reserved. He makes no provision for the flesh at all.

The humility of Jesus Christ has entered into him. He confesses His faults. He repents. He feels like dust, and yet he is a conqueror. He recognizes his weaknesses, and yet he knows that he has a great treasure. He is living in the power of it. He never compares himself to others. He makes no plans for his Adamic life at all. Everything about him equals this one thing: the presentation of his entire life and his trust upon God for the consequences of his commitment.

He is consumed upon the altar.

Why is this so vital?

It is so vital because it is the only way for a believer to live and produce God's life. What is the sense of serving God if we do not produce God's life in the process? What is the sense of being loved without loving others? What's the sense of having peace without sharing that peace? What's the sense of having power and not executing that power?

The only way Jesus Christ can evangelize and disciple others in this world is for every Christian to lay everything on the altar and be consumed. Let's allow the fire of the Spirit to take everything away until there's no trace of any attitude left in us.

Chapter Three

THE POWER OF SUFFICIENT GRACE

After a long day of helping some people with a special mission, I got home and I just had to go right to the Bible. I dived into the Psalms and meditated over a chapter from Proverbs. I was thinking about the depth of my opportunity with God. The Word of God so captivated me and captured my thoughts. I was not reading to find something to preach on; I was reading to be personally fed by God.

This happens when we allow ourselves to be consumed by God and spent for His purpose. Every single moment becomes available to Christ. This is a life of total humility. It is a life that carries an attitude that resigns everything to God. It is a life that had nothing to hide and nothing to be afraid of. You are not covering up anything. You are who you are by the grace of God.

Oh, we still have weaknesses. The treasure within us does not nullify our weaknesses. Instead, the splendor of God shines through our weaknesses. We live by the divine power of God's grace through an earthen vessel. The fact is that we will always have our earthen vessels until we are raptured or until we go home to be with the Lord. The good news is that Jesus lives in us and through us.

Our earthen vessel may try to rob us of our joy, but it can never steal the treasure that is within us. The treasure is displayed with royal splendor through the characteristics of our earthen vessels. My earthen vessel is simply a place where the treasure of God lives. Jesus took upon Himself an earthen vessel, and now He lives in the earthen vessels of all of those who have made themselves available to Him.

Thorns in the Flesh

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

"I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing" (2 Corinthians 7:7-11).

Paul prayed that God would remove his thorn, but it never happened. God wasn't going to remove it. Still, the Lord did do something for the apostle Paul. He added grace upon grace to his life so that the treasure within him was revealed in spite of the thorn. God's grace was enough to get Paul through his thorn experience. God's strength was made perfect in Paul's weakness. The apostle learned to glory in his tribulation and suffering. The power of God rested upon him.

In Matthew 17, on the Mount of Transfiguration, there was Jesus speaking with Moses and

Elijah as Peter, James, and John looked on. When Peter saw the brightness of their glorified bodies, he had a big idea. "Lord, let's built three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." At that instant, a cloud covered the mount and from it come a Voice: "This is My beloved Son; Hear Him." The command was not to hear Moses and the Law, nor was the command to listen to Elijah and the prophets. The Voice said, "Hear the Son and what He says."

The Lord was trying to consume the apostles with Himself. It was no longer about the Law. It was no longer about the prophets. It was no longer about tabernacles and places of worship. It was now all about Jesus. Be consumed with Christ and His Word and then go to the valley below and tell people about Him. Those were their instructions.

Be consumed by Christ and let Him purge and purify you. This kind of life will produce spiritual fruit. This is the type of life that is promoted and provided for. This is the type of life to which God gives His total and complete priority.

There is nothing phony, double-minded, or proud about this life. Insecurity and ineffectiveness are gone. Quietness and confidence in

Christ brings strength. This is the life that comes from a body that's been presented totally to the Lord. There is reality and resurrection. Relationships and temporal privileges have no more hold upon it. This is a body at real liberty because it is ready to be daily transformed and conformed to Christ.

CONCLUSION

We are at total liberty when our lives have been offered up to Jesus Christ. That is the great psychology of being consumed by the Spirit in the purpose of the Lord. Divided hearts and divided minds are no longer an issue. This life burns with the fire of God and lives in the energy that comes from knowing the truth.

The earthen vessel may cry out, "Please remove my problem—I cannot make it." Yet, the Treasure, the reality of Christ within shouts back, "Just let Me shine through you."

Sure, there will be times when we really feel frustration and failure. But the Treasure within will consume those thoughts. In our weaknesses, He will become stronger and stronger. In our fears, He will be faithful to display His love. In our sorrows, His joy will come through. Our lives are lives of limitation, but Christ reveals that He knows no limitations.

The earthen vessels that we are never feel as

if they can do anything right. And in reality that is very true. But our great Treasure, our Great Savior, is always there to show Himself to us. The character of God will be revealed. His attributes will be seen, and with that will come the necessary expression of God's life. We will get the portion we need from God's throne. The Treasure remains true, and He shines through.

Spiritual Self-Esteem

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

When a person desires to become something he is not, it is very easy for him to be misled. For example, a Christian who desires to be more "spiritual" may look at another believer who has a low opinion of himself, call it "meekness," and think that person is indeed more spiritual. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth.

You and I are so highly valued by God. He sent His only Son to die on the Cross for us—and that fact alone should make us see our real worth. Apart from Him, we can do nothing; but by His power, we can enter into the realization of His call, recognize our value, and receive His victory in our lives.

This booklet will show how believers can develop confidence that comes from heaven and godly self-esteem that cannot be defeated by the devil. When we finally recognize our worth, we can enter into true meekness. We can give up our

rights to ourselves so that the Savior can operate through us freely.

Chapter One

GUARDING AGAINST THE ENEMY

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezekiel 3:17).

"Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street" (Lamentations 2:19).

"So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands" (Judges 7:19).

"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he

will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

"And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it" (Habakkuk 2:1-2).

All of the above verses describe watchmen who keep the watches of the night. These watchmen stood in the watchtowers. In the Body of Christ, we have prayer warriors who serve as watchmen. In our church, our morning prayer times are vital—highly valued because of the scope of all that our ministry does. People who cannot participate in person can pray anywhere at any time. Still, I want to stress that these prayer times are going to do great things for our ministry.

God, Himself, watches over the condition of His people. He has made Himself responsible for our souls. He is fixed in His place (Hebrews 13:5*b*). His throne is established in mercy, and His whole purpose is to watch over us (Isaiah 16:5). Therefore, He establishes watchmen whose purpose it is to warn us when there is danger ahead (Jeremiah 6:17; Isaiah 62:6).

The Watchman's Job

"Now unto him that is able to *keep* you from

falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

"Who are *kept* by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).

The watchman's job is to guard against enemy invasions. The Greek word for "keep" is *phulasso*, which means to hold in close custody, to guard with your might. Don't ever get upset when a watchman cautions you about a danger and comes to you privately about something. Watchmen guard against enemy attacks as they hold up individuals in prayer. They must never invade the privacy of individual believers, but through the leading of Jesus, they are ready to go to battle for them, spiritually speaking.

Watchmen are called to protect and to keep the assembly safe from harm. A watchman protects the Body by setting up spiritual blockades—protective walls of friendship, fellowship, prayer, and doctrine—to guard against the enemy intruding upon our obedience to God.

A pure watchman is one who constantly prays during his watches. He observes trends that come up, never judging, never condemning, but never underestimating the wiles of the

enemy. For example, if someone began playing rock music on our platform, even with Christian lyrics, the watchmen among us would notice it. They wouldn't interfere physically, but they probably would write a letter to the pastor. That is perfectly in order.

The Value of Discernment

Watchmen possess discernment, having an understanding of what is going on beyond the surface. The pulpit does a tremendous job, exposing and guarding against trends that may seem harmless but are sent to be a distraction from the mind and purpose of Christ (Ephesians 2:2).

Real watchmen put aside personal preferences and deal with real attacks on the pulpit and the ministry. They are able to venture outside of their comfort zone when God leads them to do so.

This story comes from a state several hundred miles from here. A man went into a restaurant, and God led him to sit down at a table with someone he had never seen before. He had begun to share the Gospel, when the person spoke up and said, "I know those things you are talking about. I'm a Christian."

In fact, he was one of our pastors who was backslidden. He had stopped preaching and was not going to any church, so he reflected the spirit of the world, though his heart was pricked by the Spirit of God.

The first man continued, "You know I have been listening to this man on the radio, a program called *The Grace Hour*. I have learned so much through his tapes and his booklets. I have never met him, but that ministry has made such a difference in my life."

Stunned, the pastor began to weep.

"Do you know why I am crying? I am a pastor in that ministry, and I have been backslidden. Now God, in His unconditional love, has you come to this restaurant, sit at this table with me, and speak about the messages that I grew up on."

When the men finished their meals, they embraced.

"I have never done this before," the one man said. "I mean it is just not me to go to someone's table and ask if I can sit there. I am just not that kind of guy."

"Well, now you know why God told you to do it," the pastor replied.

That is the providence of God taking care of

His people through the ministry of watchmen. This pastor was languishing in his identity as a sinner. It took a simple man who was able to be led by God to impart a word in season. As a result, a man of God received the opportunity to be restored and reestablished with spiritual self-esteem. He recognized the great value God had placed on his soul, and he could go forward as a victor—not as a victim.

Chapter Two

FROM WISDOM TO REALIZATION

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy [Spirit]" (Jude 1:20).

"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11).

As we begin to move and grow with God, we enter into spiritual self-esteem. Self-esteem occurs when we begin to respond to the call of God. We hear and receive the Scriptures categorically, and we enter into God's eternal purpose. Through the Holy Spirit's power and dominion, we begin to receive grace as our teacher; and as we comprehend it, we begin to be transformed by it.

The only way we can enter into any transformation is by grace. We can gain higher knowledge, but transformation only comes as we go from glory to glory by the Holy Spirit through grace.

This means that even if I am not a patient person, I can allow the transformation of grace to lead me through the Word and through categorical doctrine, into the nature of patience. The spirit of patience then rests upon me, and it possesses me and becomes mine. That is the principle of going from glory to glory. It means that I finally arrive at a place where a part of God's nature is resting upon me. This part of His nature is ready to be used at any moment because I now possess it through the Holy Spirit.

Recovery and Rebound

A person can develop human self-esteem through moral uprightness and integrity; however, this kind of self-esteem can be torn apart very easily. Spiritual self-esteem allows us certain provisions for rebound and recovery. We fall and we get right back up. These opportunities are very precious to me because of what I have been through. Spiritual self-esteem derived from the Word of God and the Holy Spirit lets

you know that you are as good as anyone else in the world. There is no one any better than you are.

This is where spiritual self-esteem starts: you don't think highly of yourself, you don't think lowly of yourself, but you think of God in relationship to yourself. As the precious Word of God enters into your soul, you begin to reflect its nature and communicate its substance. The first thing it produces is self-confidence. I started out with zero confidence in my youth. Now I have confidence, plenty of confidence in God, but less confidence than ever in my self.

Wisdom and Understanding

"He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good" (Proverbs 19:8).

Wisdom and Understanding: Again and again, especially in the Book of Proverbs, these two are paired as separate but inseparable. Understanding is the application of wisdom (Proverbs 2:2).

We know that the essence of sin is self-realization. But wisdom brings us to self-realization in Christ as it gives understanding to the soul. Understanding is revealed when the character of

God motivates our actions. A person who loves wisdom also loves all the applications of that wisdom to his soul, and this gives him appropriate self-realization.

First, I must develop self-confidence. When God gives me a vision, I must learn to trust Him to do whatever He has given me to do. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, I have self-confidence in Him, not in the flesh (see Philippians 3:3). I also enter into a godly realization that, yes, I am able to experience all that God has for me. This godly self-realization is so good for marriages, for families, and for businessmen.

Next comes godly self-direction. The Word of God being resident in my soul helps me to make right decisions. With the Holy Spirit continually filling me, I walk God's road with momentum. If I am a Bible college student, I will continue to make right decisions in response to the call of God. At one point, certain men and women realized God's call for them to go to Bible college. They had confidence in God to do it and be blessed. So now, just as they responded to the call of God to enter Bible college, they must continue to operate in godly self-direction, not influenced by people but motivated by the love of God for people (John 3:16).

This all adds up to form a beautiful self-identity as one who is always under grace (Romans 6:14). I realize that I am what I am by the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Chapter Three

MOTIVATED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy [Spirit]" (Jude 1:20).

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Many people lack motivation because they lack a godly self-image; therefore, they also lack spiritual self-esteem. They try to operate on the same level they perceive in other believers, but they are running on natural strength that runs out. Yet, when a believer lives in a self-identity of grace and spiritual self-esteem, he is motivated by God. Specifically, he is motivated by the Holy Spirit, by love, by doctrine, by people's needs, and by prayer. Godly fellowship and

compassion move him.

As Christians, we can operate in godly self-motivation because we have a godly self-image and spiritual self-esteem. We can use the word "self," knowing that it is no longer "I" but Christ who lives in me. *He* is the source of my motivation. God moves in, I move out, and self-motivation begins to reveal objective love for people *through* me because of my focus on Christ.

When we have this kind of motivation, then comes godly self-vindication. Godly Christians have been attacked all over the world. Persecution and hatred have been directed at individuals and entire ministries in the newspapers, on the radio, and on the television.

Do those ministries decline?

No, not if their identity is established in Christ and they are motivated by the love of God for the lost. That kind of ministry continues to grow without stopping. Our ministry is just one example of the strength of God in us, as we overcome the one who only wants to divide and conquer—to rob, to kill, and to destroy (John 10:10). We have buildings, schools, and missionaries serving all over the world. We have been able to build a brand-new gymnasium to make difference in young people's lives. We have a

new parking lot to accommodate all the cars. Recently, we haven't had one seat open in our Sunday services. That means we are going to need more parking spaces, and we have a plan to expand our present chapel to make room for more people.

Vindicated by Faith

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

"For by it the elders obtained a good report.

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:1-6).

"And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

"And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

"Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

"That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

"And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:

"Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

"And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

"And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

"And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

"And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake" (Genesis 18:22-32).

Those who are vindicated become members of the Faith Heroes' Hall of Fame. Heroes of the faith simply practice faith—all the time. They may not have a great ministry in terms of sight, although God may very well allow that to happen. A hero of faith carries godly self-vindication with him. He knows that forever he is a changed person, from God's viewpoint.

Changed people make a difference in the world.

Ten righteous people could have saved Sodom and Gomorrah. But I have often wondered if one person—Lot himself—could have been enough to spare the cities if Abraham had been motivated to keep asking the Lord to spare

the righteous. What might have happened if he had said, "Lord, if there is just one righteous person, will You spare the cities?" Anyway, Abraham stopped asking at ten, and you know the rest of the story. Though Lot and his family were rescued, the cities were utterly destroyed.

Overcoming Weariness

We live in cities and countries that are not unlike Sodom and Gomorrah. We are in the midst of the greatest times of warfare that have existed in human history.

This is warfare, though it is not against flesh and blood. Our warfare is against powers that will make us so weary, unless we are careful to put on the whole armor each and every day. Sometimes we blame others for our weariness, when in fact it is the warfare that we have not discerned, defined, and identified that is robbing us of strength and spiritual self-esteem.

How do we overcome? We need to begin to see our identity as one who is established in Christ. Someone once said to me, "I would give anything to start my life over again." That is a wide-open statement. Still, God does make *all* things new. "You can have a brand-new life and start living as if everything is brand-new right

now," I responded (Lamentations 3:23).

Every single morning I can have a new measure of spiritual self-esteem. Every morning can bring me a new identity in Christ. No longer do I have to suffer from the plagues of my past and the plagues of people who have wounded me. Hallelujah! I have been delivered from all of that. I am what I am by the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10) and by the power of Jesus Christ. That is where I derive my spiritual self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

Don't accept what the devil says about you. Do not accept it, because you are just as good as anybody else. More than that, you are the apple of God's eye—the object of His desire (Zechariah 2:8). I didn't have anyone to tell me that when I was getting picked on in high school. I was so insecure that when I played guitar and sang in talent shows, I would play so softly that no one could hear me.

There are those who are blessed with having a good, natural self-image. Because of my circumstances, I would have pity parties for myself, and I depended on them to get by, but it just wasn't enough. Soon, I found I couldn't make it like that, and for a number of years I worked my heart out to overcome my poor self-image. As a result of my own efforts, I became a successful salesman. But that still wasn't enough.

I thank God that one day, I received Jesus Christ and got saved. Over the years, I have re-

ceived the Word of God and I continue to be filled with the Holy Spirit. My human self-esteem has been transformed into healthy spiritual self-esteem—godly self-esteem that will never let me stay down when I fail. By it, I have learned the power and privilege of rebound and recovery. I no longer have to prove myself every day; I just receive His new mercies every morning. Beyond all that, I have spiritual self-esteem, and I am relaxed and at rest in the power of Christ.

Stand Your Ground

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The Word of God is filled with accounts of great battles fought by men and women who looked to God for the victory. As Christians, we have the promises throughout Scripture to get us through difficult times. When we see the faithfulness of God, we grow in faith. But 1 Samuel 17: 52 speaks of the "wounded who fell down by the way." The wounded are "cast down," according to Proverbs 7:26. People who have been wounded may stop growing spiritually. The wounded soul is crying out in despair (Job 24:12). It cries out in need.

How does God heal a person who has wounds in his soul? In Jeremiah 30:17, He said, "I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds." The hands of the Lord make a person whole (Job 5:18). God binds up the wounds and heals the broken heart (Psalm 147:3).

But God also provides spiritual protection—

armor to keep us from being wounded further. When we put it on daily by faith, this armor enables us to resist Satan; it causes him to flee. In this booklet, we will show how God's armor enables the believer to stand his ground in any battle.

Chapter One

ENDURING THE BLOWS OF THE ENEMY

"Many were overthrown and wounded" (Judges 9:40).

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:10-13).

Ephesians 6:12 speaks of the principalities, and powers, and rulers of darkness—the spiritual wickedness in high places, which we face

every day in this world's system. Then, Ephesians 6:13 says, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." It is so crucial to have on this whole armor, because without it, we cannot stand.

To "withstand" means that when Satan comes with all the forces of evil against us, we must continue to stand. So many Christians are not able to do that. And, when they cannot stand, they get wounded. They get cast down. They have sorrow. They are cast down by the way, and their countenance reveals their condition.

To "withstand" means to effectively block one blow after another. It is like a boxer who is facing a barrage of punches. He can't do anything but defend and cover up so that he doesn't get hit in the face or stomach. He just moves and defends himself against the aggressor. What is he doing? Withstanding. The reason some people get wounded and live in sin is because they have never learned how to withstand.

Inner Beauty That Withstands

Paul wrote to women in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, pertaining to apparel, saying, "Adorn your-

selves in modest apparel…professing godliness." He was telling them to adorn themselves according to the beauty of their souls. The Greek word for "adorn" is *kosmeo*. It means that a lady is to organize her appearance in a manner that reflects God's glory, represents His design for a lady, and fulfills His reflections. The Greek syntax of this passage indicates that these women were not fulfilling God's purpose in dress because they were not fulfilling God's purpose inwardly.

In other words, if a woman cannot afford certain clothing, then she still practices *kosmeo* by dressing the best that she can, reflecting her inner beauty. Her interior qualities determine her exterior decoration. She learns what it is like to be a lady, and then she lives like a lady. All of this relates to the armor of God.

In fact, Paul was instructing the entire Church to adorn herself inwardly in a godly fashion. A person who is adorned inwardly with a meek spirit (1 Peter 3:4) could have a very poor complexion and still look beautiful because of God. This is what Paul was talking about. He is dealing with the inner beauty of the soul being reflected outwardly.

Made Able to Stand: Seeing God's Purpose

The phrase "that you may be able to stand" means that we will stand because of the armor. Ephesians 6:11 means that we are able to receive something that will make us withstand. In fact, we may not even become engaged in a fight! "That you may be able" means that we have been given power and ability from God to go beyond standing—it means we are not even moved.

The Psalmist wrote, "I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Psalm 16:8). 1 Corinthians 15:58 says we are to be "steadfast and immovable."

We can do this because God gives us the divine ability through divine power for a divine capacity. The power of the Kingdom of God does the resisting through your soul and body. And when we are willing to receive His provision, we are made able to stand in the evil day.

"Evil" here in the Greek is *poneros*, which speaks of Satan's government of evil affecting a small group who then attack someone because those in the group have been infected with evil. This isn't *kakos*—the intrinsic evil that is just evil

in one person. This is not the communal (Proverbs 4:17) or conspiratorial evil that can also come against Christians and their ministries. This is the effect of the kingdom of darkness. Satan's plan is to infect individuals who will then band into a small group to infect others against you.

In Ephesians 6:11, the Greek text reveals that at a critical time when we are under fire, we withstand. Satan may supernaturally attack through human agents—people who don't even know that they are wrong. We may be violently and verbally assaulted. But we have been made able to withstand. We are mature and established and immovable in Christ.

The Totality of Our Victory

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Every person will face an evil day, and we can face it because we are being "made able to stand."

Some will face an evil day in their marriages and may have to go through a very painful divorce. In an evil day, some party may become emotional and reactionary. Another may have his character attacked on the job, and that is an

evil day coming against him. With pastors, it is usually a number of different attacks that can come against them and their wives.

Paul, however, is saying that the evil day will come against you personally and individually. He is telling us what to do when these days come. What do we do when these days come? We stand.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

"And having done all" means "to conquer" in totality. Forces come against us, but we have the armor on and we stand. "To stand" designates a victory-keeping party with God. The Finished Work still stands when we are in a fight. The greatest battle ever fought was on the Cross at Calvary, nearly two thousand years ago. Jesus Christ struck the winning blow when He took back the keys to death and hell from Satan. He rose up from the grave by the power of the Holy Spirit. All the forces of hell could not even touch Him as He ascended into heaven.

When we receive the power of the Finished Work, we overcome the enemy just by holding our position. The devil can do nothing against

the Finished Work. He can try to bring up our sin, but he cannot touch us because of Calvary. We are rightly related to God. God will deal with us lovingly through chastisement if we continue in a pattern of sin, but Satan cannot touch us. Satan is rendered powerless, and he is limited by his defeat. It is so vital that we grasp this: He has been defeated—he cannot win! Because of the Finished Work, Satan cannot touch us and the conflict is over (Romans 8:37).

Chapter Two

CEMENTED IN GOD'S PROVISION OF TRUTH

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness" (Ephesians 6:14).

Paul used the verb *histemi* which means "to stand" four times in four verses. Here, it means that we stand ready to face any new attack. We are still winning. We are going to win tomorrow. Whatever Satan does today, we will just keep standing in our victory.

Can you see how much unnecessary mental conflict people go through? Can you see how many wounds are self-inflicted? So many of our own thoughts presume our defeat when we cannot be defeated. The wicked one cannot touch us because of our position.

"Having your loins girt about" speaks of the long flowing robes the Romans wore that they had to gird up in order to walk around. A girdle

was used to brace their armor tight against their bodies, and it also held the daggers, the swords, and other weapons. The girdle held everything in its proper place so the soldier could defend himself.

Weapons on Every Side

The Christian soldier has spiritual weapons on every side. These weapons are held in place by "truth"—the divine, precise truth from the Word of God. We have the Word of God going in every direction in our lives through the fruit of virtue. Virtue implements what is necessary in doctrine for every situation. There is not a side of us that isn't protected.

The girdle went all around the body and shoulders. The front part was connected to a back part. With it all, the loins were girded. Furthermore, Isaiah 30:21 says, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." The voice of God is behind us, protecting us with the Finished Work.

All of Ephesians 6 deals with Finished Work armor. There is no fighting mentioned here. All it talks about is standing.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

We are permanently standing in grace, cemented in the eternal aspect of our provision. This means that we can't pull our feet out of our position. We may fall in that position, but our feet never come out of it. We are standing and we have access to His grace with joy and hope.

This is a beautiful picture because it is dealing with truth and righteousness. The Word of God says in Psalm 85:11, "Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." Truth springs up out of us, and it is God's righteousness that makes us complete. Righteousness looks down and accepts the truth that Christ satisfied the justice of God by dying at Calvary for the sins of the world. Now we have a relative realistic righteousness given to us by God. This righteousness is an everlasting righteousness and the Law is truth (Psalm 119:142).

He who speaks forth truth shows forth right-

eousness, according to Proverbs 12:17. The Bible can only say this because God's Word is established in the Finished Work. Now when we speak forth God's truth and show it through our lives, we reveal that the work is finished.

The Lord lives in truth and righteousness (Jeremiah 4:2). For this reason, we live "by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left" (2 Corinthians 6:7).

We have our loins girded about with truth—categorical doctrine. This is the first part mentioned in the armor. Everything starts with doctrine. Jesus Himself asked the Father to "sanctify [My disciples] through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

We wouldn't know that it is a Finished Work if we didn't have categorical doctrine from the Word of God. We wouldn't know that we are more than conquerors if we didn't have doctrine. Because we know that Jesus has conquered, we also know that we are conquerors, for we are inside the Conqueror. If we are hid in Him, then the enemy cannot find us because Satan cannot get inside of Christ.

Chapter Three

AN ARMOR THAT FULLY PROTECTS

"And having on the breastplate of righteousness" (Ephesians 6:14) means to clothe yourself as you are becoming like Christ.

"The breastplate of righteousness" had two pieces, one for the front and one for the back, like a shell. One covered the whole region of the breast from the neck to the midsection of the body in which the principle of life is contained. The other part covered the back.

This breastplate was a mesh of metal rings interwoven, which made it flexible while guarding the body against the sword, the spear, or the arrow.

Walking with Beautiful Feet

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15).

The Roman soldiers had brazen boots. They

had to walk with protection that came up high above the ankles because of the secret traps that enemies laid for them.

God has a very special armor for our feet—feet that should always be ready to walk, to go anywhere with the gospel of peace. But our special armor also guards us against the secret snares of the evil one. The believer discerns the traps of the enemy and does not go in that direction, so he avoids falling into those traps that are along the way.

Many people never have God's full thought through the Word on the details of life, so problems develop in their emotions. They have never learned to enter into careful pursuit of the full thought of God.

Consider the full thought of God. When you were saved, the full thought of God said, "You can never be lost," and, "You are forgiven forever." God allows loving chastisement to come into a Christian's life, and it is designed to bring in the peaceable fruit of righteousness, according to Hebrews 12:11.

When we were saved, we became a part of Jesus Christ forever. That is the full thought of God. We are heaven-bound, and nothing can change that. We have a destiny, and we have a

new self-image, all because of the full thought that reveals our salvation. The Finished Work is God's full thought of what Christ did for every person who accepts Jesus Christ.

According to the full thought of God, the Christian doesn't walk the same way the average person walks. Their shoes may look alike, but they are not the same. The believer walks in different shoes, and he has a special kind of feet, prepared to preach the gospel of peace.

"How beautiful are the feet of those that preach the Good News" (see Isaiah 52:7 and Romans 10:15). Christians' feet are beautiful because they preach the Gospel, and they are beautiful because they detect the devil's snares.

Shielded from Satan's Darts

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16).

"Above all" speaks of having protection for the entire body. The shield described here was about four feet long and two-and-a-half feet wide. Because it could be turned around in every direction, the shield provided coverage for the whole person (see Psalm 35:2; Ezekiel 23:24). It was secured to the left arm by strong straps.

The outer surface was rounded from the center to the edge. It was polished and anointed with oil so that arrows and darts would either rebound off the shield or they would hit the oil and slide off.

We have doctrine that gives us the full thoughts of God, the breastplate of righteousness so that we are loving and motivated properly, and the shield of faith for our protection.

When Christians work but are not motivated to glorify God, they become sloppy in their workmanship and passive because of familiarity. When this is the case, a business cannot produce properly because God will not honor inefficiency, familiarity, or passivity, and the workers become discouraged. But behind the whole problem was a plan from Satan to disarm them, cause conflict, and bring in fear.

The greatest victory in any Christian business is to have order, motivation, wisdom, strength, and good habits to glorify God and bless people. Satan wants us to fail, but God wants us to be workers with Finished Work standards who receive Christ's victory and stand our ground.

Functioning with a Living Faith

It is very important that we as believers put on our armor everyday.

Without God's armor, every one of us will get wounded. We may display our wounds differently. Some may be able to cover them up better than most, but we will still get wounded.

Without the armor, the Finished Work is not enabling us to withstand, although we are still covered by the Finished Work of Calvary. Furthermore, we cannot enjoy the operation of the Kingdom of God to conquer and overcome in every direction we go. Also, without the armor, our prayer life cannot function with a living faith, so prayers may not be answered. In order for our prayer life to be effective, we have to put on the *whole* armor of God.

Having said this, remember that the Lord Jesus Christ heals the brokenhearted and binds their wounds. How does He do this? We may lose a round, but the fight has been won. That is God's full thought. I lose a round and then another, then He puts a healing ointment on the wounds and binds them. Then, I go back out with my whole armor on. I put on the whole armor and I cannot be defeated.

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:17-18).

CONCLUSION

Ephesians 6 says that none of us can live and stand our ground in the Finished Work unless we put on the whole armor of God.

Guaranteed, the last time you were depressed, the last time you were subjective, you didn't have on your armor. You neglected putting it on by faith. The armor must be put on in order to protect us.

Did you put on your armor this morning? Are you wearing the helmet of salvation to protect your mind? Did you put on the breastplate so that your motives are correct? Are your loins girt about with doctrine? Are you walking with feet that are prepared to share the Gospel? Are you walking in love? Do you have the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God? Are you praying with supplication? That is the Finished Work armor that can never be defeated.

On some days, we just forget to put on our

armor. Though we do it by faith, we have to put it on just as we put on our clothes and our shoes. And by faith, we must put on the whole armor of God. There is more to this than just standing and resisting. It is standing our ground with God and overcoming as we see the enemy flee.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)* .

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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Standing Against Goliath

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

You have probably heard of Goliath—the Philistine giant who mocked Saul's army and threatened the nation of Israel. David the shepherd boy dealt with him soundly, as he had done with the lion and the bear that dared to attack his flock. What many people do not realize is that Goliath was not the only giant Israel had to confront. The people of Israel had to deal with giants many times in their journeys (see Numbers 13:33, Deuteronomy 2:11 and 20, and Joshua 13:12).

For us, a "giant" is anything that looms large over our lives. They are often unseen, but they are extremely intimidating and difficult to ignore. The giants in our lives seek to paralyze us with fear. Many people have not gone forward in God's plan because they are afraid to fail.

The negative vibrations of the atmosphere are subtle giants that come against us in our relationships. The kingdom of darkness wants us

to pay attention to the giants so that we will lose the victory, lose the treasure of our friendships, and lose the unity and the support we can enjoy in the grace of God.

This booklet will reveal how believers can defeat the Goliaths that taunt us with mocking accusations by standing firmly in the name of the Lord. With each victory, we can go forward, loving each other and blessing the Lord.

Chapter One

WRESTLING AGAINST THE AIR

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

"Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:1-5).

The word "if" indicates one of three classifications in the Greek text. The first class says: "if, and it *will* happen." The second class is: "if, and it *will not* happen." And, the third class is: "if, and it *may or may not* happen." In Philippians 2:1, we are looking at the third-class condition;

the "if" indicates that something will happen only if we make the choice for it to happen.

In each of our lives, the real controversy in our relationships stems from the fact that we do not know how to bring joy to God. Too often we do not operate with the same purpose. At other times, we will have the same purpose but without having the same Spirit. And if we are not thinking with God, then we cannot attain the unity He desires. To bring joy to God, we need to have the same purpose, the same spirit, and the same mind, recognizing the value of our relationships in Christ.

Bringing Joy to God

In Philippians 2:1-5, the apostle Paul is teaching us something about relationships. The great thing to understand is how to bring in Christ's joy, and how to recognize what God desires for our lives. Even with all of our weaknesses, God wants us to be "likeminded"—that is, thinking the same thoughts with the Lord. We are to have the same love, the same motivation, and to be of one accord, having the same spirit.

The quality of my love will reveal and define my attitude in every relationship. Far too often, we lack perfect love for each other—and those

are the times when poor attitudes seep in, bringing controversy and division.

Applying God's love toward myself and others produces a quality of faith that measures the depth of my relationship with God and His Word. Therefore, I need to recognize that trials and controversy reveal whether or not I am in fellowship with God, and they show me just how much I can trust Him.

When we place conditions and expectations on others, we manifest a poor relationship to God's mercy, God's grace, and God's love. Friendships can deteriorate because of the conditions that are put on them. Negativity creeps in, as we grow more and more familiar with each other. Instead of extending unconditional love, we expect more of people, when we should simply appreciate them.

Battlegrounds of Self-Orientation

"If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us" (1 Samuel 17:9).

Warfare comes into our relationships because Satan works to weaken the Body of Christ. Every born-again believer has been called as a

member of His Body, with Christ as our Head, so His teaching can go forth throughout the world. Therefore, we should not enter into any relationship unless it strengthens the Body of Christ.

Self-oriented relationships scream out the same things that Goliath screamed. These relationships become battlegrounds designed to destroy a person's identity. Confrontations are initiated, and whoever wins the fight makes the "loser" his servant.

Far too many people refuse to apply the Finished Work message because they enjoy living under a system where those who are proven wrong and those who are proven guilty have to bow and serve.

Vibrations of Warfare

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

The word "wrestle" (*pale* in the Greek) means, "to sway." It comes from the root *pallo*, which means, "to vibrate." This makes sense when you consider that we as Christians are not wrestling

against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers in a dark world. "Vibrations" are given off in our communication, especially in negative communication. As a result, thoughts and feelings can be swayed by negative vibrations and can actually change the atmosphere in a room.

We waste more time putting each other on trial because we think we are wrestling with a person, when we are really just responding to vibrations from the atmosphere. Vibrations that lead to warfare do not come from people but from Satan's kingdom. Until we recognize this, we will always be fighting senseless battles that Christ has already won.

Real confrontations arise when people submit to the purpose of satanic vibrations. But honestly, is there anything on earth worth fighting about? Each of us is guilty. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But everyone who is in Christ is no longer under condemnation. Satan stirs up issues about who is to blame, who is right, and who is wrong. Then, we fall for the devil's strategy and wind up operating as puppets, swayed by the vibrations of the air.

As Christians, we need to recognize that

seeds of division are what motivate our private agendas for self-preference and self-preservation. God uses relationships to reveal these agendas so that we will take them to the Cross. There we will find victory.

Chapter Two

DELIVERED TO THE RIGHT VALUE SYSTEM

David did not pray for deliverance from Goliath in the midst of the battle. He *walked* in deliverance. He didn't pray for it. He picked up grace, evidenced by the stones he took from the brook (1 Samuel 17:40). The five stones he picked up pointed to grace. In every instance of warfare, David immediately picked up grace. The first thing we must do in warfare is to realize that grace is the only provision in which we can stand (Romans 5:2). And to stand in any warfare, we have to pick up grace on purpose.

Why did David pick up five *smooth* stones? "Smooth" speaks of having no resistance to God's provision. It represents our humility and submission to God's provision of grace for us, as we are lively stones (1 Peter 2:5). In his situation, David had fellowship with God in grace, having five smooth stones as his weapons. They are

symbolic of us drawing near to the Body of Christ as lively stones, submitting to the provisions of God in grace with no resistance.

Many times in the battles I have encountered, it wasn't the victory that I really needed. What I needed was the humility to submit to God's grace and His provision. Regardless of what I thought needed to be done, I had to learn to simply do it *God's* way.

Sometimes we fight the plan of God. There are situations where if we were to humble ourselves and become the victim, we could win the other person back. But we don't like becoming the victim, always coming out as the one who is wrong. The grace to do it God's way isn't there yet, so that means we are not smooth stones yet. That's okay. God allows us room to grow, and He will make sure we are worn smooth by the application of the Word of God in our daily lives.

Worn Smooth by Applying the Word

The stones David used had been worn smooth by the running water of the brook. In the same way, our lives are smoothed out by the water of the Word of God (Ephesians 5:26). We learn to use weapons that are not carnal but

weapons that are sanctified by the Word of God (John 17:17), separated unto God and away from evil things and evil ways.

Have you ever noticed how warfare draws us into evil thinking and evil ways of dealing with it? Yet, as the water of the Word conforms us, as it shapes our souls in meekness before Him, it is the water of the Word that causes us to understand in faith how to go forth with no resistance to God's plan. This is why in every ounce of warfare we must draw near to the Word of God, because it is the water of the Word that shapes our souls in warfare so that we won't waste time resisting the giants.

In every instance of warfare—no matter which of our relationships it involves—we need to be sanctified unto God and say, "All right, Lord, I don't like what's going on. I don't believe I'm really guilty. I didn't cause this to happen, but it's here, and I can't deny it's here. I know that there must be a purpose. But with every single thing that goes on, there is also a provision. So shape my soul according to the Word so that I won't resist the provision according to Your plan—that I may stand in the battle, by grace, as a lively stone."

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Sanctification speaks of having a relationship with God, which we enter into by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18, 1 Corinthians 6:11). The title deed for that relationship was bought with the Blood of Christ and His death on the Cross (Ephesians 5:25-26, Colossians 1:22, Hebrews 10:10, 29). The only right we have to any relationship is through the Cross. I can glory in nothing but the Cross.

The sole title deed to every marriage and to every friendship comes through the Cross of Christ. It brings us to the death of ourselves and the abundant life of Christ. It is quite an amazing thing.

I dare say that each of us has made numerous complaints regarding a relationship. It usually goes something like this: "I've been his friend for years. I deserve better than that." "I've gone through hard times with her. I deserve better than that." "I've gone through so much with them. I have stood with them through hell, and now they're treating me this way. I deserve bet-

ter than that."

The Bible makes it very clear that we don't deserve anything. I have never deserved a friendship to begin with, so I should have no expectations (Psalm 62:5) but those that are from God. Think of the freedom that can be produced in our relationships if we are willing to be shaped by the Word of God in warfare, standing together as lively stones, submitting to the purpose of God without resistance.

The Value System That Matters

A shepherd's bag was like a wallet, a place for him to keep his valuables. David placed the smooth stones in his shepherd's bag. What this means is that David submitted his weapons to Christ's value system. This came as a brand-new revelation to me: Every single thing that God gives me I must submit to God's value system. I will never prosper under my own value system.

My own estimation of a situation will never be greater than the eternal value of the situation. I must not react to someone as if he were the scum of the earth by getting angry and making sure he knows it. How can I take all that God has given me and manipulate His Word to condemn a person, according to my value system,

just because I am hurting right now?

I must take all that I have been taught and place it in God's value system, which declares that one soul is worth more than the entire world. The only way that we will be successful friends is to place each relationship in the Shepherd's bag and give it the value of God, thus submitting to God's value system.

Vessels of Honor

Okay, so some of you are thinking about a person and saying to yourself, "Yeah, but this guy keeps failing. How can I ever trust him again?"

That isn't up to us.

Each one of us was brought into this life according to God's value system. I must count it an honor to be a part of it. Maybe God wants to use me to prepare someone else for the Bema Seat, to the glory of God. Or perhaps that person can be used to humble me—so that I will run to the Cross out of my frustration and disappointment. If that is the case, then to God be the glory. I have to run to the Cross—to be mature and to realize that I should expect nothing from anyone.

This was such a tremendous revelation for

my life. No matter what the confrontation, I am to pick up grace immediately. I am to pick up the five smooth stones that represent my having no resistance to the plan of God. I serve Him as a lively stone, in humility and submission to His provision.

We are shaped and smoothed by the Word of God, and we are set apart for His purpose and placed in Christ's value system. We are equipped for the warfare that will happen in our marriage and in every relationship. What do we value in marriage? Some of us value peace and comfort. We may value our own lives more than we value the other person's life, so we seek to escape for a season. That is not the answer. The only way we make marriage honorable (Hebrews 13:4) is by submitting to God's value system instead of making the marriage submit to our value system.

The first mature question to ask in warfare is "How will this be used for the Kingdom of God?" But, it is a huge temptation that when things happen, our first thought is, "What am *I* going to do?" We are very guilty of taking the situations God has ordained for us and transferring them to our limited value system. As a result, we make our lives the first issue in warfare

instead of recognizing God's value system and how the situation will be used for the Kingdom of God.

Chapter Three

PROVEN ARMOR AND SPIRITUAL WEAPONS

"And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

"And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

"And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:38-40).

This passage shows how some believers will go to others for support in times of warfare and take on armor that hasn't been proven. They don't have a clue about their resources and they have never tried the armor at hand to see if any

of it is any good. It is so easy for us to go to someone in the flesh, tell him all of our problems, and try to get some support by asking, "What would you do?"

Here is Saul telling David what he would do. "David, if you've really got the guts to go out there against Goliath, at least put on this armor. I'm not going with you, but I'll give you what I would use."

Isn't this true about how our friends in the flesh respond? They tell you what you should do, but in no way are they going to stand with you. They sit back and say, "Thank God I'm not in that situation. But if I were you, here's what I would do."

This kind of friend tells you what makes sense, but nothing they say is proven. *Nothing* that this world has ever told us to do in the midst of trials is proven.

When someone is attacking you, the world's answer is to defend yourself. But what did Christ do? He didn't answer any accusation. He never said a word in His own defense. He let them crucify Him.

Well, that doesn't seem like a very good option—that is, it doesn't for the temporal value system. But for the eternal value system, it has

worked out well. And guess what? It has been proven—and Jesus won.

Limited Protection

What is your option? To try to succeed for a short time here on the earth and then to die alone, without taking any value into eternity?

The armor that Saul offered David was the armor the entire nation used, and it was proven—but it would only protect for a season. If David had gone into battle bearing another man's armor, it would have been too heavy and awkward for him anyway.

Yes, it might have protected him for a short time, but he would have died and Goliath would have won. So it wasn't proven to be really worthwhile. In the same way, people's comments and suggestions for our problems might work for a season, but they won't last very long, and it will be too much of a burden to bear.

Saul's armor was never tested. It was never tried and proven to make one victorious. Here was this king saying, "I'm going to honor you, little shepherd boy David; I'm going to give you *my* armor. You will bear royal armor, and as you go out to battle, the enemy will see that you are wearing the king's armor. And seeing that you

are so small and this man is such a giant, he will look at you and at least see the king's armor on you."

The best that the world has to offer is to help protect us for only a season. Saul was most likely thinking, "David's going to die anyway. At least, with the armor it will be a slower death."

Lay Down Your Own Armor and Pick up Grace

You can tell that the armor wasn't proven, because the rest of the army was not going out to battle. The other soldiers had similar armor. How come they did not go out to fight the battle? It is because they knew that they were outmatched, and they knew that the armor and the weapons they had could not handle the force of the enemy that was coming against them.

In all humility, we must honestly admit that there is not an ounce of strength we could muster in our flesh that could be victorious, even to deal with the warfare we face in our friendships. When we have done something wrong, we cannot prove ourselves to that person ever again. We will never be able to shine forth the glory of heaven before our friends, in our own strength, just to prove ourselves when

they have seen us fail. There is nothing we can do.

I have been delivered to situations where people are going to believe whatever they want to believe. People are going to say whatever they want to say. And there is nothing my flesh can offer to correct it. But God has a plan to cover you and me with His robe of righteousness. Therefore, when we enter into a situation, we need to pick up grace and go forward, because there is nothing *we* can do.

Natural Covering vs. Spiritual Covering

Saul gave David a "coat of mail." *Shiryown* is the Hebrew word here, and it speaks of a man-made metal covering to protect the neck and chest. How many times have we gone out with only a natural covering?

According to 2 Corinthians 6:7, we are to wear the armor of righteousness. We have a breastplate of righteousness (Ephesians 6:14), that covers the neck and the chest. "Breastplate" in the New Testament Greek is *thorax*, referring to a piece of armor that consists of two parts, from the neck to the middle, used metaphorically of faith and love (1 Thessalonians 5:8).

When we get involved with warfare, we

must remember our position in Christ—that we have Christ's righteousness imputed to our account. We have nothing to prove, nothing even to fight about. There is nothing of this world that is worthy of our attention.

If somebody puts us on trial and accuses us of something, there is nothing we can do about it. And there is no reason to go out to battle without picking up the grace of God for our lives and becoming smooth by the washing of the water of the Word as it shapes our souls according to His work. Oh, the value of running to the Word of God and letting it shape our souls!

I have found that when I face a trial and I actually let the Word of God shape my soul, I am victorious. When things are going well, I may tentatively do things in my own way. But when I am in a trial, I go into my prayer room, and I open up the Word, and each passage suddenly becomes the very breath of my life.

"Oh, God, that's it! I've got to cling to that promise. I've got to hold onto it. I've got to put on *Your* armor."

No Longer Servants but Friends

My flesh still wants to go against the way that God desires to deal with my situation. Frus-

tration and confusion enter the scene when I look at things through human reasoning. In the flesh, I look at what could be done, and nothing in me is satisfied unless I can prove that the other person is wrong—or that I am really sorry.

This is how the flesh operates in relationships. When we have done something wrong, we will go alone to the person we offended and say, "I am sorry." But so often, the other person just won't let it end.

"I can never trust you again!" is the response we might get. "I'm thankful that you're sorry. You humbled yourself. You admitted that you were wrong. God bless you, that's great! But I will never trust you again." And you are put in a position where you have to serve that person for the rest of your life.

At that point, we just need to stand still and say to the devil, "Okay, Goliath. It's not going to happen. You can't force me to bow to you, because my life has been bought with a price, and it could never belong to you."

Right at that moment, we need to pick up five stones right out of the brook—the five smooth stones of grace. Not just out of the ground somewhere. We have to pick them up out of the brook, from the water of the Word. We

need to get around people who will defend us, who will love us, who will cover us—people who will bring us to God's provision.

Built Together as Lively Stones

When the voices and vibrations of the air come in to sway us and try to confuse us, we need to be able to get around people that are grace oriented. We need to be built up by people who will not resist the plan of God for our lives. We have to get around people who are not going to support us with their own natural weaponry and their natural opinions of what they would do in our situation. We need friends who will actually cover us and love us and defend us with God's heart.

When the enemy comes with his accusations, we need to have dear friends around us, lively stones established in grace, taken from the brook where the water of the Word is shaping their souls (1 Peter 2:5). These friends stand around us, covering us and declaring to the atmosphere, "You can't attack him. He is covered by the Blood of the Lamb. He loves the Lord. He is going forward. His value has not been destroyed, and you can't attack him."

These friends rebuke the voices that come

up against you when there is nothing you can do about it yourself.

We need to be surrounded and built together with the Body of Christ, to be established in grace. We so need to be hid in the Body at all times so that when these voices come, the Body can point it out and say, "No! I rebuke that. It's not even going to touch him."

Aim for the Enemy's Head

"Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.…

"And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

"So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David" (1 Samuel 17:45, 49-50).

If David did not have those five smooth stones to use against Goliath, it would all be over—he would have lost for sure. And I love

the fact that the very first stone David used smacked Goliath right between the eyes!

The smooth stones of grace go right to the head of the enemy to declare victory for our lives. They go straight to the enemy's thought life, and the enemy gets confused, because the Finished Work cannot be reasoned out or understood by the flesh.

The world sees the demonstration of grace that comes toward us and out of us, and the devil says to God, "How could you possibly say that they are innocent, that they are righteous, that they are pure? How could you possibly say they are not guilty? How could you even want them as friends after what they have done?"

The Goliaths cannot figure out the grace of God, and it confuses their minds. Ultimately, the enemy is destroyed because we stand in that grace.

Kept in the Shepherd's Bag

Every situation must be evaluated with God's value system. Every single thing that God gives us must be placed in the Shepherd's bag. That is where truth is kept and truth is upheld, and it must be kept in there. The enemy may mock us, as Goliath did with David. But our

weapons are not natural; neither are they supported by reason.

David declared to Goliath, "I come in the name of the Lord."

What power! That is where his victory was found. He went forward in the name of the Lord.

No matter what confrontation, what trial, what fault I have entered into, what division is coming up against me—no matter what people have to say about me, I go against my enemies in the name of the Lord with the five smooth stones of grace.

This is how I stand in my calling. It is simply by the grace of God. I go in the name of the Lord. When I go in my own name, I expose myself abruptly and I look like a fool. But when I go in the name of the Lord, there is victory.

How am I still going on with God? I simply go on in the name of the Lord. I'm not wearing human reasoning as armor, and I'm not trying to figure out what God's plan is. I humbly submit to the grace of God as I apply God's eternal value system to my life, and that allows me to go forward in complete victory.

CONCLUSION

For the sake of our friendships, of our marriages—in all things, we must go forward in the name of the Lord.

Someone says, "You have failed. How could you possibly go forward in your calling after *that*?"

We go in the name of the Lord.

It is not a natural thing, but it has been tested and tried and proven to be true. In warfare, we simply need God's breastplate of righteousness, the righteousness that the Lord imputed to us. That alone will protect our hearts.

Proverbs 4:23 says we are to keep, or guard, our heart "with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." We will never be able to guard our hearts with the armor of human reasoning. The heart must be guarded by the righteousness of God. He has made us righteous to serve only Him, so that we can go forward in the name of the Lord.

What great honor has been bestowed upon us! If we can restore each other, without strings attached and without condemnation, by applying everything that God has taught us and by operating in His value system, we can win people back for eternity's sake.

Dear Father, we desire to be likeminded—to have Your thoughts for each moment and in every situation. We desire to abide in the same love and have the same motivation for everything we do, to glorify You. We desire to be of one accord, having the same Spirit, the same mind, and the same purpose.

As we set our affections in heaven through the Holy Spirit, we will bring You joy. And really, that is all we want to do here on the earth. After all You have done for us, we only want to give You joy.

Thank You that Your Word is shaping our souls as we surround ourselves with other believers that are established in grace and hidden in the Body of Christ. To have this kind of true friendship is to have armor and weapons otherwise unknown to man. And regardless of our innocence or guilt, we stand firm in Your eternal Word that holds our lives together. Thank You! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Standing Firm in
Godly Convictions

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Convictions are so vital to a Christian's life. Often, the dilemmas we encounter are due to rejecting God's provision because we have not yet been established in godly convictions. But by having proper convictions, we allow the world to see the character of God manifested through our frail humanity. These convictions cause us to understand the purpose that we were created and redeemed by God.

Convictions are necessary in order for the believer to stand firm in the face of the attacks that come from Satan, the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). We must have categorical convictions of loyalty, love, and edification. Sadly, many desire a Christianity that requires no personal accountability and no personal obligation to the Cross, and that's why they are condemned rather than converted by convictions.

This booklet will reveal the beauty of living

in Finished Work convictions based on divine mobilization and spiritual motivation. Through these convictions, we can experience the union we have with Christ through personal communion.

Chapter One

ESTABLISHING CATEGORICAL CONVICTIONS

"And when [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:8-14).

One thing that is so crucial to the stability, steadfastness, durability, and longevity of Christians, leaders, and ministries is living in divinely inspired convictions. The convictions God im-

parts to us are based upon His righteousness and His integrity. They are based upon His justice, His immutability, and His omniscience. They are rooted in the quality of His essence, the perfection of His character, and the nature of His divine provision for us.

So many Christians become casualties because they do not have *categorical convictions*. They may have convictions—even some good ones—but they do not think precisely with the mind of Christ, line upon line, precept upon precept, with convictions that are always under the Holy Spirit's prompting, checking, and guidance through the Word of God. Consequently, through rationalization, a believer may fall into acts of human depravity and operate in the instability of opinions that are outside of the conviction of the Lord Jesus Christ's inspired Word.

Growing in Convictions

First and foremost, all of us need to have a conviction of *who we are in Christ*. It must not be an opinion, but a conviction—an established fact, revealed and imparted by God's thoughts through His immutable righteousness, His divine integrity, and His perfect provision for man's condition. A conviction comes in the char-

acter of God's grace through the pipeline of love. It comes in the communication of His resurrection life, because we live as those who have been raised from the dead.

I make it a practice from time to time to write down specific personal convictions that God reveals to me in my communion with Him. Recently, I wrote down some more convictions for myself. It wasn't that I was living in folly, but I need to grow just like everyone else in convictions of precise light. "The entrance of thy words giveth light" (Psalm 119:130). "In thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9*b*). The Hebrew word for "light" means accurate, precise light with no invasion of shadows. In light, we get more convictions.

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). God is life, and His life is light. There is no darkness that can overtake His light. The moment we don't have God's resurrection life, we don't have God's light. If there is a place in my life where I do not have resurrection life—because of self-preservation, ignorance, or self-deception in blindness—then I will not have God's light. I may think I do, but I do not. Conviction of truth has not yet invaded that room in my soul to give me God's provision for the de-

tails of my life so I can live in God's purpose.

It is imperative that we have convictions—convictions of loyalty, convictions of love, convictions of edification. We need to enter into silent prayer for people and then speak words of edification. Why? Because we have a *conviction* to do it.

We must grow in convictions through mercy, grace, love, and forgiveness, always hating sin and loving God. A Christian who doesn't grow in conviction is a casualty waiting to happen. He will become a statistic, indifferent toward his call as a member in particular in the Body of Christ.

It is a wonderful thing to live in convictions from a Finished Work premise as the basis for divine mobilization and spiritual motivation. Through communion in the Body, we can experience the practical application of the union we have with Christ.

Judge by Conviction, Not by Appearance

There is the story of a couple who loved the Lord dearly. God was blessing them with a season of material prosperity. One day, as they were getting ready to go to the mission field, God sent a messenger to them with two boxes. The boxes

were very different: one was trimmed with a setting of gold, the other did not have a very good appearance. In fact, it looked despicable.

The gift bearer asked the couple, "Which box would you like?" They chose the gold one, opened it, and found wood, hay, and stubble inside. He then opened the other box that looked so ugly on the outside, and it was filled with gold, silver, and precious stones.

The lesson here is that we must not judge according to appearance (John 7:24). The outside of the tabernacle in the wilderness was covered with ugly looking badger skins, but inside it was constructed with gold, silver, and precious stones. In the same way, there was no beauty in Jesus Christ's outward appearance that anyone would desire Him, but inside Him was gold, silver, and precious stones, revealing the value and quality of His inward life and character before God. This is the life we desire.

Chapter Two

LIVING TEMPLES OF GOD

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

In consideration of these verses, it is extremely serious when a Christian commits a sexual sin, whether it be adultery (a married person sinning against his partner), fornication (sexual sins of unmarried people), or homosexuality.

The body was not made for fornication. The mind must not become a sensual garbage collection of worldly lusts in the degeneration of human depravity. The body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. We need to present our bodies as living sacrifices because the expression of the libido waves, which produce distorted and perverted thoughts, can lead Christians into bondage.

I speak freely about sex; I always have and I always will. No one's opinions will ever stop me; I'm here because my mother and father had sexual relations. But we must have godly convictions to keep us from fulfilling natural desires outside of God's design.

We are God's temple, God's habitation. When a man penetrates a woman outside of holy wedlock, it is an invasion of the Holy of Holies. The word "penetration" might make you feel uncomfortable, but I use the word because it is accurate. A person who has sex outside of marriage is invading the Holy of Holies! Can you imagine someone having an affair or a one-night fling with a Christian? It's an invasion of God's Holy of Holies. It would be the same as going before the literal Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies of God's tabernacle and defiling it

through an abominable act of sin.

The Bible tells us that the body is not for fornication. We are God's temple. Our bodies are for the Lord and the Lord is for our bodies.

Marriage: Boundary for Intimate Communion

When a husband properly initiates to his wife in sex and she properly responds, they have the most intimate communion inside the Holy of Holies. When it is done without fantasy, without mental pornography, and without suggestiveness, then the husband and wife communicate in an act of the richest physical expression of a spiritual union. It is a godly communion affecting the spirit, soul, and body in the triple blessing of God's design to bring pleasure to this couple because they are one soul and one flesh.

A Christian's spirit, soul, and body represent the courts in the tabernacle. The body is the outer court; the soul is the middle court; and the human spirit is the Holy of Holies with the Blood on the Mercy Seat. If a woman who is a Christian allows a man to penetrate her outside of marriage, the man is invading the Holy of Holies and the woman is letting herself be defiled.

Because of so many wrong influences during the '60s and the '70s (the era of "free love"), be-

lievers today need healthy, godly convictions about sex within marriage. Ungodly lifestyles in the past have left many believers with damaged emotions and guilt. Men as well as women would have a much better self-image if they saw themselves as God's Holy of Holies, with the Mercy Seat inside.

In God's order, it is beautiful when the Mercy Seat provides sensual pleasure from a spiritual perspective. So, when a man is able to enter into a spiritual union with his wife, that union produces a sexual communion with the Holy of Holies—perfect oneness of their spirit, soul, and body. They are not bound by the world's standards in terms of frequency or duration of the act itself. But instead of merely gratifying a need, they are mobilized by God's love in the motivation of His life.

As a lamp is designed to release invisible electrical power, our bodies are designed to reveal the invisible power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our minds are designed to reveal divine thinking, or divine viewpoint. Our souls are designed to reveal the proper conscience and self-consciousness, positive volition and mental attitude, and proper emotional responses. The only reason we are on earth today is to reveal the very

essence and nature of God. That's why the Word of God says, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13).

First Corinthians is not an Old Testament book—it is a Finished Work epistle written under the inspiration of Holy Spirit in the post-Resurrection era. 1 Corinthians 7:1 says that a man must be very careful with a woman, regarding premarital relations. We shouldn't touch the temple of God outside of God's law of life. That would be flirting with a temptation to invade God's Holy of Holies through an immoral act.

Through premarital sex, two people become one flesh (1 Corinthians 6:15-16). If they get married, there will be problems because their relationship was based upon lust and fantasies that crossed over the line into mental perversion. So many Christian marriages lack fulfillment because they became one flesh and one soul through an invasion of the Holy of Holies outside of the perfect will of God.

But when a Spirit-filled husband and wife who are confessed up-to-date enter into the sexual act, they enter into the highest form of com-

munion for the whole man—spirit, soul, and body. God brings in pleasure for the physical senses through the mobilization of the soul and the motivation of the Spirit. They enter into a physical union that demonstrates the unity of the Trinity.

Living in the Design of God's Initiation

Don't ever forget this: We are not our own; we have been bought with a price; God is in us. When I use my tongue to manifest things that do not come from God's heart, I am revealing that there is no Finished Work sacrifice in my outer court, my body.

When I enter into depression, oppression, negative volition, or negative capacity in the details of life, I defile my soul by interacting with Adam in the experience of the Fall. If I refuse to receive grace in Christ consciousness, if I refuse to have a mental attitude of the Word of God, and if I refuse to allow my emotions to respond to God in the Holy of Holies, then I magnify my experience of Adam's Fall. Finally, through reiteration of the Fall, it becomes a part of my human construct.

Because Jesus Christ satisfied the justice we deserved for our sins and iniquities, when the light of the Word of God comes by categories into my human spirit (God's Holy of Holies where the Mercy Seat resides), I pass beyond God's justice and receive His mercy. (Remember, while grace gives me what I don't deserve, mercy keeps back what I *do* deserve!) The Spirit enters into my Holy of Holies through the Word of God, and I live in the design of God's initiation.

In this new experience of resurrection life, God becomes the cause of His own effects, the communicator of His own life, the manifester of His own means, and the sanctifier of His Finished Work. Jesus Christ can then say of me, "This man has become a visible manifestation of My invisible characteristics." If I fail (and we all will), I can rebound immediately, and I won't condemn myself.

When a husband and wife learn how to love each other in Jesus Christ and how to be pure through the restraining power of God's love, mercy, and holiness, they enter into the highest form of tripartite union with their spirits, souls, and bodies communing with the Father, Son,

and Spirit. This allows them to become one soul as well as one flesh, attached to each other with a single eye and manifesting the oneness of the soul, the heart, and the spirit.

A couple that has one soul and one heart (Acts 4:32) experiences a type of sexual union in the promotion of God's divine power that brings in superseding consequences. Not only can there be a production of children—human souls who live forever as reproductions of His master creation—but this union also brings in a *family,* for God and for eternity. This is the great result of the sacredness of communion based upon a union where the three parts of man are not defiled.

Chapter Three

STANDING AGAINST DEFILEMENT

In Numbers 25:6, "…One of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."

In this passage, a couple came to the house of God to commit a sexual act. When Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, saw it, he pursued them and "thrust both of them through" with a javelin. God praised him and rewarded him for having convictions. "…Behold, I give unto [Phinehas] my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel" (Numbers 25:12-13).

We need convictions, not preferences or

opinions. If I imitate Jesus Christ without having Jesus Christ's life, if I manifest the knowledge of God without the resurrection power of the indwelling Trinity, then I am trying to be a Christian without God. I am trying to be spiritual without the Spirit, and I am trying to be godly without God's resources to reproduce godliness. But 1 Thessalonians 5:24 says, "Faithful is *he* that calleth you, who also will do it."

Let us walk before God (Genesis 17:1) and let not fornication (sexual sins) be named one time among us (Ephesians 5:3). If Christians do these things, God ultimately will destroy their bodies (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). Why? To get them out of defilement, out of iniquity, and out of connections to the wrong resources, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Limiting Our Options

The same is true for our minds. Matthew 5:28, speaking of defilement in the mind, says that a man who even *thinks* of committing adultery has already committed adultery without even touching anyone. This is also true of anger (when it is not righteous indignation) and our tongues, when we do not speak redemptive words. Proverbs 10:20 tells us to have a silver

tongue that redeems through words of edification. We must have a love that thinks no evil and grace that prevails in every situation through an invisible communion with Jesus Christ.

It is so crucial that our spirit remain alive. In God's light, we see more light (Psalm 36:9). This means that out of the light that we receive today will come more precise convictions based upon God's divine integrity. God provides immutable divine resources in a Finished Work to redeem and restore through the impartation of His Word and Spirit in resurrection life.

I have made decisions about many things in my life. I have left myself no options. When I have dogmatic convictions that leave me no options, then I am no longer tempted. People who are tempted, except in isolated cases, have not resolved the issue of convictions. They may have limited convictions, but not complete convictions. Without complete convictions, they are tempted and often fall, in weakness and frailty, into the causes and effects of Adamic habits.

When something comes up, it's a beautiful thing to look the tempter in the face and confess, "I have no feelings and no temptation, so go take your program elsewhere!"

I have convictions to think purely, to love

purely, to forgive, to show mercy, to give grace, to hate sin, and to love righteousness. I have a conviction to finish the course and keep the faith. I have a conviction to fight the good fight of faith, to study and meditate on the Word of God daily. I have a conviction to pray, to win souls, to be faithful to a local assembly. I have a conviction to be faithful to a local pastor-teacher as he follows God. I have a conviction to edify with my tongue and to communicate the whole counsel of God. I exercise my volitional right in the privilege of receiving divine convictions through growing in categories of truth. These are not opinions or religious rites to observe—they are convictions.

Many people want to have a Christianity that requires no personal accountability and no personal obligation to a Cross, and that's why they feel condemned by convictions rather than converted by them.

First I realize that I have an obligation to the absolute truth of the Cross and that the Cross requires my death in positional identification daily. Then, the fact of my death, burial, resurrection, and ascension with Christ becomes conviction. It is no longer an option—it becomes a privilege, a provision, and the truth becomes my

possession.

Conviction Not Condemnation

"And when [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove [(convict)] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:8-11).

Subjectivity takes away from convictions. Needs of the flesh weaken convictions. Instead of waiting on God to provide, insecurity and wanting something "now" takes the place of convictions. Past patterns of self-destruction produce future destructive patterns that take away from our convictions.

Because the Holy Spirit works in the realm of God's mercy, in the theater of God's grace, and in the operation of God's Word, He will always convict and never condemn, but He will *always* convict of sin. He won't accept our opinions, rationalizations, or human deductions that prevent us from making decisions to depart from sin. The Spirit convicts of sin.

Then, the Holy Spirit convicts of righteousness, meaning we can receive categorical con-

victions through imparted righteousness that relate to the categories of God's character, His essence and attributes. We can apply those convictions in any given detail of life.

Furthermore, the Spirit convicts that Satan has already been judged. We live a Christian life with our enemy having been defeated and frustrated by the judgment of Jesus Christ's death. Moreover, after His resurrection, the demons of hell could not stop His ascension.

Our enemy? My conviction is that he has been defeated. He has been judged. Why flirt with him? There is no reason to accept his deception. Why bargain with him for profit today in the temporal value system? Have convictions and do not allow that option.

Entering at the Strait Gate

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

"Strait is the gate and narrow is the way" tells me the way is so narrow that all options are gone. For me to live is Christ. For me to live is

every Word of God, using rebound instantly when I fail. For me to live is the sanctification of the Word and the Spirit (John 17:17; 1 Peter 1:2). I don't have options to weigh. I am a man of God with convictions; my wife is a woman of God with convictions. No longer do I have to be tempted by options. I have divine convictions and divine resources to honor those convictions.

Every problem we have relates to some provision we rejected because we lacked conviction. Every dilemma we face is because of an area that hasn't been established in godly convictions. We need to have convictions that place us into the reality of divine activity, releasing the invisible God through our visible humanity. Convictions bring us into our design and purpose for eternity, for which we were created and redeemed by God.

Chapter Four

AVOIDING SENTIMENTALITY

With sentimentality abounding in the Christian community today, Philippians 1:9-11 tells us how to be free of this in our relationships: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in *knowledge* and in all *judgment*; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

The key words here, "knowledge" and "judgment," refer to doctrine. This verse speaks of using doctrine to judge how you handle love and to control how we communicate love. This doctrine is crucial because it deals with people who compromise in their relationships. These people are filled with sentimentality, which may be defined as substituting compromise for transparency. It stems from a fear of rejection. Senti-

mentality is a soul-power rapport (or appreciation) that is rooted in the needs of Adam, living in emotions in a subjective relationship. It appeals to sentiment and is swayed by sentiment toward someone else.

Sentimentality bypasses a daily cross and repudiates Jesus' prayer in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." He meant "Set them apart in My Word." But sentimentality resists living by every Word of God. Instead, a sentimental Christian develops relationships in the flesh to satisfy his emptiness because the Word of God is not dwelling richly in his heart with the fellowship of the Spirit. Relationships based on fellowship in the Spirit include praying together, soul-winning together, studying the Bible together, and just talking about the Word together.

The Sword That Divides

"Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it"

(Luke 8:19-21).

Some families really hate this verse. I am all for the sacredness of the family. I visit my family. I stay in contact with my brothers. We encourage Bible college students to write home to their moms and dads regularly. Saved or unsaved, they should be called and visited. Family is sacred. Honor your family. But do it biblically.

Notice, in Luke 8, that Jesus' mother and brothers wanted to see Him. What did He do? He got into a boat with His disciples (see Luke 8:22). Some scholars say this happened the very same day. Jesus said, "Come on, we've got to take a trip in a boat." This is the same Jesus who said, "Honor thy father and thy mother." He did honor His family, but He still had to be about His Father's business (see Luke 2:49).

"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law" (Luke 12:51-53).

Jesus refused to be sentimental. Are you sentimental? Will you lose your call because of sentimentality? Stand up for Jesus in your call. Was it a man who called you, or was it Jesus Christ? It was Jesus who called you, so refuse sentimentality.

Again, sentimentality is substituting compromise for transparency in the light. It is fear of rejection; living to fulfill Adam's need and having a soul-power rapport instead of fellowshipping in the light with Christians.

If a Christian's ministry to an unsaved person lacks confrontation, then he is reinforcing that unsaved person on the road to hell. This kind of sentimental ministry bypasses the Cross so no one will be offended. But One is being offended—the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Heaven and hell are the issues here. We are loving, we are kind. To the best of our ability, we must lay down our lives. Yet, we must not compromise.

An Identity Derived from the Cross

We must stand firm in an identity that is derived from the Cross. An identity derived from the Cross is never sentimental; it does not com-

promise.

Read what the apostle John wrote pertaining to Christians:

"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrophes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth [divine] good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God" (3 John 9-11).

I cannot follow after someone who is not of God because of sentimentality. I may visit, call, and show kindness. I can be there for him if he has a need. Though Diotrophes was a professing elder—an elder!—the apostle John called him "evil."

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed"

(2 John 9-10).

I have seen so much sentimentality among Christians. What does the Bible say to do with divisive people? "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). If you keep associating with them, you reinforce their position. If you can be around them and take advantage of opportunities to get into spiritual things and finally confront them in love, then you are making it possible for them to be accountable to be saved. But if they will not look at Calvary, our lives must be a cross to them. Oswald Chambers said, "Christians have to become a cross for people who refuse it." Sadly, there are Christians who are more comfortable around unsaved people than they are with saved people because they are not hungry and thirsty for the Word of God.

We performed a beautiful wedding recently, and the groom gave a great testimony that didn't go over too well with some friends and family in attendance. We should always be kind and be careful to expose our unsaved loved ones to God's love. We love them, invite them, and do everything we can to show them we care. But

beyond all that, at this wedding, family members heard the Gospel. Those who came and did not get saved will face God one day and He will bring back to their remembrance the words spoken at that wedding.

Mark Them

Some said of Paul that he sent letters to "terrify" (see 2 Corinthians 10:9). Do you think he was being unkind? Do you think he was trying to manipulate them by fear? All Scripture is inspired by God, and the Holy Spirit inspired the words Paul wrote. He said to mark the people you should be around as well as those you should not.

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly [meaning emotions], and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to

the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:17-21).

Paul wept for the enemies of the Cross, but he still said that they are to be marked. Why? Because true love cannot be sentimental, nor can it compromise.

We need to have convictions that make us stand against evil conversation. Even our young people have to learn how to mark those who would cause division. We don't mark them over differences. But if they are sowing discord, if they are worldly and trying to bring in Satan's life, they must be marked.

Though you don't run these people down behind their backs, you do need to mark them. Otherwise, the serpent's eggs that are in them can get into your head and those eggs are bound to hatch someday (see Isaiah 59:1-5). They may not hatch this year or next year, but they will hatch, possibly within a couple months. The eggs can be transferred into your subconscious mind, even if you disagree with them. Just by listening to the subtle negativity of another, you open yourself up to infection. Be careful what you hear and how you hear (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18).*

Learn to practice Ephesians 5:11: "And have

no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." We mark them and avoid them unless there's a way to minister to them. It doesn't mean we preach up a storm at them. We need to be so careful and wise in our ministry.

Standing Firm in the Call

I have to abide in my calling—not in what someone wants me to do for my calling. I must abide in *my* calling. Did God tell me to come to Bible college? If the answer is yes, then should I let anyone take away that calling? No. That would be sentimentality and compromise.

Abide in the calling wherein you are called. A call means that you are separated unto categories of eternal life as your vocation. God can make divine arrangements around your call so that you don't have to leave it. If the Word abides in you, and you abide in the Word (John 15:7), then your needs will be fulfilled so you can honor your call.

Let your speech be seasoned with the life of Christ and have compassion. Don't fear division. The division is already there. And don't wait until there is a funeral to speak the Gospel. Speak the truth in love while the lost can still be

saved.

Love According to Knowledge

Was God sentimental in dealing with Miriam when she expressed her dislike for the woman Moses married? No, He gave her leprosy and for seven days she was shut out of the camp of Israel because she didn't like it that her brother married an Ethiopian woman. I don't know if God would have healed her and let her back in if Moses hadn't interceded (see Numbers 12:1-15).

Sentimentality incapacitates a Christian. You find it in the workplace, you see it in relationships. The Bible says the answer is to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). And we should let our speech be seasoned with salt, which speaks of the dynamics of light and life from God's Word. Certainly, I am to love my enemies, but that doesn't mean I call them up and go out to dinner with them (1 Corinthians 5:11). I weep and pray for them. And if they need me, I will be there with no thought of retaliation.

Love must be according to knowledge. I must love according to doctrine, and doctrine must be the means of judging a situation in the Spirit. We approve things that are excellent, but we do not approve the things that are not, for

we are to be pure and "without offense till the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:10).

**Read* Living an Inspired Life from the Breath of God *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

It is so crucial for a Christian to understand this doctrine thoroughly. If my life glorifies God, then it will cause division—even if I'm kind, gracious, and careful in wisdom. My life will be a sword to some in my household. Every now and then, a precious man will come home with carnal moods and his wife will have to stand up for truth. Her life might make him angry, but she cannot be sentimental. A parent deals with a teenager, talking to him and guiding him the best he can. But influence from a peer or from a carnal family member stirs rebellion that cannot be covered up. The parent's standards bring division.

This message is not legalistic, it is realistic. This is God's revealed declaration of truth to protect us, to provide for us, to keep us from the consequences of sin, to keep us in harmony with the Trinity, and to keep our body, soul, and spirit healthy and prosperous in the riches of God's

grace. This message is pure, without compromising an individual's right to choose negative toward divine mandates—and that includes accepting God's consequences.

Whatever decisions we make, choose to glorify Christ. We were created to bring pleasure to Him and to Him alone. He will add the things that we need. He will make things happen if we will stand firm and obey Him.

Standing in Victory

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

It is really amazing how people refuse to recognize just what God has for them. We have sixty-six books in the Bible that carry so many promises, and among the greatest of those promises relate to the blood of Christ.

The Blood purchased our pardon. Perfect and precious, this Blood was presented to God, and it was for God and for us. The Blood speaks upward and it speaks downward. It speaks to the Father, saying that this is what it cost the Incarnate One to pay for the sins of the world. It also speaks to Satan and his demons, saying that the victory is final, full, complete, and entire. The battle is over, and the victory is won.

I don't have to present the blood of Christ to the devil; God does that. There is nothing for me to do with the Blood. The Blood has been shed. When I believed in Christ, that Blood became precious for me just as it was always precious for the Lord.

In these pages, we will look at the great victory Christ won for us and how that victory gives us tremendous authority as new creatures in Him.

Chapter One

THE GOAT AND THE SCAPEGOAT

"But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

"Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

"Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Peter 1:19-21).

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11).

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die

not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.

"Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.

"He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on.

"And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

"And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.

"And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

"And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

"And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering.

"But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the

scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:2-10).

The Word of God tells that the blood of Jesus Christ is "precious." There were serious guidelines in the Word concerning blood and the children of Israel. Because of the preciousness of blood, because of its sacredness, blood was not something to eat or drink.

As far as I know, anyone who loses his blood loses his life. This goes for animals too.

In Leviticus, animals were slain and blood was shed, picturing and pointing to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross of Calvary. One of the great representations of this is found in Leviticus 16, regarding the goat and the scapegoat.

In Leviticus 16:15-22, after one of the goats was slain before the Lord, the high priest took the blood of that goat and sprinkled it upon the altar in the tabernacle to reconcile the holy place. Then, the priest leaned into the live goat to place both of his hands on its head and confessed over it all the sins of the children of Israel. This action of leaning over to place his hands on the head of the scapegoat was important because it repre-

sented an integration of the sinner with the substitute.

Finally, the live goat was taken by a fit man and set loose into place not inhabited. This was the scapegoat, and it went to a place that was abandoned, carrying with it all the sins that were named upon it. The sin of lying, the sin of rebellion, the sin of adultery, the sin of cheating—all of these sins were named and put upon the scapegoat. Those sins were carried away into the wilderness, and that goat was never to be found again.

The Blood's Expiation

Some folks make a practice of saying the "blood of Jesus Christ be against this" and "the blood of Jesus Christ be against that." This really is not a good practice. Why? Because of the principle of expiation. This means that the blood of Christ was for God. Christ's one offering satisfied the justice of the Lord, who is holy and righteous and can never be anything less than holy and righteous.

And because the Blood is for God, we can overcome everything through God's ways. Satan can no longer accuse a believer for any sin because of the Blood that was for God.

The blood of the goats and bulls were substitutes pointing to our Substitute, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Our sins were carried away to an abandoned place by a "fit" man. The only "fit" man who ever lived upon this earth was Jesus Christ. He lived perfectly for all of His days. He died for us and then He triumphed over death and hell. The grave no longer carries a sting for the believer who is hid with Christ in God.

Chapter Two

OVERCOMING THROUGH THE BLOOD

"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

"And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

"And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel

of the LORD stood by" (Zechariah 3:1-5).

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:10-11).

What a picture Zechariah 3 is for us to look at. The devil comes to attack the high priest. Now, the priest is just a man, so naturally he has many, many sins. But Jesus Christ stands up and will not listen to any accusation made against the priest.

Is this what you do when someone brings up someone's failures? If you listen to this kind of talk, it means that you consider yourself as being beyond Jesus. If you receive anyone attacking anyone else on sin, you are putting yourself above Jesus. Christ would not listen to one sentence about Joshua.

What overcomes the accusations of the devil? The blood of Jesus. Do works have anything to do with it? Does striving make the ac-

cusations go away? No, only the blood of Jesus Christ overcomes the wicked one. The blood of Christ was for God, and because it was for Him, He will not let Satan attack us.

When I was saved, I was placed inside of Christ. I am hid with Christ in God according to Colossians 3:3. When I was placed inside of Christ, I became a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). The old things are now passed away.

For this reason, I don't have to go digging back into someone's past to find out the root of some problem. "What happened when you were five? How about at age 8 and age 9? What did you do at 11 years of age?" Worldly counselors like to take people on journeys back in time. "Let's go through everything that went on in your life." The way to counsel a person is to counsel him with divine life from the Word of God.

The Armor of Faith

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,

against spiritual wickedness in high places.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:11-17).

There is no need for me to wrestle with Satan and with what he says about me. I am standing in grace. I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and I have access to Him on the basis of this faith. I rejoice and hope in the glory of God (Romans 5:1-2).

What Christians really need to learn is how to stand in the grace of God.

I used to be quite a boxer. I would go into the ring and take out my opponent, and I would be declared the winner. That was the end of the fight. But suppose I just kept fighting even

though I had already won. My opponent lies there knocked out and I just keep swinging away. Now that is just a lot of wasting of energy and effort.

When it comes to salvation, I have already been declared a winner. I have been made an overcomer by the blood of the Lamb. My testimony represents how His victory works by grace in my life (see Romans 3:24-25).

Chapter Three

CHRIST'S TRIUMPH, OUR AUTHORITY

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

"By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:18-19).

Jesus came out of the grave in tremendous triumph, and that triumph was final and for me—forever. Let me clear something up. Jesus did not just preach to the spirits in prison, He announced His once-and-for-all victory:

"Here I am, just as I said I would be. I am glorified. See the nail scars in My hands? Now, devil, your crowd is defeated, and your demon armies can no longer make sin an issue. I told you how it would be, and here I am! And now I am gone. Bye-bye!"

Sin separates us from God in fellowship.

God does discipline us in love when we sin. Yet, sin is no longer the issue in our lives. Disobedience to truth or to life may be an issue, but sin is not the issue. Really, we could call it disobedience to the victory that's been won. If you are not standing in the victory that has been won, then you are open to defeat in your purpose and your walk with God.

Christ accomplished the victory at Calvary. He won it and He ascended to the Father. We are in Him. And if we are in Him, we are with Him in His ascended life that is now so rich and so free. The wicked one cannot touch us.

The Breath of Victory

Jesus breathed on His disciples in John 20:22, and that moment was very important. There, the risen Christ was giving His servants His authority in this world. That authority came because of the blood of Christ that had been shed for the Father. The power came later on, in Acts 1 and Acts 2, but the authority was breathed upon them right then and there.

Authority came because of the Blood. The devil had been defeated, and now they could be hid with Christ in God. We are made brand-new creatures with His authority over sin and over

the devil.

As believers, we have authority in the will of God over all manner of diseases. I am free and experiencing God's condition because I am in my standing. I live in my state of being with the Kingdom of God and the Word of God within me.

We have the victory that's been won. This is why Romans 8:37 declares us to be more than conquerors. And as more than conquerors, we are always caused to triumph in Christ and to make manifest the savor of His knowledge in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14).

CONCLUSION

So many cannot get this reality straight: God always causes us to triumph. He keeps us from falling. We are winners. The battle is over! Satan is defeated, and there is no reason for us to kick a dead horse.

Every time the high priest went into the holy place with blood to make atonement for the sins of Israel, he must have thought, "I'm going to have to keep doing this until Someone finishes this work. When the Messiah comes, then I won't have to keep coming in here anymore."

Now it is all finished. Sin is paid for, the devil is defeated, and we have authority. Let's use the authority we have because Christ completed what He had to do—for you and for God the Father.

Stay Focused to Bear Fruit

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

In the principle of sowing and reaping, we have a great provision from God. The provision is this: If I sow liberally, I will reap liberally from God. If I sow a few seeds from the Word of God, then I will reap very little from God.

Furthermore, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows, that he shall also reap. If he sows to the flesh, of the flesh he reaps corruption. But, if he sows to the Spirit, of the Spirit he will reap everlasting life. (See 2 Corinthians 9:6, Galatians 6:7-8.)

We have an incorruptible seed, according to 1 Peter 1:23—the precious Word of God. Incorruptible, it is a seed that lives and abides forever.

When we are not sowing the Word of God, we are limiting God, and that limits our fruit bearing. Yet, when we sow in the fruit of the Holy Spirit, we allow God to remove the limits, and we can reap His abundant life.

This booklet examines how we can develop

godly fruit, expressed through godly behavior, by allowing God to cultivate and manifest His attributes in our lives.

Chapter One

LIFTING THE LIMITS ON DIVINE ACTIVITY

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23).

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:6-9).

"Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 78:41).

Many believers consistently allow patterns

of negativity to take over their lives. Here is the problem: If, when certain things happen, we react in a situation rather than respond to the Truth, we limit God. We limit Him through our negative emotions, our fears, and our insecurities. And when we start limiting God, we reveal that we really don't know Him intimately, nor do we have a proper understanding of His nature. We need to remove limitations we put on God in each area of our need by making right decisions to abide in Him.

We must recognize that Satan wants us to abort the incorruptible Word and cause us to live in spiritual birth defects. I have seen this happen to young people in our Bible college. They answer God's call, come to school, and then fall into a relationship before they have had an opportunity to be established in their studies. The educational process in the Word of God is often aborted in these cases. A relationship entangles them, they lose their focus, and division enters into their hearts.

This is why people should be so careful while they develop relationships. A relationship should never interfere with your relationship with God. Pure, healthy, no—touch love should not demand hours of your time on the phone, to

the detriment of your prayer life and your communion with God. Learn to grow in grace and knowledge, and you won't become paralyzed—limited in your fruit bearing because you limited God.

Jesus Christ became paralyzed in His humanity when He bore all of our sins on the Cross. He limited Himself by dying so that we might be liberated in His life. The Lord Jesus emptied Himself so that we could be made full.

The Will, Our Faith, and God's Grace

My will, my faith, and God's grace: Put them together and something wonderful happens. Each has a specific part to play in my life. By grace through faith, I made a decision in my will to ask Jesus into my heart and I received eternal life. And now, I grow and bear fruit by continuing in the same process. As my human behavior comes under the power of the incorruptible Word of God, my thoughts, my feelings, and my confessions bear the fruit of godly behavior.

This process, where the natural becomes divine, is so precious. Any relationship I have should be governed by godly behavior. In my marriage, I initiate to my wife with godly

behavior and she responds in a godly manner. And as I initiate and respond in a godly way to my friends and co-workers, I will discover that I have eternal friends who will stick by me in the worst of times. Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

I have had people say to me from time to time, "I don't have any friends." I don't mean to sound simplistic, but Proverbs 18:24 provides a very meaningful truth. Anyone who shows himself friendly can have great friends wherever he goes. If I want to have friends, I have to initiate a pattern of being friendly. Wallowing in depression and need, just waiting for someone to initiate to me, won't help matters.

The point is to stay focused on Christ, and let Him have preeminence in every relationship. When He is allowed to be your source of life, people will want to be around you just to partake of the fruit of the Spirit that pours out of your life.

Chapter Two

DECISIONS FOUNDED ON LOVE

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Life is made up of one decision after another. Life is won or lost in the details of making those decisions. A winner makes decisions to win. Losers, somewhere along the line, have made decisions to lose. That is why our decisions in the details of life are very crucial.

Hebrews 13:5 is a great verse to study and to help us understand the value of right decisions. Anyone who is saved is in Christ. We are new creatures, and this means we have a new standard of living. All of our old standards have been left behind. The old things have passed away and all things have become new to us.

We are not creatures of discipline, but creatures of habit. Of course discipline is necessary,

but God does not want us to consider discipline first. Cultivating good habits must come first. As we cultivate good habits of thinking and speaking, we apply discipline to continue in them.

When discipline is attached to a legalistic system of works, it is both dangerous and vain. It is a form of bondage that causes people to limit themselves and the Holy Spirit from producing God's fruit in their lives.

Equal and Unified

"But the *fruit* of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

"Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

The Word of God says that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, which produces a godly walk and, consequently, godly behavior. It is the antithesis of the works of the flesh. In the original text, "fruit" is singular, pointing to the fact that all the elements of God's fruit are one. These are not "works" of the Spirit; these are qualities that the Spirit is effectually cultivating in us and through us.

When this process is at work in an individual, he is being led by the Spirit, living by the Spirit, and being taught by the Spirit. The Holy

Spirit Himself produces the fruit of the Spirit in him.

The original text of Galatians 5:22-23 reveals that a singular verb ("is") introduces the things that describe what love is. Each characteristic is presented equally; they are equal and united, describing the believer's inward, outward, and upward disposition.

This is how this principle works. The fruit of the Spirit is love; and that love is one reflection, with eight expressions or emanations that are equal and intertwined. Joy is equal and united to love because love produces joy. Only a foundation of love makes the soul compatible to the other characteristics of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the joy that I have in my heart becomes my strength for one reason: it is equal and united to love. Furthermore, my peace is perfect only when God's love produces it. Peace is equal to and one with love and joy because of what the love of God in Christ has done in my heart.

Joy and Peace

"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour"

(Ephesians 5:2).

This verse should give us a new understanding of what it means for us to walk in love. If you are struggling in your marriage, exercise divine behavior and walk in love. Physical sickness—for you or a loved one—may be troubling you. Let the fruit of the Spirit supply joy and peace. Not joy because of the sickness, but joy because you know that God will do what is right, according to justice that has been satisfied. No matter what happens, He will make it work together for divine good.

It may seem as though He is silently standing by, disinterested. He is not. It may seem as though He doesn't care about your severe back pain or your very serious heart condition. He does care. His mind is upon you, and He is with you in whatever is going on. Something will be worked out so that God can reveal the very nature of His love to you and through you.

"And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart" (Jeremiah 24:7).

Lust is any need we try to fulfill outside of the will of God. So, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh if we walk in the Spirit of God. Being

filled with the Spirit as we walk in love is one of the most sacred ways to experience God's presence. It is the premise for motivational thinking that comes from a heart that is filled with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, *that we may know Him*.

Chapter Three

BREAKING THROUGH TO MATURITY

"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

Here, I want to focus on the subject of breaking through to maturity by having a ministry of God's righteousness and a heart of reconciliation. This kind of heart has a powerful desire to help people be restored so they can live in spiritual health.

The words "longsuffering" and "patience" are from the Greek word *makrothumia*, which speaks of having patience toward people (Galatians 5:22). This is patience that produces divine behavior, even in one who is injured and hurting. The grammar indicates that *makrothumia* is something we receive from God by His actions toward us. Longsuffering endures the injuries

inflicted by others in the midst of irritating, provocative circumstances. It is the quality of having faith-rest, even in the face of Satan's attack.

Gentleness and Goodness

"Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great" (2 Samuel 22:36).

"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7).

After longsuffering, in Galatians 5:22, we have the word "gentleness." *Chrestotes* is the Greek word, and it is defined as a kindly disposition toward others that is both pure and upright. Though we may not always actively express gentleness, God is going to show us this kindness throughout all eternity (Ephesians 2:7). Gentleness that is expressed as the result of love always demonstrates kindness. It is one of the most pleasing characteristics of the Holy Spirit.

Everyone appreciates kindness. A new person from the inner city came to our church recently and said, "It seems like no one has been this kind to me since I can remember." She was just aching to experience plain and simple kind-

ness, and the Body of Christ expressed it to her.

As the fruit of the Spirit reveals kindness, it also reveals goodness. "Goodness" (*agathosune* in the Greek) is the act of demonstrating joy, peace, longsuffering, and kindness through a godly life. Divine goodness keeps us, teaches us, and forgives us through grace. Romans 2:4, speaking to those who judge others, asks, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" When goodness disciplines, it is always through grace and mercy. Therefore, be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful (Luke 6:36).

Faith, Meekness, and Temperance

Finally, we have faith, meekness, and temperance.

"Faith" (*pistis* in the Greek) refers to an act of the will determined to express trust in God's promises. It is based on the conviction that what God has said is the truth, backed up by the witness of the Holy Spirit. Whether it is the faith of Abraham (Hebrews 11:8, 17), the faith of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16), or the faith of the operation of God (Colossians 2:12), faith believes with great confidence and assurance that God is who

He says He is.

"Meekness" (*prautes* in the Greek) describes a gentle disposition in relationships, in contrast to harshness. A person who is meek willingly gives up his right to go his own way in order to be led in God's way.

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13).

I learned to recognize the qualities of faith, meekness, and temperance from certain missionaries I met as a young pastor. I learned so much just from watching them, observing their lives behind the scenes. None of them would let me open or close my own door. They were true servants, always manifesting humility in the sight of men and meekness before God.

One gentleman had lost his wife and two daughters to a terrible sickness while they were serving God on the foreign field. Physically, he struggled to walk because of a severe limp. Meanwhile, his denomination had begun to question the validity of the Bible on certain points. That left him with no choice but to leave the organization, which also meant to give up his means of financial support. Still, he stayed in

his call, alone and without finances, and for a time eating wild berries as his main supply of nourishment.

Yet, when this man stepped up to the pulpit of our tiny church of sixteen members, all he could say was this: "Folks, God has been so good to me. I will never know why He even allows me to speak to you. He has done nothing but treat me like a king."

Now, that was lesson of meekness that I have never forgotten. This man of God imparted to all of us the things he had learned from God as he walked with Him.

The final characteristic we will speak of is "temperance" (*egkrateia*). Often, temperance is wrongly defined as "self-control." But in fact, temperance is *divine* control exercised through the Holy Spirit's singular fruit of love. Temperance characterizes the new creature as one who has availed himself to be God's workmanship and not his own. This speaks of a believer who has learned to focus on the things of God, and as a result he bears much fruit.

I will never forget what one missionary friend told me years ago. "You are very successful," he said to me. "Be very careful of your success." I took that right to heart. Success can

cause even a good man to lose sight of the One who is in control.

The Holy Spirit seeks to maintain His control to show that every expression of this fruit can flow in us and through us, so that we can manifest—and make visible—our God who is invisible. But that comes only when we focus on the prize of the high calling (Philippians 3:14), reckoning ourselves to be dead to self and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:11).

CONCLUSION

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

The fruit that we manifest is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. That manifestation becomes the evidence of who God is toward us, in us, and through us.

I love to have the Holy Spirit witness with my spirit. It is far more than a witness that I am a child of God. My spirit bears witness of the Holy Spirit's fruit when it is being expressed through another believer. Certainly, we are not to live by our feelings; yet, we know that the good feelings that come from healthy emotions can help us to go on when circumstances would cause us to grow faint.

Remember that God never evaluates us on the basis of what we do. One preacher may have a congregation of thousands, while another may serve a group of twenty. Both, however, stand

before the Lord. The issue is what we are before God. We are called to reflect the love of God: one source, one reflection, expressed through eight characteristics, all equal and undivided. If we focus on His Life and walk in the Spirit, we will reflect that life by the fruit of the Spirit. That's all that matters.

Stay in the River

Pastor Tom Schaller graduated from Northeast School of the Bible in South Berwick, Maine. From 1975 to 1981, he led a team to Helsinki, Finland, establishing a church and the Scandinavian School of the Bible. That ministry has sent out over 80 missionaries to more than sixteen countries. In 1981, he returned to the United States where he served as Missions Director for Greater Grace World Outreach in Massachusetts and Maryland. Then in 1990, Pastor Schaller led a team to Budapest, Hungary, again establishing a church and Bible college.

In 2003, Pastor Schaller came to Baltimore to serve with Greater Grace and teach at Maryland Bible College and Seminary. He is now the Presiding Elder and Pastor of the Greater Grace church in Baltimore, working with Dr. Carl H. Stevens, the founder and senior pastor of GGWO.

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INTRODUCTION

In Romans 16:19 we read, "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men…." Your obedience here in Baltimore, in this particular assembly, has gone abroad to all men. You do not know this, but people around the world think of the assembly here in a very, very awesome way because that is what we have told them. That is what they have heard on the tapes and the videos from our pastor, Dr. Stevens. That is our communication, and that is the reality. This is an amazing assembly.

We have gone through some things, and we have seen Christ manifested in His people. It is, therefore, important to know that your life of obedience in God has a ripple effect and a beautiful consequence.

In this message, we will see that though there is evil in this world, we ought to be simple-minded about it, having no apparent cleverness to deal with it. Rather, we can show

ourselves to be very wise as we simply draw near to God. There is a river for us, "the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God..." (Psalm 46:4). Get in the river! He will carry us through in the purity and beauty of His holiness, and we will not be ashamed.

Chapter One

OUR PLACE IS IN THE RIVER

"For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Romans 16:19).

I want to speak about drawing near. In this verse, the apostle Paul said (to paraphrase it very simply), "I want you to be focused and concentrating on that which is good. And concerning the evil, pay it no mind. Don't get occupied with it. It is there, and we know that, but it is not our occupation. We are to be wise and discerning concerning good. What is "good"? Here, we are not speaking of the relative goodness on the good side of the Tree of Knowledge (Genesis 2:9). Rather, it is absolute goodness. It is godliness. It is the ministry. It is the Word. It is the people of God. It is the faith. It is the sincerity. It is the direction. It is the future. It is the hope. It is the encouragement. It is every word that comes

out of the mouth of God.

Our pastor, Dr. Stevens, has had such a keen gift and a very amazing capacity as a personal pastor and as a teacher—a person who has always seemed to understand things from a purely spiritual orientation. The Spirit of God has covered our assembly, and he has spoken with such godly authority, clarity, and edification.

We are to be wise concerning *those* things. We are to be sensitive to those things that are godly and edifying. Yet, we are to be very simple about the things that are evil—very simple.

Over there is the evil—and you know it's there. We are simple regarding that. We are occupied with the good, the truth, the wisdom, the edification, the vision, and the encouragement in the place where God has put us, in the work of God.

It does not mean that we are blind, and it does not mean we are naïve. Nor does it mean that we should not deal responsibly in the affairs of life. It simply means that those things cannot be our orientation. I cannot fix every wrong. I cannot deal with or handle evil without it contaminating me. I cannot put fire in my bosom and not get burned. I cannot handle poison without it somehow poisoning me.

This is why I must draw near. This is why I must stay in the river.

Draw Near Instead of Withdrawing

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).

"Take heed." This is a very good warning. "You be careful. We warn you, unless there be in *any* of us an evil heart…." Evil heart? "…of unbelief."

It may be that I am aware that I'm in the desert and that there is no water. God has brought us out to the desert.

Remember when the Israelites said, "Moses, did you bring us out here because there were not enough graves in Egypt? Did you bring us out here so we would die out here? There is no water and there is no food out here!"

And the Lord said, "I brought you this way to prove you and to *humble* you (notice that), and to teach you that you should not live by bread only. You must live by the words—*every* word that proceeds from My mouth" (see Deuteronomy 8:3).

We are in a battle in this world. We really are. It is a battle for souls. It is a battle for our

own souls. It's a battle for our potential that may never be realized. The devil does not want you or me to become who we should be, and the evil over there has the potential of taking away from us what we were called to. Evil has a potential to take root in me so that I would become occupied with the evil. But the Word says we should be simple with the evil and wise concerning that which is divinely good—that which is inspired, that which is anointed, that which is enlightening, that which is encouraging, and that which is true. So take heed that there would not be an evil heart of unbelief.

What happens when we give place to unbelief? According to Hebrews 3:12, we are departing from the living God. Just think about that. God is over here, and I'm over there. The Greek word for departing means "to stand aloof." In one of his translations on that portion, Kenneth Wuest said that to depart from the living God is to stand aloof from Him. I step back, and I take another look. I step back, and I reconsider everything. I step back, and I try to find objectivity.

But as I look, as I step back, I have a problem, because I don't know what happens to me when I step back. Couldn't I be changing as I am stepping back? I may think I am the same, and I

may think I am being objective. But isn't it possible that an evil heart of unbelief is the motivation for my standing aloof? Actually, it is unbelief that has caused me to stand aloof. Something about my heart has departed from what God has said, what God wants from me, what God is saying to me, and what God will do for me.

Don't Leave Your Place

We have a place. Do not leave your place. In the local assembly where you were called—that is your place. It is a place for *you*. It is the place where God has put you and me—a place where we are not departing from the living God. It is here where we become wise concerning that which is good and simple concerning evil.

We do not hear messages that tear us down or words that would trash us and discourage us. We do not hear about introspection and self-analysis, about our failure and self-improvement. Rather, we hear a divine message of personal edification where the Spirit of God says to us, "This is the place. God is here." And there is a river that makes glad the city of God (Psalm 46:4). We sense that.

When we get into the river of God's pres-

ence, there is a big difference as to how we are thinking and how our adversaries are thinking. Those who are on the outside looking in evaluate what is going on from far away. They could even be sitting inside in the room and be analyzing, but their analysis may be entirely outside of the divine revelation, the presence of God's grace, and the Person of Jesus Christ.

We are in our place. We are in the river.

Chapter Two

OUR PURPOSE IS DEFINED IN THE RIVER

Hebrews 3:13 says, "But exhort one another daily…." Exhort is another word for edify. It is to lovingly encourage and teach and instruct one another. How often? Daily.

Do you remember our pastor saying to us that we should get one hour of doctrine every day? What is the point? Hebrews 3:13, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called To day…."

There is nothing wrong with getting humble and getting on our knees and listening to a message and having our hearts stir us up. There is nothing wrong with staying in our place, abiding and being built up by the Holy Spirit in our particular place in God's work.

Verse 13, read it once again: "Exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Now read Proverbs 27:8: "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place."

I have not seen many lost birds around as I go out the door and look around. Sometimes I do notice the sea gulls come into our parking lot. But when the tornados or hurricanes come, where are the birds? Many things we can say about birds tonight. But one thing is for sure. When a bird wanders from his place, that is not good. Likewise, it is not good when a man loses his place.

Oh, he may have a huge house. He may have a beautiful house, but does he have a place for his soul? Oh, he may have a big bank account over in Switzerland, but does he have a place for his soul? Yes, he has a cottage out in the countryside. He has a big house. But does he have a place for his soul?

He goes to the doctor for his body. He goes to the dentist for his teeth. He goes to an accountant for his taxes. But does he have a place for his soul? Does he have a place? You know what? People get all confused about this. They watch late night news about the latest murder. They go to sleep, and they have a shotgun under the bed. They lock the door, maybe seven locks.

I'm not so interested in those things.

We pray for the city. We build up ourselves. We love people. We go out and have outreach. We are wise concerning good, about God's perspective, and we are not focused on something that is simply not very profitable for our soul.

Into the River

"There is a river…." There is a river—really. It is the river of God, in Psalm 46:4. There is a river in this place. Ezekiel 47 speaks of this river, coming out from under the house. John 7:38 speaks of the river that comes out of the belly of a believer. There is a river, and this river is very wide. It is a thousand cubits (Ezekiel 47:5). The man went out, up to his ankles. Then he went out, up to his knees. He went out, up to his hips. And then he went into the river, swimming.

And the Lord said, "Do you see this river?" and Ezekiel said, "Yes. This is the river, and it came out from under the door of the house, and this is the house of God. This is the tabernacle of God." This scene is actually happening in the Millennium, in the future temple that shall be in Jerusalem. And this river is like the river we read about in the book of Revelation. Pure as crystal, it is the river of life that comes from God

down to us.

Question: Is that river *our* river? Is this the river of God? Is it the river of truth? Is this the river of God's mind? Is this the river of godly conviction? Is this the river of Jesus Christ Himself that flows to us and has anointed us and built us up in the Kingdom? Is this the river that is in the Body where we are all members one of another and fitly joined together? The answer is yes, in typology.

Literally, this river is coming in the Millennium, as far as I understand, and there are trees on the side. And it says here that wherever it goes, everything shall live and be healed:

"And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh" (Ezekiel 47:9).

There is a river flowing. It is here with us. It is in us. It is our fellowship. It is Jesus Christ in our midst. But now, watch. There is an evil heart of unbelief. What am I doing? I am departing. I have a problem. I'm telling you, I've got a problem. I can talk all day about it. There it is, and

I'm occupied with it. Where is the living God? My place is over here, but like a bird that is wandering off, so a man can wander from his place. This is a strategy of Satan that is in this world, and its purpose is to take away from us our health, our privileges, our blessings, and our promises.

Do not be distracted by negativity. Stay in the river. You will be glad.

Chapter Three

HEALING COMES IN THE RIVER

God has given divine increase in the multiplication of our people, raising up men and women of God by an amazing work of God. We don't even know how it happens. We just become who we are. And though some negative things may happen, and they have their place, that is not our occupation. The reality of the river that makes glad the city of God—this is our occupation. This is our place. Our place is extremely important because God has health for us, and we shall be healed. That is amazing!

He renews our youth as the eagle's (Isaiah 40:31). He stirs us up, and some of the other things—the distractions—just drop off. Our ears are precious. Remember that, please, as you hear so many voices. Please be very careful in these times, and be very gentle, very gracious, and very loving toward each other and toward all of our brothers and sisters in this country and

throughout the world, because we have to be occupied with the important things.

That river is flowing. This is a challenging time for all of us, but let us be simple concerning evil, and let us be very wise concerning good. Let's be very edifying in our speech. We are to draw near in our local assemblies, wherever they are, and there shall be a healing river of water. It shall be characterized by love, and that love has an authority to bring healing. Broken relationships can be restored, bad words can be forgiven, and what looks like malicious intention may be only a bit of confusion (though actually it can be evil). Distraction can happen to any of us. It can happen. Beware, therefore, lest an evil heart of unbelief would call us to depart from the living God to be occupied with something that will steal from us and take away from us what the river gives us. That river is a real river.

I'll tell you, you can take two brothers who have problems, and they can sit down, and the river is flowing, and there is healing. Take Syntyche and Euodias, in Philippians 4:2. Paul exhorted them, and in so many words he said, "Be of the same mind. Knock it off! Stop your complaining, and draw near to God. Get in the

river."

Get in the river. You'll be okay. Get in the river. You've got a future. Get in the river. You'll love your brother. Get in the river. You will forgive and forgive and forgive. That's what we do.

I really do not have any real problem in my soul or in my heart because this river is the river of God that forgives and forgives and forgives and gives and lives and loves and serves, and you cannot stop it. And wherever it goes, it brings healing—and many fish.

Learn to Draw Near

Let us read one more part, in Ezekiel 47:11. This is the sad news. It speaks here about the marshes—"…the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt."

When I start to listen to "He said this to me" and "She said that," the same becomes my life. I'm over here in a marsh, in the dirty mud. It stinks. I have walked in a marsh before and I was thankful I got out of it. I went into the mud real deep. It was organic smelling, about a couple of thousand years old probably, and it smelled very bad.

Do you know that some people live in that?

They do. Some people live in the marshes and the miry places, and they just think, "That's life." They are very hurt people, and they talk. Maybe you have been there. Maybe you have gotten stuck. Maybe something bothered you, and you could not forgive. Maybe something disturbed you, and you could not get over it. Maybe something happened to you, and it just really hurt you very much. It is a marsh. But look: There is a river over here. Draw near. Get over here.

"But," you say, "you don't understand me." It's all we understand. You, get over here. Here, we'll throw you a line. We'll pull you out. We'll help you. We're looking for you. Put up a red flag. We'll come and get you. Give us a call. We are for you. Jesus looks. He seeks to save. He's looking for you.

But once you get all straightened out, we should sooner or later learn that *that* is not the place for us to be. Take that stuff and put it away, and just know that it may be part of life for us, but it is not our occupation. Some of it, by the way, is simply unnecessary. So, I just go to the Cross, and I will be healed. I will be okay. We have been called to have fellowship that is actually extremely, awesomely, beautifully healthy.

The Other Side of the Picture

But let's put it on the other side too. Let's draw the whole picture, and recognize that this can happen to any of us, and those parties are part of the 'marsh party.' That type of thinking, that type of confession, and that kind of fellowship is not in the river. Do we understand it? Yes. Do we have sympathy? Yes. Do we care? Yes. Do they have a future? Absolutely. Are we any different? No, we are not.

But we are strong in grace. We are strong in faith. We are living by every word that comes out of God's mouth. We are praying without ceasing. We are rejoicing always. We are building up one another. We are laying down our lives for the brethren, and we are drawing near. In our heart is the fire, the life, the love, and the patience. And in our future is a glorious picture, because of this river. Though the mountains be cast into the sea, there is a river that makes glad the city of God, and that is our fellowship.

Wherever you are, take time to receive Bible doctrine every day. We have opportunities here to gather daily for at least an hour of doctrine from the Word of God. We have raps. We have the Bible college. We have meetings and prayer

times and soul winning. And you know what? Everything is all right in our Father's house. We will get in the river and stay in the river, and we will be okay.

CONCLUSION

If you get out of the river, you have a problem. But if you are in the river, everything is going to be okay. The Lord will deliver you from your sin and heal you with His Spirit. He will lead you and guide you beyond your self because that is the nature of God—the same yesterday, today, and forever. Amen!

Lord, I will be careful with my ears, with what I hear and what I am thinking about. I will be simple concerning evil, wise concerning good, and I will walk in the purity of faith in godly edification and truth and faith-vision. Thank You, Lord. We pray this in Your name.

Heal us if we have been in the marshes. Heal us by the river, and bring us into awesome, divine healing and restoration in our soul. This is purity. This is power. This is life. This is faith. This is Jesus Christ. Bless everything we do. Everything is important—every message and every part that we receive in Your name. Thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Stress-Free Living

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INTRODUCTION

Victorious, stress-free living is a way of life many believers have difficulty grasping. Doctrine must be repeated and rehearsed through prayer and godly meditation so that the truth can govern our souls. Otherwise, we have a wealth of knowledge that we cannot apply when faced with difficult circumstances.

One of the greatest things for Christians is what we learn *after* we know something. For example, we may read a book over again and be surprised by how much we didn't remember from the first reading. But when we have really learned something, we can use it involuntarily—automatically and spontaneously—under pressure.

As we will examine in this booklet, a learned response goes far beyond just knowing something. Meditating on doctrine brings power to retrieve things that we "know" and to implement them in daily life. When we lose doctrine from

our memories, it is no longer available for use involuntarily, even though we thought that we knew it thoroughly.

By looking at a courageous group of young people as they were forced into captivity, we will see how Christ's character is only truly revealed when the knowledge we receive is allowed to circulate in the streams of the soul.

Chapter One

THE NECESSITY OF A WELL-EQUIPPED SOUL

"My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:20-23).

"Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

"And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border" (Jeremiah 31:16-17).

In Jeremiah 31, amongst the captives from Israel were mostly teenagers being led away on a four-month, nine-hundred-mile death march to Babylon. God's nation has reached an extreme

cycle of discipline and the people have been taken captive. These teens were Jeremiah's pride and joy for the way they received doctrine, and the prophet gave them the promise that they would return to their borders some day.

The captives would be forced to march during the day and were chained at night. Ezra, one of the teenagers on this march, later wrote Psalm 119. He used the word *zimmah*, a Hebrew word rendered "mischief" in Psalm 119:150. *Zimmah* speaks of the perverted sex and molestation they endured. At night, drunken Babylonian soldiers would come to rape the women, molest the teenagers, and then chain them up again. The food for the prisoners was mostly moldy bread, soggy rice, and an almost inedible soup—something no one would think of eating under normal conditions.

Trained to Reign

The young people were being tested because they would one day again be raised up as God's client nation. These teens would be a pivotal force in the plan that would deliver Israel back to Jerusalem.

There are no Bibles in their hands—no preaching from a pastor-teacher to refresh their

souls. All that will sustain, inspire, and bless them will have to come from the Word of God in their memories. Everything will be dependent on what they have retained and what the Spirit can bring to remembrance.

Ezra would be among the leaders, for he will keep reflecting on Jeremiah's promise. His pastor-teacher, Jeremiah, had told him not to quit because in seventy years they would return. Before they were taken captive, these teenagers had been such amazing students of Jeremiah. They took in fifteen to twenty-four hours of doctrine classes a week.

Their memories had to be well-equipped. They had no Bibles to study or find comfort in, and they faced terrible rapes and molestation at the hands of these soldiers. Imagine being chained there, wondering if you would be the one attacked this time. There had to be tremendous fear, because one negative reaction or response meant certain execution. But their souls still had God's Word in remembrance. Although the Bible wasn't in their hands, it was in their being, causing them to remember and recall truth for life.

When being tested by demons or the old sin nature, many Christians fight and defend them-

selves instead of remembering the truth. We might be fully equipped to know something as a student. But that knowledge does nothing for us—even though we can describe the doctrines fluently—until it is in the heart, controlling us and our actions.

These teens were saying, "We are being tested, but we will remember what Jeremiah taught us." Their tests would develop a new generation of mature believers.

Chapter Two

HUMILITY, RECEPTION, AND ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE

"My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me" (Lamentations 3:20).

Receiving doctrine brings humility. A humble person is the only kind of person who can remember Bible doctrine and apply it.

In listening as a humble child, we should not think highly or lowly of ourselves; we should only think of ourselves as God thinks of us. He says we are complete in Him, and we agree. He says we are seated above; we agree. He says we are forgiven if we fail; we agree. That is humility.

When you are weak and need His promises to carry you on, *receive* His promises—that is humility in action. Accept God's words over your feelings, God's promises over adamic preference, and you will not live in stress.

We can be free from stress, or we can be filled with stress and never free. A divine power

system resides in our souls. We have the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God in us. All of this is inside us. It is our choice whether we use these resources or not. We can leave good food in the freezer and go hungry. It is there ready to be cooked and eaten, but we don't have to use it if we don't want to. In the same way, we can ignore what God has put inside us, or we can go negative toward it.

Receive a New Capacity for Doctrine

The humble will hear (Psalm 34:2); the meek will He guide and teach (Psalm 25:9). We cannot retain doctrine unless our old lives have been crucified. Even a preacher must take up his cross daily and put away the 'old man' (Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:22). The Spirit's filling only comes when we let God govern our listening habits, imparting to our memories brand-new inspirational capacities for divine reality that will be needed in future trials of our faith.

Promotion never comes without trials. A client nation is never raised up without testing, which often includes unjust treatment. Promotion goes to those who are treated unjustly and yet never verbalize, communicate, or react in negativity. They don't verbalize negativity about

their treatment because they have doctrine to understand that the trials of their faith are more precious than gold that perishes (1 Peter 1:7). They understand that fellowship with the power of resurrection and the fellowship with His sufferings make them conformable to His truth.

Many believers cannot keep still under such testing, because without humility and meekness there is no provision for the transfer of doctrine into the soul. He may have had his intellect stimulated, there may be a love for knowledge, but these things have nothing to do with Christianity reaching its peak of maturity.

Unshakable Hope

"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope" (Lamentations 3:21).

For the children of Israel on the death march to Babylon, doctrine in their memory brought a confidence so absolute that nothing they were going through could make them forget God. The Spirit brings truth into the memory so that confidence is unshakable (John 14:26).

Consider what these young people were experiencing; they couldn't have survived without recalling God's promises. Without the promises, I am sure thoughts of suicide would have con-

sumed them. They were being whipped, raped, molested, and chained repeatedly. Yet, they revealed absolute confidence in God that did not waver because of what was coming out of their memory center.

They kept thinking: "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed because His compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:22). There was no change in their circumstances. No physical or emotional relief was in sight. Just the Word in their memory was quickening them. The Book became alive and absolutely real to them. All they had to look forward to was the fact that His mercies would be new the next morning.

In the teenagers' minds, they had a picture of old Jeremiah exhorting them as they went off to captivity: "Don't quit! Don't quit! Don't quit!" he told them. "You are going to come back here to Jerusalem one day." They hung on those words from the prophet; they knew he wasn't lying (Jeremiah 31:13-17).

Jeremiah had taught Israel about God's mercies. He had taught them that God's compassions fail not. And each day began with what God brought back through recall. There wasn't going to be a better breakfast. No one was going

to intervene for them. But, oh, what a future generation these young people would form as they grew into tested, proven, victorious warriors of the Word of God.

They have endured rapes and molestation for weeks now, yet they say to the Lord every morning, "Great is Thy faithfulness." They did not play the blame game, but neither did they hold themselves responsible for what was happening. This captivity came after cycles of discipline in Israel, because several generations ignored God's warnings that came in earlier cycles.

America is in the midst of a cycle of discipline too. The remnant of all the mature Christians in churches in America is staying God's hand of judgment at the moment. Christians have no power to restrain the moral decline and destructive patterns at work right now. Yet, through volitional decisions of individuals in local assemblies with pastors equipped in doctrine, the Church can hold back judgment. Remember, in Abraham's day, ten righteous men —just ten—would have restrained the judgment passed upon Sodom (see Genesis 18 and 19).

Chapter Three

FILLED WITH GOD'S FULLNESS

"The LORD is my portion, saith my soul. Therefore, will I *hope*" (Lamentations 3:24).

The bodies of these teenagers couldn't respond, weak and ravaged as they were. The soul could respond, however. You can't kill a soul. A soul can't be stopped from believing, neither can it be stopped from having love. In the last month of cancer, though the body might decline, the soul can keep growing with God.

The word for "hope" in this verse speaks of having an absolute confidence in God. These young people sat under a mighty prophet who suffered as no other prophet, except for Isaiah. He imparted something to them, even while many of their moms and dads were rejecting the Truth. They learned to adjust in grace and doctrinal acclimatization, adapting to their otherwise unbearable situation, because they believed that they had eternal individual destinies.

They reached a place where they had tremendous objective love toward God, trusting Him beyond the suffering they were experiencing. Ultimately, they had subjective love toward the world, but not objective love toward it for they saw no value in the world apart from God's purpose.*

We must express subjective love from God toward everyone. Anything we say behind someone's back violates subjective love. The very first word grieves the Spirit; the next paragraph quenches the Spirit. Some don't even know that they are doing this. Have you said anything negative about someone? If you have, use recovery before God. Name it, forsake it, rebound and then go on.

Enter into Fullness

This group of teenagers had entered into *pleroma* faith. This means they were filled with the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19). Doctrine filled every shelf, every drawer, every room of their souls. It was in the attic, in the basement, in the kitchen, in the living room, in the dining room, and in the garage—picturing the different compartments of the soul.

The difference is *pleroma*—fullness. Chris-

tians who are faithful to hear and receive the Word develop categorical substance in their storage centers. They don't get off on self-gratifying experiences. They are quick to rebound after a failure.

There isn't anything we need more than His mercies and compassions to get us through the day as we face the trials of our faith. Promotion will not come as a matter of course. We will face challenges, but we can be stress-free in every situation.

We don't have to compare ourselves with others and cry about what we're going through, or feel as if we're being used unjustly. We don't have to be immature and unscriptural. We can have this *pleroma*, this fullness of God within us, with new mercies every morning and compassions that fail not.

Deceived by Knowledge

Perhaps the most deceptive thing in all of Christianity is a believer having all kinds of knowledge without having *pleroma*. A person such as this may even fluently recite verses, quote commentaries, and rattle off the Scriptures. But it is only academic knowledge, perceived by the intellect but never operational in

that person's life. Until there is a divine transfer at the Cross and the mind of Christ takes over, the fullness of God isn't allowed to come in to impart the living Word to the soul.

For example, a couple can come to church for years and yet cannot find the resolve to keep their marriage together. It is time they confessed that they have only academic knowledge in Christianity. They are saved, but they have no ministry of reconciliation or restoration. They speak no words of reconciliation, but they have the knowledge of them. The knowledge, which came from the Holy Spirit, never went beyond perception.

"I go to church, but I can't get deliverance," someone may say. A more accurate confession would be, "I'm a Christian who chooses not to go beyond the knowledge of the Truth."

Those who are delivered and victorious take what they know and transfer it through faith and meekness into what they want to become: conformed to the image of Christ.

We really haven't learned what we "know" until it is applied spontaneously, revealing Christ under pressure. Knowing the truth but never being delivered by it frustrates grace, takes us out of an eternal purpose, and does

away with our individual sense of destiny with God.

**For more about subjective and objective love, we suggest reading* The Love of God, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Four

ENHANCING THE SOUL'S VOCABULARY

To have an individual sense of destiny with God is one of the greatest things for a believer. First comes faith perception of God and of His Word, then the transfer of truth into the soul begins. It all starts with understanding vocabulary. A believer can never express himself beyond the vocabulary he derives from God's Word. Communication defines what we are and where we are, in Christianity. If someone knows only a few words of English, that is all he can communicate. When a person learns more words, his communication expands. When we know God's vocabulary and learn to implement it, we have a very beautiful way into the life and power of the ministries of Christ, whereby we are able to exercise true spirituality.

The mind develops the memory and the memory produces pathways for learning

processes. These processes develop conditioned thoughts from God, which are conditioned convictions. Conditioned godly convictions overrule anything we feel, desire, or want. Conditioned convictions resolve the empirical process of the senses that plague many Christians with human weakness of the flesh.

The Holy Spirit is a gift to every believer, but true spirituality is learned through these processes. Jesus Christ *learned* obedience by the things that He allowed the Father to work into His life (Hebrews 5:8). The rate of learning determines the development of a person's potential. If I were to ask someone to name the presidents of the United States in order, only those who had a learning process that consistently included those names would be able to do it. Our learning is determined by how we develop new pathways or memories. But unless we exercise what we have learned by reviewing it often, those conditioned thoughts will decrease.

Conditioned for Right Thinking

The Jewish captives on the long death march to Babylon had learned that thinking with God was more important than what they were feel-

ing, seeing or tasting. These teenagers had no Bibles in hand, but they did have the Bible in their hearts. They entered into a brand-new life of drawing from the Word of God in their heart. The Word became assimilated truth that went beyond knowledge. Remember, what we *learn* —beyond what we *know*—is our provision for living each day.

The mind develops these memory pathways through the learning process of developing conditioned thoughts. These conditioned thought pathways stabilize the memory. When my learning rate exceeds my forgetting (providing it is experiential and established in a process of metabolizing, assimilating, and circulating the Word, as in Jeremiah 15:16), then truth becomes the ultimate pathway—beyond sight, feeling, and taste. Lamentations 3:23 teaches the value of a harmonious rapport with God that exceeds any rapport with people. This rapport with God brings an appreciation for God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When we fail, if we use the principle of recovery with integrity, we begin to live in a pathway of having and receiving the mind of Christ again.

In Bible study and in church services, we receive information. Then we are quickened in

what we know, develop in what we learn, and faith perception comes in with assimilation and application in situations. At times, however, new memories become old and begin to deteriorate because we haven't had an opportunity to use them. As a result, when a situation comes, the "new" information that was never applied is difficult to remember, though it may have been what we needed.

Therefore, as we begin to develop memories with the Word of God and apply them, the Bible tells us we have the mind of Christ, which is received from the preciseness of the Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:15-16). We are not to live by feelings, projections, and private interpretations of truth. These result in empiricism, preoccupation with self, and divided doctrines (partial truths that never operate under pressure). The truth must be *applied* to become operational.

Matthew 6:33 tells us to seek the Kingdom of God first and His righteousness. No matter what our situation, we are to seek the Kingdom first. We shouldn't accept the demands of the world, letting them take us away from seeking the Kingdom of God.

We submit ourselves to God and honor those who pastor the local assembly with the

Word of God (Hebrews 13:7-17). We will then develop a single eye, and our whole body will be filled with light, as opposed to those without a single eye who have bodies filled with darkness (Matthew 6:22-23).

Living in the New

Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations 3:24, "The LORD is my portion." In verse 22 he said, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." The only reason we are not consumed is that His mercies and His compassions are new every day. "New"—*chadash* in the Hebrew—implies that nothing exists outside of what is new. This means that every single relationship is made completely new every morning.

God's mercies have the power to bring in an ability to totally think, confess, and live in His newness. Anything outside of this newness needs to have a grace adjustment and doctrinal rehabilitation.

See the Goodness of God

"The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him" (Lamentations 3:25).

What were these captives waiting for? De-

liverance from rape and molestation. But that deliverance would not happen for a long time. Things did improve because God blessed Ezra, and he found a measure of favor in the land of captivity. But here is the question: If that were you, would you still seek God? If you had to watch loved ones and neighbors endure such brutal treatment, would your soul seek God? Or, would you just self-destruct in your superficial Christianity?

After all they had been through, these young people could say, "The reason we hope in God with absolute confidence is because He is our portion." They understood the situation and waited for the Lord to fulfill His plan. The process of discipline upon Israel left the youth as innocent victims who were treated unjustly because of the sins of their fathers. Such unjust treatment, however, would bring them rewards that they will enjoy for all of eternity (2 Timothy 2:12). What was happening was not their fault and they refused to blame themselves for the molestation and rapes.

Waiting on the Lord

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is

good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth" (Lamentations 3:26-27).

This passage means that the man who hopes has absolute confidence and quietness in the midst of terrible things going on around him. Referring to the teenagers, these verses talk of how it is good for them to bear the yoke of testing in their youth. Very few could even begin to accept such a situation. Yet, there weren't any options for this group. If I am in a place without options, it would be well for me to put Christ first. When we can't find an explanation for what is going on, we need to have absolute confidence that God is going to make it into something far better than we could ask or think throughout all eternity.

The precious thing revealed here is how with the Bible in their hearts, these young people only had what they could recall to sustain them on the journey of death. The Word had become resident in their heart as it was transferred through the human spirit, down into the five parts of the soul. Under pressure, they would find value in the character of God's Word and His promises. Now they were expressing objective love toward God such as they had never done before.

They were now seeing God's value as the object of their love. Not only can we have subjective love when we are filled with God's love within our essence, but also we can see God's tremendous value as the object of our love. He is love, He is compassion, His mercies are new. He gives us joy and peace in our souls.

Even when our bodies are in a terrible condition—weak, frail, with only God knowing how we will make it—our soul can control us through our free volition as we make right decisions to have the mind of Christ. We simply have to accept His provision for our bodies.

At Last, Rest and Refreshment

When they reached Babylon, the leaders there had compassion and the teens and many other captives were treated surprisingly well. After all of the mistreatment, they were finally cleaned up and given proper food. Medical doctors made sure they were nourished before they did anything else, because of their frailty. God had a provision for these slaves because he was going to use them.

Jeremiah told Ezra, "You're going to be coming back, so don't you quit" (see Jeremiah 31:17). He and other teens kept reflecting on that

promise. They were trusting the Supreme Court of heaven as they had never trusted it before. Then, they were shocked to see how the leaders of Babylon were led by God to help heal them.

The Babylonians knew what they were doing. They wanted to get these frail youngsters strong. "We want these Jews to serve us because we know that they have special gifts," was their thinking. Finally, these battered bodies were shown some mercy after four months of merciless treatment.

Still, God's mercies were new every morning, every step on the march, because these believers had the ability in their souls to make them new by their choices. Great is His faithfulness. The name of God is faithful (Deuteronomy 7:9). We fellowship with a faithful God (1 Corinthians 1:9). He is faithful to deliver us from all temptation no matter what it is (1 Corinthians 10:13). He is faithful to do it for us and in us. He will always be faithful to us even when we don't believe (2 Timothy 2:13).

God's faithfulness reaches to the clouds (Psalm 36:5). It also reaches to the heavens and into the congregation of the saints (Psalm 89:5), no matter what goes on in the congregation. His faithfulness will not fail (Psalm 89:33). Some-

times, His faithfulness afflicts us (Psalm 119:75). This is what Ezra and the others understood beyond knowledge—"We know You are faithful, Lord. We have affliction, but we know You are faithful."

Even in the midst of extremely trying times, these believers set their minds above the stress and upon the Lord. The result was victory, with outstanding character. These believers were truly free.

CONCLUSION

God always answers us in His faithfulness (Psalm 143:1), and His faithfulness is great (Lamentations 3:23). If you sit down with a single eye, seek God's Kingdom first, and ponder these verses in Jeremiah and Lamentations, you will begin to thank God that your heart is beating. Linger a while with the Holy Spirit's filling, take every verse on faithfulness and store them in your soul. Soon you will realize that there has always been a provision for your life, and there will *always* be a provision. *God is so faithful*. He was faithful to call you, He will be faithful to keep you. He is faithful to forgive, cleanse, and renew you.

More than acknowledging truth, we have to let the truth be transferred to our souls. Then, the power of God is manifested through us in several ways. He enables us through His power (*dunamis*). The process of transfer (*energeia*) allows the words that I have heard to possess

me in learning a precise category of doctrine (*ischus*). Next, comes the manifestation of what I have learned under pressure (*kratos*). In the midst of these pressures, we will find God's special angels strengthening us in the battles (Daniel 10:18).

It must be so frustrating for the one who only has knowledge of God's truth to live in stress because he has nothing to recall in his soul. He becomes a weary person, tired and in spiritual decay. His wandering mind never permits doctrine to go beyond knowledge. Yet, the one who meditates and allows doctrine to be transferred into the five parts of his soul will be surprised at the victories won with Christ. This one will manifest to the world what is alive in his soul.

Table of Grace

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Unless there is a revolutionary change in Christianity throughout our country, the years ahead may be called the years of the cobra and the viper: Many will be infected by the venom transmitted by the serpent, Satan. *It doesn't have to be this way*. God has promised to prepare a table for us in the presence of our enemies. For some, the next few years will be the years of feasting at the table of grace, years of serving in brokenness, humility, meekness, and obedience.

God wants us to hear every single word from the Bible so we will not live in preoccupation with self, presuppositions about people, or presumptions about the past. Matthew 5:6 says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." These people are focused, occupied with the throne ministry of a victorious Lord. Everything in their life is Christ. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness, they are continually filled.

Chapter One

WHICH TABLE?

"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17).

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5).

"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Corinthians 10:20).

"Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Psalm 78:19).

"Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap" (Psalm 69:22).

There are two tables placed in front of us every day of our lives. What we do with those

tables is important, because God wants each believer to eat from the table of grace, which will give us an eternal self-image, derived from heaven, and the ability to live in *theantric action autonomy* with *cognitive invincibility*.

"Theantric action" refers to the Kingdom of God operating in a believer. It speaks of the Father's plan, the Son's Finished Work, and the Holy Spirit's power using the Word to produce Christ's image in the reflection of our thoughts, words, habits, and behavior. When that Kingdom reigns through spiritual autonomy, we are self-governed by the words of Christ while we abide in the local assembly where we were called, faithful to receive from the pastor-teacher and responsible for the words we hear.

"Cognitive invincibility" means that a believer has the knowledge of Jesus Christ in him—knowledge that conquers in every test and every temptation. He is able to overcome everything that comes against him, because he has internalized God's Word. This Christian has conquering power because of the freshness of his walk with Christ. He has the ability to succeed anywhere, any time.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my

head with [the] oil [of the Spirit for my mind]; my cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5). This is cognitive invincibility—conquering power for the mystical unknown, power to leap over walls in my life.

Can God furnish a table in the wilderness of need and want (Psalm 78:19)? Yes, He can. The Word of God says in 2 Chronicles 13:11 that every morning and every evening, the Levites offered burnt sacrifices and sweet incense, and they set the show bread in order on a *pure* table. For us, this means that we have the pure ability of grace to receive and utilize what has been given to us by God.

The Profaned Table

God said to Israel in Malachi 1:12, "You have profaned [my table]." In verse 7, God said, "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar." Then they asked God, "Wherein have we polluted thee?" And God answered, "In that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible" (Malachi 1:12). God was saying, "The things I give you through my servant you soon consider to be worthless for your life." This is what happens with many Christians who daydream in church, never uti-

lizing the message from God's table.

We cannot take of the cup of Satan *and* of the cup of the Lord. According to 1 Corinthians 10:21, we cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and the table of the devil. We must eat from *one* table: the table of grace.

We have received the fullness of Jesus Christ (John 1:16), and the table God sets before us in the wilderness is a table filled with grace. That grace depends upon the Giver and never the receiver.

But God does not give me grace to serve Satan's kingdom. Neither does He give me grace to serve my flesh to continue in sin (Romans 6:2, 15). God does not give me grace so I can wallow in drug addiction, alcohol, anger, complaining, or murmuring. No, God gives me grace when I'm weak so I can grow (2 Peter 3:18) and become like His Son by receiving something I don't deserve.

The Problems of Spiritual Anorexia and Bulimia

"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

One of the plagues of the twentieth century is the vanity of anorexia and bulimia. It is iniquity, and it is very serious. A woman who is anorexic does not want to eat because of the way she *thinks* she will look with the weight it will bring. Perhaps she is fearful of looking like her mother or grandmother, or maybe she wants to be successful in the modeling world or as an actress. A bulimic person will go through the motions of eating but will induce vomiting before the food has a chance to digest. Both disorders are extremely dangerous because as they prevent unwanted weight gain, they also rob the body of nutrients necessary to maintain life.

Christianity has a problem of *spiritual* anorexia and bulimia. Spiritual anorexia will keep believers from submitting to a ministry that offers a daily diet of the Word. They will restrict their intake at first because of misplaced priorities and later because of guilt. A Christian who has spiritual bulimia receives the Word of God only to vomit it out because of a preferred lifestyle.

Spiritual anorexia and bulimia are evil. A person may think he can get away with it as he stays "thin," but God sees it as sin. It is more than a psychological disorder but a disorder

caused by a viper and intended to destroy its victim.

The Bite of the Serpent

In Genesis 3:1, a serpent cleverly approached Eve when her husband was not acting as her covering. In Genesis 3:13, she said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." From that moment on, Adam and Eve began to live in spiritual anorexia. Then God, in Genesis 3:21, killed an animal and made garments of the skin to cover them. *They were covered through the blood of a sacrifice*.

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 10:8 that "whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." Satan's challenge to God in Job 1:10 was that the only reason Job served God was because God had put a hedge around him. According to Zechariah 2:5, the hedge represents positional truth, or the fire of the Finished Work through doctrine. When the hedge is broken, the serpent bites.

Herpetology is the science of reptiles. The root of this classification is from the Greek, *herpetos*, which means "crawling." According to Genesis 3:14, the serpent, who was the most beautiful creature in the garden of Eden, was

cursed to crawl on his belly and to eat dust because he deceived Eve. Among the families of reptiles, there are two major divisions of venomous serpents: those which are primarily *hemotoxic* and include vipers, and those which are primarily *neurotoxic* and include cobras. Hemotoxins attack tissue, destroying red blood cells by depositing bacteria. Neurotoxic venom attacks the central nervous system. Sometimes, because of the complex nature of the substance, the venom can effect both areas.

In a spiritual analogy, the devil, "that old serpent" (Revelation 12:9), has an agenda to destroy believers. He will use venom like that of the viper and the cobra that goes into the unconscious mind, producing secret negative attitudes and wrong motives. It produces preoccupation with self, presuppositions toward people, and presumptions about the past, as well as a lack of real faith for the present, which is a great transgression (Psalm 19:13). This "venom" can stay in the unconscious mind for years and years before it is manifested.

There are six kinds of spiritual toxins: the venom of bitterness, the venom of resentment, the venom of blame games, the venom of negative reaction and vindictiveness, the venom of

self-righteousness, and the venom of pride. Like the hemotoxins or neurotoxins we spoke of, they affect a person's emotional complex as well as their body. The emotions become infected as the toxins remain in the unconscious and subconscious mind, dividing the objective, conscious mind.

Consider what happened to Israel in Numbers 21. Because they murmured against God and against Moses, "The Lord sent fiery serpents [vipers and cobras] among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died" (verse 6). This is a picture of what can happen to Christians when the venom in their emotions finally goes into their physical bodies; this can lead to the sin unto physical death.

If the venom in your subconscious and conscious mind is not thoroughly cleansed and purged, it will eventually kill you years before your time. Hundreds of Israelites died years ahead of time, because the venom that was in their emotions eventually went into their bloodstream. In 1 John 5:16, this is the sin unto physical death for a brother who never confesses his sin to rebound (1 John 1:9). He doesn't understand that the Lord said in Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for

mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Also, in Isaiah 44:22, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins."

Healed by Gazing at the Substitute

God is saying, "If you will name your sin, I will forget it. You will no longer be chastised. I will purge the venom from your life."

What did God do for the Israelites who had been bitten by serpents in Numbers 21? He told Moses to put a brazen serpent on a pole, and said, "Whoever gazes at it will be instantly healed by *grace*—by a gift that he doesn't deserve (see Numbers 21:8). The serpents can no longer touch him."

A woman told me, "My husband and I don't fight—we don't even talk! I think I married a concept." She continued, "I married a faithful, naturalistic human being who goes to church three times a week. But he doesn't initiate. Indeed, he is quite boring. He gets tired all the time, and he reacts very quickly. What's wrong?" Her husband has been bitten by a serpent.

After a person is bitten by a serpent, Hosea 2:6 says God puts a hedge of thorns around him

so that if anyone comes close and tries to communicate, he will feel the prick of the thorns. Also, this hedge makes the paths difficult to discern. This was the condition of Israel when, after being led by God through the wilderness into lands of plenty, they forsook the living waters and tried to establish their own capacities without God. "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13).

Classifying Christians

There are three classifications of people in every single church—those who have made pre-salvation professions, saved believers, and Spirit-filled believers.

James 2:19 speaks of the first group. They have made professions but they have never been saved. Jesus said in Matthew 7:22, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"

There are cosmic evangelists who exhibit spiritual bulimia. They receive the Word but vomit it out so they can prosper in materialistic

security with money, cars, and extravagant homes. They attract big crowds, and people who live in their emotions patronize them in spiritual ignorance. God does provide prosperity for His people, but he does it through grace blessings (Matthew 6:33).

To every professing pre-salvation believer who never possessed eternal life, Jesus will say, "Depart from me…I never knew you" (see Matthew 7:23). Let God decide who belongs to this crowd. Luke 8:18 says, "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

The effects of spiritual anorexia and bulimia are evident among the second crowd, the *saved unbelievers*. The Word of God says, "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (James 1:22-24). This person is a Laodicean Christian, as described in Revelation 3:15-16: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor

hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

This doesn't mean these Christians are lost, because at one time they were hot. It means they have no fellowship because they are filled with spiritual anorexia or bulimia, whichever the case may be. But people who live year after year in either physical or spiritual anorexia or bulimia could face the sin unto physical death because of the bite of the serpent.

Now we come to the third group of people in a church—*Spirit-filled believers* who sometimes have to use grace to rebound from a fall seven times in a day, but they isolate their failures and go forward (Philippians 3:13-14). With an honest and good heart, they bring forth fruit with patience. Yes, they have weaknesses and wish they didn't, yet they grow in grace and knowledge in the process of overcoming their weaknesses.

Spirit-filled believers do not use grace as a license to serve sin, the world, or the devil. Desiring to be like Jesus, they are not perfect, but they are honest and mature as they hunger and thirst after God, seeking for Jesus Christ the same as they would seek a treasure (see Proverbs 2:1-5).

Chapter Two

DON'T FORSAKE THE MANNA

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

"And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live" (Deuteronomy 8:2-3).

"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Psalm 138:2).

In Exodus 16, the children of Israel were hungry and believed they were going to die, so

they murmured against Moses and Aaron. In verse four, God told Moses, "I will rain bread from heaven for you." This special food, called manna, was a supernatural, daily provision from the Lord. Perfect in its composition, containing every essential nutrient, manna is a picture of the Christian's provision for a daily diet of Bible doctrine to maintain spiritual health.

In verse 7, God said, "In the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord" (speaking of the manna coming down with the dew). The men were told to gather enough manna each morning to feed their family for that day (except for the sixth day, when they were to gather twice as much in preparation for the Sabbath). This is a picture of each believer eating according to his capacity for God and his hunger and thirst for Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, verse 20 reveals that some families did not use all the manna they had gathered for the day, and it bred worms and began to stink. When Christians don't apply what they have received, it begins to smell inside of them. Because they are not hungry after truth, their lives take on the smell of nervousness, stress, and being emotionally upset and disturbed. They don't utilize what comes from

the pulpit. They have polluted the table of the Lord. This is a clear case of spiritual anorexia and spiritual bulimia.

In Numbers 11:6, the children of Israel said, "Our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes." What happened? Psalm 69:22 reveals that their table became a snare before them, and that which should have been for their welfare now became a trap.

Filling for the Thirsty and the Hungry

God said in Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." He said He would pour out blessings upon *their* offspring and upon their offspring. *The condition for this blessing is that we are thirsty*. Then, Matthew 5:6 says that they which *hunger* and *thirst* after righteousness shall constantly be filled. In the original text, these verbs are present active participles. In other words, we are to *continually* produce the action of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The believer who does not hunger and thirst after righteousness is never filled, even if he likes the message.

We may be stimulated or we may have emotional thrills, but that is not spiritual conversion. We may enjoy messages selectively, but that is

not spiritual inspiration.

To hunger means to go after the whole counsel of God, and when you go out of the church door, you're so filled, you can't even think of anything but Jesus Christ. It shows in your countenance, it is revealed by your heart attitude, and it is communicated with your voice.

The Value of Being Empty

Concerning the Laodicean believer, the Word of God says in Jeremiah 48:11 that "Moab hath been at ease from his youth,…and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed."

Have you ever met anyone like that? His taste remains the same and his scent is not changed; there is no freshness in his expression of life. Yet he doesn't go into any serious captivity. Jeremiah 48:12 says, "I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels and break their bottles." Whatever they have they will lose, because they do not empty their vessels.

Being emptied from "vessel to vessel" means that when a message comes forth, we put it into action. Every Christian should be a soul winner,

and each one of us should go on purpose at least once every week. Here in Baltimore, we are making an impact on our city. We have Bible clubs for inner-city children and a program for our teens. We want to build a gymnasium as a provision for our young people, including our three inner-city schools. We want people to spend evenings with inner-city youth to help them to get off drugs. We keep going forward.

We may respond to the message and agree to empty our vessel. But as soon as we hear it, we need to purpose in our hearts to obey the Word. Moab didn't obey because it wasn't convenient. Those people are hearers of the Word, not doers.

Oh, Moab had reasons. And if you approach this kind of believer, he will look you right in the face and say, "I know," and then proceed to give you all of the excuses. Eventually, God sent to Moab people like himself with wandering minds. The Word that was to save him now caused him to wander (Psalm 69:22, Romans 11:9). Christians like this are not cold, nor have they gone into captivity, but neither are they on fire for God.

Eat at a Pure Table

"[The priests] shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister

unto me, and they shall keep my charge." (Ezekiel 44:16). This is a picture of a believer-priest who is hungry and thirsty, drawing near to minister to Jesus Christ. This believer is not preoccupied with himself. He has no presuppositions about people. No presumptions about the past. His conscience has been cleansed and purged by the blood of Christ. Finally set free, he is now able to eat at a pure table of grace (2 Chronicles 13:11).

We all have a weakness, and it doesn't matter what our weakness is as long as we don't use it to serve Satan, the flesh, or the world. We must not use our weakness with the venom of pride, blaming others, self-righteousness, resentment, bitterness, negativity, or vindictiveness. Allow the pure blood of the Lamb to cleanse away the venom and take over your life.

In Numbers 11:6, after God gave them manna, the children of Israel said, "Our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes." Do you ever feel dried up despite what God gives you?

A person may say, "I don't get anything out of the messages." To confess that means that you are polluting God's table, considering His Word to be worthless, and making the provision of

Christ contemptible.

Surprises of Grace

The Bible is filled with the surprises of God's grace. Matthew 5:6 promises that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. Jesus said in Matthew 21:31 that the publicans and the harlots would go into the kingdom *before* the Pharisees and scribes. It is beautiful to realize that, in one second, the thief on the cross next to Jesus believed, grace erased his past, and he went into Paradise with Jesus that very day.

Elijah had been depressed to the point of despair, believing that in all of Israel he was the only one who remained faithful. But 1 Kings 19:18 reveals that there were seven thousand faithful believers whom Elijah was not aware of—seven thousand believers who had not yet publicly confessed their faith. Thank God for the surprises of grace!

Remember, grace depends upon the Giver, never upon the receiver. We receive it in our weakest, worst moment; we receive it because we hunger and thirst for God; we receive it because we realize that we are children of the dust. Knowing this, we determine to be at church services, to be where God's people are, and to have

an eternal self-image. We have theantric action autonomy (able to live by every Word of God wherever we are) and cognitive invincibility to overcome every test and temptation.

Dwelling richly inside our souls is the Word that created the universe (Psalm 33:6) and holds it together (Hebrews 1:3); a Word that is quick and more powerful than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). We have a sense of conquering, a sense that what we have is invincible, that we can overcome anything, and that Christ is more than our very breath. We have a sense that His Word is more important than the food that we eat to nourish our bodies (Job 23:12).

We have God-consciousness—something that God Himself gives us through His omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience, and in the creative power of His Word.

Do you know why we go soul winning? Because every single person in the universe has been given a consciousness of God. When they get weak, the consciousness of their Creator within them tells them that they must get to know this God. It tells them they must receive Him and learn to love Him. This is the only thing that counts in the universe—the grace of God coming to individuals in the Person, power,

and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. We go as earthen vessels ready to share the precious treasure that's inside.

A Plea to the Church

"David saith, "Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them" (Romans 11:9).

The very thing that was meant for the welfare of the nation of Israel became a snare and a trap. This can happen in a believer's life when he receives the Word of God but doesn't use it. It doesn't transform him. As far as this person's life goes, the Word of God is no longer quick and powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword. He is occupied with business and domestic issues. Preoccupied with his schedule, he doesn't communicate with Jesus Christ. He has no hunger or thirst and no capacity to comprehend what God says in Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty."

Our hunger and thirst for God's Word will set the stage for the years ahead. Through obedience we can become a pivotal force once again to hold back judgment on our nation. Judgment will come progressively on America unless the churches—regardless of denomination—are

hungry and thirsty after righteousness and understand Psalm 18:44, "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me."

Christians must hear the Word of God not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). This is only possible when it penetrates in the flow of the Holy Spirit.

It is time for God's people to get on their knees, pray, and repent. God says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

We must turn away from anything that would infect us, any form of venom. Come to a pure table and be purified by faith (Acts 15:9). Let the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts. Grow in the pure grace of God, which is given for our weaknesses so that we can grow. We can rebound when we fail and be accepted because grace has been given to cleanse us. But though we have received the fullness of grace, we are responsible to apply it. We must not allow grace to remain inside of us untapped.

What does it mean, practically speaking, when a Christian will not use the manna he receives? It means that when he is told to reconcile, he doesn't do it. (And I'm not talking about reconciling with people; I'm talking about reconciling with God). Whenever there is a serious problem in relationships, we must first be reconciled to God. How do we do it? We eat from the table of grace strictly for the other party. Yet, hundreds of Christians do not do that.

The measure that we hunger and thirst after righteousness is the measure we are going to have a great Spirit-filled life. We will prosper just as our soul is prospering—physically, mentally, spiritually, and financially.

God wants us to pray on our knees that we would have a new hunger and a new thirst for righteousness—a hunger where Christ replaces our vain imaginations with Himself.

God wants to transform our very nature and give us an eternal, spiritual self-image in the Finished Work. He wants to produce theantric action autonomy within us, enabling us to live unto God and be fulfilled, even without people, although we will *never* outgrow our need to be

part of a local assembly or to hear from the pulpit. When God's Kingdom is fully functioning in us, then we can actually trust in the Lord with all our heart, all our soul, and lean not on our own opinions.

Is our table a communion table, or is it a table of self-justification, stemming from unresolved conflicts that have never been to Calvary? As a final product of the Finished Work, when I am filled with the Holy Spirit, I am ready to go forward with cognitive invincibility, with a conquering knowledge inside me. I have assimilated, masticated, and meditated upon this knowledge in my soul to the point that it becomes residential. My mind is filled with God's life and God's words. I belong to Him, and He belongs to me, and Christ is all and in all things (Colossians 3:11). I am free to grow in my weakness with a proper perspective of grace so that I can become just like Christ in my situation.

Venom from the serpent's bite always causes a guilt complex, but the Holy Spirit sets us completely free and makes us new creatures moment by moment. May we learn to walk in the Spirit of God who is love.

Chapter Three

PREPARE THE TABLE AND ANOINT THE SHIELD

"Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield" (Isaiah 21:5).

The world is in crisis. Every great nation that has fallen went through five cycles of discipline.* Each progressive cycle was designed to bring the nations to repentance, but because of the hardness of hearts, they would not. Today, America is in the third cycle, characterized by moral decline.

What can we do as Christians to hold back the forth and fifth cycle of discipline? First, we can become true intercessors. We can be true to God, and live in true spirituality. If enough Christians in every city will do that, we can hold back the fourth cycle for a season.

The Word of God says, "Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink: arise, ye

princes, and anoint the shield" (Isaiah 21:5). The shield speaks of the shield of faith, in Ephesians 6:16, which quenches the fiery darts of the devil. Categorical doctrine becomes your hedge and the table of grace becomes your provision. You have repented from spiritual anorexia, and spiritual bulimia, and now you're daily eating the manna and the corn from heaven (Psalm 78:24). No longer do you confess, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Psalm 78:19). No longer is it said that you have "limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 78:41).

The Unique Person of Christ

At a time when David was very discouraged because of his children, the Holy Spirit gave him a prophecy of the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ, who, in His humanity, would be born in the line of David one thousand years later—the Son of God who would magnify the Word above His name (Psalm 138:2). Jesus would magnify the Word above Himself—above His needs, His comforts, His schedule, His habits, His desires, and His purpose. He would magnify the Word above His perfect humanity.

The Word of God says in Deuteronomy 8:2-3 that the Lord humbled Israel by leading them in

the wilderness for forty years. God's whole purpose during those forty years was to humble them. "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (verse 3).

This is what David was referring to in Psalm 138:2. And in Matthew 4:3, when the devil tempted Jesus to turn the stones into bread, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, because it was "this man" (the Lord Jesus Christ in His hypostatic union as God in a perfect man) who would live by every single Word of God.

In essence Satan was saying, "Go ahead! Use Your deity to turn these stones into bread." But Jesus Christ came to empty Himself (*kenoo* in the Greek), according to Philippians 2:7. This is known as the *kenosis* passage. What did Jesus Christ empty Himself of? Certainly He had deity; He would never be anything *less* than Deity. But He lived in His humanity because He was a prototype of what we are becoming.

Tempted in the same desert where Israel murmured about the manna, Jesus went forty

days and forty nights in extreme heat, with no food. He could have used His deity at any time, but because His humanity had to be tested, He did not *exercise* His deity. Instead, Jesus said "no" to Satan's temptation and lived by the Word. Likewise, we are to follow His footsteps and live by every single Word of God.

Why do you think a faithful pastor studies for hours? It is so he can give the people in his church scriptural messages and not emotional devotionals. Rather than empty stimulation and emotionalism that causes people to live in natural observation without the reality of divine revelation, God is after shepherds who will feed their flock from a table of grace.

Hearing and living by every Word of God is the only way to remain free from venom locked in your unconscious and subconscious mind. When you are free, you can hear about soul winning, intercessory prayer, and about loving one another as Christ loves you, and then go out and empty yourself from vessel to vessel.

Seeking the True Treasure

Every time you receive categorical doctrine, God makes a deposit in your bank account in heaven. When you hear a message on the min-

istry of reconciliation and obey it the best you can, it can transform your marriage and family.

When the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5) and the power of Jesus Christ comes into us through the power of God, we have theantric action autonomy—the Father's plan, the Son's execution of the plan, the Holy Spirit's provision for the plan, and the Word's instruction, all controlling the soul. God's Kingdom within enables us to live in Christ and execute the Christian life on the outside. Not only do we experience the richness of His life down here, but deposits are being made in the bank of heaven and we are becoming wealthy up there.

If you want to talk about wealth, start with Ephesians 1:6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." The Greek text implies that we have been "graced out" by the Finished Work of Jesus Christ, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (Ephesians 1:7-8). Jesus Christ has made us truly wealthy.

Do you want to talk about wealth? We are

hid with Christ in God. Christ is in you; this is the mystery of the Church Age that the Old Testament saints knew nothing about (Colossians 1:26-27). We have the abundance of mercy and grace on a table—the abundance of joy, forgiveness, peace, and wisdom. The flesh with its affections and lusts have been crucified once and for all (Galatians 5:24). We have all the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments!

The Exceeding Greatness of His Power

Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:17 that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." He prayed this so that the eyes of our understanding might be enlightened, and that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (Ephesians 1:18).

We should be excited about this! Paul continues, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and

power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put *all things* under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, *the fulness of him that filleth all in all*" (Ephesians 1:19-23).

When we begin to understand how wealthy we are and that we have everything we need inside of us, we won't suffer from spiritual or physical anorexia or bulimia. There are many reading this who are living in one of the two, and they're not kidding God. God doesn't look upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). We do the will of God from the heart (Ephesians 6:6), and we obey from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered to us (Romans 6:17).

Christianity isn't taking care of the belly first, but it is taking care of the heart first. When the heart is right, it radiates a beautiful countenance—we look good to God no matter what our physical appearance may be. I'm not suggesting that we should not be disciplined about our appearance; I am suggesting that first we get the heart right. God didn't say to Moses, "You have to *look* better before I can use you." He

said, "Put your hand in your bosom," and it came out with leprosy. The message was, "Your heart is wrong, Moses." And then, God fixed it.

Conversation at the Grace Table

Thank God, there's a grace table where we can get our hearts right toward our besetting sins. There's a grace table that says to Abraham, "You're the father of Ishmael, but through Isaac, you're going to be the father of the entire world of Christians."

The grace table says to Jacob, "Your twelve sons have come from four different women, but these sons will be the heads of the twelve tribes because you went back and ate from the grace table."

This table says to David, "You may have done some questionable things on your death bed, but the Son born through your seed line will be Jesus Christ. And David, you fulfilled all My will, and you never turned aside, son. Come up with Me and be the prince in the Millennial Reign." This is not said to reinforce sin. God *hates* sin. He loves the sinner, but He disciplines and chastises the believer many times.

I know of certain people who probably wouldn't want to take part in the Millennial

Reign, all because David will be the prince. They think he wasn't good enough to make it. I understand that a young virgin was brought to him to keep him warm the last week of his life. I read it in the Scriptures. But he's still going to be the prince. Oh, that doesn't seem fair.

Grace doesn't seem fair from man's viewpoint. If you don't believe me, read Matthew 20:1-15. From man's viewpoint, grace isn't fair when the guy who worked an hour gets the same pay as the one who worked eleven hours. But from God's viewpoint, it reveals the mercy and love of a table that is set before you in the presence of your enemies (Psalm 23:5).

Peter denied Christ but then he ate from the grace table and became an apostle, preaching grace to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. Paul was a murderer of Christians, yet he found the grace table through an encounter with Jesus in Acts 9 and went on to become the greatest apostle who ever lived.

Thank God that He prepares a grace table before us in the presence of our enemies—a table filled with love, joy, and peace. We can eat freely from this table. And we have wealth in heaven and wealth in our souls. We simply need to release it *by grace through faith* in the same way

we were saved. Let's show people what kind of food we are eating and how well built we are, spiritually.

The Melodies of the Heart

The Spirit-filled Christian is sanctified by the Word of God that dwells in him richly. He sings and teaches and admonishes others in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. There is a melody in his heart unto the Lord. The Spirit-filled Christian has the fullness of the Word of God in him instead of the venom of a serpent.

In Acts 28:3 when Paul was on the island of Melita on his way to Rome, a serpent jumped off a bundle of sticks that were being thrown into a fire and attached itself to Paul's hand. When Paul just shook the serpent off into the fire, those around him were amazed that he didn't die from the venomous bite. But Paul wasn't affected because no serpent could harm a man who had more doctrine than any man who ever lived, after Jesus Christ, because he had a living faith in God.

We can do the same thing. Is there a cobra or a viper trying to bite you spiritually? The hemotoxins and neurotoxins don't have to affect you physically or emotionally; however, because of

the isolated case in Acts 28:3, some people have turned this into a religious movement. God protected Paul in this case as he did not handle the viper on purpose.

A Laodicean Christian gets weary and tired in a church service because he's preoccupied with himself. He has presuppositions about life, and presumptions toward absolute truth. But the Spirit-filled Christian sings with his grace in his heart to the Lord, edifying those around him and always going forward.

The Spirit-filled believer looks into "the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, [and] this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25). He has a little mirror in his soul that keeps reflecting the nature of God in His precise essence. Doctrine has formed that mirror. When he needs something, the mirror reveals it to him as it reflects Christ's nature through the living Word. It is the Word written on his heart: the same Word he has eaten from God's magnificent table of grace.

**Read* Dealing with Stressful Times, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997, for more about the cycles of discipline.*

CONCLUSION

The Word of God says in Jeremiah 17:1, "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart." Their sin was so terrible that they had rejected the truth and hardened their hearts. Instead of becoming mirrors that reflected God's nature, their souls mirrored the effects of serpent bites.

Many in Israel died when God let loose the serpents on Israel's murmuring generation (Numbers 21:6). But those who looked upon the brazen serpent were healed because it was a substitute—a picture of Christ becoming sin for us. When we look to Him, we are saved *and* delivered.

Serpents cannot infect the believer who lives in theantric action autonomy with an eternal destiny in cognitive invincibility. Hedged about with a wall of fire, we have knowledge inside our soul that conquers everything on the out-

side. When we hear the Word of God, we immediately obey. God is more concerned with the interior decoration of a soul with doctrine than He is with the external things that give temporal happiness. The issue is not the outer man, it is the Spirit-man inside.

We can be hungry and thirsty for the things of God instead of rejecting God's provision in spiritual anorexia. We can keep our food down in the memory center of the soul instead of vomiting it up in spiritual bulimia. Thank God that the manna is for more than mere survival. *It is revival.* And God and you are enough in any situation because you have been eating from God's table of grace.

Taking Care of the Orchard

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

While the Garden of Eden was still perfect, the first man, Adam, was responsible for tending the trees, taking care of the fruit, and watching for anything that could hurt or destroy the crop. Adam tended a perfect garden in a perfect environment. But after the Fall, when sin entered the world, man was forced to work for food and shelter by the sweat of his brow, in a world that was cursed.

Jesus often compared the work of the church to that of farmers and shepherds. Agriculture was a common link to average men and women of that time, but even today, the similarities are remarkable.

Anyone who has planted a garden knows the work involved in preparing the soil, planting and watering, and waiting and waiting. But to see a tremendous crop suddenly withered will cause even a strong man to be disheartened.

This booklet explains the plan and purpose

God has for men and women of all ages to respond to His cry for laborers in the field. Furthermore, it points out our need to flourish, having the right priorities. Then, as disciples of the Lord, we can tend to others that they might flourish too.

Chapter One

THE FRUIT OF TRUE REPENTANCE

"Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honored" (Proverbs 27:18).

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:32-34).

"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain….

"Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed" (2 Corinthians 6:1, 3).

Thanks to Calvary

Today I went back to the place where I used to go.
Today I saw that same old crowd I knew before.
When they asked me what had happened,
I tried to tell them,
"Thanks to Calvary, I don't come here anymore."

Thanks to Calvary I am not the man that I used to be.
Thanks to Calvary things are different than before.
While the tears ran down my face I tried to tell them,
"Thanks to Calvary, I don't come here anymore."

Then we went back to the house where we used to live.
My little boy ran and hid behind the door.
I said, "Son, don't be afraid, you've got a
brand-new Daddy now.
*Thanks to Calvary, we don't live here anymore."**

In a recent recording of this song, written by Bill and Gloria Gaither in 1969, the singer gave his personal testimony. He was a born-again, Blood-bought Christian, going to church with his wife and family consistently. One summer came, and they started missing church. By fall, they were arguing and would not speak to each other. When winter arrived, they only went to church once in five or six weeks, putting every-

thing else first.

After doing so well for so long, he had started drinking, and he kept on drinking. At times, the alcohol made him wild, and he did everything but hit his family. Eventually, he was arrested. As a result, during that time, he went through a great experience of repentance.

That was more than twenty years ago. After he experienced that time of repentance, sobbing and weeping, he and his family have a brand-new life together. When he got on his feet, he was able to buy a new home. Furthermore, he is an assistant pastor and a singer.

True Repentance

One of the great problems that we have as Christians is that we do not understand repentance. There is little proper repentance today among believers. Yes, repentance is a gift of grace, but like the gift of salvation, we need to act upon it. Ephraim cried out, "Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned." Then, after he was turned, he repented, and was ready to receive instruction (see Jeremiah 31:18-19).

With real repentance, this is what happens: Ezra said, "O my God, my face is blush as I look into Your face. My iniquities have gone over my

head. My trespasses have reached unto heaven." This man said, "I cannot even look at You." And by the way, Ezra was a godly man (Ezra 9:6).

In Nehemiah 8:6, Nehemiah wrote, "they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground."

The apostle Paul said, "We need to turn and repent and bring forth fruit that follows our repentance" (see Acts 26:20).

"Repentance" means to work out what God has worked in by the Holy Spirit and the Gospel through rebound. It means change from sin, from self, to a living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

Repent from Good Works

But repentance is not always from overt sin. Many people need to repent from good works, from being good without God.

In Luke 18:10-14, Jesus told the story about the Pharisee and the publican at the temple. The Pharisee basically proclaimed his own goodness compared to the apparent wretchedness of the other man. The publican, on the other hand, said that he would not come near the altar. He began beating his breast with his hands, and he said, "I can't look up to You, Lord. I am an extortioner. I am an adulterer. I can't look at You. God, be

merciful unto me, a sinner."

Jesus said that of the two men, the publican went home justified. Do you know why? Because he repented.

Bring Forth Fruit

Bring forth fruit! In your marriage, in your friendships, in your walk with God, in your tithing—whatever you do, bring forth fruit because you have repented by the grace and gift of God.

Sadly, Romans 11:29 ("The gifts and calling of God are without repentance") is often abused. People try to use that verse without proper understanding. It does not mean that there is no repentance. It means that God does the changing for us; *He* is the one who turns us. We do not sin on purpose only to rely on repentance later on. Grace does not give us liberty to sin; rather, it gives us a desire to be pure. We repent by the gift of God that really changes us.

A family wrote a beautiful letter recently, thanking our church for sending soul winners into their neighborhood. They said, "There are five of us in the family, and we cannot even tell you what it means to us that people from your church visited our home."

She said, "We were fighting. We were drinking. We were screaming. Our kids were wild. And every one of us came out to visit your church, and every one of us got saved. We have been the happiest household possible during the last five months."

That is genuine repentance.

*Thanks to Calvary (I Don't Live Here Anymore) *by William J. and Gloria Gaither, copyright 1969; William J. Gaither, Inc. All rights controlled by Gaither Copyright Management. Used by permission.*

Chapter Two

THE SUMMER IS NEAR, THE TIME IS AT HAND

"Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof" (Proverbs 27:18*a*).

What is the significance of the fig tree?

First of all, it represents the nation of Israel. Secondly, it applies to every born-again believer.

According to 1 Kings 4:25, every affluent Jewish family had one or more fig trees, which was a display of prosperity.

Matthew 24:32-33 says, "Learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all *these things*, know that it is near, even at the doors." Jesus goes on to say in verse 34, "I want you to know that this generation shall not pass away until all these things are fulfilled."

"These things" refers to the events of the end times that Jesus had just spoken of in depth to

the disciples (Matthew 24:1-31). In verse 30 and 31, He spoke of His imminent return.

The fig tree budded on May 14, 1948, under the Harry Truman administration. On that day, the nation of Israel was once again established, when forty thousand went back to the land God promised to them. There is not a true Bible scholar in the world who disagrees with that, including Billy Graham. So at the most, a hundred years would take us up to 2048. And that is not setting dates, because nobody knows when.

Many went back in airplanes, as the Word of God says in Isaiah 60:8, flying "as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows." Isaiah did not know to call them airplanes in those days, but he was faithful to present the vision that God gave him. And fifteen hundred years later, many of us lived to see them go back by the thousands.

We lived to see the flag of David go up over Jerusalem. We lived to see the geographical location of Israel established according to Genesis 13:12-17. We lived to see the new irrigation systems replacing Jacob's well. We lived to see all of this—while Israel still fights with the Arab nation.

And now, "Verily I say unto you, This gen-

eration shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:34). That was speaking about the generation of the fig tree budding, which was in May 14, 1948. Sometimes, a generation meant from father to father. When Israel was in the wilderness, a generation was equal to forty years.

Jesus Christ is coming soon. No one knows the exact hour. But He has revealed through His Word and by the events that have been fulfilled** that the time is near, perhaps in this generation.

The Body of Christ: God's Orchard

We have an orchard, according to Song of Solomon 4:13. We have an orchard of pomegranates, each one filled with seeds, and every seed reproduces another pomegranate, which speaks of an abundance of blessings. In that orchard, we also have pleasant fruits—trees and plants, such as camphire and spikenard, used in ointments and as fragrant spices.

A godly ministry is an orchard, and it has to be cultivated continually. Few Christians know that the responsibility given to an overseeing pastor of a worldwide ministry is an enormous task. Thanks to your prayers, we have an or-

chard to tend to. Thank you to the co-laborers who, each week, bring the Gospel to our neighbors in this city. We are so thankful for the people who pray and for everyone else who shares in our outreaches. We have an orchard, and the orchard must be kept. Furthermore, every single believer is a fig tree.

The man who sang "Thanks to Calvary" had almost withered away. He almost fell into despair, having lost everything he once had. Though at one time he was an active Christian in a local church, after a time, church attendance was not a priority. The cares of this life, like dead wood, began to take precedence, choking out the life he had once experienced in Christ.

In John 15:1-2, Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Pruning (or purging) involves cutting away, but the goal is to make the believer more fruitful.

Pastors, Watch Your Orchard

We do not want God to look down years from now and see a church that is divided, that has not kept the orchard by keeping and honor-

ing the Word of God—through prayer, through love, through investment, through categorical doctrine, through soul winning, through discipleship, and through caring.

As pastors, we need to watch our orchards. We need to establish our priorities and not be taken away by distractions. Watch the orchard. Take care of the orchard. Pastor the orchard.

People, Remember Your Pastor

The Bible says in Hebrews 13:7*a*, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God." Simply, remember them. Why should we remember them? Because they speak the Word of God to us.*

Next, in Hebrews 13:7*b*, "Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." In other words, "Follow their faith, and remember the results of the way they live."

The Bible says that if they speak the Word of God, we are to follow their faith. If the pastor has a vision, we share the vision. If he wants people to come to church faithfully, then come. *Follow their faith.*

And as men and women follow the faith of a man of God, consider the results: fruit on the fig

tree; an orchard filled with pomegranates—the multiplied fruit of regenerated souls.

**For more about the role of a pastor-teacher in the lives of be - lievers, we suggest the following booklets by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications:* Understanding Delegated Authority *(2000), and* Choosing a Local Assembly *(2001).*

***To see not only the accuracy of the Scriptures but also the faithfulness of God in His plan for mankind, read* Fulfilled Prophecies from the Bible, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

Chapter Three

GUARD THE FRUIT AND DON'T NEGLECT THE TREE

One thing that is so crucial for every relationship: *Guard the fig tree.* Guard the fruit. Guard the fig tree. For every family, guard the fig tree. Guard the Christian schools. Guard the Bible college. Take care that they do not slip into despair or degeneration. When fig trees get old and they are neglected, they speedily degenerate.

This cannot be over emphasized: Do not neglect your fig tree. Do not neglect the orchard. Every one of us is a member in particular in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). For every time you have gone to church, it is written down in a book in heaven. And every time you miss a church service when you didn't have to, that is also recorded (see Malachi 3:16, 17 with Hebrews 10:25 and Acts 2:41-47).

Consider the Value

Little do we know the value of a message from the Word of God. Little do we know the value of godly fruit to our God. Little do we know that we are to increase in knowledge according to His love, to prove the things that are excellent, and to bring forth fruit to His glory (Philippians 1:9, 11).

Never be familiar with the principle of the fig tree. Never be familiar with the Church. Never be familiar with the Bible. Never be familiar with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ's return is imminent. His return is near. His return is very near—even at the door. Jesus Christ is truly ready to come back. This is real. Either I am a pastor prepared and applying the message, or I am just sitting in an office and playing games.

I will not compromise with a single thing about this fig tree. This orchard has to be kept. This orchard has to be protected. This orchard has to be cultivated. This orchard needs to be fertilized. This orchard must have its rain and sunshine.

We beseech you, as workers together with God, that you do not receive the grace of God in

vain. Give no offense, that the ministry be not blamed (see 2 Corinthians 6:1,3).

Teenagers, give no offense lest the ministry be blamed. Adults, give no offense with your language lest the ministry be blamed.

The Word of God says in Hebrews 12:15, "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God...." After we fail the grace of God, something else happens inside: A root of bitterness springs up. As a result, many are troubled because we are bitter, and it spreads and amplifies with our deception. What's more, the Word of God says, "…and thereby many be defiled."

Hold Fast to Your Convictions

I have a conviction about taking care of the orchard, making that my top priority. Every day of the week, I plan to be available, making sure—under God's leadership, under God's help—to take care of the orchard.

The orchard is the most beautiful thing God created. It is an orchard of eternal souls. It is an orchard of eternal life. It is an orchard of eternal provisions. It is an orchard where people need to be saved and discipled all over—throughout this city, this nation, this world. It is an orchard that requires dedication, commitment, and sur-

render, and it needs a daily Cross.

Let us rejoice and be glad in these times. Let us be used in the hands of God to tend His orchard. The fruit is almost ready to harvest, and the laborers are few. Let's go!

CONCLUSION

We are like trees in an orchard, and we need to have priorities—priorities such as we have never understood before. Never compromise purity with impurity. And never fall into letting people influence you into being a people-pleaser rather than going all the way with Jesus Christ.

Every pastor who is a real man of God should have a burden for every person in his congregation. When we meet Jesus in the Rapture, I want to be able to introduce each one to Jesus by name with confidence that each one has pleased Him.

Don't take the grace of God in vain; because it teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust. Grace doesn't teach us to continue in sin. Instead, we can allow the grace of God to give us the gift of changing.

Father, bless us. The best I know how, I have told all the truth and addressed every person reading this booklet, starting with me. In Jesus' precious name.

Amen.

Taking Care of Your Soul

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

So many people are consumed with what they consume, without understanding the effects of imbalance. In America, for example, we are bombarded with information regarding proper nutrition. Some individuals accept canned statements from the "experts," follow certain diets, and, often, end up with strange illnesses. And why? They received dangerously unbalanced information without a premise: They did not understand God's design for growth, development, and nurture of the human body.

In this booklet, we will examine the importance of having God's balance in our lives. Instead of suffering the effects of wrong choices that have plagued mankind since the Fall, we can properly appropriate the whole counsel of God. Then, looking into the mirror of the Word, we can receive reflections of precise light as we are changed from glory to glory.

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF OVERDEVELOPMENT

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7).

God breathed into man the breath of life, and *man became a living soul*—this is extremely important. The reality of all divine intelligence is based on the origin of all destinations. The origin of something always determines the line of development and, ultimately, its destination.

Without exception, any situation that develops in a way that is not pleasing to God, had the wrong origin. This is the reason the Bible says a Christian is never to marry a non-Christian: The origin of a relationship determines both the line of its development and the destination of the marriage.

The origin, or source, of our thoughts and

emotions always determines the lines to their ultimate destination. So, God breathed into Adam the breath of life—the human spirit (Job 33:4; 32:8)—and man *became* a living soul. Although he had a living soul, man was never designed to live in his soul. But after the Fall, man went from *being* a living soul to living *in* his soul. Now, natural energy would come from his soul instead of supernatural power from a divine origin.

Uncontrolled Soul Growth

The moment Adam and Eve partook of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they entered into the process of having overdeveloped souls. Their souls became overdeveloped through knowledge. No longer did they simply *have* living souls, but they had soul-life; they were living in their souls. The breath of God no longer had dominion to control the life of man.

God had intended that the human spirit, with its origin in God's Holy Spirit, would be the source for what man became in his life. But now, Adam had a soul that was developing too rapidly. In reality, this overdevelopment of the soul was uncontrolled, untimely development.

I may go to an Ivy League college—which

certainly isn't wrong—and get brainwashed with atheism, Darwinism, gnosticism, or the many emanations of knowledge that are the premise for all intellectual development. I thank God for education. But the problem is that though my soul may be developing very rapidly, it's an uncontrolled development.

Imagine if I were to wake up some morning and say to my wife, "We've got to talk." She says, "Yes?" Then I tell her, "I've never dared to be honest with you, but I don't love you." What's happening? My soul has had an untimely development outside of the perceptive capacity and comprehension of my human spirit.

Suddenly, I realize that when the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge entered my perceptive lobe, I began to enter into reasoning powers outside of God. Let me say that again: When I partook of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, I began to develop reasoning power independent of God in my overdeveloped soul, uncontrolled in its development.

When Eve saw that the Tree of Knowledge was pleasant to her eyes, her emotions began to be controlled by something from the external realm. From that point on, women have had a

tendency to become emotional, allowing something from the outside—from another source—to control their response to reality. "Pleasant to the eyes," "good for food" (Genesis 3:6). The mind now reasons outside of God, and the emotions now emote from the outside with life's circumstances.

God never said through His Holy Spirit, "I want you to search yourself." In Psalm 139:23-24, the Psalmist said to God, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." David was saying, "I'll never search myself—I'm not supposed to. But *You* search me. If I search myself, I'll only end up living in denial and confusion, with a reasoning process outside of God."

Conversion of the Subjective Mind

If doctrine does not bring us into the totality of the divine life of Jesus Christ, then it is of no value. Many Christians have stagnated with the Word of God; their lives have become stationary. They may feel proud that they know the Word, but they do not understand the Word of God. To understand it is to appropriate it in the realm of divine reasoning.

Often, the independent power of free volition will usurp authority over doctrine. Light will always permeate any place it is allowed to enter, but it will not invade any area where it is not given an entrance. The entrance of God's Word brings in light and understanding to those who otherwise have a low degree of divine perception (Psalm 119:130).

According to Psalm 36:9, in God's objective light, the believer receives subjective light. This means that when I let objective light in, the Holy Spirit brings in subjective light. In other words, He adds subjective light to the objective light I've received from the Word of God.

When this takes place, the subjective mind is cleansed and purged, washed from the effects of opinions and the evaluation of human reasoning. If a woman says, "My husband is a monster; all he wants is sex," she has human reasoning without spiritual understanding. She has a subjective distortion of her husband while she has an objective understanding of how he should behave. This creates a conflict. Half of her soul—her subjective mind—is not converted.

If a man goes into business working in sales, does well for a season, and then business cools off, his confession may be, "Well, it's just the

time of year." Yet, any godly man who understands the origin of peace, power, and wisdom can always live in its effect: *success*. But this one reasons with his overdeveloped soul, which has given him a crutch to be ineffective in selling. "I was doing well last August," says the businessman, "but I'm not doing well in January." That statement is the product of human reasoning without faith.

When I choose instead to reason *inside* the Word of Life, God will fully develop my soul in the life of His Son. When my life has its origin in the human spirit, instead of originating in the soul, it quickens the operation of my human soul. At last, I can experience the effects of God's life in my human body.

Chapter Two

FUNCTIONING IN GOD'S THOUGHTS

Everything in the soul-life has to be checked, evaluated, and handed over to death. As this happens, the spirit-life keeps rising, increasing, and we now have a controlled life. God uses His light and truth to lead us into precise thinking with Him. The believer has now entered into *purity*—the human spirit controlling the capacity of the human soul. *Impurity*, however, is a mixture of the soul and the spirit fighting for control. The result is confusion, double-mindedness, and a divided heart.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11). God's thoughts toward me are always peaceful. That's objective truth. But if I am impure, my subjective mind will never accept the light of Jeremiah 29:11. The details of life become

a hindrance to the conversion of my whole man.

Wives who cannot get along with their husbands have not had their souls developed in the spiritual realm. God doesn't expect them to wait until the Rapture to have it happen. Nevertheless, they reason it out in their souls.

Though many people have legitimate sicknesses, others are hypochondriacs. A hypochondriac has a soul that is undeveloped in Christ. They acknowledge, confess, and submit to every single pain, every abstract projection, and every penetrating signal from the air. They are instruments of demonic communication. You can talk to them for hours, yet they remain undeveloped, because their subconscious mind never gets converted in the objective light of healing.

If I have something wrong with me, I shake it off. If I *still* have it, I shake it off, get up with joy, clown around with people, exchange love, and preach the Word. Then I think to myself, "Boy, that was gone quickly!"

The Lord Jesus Christ wasn't lying when He said to us, "I found you guilty and decided to condemn you. I decided to crucify your flesh, and I decided to bury it. I did it, historically. Now, this truth is available experientially. It's retroactive. It's an absolute truth given to you in

the authenticity of My love, in the supreme, gracious provision of mercy, through the steadfast application of faith. I know My thoughts toward you, thoughts of peace, *not* of evil."

Knowing that this is God's objective promise to us, we must seek it on the basis that He only thinks peace toward us, no matter where we're at. This objective promise gives us the provision of supernatural energy to seek it.

Supernatural Energy, Supernatural Gifts

People have natural energy and natural gifts. But beyond that, we have supernatural energy and supernatural gifts. More than one person has come into the ministry with their natural gifts, but they didn't last long. They may come into the sales force of a Christian company, but their natural gifts don't take them very far. Many professional people are gutless when it comes to deriving their life through wisdom from above. It takes a supernatural operation of discipline in order to make an impact on the economy of the Christian community.

Businessmen—though they may not be emotional—are often moody when it comes to understanding success. They must realize that a successful person lives in the reality of faith and

the discipline of grace. They are mobilized by the conviction that, if you sow, you will reap. A real salesman, for example, has very few "down times," because he learns to overcome through supreme wisdom from God. If he can't pray and get victory in sales, why would he ever want to go on the mission field? It isn't that God decided not to bless the salesman—the salesman decided to goof off.

God's thoughts are thoughts of peace. He doesn't bless us for nothing, but He says, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 29:13-14*a*). This means we will find Him in every detail, and in every need of our lives.

Chapter Three

FUNCTIONING IN GOD'S LIFE

When God's life controls the human soul, the believer enters into divine pleasure. Psalm 16:11 says there are pleasures forevermore at God's right hand. We were created for His pleasure (Revelation 4:11). Knowing this, we begin to understand that God gives Christians pleasure in living. Whether it is in working or in making telephone calls, we can have fun; our joy can remain.

The human spirit brings God's knowledge into the intellect, so the soul can derive its power from the kingdom of Christ. Then, the free volition has plenty of information to make right decisions and the conscience functions with Jesus Christ's norms and standards of grace. The self-conscious part of the soul begins to focus on the throne ministry of the indwelling Christ. The believer who lives like this discovers that his old sin nature—now in a dormant state—no longer

causes schizophrenia or psychosomatic diseases.

"I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23*b*). This is God's order: first the human spirit, then the soul, then the body. God says, "I have an order, and I will never reverse it. Man has reversed it, but I will not. My order is the Holy Spirit breathing into man the breath of life—the human spirit—making him a living soul."

But, man left the resources of the human spirit to live in his soul. Now, it is no longer a "living" soul; the believer has given place to all kinds of problems where he will emote over his circumstances by overthinking outside of truth. This is a tough way to go. A person with an overdeveloped soul can no longer think with God. Sure, there are times that he thinks with God, but this believer has an impurity—a mixture—in his soul.

Having God's Order

When the Holy Spirit begins to fill my soul through my human spirit, then I enter into God's order. When I understand how channel A (the perceptive lobe), channel B (the human spirit), and channel C (the human soul) operate,

then my spirit, soul, and body will function in God's order.[1] Now, when I pray, I expect God to hear, even if I don't have feelings. I no longer emote in reaction to what is happening in my life. I don't live in my emotions, but I live in the Spirit, rising up to control my capacity for self-essence.

When the spirit, soul, and body function in the order of Creation, followed by the flow of the derived life of redemption and restoration, then we can redeem the time. Our times truly are in God's hands.

Out of God's Order

I may pray, "Oh God, heal me. Jesus, please heal me," but if that prayer is from my soul, and if I regard iniquity in one area of my life, then God does not hear my prayer (Psalm 66:18). It's an abomination to Him (Proverbs 28:9).

I may be the most sincere person in my human soul. My life may be beyond outward reproach, but the deep is not calling to the deep (Psalm 42:7). Objective light does not become subjective substance.

1. Refer to *The Hearing Heart* for more information on this subject (Grace Publications, 1996).

Chapter Four

REFLECTING GOD'S GLORY

As a pastor, I desire that my congregation discern what is going on in the kingdoms (of darkness and of light) on both a local and national level. If you see that there are thousands of cases of the flu, you know *that* is not of God. So, rather than becoming passive and just receiving what thousands are receiving, discern what caused it.

Now, for example, if you're a man, maybe you went outside in January only wearing your undershirt and caught the flu. Your flu certainly isn't of the devil; it was caused by a stupid mistake! But when we function in divine order—spirit, soul, and body—then the gates of hell cannot prevail against us. If people around me are having thoughts of adultery, I don't get infected with those thoughts, because I am living in an order where they can't get in.

Wherever light can get in, it will come in.

Wherever darkness can enter, it will. Light always overcomes darkness, but darkness can also overcome light. If I turn the lights off, the darkness replaces the light. But when I turn the switch, the lights come back on, taking the place of the darkness.

Where the Spirit of the Lord Is

The soul of Adam always wants to usurp authority over the human spirit, which derives life from God. You may confess, "I've had a rough month." Well, you weren't made to simply emote nor to reason over the circumstances of your life. You were made to receive substance from the Word of God and live in reflected glory: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:17*b*-18).

As we look into the mirror of God's Word, we receive reflections of precise light and we are changed into God's image from glory to glory. Here, *glory* means the substance of God's divine nature being reflected through our humanity. It means that we reflect the precise attribute of God's nature that is needed for the moment. As

God's divinity begins to control our humanity, our humanity becomes an instrument for God's divinity. Together with God, you cooperate in the essence of your soul, realizing that you still have an individual soul, but now your individuality is covered by God's divine life.

CONCLUSION

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24). They that have Christ *have crucified the flesh!* and the affections and lusts thereof.

"This is interesting, Lord. Do you mean that the affections that I should not have, have been crucified too? Is that absolutely true, God?"

"That's exactly right. I wouldn't lie to you, would I?"

"My lusts have been crucified. If my spirit, soul, and body function in the order of my creative design through redemptive rehabilitation, then my lusts are gone—forever!"

If this is absolutely true—and it is—then why can't more people experience it? Because, they live in the historical reality of faith without an experiential relationship to Christ. What a statement!—the theological, historical reality of dogmatic faith without the experiential relevant relationship of fellowshipping with His life.

Conclusion? They have objective life with no subjective conversion.

A person may say, "I've been wounded for *so* long, it's going to take me a long time to be healed." You bet it will—It may take forever. But, it doesn't have to, because *nothing* is impossible with God.

Teenagers:

Answers for Life

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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PASTOR LOVE'S TESTIMONY

INTRODUCTION

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9).

Behind Psalm 119 is the extraordinary story of the sufferings of God's people in captivity. Special emphasis is placed on the life of Ezra as a teenager. If he were alive today, Ezra could easily identify with the worst situations teens face. He witnessed the murderous torture of his family and friends, and he lived in constant dread of being brutalized by the enemy that ruled his people with a vengeance. In the face of it all, Ezra had hope! He poured out his heart to God and was instructed by God's Word in the night seasons.

As you grow in Christ in this day and age, your struggles are not taken lightly. God's Word is sure. The authority imparted to Ezra as a young man is available to everyone. No matter what you have faced or how badly you have failed, God is waiting to be gracious to you!

How Teens Can Love Themselves

Chapter One
THE PERSONAL LOVE OF GOD

"For thou has possessed my reins [that is, my emotions]: thou has covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee" (Psalm 139:13-18).

As the Lord thought of you in eternity past, He decided how He was going to make you.

You were in His thoughts before the foundation of the world. Psalm 139:16 says, "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect…" Verse 15 says that we were "curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." God created you, and He knew exactly how tall or how short you would be. He knew what color your hair and eyes would be, and He also knew exactly what He wanted you to weigh.

Think of it. The Lord created us, but we went bad. We chose to sin. First, we inherited Adam's sin nature. It was imputed to us before we ever sinned, and we were condemned. Then Jesus Christ came to die on the Cross and shed His blood for us. He saw us defeated, frustrated, and living in the dominion of the old sin nature. So, to rescue us from a horrible pit, He became a man, went to the Cross and bore every one of our sins on His own body. Jesus shed His blood for our sins. He died, was buried and went into hell. After that, the Spirit of God resurrected Him (Romans 1:4), He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11) and appeared before the Father to represent anyone who would trust and believe upon Him.

The moment you believe upon Christ as Savior, He imputes His own righteousness to you

without works. He saves you by grace through faith in Him and not of works, lest any man should boast. Jesus will save anyone—and *any* young person—and give them a new birth from on high.

Just As You Are

God, in His foreknowledge, knew all the sins you would ever commit, yet He commended His love toward you. While you were yet a sinner, He died for you on the Cross (Romans 5:8). Don't you think He loves you a lot? Yes, He does. God's love for you doesn't depend upon *you*. You're used to getting praised when you do well; you're used to feeling good *when* you do well, but God loves you just as you are. Say this to yourself, "God loves even me, *just as I am*."

God loves you today just as you are. Don't be afraid of it. He is *not* going to hurt you. Now, if God loves you just as you are, and you don't have to do anything to get God to love you, then why can't you love yourself? It is vital that, for the rest of your life, you understand the answer to that question.

These are the reasons why, as a teenage Christian, you ought to be able to love yourself: First, God created you. Second, He sent His Son

to die for you, to shed His blood, and to take the penalty for your sin. Third, once you believed, God saved you totally by grace. You couldn't earn salvation. You simply believed and He came to live in your heart. He gave you righteousness without works. Fourth, once the Lord Jesus Christ comes inside of you, He will never leave you.

Though we may grieve God's Holy Spirit with our attitude, or quench His Holy Spirit by being rebellious, will God ever leave us? No! God will never leave us nor forsake us no matter what we're like (Hebrews 13:5). If we break fellowship with Him, He will discipline us and He may scourge us, but He won't leave us.

Doesn't that reveal how much He loves you? If God loves you that much, why can't you love yourself? You can. God knew what you were going to be like. He knows everything about you and He still loves you. If God loves you like that, you ought to be able to love yourself.

One of the greatest factors in getting to know God is being able to love yourself. Loving yourself takes away guilt, once you have named your sin and forsaken it. It takes away insecurity, inferiority complexes, and fear. Loving yourself does away with laziness, comparing yourself

with others, and living in your emotions and feelings—the hazards of growing up. It does away with rebellion and negative speech. How? If I love myself with God's love, if I love myself with Calvary's love, and if I love myself because I'm filled with the Holy Spirit, then I don't feel bad about what I look like. God made me and I love who I am. In the dust of the earth, He saw what I was going to be like a long time ago. God said, "That is what I want her to look like. That is the size I have chosen for him—I love each person I have made." God loves you as you are, so you certainly ought to be able to love yourself.

Chapter Two

LOVE PRODUCES CHARACTER

People don't always love you as you are. They reject you when you are bad, or when you've done wrong. But God loves you as you are. God forbid that we fail, but He loves us even when we do fail. Remember God loves you as you are. You must learn to love yourself as you are. I'm not talking about living in sin or taking God's grace as a license to sin, but I'm saying that God loves you just as much in your weakness as He does in your strength. God accepts us with our strengths and our weaknesses. He wants us to develop through His Word, His Spirit, and His patience. God will be patient, kind, and gracious. He will help you through transitions while you're not yet what you want to be.

Ephesians 2:10 says that we are God's workmanship. This means that God designed us and created us. That's why we ought to be able to

love ourselves. When we fail, He tells us to name our sin, forsake it, isolate it and go on. Be honest about it. Don't be a phony. Tell the truth! Define your weakness and let God help you to get out of it.

Bring peace and happiness into your home and try to bless others in your household. Try to make your parents feel good about themselves and about the environment of the home. Build them up and edify them. Surprise everyone in the household by edifying and honoring your mother every day, and not just on Mother's Day. Honor her now because you won't have her around forever. Don't expect your parents to be perfect, because they aren't. Just thank God for all the good things they've done, for who they are, and for their love toward you. But don't make demands upon them. Just cooperate and make the home a happy place to live because you're there.

Love Produces a Change

God's love doesn't demand a change, it produces one. When we start responding to God's love, we are changed. I've seen teenagers on drugs. I've seen them get into trouble at the age of ten or eleven. And by the time they are fifteen

or sixteen, things have gone so bad that their souls are in complete disorder. Then I've seen those same kids spend two years letting God love them; letting the pastor, their family, and other Christians love them; and you know what? The love God gave them produced a change in their lives.

First, we learn to respond to God's love. As we are loved, we love ourselves, and we desire both to develop a capacity for God and to make something of our lives in the kingdom. So we enter into self-discipline, which starts in the mind. By taking courses that are difficult for us, we develop discipline. We enter into situations and volunteer to do things that require discipline. Discipline produces character. Character is what God *knows* we are, while reputation is what people *think* we are. Through character we begin to operate on the basis of love and grace and will begin to enjoy the rewards of making a series of right decisions through discipline.

As a result, teenagers go to school and they learn how to listen, how to communicate, and how to express themselves. By learning how to respond intelligently to their teachers and to ask stimulating questions, they are developing character. Then they learn how to make good deci-

sions in the home and in their studies. They begin to make good decisions about companions and friendships, about witnessing and living clean—and they find that it's easy!

Teenagers can begin to make a whole series of right decisions. You know why? Because God loved them *first;* His love doesn't demand a change, it produces one. God's love produces young people who have a capacity to love themselves. Once they love themselves with God's love, just as they are—the way God loves them—then they can love their parents just as *they* are. They can love their friends and other people just the way God made them. This love is not conditioned by the other party; it's a love that is based upon God's presence, God's grace and God's Word.

Chapter Three

LOVE PRODUCES MATURITY

Someone has said, "Put Jesus first, others second, and yourself third." Did you know that isn't right? It is impossible. Do you know how it should be? Jesus first, *myself* second, and others third. Galatians 5:13 says "by love serve one another." Verse 14 states, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." So you see, it is not Jesus first, others second. That may sound good, but it's not proper. I love Jesus first, then I love myself. After I love myself, I can love others. This takes a young person out of living in their emotions. Knowing this takes them out of fear, guilt, pleasure, and worldliness.

Worldliness is a mental attitude. Long before you ever did anything worldly, your thoughts were worldly. If you experience Christ's love then you will not love the things of the world. God's love doesn't love sin, so you don't love sin. When God's nature and His Word take over,

everything in your soul is put into its proper perspective. Consequently, as teenagers, you become mature at a much younger age than people ever thought possible.

A Disciplined Thought Life

In order for you to enter into this kind of maturity, the first thing you must do is bring your thoughts into subjection. What is wrong with being told—as a teenager—to bring your thoughts into obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)? This means having a disciplined thought life. In so doing, you're able to concentrate, that is, to focus on one thing at one time and to exclude all other stimuli. You can think one thought at a time without the confusion of uncontrolled thoughts that seem to "creep" in. In other words, you can bring *each* thought into obedience to Jesus Christ, commit it to Him, and have your mind fixed (2 Corinthians 10:5-6).

Because you love yourself, you will take steps to improve yourself, and you end up with a good self-image. As you keep helping yourself to be better, your capacity continues to grow. When I say "better," I do not mean doing good works; I simply mean that you live with an advantage over Satan. As you experience your ad-

vantage over the world, you will begin to see that you are developing a capacity for wholesomeness, and your life is occupied with something bigger than you, something bigger than your problems. As you grow in this capacity, you choose the right friends, the 'right thing' to do, and the right attitude toward subjects in school.

Open Doors

After your capacity begins to be established, God teaches you the principle of open doors. In Revelation 3:8*b*, the Lord Jesus Christ said to a certain church, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." What are these "open doors"? There is a door of salvation, open for a person to be saved, to be washed in the blood, to be born again. Jesus is the door of salvation (John 10:9). He will show you the open doors. Then there is the open door for service. You may go out to minister on a Bible club or to go soulwinning. There are also open doors in your home and church, open doors to stand up and be counted and to enter into godly ethics characterized by conviction.

Chapter Four

GOD'S PERSONAL WILL

The subject of *situational ethics* was explained by a man named Fletcher. Don't take advantage of situational ethics—they're *always* wrong. Situational ethics says, "The other kids are doing it, so I'll do it." "My best friend started to do it; I'm going to do it." "It is right to rebel because of the situation." No it isn't!

Then there are *moral ethics*. Moral ethics simply means that though I'm going to be outwardly moral, I will still live with an immoral mental attitude.

Finally, we have the proper ethics—*divine ethics*. A teenager said to me, "I think it's all right to smoke." I said, "Do you really?" And he said, "Yes, my parents don't care. My mother said it's all right." I said, "Let me ask you something. What does God say about it? What is God's will for you on the subject? I'm not going to say anything, but what is *God's* will on the subject of

smoking?" Do you know what that teenager said? "It's God's will not to smoke." I said, "Oh it is? What makes you say that?" He said, "Because I've already asked Him and He showed me it isn't His will."

I said to a teenage girl, "You've been going with a guy and you've become so occupied with your relationship that you don't pray any more. You don't love Jesus like you used to, and you're not the same kind of a teenager." Then I asked her, "Have you ever let this guy touch you?" She bowed her head and said, "Yes I have. Not much, but…." I said, "Let me ask you something." I was very frank but very broken. "Is that God's perfect will?" You know what she said? "I don't know." I said, "Okay, just pray and ask Him. I'm not going to say a word. But, is it God's perfect will? Just ask Him." She prayed and said, "God, is it your perfect will?" I waited a minute and I said, "What did He tell you?" And she said, "He showed me it isn't His perfect will." She entered into *godly ethics*. Do you know what godly ethics means? It means doing what God's will says.

I approached a man who was going out on his wife and I said, "Let me ask you something. What kind of ethics is that for a Christian, to go

out on his wife?" He answered, "It is terrible." I said, "That's right. You pray and ask God right now what you should do about it." He said, "I don't have to pray. Of course I should quit it." I said, "You're not getting the point. I want you to pray right now and ask God what you should do." He said, "I don't have to do that. I know I should repent." I said, "I know that, but pray right now and ask God *how* you're going to go about it and what *exactly* you should do."

After we prayed I said, "Okay, what should you do about it?" And the man said, "God has shown me that first, I should call up this woman and tell her the relationship is off and that I never want see her again. Second, go and ask for my wife's forgiveness. Third, love her like I've never loved her before and lay down my life for her. Fourth, really invest in my family and be responsible." He never would have thought of these things if I hadn't encouraged him to ask God what His will was. You know, it is a simple thing, but it is so important for a young person to ask, "What is God's will?" I'll guarantee that He'll tell you.

God loves you just exactly as you are, and He doesn't love anybody any more than He loves you. He did everything for you that He

has ever done for anybody else. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Even when you're bad, He loves you. When you fail, God provides a way for you to get right and forsake your sin and go on. He is going to make you just like His Son. He started a good work in you and He's going to finish it! Remember, He's *never* going to stop loving you.

The Privilege Of Discipline

It is our privilege to say, "Lord, I want to be disciplined to get to know you. I want to be disciplined in my spiritual life. I want to be disciplined in my mental attitude, my emotions, my free volition, and my conscience (which is the norm and standard for my thinking). I want to be disciplined in my self-consciousness so I'll be occupied with God and the right things in life. I want to plan my time (James 4:14), redeem the time (Ephesians 5:16), and appropriate my time with wisdom (I Corinthians 7:29-31)."

Plan your time and you won't get into mischief. Plan who you are going to be with, and you won't get involved with the wrong crowd. Plan how you're going to think, and you won't think the wrong thoughts. Plan how you're going to treat your parents, and you won't treat

them wrong. Plan how you're going to be in school, and you'll be right in school. Plan, then redeem the time with the filling of the Spirit and the Word of God. Take advantage of opportunities and appropriate what you know. Appropriate God's Word in simplicity. Appropriate God's love, and give God's love to others.

Chapter Five

LOVE'S DESTINY

God made you in His image, and He sent His Son to die for you on the Cross. When you were saved, He came to live inside you and will never forsake you. He loves you forever, with an everlasting love. Someday, He's going to make you perfect, either when you go home to be with Him or in the Rapture. He will give you a perfect body just like His Son's body. Every Christian has this destiny. We have eternal life, and we are destined to spend eternity with God. As members of God's royal family, we are destined to be saints forever, to enter into an eternal purpose, and to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Oh, what a destiny! This is why now, as you prepare to meet Him, He wants you to have a joyful, abundant, pure life. He wants you to make positive decisions toward His Word and His Spirit, bringing every thought into obedi-

ence. Make positive decisions in how you relate to others, in the way you sit, and in the way you dress, because these things are important to your image. Do the best you can in school, and develop a spiritual life that counts with God.

God's Thoughts and Ways

The Lord Jesus Christ has His thoughts and you have your thoughts. You can manufacture your own misery, problems, hang-ups, and guilt. You can manufacture some of your own hazards, or you can let the Lord Jesus Christ come in and produce love, joy, peace, and discipline. Learn how to think properly, with conviction, and make decisions privately with God. "My thoughts are not your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8). Tune into God's thoughts and learn how *not* to make decisions in your own thoughts.

God also says, "Neither are your ways My ways." Learn to accept God's way with conviction. Once you've become established by making decisions with moral conviction and godly ethics, then you can begin to walk through open doors. Open doors mean opportunity. When you reach an open door, you go into another room. Once you establish convictions there, you go into the next room. As you progress with

each opportunity, you go forward with God.

There is an open door that you haven't stepped through yet. God is saying, "I've opened it. I love you. I've paid to give you an opportunity to go through that open door; but you've got to come in through your own will, your own decisions, and your own desire. You can go through that door and *I'll be in there*." He has prepared each "room" in this life for us. He draws us unto Himself. He beckons us, using circumstances to get us to go through open doors. He takes us into places where we've never been: new, positive, creative relationships with new goals, habits, motives, desires, and pure convictions.

Future Rewards, Present Goals

One day, every one of you will stand before Jesus. Your family and friends will be there, as well as people in your church. As you stand before the Lord, He will make a decision based upon how you responded to grace, the Word of God, and open doors. He will give you either a crown of joy, a crown of life, the Tree of Life, or the Morning Star Order. The Morning Star Order, which is the highest honor in heaven for the redeemed, means you will reign with Him

over nations. He may award you the Tree of Life in the Garden of Paradise, which means you will understand mysteries in eternity that few will understand. You will have revelations that no one will have except those who eat from the Tree of Life and you'll enter into a pleasure that only Tree-of-Life recipients will experience—special wisdom from God for eternity (Revelation 2:7).

Each one of us is writing an eternal book right now, and today we have written a page. Maybe this week, we've written a chapter. Our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. God is writing a Book of Remembrance (Malachi 3:16) as we go through open doors. Maybe God wants you to go to Bible College. Even if you're going into a profession such as teaching or accounting, He may want you to first have a year of Bible College. Having a profession is beautiful as long as you glorify Christ and do your work for God. Maybe you will become a missionary in the Third World. Whatever your dream, it is vital that you have both short-range and long-range goals. Your goals may be subject to change, but your heart must reach out to honor Christ and obey Him.

Remember the principle found in Job 13:26*b*, —God makes me "possess the iniquities of my youth." Sins committed during youth bring about a long-time inheritance. "His bones are full of the sin of his youth" (Job 20:11*a*). When you sin heavily in your youth, your bones become full of those sins and you're enticed to go back to them. Psalm 25:7 says, "Remember not the sins of my youth." Bitter memories, shame and remorse are the results. Jeremiah 3:25 says, "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." The sins of youth begin to establish something in the memory center and in the frame of reference that is so difficult to overcome.

Say "no" to rebellion. Say "no" to worldly pleasure. Say "no" to being a prodigal against your parents. Say "no" to pleasure-seeking and self-indulgence. Say "no" to worldliness and worldly music. Say "no" to smoking and drugs and lust. Learn to say "no" and you won't enter into the sins of youth. There is time for a beauti-

ful marriage when you get older. In God's timing, He will lead you into a wonderful relationship. Don't be impatient; don't hurry things along. Just learn to get to know God. Learn how to study and enjoy life and enter into the balance of a good wholesome life. The Bible teaches that it is possible to be godly at a very young age. Do what is right through the grace of God and the Word of God as you make choices backed by godly convictions.

True Freedom for Teens

Dignity and Integrity

There are two things everyone needs: dignity and integrity. *Dignity* is honoring yourself as you were created in God's image; honoring yourself because you bear the image of a holy God, because you've been redeemed by God, and because He lives inside of you. That's the dignity that you should come to respect and reflect.

God created you. You did not evolve from a one-celled creature. God created you and breathed into you the breath of life, even though He made you out of the dust of the earth. Because we were created in God's image and He redeemed us, we develop *integrity*, which means honesty toward ourselves, toward God, toward our families, and toward others.

There are many misconceptions about freedom. Many people think that rebellion is freedom. Rebellion is not freedom. Many people rebel on their way to freedom, but rebellion is not freedom.

Often teenagers will rebel against their parents; and their rebellion, after it is analyzed, is nothing more than anxiety and a mistrust of themselves. Because they mistrust themselves, they develop anxiety. Then they transfer their mistrust and anxiety about life toward their parents.

There is a tremendous difference between fear and anxiety. Fear energizes me to have sharp faculties. But anxiety is different. Often when I have to do something vital, or perform in some way, tension and stress produce anxiety.

Psychiatrists tell us that anxiety sometimes blurs our vision—physically as well as mentally. Anxiety over a period of time will cause physical problems and emotional disorientation. Fear, as bad as it may be is said to sharpen our faculties with negative energy.

For example, if you were crossing a busy highway with cars suddenly coming from both directions, and you couldn't do anything about it, you would experience fear and anxiety. The fear would help you escape being hit by the cars, but the anxiety might make you panic and be involved in an accident. These two things con-

tribute toward paralyzing the human race. They interfere with true freedom.

When our self-life is threatened, it causes anxiety. This threat produces fear. It incapacitates us from developing intellectually, spiritually, and morally.

Freedom, Not Independence

True freedom is something we discover outside of ourselves. Many times, rebellion is caused by subjective reactions, but we discover freedom outside of ourselves. For example, when we understand the Word of God properly in the character of grace, trusting it completely, then the Word in us begins to develop an amazing capacity for real freedom. But rebellion is not freedom and freedom is not rebellion.

Let me illustrate this principle. Through rebellion, a young person becomes "independent," and he gloats over his new freedom. But actually, he is in terrible bondage to whatever he has taken on in the name of "being free"— lust, rock music, or words of slander and cursing. In the eyes of his Creator, he is not dignified, nor is he walking in integrity. So the very freedom that he thinks he has is not freedom at all because it is dependent upon rebellion and sin. Something

that depends upon rebellion and sin is not freedom. Something that's independent of dignity is not freedom. Something that's independent of integrity is not freedom. So this person has not found true freedom at all. He has found a new way to be independent, which has locked him into a condition of negative decisions and has given him a negative state of mind.

True Freedom Develops Potential

When freedom is properly understood, we don't fight reality, but we submit to it with discipline through proper information (in our case, to grace orientation and categorical thinking with God), and we grow in an amazing capacity to develop our potential in every area of life. If a young person with a high IQ wants to go to an Ivy League college, then as long as he has received solid training in the Bible, he will be able to develop his potential because he has developed his character through the Word of God. You see, developing your potential and developing your character go hand in hand. The problem with our nation is that we think that we are developing our potential by developing our intellect yet without developing our moral understanding in character. And so our nation has

fallen into the pit, especially in the teenage realm.

What we desire for ourselves is for God to help us to develop our potential through study and discipline, and through taking advantage of proper educational opportunities as we develop our character of dignity and integrity. Real freedom does not fight the reality of who we are.

Young people who develop real, godly freedom are aware of who they are and can be honest about it. Though you develop a self-consciousness of your weaknesses and strengths as you mature, you are becoming, by the same token, self-conscious of God's love, His grace, His thoughts toward you, and His Spirit in you. It becomes a matter of choosing the right kind of life and the right kind of source to think right, feel right, decide right, and act right. This is true freedom.

True freedom grows in the process of understanding the truth about God, the truth about ourselves and, by submitting to God, using the benefits of grace to grow in the reality of liberation from "self."

A person who lives in true freedom is not preoccupied with "self." He is preoccupied with God, but develops in his self-awareness of God,

in practical ways, through fellowship.

When we pray, let's make it sacred. That's freedom in prayer. Let's have the right posture by having our eyes closed. Let's have the right stance. Let's imagine ourselves before the living Christ, who has wounds in His hands because He loves us. When we sing, let's get up and sing with all of our might. When we worship, let's worship God and God alone.

Many times we rebel against concentrating when concentration would set us free from rebellion. Many times we cultivate foolishness, when fellowshipping with concentration on truth would liberate us from foolishness.

Inner turmoil and conflicts mean that my self-life is threatened, which is the basis for fear and anxiety. I want you to develop your awareness of God and of yourself as an individual letting God take over. You must be very aware of what you're doing as you exercise your faculties toward learning about the Lord. Allow Him to impart the power, energy, love, and grace necessary for your inner happiness, your inner peace, and your ability to develop your potential.

Do you realize the potential you have? Adults shouldn't legislate rules to you, but we *are* going to tell you the truth. Adults who love

you won't keep you from expressing yourself and developing in a process of individuality. We're going to help you do that. But, when you acquire knowledge without humility, that knowledge morally darkens your self-image. Humility, on the other hand, brings in God's power and God's life to teach you how to think. A lack of humility allows me to use my knowledge to exalt myself in pride above others with independence in rebellion against true freedom.

A Threat Met with a Promise

Think of the things that threaten society. Loneliness and anxiety are said to be the two greatest threats to teenagers, yet these things are never discussed. Secret, mystical loneliness and anxiety threaten those who are adventuring in the world of the unknown, taking on the struggles and strife of survival in the teenage world. Cosmic loneliness and cosmic anxiety rob teenagers of the privilege of developing their self-image with God, and of entering into the creativity of God's grace. It robs them of the privilege of faith through God's promises, humility through God's Cross, and love through God's Spirit.

As we learn God's promises, they become a

part of us, and sooner or later they become our resources. At first, they do not appear to be our resources because they involve a process. But when the promises become "ours," then instead of going into the resource factory of this world's kingdom, we will draw from the divine enterprise of spiritual industry. We enter into the very life of a Christian who has learned to be spiritual in a very practical, industrious way.

It's a precious thing to know that the Bible is right when it says, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free….If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:32,36). The Son doesn't make you rebellious. He doesn't make you independent. But He does give you every right to develop in the process of becoming an individual. Most of all, He makes you *really* free. You don't have to fight reality because reality is something that lines up with what you know in your conscience—regulated by the norms and standards of love and grace.

This reality is something that fills up the dull places, the empty places. Reality comforts the lonely person and gives the anxious person boldness and confidence because Somebody bigger than the world is inside of you, loving you,

supping with you, being your friend. He eliminates the pressures of the world for the time being and gives you everything you need on the inside in a very personal way. If you develop this relationship and cultivate it, you'll be amazed at the practicality and the availability of true freedom.

Dream Goals

Chapter One
DREAMS OF THE HEART

"And [Jacob] dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven..." (Genesis 28:12a). Before the full canon of Scriptures was completed, dreams were given by God to guide His people in specific situations. Today, we depend upon the Word of God as our source of reliable information, but there is another type of dream that we are interested in: dreams of the heart. Heart dreams motivate our thinking in a godly way, causing us to establish goals at a very young age. When these goals are established, they are regulated by discipline. As a result, we are sustained as individuals.

Many years ago I had a dream. I don't mean a literal dream, but a dream of the heart—a hope, a burning desire. I had a dream that I would be a baseball announcer. Of course, the

team that I would announce for would be New England's team, the Boston Red Sox. Using my tape recorder, I would go through their lineup and announce the game. I even used sound effects to imitate the noise of the crowds. My brothers thought it was crazy, especially when there was work to be done, like hoeing corn. But that was a dream I had, and in my dream I actually had to pay radio stations not to sign me up!

After I became a Christian, I had a dream to become a preacher. I practiced preaching to trees on our farm. I preached to one tree after another (nobody was around). I would get so excited. Some people dream that they are missionaries. Some dream of really understanding the Bible and being able to relate it to others. Still others dream of having a ministry to help young people.

I know a young man who has already been to India; he has a dream to go back. It's his desire and his goal. I know another young man who is in the service. He has a dream to be a solid witness for Jesus Christ in the military. These dreams are all good, healthy, wholesome attitudes of the heart.

I once witnessed to a couple in Maine who were living in sin. They were only fourteen and sixteen years old, and they were drinking and

doing everything under the sun that was wrong. But I always loved them. Finally they started coming out to services. They would go out with me on Saturday nights to pray over the city of Portland. We prayed over every seat in our church, including the choir loft, and the Sunday school rooms. We prayed for people to get saved, and these young people began to come through for God beautifully. They said that in their worst moments they had a tremendous desire to be delivered. They had a dream to live clean for God.

Dreams are beautiful things. A dream of becoming an engineer, a nurse, or a teacher is a very special thing if it's motivated by God. I'm not talking about subjectivity, but about a strong desire in the heart, a strong purpose that motivates a goal. This type of dream causes teenagers to make preparations for life and to live in the consequences of their goals. They check their performance with their goals. They have some tremendous dreams. And do you know what? These dreams really do protect the soul.

Chapter Two

DREAMS REALIZED

I had the privilege one summer, as I have on many occasions, to talk with some of the major league baseball players. We were on the field for an hour and a half with Canseco, McGwire, Greenwell, Harold Reynolds, Ellis Burks, Marty Barrett, and Dwight Evans. One of the things that Dwight Evans said to me was, "Many years ago, I had a dream. In this dream, I wanted to be a major league ball player. I was kind of muscle bound. I didn't have good reflexes, but I worked and worked. All of a sudden everything changed for me, and I began to hit the ball with authority. Even in my twenties, when I came into the major leagues, some of my hitting abilities were questionable, even though my fielding was professional."

Evans went on, "But I remembered the dream I had as a young boy. Instead of going out drinking and living in sin I stayed with my

dream, and I've kept my body healthy." He is healthy. He had thirty-two-inch waist when he was thirty-nine years old. He said, "I'm a born-again Christian, and I'm so thankful for Jesus Christ. I want to play ball for another two years, but even if I don't, I have a dream that my life is going to be better than ever because of the Savior Jesus Christ." Dwight Evans had a dream and he has realized his dream.

Marty Barrett told us, "When it's all said and done, you win, you lose, you do well, you don't do well; but walking with Jesus Christ and having goals for eternity are the most important goals for me, my wife, and my family."

I don't believe that there has ever been a person in any profession who can be really effective under most circumstances, unless he has first become effective through Christ, the Word of God, and his dreams. Did you know that a person who has dreams lives better because he has goals? A person who has healthy dreams checks his performance against his goals. The consequences of a person's goals will maintain his performance. Consider some dreams for yourself under the guidance of the Spirit of God. Ask the Lord for a dream goal.

I hope girls will have a dream to stay pure

before God. I hope that you will not let your emotions run wild, having desires apart from God's will and making wrong decisions in these precious years of your life. I pray you'll have a dream to one day go to your pastor and say, "I'm going to get married, and I'm a virgin. I thank God that years ago I had a dream to keep myself pure for Jesus, for my family and for my church. And today, as I walk down that aisle, my dream has been fulfilled. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit." I hope that you'll have a dream to one day be a godly wife. Boys, have a dream that you'll be godly husbands and fathers.

Chapter Three

GODLY GOALS

Values lead to goals, and goals are checked by performance. Your performance is checked by God's Word and God's grace, which is always there to help you. You have the ability to develop your capacity to concentrate on the Word of God. In every area where a desire, a goal, and a purpose are formed through the grace of God and the will of God, you will understand what it means to have a dream.

As a teenager, David took care of his father's sheep. When David was threatened by a lion and a bear, he was so God-conscious that God gave him a beautiful victory. David pictured himself as a great warrior for God. Then one day, he defeated the giant Goliath and protected the entire nation of Israel from the reign of the Philistines. David, who had a dream as an eighteen-year-old lad, went out with his slingshot

and killed Goliath. David had a dream.

It's a beautiful thing to understand the value of having dreams. Paul had a dream that one day at the Bema Seat of Christ he would receive a great prize for serving God—a crown of righteousness. This was a unique dream, and certainly, Paul was able to fulfill his goals and he will experience the fulfillment of his dreams.

Show me a person who is filled with emptiness and passivity, without purpose in life, and I'll show you someone who doesn't have a dream. Show me a teenager who doesn't have a dream, and I'll show you someone who isn't motivated before God. A person without a dream is passive, frivolous, empty-headed, and easily influenced by people who have no purpose in this life. The book of Proverbs says, these people hang around the wrong crowd, even in the church (Proverbs 13:20). They make wrong decisions and justify them, but they never have a dream.

I want you, through the Holy Spirit and the Word of grace, to consider some very practical dreams that God wants you to have. Dream about what you're going to be like this year. Have a dream for God to change your attitude, if that's what you need. Have a dream for God

to conform you to the image of his Son. Remember, at one time, Jesus was a baby, then a young child. As He went through His teenage years he faced every single situation that each of us face. Have a dream that you're going to be a happy, joyful, spiritual, victorious, triumphant representative of God. Establish some precious dreams.

In Isaiah 29:8, it says a hungry man dreams. It also says that a thirsty man dreams. Think of it. A person who is hungry dreams of having food. A person who is thirsty dreams of drinking water. When God puts us in a place where we have honest needs because of heartaches and circumstances, then we can begin to have dreams. With your dreams, you can be disciplined and let God help you to fulfill those dreams.

Isiah Thomas said that when he was in elementary school playing basketball on the streets, he had a dream to one day be a forward in professional basketball. He was told that he would never be able to make it. But his dream and God's help took him all the way to the Detroit Pistons. I think you, too, will discover that again and again, God will help *you* fulfill your dreams.

Chapter Four

PASTOR LOVE'S TESTIMONY

(Note: Pastor John Love is the youth pastor for Greater Grace World Outreach.)

I think one of the greatest compliments that Joseph's brothers gave him was to say, "Behold, the dreamer cometh" (Genesis 37:19).

For those of you who can't dream, there are people who are dreaming for you. God will create within you a capacity for dreaming. We are people who have the opportunity and the privilege to dream because the Kingdom of God is a place where dreams can become a reality.

As a young person, I didn't really know what I wanted to do, but there was a desire within me to see people happy. I thought rock and roll musicians made people happy. I didn't realize that wasn't the case. It *looked* that way but after experiencing a little bit of that lifestyle, I realized how disillusioned I was: Rock stars *didn't* make people happy, and alcohol and partying

didn't make people happy. Drugs didn't make people happy either.

Then, at the age of seventeen, I got saved. Over the years, God did so many different things in my life, and finally He said, "You know, this is the way that you're going to be used to make people happy. You're going to be able to give them a message that can change their lives and bring them into a relationship with a living God." I can honestly say that dreams do come true in the Kingdom of God. Outside of the Kingdom of God, I don't know if dreams can ever come true.

Bill Alexson is another person who dreamed. If he couldn't play in the NBA or work side-by-side with these professional athletes, he just somehow wanted to be with them to minister to them and communicate Christ's life. Today Bill is working with the professional athletes.

Let's dream. As we see one another, let's say to ourselves, 'Behold, the dreamer cometh.' We know that Joseph's brothers' attitudes were critical and negative. They hoped and imagined that they had put an end to all of his dreams. They dashed his hopes to pieces when they left him in that pit to die. I suppose there will be times, even if we dream, when it will look like

we have been left in a pit to die. But there's also another beautiful verse in the Bible about Joseph's life, and it says, "But the Lord remembered Joseph." It just keeps saying throughout the story in the book of Genesis, that the Lord remembered Joseph. Before long, Joseph was prime minister of Egypt and he was the very one God used to save his own family. Joseph dreamed and his dreams turned into reality.

If we dream with God, there is also that possibility that our dreams will turn into reality. So aim high and dream great dreams for God because in the Kingdom of God, they can come true.

Knowing the Will of God

How do you know you're dreaming the right dreams? Some dreams could be motivated by self-interest. We can be certain that some of those dreams will remain unfulfilled.

Many people ask, "How do you know the will of God?" There are a few answers to that question. First, the Holy Spirit will always speak loudly enough for a willing soul to hear. In other words, God is not going to leave us hanging and wondering. He's not going to leave us out in the dark. Secondly, God will never lead us in a way

that is contrary to His Word. His leading will always be consistent with the teachings of the Word of God.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Holy Spirit will lead those who have already committed themselves to do as God would choose for them. In other words, if a dream is motivated by self-interest and we have already committed ourselves to our choices instead of allowing God to choose for us, then we will find roadblocks. We will come up against closed doors because God doesn't want us to go in that direction. Many of us have been saved from dreams that were motivated by self-interest. The bottom line in our hearts must be "God, not my will, but thy will be done. And if this dream isn't of you—and won't bring you glory—then I don't want to dream in that direction." We don't want to have self-oriented dreams because they can turn into nightmares.

Can you honestly say that your dreams glorify God? When you dream, is the goal of your dream to glorify Him? Dreaming should take us beyond ourselves. God wants to take us beyond what we can do today into a realm of trusting Him to do the impossible. God's people should always glory in the impossible.

Testings for Blessings

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Difficulties can bring out the worst in some people and the best in others. The difference in a person’s reaction stems from the resources that he has within.

For example, David (who later became a king) allowed the situation with Goliath to bring out all he had learned while caring for his father's sheep. He heard the taunts of the Philistines' giant and sprang into action. Taking five smooth stones, he ran straight toward the enemy and hurled a rock that smacked Goliath in the head. David triumphed and so did Israel. It was time of testing that brought about a great response and a great blessing for him and his people.

What made David so bold at that moment? It was all those moments in the fields where he had to keep watch and protect the sheep committed to his care. During those times, David meditated and prayed and worshipped and

served with all of his heart. The results were manifested when he was put into a test. Out of him came the resources of power and strength derived from his relationship with the Lord.

This booklet looks at our moments and seasons of testing and points us to a place where we can find help in our time of need. It will reveal that when a believer has the proper inner resources from God, he can face any test in a relaxed and confident manner.

Chapter One

A LIFE OF CONTINUAL REJOICING

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:6-9).

People have three inner resources that they tend to depend upon: sublimation, emotionalism, and the old sin nature. These are present in the genes derived from the first man, Adam. For example, pressures come and some people just

sit down and sublimate with seven hours of television a day. Others just hang out at restaurants and talk and talk and talk.

First Peter 1, however, speaks about the most beautiful deliverances that can happen to Christians. Look at this phrase in verse 6 of Chapter 1: “Wherein ye greatly rejoice….” This construction means that we can be constantly rejoicing, no matter what we find ourselves in the midst of.

“Well,” you say, “I can't do that!” You just revealed your dependence on Adam’s inner resources. The problem is that this way of living is so painful. A person who lives this way gets so tired that he can hardly exist.

Triumphant Exuberance

First Peter 1:6 says that we are to be constantly rejoicing with a joy that expresses itself in triumphant exuberance. The Greek word for “rejoice” is *agalliao*, and it is one of my favorite words. It speaks of having an attitude of celebration within us. Believers have this great capacity to celebrate in anything we are doing or going through. You may be washing dishes or dusting the furniture. Whatever it is, you are just so thrilled because the doctrines within you are

working together to make your life a party.

Imagine a wife who lives like this in her home. Her husband arrives from work and sees what's going on and says, “Wow, you seem really happy today. What happened to you?”

“Nothing special,” she says. “I am just relaxing in the plan of God. I read a booklet by some pastor who said that there can be a continual celebration—a party—in me because I am filled with God's nature.”

This type of person is very special. Within, grace parties with mercy. Mercy has a party with love. Love has a party with forgiveness. Forgiveness has a party with fellowship. Fellowship then parties with godly power. At last, God’s power has a party in that soul, revealing as He did with David and Goliath that Jesus Christ has conquered the devil.

The inner resources of the flesh are no longer in control. Defeated are sublimation and emotionalism and the flesh reacting with the old sin nature. Instead, the believer’s life can be one of *agalliao*—continual rejoicing. Truth becomes his inner resource. There is a great illumination in his heart, and something beautiful happens.

Chapter Two

STOREHOUSES OF TRUTH

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (1 Peter 1:6).

When I first started going to church, something began to happen within me. I probably did not realize it at first, but as I remained committed to the local assembly and church attendance, hearing the Word of God preached and studying the Bible, my soul began to store up something. That something is what we call categorical doctrine.

Surely, you have used a catalog of one sort or another. In those publications, merchandise is presented in an organized way. The clothing is in the clothing section of the book, the electronic items are grouped together in another part, and so on.

As your soul receives doctrine on a consistent basis, this doctrine becomes categorized.

Your heart is cataloging the truth so that your mind can make the references it needs in any given situation.

Another amazing thing happens as the soul becomes filled with categories. You will discover that what is in you begins to come out. Bitterness is no longer in there. You don't have anger because it is not in there anymore. The things that come out of you now are magnificent. Truth is being stored within for future tests. What you receive in studying the Word, in church services, and in rap sessions are all being categorized in your soul. All of these things go into storage. God leads you, and He feeds you exactly what you need when you go against Satan.

Challenges to Momentum

Let's say that God knows that Satan wants to make you sick—very sick perhaps. Satan starts his process, but God has already supplied you with what you need. By going to church, you were receiving truth that provided the resources of God. His resources sanctify your soul, setting you apart for God’s purpose and making you ready for sanctified tests that will further promote you in His plan. You are made ready for brokenness as a result of being filled with the

Spirit of God.

This beautiful passage in 1 Peter describes something that happens to affect you for eternity. There is a present linear action at work, indicated in the Greek grammar. As we face momentum tests, truth is working inwardly. We don't have to confess, “Bad week. Bad day.” We don't have to say that at all. Instead, we have the grace of God working from faith to faith to faith to faith. We experience this magnificent deliverance because we have been prepared for the tests with inner resources of God's nature.

These provisions become locked into our memories for the Holy Spirit to bring to our remembrance. We have a storehouse of truth—not just words, but the Word of God in categories of doctrine, quick and powerful, for the edifying of the saints and the tearing down of the enemy’s strongholds (Hebrews 4:12; 2 Corinthians 10:4-8).

Chapter Three

SUBSTANCE FOR SUCCESS

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:7-9).

"But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:13-14).

"The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Psalm 34:7).

In 1 Peter 1:7, the word for “praise” in the Greek text is *epainos*. It refers to what goes on in the angelic realm as we go through the battles of this life.

Every believer has at least one angel assigned as his guardian as we go through the warfare that exists in this world system. These angels help us in the midst of the angelic contest as they battle the fallen demons. Your angels are ministers to you because of grace, and they are present to help you as you obey the Word of God.

Epainos means that your angel fights for you, slam dunking the demon counterpart that hates you and attacks you. Ancient scholars have written beautiful commentaries on this important aspect of our spiritual lives.

Picture it like this: Here I am, walking with Jesus Christ, living in the power of the Holy Spirit, and drawing upon the inner resources I have built up in advance through the present linear action of choosing to hear the Word of God. So I am walking along, and Satan's forces take aim, but my angel says to the demons, “Leave him alone!” Suddenly, the demons cannot do what they had planned to do. Instead, I am enabled to glorify God with a brand-new lin-

ear action that brings in the sanctificational provision of the Word of God (John 17:17).

Degrees of Glory

Beyond this sanctificational provision, I enjoy victory in the momentum test. Furthermore, I continue to receive degrees of glory that will be revealed in heaven when I stand before God at the Bema Seat. That is where every believer will receive or suffer loss of rewards for all of eternity, based on how he appropriated God's provisions in time.

What we go through here in time is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Really, we have no idea how much glory is being developed in us, in our ministry, during these difficult times on earth. I am so grateful for the great men of God who are laboring with me in spite of the opposition from the wicked one. One day, all will be revealed, and there we will have it! We will see the manifestation of the glory of God.

Glory is simply the reflection in substance of God's actual essence—His nature revealed in men. Degrees of glory are added to us as we progress through the tests that are designed to bring us blessings.

“Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” This portion of 1 Peter 1:6 speaks of a “locative of sphere,” or area of influence. In the midst of these days of warfare, we have something more than inner peace. We have peace that is revealed. Yes, there is heaviness and manifold temptations, but by faith we greatly rejoice. Why? We know that testing brings blessing.

“Though now for a season” includes two Greek adverbs of time that speak of the extent of our suffering. “Now” (*arti*) refers to a very short time, just at this moment. A “season” (*oligon*) describes a longer period. This means that there are times when we may suffer short, very intense tests. Or, we may go through “seasons” that could mean several months of testing.

All of these testings serve a purpose, which is to lead us to blessings. A believer who is lacking God’s resources within will be overwhelmed by such tests until he comes to the end of himself.

A categorical-doctrine Christian pays the price to develop deep inner resources of doctrine through hearing and reading and studying the Word as much as he can (2 Timothy 2:15). These provisions of preparation preserve him

and help him pass the sanctificational testings in time, bringing eternal degrees of glory that will never fade.

CONCLUSION

A time of testing may last for a day, for a month, or for a year. But, no matter how long it lasts, we can live in an attitude of rejoicing in Christ, enjoying a great party within our hearts. Satan may come against you. People may talk about you and attack you, but you will be having a party inside. Hell may be trying to wear you down, but the forces of Satan are the ones who will have to quit and go home.

This principle of rejoicing through godly inner resources really does a number on the demons. I can just see them hanging their heads as they drag themselves back before their master.

“How did it go?” the master asks.

“I don't think we want to try that for a while—at least, not with those people in that church.”

“Why?”

“Those people all go soul-winning. They are

constantly having Bible studies—teen-agers, women, men, students….”

“What do you suggest we do?”

“Find another group of people who aren't so prepared for warfare.”

“Very good. Now, do it!”

The demons run from people who understand that testing is for *our* sake. God's peace rules in our hearts as His Word supplies resources that never go bad. By setting our hearts on God in the hard times, we glorify Him as we manifest His character and nature in the situations we go through. So let’s go forward with Christ no matter what. We will have all eternity to enjoy the glory of God formed in our lives through faith obedience, both now and for a season.

Thanks from a Grateful Heart

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

A great release comes to the Christian who is thankful. Even in the midst of difficulties, his heart overflows with the joy of the Lord. And though Satan's attacks are specifically designed to bring discouragement, the act of giving thanks brings protection for our souls and minds.

We have been released from the captivity of sin, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, and His Resurrection power is now at work in us. His mercy is our dwelling place. We are His people and He is our God (Jeremiah 30:18-22). These are the themes that should ring out from within, and when we allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in our hearts, the Word we have received will enable us to overcome negativity and stress.

This booklet is written not only to instruct us in the doctrine of thanksgiving, but also to express my great thanks to the Lord and to those who have touched my heart.

Chapter One

FROM THE HEART

"And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small" (Jeremiah 30:19).

"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, *doing the will of God from the heart*" (Ephesians 6:6).

"But God be thanked, that ye *were* the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye *became* the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18). Here, the Word of God is referring to a person who no longer serves sin. None of us is sinless, yet because of our recognition of the work that Christ finished on Calvary, we are blameless.* And in Jeremiah 30:19, God will glorify those who have thanksgiving that proceeds from the heart.

When God honors the thankful Christian, men don't like it. They call it "adulation"—an inordinate show of praise. Of course, Hollywood gives out its Oscars, TV stars get Emmys, and athletes are worshipped by adoring fans. But at times when God glorifies His people, some Christians still react. They don't understand how to rejoice when one is honored or how to weep when someone suffers. Simply put, many are not taking up their membership in the Body of Christ as a particular portion (1 Corinthians 12:26-27).

God glorifies men and He says "they shall not be small." What a wonderful declaration! They will not be "little" before Him in anything that they do because thanksgiving proceeds from their hearts. Their hearts are not divided by envy, bitterness, or insecurity. When there is any negativity, they deal with it instantly and go on.

The Sound of Thanksgiving

We are to give thanks in everything, for this is the will of God. In 2 Chronicles 5:13, trumpeters and singers were appointed to "make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD." Each morning, noon, and evening, this group was to stand and give thanks to God.

God told David to have the singers praising Him in the temple all day and night. They were to be paid just to sing. God wanted them to sing around the Ark because He loves to be thanked and adored. He uses it to fill the hearts of others with thanksgiving. So, when you hear the singers sing, thank God, join in, and worship from your heart.

From Thanksgiving to Glory

When we are thankful, we always have an attitude of rejoicing (see Psalm 107:22). A husband will not have a problem with his wife if he's thankful to God for her from his heart. Likewise, a wife can overcome mountains if she is thankful to God from her heart. An alcoholic can be delivered if every morning and every night and all day long he thanks God for the victory from his heart.

The Bible says that when we are thankful, we pray more (Psalm 116:17). When we are thankful, we sing more (Psalm 147:7). When we supply the needs of others, there proceed many thanksgivings to God (2 Corinthians 9:12). Thanksgiving comes through us and we allow abundant grace to "redound to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 9:11; 2 Corinthians 4:15).

Psalm 106:47 declares that *we live* thanking God, and we triumph in His praise. Isn't that good? The Bible is speaking to us, and it is still speaking today as much as it ever did.

**Read Pastor Stevens' booklet* The Finished Work, *Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

THE COVERING OF THANKSGIVING

"For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it" (Isaiah 28:20).

Coverings are so important.* Thanksgiving serves as a covering against the attacks of the devil. But if we are not serving God with thanksgiving that comes from the heart, we will lack a vital covering. Husbands are to be a covering for their wives (Ephesians 5:23), yet unthankful husbands do not cover their wives. An unthankful wife will not cover her husband. Unthankful children will not cover their parents. Unthankful businessmen do not cover their employees. More than ever before, it is vital that we understand the value of having a heart of thanks so we will not rob ourselves or anyone else of a covering.

David wrote in Psalm 23:2, "He maketh me

to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." A thankful Christian is a green pasture for others. By sending out missionaries; by writing a letter; through booklets, radio, and television ministries; and through all of the outreaches, we become someone's green pasture. God help us to be green pastures for people in South America, Central America, the Middle East, the Far East, Africa, Europe, Australia, and right here in North America.

"Green pastures" speaks of mercy and Bible doctrine: "Cause me to rest in the merciful doctrine of Your Word." Green represents mercy, and a pasture represents spiritual food for the soul from the living Word of God. As thankful Christians, we become green pastures, living testimonies of the Truth to be "known and read of all men" (2 Corinthians 3:2).

It is wonderful to be a green pasture for those battling a serious disease, like cancer. So many in our church have been faithful in their call to minister, comfort, and identify with those patients and their families. We are thankful for each one who serves.

I know a pastor with a great gift of humor who will do whatever it takes to make people laugh, which breaks the atmosphere of tension

and stress and helps people to relax. He is enabled to preach and is often broken because of an attitude of thanks and a humble spirit full of praise. He is thankful from his heart.

Clothed with the New Covenant

So often when God was dealing with the backslidden children of Israel, He would describe in great detail how He would cover them in fine linen (Ezekiel 16:6-14). His New Covenant not only covers our sins—past, present, and future—but also covers every single thing in our lives. Though God will shake what can be shaken in our lives, He declares to His people, "I will surely cover thee" (see Isaiah 22:17).

Christians need to realize this and understand that we are never to judge or attack one another. We are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). We are to be so hid with Christ that Satan can't make a case against us—even when we are guilty. That is what being "hid" really means.

For example, in Zechariah 3:1-4, Satan had made a list of all the sins of Joshua the high priest. But when he presented it to the Lord in the courtroom of heaven, Jesus Christ stood up and told Satan to shut up and get out of there.

Then He said, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." Joshua's garments were filthy, yet Jesus said, "Get him some clean clothes." The Lord wouldn't listen to a single accusation against Joshua.

Now, we know we are supposed to repent, but do you know there is no record of Joshua even saying, "I'm sorry"? And when Satan accuses us, until we do it again, God takes away our penalty—*even if we don't repent*—though we are still left with the consequences of our sin. Whatever judgment we were judicially worthy of is added to the devil's eternal degrees of punishment, which he will endure in hell forever.

Satan is in a very different place in hell than where unsaved people are. Degree after degree of judgment is added to him because of the sins of those he accuses. His punishment in hell will be far worse than that of the unsaved person who goes there. Think of how many people, by God's grace, we can be a covering for. To be part of a ministry that has God's heart for the lost is something I am so thankful for.

Colored by Royalty

"But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach

of men, and despised of the people" (Psalm 22:6). In this passage, Jesus is speaking about His life, identifying Himself as a worm. Actually, there is a special kind of worm, which when squashed produces a very costly purple dye that was used to color the curtains in the tabernacle (Exodus 26:1-6; 35:6-12). The curtains, used as a covering in the holy of holies, were blue, scarlet, and purple, clasped together by gold. This revealed a fantastic covering of resurrection life. Blue represents Deity, and scarlet points to the humanity of Jesus, which was required for a perfect sacrifice. Purple, however, represents the hypostatic union of God in Man—the royalty of Jesus Christ, the King of kings.

Thanks be to God, when Jesus went to the grave two thousand years ago, retroactively we went with Him. Our sins, our iniquities, and the old nature were buried there and cast into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). Can you see the picture? When Jesus was raised from the dead, we were raised with Him positionally. When He ascended, He took us with Him, and we are now seated together with the Lord Jesus Christ who covers us with His resurrection life. The effects of our sins have been canceled, though we must confess any known sin and isolate it to maintain

our fellowship with Christ in the light and avoid chastisement.

"We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his [resurrection] life" (Romans 5:10). We have great joy in our salvation, and the covering of that great joy is our strength! For this, we are truly grateful.

**Read* Coverings, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Three

A PASTOR'S THANKSGIVING PRAYER

What follows is a poem written to express a pastor's love to the people in his church.

Dear Lord, I come to you today
in my own simple "Stevens'" way,
to lift my heart and try to pray
and tell You what I want to say;
Oh, thank You on this Thanksgiving Day.

For my dear wife who is so true,
who lives and prays for each thing I do,
and is always there to say, " I love you";
To hold my hand through many storms,
always willing to wear her crown of thorns;
I'm thankful.

For my dear son Paul and his sweet wife

who stayed with Dad through
    attacks and strife.
They never turned from their call
and are such a blessing to us all.
I'm thankful for Natalie's sweet little calls.
For June, Barbara's mom, who does so much,
A willing heart, a laid-down life,
    her loving touch.
For all of my grandchildren, near and far,
who are constantly blessing
    their sweet "Papa";
For family who show they care,
    even with a silent prayer;
For Beauty, the dog, who runs and jumps
    when I get home,
then at my feet, quiet and still,
    waits for a bone.
(Hoping for a snack to eat,
but never follows at my feet);
And for Muffin and Comfort,
    I will not leave out,
who love the yard and run about;
I'm thankful.

For all of the heartaches, trials, and pain,
which taught us that to give is gain.
For our dear folks who help sustain;

For clouds, and storms, and chilling rain;
For lonely days of stress and strain,
that make us shout,
    "Lord, please come again!"
For those who have stood close by my side,
with whom I've laughed and mourned
    and cried,
and sung, and wept, and smiled, and sighed;
who stood so tall and helped me share
my heavy load, and hurt and care;
Who've had the love to bravely dare
to undergird and help me bear
the load, when days were not so fair;
For those who helped possess the land
and followed me, and held my hand,
though oft' they could not understand;
I'm thankful.

For deliverance from pork and fat,
and pizzas, and such things as that;
From alcohol that sinners drink—
it's only fit for the kitchen sink;
From the greasy foods, and sweets too—
the things not best for me to chew,
iniquities that I once knew.
(Don't get offended; we're just having fun.

I might have some french fries
when this is done!)
For bees that make their nectar sweet
and make health foods for us to eat,
I'm thankful.

For a faithful staff to share the work,
who never loaf and never shirk
the task they have been asked to do
but stand beside me, strong and true;
For loved ones who are oft denied
my presence at their lonely side;
For deacons tested through the years
who calmly share with me my fears;
For shut-ins who abide in prayer,
who constantly my burden share;
For the Deaf who make me understand,
they love me with their speaking hands;
For nursery folks whose time is spent
enduring a most dreaded scent.
Eye cannot see, nor tongue can tell
the odors they are required to smell!
(God bless these oft neglected saints
who love our kids and change their pants.)
For all these dear ones, Lord, I say
Thank You! for sending them my way.

For the blessed fact that when I'm gone
the work down here will go right on.
To know that when I'm in the air
Those left will know Your tender care.
For all of those who now "moon-light,"
an extra job they work at night,
to help to win our biggest fight,
I'm thankful.

For those who make the tapes and help write the books,
who type the letters and print and file,
who keep the office in fine style;
For those who play the instruments,
and those who plan some main events,
such as communion and baptisms too,
and other special jobs, to name a few;
I'm thankful.

For all the secretaries who serve so well,
a special group of spiritual girls;
For Jeannie and Dottie's telephone
service to all,
with godly cheer they answer the call.
For the Friday night prayer group that prays
and help us get through all of our days;
For security: men who serve and wait

aware of each scheduled date,
Who freely give of their time
to protect our people and keep them fine;
For Dick Colby and his crew,
the many projects that they do,
expressing Christ all the way through;
For Ron who helps and helps again,
who does a great job and is a dear friend.
Then there's the restaurant—
    they all work so hard,
frying the french fries in "glorified" lard!
I'm thankful.

For Dr. Lewis, a "Jonathan" friend,
who's determined to serve
    with me to the end.
For Kathy, his wife, who works and serves
like few on earth, with great spiritual nerves.
For Pastor R. and Diane, his wife,
who love our people out of strife,
who serve and love with all their heart,
and made a commitment never to part.
They really understand their call
and are loved so deeply by us all.
I'm thankful.

For President Sutorius and the faculty too:
What a dedicated faithful few,
who train our students with great care
to take this message everywhere.
For the president's wife, Mary—
    one of a kind,
and their faithful family right behind.
For our great teachers in the day school,
who with grace enforce each rule.
They teach and love to fulfill their call.
They start anew with joy each fall.
For Pastor Baker and Sylvia too,
who work long hours, and not just a few.
I'm thankful.

For businessmen who love the Lord's work
and hire me as a consultant
so I will not financially hurt;
For these men who give so much
after receiving God's heavenly touch;
For the congregation digging deep
when the offerings are down
    and bills are steep;
For our people who give out of their need
because inside is God's precious Seed;
I'm thankful.

For the faithful folks who go abroad,
with ready feet that are spiritually shod.
Pastors Tom and Scibelli too,
and Pastor DeMeo and all of their crew;
Pastor Schollaert and all the rest—
To win the lost, they do their best.
For all the pastors in the states—
Our faithful friends, on God they wait;
They play a part in our vision too,
serving in Jerusalem to see it through;
And I'm thankful.

For all the tears and smiles and fun;
For every laugh and every pun;
The way You have helped
    and how You've led,
and for the Blood that You have shed.
For all the times You've heard me say,
"Who gives this lovely bride away?"
For all the sinners who have knelt,
For all the joys that we have felt;
As Jesus washed their sins away
so they could sing, "O Happy Day!"
I'm thankful.

Thank You, Lord, for loyal people here,
who for these years have stood so near,
to pray and give and love and cheer,
through victories, losses, faith, and fear.
And please, dear Father, find a way
to show them my dear love today.
And one last word before I'm through:
Greater Grace folks, I love you!
I'm so thankful.

CONCLUSION

"Out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry…" (Jeremiah 30:19). Thanksgiving that proceeds from the heart blesses God. It comes out of us, and when it does, the house of the Lord will be filled with God's presence. When we sing and our hearts are filled with thanksgiving, then our homes will be filled with the presence of God. How great is our God! And before Him, we are not small.

Dear heavenly Father, thank You! We pray that these words will release individuals to experience the victory that comes with thanksgiving. We receive Your love to release us and to express Your greatness in every area of our lives. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.

The Authority of Grace

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"For ye are not under the law, but *under* grace" (Romans 6:14*b*).

"No man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

"But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved…."(Luke 5:37-38).

Every believer has been placed under the government of grace. Unfortunately, not all believers experience the authority and victory of grace in their daily lives. Though they may be stimulated by a church service and experience a temporary release in their emotions, two days later they discover they have not changed at all. Why? They could not retain the new wine of the Holy Spirit of grace because they received it into their old capacities that lacked spiritual substance.

This booklet will show that when we receive truth into our new capacity (in Christ) through

the new wine of the Spirit of grace, then grace becomes the final and personal authority for our lives. By that authority we can experience personal deliverance from our old sin nature so we can function freely in the newness of life in Christ.

Chapter One

THE FOUNDATION: GRACE AND TRUTH

God's grace is the final authority in the life of a believer; it is the referee in every detail we face. The Word of God says in John 1:16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." If the Holy Spirit were to reveal what this means in light of the dispensation of grace (in Ephesians 3:2), you would be extremely broken and desire to be alone with God just to worship Him and thank Him. Because of the Finished Work, from His fullness we have *already* received grace upon grace.

John 1:17 says, "For the law was given by Moses, but *grace* and *truth* came by Jesus Christ." I want you to remember those words—"grace *and* truth." Truth can never be separated from grace, neither can grace be separated from truth.

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps" (Psalm 85:10-13).

Mercy and truth met together. Therefore, when that meeting took place at the Cross, mercy also met grace. They met in the Person of Jesus Christ. When Psalm 85:10 says that righteousness and peace kissed each other, it is speaking of the Father's righteousness. And in Ephesians 2:14, Jesus Christ is our peace. So, in perfect holiness and righteousness, God the Father kissed Jesus Christ the Son, who represented man as the Sin-bearer (though He never sinned).

What does it mean that "truth shall spring out of the earth"? Through Christ, grace *and* truth can now spring up from the earth through the fullness of His Body (see Ephesians 1:23). The Father's perfect righteousness looks down from heaven and is pleased.

We can never read a verse in the Bible apart from grace, and we can never read anything about grace apart from truth. When Jesus Christ finished the work on the Cross, He represented

the pure grace of God as He also satisfied the Father's justice in truth. Blood-bought, born-again Christians need to understand that at Calvary, grace initiated to faith the gospel of salvation—so grace also met *faith* at the Cross. And when the faith of a man responds to the initiation of God's grace, a marriage takes place. That is what happens the moment a person is saved.

Adam, the Condemned Man

In the parable of the wine and the bottles, the new wine represents the Holy Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29). The old bottles, or wineskins, represent the condemned man Adam and his limited, natural capacity. The new bottles represent the new man, regenerated with a new capacity for the purpose, plan, and provision of God. When the new wine goes into old wineskins, they break, and everything that person received is lost, practically speaking. Why? His natural capacity could not contain the strength of God's substance and was destroyed; therefore, the new wine goes out.

"God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not

condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:17-18).

Think about the first part of verse 18: "He that believeth on him is not condemned." *If we believe on Him, we are not condemned.* Yet, hundreds of people who are born again and on their way to heaven walk around like someone who is condemned. A condemned man is guilty. A condemned man needs to sublimate. A condemned man easily becomes emotional; he always has to have his soulish, emotional needs ministered to, and he always needs someone or something to feel fulfilled.

Adam is a condemned man. He will never be any better. His bruise is incurable and his wound is grievous (Jeremiah 30:12). He will never change. In fact, God has never tried to change him, and He is not going to change him. God will have nothing to do with Adam.

If you want to live in Adam, you can have him. You have a free volition. God will never interfere with your right to try to fulfill Adam. Positionally, Adam was sentenced to death and executed, but experientially, he does not want to die. He wants to preserve whatever is left in his

condemned life. His emotions are miserable. He may be happy for a day here and there, everything can be fine for one week, and the next week he's off again. He is not condemned by anything he does—he was condemned already.

The condemned man also takes his place in marriages. A marriage is terrible when Adam gets involved. Adam in the husband goes against Adam in the wife, and on any given night, one Adam is "better" than the other Adam. Either the husband gets mad and withdraws in his reactions, or the wife withdraws and goes through periodic soulish cycles.

The Judgment of Grace

"For we are labourers together with God; ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: the day shall declare it, because it shall be

revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:9-15).

This portion of 1 Corinthians 3 deals with the judgment seat of Christ (*bema* in the Greek). A judgment for believers, the Bema Seat of Jesus Christ will be based entirely on grace.

Romans 6:14*b* says, "Ye are not under the law, but *under* grace." Grace is what God did for us. It doesn't depend upon our ability, though we must receive God's initiation of grace toward us. Then we can enjoy grace that is in us and let it work through us. This is why 1 Peter 4:10 says, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the *manifold* grace of God." "Manifold" means "many-sided." In other words, we are to receive and give grace on every single side, for every part of our lives. *This* is revival.

Holy Temples of Grace

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple, him shall God

destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Let no man deceive himself" (1 Corinthians 3:16-18*a*).

In light of the future judgment for believers at the Bema Seat, we must realize that our bodies are temples for the new wine of the Holy Spirit of grace. Therefore, we must be extremely careful what we allow inside our temples.

A Spirit-filled believer should be able to look in the mirror and say, "My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is not my own. I belong to God; therefore, anything that I do on earth I will do through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. He has made me holy, and I will not use my vessel to receive negative, worldly thoughts."

On the other hand, Christians who receive the Word of Grace into old capacities are putting new wine into jealousy, new wine into insecurity, new wine into a poor self-image—new wine into the old man. And what happens? It pours right out on the ground.

Christianity doesn't work for people who continue to put new wine into the old bottles. What they take in to their natural capacities will destroy them.

Every initiation of grace is precious. God's system is grace: giving a gift to someone when

he doesn't deserve it. But Satan requires an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Picture millions of sinners—wretched people, self-righteous people, and people who live in human good—all on the road to hell but going from different directions. Then picture a meeting in eternity past when the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit looked down through time and saw the terrible condition of the world lost in sin. There Jesus said, "I will go and take care of it all. I will die not just for the sins of those who will believe in Me but for the sins of the whole world" (see 1 John 2:2).

Chapter Two

SANCTIFIED: ONCE FOR ALL

Jesus Christ came to earth to do the Father's will. "…He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will *we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*." (Hebrews 10:7, 9-10).

The Christian who refuses to walk in the condemned man says, "My sins have been paid for once and for all. When I fail I'm going to name it, move on, and leave it behind me no matter what it is."

Hebrews 10:14 says, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Remember, we have already been sanctified "once for all" through faith in Jesus Christ, the One Offering. We are complete in Him.

The Holy Spirit also gives witness of these things: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws [doctrines] into their hearts, and in

their minds will I write them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:16-17).

God does not remember our sins, and according to Psalm 103:10, He does not deal with us after our sins or iniquities. "...For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalms 103:11-14).

Do you imagine that God is remembering how terrible you have been at times? The Bible says that "their sins and iniquities will *I remember no more*" (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

Approaching God with Boldness

"Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus…" (Hebrews 10:18-19). Understanding that God deals with us as a loving Father with grace initiations, we are able to have boldness toward Jesus Christ, our High Priest.

In Leviticus 16:14, when the high priest went

into the holy of holies on the day of atonement, he took the blood of the bullock and sprinkled it with his finger *on* the mercy seat. Then he sprinkled the blood seven times *before* the mercy seat. According to Exodus 28:33-35, the high priest wore a robe trimmed around the hem with bells of pure gold. As long as those standing outside the holy of holies could hear the bells ringing, they knew that the high priest had not died in the presence of God but that God had accepted his sacrifice of the blood.

Compare that scenario to Hebrews 4:16, which is for us today: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Unlike the high priest who went in once a year, we can come unto Him boldly twenty-four hours a day, every day, just as we are.

Are you backsliding? *Come boldly*. Have you fallen? *Come boldly*. Have you gone back into sin again? Name it, forsake it, turn your back on it, and come boldly to find grace and mercy to help in your time of need. Rush into the Holy of Holies in heaven (Revelation 11:19). There is a mercy seat sprinkled seven times with the Blood of Jesus Christ. Through the Finished Work, Christ has opened for us "a new and living way,

which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Hebrews 10:20).

One Judge, One Sacrifice

We have "an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins [(because there is only *one sacrifice* for sins *forever*, according to Hebrews 10:12)], But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot

the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? [*(Remember, this is speaking of 'new wine'.)*]

"For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:21-31).

Why would God say these things if everything is grace and grace is everything? Because, grace is always coming toward me. But it must live in me, and it must flow through me toward others. I must become a living epistle of grace (2 Corinthians 3:2-3). Then, I will receive grace rewards because I was graced-out.

Cast Not Away Your Confidence

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back [*from grace*], my soul shall have

no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving [and deliverance] of the soul" (Hebrews 10:35-39).

What is Hebrews chapter 10 teaching? Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice, therefore He can deal with any problem in my life. And if I have a problem with my emotions, I end it with God once and for all.

After a notoriously evil person died, someone said, "Well, at least he won't be doing those terrible things any more." Adam in any of us is a terrible person, and when he dies, he will not be doing terrible things any more. The person who stole will not be stealing any more. The person who murdered will not murder again. The person who gossiped will no longer gossip. The man who straddled the fence indecisively will not be doing it any more. Whatever we were in Adam, when we finally die to self and accept our place of co-crucifixion with Christ, guaranteed: we will not be doing those things any more.

I have never seen dead people coming out of their graves to do bad things. They are dead, and they are buried. He that dies once dies no more (see Romans 6:9-10).

God always provides a way for grace to teach us.

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith, which we preach…"—God's Word is in your mouth, and in your heart because of grace.

Now notice the conclusion: "…if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:6-9).

That passage is not speaking about salvation but *deliverance*! When you realize that Christ is not far off, you will be delivered from Adam. The deliverance is already *in* you through the absolute Finished Work of grace.

For this reason, God's righteousness is re-

vealed from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). Remember that grace married faith, and the substance of that marriage is righteousness. Born from that union, a child of God confesses who he is (a product of grace), what Christ has done (imparted His righteousness), and he grows from faith to faith and grace to grace.

Grace Initiation, Not Restitution

Christians who understand grace do not require restitution, or pay-back, with one another (unless a judicial crime is involved), because they are good stewards of the many-sided grace of God.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also" (Matthew 5:38-40).

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-44). This

is something we can never do in the flesh.

Jesus goes on to say, "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" (Matthew 5:46). If we love those who love us, remember: so do the publicans. We are no better than they.

Christians have misunderstood Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This doesn't mean that we are perfect on earth, but it means we are to love others with the perfect love of God which demonstrates grace and is manifested through mercy.

Chapter Three

DAMAGED CAPACITIES TURNED BY GRACE

What good does it do for God to put new wine into the old wineskin of a homosexual's body? The new wine goes right out. It does no good to put new wine into the drug addict, the alcoholic, or the self-righteous, religious person. Put the new wine in someone who is up and down in their emotions, and it just leaks right out. But according to Matthew 9:17, when the new wine goes into the new bottles, *both* are preserved.

Luke 5:39 says that if you drink the old wine, you won't desire the new. In other words, if you go back on drugs, you won't want the new wine of the Holy Spirit. If you go back into homosexuality (and *choose* to live that way), you won't want the new wine. But if the new wine goes into new bottles—new capacities—through the Holy Spirit of grace, then you are free from any

identification with the old.

If you can't smile and you can't laugh, get the new wine of the Holy Spirit inside you, and you will be so happy that people may think you are intoxicated at nine o'clock in the morning like the disciples at Pentecost (see Acts 2:13)!

Joy: The Effect of the New Wine

God didn't create you to be sad or to go around with a frown on your face. You were designed to have the joy of the Lord as your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). When Jesus Christ gives you His joy, then your joy is full (John 15:11).

Joy is the strength to laugh, to be happy, and to be free. With this kind of joy, you don't even see the heat when bad times come (see Jeremiah 17:8). When people come to you deeply concerned over what you're going through (because you are "getting the heat"), you can say to them, "What heat?" But because they feel bad about what you're going through, they might try to make you feel bad about it too.

Truthfully, the graced-out Christian doesn't see the heat when it comes. In the scorching trial, their leaf remains green. But people who *do* see the heat never see the good when it comes.

Their leaf withers, and they withdraw from their provision.

Every born-again Christian can enjoy an abundant life. We are free to grow in purity, and as we go from faith to faith, the righteousness of grace is revealed. If we should sin, we simply name it, forsake it, and continue on with God. It is most important, however, that we don't make a provision for our flesh to continue in sin that grace might abound—*God forbid*.

That is what the Bema Seat is all about. It will reveal what we did with what we knew and received of the grace of God. Our sins will not be mentioned, but He will bring up every message we heard on grace—and each one is recorded in God's book of remembrance (see Malachi 3:16).

The Authority of Grace in the Local Assembly

According to Ecclesiastes 12:11, every Christian is to have one shepherd, or pastor-teacher—a pastor who knows categorical doctrine, exegetes the Scriptures, and knows isagogics (the historical frame of reference). The pastor is charged to be a soul winner, to love, to invest, and to have a vision for worldwide ministry. Under the pastor-teacher's covering, the be-

liever can grow in the ministry with a single-eye (Matthew 6:22) and a single heart (Ephesians 6:5). He can go forward to receive a full reward in heaven at the Bema Seat.

"Look to yourselves, that we lose not the things which we have wrought, but that we receive a *full reward*" (2 John 8). To receive the full reward means to go all the way with God under one pastor-teacher in one local church. It means that though a person may never go on the foreign mission field, he still receives the rewards of those who do because he is one with the worldwide vision of the ministry and abides faithful in his call.

Certainly, Christians may receive from many godly portions in the Body of Christ worldwide that complement true doctrine. But if this same believer were to leave his call to a worldwide ministry and settle for a little church that gives money to missions once a month (but never sends anyone out), he would lose rewards he could have had through identification with a worldwide vision.

Don't be a half-baked, sentimental Christian who settles down in a lukewarm environment listening to a so-so gospel. Get some convictions! Get right with God, and follow through with

your decisions!

Stop Trying to Deal with Adam

Man must live by every single Word of God (Matthew 4:4) because we will be judged by every Word of God (John 12:47-48); but God has given us grace to fulfill what He has called us to do (see Ephesians 3:7-8).

The apostle Paul wrote that we are colaborers with God, and he beseeched that we would "receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1). He went on to quote from Isaiah 49:8: "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed" (2 Corinthians 6:2-3).

This is the message: God has provided a grace table.* Don't receive it in vain. *Now* is the accepted time to be delivered from Adam's nature.

Stop trying to deal with Adam. Some people only confess who they are in Adam: "I'm neurotic. I'm psychotic. I'm depressed." But the old sin nature has *always* been neurotic, psychotic, and schizophrenic. So instead of trying to deal

with what we've always been, why not crucify the person who has made us that way?

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [Christ], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6). "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11). Why not get rid of the root (Adam) instead of always dealing with his fruit?

I've never seen a dead man get drunk, take drugs, argue, get depressed, or speak out of negativity. A dead man has never threatened to take his life.

The answer to our problems is to be crucified and resurrected in Christ. Why should I live in a life that has been condemned when I have a new life in Christ that the old man could never match, even though Adam lives in me?**

We have the *new* man. We choose to walk in the new man (Romans 6:4). When we choose to walk in the newness of the Spirit, we have Christ's nature (Romans 7:6). We are being renewed daily in the spirit of our mind (Ephesians 4:23). Everything is new, and there is nothing old in it.

What if we fail three or four times? Then

each time we do, we name it, forsake it, and go on so quickly that we hardly notice we failed. The only reason we name our sin is so that we won't continue to live in it.

Life in Christ isn't difficult; it's impossible! But Jesus Christ finished the work. He put His blood on the altar seven times, which is God's number for perfection. *It is finished.*

Do you like the new man? Is there anything old in him? Does he have problems? Of course not. The new man is filled with power, love, joy, and faith. There is no condemnation in him. He never judges or blames others. The new man is so satisfied with God that when you see a Christian who walks in the new man, you want to be just like him because he reveals the newness of Jesus Christ's life.

Do Not Receive the Grace of God in Vain

Many marriages look good superficially but are filled with pettiness and lack substance in communication. Often, what appears to be harmless quarreling is actually covering up years of ingratitude and familiarity, which can lead to secret contempt toward the spouse. Though they can't put their finger on the problem, they know there is something deeply

wrong. Usually, it can be attributed to receiving the grace of God in vain.

Hebrews 12:15 instructs us to look "diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

If we receive the grace of God in vain, then we will go right back to thinking, speaking, and living in the condemned man. But it doesn't have to be that way! We can draw near to God's throne of grace twenty-four hours a day and drink in the new wine of grace and truth without condemnation. Once we have internalized grace and truth, we can walk in God's plan and purpose, going from faith to faith, revealing the substance of God's righteousness, and manifesting the authority of grace through love.

**For more about this amazing provision, read* Table of Grace, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

***Read* The Finished Work of Christ, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998, for an expose of Adam's dilemma.*

CONCLUSION

One of the most unusual tragedies of our day is to see Christians falling from grace (Galatians 5:4). But when a believer falls from grace, he falls deeper into it. Positionally he stands in grace (Romans 5:2). But in a falling man's experience, he just doesn't know enough to accept it; therefore, he doesn't grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ in the Lord.

Forever and ever, every Blood-bought, born-again believer will be under grace. Nothing can pluck us from the hand of God. Still, it is so sad to see Christians who refuse to walk in the authority of grace, which is the only way to a victorious life.

God is waiting to be gracious to us (Isaiah 30:18). He is waiting for you and I to put on the new man every morning and to keep the new man on all day long. If we put on the new man, then our bodies, which are the temples of the Holy Spirit, will manifest the grace processes of

God's nature.

As the guests of God in Satan's territory, we are on earth to reveal the attributes of grace: forgiveness, patience, joy, purity, edification, and integrity. Let's go forward redeeming the time. Receive His sufficiency to reveal the authority of God's grace for every situation.

The Battle Is the Lord's

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Oh, how we like to fight our own battles! For some reason, most of us as Christians just cannot see how we can win a battle unless we give God our assistance.

Spiritual battles, however, can never be won with carnal weaponry (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:12). The efforts of our flesh and our minds fall far short of what is necessary to accomplish real, spiritual victories in the midst of this world's system, which is supernaturally controlled by satanic forces.

This booklet, drawn from a study of Joshua 10, reveals that our only path to victory is our availability to God. When we recognize that every battle belongs to the Lord, then our victories will extend to every area of our hearts and lives (Exodus 14:3; 1 Samuel 17:47).

Chapter One

GOD RESPONDS TO OUR AVAILABILITY

"God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God" (Psalm 55:19).

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

As born-again Christians, we have liberty to change. But individuals who refuse to let the Word of God and the Holy Spirit change them do not fear God. As we gaze into the mirror of the Word of God, God's thoughts toward us become clear. We gaze into the Word, not just glance at it. We go beyond careless observation into studying and internalizing categorical doc-

trine; and through this process, the Spirit of God changes us from glory to glory.

Where people fear God, having a fervent respect for all things concerning Him, a great change happens. Perhaps one of the most exciting adventures in the Christian life is the adventure of change. Recently, during a radio broadcast, a husband called in and spoke of his bad marriage. I felt led to be very objective and honest. Lovingly, but forcibly, this man had to be confronted with the fact that the problem was with him. Fortunately, he agreed that there had been few changes in his life as a husband, though he professed to know Christ.

Because we are born into the world, live in the world, hear the thinking of this world, and receive education from this world, it is very easy to allow the world to change us. When we do not purpose to receive God's truth, ungodly influences will automatically come in and try to conform us to this world. Our genetic makeup, established in Adam's fallen nature, can be the basis of our personality. Satan uses information he gathers from his superficial observation of our temperament and disposition, and his primary sources are our countenance and our confession.

All kinds of problems can affect our personalities. Early in my life, I had to overcome the persecution, accusations, and negative projections of poverty and the rejection it brings. I purposed, however, to let Christ transform me according to His Word, through His Spirit. Now I am changed.

Reverence Christ's Lordship

Where there is no reverence for the Lordship of Christ, there can be no change. Yet, as King of kings and Lord of lords, Christ has more than enough ability to change us.

Consider this: Our inability is simply God's opportunity to respond to our availability. This is why it is so crucial for us to allow God to change us.

"And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.

"Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night.

"And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah" (Joshua 10:8-12).

The people of Israel journeyed behind Moses toward Canaan, the promised land. In God's mind, that land was already theirs. Canaan was God's gift to Israel, but they had to allow God to use them to take it over little by little. Today, in the analogies of heaven, the battles they fought represent what we face every day in our souls and our flesh. God's truth does not change, and today as then, the message is the same: Fear not, and do not be dismayed. God is fighting for us (Joshua 10:8, 25, 42).

Chapter Two

GIVE YOUR ENEMIES UP TO GOD

I cannot understand why some people have such a habit of fearing people. The fear of man is a snare, according to Proverbs 29:25. This speaks of an entrapment of our emotional structures and our soul complexes.

The Psalmist declared, "I will not fear what men can do to me" (see Psalm 56:4).

"Not a man shall be able to stand against thee," said Joshua. When Paul went before King Agrippa, it was the king—not Paul—who trembled, because of the truth spoken to him. Paul had no fear of a man. He refused to compromise with hell, he refused to compromise the Gospel, and he refused to compromise repentance.

Throughout the battle of Joshua 10, Joshua kept his roots in Gilgal—the city of power, of resurrection, of faith. This city, mentioned five times in that chapter, typifies the place where grace reigns over sin through righteousness. It is

a place of restoration, of realization, and of revelation. At Gilgal, the Lord Jesus Christ—the captain of the Lord of Hosts—met the soldiers of Israel with His sword drawn.

The interesting part of the battle described in Joshua 10 is God answering Joshua's prayer to keep the sun and the moon in place until the battle was complete. The sun did not go down for a whole day. This is a great picture of Jesus Christ being in control of the battle. Hailstones fell and killed more than the swords of Israel.

God is always fighting our battles and always winning them. At times, He does it quietly, but sometimes He does it vigorously, always providing protection and provision for His people.

Under Our Feet

"And it came to pass, when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they were consumed, that the rest which remained of them entered into fenced cities.

"And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.

"Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out

of the cave.

"And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.

"And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

"And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.

"And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening" (Joshua 10:20-26).

I don't think we could ever begin to realize what God does to our enemies. Most people have received very little doctrine regarding the consequences of being an enemy against God. Someone who opposes God's ministry consistently will be disciplined by God's justice.

God won the victory. And as a result, no one

moved a tongue against the children of Israel. The people of God were established as a people to be feared.

In the same way, no one should gossip about a person who belongs to Jesus Christ. God establishes and vindicates His people and validates His Church, the Body of Christ. To go against His own is to go against God Himself. This does not mean that you cannot disagree lovingly. But no one can go against God's people through the evil government of Satan and get away with it.

After the victory in Joshua 10, Israel enjoyed peace for forty years.

Chapter Three

CONQUERING THE REGIONS OF THE HEART

"And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain: and he did to the king of Makkedah as he did unto the king of Jericho.

"Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah:

"And the LORD delivered it also, and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel; and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain in it; but did unto the king thereof as he did unto the king of Jericho.

"And Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, unto Lachish, and encamped against it, and fought against it:

"And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein, according to all that he had done to Libnah.

"Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining

"And from Lachish Joshua passed unto Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it, and fought against it:

"And they took it on that day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish.

"And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, unto Hebron; and they fought against it:

"And they took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon; but destroyed it utterly, and all the souls that were therein" (Joshua 10:28-37).

God's people were courageous in their faith and in their conduct. They were uncompromising in their testimony, passionate in their devo-

tion, sacrificial in their service, and transparent in their life. This speaks of God's unique people and how they began to conquer. They went on to triumph over twelve different cities, and every city represents something different in God's divine revelation toward Church-age believers.

Joshua and the people of Israel followed God to the city of Makkedah, "the place of shepherds." It was the location of a cave in Judah, and there Joshua captured and executed five Canaanite kings. Coming out from the caves, the kings who went against God's people had to bow their heads before the people of God, who soundly defeated them.

Those who go against God's churches, whatever denomination they represent, are enemies who will be put under the feet of His people. God's people are kings and should uphold their position of kingship.

From Separation to Subjection

In verse 29, Libnah was the next city to be defeated. Libnah means "pavement" and it represents a clear path that brings us from separation from evil to subjection to God. Once we have overcome the enemies within our soul, Christ brings us to a place of subjection to Jesus.

From Genesis to Revelation, subjection and submission to God is a consistent theme (see Genesis 3:7 and 1 John 4:17).

Next for Israel came Lachish, which means "invincible"—unconquerable, because of resurrection power. God's people who walk in resurrection power cannot be conquered by materialism or by the call of the flesh. They rise above the natural enticements of the air and the dominion of the old sin nature with its genetic limitations as they realize victory in Christ.

Claiming Our Destiny

Before they left to take the next city, King Horam of Gezer went up to help Lachish, and Joshua killed him and his people, with no one remaining. The king of Gezer was living in self-deception, thinking that he and his men could overcome the people of God, even though five neighboring kings had already been slain and hung on five trees. He is an example of how people who are cut off from the life of Christ can be easily deceived by their emotions and natural understanding.

Eglon was the next city taken by Israel. Their king had already been slain, and after camping on the edge of the city, Joshua and his people

fought, and every soul in that city was utterly destroyed. At this point, the people of Israel must have seen that God was running the show. God's voice was heard and His people were taught. They were warned, and they listened. They must have finally understood that He had a definite plan for their lives—an eternal destiny.

It is so crucial that each of us lives with a sense of personal destiny. Do you wake up every morning with a personal destiny? Do your thoughts and words center on that destiny? Hebron, the next city captured, means "association," and it speaks of having fellowship and communion with a personal God. This exchange with God often comes in the midst of serious and unusual changes as He reveals to us a personal sense of eternal destiny.

The Record of Our Relationship

"And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and fought against it:

"And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to

Libnah, and to her king.

"So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded.

"And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon.

"And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.

"And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal" (Joshua 10:38-43).

Israel marched on from Hebron to Debir, which means "sanctuary." It was a place where the Canaanites kept their records and taught their letters. For the people of God, Debir speaks of heaven, the place where we dwell with God as He keeps records of our relationship to the Cross, because of our personal sense of destiny in our relationship to the Redeemer. This place speaks of what we do with the mercy, grace, and love of God that He has taught us in our walk with Him.

In Joshua 10:11, before Makkedah was conquered, Israel claimed the city of Bethhoron, which means "house of hollowness." This represents the place of God's wrath. It is where Israel was used to bring down the wrath of God upon the city.

When we are soul winning, there are times when we have to mention the wrath of God. Everyone we witness to who is not saved is already condemned (John 3:3 and 18) and subject to the wrath of God. If they never receive Christ as their Savior, unbelievers are condemned forever.

At the judgment seat of eternity, their rejection of the Gospel will be replayed for them in some way. Some will claim that no one ever told them of the love of God for them, yet personally a picture will be revealed, showing some of us on the street or at the door sharing Christ and pleading with them to get saved.

Over the years, we have knocked on thousands of doors in our city. We have heard it all:

"Not interested."

"I get saved every day."

"I follow God in my own way."

The wrath of God is upon those people, and it is their own fault. They are precious souls and they are worth going after. Oh, but how sad it will be for those who fail to respond to His invitation of salvation.

That brings us to the city of Azekah (Joshua 10:11) which means "dug over"—a place that was hedged or fenced in. God sometimes hedges in the unsaved through acts of nature. Hailstones fell from heaven on this city.

What will happen to the unsaved who are trapped in an airplane as it falls from the sky? They are fenced in. Either they will accept Christ at that moment, or they will be dead and gone for all of eternity. Cancer, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes—these things can come upon people quickly and send them into the dungeon of darkness that will be their eternal habitation, unless they respond to the message of the Gospel—that Christ has paid it all, and all that's left to do is receive His free gift.

Other cities taken in Joshua 10 were Gibeon, "hill city," and Jarmuth, "heights." These places refer to those who are fed lies from the atmosphere by Satan's forces.

Finally, we have Jerusalem, the royal city of Canaan. It is the city that represents the founda-

tion of peace for the people of God. David set up his reign there. It speaks of the ultimate victory of God, the moment when His triumph will bring peace forever to His people.

Joshua and Caleb and the rest of their armies were able to witness great things done by God. They saw the Lord keep His promises and bring victory after victory after victory. In every case, they went forward to do battle; and in every case, the Lord fought for them, and they recognized that the battle is not theirs. The battle is the Lord's.

CONCLUSION

God will conquer all things for us in the same way He conquered these cities for Israel. Our part is to be available to Him and to give Him the opportunity to lead in these victories.

Every place the soles of our feet shall touch shall be ours. Even when our inability slows us down, God will meet us with His stability, the stability of His immutable love, His amazing grace, and His divine integrity toward His Son, Jesus Christ.

God never fails to meet us where we are and to give us the overcoming life that Israel enjoyed in Canaan. Canaan cannot compare to Heaven. It simply represents God's promises to conquer our enemies because our positional victory has been won.

All we must do is purpose availability and cooperation with Christ, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Then, we can realize and accept God's promises. He will honor

every promise He has made to us, in every degree, through the integrity of His character.

The Beginning of Sorrows

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INTRODUCTION

"For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

"All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:5-8).

Atime is coming when the Lord will call out His people as He takes them up to heaven and pours His judgment upon the earth. According to Matthew 24:4-14, nine signs will accompany the period just before that time. There will be false Christs, wars and rumors of war, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, martyrs, false prophets, iniquity abounding, the love of many waxing cold, and the Gospel of the kingdom of God

preached in all the world. That time is called the beginning of sorrows—the beginning of the end.

These are important days for Christians to be alive. The tragedies of September 11, 2001, and the wars that have followed remind us that time is short. God's timetable is not known to us, but the signs of these times reveal that He will come soon.

Earthquakes, wars, famine, and pestilence have increased greatly. Changes—many of them devastating—have touched every life. Our only guarantee is that the days that follow will bring more perils, and more challenges.

Tragedies have left wounds that need the healing balm of God's grace and mercy. While many have hearts that are open and ready to receive the love of God, many others are mockers, scoffers, and lovers of themselves (2 Timothy 3:1-2 and 2 Peter 3:3). This is a time for Christians to follow the way of God by revealing His love and His peace, leading many to salvation.

My prayer is that those reading this booklet would take up the challenge of this era and recognize the role of Christians in the end times. As sorrows unfold, let's lift up the name of Jesus in everything we do. Let's show the victory of the Cross, the value of Redemption.

Chapter One

IF GOD'S PEOPLE PRAY

"Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee" (Jeremiah 10:7).

"The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Psalm 103:19).

"Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him" (Psalm 72:11).

These verses reveal that Jesus Christ is the King of the nations. He rules over all. One day, kings shall bow down to Him. God will judge the nations and deliver justice to the people, and all nations shall serve Him (Isaiah 2:4).

Throughout history, God has commissioned godly servants and "client nations"—nations that submit their political principles to the Word of God and depend upon God to protect and to

supply their needs. A client nation is not necessarily a Christian nation, but it does include many Spirit-filled Christians whose prayers hold back judgment on that nation. These Christians are faith-heroes who speak grace, mercy, power, and peace to people's souls. Thank God, America has many of these heroes to help her through this time of great sorrows, great adversity, and great opportunity.

The effect of the prayers of one such hero is evidenced in Genesis 18. In this chapter, the Lord visits Abraham and reveals the judgment about to be meted upon the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Knowing that his nephew Lot and Lot's family lived in Sodom, Abraham asked God if He would spare the cities if fifty righteous people were found there.

"Yes," God said. "I will spare Sodom and Gomorrah if fifty righteous are found."

Abraham then said, "Lord, would you spare them if you find forty-five righteous?"

"Yes, I will spare them for the sake of forty-five righteous people."

"How about forty? Would you spare the cities if you find forty righteous, Lord?" Abraham pleaded.

"Yes, I spare them for the sake of forty."

This exchange went on until Abraham got down to ten. "Ten, Lord—would you spare the cities for the sake of ten righteous ones?"

"Yes, I will stop judgment if ten righteous ones are found," God promised.

Then, the strangest thing happened. Abraham stopped asking. The Lord went His way, and Abraham went back to his place. My question has always been, "Why, Abraham, why did you quit asking? Why didn't you go all the way down to one?"

The Policy of Grace

God's way has always been the policy of grace, the policy of mercy enduring forever, the policy of a love that never changes. In view of this, my opinion is that the prayer of Abraham, a godly man, could have held back judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. God did spare Lot and his daughters—though the angels literally had to drag them out of the city.

As for Christians alive today, we are in a position where our prayers are so vital. Terrorist attacks on the United States have made many people realize their need for God. Church attendance across America has increased dramatically. The Word of God is real. Let's make sure

we speak it to the souls in such need.

Remember Who Is in Charge

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:16-21).

"…Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5).

Jesus Christ is in charge of history. Terrorists and tyrants may attempt to alter the course of human events, but Christ is the governor of the nations. We cannot even deliver our own souls (Psalm 18:48). He is the "Alpha" and the "Ome-

ga," the beginning and the end. He was born of a virgin; He lived a perfect human life; He experienced death, burial, and resurrection; He ascended and is now seated at God's right hand as a glorified man; He was dead but is now alive forevermore. The keys of hell and death belong to *Him*. Those who come to Him by grace through faith shall live and reign with Him forever.

This is why I take Christianity so seriously. We serve the One who is Lord over death (Revelation 1:18). Jesus Christ went through death, and He is now alive forever more. God desires to teach us how to have divine priorities and eternal schedules. He would love to guide us, to order every step that we take (Psalm 37:23; Psalm 119:130). He would love for us to bring every one of our thoughts into submission to Him (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). He would love to pull down the strongholds in our lives so we could be rooted and grounded in Him.

Many Christians are so caught up with the ways of the world, spending precious time worrying about food, shelter, and raiment. God has a divine schedule for us, a plan to redeem the time and to put Christ and His righteousness first. When we do this, He will add unto us all

of the things that we need (Matthew 6:33).

The Power of Divine Priorities

Because He has placed eternity in the heart of every man and woman, nothing less than God can really fulfill a man (see Ecclesiastes 3:11)—it is something inside of everyone who recognizes that there is something, someone, beyond this life on earth.

The movie "Chariots of Fire" looks at the lives of two Olympic runners. One captured many medals and yet found no fulfillment. There was no thrill in his winning. That place in his heart was still undefined.

The other runner, Eric Liddle of England, was a man of God. He was scheduled to race on Sunday but refused because of his convictions. Then, when he was given a chance to run on Monday, he triumphed. His running was inspired by God, and with every step he thought of China and of the lost souls who were there. After his Olympic career, Liddle served as a missionary to China and was martyred during the Japanese invasion of that country during the 1940s. This was a man with divine priorities.

Our times are in God's hands (Psalm 31:15). This cannot be emphasized enough. All times

and all seasons are in God's power (Acts 1:7). He takes down kings and He establishes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the understanding (Daniel 2:21).

All power in heaven and on earth is given to Jesus Christ. For this reason, He said, "Go and preach the Gospel, teaching all nations, making disciples, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." As with the prayers and the outreaches of many evangelical churches and believers everywhere, we contribute to holding back God's judgment on the earth.

We are a very special part of America's destiny. Our church attendance, our hearing the Word of God, our confession of faith, our communication of the Gospel of grace—these all contribute a vital part to the holding back of judgment.

Chapter Two

MAKING DISCIPLES, CHANGING DESTINIES

Christians in a client nation are responsible for teaching their people categorical thinking and categorical doctrine in the power of the Holy Spirit. They are responsible for establishing Christian education and for propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Furthermore, they are responsible for making disciples of those they lead to Christ.

When we honor God's plan for our lives, God honors His client nation. We take part in shaping America's destiny, and God uses our nation to reveal divine justice and freedom to oppressed people everywhere.

After much prayer, the Puritans who sailed to North America in the 1600s formed a new colony in the New World. The United States, established in 1776, has served as client nation for many years now. Now, it is very late in God's

timetable. We, as Christians in this country, are custodians of the Gospel. We must preach and teach the categories of the Word to people, line upon line and precept upon precept, so we will not lack God's knowledge. We must go forward together in our communities as powerful evangelical forces of prayer, love, service, and outreach.

The Privilege of Preaching

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy [Spirit], and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake" (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

We don't just preach the Gospel—we preach God's Word in the power of the Spirit. We impart the life we have in Christ. We revel in the privilege to speak life, to speak eternity, to speak healing, and to speak peace by the grace and wisdom of God. It is our privilege to have power in our words because we have the silver tongue of redemption (Proverbs 10:20). As Christians on earth in these days, when we preach the Gospel, we reveal eternal life to the unsaved. When they believe, the life of Christ becomes their eternal destiny.

A man visited our church recently. He had gone through a terrible divorce and blamed his ex-wife for his son's death while driving drunk. One of our people knocked on this man's door. Because of his situation, he was angry and argumentative, saying that he didn't want to have anything to do with God. Yet, he responded to a challenge and he came to church. He was loved by so many, and when he heard the message, with tears running down his cheeks, he received Christ as his Savior. His destiny was changed forever.

This was not the work of a man. It was the work of Christ through His Body, the Church. Those with various gifts and particular portions spoke eternal forgiveness, eternal grace, and the Glorious Gospel to this man's soul.

A Time for Humility

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my

mouth" (Revelation 3:14-16).

There is a Laodicean spirit of lukewarmness that prevails in many churches today. These churches are not necessarily cold. They do preach the Gospel, yet they do not have divine priorities, and they do not reveal a fiery fervency for God.

The average person in these churches does not want to be taught the Word of God in precise categories. Though he wants to be saved from hell and go to heaven, he doesn't want to take the time to hear precise truth from the Word of God, grow in it, and be obedient to it.

According to 1 Peter 4:17-18, judgment begins at the house of God. The world events that have unfolded recently should be viewed as a tremendous warning to us as Christians.

God warned us that perilous times would come. These are the beginning of sorrows. Matthew 24 and Revelation 8 outline the Great Tribulation that shall come to the earth. In the Tribulation period, evil will reign. There will be famine, death, and destruction worse than any we have known. Waters will be poisoned. Demons shall terrorize and kill and maim the inhabitants of the earth. The wrath of God will be poured out.

Born-again, blood-bought believers will not experience these terrible things. All of us who are Christians will have been raptured to meet Jesus in the air (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). God will save us out of the wrath to come.*

Thousands went to work on the morning of September 11 and never came home. Perilous times are here. It is not a time to play games. This is a time when churches throughout America should have overflow crowds. We should pray, come together, and witness with boldness. We must dare to be honest about the reality of heaven and hell.

We do not have to provide evidence; we *are* the evidence of His great grace and love. We are Christians, and our lives ought to be a living testimony of the character of God.

When we humble ourselves before God and repent of our sin, then God will begin to heal our land (2 Chronicles 7:14). He will establish a mighty work of power, protecting Christians and manifesting His nature in these last days.

Secret sins and follies must stop. Unnecessary, worldly pleasures need to be put aside for the sake of the Cross of Calvary. We need to lay down our lives for a lost world because we understand the power of hell and the power of

heaven.

We must have priorities. If our eyes are single—sharply focused on Christ—our bodies will be filled with light (Matthew 6:22). In everything we do, let us go forward in grace and love, avoiding complacency and having divine priorities.

**Read* The Pre-Tribulational Rapture, *by Dr. Daniel E. Lewis, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Three

PREPARE TO MEET GOD AT ANY MOMENT

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:55-58).

God will deliver us from the wrath that is to come. We who have heard the Word and believed upon Jesus Christ have passed from death unto life. We wait for heaven. We wait for Jesus Christ to come for us. We worship and praise Him because we have been saved by the blood of the Lamb. We rejoice because we know

we won't be here for the Tribulation.

The Rapture could happen at any moment. Jesus will come in the clouds, and we will rise to meet Him, ever more to be with the Lord. What a glorious day that will be! We will not have to face the wrath to come because Jesus took our sins upon Himself at Calvary. His death opened the way for us to receive His life. That is the glorious Gospel!

We should be occupied with Christ until He comes (Luke 19:13). The sorrows of the end times have begun, and with them are opportunities for us to reach the lost. These are the times for us to be steadfast and immovable. Our priority should be to abound in the work of the Lord.

Let's put aside pettiness and reflect the spirit of love, the spirit of forgiveness, the spirit of holiness, and the spirit of conviction. Establish divine schedules with an eternal purpose and let God guide our steps and control our thoughts. God will take over our lives as we walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Filled with love, we can boldly and confidently share the Gospel of Christ.

He Is Coming for Us

The time is drawing near when Jesus Christ

will come for His own, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. In Revelation 3:10, Jesus declared to the faithful in the church in Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee *from* the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

The Greek preposition "*ek*" (translated as "from" in the King James version of the Bible) is so important to understand. It really means that believers will be "kept out of" the Tribulation to come. Some would have us believe that believers will be kept while they are still "in" the Tribulation. They fail to understand the syntax of the original language. In this instance, Jesus Christ speaks of taking Christians "out of" this world before the Tribulation period.

In heaven, the life of every born-again believer will be evaluated at Christ's Bema Seat, and we will receive eternal rewards. Then, we will enjoy the glorious marriage supper in celebration of our marriage to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. All of this will go on in heaven, while all hell is breaking loose on the earth.

Finally, according to Revelation 19:13-15, Jesus Christ will return with His own. Riding on

white horses, we will return to earth with Him in triumph. We will have glorified bodies with no old sin natures. The flesh will have no more control over us.

Be Prepared

There are Christians who attend church only when they feel like it, and these folks are not ready to meet Jesus Christ. He is all in all (Colossians 3:11). His command is for every believer to take up his cross daily (Luke 9:23). These truths are in the Bible. They should be read, heeded, honored, loved, obeyed, and shared. We need to go forward applying the truth from God's Word.

God told us to teach our children, so we have established Christian schools. We are told to go and make disciples, so we go out in the streets of the city every week, seeking the lost, winning people to Christ, and making disciples.

We have been told to reproduce ourselves wherever we go—in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and in the uttermost parts of the world. So we have sent missionary teams to more than 180 countries. The Lord commanded us to do these things, and we continue to go forward with more intensity, fervency, desire, and prayer. By the grace of God, we obey His Word.

CONCLUSION

In pivotal times such as these, God is after people who will pray and preach and propagate the Gospel. The Gospel of the love of God must be lifted up, and it will draw men to Him. We will win people by the Good News and by caring for them.

God is for us. No matter what comes against us, our response must be to pray, get out the Gospel, and go forward with the Word of God. This is the time to teach that God paid the price for all of our sins. Anyone—*anyone*—can be saved, receive the gift of repentance, and have a brand-new life as a brand-new creation of God.

Today's sorrows require that we are faithful to express the love of God. The world needs Christians who will study the Word and rightly divide it. People today need Christians who decide to put Christ first at any cost—Christians who recognize that heaven is their destiny and that their purpose is eternal. Then, Christ will do

the adding and the blessing upon the earth.

The Bema Seat:

Presented in Joy or Grief?

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INTRODUCTION

"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name" (Malachi 3:16).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:10-11*a*).

Many Christians will be shocked when they stand before Jesus Christ. When we think of judgment, believers often picture the Great White Throne and that terrible day reserved for the unsaved. Most never consider the Bema Seat of Christ, which is the judgment appointed for the redeemed. Few even dare to mention this epistle, but when Paul said in 2 Corinthians,

"knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade you," he was writing to eternally secure Christians.

Everyone who is truly born again shall appear before Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat, and each one shall individually give an account of his life. The Lord will bring out the book of remembrance, mentioned in Malachi, which contains the whole record.

Each time you went to church, every word that was taught at each service, the times of rich fellowship in the car or wherever, every word you used to edify—all of it will be in that book.

Now, picture getting to heaven and for the first time the book is opened—and you can't say one word in defense, because the facts are all there. For some, that day will be pure joy and rejoicing. However, many will weep and sob with anguish.

The message in this booklet is for all of us. It is being presented not to pamper the flesh, but to prepare us, so we won't be ashamed when we come before Him.

Chapter One

THE WORD DOES THE JUDGING

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:47-48).

In John 12, Jesus Christ declared that anyone who rejects Him, refusing to accept His words and His teaching, has his judge: The very message that He had spoken would judge those who refused to hear Him. Jesus said He did not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save it. But He also said He came to minister doctrine, the truth about who God is and who we are, revealed in His written Word, and that doctrine would be the instrument used to judge every believer at the Bema Seat of Christ.

If we didn't have these physical bodies, we

could tell how much doctrine a person has received by the size of his soul body (Proverbs 11:25). The moment you get to heaven it will be easy to recognize who was faithful to receive the inculcation of the Word of God in its categorical explanation of life. Likewise, it will be easy to recognize those who did not make the Word of God a priority.

Every day presents opportunities to build up a very strong soul body. This is why, as it is so vividly illustrated in Acts 20:17-38, the Apostle Paul was so dogmatic and fervent, teaching the Word of God to the congregation. "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." He taught doctrine seven days a week—a class in the morning and a class at night. Fourteen classes every week. And he did it with tears.

Why was Paul so willing to spend and be spent? Because he knew that the words he was teaching would be the same words used to judge every single person as each one stands all alone before Jesus Christ in the supreme court of heaven. Paul understood that at the end of each session, each life will be summarized with a declaration. When Jesus Christ comes out, He

has to make an announcement: "Winner!" or "Loser!"

If Jesus says, "Loser!", then I will be temporarily ashamed (1 John 2:27, 28). I can't lose my salvation, and I will be happy forever, but I will suffer the loss of rewards. I will not be able to eat from the Tree of Life. I will see others going to the Tree of Life and enjoying its fruit, but I will never be allowed to touch it. I will not receive crowns and rewards, all because I didn't eat the Word of God. In Jeremiah 15:16, the prophet said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them…." He *ate* them—meaning, he devoured them and consumed them categorically—and it was the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

This is why I made a commitment to the Word of God many years ago. I made a commitment to eat it, to masticate it, to digest it, to assimilate it, to circulate it, and to appropriate it, because one day I will be all alone before Jesus and He will use the Bible to judge me. The sixty-six books, the full canon of Scripture, will be the standard by which my life is measured. He will open it up to John 12:47-48 and say, "Because of my justice, even though you are saved forever, the degree of your eternal happiness will now be determined by what you did on earth through my Word."

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation…. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:7, 17)

At the Bema Seat, the record will be checked to see if I lived in God's operational will for my life—did I serve under the right pastor-teacher and function in precise categories as a member in particular? In John 17:17, Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." So, God will check to see if I let the Word of Christ dwell in me richly (Colossians 3:16) and whether I was constantly being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

Ecclesiastes 12:11 says, "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd." My life will be checked to see whether I had one pastor-teacher—not many teachers, but one—whom I was called to serve

under, wherever that may be. The record will show whether I honored my pastor according to the following verses:

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward" (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Galatians 6:6).

Christ will examine my record with these verses because He has delegated authority and gifts to pastors to communicate God's mind to me. The purpose of this is to establish humility, meekness, and honor in my soul.

Next, He will ask whether I lived by every Word of God. This will be the question. Before I can live by every Word of God, I have to know every Word of God. Jesus said, "It is written,

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

I will also have to give an answer as to whether I was in the geographical will of God—was I in the local assembly that God called me to? This is closely related to the operational will of God. I cannot function in God's plan for my life if I am not in the right place.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). Unless the believer is in the geographical will of God and the operational will of God, under the right pastor-teacher, he can never be in the perfect will of God.

In summary, we will be judged at the Bema Seat on the basis of the words Jesus Christ has spoken to us through the office of one pastor-teacher. Did we live in the operational will of God? Did we have the right pastor-teacher and live by every word of God? Did we honor the geographical will of God? Were we in the local

assembly God called us to? Finally, did we present our bodies to God every morning so we could be set apart to live in the perfect will of God each day?

Examine yourselves—not in the subjectivity of human evaluation but in the objectivity of the revealed mind of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two

RECKONING ON REALITY

A painful part of the Bema Seat judgment will be when Jesus shows us what would have been, had we made right decisions.

Jesus may look at the record of one life and say, "In 1965, I spoke to you and called you to study my Word. You weren't teaching Sunday school or a Bible study. I just said, 'Study.' I asked you to study and be disciplined. I told you to master the Bible and then the Bible would master you."

If the record shows that I failed to do what He asked during this life, then He will show me through His omniscience what would have been, if I'd obeyed Him. In this case, He will reveal to this soul the Father's perfect will for his life and what would have been if the right decision had been made in 1965. Also, He will show how the wrong decision affected the whole plan. This is part of the justice of explanation. Remem-

ber, you and I will be there all alone. Not a single excuse will be accepted. Not one!

By the principles of His omniscience, Jesus Christ will also show each believer who made great decisions what it would have been like if he hadn't made those decisions. People will be praising Jesus all over the place at that moment!

Picture this now. Jesus Christ opens up the book and says to me, "Because of your free volition, I didn't interfere. But now I am going to show you every time in your life when you operated in my permissive will, outside of my perfect will for you."

God will show me the times I was given logistical grace (Matthew 5:45) but refused to appropriate Calvary's grace. I was given logistical grace—the common grace God metes out to believer and unbeliever alike, because of His character, upholding His principles—and I counted it as a blessing, but it wasn't a blessing at all! Instead of experiencing the opportunity to go from grace to grace and faith to faith, developing my soul body in my situation, God gave me what I asked for—but it wasn't what I should have had.

The children of Israel saw miracle after miracle of supernatural deliverance, still they re-

peatedly found fault with God's provision. Finally, in Psalm 106:15 "He gave them their request; but sent leanness unto their soul." He gave them meat instead of manna and they interpreted this as a blessing, but Israel didn't know what they had missed.

The Believer's Call to a Local Assembly

Jesus may say to someone, "I sent you to this pastor-teacher, but you didn't honor him because you were sentimental. I called you to a certain assembly, but you wouldn't pay the price; you were more interested in other things." We must recognize how vital these decisions are to the operational will of God, to the perfect will of God. Missing the point in these matters is no small thing. Our walk with Christ is like a building: each block in the structure is laid precisely, each part supporting and supported by the whole. We cannot walk in the perfect will of God if we do not obey His call to abide under a pastor in a local church.

"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto

one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matthew 10:41-42)

Let's use our ministry to illustrate this verse. We are in all the world with missionaries and affiliated assemblies. Now, each person who was called to this ministry and has passed the tests of the geographical, operational, and perfect will of God—using rebound when he failed—will share in every success of the pastor and of every missionary. At the Bema Seat, he will receive every reward his pastor receives.

Do you wonder why Jesus will do this? Because every believer is part of the one new man of Ephesians 2:15, the hands receive the same blessing as the toe, from the Head. Jesus Christ is not partial. If a person honors the delegated authority of his pastor in the local church and honors the table of organization, he will be rewarded. Let's mention here that the government of a church can never invade a person's rights, and no one should ever feel in bondage, should he decide to leave; they are never to run your life or to judge you. Likewise, a church member shouldn't judge his pastor when he preaches a tough message. It works both ways!

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:17)

Every pastor will be asked if he taught doctrine categorically, and whether he motivated people to win souls. Of course, God knows the answer, but each pastor will have to go through the judicial process because of perfect justice. God will ask these questions because the congregation members will be judged according to the words that God spoke through the Scriptures in messages. He will not judge apart from the Bible, and the same Bible that Jesus preached is being preached today.

This is why it is so important to hear the Word of God daily. With all the business, domestic, social, security, and temporal pressures, there is no way that any believer can properly retain categories of Truth unless it is being pumped in daily. *Daily ask for your bread.*

Pastor-teachers must give account for their people. Before the Bema Seat, a pastor will introduce each member of his congregation. He will

not be in the judgment room when Christ goes over each life, but the pastor, now in heaven with a perfect mind, will give an objective appraisal of each member, and he will do it with either grief or joy.

Why will the pastor have either grief or joy in giving these accounts? Because he has responsibility, according to 1 Peter 5:1-3. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

I want to challenge pastors to get out your dictionaries. Keep your presentations fresh. Challenge the people who hear you all the time and learn to keep the message exciting. Don't be lazy. Learn the whole counsel of God, but learn how to deliver it fresh, so even *you* like your own approach. Think things through in discipline. It never bothered Jesus to say things that were hard to understand. Jesus deliberately would get deeper than what the carnal mind could handle! He didn't keep things on the lower shelf. People

had to think when they heard Jesus teach, and then mix faith with what they heard.

An Office of Grace

"By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name" (Romans 1:5). Paul said it was through grace that he was an apostle. It is through grace that you or I have the office of pastor-teacher. Grace is a reality. I must understand what it is and where it takes me. This verse also shows me it is through this beautiful government of grace that I obey. I obey through grace! And as I obey the Word of God and the Holy Spirit through grace, the propagation of the Gospel is promoted to all nations. Do you see how it goes? As I grow and disciple people and love and honor them, and we care for one another, identifying with one another, then as God leads, we begin to spread out to our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world.

Isolated groups have abused authority and they have invaded the believer-priesthood of people. As a result, the average Christian doesn't dare to face the mandate to submit to spiritual leadership. The pastor has spiritual authority,

but it is representative authority that protects and provides for the believer-priest. A pastor does not control with his personality, though he leads and communicates the whole counsel of God.

Everyone will stand or fall before God as a believer-priest without the pastor dictating decisions. The pastor is not to judge people for their decisions, but he has every right to preach the categories that will provide the proper foundation for making godly choices.

Chapter Three

FINAL DECLARATIONS

"His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:23).

When my appointment at the Bema Seat is finished, this is what I want to hear Jesus Christ say to me: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Isn't this what each of us wants to hear? I preached this message to help people get ready for that day. We will meet Him soon. I want each one to be able to hear those words from the Lord.

Everyone reading this should consider himself warned of what's to come. Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus: "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and

day with tears" (Acts 20:31). Paul had a grace ministry, but he also had a ministry of exhortation. He never preached a message in which he didn't give a warning—because eternity is a long time.

Those Who Will Be Ashamed

"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:27-28).

In heaven, a huge crowd of those who are saved will be ashamed. Not forever, but they will go through a period of being ashamed. One scholar says the shame will last right up until Revelation 21:4, when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Even after the shame is removed, there is one more problem. These believers will not be

allowed to reign with Christ. They can neither reign nor rule. These people wouldn't receive the best for their lives, so they cannot have the best in eternity. Why not have the best here, which is Jesus Christ? Why not give my very best to Jesus Christ, so I can have the very best for the billions and billions of years to come?

I would hate to hear Jesus Christ proclaim "Loser!" to anyone—everyone standing silent, as the name echos in the halls of heaven. Later, the tears are wiped away and those former things are gone. That person won't remember that he's a loser, but the justice of God has to announce that he is a loser. Justice has to do this.

Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation use the word *overcome* several times. In the Greek text it is a reference to one who wins as opposed to one who loses. Those declared winners at the Bema Seat will be given hidden manna and new names (Revelation 2:17). Winners will be given white stones (Revelation 2:17) and they will sit with the Lord in his throne (Revelation 3:21).

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my

Father. And I will give him the morning star" (Revelation 2:26-28). He will give winners the highest reward of the morning star order, and they will reign with Him forever.

Jesus Christ overcame *for* us; now let Him overcome *through* us. This is the key! He has given us His Finished Work victory—and it's all free! Now, be a winner and let Him overcome through you.

Degrees of Happiness

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7).

Now, there will be no unhappiness in heaven—I'm saying it again—but there will be degrees of happiness in heaven. I mean, if we are having a party in the garden at the Tree of Life—and the Greek text reveals that there will be a paradise garden where people go to have godly parties—everyone will be invited. This is the good part. But the bad part is that only the winners will be able to eat of the Tree of Life. This is not learned behavior like we have down here through education. This is a supernatural

impartation of a reward.

Jesus Christ will open up a book and say, "What kind of a husband were you, according to the grace of God?" He will find out what kind of a daddy you were and what kind of a soul winner you were. Our priorities and our discipline will be examined.

Christ will say, "I told you to study to show yourself approved rightly dividing the Word of Truth." Those who didn't do this will be declared losers. They are losers anyway, because who can survive spiritually without hearing and studying the Word of God consistently? Every believer who doesn't study every day and rightly divide doctrine will be pronounced a loser. He is destined to be a loser. That's a promise. I am commanded to study. I don't *have* to, but I am commanded.

It's possible for the Bema Seat to really be fun. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). The greatest joy for a pastor is to present someone to the Lord and say, "Wow, he was great down there!" (Hebrews 13:17). What is the pastor doing? He is presenting a winner with joy.

Others, unfortunately, will be presented in grief. Can you imagine it? Even though he will

have a glorified body and perfect love for all of his people, the pastor will have to introduce some in grief at the Bema Seat. The Lord will ask the pastor, "What is your evaluation so that we can keep the table of justice straight?" And the pastor will have to answer, "I love him dearly, but I must present him in grief."

CONCLUSION

Each of our lives will be judged at the Bema Seat on the basis of the Word of God. Preparing for that time is very simple, according to the Bible. Consider the following points carefully.

Everyone must study and rightly divide the Word of God, meditating on it daily and implementing it faithfully.

Each of us must have *one* pastor-teacher (Ecclesiastes 12:11). We can receive other portions that complement his, but we must be careful not to listen to portions that contradict the sound doctrine we have been taught.

Every Christian will be judged on the basis of the categorical doctrine that was available to him through grace and through love, and according to his obedience to the Word.

In heaven, there will be degrees of happiness, but there will *not* be unhappiness. There will be many crowns awarded in Revelation 19:12, and the great morning star order, which is

the supreme reward.

Finally, we must take up our cross daily through an understanding of the Finished Work and retroactive truth. I can't do this unless I have been taught and am being taught the Word of God. It has to be precise light. In light, we receive more light (Psalm 36:9). In other words, in the generalization of doctrine, we will learn precise doctrine, and precise doctrine will be a precise lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Psalm 119:105).

We are to live this life without earthly distractions. We must not live in a double-minded existence, but with a single eye full of light. As we look to Jesus Christ and Him alone, we will see the consumation of His great work in all of us when we stand before the Judge of the supreme court of heaven and hear the declaration, *Winner!*

The Borders of Love

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INTRODUCTION

Many people often entertain thoughts that send their emotions spinning out of control. Then they tend to fall into reactions that are based upon feelings and circumstances.

People become reactionary in situations instead of being responsive to the Holy Spirit when they have never established the borders of love in their lives. Borders are checkpoints. They keep the right things inside and the wrong things outside. What empowers these borders in our lives is God's great love.

In this booklet, we will examine the ways in which love can keep us and protect us, providing perfect peace and joy no matter what may come our way.

Chapter One

LOVE'S ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

Is there any wound that love has not suffered? The Lord Jesus Christ suffered wounds in His side, His hands, and His feet. Think of the abuse that He endured. What He suffered on the Cross was the ultimate sacrifice of love. Love is more than able to endure the ultimate experience of suffering.

Many people cannot endure the ultimate form of suffering because the Holy Spirit has not yet filled them with His love. When the Holy Spirit progressively and continuously sheds God's love abroad in our hearts, then we will have the capacity to suffer the sacrifice of ultimate love for others.

So often, Christians react to others without revealing even a hint of the ultimate love that suffers long for all people. This is so serious because love is the most conclusive evidence that reveals our true salvation and eternal security

(John 13:35; 1 John 3:14). Unless we walk in love, we are sure to get way off within a short period of time (Ephesians 5:2). We know we have passed from death unto life if we love one another. The ultimate suffering of love is represented in sacrifice. As Christ laid down His life for us, so we should lay down our lives for one another (1 John 3:16).

Love Lays Down Its Life

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:14-16).

This is the issue that so many Christians do not want to face as it relates to Scripture: If we operate in anything less than God's love, then we are operating in a form of hate. Anything less than sacrificial love is hate, in one form or another.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken

me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

"O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent

"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

"Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

"They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

"But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying,

"He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

"But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

"I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

"Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

"Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

"They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

"I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture"

(Psalm 22:1-18).

Psalm 22 expresses that the ultimate meaning of love is to lay down our lives for those who do not deserve it. Jesus Christ initiated love when there was no response. The lack of our response did not decrease the manifestation of love that the Lord revealed at Calvary.

Demonstrating Love's True Character

Jesus Christ came into a world where everyone had turned to their own ways. Jesus did not come into a world that wanted His love. He

came into a world where no one sought after God. Still, while we were yet sinners, He came to earth and died on the Cross to demonstrate the nature of His character, the essence of His attributes, and the characteristics of the meaning of His love.

Marriage should never be based upon human attraction. I have heard husbands say of their wives, "She is my best friend." Does this mean that if she turned against him he would love her just as much? Would he remain her friend? (See Proverbs 17:17.)

If my wife turns against me and I stop being a true, faithful, and loving friend to her, then I am not loving her. Instead, I am merely involved in a mutual friendship with its mutual respect and admiration that fulfills a mutual need.

Chapter Two

THE PATH TO JOY AND PEACE

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

"Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

With love comes joy. Love cannot produce anything but joy. Joy is the strength of love. Nehemiah 8:10 declares that the joy of the Lord is our strength. The first fruit of the Spirit is love, the second mentioned is joy. God gives a joy that no man can take from a person who is living in the ultimate meaning of sacrificial love with a Spirit-filled, Word-filled life.

Along with joy comes peace, the third fruit of the Holy Spirit. "He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat" (Psalm 147:14).

It is very easy for us to love when circumstances are peaceful. If circumstances remain peaceful, then peace remains. But what happens

when the circumstances are disturbed? The peace is often disturbed too.

When God says that He will give us peace within our borders, He is speaking of the fact that the borders for peace are in the eternal circle of sacrificial love.

With love as the border for peace, if I step outside of love, then I am not living in peace: My mind is not established; it is not stayed upon love (Isaiah 26:3). Therefore, I lose perfect peace. Perfect peace happens only when perfect love surrounds me within its borders.

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:2).

The essence of God is love, and grace is the channel of love's communication. Because perfect love casts out fear, we will have a peace that passes understanding when we abide within love's borders.

Perfect Light, Perfect Love

"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165).

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let

it be afraid" (John 14:27).

Could you look me in the eye and say that you have not been offended, mentally or emotionally, in the past two weeks? Now, God doesn't say that we can live perfect lives. But He does say that we can live in perfect love and peace.

Life is filled with all kinds of relationships. Many relationships among Christians never enter into the fellowship of life, light, and love. Because of this, it is very easy to let a relationship become hindered. It is easy to fall into resentment, reaction, vindictiveness, bitterness, and dislike. This very easily happens in conditional relationships.

Even a very good relationship can degenerate if it is not centered around God's love. A believer could become involved in a relationship that has brought him peace, and that relationship leads to marriage. Six months later, however, he begins to notice signs of manipulation. He becomes the object of subconscious mocking, because of his appearance or something else, and peace disappears. What happened? Even though the relationship was centered on Bible knowledge, it was never centered on the Person of love—the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the re-

lationship cannot enter into the ultimate of love's meaning—the sacrifice of a Person. When problems come up in our relationships, we can overcome them by putting Christ's love into action.

Chapter Three

LOVE'S WALL OF FIRE

"While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

"As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

"And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

"And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly

"And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

"And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were

with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

"And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

"And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

"And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat" (Mark 5:35-43).

Jesus was ready to heal, in Mark 5. He didn't even hear the negative comments of those around Him.

"Don't trouble the Master."

"The girl is dead."

These were the statements made to a desperate father on the verge of losing his daughter to death.

Jesus didn't listen to those negative statements. He just went into the house, spoke the Word, and the twelve-year-old girl was raised up instantly. That was love in action.

Love never hears negative statements, so it doesn't receive negative energy. Negative energy doesn't enter our souls because of the purifying

wall of fire that surrounds Christians (Zechariah 2:5). Negative energy cannot penetrate that fire. The moment negative energy comes near, the fire—the holy spirit of burning, according to Isaiah 4:4—destroys it.

Negative statements, regardless who is making them, cannot get through. Reactions cannot get through. The negative ways people treat me can't get through this fire when I am established in self-sacrificing love.

Words That Bring Peace

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Peace comes from His words. Victory comes through His words. Nothing comes from natural ability. Nothing comes from attraction and human compatibility. Everything comes through the Cross, and it is there that all things are established.

"Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the LORD 'S servant?" (Isaiah 42:19).

This verse is speaking of Jesus, of course. He

is the only Perfect One. He never gazed upon any negative thing that could invade His soul and attack perfect love. He was deaf to the Pharisees' accusations. The only reason He openly rebuked them in divine indignation was to publicly identify their wicked, evil, religious hearts.

Spirit and Life

"Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

"Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.

"Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalm 143:8-10).

God's words are spirit and life. Unless they become spirit and life to *me*, then as a believer, I have no foundation to stand upon when trouble comes.

When was the last time you had a negative mental attitude? Did you confess it as sin immediately? If it is allowed to continue, it may become an infection of evil.

The words Jesus has spoken to us, He has spoken that we might have peace (John 16:33).

Circumstances, family or marital problems, and health issues do not have to hinder us, because we have peace in the borders of love. If we leave these borders of love, then we lose peace because we have made it conditional and circumstantial.

The greatest peace and joy we can have is found in the fullness of God. If God's love surrounds us, then we have joy that becomes our strength. We are established in perfect peace because of the words He has spoken.

After His resurrection, the first thing Jesus said to the disciples who were hiding in the upper room was "Peace" (see John 20:19). He said, "Peace," because at that moment they didn't have it. Their hearts were troubled.

Christ's words give us the peace that surpasses our understanding, for they are rooted in a love that passes all knowledge (Ephesians 3:19). As we abide inside the borders of love, we can rest in God, who rests in His love and has joy over His children with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

CONCLUSION

The God of peace raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. This same peace that Jesus had when he was raised from the dead now surrounds you in His love. Because that is true, you can handle anything that comes into your life.

Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. Then, He was raised from the dead so we could be raised with Him. This is a great correlating truth at work in our spiritual journey toward manifesting His true nature of love.

A Christian filled with God's love always has joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. These are the eight characteristics of Christ's essence, which is love. Knowing this is the key to unlocking the door to life's adventures. It is the key to a faith that enables one to live through grace upon grace and faith upon faith.

As we meditate upon this message, let that knowledge become life, let understanding be-

come experience, and let exposure become reality through God's life.

The Burden of Love

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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to talking about burdens, most people think of the loads that they must carry. Many become entangled in legalistic thinking in a system of works. They try so hard to do what God wants them to do.

The Bible, however, reveals that when we are yoked up with Jesus Christ, our burden-bearer, we will find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

As Christians, our burden is to fulfill the law of love. This simply means that we are to love others as Jesus loves us, having an attitude of restoration and reconciliation.

By looking at Galatians 6 and other scriptures, this booklet will examine the topic of burdens in simplicity and clarity.

Chapter One

FOCUS ON RESTORATION

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

"For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

"But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

"For every man shall bear his own burden.

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Galatians 6:1-5).

What does it mean to bear your own burden? Consider that question for a moment. To bear your own burden means to fulfill the law

of love by bearing someone else's burden.

Our burden should simply be the burden of restoring someone. Our burden is to follow God's method of restoring a loved one or a friend privately (see Matthew 18:15).

One way to bear someone else's burden is to restore a brother overtaken in a fault, keeping in mind that God is everywhere present, He has all knowledge, and He has all power. Understand that God was there when that person fell. He has all knowledge about what happened, and He has the power to correct the situation all by Himself. Instead of judging someone, God wants us to restore him.

God's Unusual Law

God has established a most unusual law in the spiritual realm. Thousands and thousands of Christians are suffering because they do not observe this law. They suffer because they do not practice the following verses:

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and

with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:1-2).

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

"And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between them-

selves:

"Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

"And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

"Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

"Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

"Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

"Who knowing the judgment of God, that

they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

"But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things" (Romans 1:18-2:2).

The way we judge others will be measured back to us. We are inexcusable because we do the "same things." Maybe we are not doing the exact thing that another person is doing, but we do something else that is mentioned in Romans 1:18-32. Several sins are mentioned in that chapter, and sooner or later we are doing one of them, so that makes us just as guilty as the one we judge.

Chapter Two

STRENGTHEN THE WEAK HANDS

Bearing our own burden also speaks of having a ministry of reconciliation with specific words to reconcile others (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). In Hosea 14:4, regarding the people of Israel, God promised to heal their backsliding. He also promised to love them freely, saying "mine anger is turned away."

Reconciliation always involves covering the other person. Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). Proverbs 10:12 says that love covers all sins. He who loves, covers transgressions (Proverbs 17:9), but the one who repeats a matter separates friends.

"Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days" (Ezekiel 3:15).

"Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm

the feeble knees" (Isaiah 35:3).

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

"And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Hebrews 12:12-13).

"Lift up" in Hebrews 12:12 is a Greek word (*anorthoo*), which speaks of encouraging someone who has fallen so he can be strengthened and have another opportunity. It is the act of communicating life, love, and light so that person can have a new structure and be established in a faith life of restoration.

Finished Work Coverings

"And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:

"And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

"And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

"And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness" (Genesis 9:20-23).

Noah planted a vineyard, made wine, and got drunk. Some people try to find excuses for Noah's behavior by saying that Noah didn't know the wine would cause him to feel good. I think Noah knew what he was doing, and he wound up drunk and naked in his tent. Ham, Noah's son, looked upon his father's nakedness. Then, Ham came out and told his brothers, Shem and Japheth, about it.

Shem and Japheth would not look at Noah in that condition. Instead, they put a blanket on their shoulders and backed into the tent to cover their father. Their eyes never saw Noah's nakedness. Those two sons applied the covering of the Finished Work over the one who represented spiritual authority in their lives.

Chapter Three

SENT ONES: PEACE TAKERS AND PEACEMAKERS

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

"He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).

Many people refuse to recognize that God ordains certain people for specific tasks on earth. Every single Christian is a "sent one." When we fail to treat one another as being sent from God, we become common and familiar with each other.

This very thing happened when Jesus visited Nazareth, according to Matthew 13. Jesus spoke in the synagogue, and the people were amazed at His wisdom and His mighty works. But they responded by saying, "Is this not the

carpenter's son? We know his mother and his brothers and his sisters." The scribes and Pharisees were offended because they considered Jesus to be of lesser social standing, yet He was operating with such authority over them.

He left, saying, "A prophet is without honor in his own country." Jesus could do no miracles in Nazareth because of their unbelief; they did not realize that Jesus Christ was a sent One.

Go Forth with a Purpose

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16).

Every blood-bought believer is chosen by God's grace, because God knew before the foundation of the world that he would accept Christ. Every believer is sent into this world to have Christ revealed in him and through him (see Galatians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 4:9-10).

Two couples with serious problems of adultery and perversion were referred to me. They were really lost. One at a time, I counseled them and presented the plan of salvation.

We wept together. We got on our knees in

prayer and they got right. Today, both couples are doing great—all because they discovered that they could be restored through a ministry of reconciliation and through love that covers sins. The words of reconciliation gave them a brand-new beginning and power to never go back into their filthy lifestyles.

The Path to Blessing

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

"And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall

be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:1-12).

These statements by Jesus are not just about what will happen during the Millennial Reign of a thousand years. These remarks were directed to the Pharisees and scribes of that day and toward those who carry their spirit today.

The "poor in spirit" are blessed when they recognize that they are nothing in themselves. "Those who mourn" are comforted because they respond to conviction that leads to salvation and conversion. "The meek" are blessed and shall inherit the earth because they are conscious of God's work, God's presence, and God's love.

Jesus continued to speak of the filling that comes to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. He spoke of the mercy obtained by the merciful. He said that the pure in heart

will see God. The peacemakers, especially, shall be called children of God.

Those who have secret problems of incompatibility in their marriages should learn to be peacemakers. In order to be a peacemaker, you have to be a peace taker, according to Colossians 1:20: "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

Persecutions, revilings, evil speaking against you—all of these things will bring great rewards in heaven, just as they brought great rewards for the prophets long ago (Matthew 5:12). Persecution leads to reigning (2 Timothy 2:12), and there are great rewards for those who bear God's burden of love in this world.

CONCLUSION

Every one of us has been given a burden to love and to help others out of their failure. This should be our only burden. To prove our own works and to rejoice in ourselves means that we relax as we practice the law of love.

Bearing the burden of one overtaken in a fault is fulfilling the law of love. I don't think this is taught enough. So many people are trapped and weighed down by their failures and follies.

My burden is to help those who have been overtaken in a fault—not because I am a pastor, but because I am commissioned by God with a ministry of reconciliation. Furthermore, I have been sent out with a ministry of reconciliation.

We have the words of restoration. We have received God's peace for ourselves, and we can help others to make peace with Him as we show them the way to Calvary.

The Certain Sound

of Unity

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INTRODUCTION

Christians throughout the centuries have mishandled their differences. As a rule, divisions within the church have not been dealt with scripturally. In most church splits, one side is entirely at fault—the side that will not obey categorical doctrine.

For many years I have had the privilege of working with a staff of mature men and women who operate with magnificent unity. By the grace of God, there is never a spirit of division. There is no infighting to get things done. No one is whispering behind somebody's back. Our staff members know and practice categorical doctrine. We may not always agree on every issue; however, we will honor one another and have such unity that we will not be influenced to join Satan's cosmic crowd who are evil in their communication.

But remember, Satan is a master counterfeiter who promotes a kind of cosmic unity

among his ranks. How does a believer avoid this satanic influence? By coming under the bona fide authority of the Trinity and experiencing the unity of faith in the fullness of Christ, the Spirit-led child of God enters into fullness that includes active participation in a local church. This booklet describes the fruit of unity represented in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as it exposes the strategies designed to keep us from manifesting perfect oneness.

Chapter One

COSMIC UNITY VS. ONENESS IN CHRIST

"His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered….The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved" (Job 41:15-17, 23).

One of the things that people face through the ages is the heartache, the sorrow, and the dilemma of division. It doesn't take much to cause problems. Satan works through his kingdom doing everything he can to keep his subjects unified and to recruit people for the roles of rebellion within his camp (see Proverbs 1:10-14). His factions are joined together, they stick together, and they cannot be moved. Nothing can separate them. They are so near that air cannot come between them.

That is what happens when something from the cosmic world is entertained by people within the local assembly. They enter into a unity, but it is cosmic unity, and it can destroy a ministry.

Not everyone who goes against a work of God becomes completely negative. Some are fence straddlers, and while they may not join the crusaders, they do not stand with God's people. Very often they wind up as casualties.

Thank God, Jesus Christ is always victorious through every battle we face. And frankly, people who go through these trials will better understand warfare. They become better equipped to discern evil spirits of division that can infiltrate so subtly.

The people who fall in with the devil's crowd, influenced by evil, are joined by cosmic unity. Because they do not have the peace of God, they join this group and that group, looking for support—all because they do not know God. They have forsaken the unity of the Body of Christ and do not stand with God's people, so there is no real stability in their lives. But we have been exhorted to "*stand fast in one spirit, with one mind,*" working together for the faith of the Gospel (see Philippians 1:27).

"It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord...." (2 Chronicles 5:13*a*).

Referring to the Godhead, Job 23:13 says, "He is in *one mind*, and who can turn him?" 1 John 5:7 tells us, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy [Spirit]: and *these three are one*."

"Have we not all *one* father? hath not *one* God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" (Malachi 2:10).

The Bible says that Jesus Christ is the Father's one Son, His well beloved. And in Mark 12:6, He said, "They *will* reverence My Son!" implying certain consequences for those who do not.

"For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The Trinity is one. In Their foreknowledge, in the determinant counsel, having designed a plan for the ages (Acts 2:23), They were one. They have *never* disagreed. They have *never* had differing opinions. They have never had different

thoughts. They have never been divided, and They have never changed their minds. The Trinity is one!

Oneness in the Plan of Salvation

In Their counsel, the Trinity determined that the one Son would be sent to execute the plan. He volunteered to die on a cross and to shed His blood for our sins. He would be crucified and buried, then raised again on the third day. The Trinity was one with this plan. They were one in Their determination that if any man seeing his need for the Savior would believe these things by grace through faith, he would be saved—not of himself but as a gift of God. They were perfectly one in that.

When They said, "Let's justify men by faith so they can have peace with God" (see Romans 5:1), They were one. When They said, "Let's never charge men with *any* sins, ever, nor impute iniquity to their account" (see Romans 4:7-8), They were in agreement. When They determined to give the Holy Spirit to whosoever would believe, sealing believers until the day of physical redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30), They were one.

The Trinity was one on the truth of eternal

security. They agreed that as a Christian rebounds, he receives total forgiveness. Even if he falls seven times in a day, the believer can get up and go on, forgiven. The Trinity agreed that the Christian could isolate the sin, isolate his past, and continue his life unhindered (Proverbs 24:16). They agreed on the fact that They would *never* leave nor forsake any believer, ever (see Hebrews 13:5).

The Son was one with the Father when He said, "I am always going to please You, Father. I will never do one thing that doesn't please You" (see John 8:29). The Son never pleased Himself (Romans 15:3). He *always* submitted to the Father (John 5:19). He always did what the Father commanded Him to do (John 5:30). His words, His works, and His thoughts were derived from the Father (John 14:10). Jesus Christ always submitted His humanity to the Trinity's table of organization. Never once did He disagree with the Father.

The Holy Spirit, equal with the Father and the Son, has never once glorified Himself but always glorifies the Son, in agreement with the plan of the Father. They have oneness, and oneness means They cannot be separated. You can't even tell Them apart. The Trinity thinks as one,

acts as one, speaks as one. They do everything in oneness.

Oneness in the Body of Christ

If the Father, the Son, and the Spirit indwell us (and They do, according to John 14:23 and 1 Corinthians 6:19) and the Word of God dwells in us richly (Colossians 3:16), then the Body of Christ can be just as one as the Trinity is. We had better be, because we are commanded to be just as one as They are! (See John 17:21-22.)

Don't accept the lie that your marriage can't have oneness. Husbands and wives, don't confess that you can't be absolutely as one as the Trinity is. There can be amazing oneness, and we all have witnessed it in many of the lives around us.

Two people praying can be totally one (Acts 12:12). We can worship in total oneness. We can serve in absolute oneness (Psalm 102:22). Why? Because, we are members of His Body, and Christ cannot be divided (1 Corinthians 1:13).

Chapter Two

ENEMIES OF ONENESS

The problem I have seen in church splits is that people simply do not know the Book. They don't adjust to grace, and they are wrong. Some always want to say how they have been wounded. Then they wound others because they are not of God. Even though they are Christians, they are trapped in a satanic system and some have never come out of it. There are couples who always need the pastor to be an arbitrator for every disagreement. For years they just get by, always struggling because they don't have oneness. The solution to the problem is plain: They need to get right with God and live!

Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, *that they also may be one in us*: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; *that they may be one, even as we are one*" (John 17:21-22).

There are people who do not want to confront other Christians that are causing discord, so they make statements such as, "All of us are partly to blame." That is not true! It is *not* everybody's fault. Away with that pseudo-humility. In almost every case, division is the fault of one side—the side that will not obey the Word of God. The Bible clearly says that if we have anything against a brother, we need to go alone in a spirit of meekness, as God leads.

God is one, the Trinity is one, the plan is one, the provision is one, the purpose is one, the power is one, the peace is one, and the program is one. Every single Christian should be absolutely one with God.

Paul prayed that we would think the same thing, being "perfectly joined together in the same mind" and the same judgment of doctrine (1 Corinthians 1:10)—that we would think exactly the same thing.

"But," you say, "everyone *can't* think the same thing." That is true if we don't know God's Book. Yet if we know the Bible, we can think the same thing and still have diversity of gifts. We can allow others to express their opinion and not accuse them, though it may be wrong if they are not right with the Book. Still, we do what is right

according to God's Word and do not compromise.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Oneness is one of the most precious things in all the world. When there is oneness in worship, people begin to have revival in their lives. During a recent worship service, I saw a couple who had come to a place where they felt they really didn't love each other anymore. I counseled the husband to take steps toward intimacy by faith. He hadn't held his wife's hand for months, but now there they were, worshipping God together, holding hands. Then I saw him put his arm around her and kiss her on the cheek. Later they reported a revitalization in their marriage and in every part of their individual walks. This can only happen through God's oneness.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the

dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing,"—*descended life!*—"even life for evermore" (Psalm 133)

Watch **What** *You Eat*

"He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isaiah 44:20).

People who neither feed on the Lamb of God nor drink from the New Covenant can only feed on ashes. Ashes cause wounds. If several people were to turn against a pastor, at first the pastor may be led to say nothing about it. If they continue to sow discord and he finally addresses the situation from the pulpit, confronting the problem with the Word of God, those same people will say they were wounded. But, they were wounded by the Word of God because they were doing wrong. Still, years later they tell people that it was all the pastor's fault, when all he did was address the issue with doctrine.

What happened to those people? They were feeding on ashes and their deceived hearts turned them aside. They are unable to deliver their own souls, nor are they able to admit that

there was a lie in their right hand, the hand of approval. They approved of a lie, and it infected their lives.

During a conspiracy, God may give the pastor a series of messages to preach on grace. The conspirators, however, will be revealed by their reaction. They may say things such as, "The pastor is only preaching grace to soften people up. He is just trying to pacify the congregation." People can become so deceived that they will attack the grace message! But if he had preached against sin, they would have said he was preaching against their crowd. A pastor can't win with those who feed on ashes.

Watch **Where** *You Eat*

People can get into evil and never even know it. They divide and hurt local assemblies everywhere by letting corrupt communication enter their mind and come out of their mouth, and they never get right. I am not talking about someone who falls into sin or who simply disagrees with you.

Those who eat from the table of demons eventually get wounded (1 Corinthians 10:21). They eat from the devil's garbage can, feeding on the ashes of the *kosmos diabolicus*, which is

Satan's organized plan in the world, operating independent of God. This system of thinking is energized by Satan's supernatural forces in the air. Those who have been trapped by this system approve of a lie, and many of them never change. Because they do not know categorical doctrine, these people can't think with God precisely. They don't know the many-sided (*poikilos*) grace of God, and they don't know unconditional love.

Wounds and Bruises? Consider the Source

"For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous" (Jeremiah 30:12).

"For her wound is incurable" (Micah 1:9*a*).

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isaiah 1:6).

People become wounded when they leave the Throne of grace and go to the garbage can to get information against a brother. It isn't the brother who has wounded them; it's the garbage from hell, the lies from the devil. Instead of guarding their hearts, they allowed wrong

things to get into their souls. The devil's accusations and deceptions caused those wounds, not the brother or sister they are now against.

When this kind of crowd comes against you, they become enemies. They will blame you for the wounds that they have had since they were children. Oh, you helped for a few years by putting bandages on the wounds. But if these people never get right with God, their wounds are incurable because they came from the Fall.

Wounded people start placing blame, trying to change, control, and correct others. Do you want to know where the wounds come from? In Jeremiah 30:14, God is speaking: "All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not; *for I have wounded thee* with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased" (Jeremiah 30:14).

Many of the wounded have been wounded by God. Yet in Jeremiah 30:17, speaking of Israel, God also said this: "I will restore health unto thee, and *I will heal thee of thy wounds*, saith the LORD."

In Acts 10:38, however, the Greek word for the oppression some people experience is *katadunasteuo*, referring to wounds caused by Satan.

Any man or woman who is right with God will recognize that wounds come from one of two sources: either God or Satan. No one on earth is ever the source of your wounds. People may be the instruments used for the purpose, whether divine or evil, but the strategy belongs to the kingdoms involved, and they are invisible.

"But someone molested me," you might say. That is a terrible thing for anyone to have to endure. Yet, women have told me that they have been healed from the effects of molestation. They have been so healed that they no longer are living in their old wounds. They live in the mercy, grace, love, and power of God. They live in the joy of God, the unity of God, the wisdom of God, the promises of God, and the faith of God with obedience that brings glory to God.

Conspiracies of the Soul

There are two sides to God's Book, the "two-edged sword" of Hebrews 4:12. One side convicts, the other side converts. Here we are talking about the side of the Book that convicts with divine reality in divine dynamics so that we will live in the true expression of oneness. There is not a reason under heaven that the children of God can't have a revival. Still, one problem

stands in the way: *internal conspiracies* caused by Satan.

Conspiracies are progressive and begin in the soul. First, the emotions rebel against the mind. Then the mind struggles to use knowledge from God's Word, which stirs the emotions to rebel against people on the outside. The conscience (the place where the norms and standards for right and wrong are established) rebels against the mind. Self-consciousness rebels against oneness with God. The volition goes negative, then the old sin nature connects with the volition and self-consciousness to direct the individual's behavior as he chooses to live in one of the six human lust patterns. That's how an internal conspiracy works.

Every divorce starts with an internal conspiracy. A woman has never left her husband, neither has a husband left his wife without first experiencing an internal conspiracy. No act of fornication or adultery is committed without there first being an internal conspiracy against what God says about these things.

Depression is caused when a person has an internal conspiracy. The heart is divided (Hosea 10:2), and this person is double minded (James 1:8). According to the Greek, he has twin souls

at work within him. Without unity in the soul, anything can happen, because the believer has given a place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27).

What Satan wants is for us to be so one with his kingdom of darkness that "no air can come between." He wants us to be choked from receiving God's breath of life through the inspiration or "breathing in" of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Three

KEEP THE UNITY OF THE TRINITY IN YOU

"And the very God of peace sanctify *you* wholly; and I pray God *your whole* spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

"You" and "your" in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 are both plural pronouns. "Whole" is an adjective modifying the three nouns "spirit, soul, and body," and speak of amazing unity. Our spirit, soul, and body can be one in absolute unity with God, with His Word, with grace, with mercy, with love, with compassion, and with the Great Commission to go into all the world.

God may say to you, "I want you to go to Bible college. By faith, go, study, be trained, and give yourself over to your call." If you do not obey His voice, you reveal a lack of unity in your soul. If you say, "Yes, I will," but then you

don't go, you will lose the unity in your soul concerning your call.

The Three Parts of Man

If we do not love as God loves, we lose the unity of the Holy Spirit in our human trichotomy, comprised of the spirit, soul, and body. When we don't forgive exactly as God forgives through the Holy Spirit in us, then we no longer have the unity of God in forgiveness. As a result, the soul enters into a partial conspiracy against forgiveness.

For example, a woman goes out on her husband because, she says, he is not able to meet her needs. Truthfully, she believes that God cannot meet her needs either. Her spirit, soul, and body are in rebellion against the Trinity, therefore she has no basis for peace within her human trichotomy. She is rebelling against love, purity, faith, conviction, and the Cross. She has come against the unity of resurrection power that could make her so happy, she would never be the same again.

The Cross brings in the unity of the Trinity. "Unity," in Ephesians 4:3 and 13, is *henotes* in the Greek, and speaks of a unity so intense that no one can get in between. In a unique analogy pic-

tured in Acts 27:41, *ereido* speaks of being fixed and established so that nothing can move you. "I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, *I shall not be moved*" (Psalm 16:8). People can't move you. Circumstances can't. Money can't. Sickness and disease can't. Not even separation from the one you love can move you.

Now, nothing can move you. Why? Because you are established. Your heart is fixed (Psalm 57:7). You have the unity of love, the unity of God's grace, and the unity of the Trinity's compassion. You have the unity of wisdom dwelling in you richly through the Word. You just sense that you are someone beyond this earth while you are still on the earth.

You are more than a conqueror (Romans 8:37). God always causes you to triumph in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14). You have a unity that the Trinity has had since before the world began, a unity that endures through time and will continue for all eternity. That unity dwells in you through the filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) as you walk in love (Ephesians 5:2) with the Word of God guiding your every step (Psalm 119:133). Your meditations are sweet. You and God, God and you, together, are one. Just as the

Trinity is one, you are one with God and one with the Body of Christ.

Unity. Revival. The devil can't touch it and he can't stop it. Satan's crowd is so one that air can't come between them. But, we are so one that the devil can't come between us! The sin nature can't come between us. Not even gossip can come between us.

Unity in Communication

Even if a brother does fall, it is no one's business but God's. Each one of us stands or falls before Him. No one is worthy to judge another believer (Romans 14:4). It is a beautiful thing when young people keep their purity and do not play games with the devil. They allow their spirit, soul, and body to remain one with the power of the Trinity. But when a Christian falls—God forbid—the only place for him to go is to the amazing throne of grace.

Ephesians 4:29 tells us to let no corrupt communication proceed from our mouths. *Every word that a Spirit-filled believer speaks is edifying.* What he says ministers grace to the hearers. Jesus ministered grace to a prostitute and saved her. The Lord Jesus ministered grace to Peter, even after the denials, and waited to cook break-

fast for him on the shore. Then Jesus restored Peter and recommissioned him to preach before he was really proven (John 21).

Jesus Christ ministered grace to Paul through his struggles in Romans 7, when Paul was doing the things that he shouldn't do and not doing the things that he should have been doing. The Holy Spirit spoke to Paul and told him to shout, "No condemnation!" That confession brought him into the power of the Holy Spirit's transformation (read Romans 8:1-39) because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29).

Never say a single thing about a Christian unless he is present. Instead, go to him alone and use creative communication. Share with him in a spirit of meekness and love. The minute we say something about another person, we no longer have unity.

You say, "Can't we have honest differences?"

Yes, of course, but settle the issues to help the other person.

"Isn't there diversity of gifts?"

Yes, but we are not to have indifference toward one another in using that diversity.

Unity: A Healing Ointment

The one thing that heals us is having the

unity of the Holy Spirit through the unity of categorical doctrine, the unity of grace, the unity of mercy, and the unity of love controlling our trichotomy.

God has made it crystal clear that He wants His people to be one. Thank God for the many Christians who have oneness. They know unity and they practice it.

Ephesians 4:3 says, "Endeavouring *to keep* the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "To keep" is a present active infinitive of *tereo* in the Greek text. It means that billions of years ago, the Trinity had perfect oneness about your life. They decided that if you would choose to believe, They would perfect you some day. They determined that They would never condemn you, even if you failed miserably. Even if you were to continue in sin, They decided that They would take you home early. They agreed to love you and never change that love, no matter what you are like.

All the Trinity desires is that we *keep* this same unity toward the brethren that They had toward us in eternity past, the same unity They have among Themselves. The Trinity has oneness about healing our minds and our emotions, a unity about wanting to bless us. The Father,

Son, and Holy Spirit want us to receive Their unity and be blessed.

God Has Commanded a Blessing

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: *hath he said, and shall he not do it?* or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and *he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it"* (Numbers 23:19-20).

God is out to bless us, and the devil cannot reverse it. Though I do not deserve it, I thank God for all of the precious co-laborers who have worked with me through the years. The thing that has kept us is our unity in the Spirit, not the unity of Adam or personalities.

The unity of the Trinity gives us the same mind while we have a diversity of gifts (Romans 12:4-5). Is there room for disagreement? Yes, but only if we love people, show compassion, and have a capacity to wait for them to come through, to wait while they grow. We are to be kind and loving, not stirring up the flesh.

Wherever there is unity, God will command a blessing, whether it is in marriages, in families, or in friendships. But first, our human trichotomy must be right with the Trinity, meaning

we first must receive the love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in our spirit, soul, and body.

After that, a man can go to his wife and say, "Honey, I have received the Trinity's love in my spirit, soul, and body. Here is what I did. Do you want to receive it, too? It's all grace. We will pray for each other, we will love each other, and we will practice communicating this love all the time." Before you know it, each one will have the unity of God in his spirit, soul, and body, and life will become the most wonderful thing in all the world.

How Unity Affects the World

I thank God for our precious foreign missionaries in Central and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. As they have gone forward representing God in all the world, their unity has given them one of the most unusual records in missionary history. When the Word of God dwells richly in the lives of missionaries, they do not become casualties on the foreign field. With the Holy Spirit filling them, these men and women have learned how to adjust to the grace of God. They have an unbelievable unity in the Lord.

When Christ is lifted up and we allow ourselves to be drawn into the fullness of God's life as He intended, pettiness and fault finding will disappear. We can be about our Father's business with perfect oneness and a diversity of gifts, filled with the Word and the Spirit, manifesting light to the world.

CONCLUSION

Because it is so vital that we grasp the principle of unity, I have been feisty in communicating some of these truths. The devil hates feisty, uncompromising preachers who know the Book and who have dogmatic convictions. But when we are under attack from the demons of the air, Christians can't afford to be passive. When a preacher is functioning with the oneness of the Godhead in His humanity and preaching the Word of God to a congregation that listen in the unity of the Spirit, the demons can't handle it. "Let's get out of here!" they say. Satan recognizes Christians who are firm in their convictions and will leave them for someone they can easily infect with a critical spirit.

Godly unity is the best resistance against Satan and his demonic forces. When we resist the devil through the certain sound of oneness, he has to flee. This clears the atmosphere of any interference during a service, opening the way

for salvation, healing, restoration, reconciliation, and victory that will stand the test of time. People are free to draw near to God, free to be led by the Spirit.

With this kind of oneness, people will be led to go into all the world with the glorious message of the Finished Work and reveal the unity of the Trinity through the unity they have within themselves and with other believers. "*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me*" (John 17:21).

The Compassion of Christ

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

In the Church of Jesus Christ, so many suffer with physical pain. When I see those who experience physical pain, I am deeply touched.

The Lord Jesus Christ sees people who have needs. He is never casual in His observation nor careless in His comprehension. But often what God sees is that so much of our pain is caused by pain from inner wounds. So much anger is caused by anger, resentment caused by resentment, fear caused by fear. And so much loneliness is caused by somebody else's loneliness.

All of those problems, including drug addiction and alcoholism, happen because of an unfulfilled capacity in the hearts of people with an unfulfilled purpose. They are people who lack an understanding of what God feels toward them and wants for them and wants to be for them. In Jeremiah 12:15, the Word of God says that He looked at the multitude of Israel's backsliders, and He had compassion on them. In

Psalm 78:38 the Word of God says that He had great compassion and forgave all their sins.

Why does God have compassion on the backsliders? He knows there is a reason for their backsliding. People are not happy, and they are trying to fulfill unfulfilled capacities and unsatisfied desires, and they can't do it. It is just a matter of time before they will burn out due to their backsliding, or their backsliding will affect their health. This booklet shows that in order to have compassion that makes a difference, we need to get to know the heart of God—a heart that was willing to die on the Cross and put on our shame so we can be clothed in His perfection.

Chapter One

COMPASSION: GOD'S MEASURE FOR MISSIONS

"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

"Then he saith unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:35-38).

"And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14).

"But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

"So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us" (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

If you take a journey with Jesus Christ, you will see that the pain of others troubled Him deeply. That is why He said to Israel (Isaiah 63:9), "In all of your afflictions, I am afflicted."

Moved by Compassion: The Motive for Going

Matthew 9:35 says that Jesus went about in the cities, villages, and synagogues, preaching the Kingdom of God, doing whatever He could to help the needy. He saw the multitudes and had compassion on them. He saw that they fainted and they were scattered abroad, as sheep with no shepherd.

Then He said unto His disciples, "Truly the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

And He said, "Would you pray that the Lord of the harvest would send forth people into the harvest fields?" That is a Holy Spirit prayer.

Seeing the multitudes who, in one way or another, were fainting or sick or in pain or hungry—every time, Jesus Christ was "moved with compassion."

And when He said that the harvest field is plenteous but the laborers are few, He didn't only mean that there are not enough people who would go to win the lost; but there are few who go out motivated by compassion.

Jesus Sees Us One by One

When the Lord Jesus Christ saw the leper or the blind man or the man with the withered hand—just one individual—He was moved with compassion.

The first thing to understand in relationship to your healing is God's compassion toward you. In order to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit, you need to understand that without an exception, when Jesus looked upon multitudes, He looked upon individuals. Furthermore, He didn't just say, "God bless you." According to John 11:35, He wept. In John 11:38, He groaned. In Luke 19:41, He wept. In Hebrews 5:7, He shed many tears.

Today, whatever state you are in, never separate your condition from God's compassion nor your pain from God's Holy Spirit. Do not let the pain destroy the amazing thing that God wants to do for you.

The Right Hand of Approval

In Psalm 16:8, David said, "I have set the LORD always before [my face]: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

God was at his right hand? What did David mean by that? Jesus Christ was the expressed image of God's Person. After He purged our sins, He was seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3). In Hebrews 12:2, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father.

But David said, "God (Yahweh) is at my right hand"—the right hand speaking of "approval with compassion."

When Jesus Christ entered into heaven, having paid for our sins, the Father said, "I approve of what You have done for them, and I accept You, the Just, dying for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18).

Then the Lord said, "I have compassion on them."

So the "right hand" refers to approval with compassion. That is why "whosoever will" may come to Christ. That is why the moment we believe, we are justified before we have had an opportunity to change our old ways (Romans 4:3, 4:5).

In 1 Samuel 20:42, Jonathan said to David,

"Only the LORD is between us." These are the stages a Christian must begin to understand. David set the Lord before his face (Psalm 16:8). In pain, in need, in heartache, I learn to set the Lord before my face. Then, God is at my right hand, approving of me with compassion through the Finished Work because I am seated together in heavenly places with Christ (Ephesians 2:6). As believers, hid with Christ in God, no one else could be closer to Him. Furthermore, our fellowship with each other, as with David and Jonathan, is unbreakable when the Lord is between us.

Chapter Two

GATHERING MANNA: LESSONS IN GETTING TO KNOW GOD

When God gave manna to the two and a half million children of Israel (Deuteronomy 8:3), He humbled them. Here they were, delivered from slavery in Egypt but now wandering in the desert, led by a man (Moses) whom they were beginning to distrust. While they cried out for the leeks, cucumbers, and garlic they had eaten for all those years in bondage, the Lord fed them with manna to teach them that God's people must not depend on natural provisions only, but every word of God.

The manna God gave them was round and it was white (Exodus 16:14, 31). The round shape of a circle is often used to represent the eternal nature of God, having no beginning and no ending (Psalms 90:2 and 103:17). Also, the manna was very small and pure white. The Scriptures say in Psalm 12:6 that the words of

God are very pure. As silver is tried in a furnace, so is the Word of God tried and proven pure on the earth. Proverbs 30:5 says, "Every word of God is pure." Psalm 119:140a says, "Thy word is very pure." All of Scripture, every commandment of God, is pure.

So, manna speaks of the purity of God's character and the nature of God's love, in the compassion of His communication, in the promises of His provision, and in the identification of His love, dying for everything that is wrong with the entire human race.

Ground Rules for Gathering

The manna had to be gathered on a daily basis for six days (except on the day before the Sabbath when enough would be gathered for both days). Every morning before sun-up they would gather their provision for that day. If they gathered any more than what was needed, the remainder would become rotten.

They couldn't just take the manna; they had to stoop over to gather it before they could appropriate it. Likewise, to receive the Word of God in humility, we need to live in the humility of receiving it as it comes and gathering it with meekness when we come together to hear the

Word preached. Then we must appropriate all we receive.

Appropriating God's Provision

Appropriating the manna meant that it became the personal property of the one who gathered it. What's more, he could have as much as he gathered, though it had to be used that day, according to God's plan.

And do you know that God sent down millions of pounds of manna to provide for two and a half million people? It was right outside of every single tent. They could just take a walk outside in the fresh dew and gather it—millions of pounds of manna from heaven.

But according to Numbers 11:4-6, the children of Israel murmured, and the mixed multitude despised God's provision, as many despise the pure Word of God today.

The manna represents the pure Word of God. God wants us to eat of it daily. He sends the Word in its purity and power and love to heal the wounds, the pains, the emotional stress, and the heartache we all face (Psalm 107:20). Whether it is the heartache of bringing up a family during difficult times or the stress of having enough to get by financially, the Lord sends that

precious Word to heal and deliver us in the fresh dew of the morning.

Satan's Controversy

In Hosea 4:1, the word riyb speaks of the controversy, a case of law, that one would find in the courtroom. Satan contests God's compassion toward us, and he contests God's love for us as he tries to stop what God, because of His compassionate nature, wants to do for us. Satan is called diabolos, "the false accuser," in Revelation 12:9. Job was summoned to the courtroom of heaven as a primary witness against the devil's case (Job 1:6-12). Because Job didn't know he had been summoned, he had to go through the trials by faith based upon what he knew about God's character.

Another word, antidikos, translated as "adversary" in 1 Peter 5:8, speaks of a supernatural 'detective' who tries to find out what you know, how you feel, and how you are going to react in the courtroom in the angelic conflict between God and Satan.

Satan continually asks God for people that he can put on trial. If they come through the trial of their faith as winners, their victory is "more precious than gold that perisheth" (1 Peter 1:7).

Yet, the most beautiful thing is that when a person comes through a trial, God begins to reveal His character, because the Word of God is pure, "as silver tried in a furnace"(Psalm 12:6).

Why Trials Are Precious

When God said to Israel (Isaiah 43:10), "You are my witnesses," He did not just mean they were custodians to get out the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He meant, "You are My witnesses" as in Acts 1:8, when He said, "You will be witnesses unto Me after you receive power and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Then you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the world."

The first witness is with God in the angelic contest and the unknown trials. There, we are asked by God to exercise faith to reveal God when Satan comes after us with all the forces of hell in the trials of life. And always, Jesus Christ is the faithful Witness who pleads our case before God and against the devil as long as we are on the earth (1 John 2:1; Revelation 1:5).

Chapter Three

EAT THE CORN, GAIN COMPASSION

In Joshua 5:12, the manna ceased. Now Israel would eat corn, the fruit of the land in Canaan. Jesus said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

The difference between the manna and the corn is this: Manna is God giving me the Word; corn means that God now gives me the Word through His resurrection life.

The children of Israel murmured (Exodus 16 and Numbers 11) because though they were being given the Word, they didn't have the Cross in their lives. They were being taught by Moses, one of the great preachers of that time. They were receiving the Word of God but they didn't have the Cross. The corn, representing a seed of the Word of life, when it is thrown into the freshly turned ground of the heart, abides

alone no more. It will bring forth fruit. We now can have the resurrection life of Jesus Christ, as well as the power of that life, with the Word of God.

Appropriation, Mastication, and Assimilation

When you appropriate the Word of Life, it becomes yours. Then, you begin to chew the Word of God. You must masticate it, chewing it slowly, methodically, and progressively so it can be properly digested. After that is the process of assimilation.

Assimilation happens when the nutrients in the food are transmitted into the blood and distributed among the vital organs to give strength and power to the body. Assimilating God's Word means that by the doctrine you have received, you enter into identification with other people. You receive the nature of Christ, so when you see someone in pain, you are moved with compassion. They may not even know it, yet you are moved with brokenness and you pray for them. You go to God for them, and you want them to be healed, no matter what their needs are.

Many people, however, never allow the Word to work in them to get to that stage. Con-

sequently, they never receive the ability to identify with others. It is vital that as Christians we would be extremely wise and sensitive to people. We do not realize the pain that certain people go through—not just the physical pain but the emotional pain. Perhaps it is the pain of failure. Maybe it is the pain of having a loved one who is dying.

Recently, a doctor, his wife, and a child were all killed in an accident—only one child survived. Now imagine one child losing his mom, his dad and his sister, and he is the only one left. Just imagine what that child is going through.

Compassion Knows How to Identify

During His time on earth, Jesus Christ went in the cities, and villages, and synagogues. He saw everything that was going on in people's lives. He was moved with great compassion. He was no respecter of persons. He saw the masses of people as sheep having no shepherd.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). We need to be able to look at Him in such a way that He can speak faith into our souls and bodies and circumstances, that He can express His love to us.

The apostle Paul was willing to die and go

to hell for his fellow Jews. He said, "We were gentle among you, as a nurse cherisheth her children. We are affectionately desirous of you, not willing to impart to you the gospel only, but our own souls, because you are dear to us" (see 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

Paul wanted to do more than preach. In 1 Corinthians 4:20, he said, "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power"—the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul was saying, "I want to do more than give you knowledge." He said, "I want to impart to you my own soul, the compassion I have toward you. I want to impart God's nature and what God has done for me, to you." That is real Christianity. That is having and giving the compassion of Christ.

CONCLUSION

Christianity is Christ sharing Himself with us, then we share Him with everyone we possibly can. Christianity is simply sharing who God is on the basis of what God has done with our needs and heartaches.

The Christ who came to die on the Cross was always moved when someone was in pain. Always. We need to learn how to make contact—not just in doing good works but having real contact with individuals who need what we have to offer: the compassion of Christ. This compassion can become contagious as it begins to work supernaturally against the forces of darkness and all the unhealthy pressures in the environment.

We must not be familiar with the power in prayer; we need to have an absolute expectation from God. That is when God gets the glory in the angelic realm.

Father, we pray for individuals who are going

through trials of their faith. We don't take lightly what some people are going through. We pray that You would speak faith into each situation. Whatever it is, You know it. We pray they would receive power in the Holy Spirit—Your divine provision—because of Your compassion. We ask You for miracles, victories, and deliverance, and we ask it with gratitude and thanksgiving in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

The Confidence of Quietness

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Some men are able to go anywhere and everywhere and disciple people. They plant churches and people come. I think their secret is in knowing that everything is all right in the Father's house. This confidence with quietness comes from knowing that whether we listen to a message from the Word of God or read a book on a Bible theme, every word is for us, personally and individually.

Every word that comes to me from God to speak in the pulpit is first for me. If I don't see it that way, then I am living in hypocrisy. That is, I am pretending. In listening to what God says to me, I must hear carefully what the Spirit is saying. The still, small voice of God is always revealing great principles about me, about God, and about life.

Every one of us is a vessel, and every one of us must be broken in some way. Some of us are very unique and strong vessels. Some of us are great physical specimens of health and happiness and prosperity. All of us will crack some

how, some way. Why? Because God cannot use the proud. Any heart that exalts itself away from the Cross, away from Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, is a proud heart. Its confidence is grossly misplaced.

Humility must come before there can be any honor; otherwise, the honor will go straight to my head. Therefore, God delights to bring details into my life that will break me. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, the Bible tells us in Proverbs 27:6. Those details teach me that real contentment comes from what I have in my heart.

As this booklet will reveal, if my heart seeks the glory of God and His glory only, then I will have His quietness and His contentment controlling my reactions and responses.

Chapter One

WEANED AND MADE MATURE

"LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.

"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalm 131:1-2).

"And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

A weaned child is a child who no longer needs to be fed from the breast. He has grown up in a good measure and now lives off more than mother's milk. Spiritually, we go through a weaning process. As young Christians, God is careful with us. He nurses our capacities with grace and mercy. Surely, our faith will be tested, and sometimes significantly in our early days as believers. But God is with us. He knows our needs and He nourishes our hearts with tenderness as He builds our confidence in Him.

When a mother first starts the weaning process, there is some tension. The child is very comfortable and familiar with the way he has been eating. He is not very interested in changing the program. There are tears and tantrums, and some sentimental mothers give in to the anger. I can remember one story of a woman who was struggling to wean a young boy to get him ready for first grade. That's a long time to be taking in mother's milk.

The spiritual weaning time may find me in confusion. I will have times of being disturbed, envious, jealous, and troubled. Probably I will do a lot of comparing my situation with the situation of someone else. Satan will do his best to keep me in these emotional strongholds, whichhe sometimes uses to "demonize" a believer, causing us to take on his behavior instead of putting on Christ. With our permission, these strongholds may become internalized. By our choices, outside pressures can be transferred to our souls.

Condescend to Men of Low Estate

"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (Romans 12:16).

"But let every man prove his own work, and

then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Galatians 6:4).

When I am weaned, I possess maturity in my spiritual walk. I have studied, so I am able to rest, to be quiet in the midst of difficulties and circumstances. I do not react to things happening around me on the horizontal plane. My pattern is to maintain my vertical connection. I look up and go before the Throne of Grace, where I can find help in my times of need. My mind is not influenced by the high things of the satanic atmosphere. This is what is going on when someone frets over a little detail because of pride. Mentally and verbally it bothers this person as the demons in the atmosphere are pushing his buttons.

Galatians 6:4 is a beautiful verse. It speaks of looking after yourself. A weaned child knows how to care for his soul and his heart. He guards his heart. He is aware of the things that could become distractions in his life. He avoids the very appearance of evil. He checks out what's going on in his life and compares it with the truth. What isn't true, he casts down as vain or empty. He rejoices because his fellowship is with Christ, and no one can touch that, nor can it be taken away from him. He doesn't need outside approval. Acceptance is not something he must seek. Instead, he knows the One who died for him. He

is approved unto God, and that is enough. He needs no approval from men because he has examined himself, and he is occupied with Christ. His heart is satisfied with Christ and the obedience that this relationship brings out of him.

Chapter Two

QUIETNESS IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:1-5).

Once a man came raging into my office and spent nearly an hour making accusations and angry statements about me. It was quite an exchange that went on and on.

God spoke to me and said, "Be silent. Be still. Don't interrupt, and don't react."

When he finished fifty-five minutes into his tirade, I thanked the man. I said, "I love you and want you to know that you can come to me at any time with any trouble."

Months have gone by and today this man is one of my dearest friends. *God* kept me in that exchange. I made no defense and I offered no reaction. That man needed to be loved unconditionally. He became one of the top students in our Bible college.

What happened in my office that day? God gave me strength to look at things from this man's viewpoint. He was struggling. He needed to say some things. Maybe I needed to hear what he had to say.

When a wife cries out, she is going through something. The last thing she needs is a reaction from her husband. She needs the love of God. This is the whole purpose of brokenness. God breaks us so that we can help others and contribute to their lives. The best thing to contribute to another's life is the love of God.

This is the way Jesus spoke to the world. He did not cry out. The afflictions and contradictions that came against Him did not bring reactions. They brought out His love and His instruction and the beauty of His holiness.

The writer of Philippians was well acquainted with trouble. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were cast into prison after having been whipped illegally by the Roman authorities. Beaten with the cat-o'-nine tails, their backs were battered and sore, but God supernaturally delivered them. There they were, chained in that dark prison and singing at midnight when the earth quaked and the walls crumbled. Their shackles broke, and they were set free.

Paul was not whining in his situation. There was no negative reaction. He had confidence in Christ and a quietness in his soul that enabled him to sing out. His faith was in bloom, not in gloom. There was joy, not depression. He felt liberty, even though his feet were in stocks. What did this for Paul? It was the mind of Christ that was in him. He allowed Christ's mind to dwell in him and lead him.

Christ lived on earth with a mind of humility. He made Himself of no reputation, even though He alone deserved the most glorious of reputations. His obedience to the plan and purpose of God carried through to His death on the Cross. Christ's humility resulted in His high exaltation. His name is above all names, and one day every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.

Proper Self-Examination

Self-examination is really this: quieting ourselves as we relate to the Word of God. This is the true measure of maturity. I behave myself on the inside. There is the provision of the Lord. Someone may rail on me, but I practice the spirit of grace. My countenance remains sweet and I don't impute anger or accusation to myself or to the person doing the railing.

I prayed as the man who became angry at me kept yelling. I say he was angry "at" me, because his real problem wasn't "with" me. "Lord, let him say anything he wants and needs to say right now," I prayed. "Show me if there is any way to meet his real need."

Before he left my office, I embraced this man. He went to his car, he said, and wept like a baby. He told his wife, "I took twenty-five years of self-hatred and dumped it on the pastor."

Then, he confessed to his wife the real issue. This man had an affair with another woman at some point and had never repented before God. Every time I preached on getting right with God, this man's anger and resentment intensified. It was an anger that had built up against himself and it finally poured out. Now he can say he is

free. His marriage is amazing and his unresolved guilt is gone.

All of that happened because God quieted my heart and my spirit in a difficult moment.

Chapter Three

GOING WITH THE FLOW OF GOD

"I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand" (Zechariah 2:1).

"Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

"Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

"And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.

"Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were

to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.

"Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

"And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.

"Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

"Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

"And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh." (Ezekiel 47:1-9).

In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet described how the water flowed from the temple of God. It flowed down from the north and then out from the east side of the altar, which speaks of the res-

urrection life of Christ flowing toward us.

The water at first was at the ankles. Then, he was led out and the water reached to the knees, which speaks of advancement in prayer. Next, the prophet was led out to where the water was up to his loins. In Ephesians 6, the believer is instructed to have his loins girt about with truth. When the believer moves out into this depth, then he has grown in doctrine. Truth in categories has been hidden in his heart.

Finally, the water is so deep that the believer has to go with the current, the flow of living waters. This, of course, speaks of the Holy Spirit. There are fish in that river. Jesus told Peter, James, and John (the apostles who left the family fishing business to be disciples of truth) that He would make them fishers of men.

Understanding, prayer, and truth are energized by the work of the Holy Spirit. The result is that people are led to the Lord. We enter into the flow of living waters, and we reach the lost in our Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. We go into all the world. Missionaries reproduce what they are taught in the way of God, churches are planted, and more people start moving into the flow of God.

The Work of Confidence

What is doing this work? It is the confidence

that comes from quietness and rest in the purpose of God. This will work everywhere, with anyone who will give his life to Christ.

"And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20).

Gideon was from a poor family in the tribe of Manasseh. He was the least in his father's house. But God said to him, "Surely I will be with thee" (Judges 6:16). The Lord promised to use Gideon to bring a victory over the Midianites.

God brought a great victory, using only three hundred men. They won by blowing trumpets and allowing their vessels to be broken. After the vessels were broken, the lamps shined out into the night. The Midianites were driven into confusion and defeat.

These principles work for us as believers. We hear the Word—the trumpet sound—and then we sound out the Word of God. We allow the Word to quiet our hearts in the midst of the battle. First the light shines in our hearts. Then, as we allow our vessels to be broken, it shines out.

The result? Victory.

"After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he

himself would come.

"…And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:1, 17-19).

"Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary" (Psalm 96:6).

Jesus sent out seventy, and they carried His power with them. What confidence they must have gained from sitting and hearing from the Savior. He spoke powerful words to His disciples, and they had powerful results.

The words of Jesus brought the disciples an understanding of His honor and majesty. His sanctuary brought strength and beauty to their lives. Christians reveal the honor and majesty of Christ as they reverence His presence. Wisdom comes through our humility to hear God. In our weakness, we are made strong. There is power, there is grace, and there is forgiveness.

Humility is brokenness born from our rest in the truth of God. Our hearts are contrite because of the content that He gives us. Our spirits are revived continually. We are given a royal love for

all people. Moment by moment we walk with Him, and He inhabits our praises.

CONCLUSION

Every single believer has great potential to reveal God and all of His characteristics. We are surrounded by a wall of fire. That is, the truth of our permanent position in Christ stands guard around us. Satan cannot break through that wall. It is impenetrable.

Yes, as human beings, we will fail. We will sin. But we have an Advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ stands before the Throne of God and represents us. Jesus stands up to our accuser, Satan, and says to the Father, "Those believers are ours. I bought their redemption with My precious blood, and they received it. Nothing can separate Us from them."

God deals with His family matters. No accusation, no condemnation can stand against those who belong to the Lord. That reality should quiet any anxious thought that might be trying to spring up in our minds. We can stand in the confidence of the Word of God. The Word is settled forever. It cannot be moved. It can never return void. Every word of it is right and real. It feeds

us and leads us and gives us substance to be able to walk in this dark world.

Other Booklets by Pastor Carl H. Stevens

Children of Promise
Satan's Limitations
Something Good is Going to Happen to You
Be Anxious for Nothing
Discover the True Meaning of Life
The Way of God
This Grace Is Also for Me
Demolish the Emotional Walls
Facing the Valleys with God
God's Plan According to His Integrity
Eternally Secure
The Reality of Hell
Where Does God Rest?
Loving Yourself
The Language of Tears
The Full Thought on Repentance
Created to Have Dominion
The Perfect Law of Liberty
Welcome the Thorn
The Quality of Faith
Embraced by Hope
Can I Really Stop Sinning?
The Monster Sin
The Highest Authority
Let's Discern Worldliness
Travailing in Prayer
The Way of Transformation
For a Worm Such As I
Revealing Supernatural Life
The Whispers of God
Stay Focused to Bear Fruit
When Testings Come
Resting Under the Cloud
What's Going Into Your Heart?
Digging Ditches by Faith
Forgive and Forget
Lord, Help Me Laugh!
The God of All Blessings
Church Leadership
The Virtue of Love
Have a Tremendous Expectation!
Getting to Know God
Reigning Through the Word
Christ Is My Identity
Genuine Identification
Live in the Provision
A Cross for Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow
A Personal Cross for a Personal Resurrection
Are You Married to Your Wounds?
In the Fire, But Not Consumed
Never Accept Defeat
Grace and No Other Gospel
Receive the Gift of Repentance
Heart to Heart with God
Spiritual Self-Esteem
God's Justice Will Stand
Find Strength in Praising God
Don't Be an Abstract Christian
God's Way of Escape
Hearing the Voice of the Lord
Set Free by the Blood of Christ
How Is Your Relationship with the Holy Spirit?
God's Wisdom
God Provides a Hedge
Living in the Moment with Eternal Purpose
Let God Fight Your Battle
The Sin of Discontentment
Choose a Life of Faith
Divine Thinking Skills
Transformed by Truth
Protected by Angels
Have a Glorious Confession
Dwelling Together in Unity
Christ: Our Portion Forever
Resist the Devil through Truth
Complete in the Family of God
Choices and Consequences
Believe!
Humility Quiets the Soul
There Is No Limit to God's Forgiveness
The Purpose of the Valley
The Battle Is the Lord's
A Faith Built on Absolutes
Divine Resources for Healing
Growing in the Anointing of Grace
Open the Door to an Abundant Life
Let God Clear the Way
Commitment Is a Decision
The Father Knows Best
What Is Your Source?
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The Cross: A Burden

or a Blessing?

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and is host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

"My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof" (Psalm 71:15).

What does it mean to take up my cross?

Good and evil come upon all people — godly and ungodly. Being sick is not a cross. Being confined to a wheelchair is not a cross. Living with an alcoholic or enduring a bad marriage is not a cross. Experiencing persecution is simply identification with Christ, but it is a not a cross.

My cross is not people, nor is it suffering. It is not what people are doing to me. My cross is not losing my reputation — if I don't build a

reputation then I don't have to worry about losing it. It is not that I am hated for Christ's sake, because every Christian who identifies with Christ will be hated.

Taking up my cross means finally getting rid of *myself*. That's all it is! I take up my cross by accepting the fact that Jesus Christ was judged for all my sins and that there is no condemnation. This is called "righteous judgment" in John 7:24. It is the righteousness of God that David cried out about every day, in Psalm 71:15.

Through this message I want you to see that taking up your cross is not a burden that you must bear. Rather, it is the beginning of liberation in the midst of your circumstances.

Chapter One

WALKING IN LOWLINESS AND MEEKNESS

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:1-7).

Lowliness is *tapeinophrosune* in the Greek text. It means to think toward someone in grace. I am to think in grace toward every other person just as God, through grace, thinks toward me.

Meekness means to be absolutely submitted to God's plan, no matter who He uses to rub me

the wrong way. I accept what Jesus Christ brings into my life because His plan is perfect (Psalm 18:30), and He does all things perfectly (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Longsuffering is *hupomeno,* meaning that I am to accept whatever happens in my life as being for my sake, so that the grace of God may redound to His glory (2 Corinthians 4:15).

Finally, *forbearing (makrothumia)* indicates that these qualities are to be revealed no matter what a person says or does to me. In other words, I take my analysis of Truth into action; I go from believing to receiving a gift of grace to handle the situation. I reveal poise with peace in the dynamics of faith rest. That covers just about everything.

Beseeched to Action

By using *beseech* (*parakaleo)*, Paul is exhorting Christians to go from analysis to action, from theology to spirituality, from Christian faith to the Christian walk, from believing to experiencing, from knowing to receiving. *Worthy* is *axios,* an adverb that speaks of bringing our behavior into line with what we believe. We are to walk worthy of our calling, God's divine summons on our lives.

Let's picture what is being communicated in these verses. The Lord Jesus Christ teaches every Christian that the only way to live is to be a responder to the divine provision of grace as it is given to every man. *Beseech* simply means we are being *urged* to put this provision into action in our experience.

God did not initiate sin, nor did He initiate evil; but He responded to our personal sins by dying on the cross. This was the divine response to human sin — the provision for the sins of every member of the human race.

Isaiah 1:5-6 reveals that, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

How did God respond to these facts about our humanity? By dying in our place. The entire nation was declared desolate (Isaiah 1:7), yet His response was to die for them who had been devoured and "overthrown by strangers."

In the same way, Christians must initiate to the world with a divine response to Jesus Christ's mandate in Matthew 16:24: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and

take up his cross, and follow me." *Take up* is the key word in this passage. It does not say that we are to take up Christ's cross. We are to take up our own personal cross.

Chapter Two

WHAT WE TAKE UP IN CIRCUMSTANCES

Is it a person's cross to be confined to a wheelchair because of unfortunate circumstances? No, it is not. Nor is it a mother's cross to lose her baby. Deafness and blindness do not represent the cross to those who must endure such conditions. An accident on the highway is not a cross.

The fiery furnace was not the cross for the three Hebrew boys, in Daniel 3:23-27. They revealed that they had taken up their cross when they said, "It's OK if you slay us." Being placed in the lions' den wasn't the cross for Daniel; his cross was revealed when he went to sleep in the midst of eleven thousand hungry lions that should have consumed him in thirty seconds.

Fanny Crosby's cross wasn't her blindness, but it was the eight thousand hymns she wrote, one of which was "Blessed Assurance."

George Mathison, a well-known Scottish preacher, was told that he was going blind. He thought it over and wrote this song:

"Oh, love that will not let me go
Oh, light that followeth me all the way.
I will not grow up in darkness
Because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has to say."

Was George Mathison's blindness his cross? No. Once he became blind, he took up a ministry of love.

Our cross is what we take up in our circumstances. Losing everything we have is not our cross, but, rather, taking up the attitude of Job — "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD " (Job 1:21).

Taking Up the Cross Toward Others

When someone hurts me by sending hate mail, that is not my cross. But when I respond by getting on my knees and secretly praying for that person, then I am taking up my cross. The cross means suffering on behalf of someone who doesn't deserve it. In Matthew 5:38-41, Jesus told His disciples, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

What people do to us is not our cross; it is what we do with God toward them. This is taking up our cross and denying ourselves. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165). Great peace is the result of taking up our cross, even when people have tried to offend us.

After Jesus Christ met Saul, who became Paul, on the road to Damascus, the Lord told Ananias that Paul was a "chosen vessel" to share the gospel with the Gentiles. "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16). Many would come to hate Paul for his conversion. The Jews and the devout women would hate him and he would be driven out of villages and towns.

But how Paul prayed for his enemies, and what he thought of them revealed that he had taken up his cross. "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites;

to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Romans 9:3-4). Paul would rather have gone to hell in place of his brethren so that they could go free. That was taking up his cross.

Taking Up Praise in Trials

Our cross isn't our suffering; it's what we *do* with our suffering. Our cross isn't the trial of our faith; it's how much we take up praise during the trial. We respond with all lowliness of mind, thinking toward others in the mind of grace and giving them what they do not deserve.

As the Spirit of God produces the fruit of meekness, we can say, "Lord Jesus, thy will be done, and in everything I will give thanks. I am Yours today and You are mine. Thank you." This is taking up our cross. No matter what unexpected thing happens to us, we rejoice because Jesus Christ is in us. He takes control of our emotions. His mind becomes our mind through the impartation of His life because of our grace response.

As the mobs rushed upon the martyrs of old to kill them, the martyrs prayed for the very ones who were burning them at the stake. Tak-

ing up their cross was not the act of martyrdom, but it was when they prayed forgiveness for their persecutors.

Acts 7:59-60 records what happened to Stephen as he was being stoned, "… calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Victorious, Stephen was immediately ushered into the presence of God.

Chapter Three

ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT, ONE LORD

Everyone has been given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, in Ephesians 4:7. Now, each of us is asked to give grace for grace because we have received the fulness thereof (John 1:16). In any situation, we have the option of a human response, an adamic response, or a grace response.

All born-again Christians, no matter where they go to church, are members of one body. They have one Holy Spirit even as they are called in one hope of their calling. Every believer has one Lord and one faith, and, by one baptism, has come into the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). There is one Father who is above all, through all, and in all.

Then why are there problems among believers when there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, and one Father? We should

have the same mind and the same love because we have the same mandate and the same Bible. We shouldn't be causing trouble for each other; there's no reason to get angry at each other.

The Responses of Prayer and Confession

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

I am to confess my faults. This doesn't mean I get up in the pulpit and start confessing my problems. It means that when I know I am wrong, I don't hide in self-denial. I may be led to take someone aside and say, "I've had a bad spirit toward you, please forgive me. I reacted. It wasn't your fault, it was my fault." This is confessing our faults one to another.

I don't have to react when someone doesn't treat me right. I get on my knees and pray for him because he is going through something. This person is usually very kind, but today he is having a tough time and I am to pray for him.

"Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:5-7).

Think of the individual who was an alcoholic: Christ received him. Think of the drug addict, the lesbian, or the homosexual; Christ received each of them for the glory of God. The self-righteous Pharisee and the arrogant, religious gossip believed and Christ received them, too. I am to receive others just as I was received by Christ.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently," (1 Peter 1:22). No matter what someone does to me, I am to have a heart that is pure with God's love.

"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13). In the Greek, this verse tells us to love one another from our hearts where Christ is formed.

"I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou

observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Timothy 5:21). In honor, I prefer another above myself. I fix a high value on others because of a high esteem that shows no partiality.

Esteeming Others

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

This doesn't mean that I think more of you and less of myself. In the original language, this verse tells me to esteem you above my right to react to you. I am to esteem you higher than my right to take your believer-priesthood from you by attacking you. I am willing to be the least in the situation. I love you and honor the freedom of who you are in Christ, so I don't say anything to hurt you. I respond to God instead of reacting to you.

"And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another,"

(1 Corinthians 4:6).

"Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door" (James 5:9).

These verses teach us that we are to bear one another's burdens. There are times when I have to be careful while I am in the pulpit. I know some things going on in people's lives that others don't know about. Those thoughts come to mind when I start looking at faces in the congregation. To these people, certain issues are very important and very difficult, and I try to bear their burdens early in the morning in prayer. I try to think of what they are going through. I try to identify with people in the love of God through the compassion of Christ. Also, I pray for my enemies every morning, knowing that, if it were not for the grace of God, I would be God's enemy because of my old sin nature.

The Holy Spirit wants us to understand that we're not to reserve anger nor hold a grudge, because a root of bitterness will spring up (Hebrews 12:15). That root results in sins of the tongue, causing many to be defiled. We must guard our hearts so we will not fail the grace of God toward each other.

"For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:24-26).

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep," (Romans 12:15).

These Scriptures express great principles of body life. We rejoice when people are honored, and weep with those who suffer. No one can do this in the flesh. Only the believer who condescends and takes up his cross can do it. As he takes up his cross, he is filled with the Spirit. He becomes one with those who are rejoicing and with those who are weeping. That believer becomes one with others' needs, heartaches, failures, frailties, and weaknesses, and he is now in a position to pray, to help, and to bless others.

Chapter Four

DENYING OURSELVES

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

The phrase "if any man would follow me" is a third-class condition in the Greek, meaning he may or may not follow Jesus Christ; it's up to his free volition to follow Him. Anyone can make a decision to follow Christ, but it is impossible to do so unless he takes up his cross. Beyond that, a man must deny himself. This isn't speaking of asceticism; He isn't teaching self-effacement for religious concepts. The Lord is teaching something far, far deeper. If anyone would follow Christ, he must deny himself and take up his cross. Then he will be free to follow.

We must not be entangled with our rights. We cannot be involved in a lifestyle of natural preference. We cannot be distracted into debat-

ing our cases. We must not chose a geographical location for its comfort and convenience or because someone we like is there. A husband or a wife should not argue in favor of the self life. We must deny ourselves.

Resolving Long-term Problems

To deny ourselves is to accept the absolute elimination of hundreds of unresolved problems in the old sin nature. Our emotions cannot be educated. These problems never change and they won't disappear. Just as God is as precious as He has always been, so our old sin nature is just as bad as it has always been.

To deny myself means to allow the Cross of Christ to resolve all the conflicts that are derived from my genetics and generational curses. Some try to justify a child's negative behavior by saying, "His father has been that way since he was 5 or 6 years old." This makes no sense when we understand that the Christian's life starts with the Cross, and his victory comes from taking it up and letting it become personal.

I was saved when I believed in the Cross and all it accomplished, but I am delivered by taking up *my* cross. If I don't take up what I believe, then I cannot be delivered.

Pastors have become casualties and pastors' wives have become burdens to their husbands all because they have sought for a way out of a personal cross. They magnify something else such as being a good father or good mother when taking up their cross would make them what they should be in any area of their lives.

I deny myself by refusing to make a case for myself and defending what I do. I deny myself by refusing to react and compare. I can't do this on my own; that would be making a fair show in the flesh (Galatians 6:12). Christ did it all for me. Denying myself and taking up my cross is simply recognizing and realizing what Jesus Christ did for me two thousand years ago. This brings glory to God and God alone. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," (Galatians 6:14).

Come to the Resurrection Side

We will experience tests to see whether or not we have taken up our cross. A dead man cannot take up anything, so in order to take up our cross we must come to the resurrection side of life. "Neither yield ye your members as in-

struments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:13-14). I have never witnessed a marriage that had a problem with separation when one partner denied himself, took up his cross and followed Jesus.

Have you ever had the opportunity to counsel people living in their Adam natures? It's a hopeless, helpless job. Someone will say, "He did this and he didn't do that … . " It goes on and on. It gets so confusing and wears you out.

A conflict in Adam cannot be resolved in the flesh. There's only one way to deal with Adam's condition: Death. Jesus died for my condition in Adam. The Father judged all of our sins on His Son. Christ became sin so that sin would not have to be imputed to me. More than that, He gave us overcoming power through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Conflicts do not have to be resolved; they were crucified and buried with Jesus. Still, Satan does all he can to wear out the saints by trying to involve us in conflicts that were resolved two thousand years ago in Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

What once looked like an impossible burden has become my greatest source of blessing. Taking up my cross is accepting the fact that Jesus Christ was judged for all my sins. There is therefore now no condemnation for me. He became sin, so my sin is not charged to my account. Positionally, I am free, and I can derive my life from the authority of my position in Him.

At last, the effects of genetic curses have been eliminated from my life. It doesn't matter who did what in my family history, regardless of how far back these curses go. No matter when or how or where these things entered the picture, I am free from the past.

In taking up my cross, I accept the fact that my personal problems have been resolved by my personal death with Christ. These problems are out of my life because I believe that I was personally buried with Him. Not only have I

been liberated from all the unresolved effects of my past, but I am also free from the entire history of Adam and what he passed on to me through the Fall.

I believe that I died with Christ two thousand years ago. I believe I was buried with Him two thousand years ago. But most importantly, I believe that I have been resurrected with Him. I am seated above, and I have received a brand new image in Christ. "Old things are passed away; behold, *all* things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17*b*).

The Dark Side of Morality

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Many people do good and honorable things in the name of morality. They are moral people, and they do good things in their own eyes. Still, they fall short of God's standard for goodness. Morality is vitally important to the preservation of national entities as it maintains the law and stability in the human conscience. The governments of communities, cities, and nations would be ineffective without the role of morality in society.

There is, however, a dark side of morality. It is revealed through attitudes of judgment and stubbornness where morality exists apart from the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. It operates on the basis of the letter of the law without the life of the Spirit, and that can only bring death (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Too often, the dark side of morality is found among Christians when morally "good" people pass judgment and circulate evil reports about a

brother or sister who has sinned. Instead of helping, they end up hindering the work of Christ by causing unnecessary wounds and division.

This booklet will show that the sin issue for everyone was dealt with once and for all at Calvary. With Christ as our focus, we can operate consistently with a spiritual morality that not only seeks and saves the lost, but also covers, edifies, restores, and redeems believers in the midst of their worst failures.

Chapter One

WHEN MORALITY IS NOT SPIRITUALITY

"And as we tarried there many days there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

"And when he was come down to us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy [Spirit], So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

"And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

"Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

"And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

"And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem" (Acts 21:10-15).

When Paul decided to return to Jerusalem, he was going against the will of God. Paul was told several times not to go to Jerusalem. He had orders to go to Rome (Acts 19:21), and the church there desperately needed him. His intentions were good, even noble. Yet, by doing what seemed right in his own eyes, Paul was set up for unnecessary suffering.

First, the Holy Spirit forbade Paul to go to Jerusalem. Then, the disciples in Syria told Paul "through the Spirit" that he should not go up to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4). Next, in Caesarea, at the house of Philip, the prophet Agabus warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Finally, his local church told him not to go. Not only was he warned through the Holy Spirit, but also he was told what would happen.

The Spirit was moving; people wept and begged him not to go. But Paul answered, "Why do you weep and break my heart? Can't you see that I'm ready to be bound and even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus?" Paul didn't get the point! The point was not his willingness to die but his willingness to obey God's will; and it was not God's will for him to go

(Acts 21:4-14).

Sentimentality: The Subtle Deception

A lot of Christians have sentimental relationships and they call it "love." They put their preferences ahead of the leading of the Holy Spirit. Even when choosing a place to serve God, they may reason, "Oh, I love that place so much. I'll go there!" We are to go into all the world, but only when and where God tells us to go, and God was telling Paul, "Don't go to Jerusalem."

The apostle to the Gentiles would not listen to his fellow Christians. The Holy Spirit was speaking to Paul through many different ways, saying, "Don't go! Do not go to Jerusalem. If you do go, you will be bound and turned over to the Romans and placed in prison." But Paul would not be persuaded.

"And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done" (Acts 21:14). You couldn't tell him anything at this point. He was stubborn. There was a separation between Paul and his fellow believers in the Body of Christ.

What Are We Celebrating?

"And when we were come to Jerusalem, the

brethren received us gladly" (Acts 21:17).

The classical Greek text reveals that when Paul arrived in Jerusalem, the people welcomed him, received him, and gave him a party. But, what was happening with Paul is what several outstanding scholars call "the dark side of morality."

Because of sentimental emotionalism, the apostle Paul, a great man of God, disobeyed the Holy Spirit and members of the Body of Christ who told him not to go to Jerusalem. He had taught that we are not justified by the Law but by grace through faith (Galatians 2:16; Romans 4:11; 3:20-24). He had just been in Corinth and had written a beautiful letter to the believers in Rome, where he was supposed to have gone.

Paul went to Jerusalem and took a Nazarite vow (see Numbers 6; Acts 21:23-26), which the Spirit forbade him to do. The members of his own team tried to keep him from going there, but he would not be persuaded. He said it broke his heart to disobey them, but he still disobeyed.

James, the Lord's brother and the head of the church at Jerusalem, felt that following the Old Testament law of Moses was the good thing to do. Some believers there went to the temple every day, and Paul went in with them. So the

church received Paul with much celebration.

This lesson is so important because it exposes the dark side of morality. The apostle didn't do anything morally wrong; however, he disobeyed God to reach his brethren after his own flesh, even though he was told absolutely not to go there.

One of the major assaults on believers living in the dark side of morality is to cause them to forget doctrine. Paul forgot the doctrine that only recently he had written by the Holy Spirit. Also, Paul had become proud because of his emotional sentimentality toward the Jewish people. God's grace was the answer for them, not the Law. And what Paul did was to go against the amazing grace of God.

From Hypocrisy to Rebound

The Galatians were a people who wandered from France into Asia Minor. Many Galatian Christians believed that by circumcision a person is saved. They received false teaching that said salvation is in Christ *plus* circumcision. In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul rebuked them for believing this. But then *he* fell into a similar sin of adding good works to the totally finished work of Christ. Paul honored the Nazarite vow

and the Mosaic law, even though he had received the revelation that the Law was fulfilled in Christ, and in fact, that the Law is fulfilled in us by Christ (Romans 8:4; 10:4).

Paul left what he knew, what he had taught, and what the Holy Spirit had revealed to him in Arabia. He began to live by the letter of the law instead of living by grace through faith in Christ. He agreed with a crowd that wanted to use him to reinforce their position on the Law, and as a result, he ended up in prison in Rome.

It wasn't just the religious Pharisees that did this to Paul. These were Christians who refused to accept anything different from the Mosaic law. They had accepted Christ, yet they were self-righteous, highly moral hypocrites.

After he was saved, Paul visited James (see Galatians 1:18-19), and he also visited Peter for fifteen days. Paul liked Peter and James, but James was legalistic. Paul was manipulated by flattery, and then he did all the things James suggested he do in Jerusalem. Thankfully, both of them did rebound.

Eventually, Paul realized that in his error, he had caused confusion and division among new believers everywhere. He thought, "My God! I went against Agabus. I went against my own

disciples who were being told by the Holy Spirit to tell me not to go to Jerusalem." Later, in Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul received and wrote the revelation of the pastor-teacher and the value of being hid in Body of Christ.

Standing by the Man of God

Second Timothy 4:11 tells us that Luke went to be with Paul in Jerusalem. Later, another group followed him. Here is the principle: Paul disobeyed God; he clearly disobeyed the Holy Spirit, yet many of his followers obeyed the doctrine he had taught them. They didn't leave him, they did not forsake him, and they did not criticize him. They never said a negative thing about him. Luke went to him first, then others went to help him—even when they knew he was disobeying God's call.

Do you know why they stayed by him? They turned the situation over to God. Their attitude was "All right, God, you said he was not to go. But he's going. We turn him over to You." A study of isagogics, the historical frame of reference of that time, indicates that there was not one word of gossip against Paul—not one word of it in the Scriptures. And there was not a single criticism of Paul.

Please understand that Paul's sin was not a serious matter of immorality. If it had been, the church would have been obligated to follow scriptural measures to prevent others from being infected. But in fact, Paul thought he was doing a "good" thing. The problem was not with his motives; they were "good." Plain and simply, Paul was disobedient to the expressed will of God.

The Holy Spirit spoke four different times, telling Paul not to go. Still, he went, but not one of the faithful Christians in the church went against him. Instead, they stood by him and honored his office. Now, that is a real church. Paul was still their pastor-teacher, and he was still God's man. God would correct him, but God would also bless him in spite of his mistake. While he was being held captive, he would write the "prison epistles" of Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon.

Chapter Two

ACCUSATIONS, MANIPULATIONS, AND ERRORS

Many Christians would have judged Paul's mistake from the dark side of morality, though what was going on wasn't immoral. And as Christians, we often operate from the dark side of morality. We are not immoral, but we do things on the dark side of morality. Let me illustrate it.

Let's say that you were planning to go away for the weekend. The still, small voice of God touches your heart and you perceive that it may not be His will. Yet, you continue with your plans, convinced that God is leading you. Then, a friend that you trust says to you, "I believe God is saying that you should not go to that place on this particular weekend." Without knowing what was already said, a pastor comes

up and says, "You know, I don't feel right about you going there this weekend." He has never said anything like that in his life, and he has never invaded your privacy, but the Holy Spirit told him to say it. Next, two women come up and say, "We have never said anything like this before, but we just don't feel good about your going there this weekend."

Four people who haven't said anything to each other have now told you not to go, but you say, "I'm going anyway. Think of all the good that can happen there!" Though you are a believer-priest who stands before God and not men, chances are you are operating in the dark side of morality.

Judge Not: Rules to Live By

The dark side of morality is also revealed when a true Christian fails and the person who didn't fail attacks him. Let's say that a person falls into immorality, and he is very ashamed of his failure.

If you are a person without that weakness, you may be apt to be the first to judge that sin. But if you do not go alone to the one who has failed, and if you verbally attack him before others, then the dark side of your morality is worse

than the immorality of the accused. Why? We are instructed to turn it over to God. If someone does something against you alone, you are to go alone and beseech him with a heart of compassion (Galatians 6:1). Do not go to anyone else, and do not judge (Matthew 7:1-2), or you will be judged.

There are questions anyone who is accusing another needs to consider: Is it true? Were you there? Do you know everything about the circumstances? Did you go to that person alone? Memorize these things and you will be set for the rest of your life if anyone says anything against you or any other believer.

The dark side of morality accuses people who fail instead of helping them to get up. If we see a brother overtaken in a fault, we are not to tell anyone; we are to help him up.

The joy of the Lord is our strength, and if we are not abiding in God's kingdom, our countenance testifies against us on the witness stand in heaven where the devil is accusing us (Isaiah 3:9; Proverbs 17:22; Proverbs 15:13).

Morality has many dark sides. It is the husband declaring to the wife, "I am the head. That's what the Bible says." But before the Word of God ever teaches that the husband is the

head, it teaches that the husband is to lay down his life and love his wife the *same* way Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Once he has that right, a man can use the authority of his headship as necessary. Otherwise, he is living in the dark side of morality. He knows the letter, but not the spirit of that doctrine.

Getting Your Way the Wrong Way

The dark side of morality can also be seen when a wife manipulates her husband out of his headship. Sweetly, tenderly, graciously, kindly (but professionally!), she says, "Honey, what would you think if we were to do this?" and it's wrong all the way, but her husband says, "Well, let's pray about that. I don't think we should do that, and this is why. But I appreciate your idea."

So she lets it go for a day, and then she says, "Well, what if we do *this*?" saying the same thing, only in a different way. She is not mean or hateful, just clever and conniving. It is professional manipulation from the dark side of morality.

A student may say in public, "Thank God for our Christian school," a day after he was smoking pot. He says it just in case someone finds out. Some people may even think there is a

revival going on because of that young person's "spiritual" confession. Of course, we thank God that he stood up, but in that case, it is the dark side of morality in action. Still, there is hope. Revival *is* happening. But remember that even the apostle Paul backslid terribly against the Holy Spirit and His counsel.

Problems in Ministry

When a pastor doesn't study for his messages, he is backsliding—even if what he tells you is true. His sermons are shallow, something that he heard from someone else, something that is warmed over, and he doesn't say anything fresh. He is serving old manna because he didn't prepare to preach, and he is backslidden. That is the dark side of morality.

A pastor should study—study until his eyes get red. People tell me I look tired sometimes. Of course, I do! You try getting up at 4:30 a.m., studying, driving to the office and studying more at 6:30 a.m., and see if your eyes don't get red! First Timothy chapter five tells preachers to study and labor in the Word and doctrine.

Keep Your Eyes on Christ: The Light of Life

Keep in mind what we learned from the

early Christians. First: The members of his church allowed God to deal with Paul.

Second: They loved him and never criticized.

Third: They did not compromise—they told him that the Spirit said, "Don't go."

Fourth: Luke went with him immediately, and ultimately the others joined him because they loved him so much.

Fifth: God worked it all together for good anyway, even though he disobeyed.

The most important thing to remember is that when Paul disobeyed God, the Christians he discipled still obeyed everything that he had taught them.

Another thing is that they didn't put their focus on Paul, examining his character or his motives. They loved Paul, but their eyes were on God. Not one verse in the Bible says we are to fix our eyes on a man. Just keep your eyes on Jesus Christ and trust Him for the outcome.

If someone does something against you or if he compromises cardinal doctrines and causes people to stumble, go to the person alone and keep it private. Make him accountable to the truth, but keep your eyes on God and keep obeying the truth that you have been taught, even if the other party is not right at the mo-

ment. What a lesson that is! Keep your eyes on God (Hebrews 12:2).

Paul's people did not cast him aside. Paul had already taught his people not to do what he was doing—being double-minded. He had a sentimental attachment to the Jewish people, precious sacred people who are part of the "whosoever will may come" crowd. When they get saved, they become members in particular in the Body of Christ. But Paul needed to hear from God and discern His will.

Chapter Three

ENTER INTO THE LIGHT OF LIFE

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Christ died as our substitute. This means that when we sin, the sin has already been judged, and Jesus Christ has already paid for the sin. John 7:24 calls this "righteous judgment." It is never our sin that judges us.

The unsaved have not had their sins forgiven, even though they have been paid for. Revelation 20:13 tells us that the unsaved will be judged *not* for their sins but by their "good" works according to human viewpoint and the evil they have done. Their sins, like those of the whole world, were paid for, but they are not forgiven because they have not received the Savior.

In the Church of Jesus Christ, there is a dark side of morality at work that equals self-righteousness. There is also comparative or relative

righteousness. In other words, many Christians will never truly forgive certain kinds of failure, especially in areas of immorality.

I thank God that morality preserves nations and can save marriages that exist without God. But morality does not save the soul, so it is only pertinent when it is under spirituality.

So many Christians have a form of morality that excludes grace, excludes mercy, excludes unconditional love, and excludes divine forgiveness. Their moral standards exclude divine patience and instant recovery through rebound as an attitude toward one who has fallen. Therefore, it is self-righteousness.

The Totality of Forgiveness

When we sin, we acknowledge the sin that has been paid for and we name the sin precisely (*homologeo*). That simply means we are to confess the sin to God by saying, "My God, I lusted," or, "I lied." By the way, a moral person who lives in the dark side of morality is always lying against the Holy Spirit because he does not acknowledge what God says about his morality—that "all your righteousness is as filthy rags" (Isaiah 54:6).

Certainly, when we sin and do not want to

get right with God, we are disciplined for (a.) grieving the Holy Spirit (b.) quenching the Holy Spirit (c.) being out of fellowship, and (d.) the natural result of reaping what we sow in the flesh. Yes, there are areas of discipline. But get this straight: Our sins are not the issue.

Our sins have never been and never will be the issue. They cannot be, because they have all been paid for on the Cross. I will reap what I have sown in my body if I abuse drugs or alcohol. If I smoke cigarettes, I will reap what I have sown in my lungs. That is the natural effect of the law of sowing and reaping. It is not judgment for my sins, however, because Jesus was the acceptable substitute paying for *all* sins.

Therefore, because He was our substitute, we have the absolute assurance that sin will never again be the issue. Still, when I grieve the Holy Spirit by living in the flesh, that becomes an issue, due to the natural process of sowing and reaping.

This is why the Bible teaches us to "judge righteous judgment." If you look at someone and say, "Well, he got what he deserved" and you mean regarding punishment for his sins, you are wrong. But if you mean that he reaped what he sowed, you are right (see Galatians 6:7-

8). "In whom [Jesus Christ] we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14).

Victory over Natural Thinking through Doctrine

Worldly people can be moral, naturally speaking, if, for example, they don't steal, if they don't covet their neighbor's wife, and if they do not bear false witness. Many nations have a form of morality that protects the freedom of person, property, and personal rights, and thank God for the places where that exists. Still, it is not spirituality.

Many marriages get by on the moral side of religion but they do not have abundant life on the spiritual side of Christianity. If I have spiritual morality according to God's viewpoint, I will give others the grace that I have received; I will forgive as I have been forgiven; I will love as I am loved.

Some people operate in the moral law of relative righteousness that follows their own code of self-righteousness. This spirit plagues churches, grieves the Holy Spirit, quenches the Holy Spirit, and robs people of true redemption, absolute grace, absolute forgiveness, absolute love, absolute restitution, and opportunities for

reconciliation.

Deal with Failure through the Process of Rebound

Don't misunderstand this: Failure should be dealt with, resolved, and reconciled with God's grace. The process of rebound includes confessing any known sin to God and being persuaded to let God take over. But there has been a destructive pattern at work for years in Christian churches, and it is the reason that people in these places do not have cognitive assurance, cognitive love, cognitive forgiveness, and cognitive confidence in redemption.

If I am moody today, I am not living in the power of God—I am living in the dark side of morality and I am not spiritual at all. If I want to destroy myself because of circumstances, then I am not executing the spiritual life of God at all. Worrying is mistreating God's creation. Moods directed at yourself are not just directed at you; they are directed against God's creation. This is a serious matter.

Perhaps you have real issues to deal with in your home. But when you belittle your spouse and become a nag, you won't find a solution. You need a solution, and you must do some-

thing, but take a divine solution by using your spiritual life. Use God's solutions, and don't live in your own relative righteousness in the mad race for superiority through self-righteousness. For many, the attitude is, "I am better than you are; I am a morally superior being." But in fact, that person's spirituality is nonexistent.

Self-righteousness always justifies itself and finds the other party guilty. Self-righteousness lies to itself, therefore it also lies to the Holy Spirit who lives inside every believer. When you lie to yourself, you deny what is right and the Spirit cannot operate. First He becomes grieved, then He becomes quenched, and except for positional truth, your life is like that of an unsaved person.

There is a better way! Our deliverance, as our salvation, comes by receiving. Why not accept God's provision and have all your needs met in Him (Philippians 4:19)?

CONCLUSION

There was Paul, the greatest man of God who lived (after Jesus Christ), and he was doing every kind of wrong thing. He wasn't immoral, but his morality was not under spiritual light. In fact, it was a carnal morality—the dark side of morality.

When Paul disobeyed God, he disobeyed the Word of God. Any time we disobey God, we are disobeying the Word. And the reason we are disobedient is because we do not really believe what the Word of God says.

We are to live by *every* word of God, and that includes the words, "It is finished!" and "No condemnation!" Thank God, we only need to be turned in the direction of His Cross. Delight in this great salvation and be a vessel that reveals the light of the Spirit of God.

The Doctrine of Doctrine

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Doctrine is a systematized body of God's thoughts about life in the categories set forth in the Bible. In this booklet we explain the principle of Bible doctrine as it is taught in the Scriptures in order to help believers appropriate knowledge in the wisdom of grace. Learning to think with God categorically, according to the Word of God, will teach us to be quiet, to rest in faith, and to live peaceably with all men.

Categorical doctrine is the basis for thinking with God objectively through His Word. This motivates us to be filled with the Holy Spirit continually, and to walk humbly before God and men.

We will apply God's Word in situations of life with the wisdom from above, which is "…first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

“But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

Chapter One

LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU

We cannot separate the person of Jesus Christ from what He thinks (Proverbs 23:7) any more than we can separate the character of God from Jesus Christ. In order to learn about Him, we must exalt Him and learn what He has said in His Word about the details of life.

"Doctrine" is simply a systematized body of teaching the Word of God. Categorical doctrines are truths and teachings in the Bible on similar, individual subjects that can be put together in the same category (such as the doctrine of salvation). It enables us to think with God in accurate light and to reciprocate and receive God's thoughts in an absolute category as set forth in the Word of God.

All doctrine is revealed and empowered in us by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). It leads us to magnify Christ, to honor His written Word in specifics (Matthew 4:4), to be objective in our

thinking, to speak and serve in the power of the Holy Spirit, and to be able to appropriate knowledge in the wisdom of grace.

Doctrine should never be taught to puff up a person with knowledge (see 1 Corinthians 8:1) or used for arguing and vain contentions. It should never be used to legislate rules and laws in the name of the Bible (see 2 Corinthians 3:6). Jesus said in John 6:63: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: The *words* [(*rhema*—what one has said or taught)], that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."[1]

Beware of those who esteem the letter of doctrine but do not impart its life. They fill their minds with facts and 'head' knowledge, which result in egocentric pride. They use doctrine as a hammer and pound the letter of the Word of God on those who do not have a capacity for it.

Doctrine spoken to us should become spirit and life through the work of the Holy Spirit in us. It provides us with definition of thinking, direction in our daily walk with God, and power to experience victory with our thoughts, our words, and our life.

Some people will say that Christ is the issue and not categorical doctrine. That statement

may sound spiritual, but it reveals a lack of understanding. John 8:47 states: "He that is of God heareth God's *words*…." "Words" here is *rhema* in Greek. In application in this context, *rhema* is defined as utterances in which God, through someone, declares His mind.[2] This could be through a preacher declaring the Word of God.

Hebrews 3:10 states: "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart and they have not known my ways."

The word for "grieved" is *prosochthizo*, which Kenneth Wuest tells us is a word, "expressive of a strong displeasure, amounting for an offence." Wuest also points out that *prosochthizo* is used in the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures) to translate the Hebrew verbs for "be disgusted, to spew out….God was offended at the actions of Israel." Why? Because they always erred in their heart. "Err" is *planao* in the Greek—to be led aside from the truth.[3] They did not have a knowledge of God's ways, and so they were led astray.

In this same verse, the Greek word for "known" is *ginosko*, which speaks of a knowledge gained from experience. The people of Israel were lacking experience in knowing God's

plan and having doctrine in their heart. As a result of not knowing the plan of God nor doctrine, they became a people of wanderers in their hearts. This is a present-day danger for us as well.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates" (2 Corinthians 13:5-6).

In this verse, we are told to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith. The Greek word for "examine" is *peirazo*, which means to test or try ourselves for the purpose of ascertaining the quality of what we are thinking or doing: Do we think according to Bible doctrine? Are we using Bible doctrine for good or for evil? The Scriptures and categorical doctrine should help us to specifically grow in grace and to think in grace toward ourselves and others (2 Peter 3:18).

Second Corinthians 13:5 also says to "prove your own selves." In the original Greek, "prove" (*dokimazo*) means "to test, to see if something is acceptable or genuine." Thayer illustrates the word by comparing it to the refining process

used to test the genuineness of precious metals.[4] *Dokimazo* in this verse means to test to make sure a given situation finds you living in Bible doctrine (the faith).

"Know ye not your own selves…." To "know"—*epiginosko*—is to become thoroughly acquainted[5] with a categorical system of Bible doctrine. Are you advancing your system of thinking with God in every thought?

"How that Jesus Christ is in you…," in 2 Corinthians 13:5, is in the locative case which means Christ is in us. Therefore what He thinks about a subject takes over our soul, and we are changed to His image on the inside in that area. We learn to actually think what He thinks, as Paul says in Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Again in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Reprobates"—*adokimos*—means disqualified, not proving to be what we ought to be. When we stop thinking with God, we become disqualified in the details of life, unable to function in the objectivity of the Word. We end up fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts of the flesh in our ignorance, because we have not allowed the Word to teach us.

As 1 Peter 1:14*b* illustrates: "not fashioning

yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance [*agnoia*—lack of knowledge]." When we are ignorant of Bible doctrine, we simply lack the information and intelligence of it, whether through disinclination, lack of study, or outright refusal to hear. Thayer defines "ignorance" as a want of knowledge, especially in divine things.[6]

Eat the Word

If we do not make categorical Bible doctrine the issue, then we will find ourselves conforming our mind and character to a different pattern outside of Bible doctrine.

Here is a list of verses that express the importance of thinking in categorical doctrine:

"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name (Psalm 138:2).

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16).

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and

make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

"He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (John 14:24).

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

"For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

"For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (James 1:21-24).

"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:5-6).

These verses teach us that when Christ is the issue (this includes living in what He thinks), and when our life is sanctified by doctrine, then we will reveal doctrine in the purity of the Holy Spirit. We must remember that the Word of God will judge us in the last day, according to John

12:47-48:

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

[1] Thayer's Greek Lexicon of New Testament, *p. 562*

[2] Ibid

[3] Kenneth Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, "Hebrews in the G.N.T.", *p. 76*

[4] Thayer's Greek Lexicon, *p. 154*

[5] Thayer's Greek Lexicon, *p. 117*

[6] Thayer's Greek Lexicon, *p. 8*

Chapter Two

THAT WHICH IS TAUGHT VS. WHAT WE ARE LEARNING

Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words gives a clear picture of two words, *didache* and *didaskalia*, that are both translated as "doctrine" in the King James version of the Bible.[7] Though both words are sometimes used to refer to that which is taught, more often, *didache* speaks of God's authority behind the teaching, while *didaskalia* is used to speak of that which we are actively learning.

Didache *in the Bible*

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine" (Matthew 7:28).

"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9).

"But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden" (Revelation 2:24).

The True Doctrine

"And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine" (Mark 4:2).

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

The following two paragraphs, found in *The Complete Biblical Library: The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary*, helps us to understand the use of didache in the Bible:

New Testament usage reflects two senses. Teaching (*didache*) can refer to "instruction," either of Jesus (Matthew 7:28; Mark 1:22; 11:18) or of others (Matthew 16:12, of the Pharisees and the Sadducees; Acts 2:42, of the apostles; Hebrews 13:9, of the opponents of the gospel).

Didache also carries the more developed understanding of "doctrine," i.e., a set of truths or practices to be learned and followed (e.g., Titus

1:9; Hebrews 6:2; 2 John 9, 10; cf. Revelation 2:14,15) which are entrusted to the Church (e.g., Romans 16:17; Titus; 1:9). As such, the only true "doctrine" or "teaching" is that of Christ. In one sense Jesus' general instruction is ultimately this same "doctrine." It comes from God (John 7:16) and has the authority of God (John 7:17f.; cf. Mark 1:27).[8]

Jesus is the one who gives the message to the messengers. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (John 13:20). The messenger is obedient to preach the Word in truth, and the congregation is obedient to receive the Word preached, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Didaskalia ***in the Bible***

"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained" (1 Timothy 4:6).

"Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour,

that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Timothy 6:1,3).

"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1).

"Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:10).

"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13).

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17).

Teaching Sound Doctrine

"Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching [*didaskalia*]" (Romans 12:7).

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning [*didaskalia*], that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

Didaskalia is a noun that means teaching, in-

struction. In Romans 12:7 and 15:4 it is to be understood in the ordinary sense of "teaching" or "instruction." More importantly, *didaskalia* (singular) came to describe proper Christian "doctrine" in contrast to the false "teachings" (plural) of men which threatened the Early Church.

Correct *didaskalia* was a crucial plea from Paul in the Pastoral Epistles. The communities—indeed, "sound teaching" itself (1 Timothy 1:10)—were threatened by false teachers who had imported their own "teachings" (plural). They could not stand sound doctrine, preferring instead the doctrines of devils (1 Timothy 4:1). The solution to these erroneous teachings was the "good doctrine" (*tes kales didaskalias,* 1 Timothy 4:6; cf. 1 Timothy 4:13; 6:3; 2 Timothy 3:10; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 10).[9]

Categorical doctrine is vitally important to every believer because it is the expression of the binding character of Christ. Also, categorical doctrine marks the difference between the truly mature congregation and the various unbalanced movements which threaten the Church today.

There are many movements in these end times that leave the emphasis of Bible doctrine and focus instead upon the emotional involve-

ment of the listener. But Jesus forbids this kind of one-sided worship in John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit *and in truth*."

[7] Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, *pp. 333-334.*

[8] The Complete Biblical Library: The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary, Vol. 12, *pp. 118-119, World Library Press.*

[9] *Ibid., pp. 113-114.*

Chapter Three

THE DOCTRINE OF JESUS CHRIST

"…The people were astonished at his doctrine" (Matthew 7:28).

"And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine" (Matthew 22:33).

"And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him" (Mark 1:27).

"And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine" (Mark 11:18).

"And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power" (Luke 4:32).

"Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me" (John 7:16).

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

"The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine" (John 18:19).

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2 John 9-10).

Chapter Four

DOCTRINE IN THE EPISTLES

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Romans 6:17).

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

"As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:3).

"For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:10).

"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of

Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained" (1 Timothy 4:6).

"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13).

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17).

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Timothy 6:3).

"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience" (2 Timothy 3:10).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).

"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9).

"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1)

"In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity" (Titus 2:7).

"Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:10).

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2 John 9,10).

Chapter Five

THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE VS. THE DOCTRINES OF MEN

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

"Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:28).

"Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord" (Acts 13:12).

"And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?" (Acts 17:19).

As we see in these verses, there have been faithful men who have both preached and continued in the doctrine of God. But when men

teach doctrines to their people that emphasize a system of works, they teach the doctrines of men.

"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (Isaiah 29:13).

"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9; also Mark 7:7).

"Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:12).

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14).

"Which all are to perish with the using; after the commandments and doctrines of men" (Colossians 2:22).

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of

devils" (1 Timothy 4:1).

"Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth" (Titus 1:14).

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace…" (Hebrews 13:9).

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Revelation 2:14).

"So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" (Revelation 2:15).

The teaching that we receive is from the kingdom of light or the kingdom of darkness. Satan, after all, does present himself as a minister of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). First Timothy 4:1 clearly states that Satan has his own doctrine by which he causes some believers to depart from the faith. If believers are not careful, Satan will use the doctrines of men to lead them to his own doctrines and thus lead them astray. (See Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7; Isaiah 29:13, 1 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 2:14; Revelation 2:15.)

CONCLUSION

Let us purpose to always be available to God's thoughts on every subject. Be ready to hear the Word preached by a pastor-teacher who rightly divides the Word of God, line upon line and precept upon precept.

When we receive His Word with meekness (James 1:21), mixing faith with it as we hear (Hebrews 4:2), the word preached profits us in every category of life, and it is able to deliver our souls.

God gave us the Bible so that we could know Him. He gave us His Word so that we could be conformed to His image and have an answer for every detail of life. This is why we need to know the Doctrine of Doctrine.

This booklet was designed to help us see the need for daily Bible doctrine. We teach Bible doctrine to others both by word and by personal example, as we appropriate doctrine in wisdom and understanding from God's heart, in the spirit of life (John 6:63).

The Door of Hope

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Many times when I go to the pulpit, I have just received news about someone who is going through serious difficulties. A young man recently found out that his father has throat cancer. A wife finds out that her husband has been unfaithful. Parents learn that their child is in trouble. People are going through so many trials and heartaches. For this reason, our desire is to bring messages that can help people understand that there is a door to hope.

First of all, our hope must be toward God (Acts 24:15). God is the author of hope (Titus 1:2). We have a lively hope, according to 1 Peter 1:3, and Hebrews 6:18 tells us that God will always set a hope before us—always.

Hope is not something we can see (Romans 8:24). If we could see it, it wouldn't be hope. We hope, and we wait patiently for something we do not see.

Abraham hoped against hope (Romans 4:18).

Hope is not wishful thinking. It is based upon the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, the integrity of His promise, and the love of His desire for us. "The LORD will be the hope of his people" (Joel 3:16).

I want to show something about hope in this booklet that will bless your hearts. My desire is to communicate and impart something that will cause you to see that in every single detail in your life, you must have hope.

Chapter One

AN ETERNAL EXPECTATION

"And I will give her her vineyards for thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt" (Hosea 2:15).

After Israel won a tremendous victory in Jericho, a man from the tribe of Judah sinned by taking things that God had called accursed from the ruins (Joshua 7:1). God told Joshua what had happened and instructed him to "destroy the accursed from among you" (verse 12). So the man, named Achan, and his family were taken to a valley where they were stoned to death and burned. God cursed the place, and it became known as the valley of Achor (verses 24-26). Thus, He set a precedent for Israel as they entered the Promised Land.

Yet in Hosea 2:15, it is written that God would bring forth fruit in that valley, making the

valley of Achor (which He had cursed) a door of hope. There, Israel would sing as she did in the days of her youth. In other words, God takes what is cursed, what people have given up on, and makes it a door of hope.

The psalmist said, "I will hope continually" (Psalm 71:14), meaning, he would hope forever. It is not wishful thinking to have this hope. Hope is something God gives you because of who you are in Christ. You can and must and will have hope—and it will be realized either now or later.

Expectation That Perishes

"When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth" (Proverbs 11:7).

Just imagine that someone could live down here, perhaps work very hard, become successful, and have a beautiful family, and yet never receive Christ. When he dies, he has absolutely no hope and goes into a Christless eternity.

"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death" (Proverbs 14:32).

The original text of this verse says that the unsaved person dies in his wicked state with no

hope of redemption. But the person who has God's righteousness has hope; and beyond hope, he has absolute trust in God's plan for his life.

The words "hope" and "wait" have the same meaning in the original text. According to Psalm 37:34, those who wait or hope upon God are exalted. God loves it when we keep hoping. And hoping, we keep believing. And when we keep believing, we keep hearing God's Word as we keep fellowshipping with God's life. It means we keep trusting God's promises. We continue to hope in mercy (Psalm 33:18) because we believe in the God of all mercy.

Desire That is a Tree of Life

"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:21-22).

When Jeremiah, the writer of that verse, recalled mercy, he was able to have hope again.

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12).

The great realization of this verse is found in

the parable of the prodigal son. When he came home, the prodigal son was hoping just to be a servant. He couldn't wait just to be back working under his father. When his father saw him, he ran to him and started kissing his son's neck. All the son could say was "I have sinned against heaven and you, and I don't want to be anything but a servant." But the father clothed him, gave him new shoes, put a ring on his finger, and threw a party for him. And the son was hoping that he would just be accepted as a servant! What he got was a tree of life. That tree of course represents Calvary's tree, which brought new life for everyone who believed and received the Savior who died there.

Hope deferred is hope that hasn't come yet; it hasn't happened yet. So, every morning, you just keep on hoping till the tree of life satisfies the desire God placed in your heart.

Chapter Two

THE POWER OF SIMPLE FAITH

A woman had cancer and was given six months to live. Making matters worse, her husband left her and her child. Every morning, noon, and night, this woman would keep saying, "I am not going to die—just not gonna do it! God will keep me alive. I have to bring up this child. I am *not* going to die."

The doctors told her to be realistic, trying to prepare her for death.

"You can prepare me all you want," she said. "But I am not going to die."

Twenty-eight years later, she is still alive. They gave her six weeks to live, but the doctors didn't realize that she just didn't want to die. "I am not going to die, my hope is in God," she kept saying. She received a tree of life.

Think of hope.

A precious Christian I know is in a wheelchair right now. She hopes to walk again on this

earth. With the waves of healing that God brings, this can happen in an instant by the grace of God. But even if this doesn't happen, her hope will be fulfilled when she is dancing on heaven's streets of gold for billions of years to come in eternity.

Hope is a great partner to travel with on this earth.

Maintaining Integrity

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

Job was a classic example of someone who had hope. "I don't know when I am coming out of this, but I know that God will deliver me" was the attitude Job expressed. Job's face was wrinkled and his body was covered with sores; he looked miserable. No one would shake hands with him (Job 17:3). His own brothers left him (Job 19:13), and his servants wouldn't speak to him (Job 19:16). Young children would have nothing to do with him and spoke evil of him (Job 19:18). His closest friends abhorred him (Job 19:19).

"This is strange," Job thought. "I used to be eyes for those who were blind and ears for those

who could not hear. When I spoke, I made people happy. I was a nobleman. I was a father to the fatherless, and I helped the poor.

"I had a funeral the other day, and there were ten caskets—they were for all of my children. Not only that, many of my servants have been killed; my possessions have been completely wiped out.

"My wife is nagging me and telling me to forsake God. And now, my three best friends have come to see me, but they haven't said a word for seven days and seven nights. I get new servants, and they leave me. But as I sit here on this ash heap, I want you to know something: I have hope in God's deliverance. I don't know when I will come out of this, but I will come out."

Our Redeemer is Faithful

Job had hope. Why? Job 19:25-27 tells us:

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

"Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins

be consumed within me."

He also said something very beautiful in Job 27:5-6: "God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.

"My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

There are people who, when they can't see a way out, lose their integrity toward faith. They lose their integrity toward hope. They lose their integrity toward prayer. They lose their integrity toward waiting upon God.

"…They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

God is saying, "Always have hope. I will not let you down. Hope till the end. Whatever you do, have a lively hope toward me (1 Peter 1:3). Be encouraged by the hope and the grace that brings in the Word of God (1 Peter 1:13)."

Whatever we do, we must have hope.

Chapter Three

THE END OF EVERY MEANS

In every realm of our ministry, from every walk of life, are some of the most beautiful people in the world. When I am with them, we have such a rich, rich fellowship in our hearts. We have such hope, and it is hope that is built on nothing less than God's righteousness.

Hope is not a means to an end. Hope is the end of every means. Hope will come to pass. God will do it.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

The Holy Spirit groans with utterings that cannot be understood, humanly speaking. While we are hoping against hope, the Spirit is groaning, and the groaning has our name on it.

When the Bible speaks of God's love, never

take it with familiarity. When God says, "I love you," it is the most sacred and precious thing in the world. "I love you so much that I died on the Cross for you. I shed My blood for you. I will save you forever when you trust Me for salvation."

The unsaved person has hope that once he believes he will be saved forever. Hope is laid up in heaven forever (Colossians 1:5). Never be removed from the hope of the Gospel (Colossians 1:23).

For the believer, it is such a precious thing to say, no matter what you are going through, "My God loves me. My heavenly Father loves me so much that He sent His Son to die for me. He will be with me forever. Everything I have ever done or ever will do has been forgiven. The Father loves me, Jesus loves me, and the Holy Spirit sheds abroad His love in my heart. Furthermore, I have hope because of the Word of the living God" (Psalm 119:49).

This living, growing hope helps a person to prolong his days upon the earth. It can help a person defeat disease. It helps a person overcome adversity, negativity, and a poor self-image. It helps a person gain victory over sin.

If you are failing right now, you need to

know that the last round hasn't been fought yet. You are going to win! Your hope will get you out of failure. Have hope in your God, that your God will get you through your failure. He will give you His mercy. He is the God of patience and consolation (Romans 15:5). He is the God in whom we have hope.

Encouragement in Adversity

A girl had a terrible disease that caused her to become paralyzed. Another disease came along and crippled her even further. She couldn't walk, all she could do was use her hands.

We met this girl in the hospital, led her to Jesus Christ, and visited her often. Once she asked, "Pastor, what can I do for God?" I said, "Make phone calls and write letters. Tell your story. Just love us all, because we sure love you."

That girl was overwhelmingly encouraging and never seemed downcast. She had this hope.

Thank God and praise the Lord Jesus Christ that we can have hope against hope. It is a lively hope. It is based upon the Author of hope and the Word of hope. It is based upon the character of God.

The Word of God says in Psalm 22:9 and Ezekiel 13:6 that we can make others have hope.

A godly husband can cause his wife to have hope. A Spirit-filled wife causes her husband to have hope. A teenager can make his mom and dad have hope when they are going through difficult times. Through fellowship in the Body of Christ we can make one another have hope.

And no matter what you go through in the plan of God, Satan cannot steal your hope. He can't do it.

Abide in the Lively Hope

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

We have a hope that is steadfast and a hope that is sure—not only in trials, not only in adversity, not only when we are weak and frail, not only when people hurt us, not only when we

have hurt others, but all the time.

Live in this lively hope. Don't be occupied with anything but hope. Have God's character toward hope. Job stood on God's character. By the light of God's word, he walked through darkness (Job 29:3). Furthermore, God washed his steps in butter (Job 29:6).

I lived on a farm for many years, and as the youngest child in the house, I had to work the churn to make the butter. That's the way it was on most farms. I would churn and churn that milk until it turned to butter.

Washing our feet in butter means that we meditate continually on the milk of the Word of God until it becomes the substance of butter in our hearts. "I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope" (Psalm 130:5). The Word works on all the parts of the soul, prompted and motivated by the human spirit.

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12).

"Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee" (Zechariah 9:12).

Job ended up with double of everything he lost—family, friends, wealth, livestock, land. He

was a prisoner of hope. He hoped against hope, and so do we. We wait upon God. It hasn't happened yet, but we are believing with all of our hearts because we are prisoners of hope. We have a way out of defeat: It is through the door of hope.

CONCLUSION

Thank God that our hope is in being fulfilled in soul winning through the tremendous hard work of so many people who go out to seek the lost. We have a vision to bring the Gospel to 220 countries. We have hope, and that hope will be fulfilled.

Whatever your situation, don't stop hoping. I don't care what a doctor may tell you, don't stop hoping against hope. You can be shocked by what hope can do. It has such power.

Everyone reading this has wanted to give up at one time or another. All of us have. But we can be revived immediately by hope. It is a lively, precious hope that comes from God.

Hope

I hoped the sun would shine again,
piercing the clouds and rain;
I hoped that some relief would come
and drive away the pain.
I shared with hope the feeling
that the way would soon be clear;
And as we groped to find our path,
Hope was always near.
I hoped to find solutions
for the problems of the day;
I hoped to find the answers
to my questions on my way.
Yet day by day no answer came,
solutions fled away.
The path stayed dark, the journey drear,
but Hope was there to stay.
At journey's end 'twas just the same,
continued I to grope;
No answers or solutions came,
and all I had was Hope.
Did sorrow crowd my weary heart?
And did I weep and mope?
For 'twas not the end that brought me joy,
but trav'ling with my friend called Hope.

My life is rich and filled with peace
until my journey's end;
For Hope is constantly with me
and is my dearest friend.
My problem yet has not been solved,
yet I have learned to cope;
'Tis worth it all to travel with
My constant friend called Hope.

(Author unknown)

The Dynamics of Obedience

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"…Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

Obedience to God's Word is so vital for God's people to understand. We may have the mistaken impression that obedience is simply doing what we are told to do; however, it is far more than that in the economy of God.

Obedience contributes to our practical sanctification in the Holy Spirit. Obedience to God's Word is the key to every thought, the key to every relationship, the key to every friendship. The key to everything that brings us intimacy with God is obedience.

Many Christians need a transformation in the area of obedience. What is needed is a total restructure of the soul—the mind, the emotions, the conscience, the self-consciousness, and the

free volition.

As this booklet will show, real obedience leaves the door open for me to be filled with God's love. Obedience gives me a love for everyone, even for my enemies. Obedience releases love. Obedience expresses integrity. Obedience reveals the divine patience of God.

Chapter One

OBSESSIONS AND COMPLAINTS

"As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me" (Psalm 18:44).

The business of practical Christianity can be summed up in one word—obedience. It is extremely sad when people become obsessed with a problem. They may be very right in their premises, but they are so wrong in their presuppositions.

Allow me to illustrate this. Suppose that a certain person feels that another person has hurt him. Perhaps they are married, and she constantly runs him down. The same problems come up, over and over again. Now, it is not wrong for him to seek counsel to get some of these problems out in the open. It is understandable and acceptable.

"He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isaiah 44:20).

Yet, a problem can develop if a person becomes obsessed with trying to manufacture his own solution. He tries to manipulate the situation to get what he wants, based upon the fact that he has been hurt by another's wrong doing. The next thing you know, a "friend" comes along and these two enter into an agreement. They determine how they are going to deal with it, but they are operating outside of obedience to God's truth. From that day forward, these friends feed on ashes.

The "friend" doesn't mind listening to the whole story repeated day in and day out. They pray together. Now, the person who caused the offense may be guilty, but these two friends are guilty of one of the sins that God hates—the sins of the tongue.

"These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

"A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

"An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

"A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19).

What these people need is a total cleansing of the unconscious mind and a new filling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does the purging by the Blood of the Lamb (see Hebrews 9:14). Then, they need to stop talking and to stop blaming others for what has happened to them.

Too Much Talk

Often, people will judge an overseeing pastor for not punishing people. First of all, he is not God. Secondly, there is no church in the world that has perfect people. One group will be imperfect on this day and another group will be imperfect tomorrow. A church leader is constantly involved in people's problems; but ultimately, talking about the problems does not bring changes. It simply reinforces the judgment upon the other party.

Consider this: God never turned away Abraham, nor did He turn away David. Still, there are people who would go to God and say, "I have read the Bible, and I don't like that you let

Abraham get away with what he did with Hagar. Why did you make him the father of my faith when he did such a thing? And don't get me started about David! He multiplied wives and then he went and took Bathsheba for himself and arranged for her husband to be killed in battle. I don't appreciate that you will allow this man, of all people, to be the prince during the Millennial Reign on earth. That is not fair."

Do you think God would listen to such complaints?

This is how some people operate in the church. One has something against this usher. Another has something against the day school. I get notes all the time from people who wonder why the church is letting someone get away with something. I cannot find it anywhere in the Bible where the church is supposed to be running people's lives.

I suppose we should complain to Jesus about Peter. "Don't tell me, God, that you are going to let Peter get away with denying you three times. If you let him get away with this, then I am not going to follow you anymore."

"By the way," God answers, "I am going to let Peter get away with it. I have forgiven him completely. His sin is all paid for. I am going to

get Peter back, and he is going to feed My sheep and My lambs."

"But God, shouldn't we wait until he has proven himself? Shouldn't we see if he is right with You?"

You may be laughing at the nature of such a conversation. But this is exactly how some people in churches act. "I don't think this teacher is right. He is not treating my child right." "No one understands what is wrong with my husband." The problem is that they will not accept what God has allowed, and instead of seeking His heart, they are seeking judgment.

Let God Deal with Situations

We are not God. We have been taught to live and let live, unless the situation is affecting the table of organization. Now, if there really is a problem with a church officer or someone on the staff, then we are to deal with the situation in grace, according to truth, and under the doctrine of privacy and confidentiality.

I cannot stand in judgment of anyone. We stand before God and not others (Romans 14:4). We cannot look into another person's heart. Even if someone failed this very day, I do not know what is going on with him. He may go

home to cry and weep. He may be so sad over his failure and completely repent before God.

Someone came to me last week and said, "Do know you that this person is doing this?"

"Were you there?" I asked.

"No, but my best friend told me that this is what happened."

The Response of Obedience

The person telling me was not there, and I was not there, but he wanted me to know just how awful it was for that person to do this thing. What was the response of obedience? I told him to go and get the person who was accused and with him there and me there, he could say just what he said, but in the other party's presence.

Obedience to the Word of God is the result of our sanctification by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2). The key to every thought, the key to every relationship, the key to every friendship, the key to intimacy with God is that we live in obedience.

We need a transformation in obedience. What is necessary is a total restructure of the soul—the mind, the emotions, the conscience, the self-consciousness, and the free volition.

Chapter Two

GETTING OFF TO THE RIGHT START

A Christian should start each day with a plan to be obedient. For instance, this morning I began by saying, "Father, there is one thing I would like to do right now, and that is to say, 'Hello.'" Why I am telling you this? Because I want to show you just how simple it is to have intimacy with God.

So I simply start my mornings this way.

"Father, I want to say hello to you. Jesus, good morning. Welcome, precious Holy Spirit. Would You fill me right now? And, Father, the one thing I want more than anything in the world is for You to keep me from falling. You promised to do this, so I am asking you, please keep me from falling. It is so easy for me to fall mentally."

Now, I am not even speaking about falling into lust, defilement, cheating, or lying. But, if I

go five hours without communicating with Jesus, if I go that amount of time without talking to Him, then I have begun to backslide.

The key for each of us is to say to God, "Keep me from falling. Help me, Lord, as I stand in Your grace. Father, give me a spirit of obedience."

Piercing the Darkness

The demonic forces work so hard trying to pierce our obedience. Consider Gethsemane, where Jesus sweat great drops of blood through his pores. He was under a severe supernatural attack as Satan battled to keep Him from Calvary. The disciples were there to pray, but they became dull and went to sleep because of the intensity of the warfare. A supernatural piercing was happening throughout that garden.

Yet, Jesus endured and went to the Cross according the divine will and purpose of God. That piercing at Gethsemane was fierce, but it did not stop Him.

The apostle Paul referred to his thorn in the flesh as a messenger of Satan to keep him humble. This thorn, I believe, was an actual demon piercing Paul's flesh. He was not sinning, but the demon was trying to pierce his obedience.

Demons want to pierce us just to keep us from following the purpose of God. The thing we have to keep in mind is that we have a position that is higher than the principalities and powers that try to plague us.

So, in these situations of warfare, this is how we should pray: "Father, because I am positioned higher than the forces of hell, would You please fill me today with the spirit of obedience?"

Often, this spirit of obedience may mean that I am to stay silent. At other times, it means having fun by making up a song. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

It is a beautiful thing to have the balance of divine diversity with the joy of the Lord as our strength. We also have tears and the compassion of God as our expression, with a desire to love and to help people.

Let me tell you, there is nothing like going to sleep when you have lived a day in the spirit of obedience. You just feel so good and so clean all over. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Your heart is purified by faith (Acts 15:9).

Chapter Three

OBEDIENCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

I love to tell the story of a great couple in our church. They were separated for four years, and I never heard the wife say anything except, "I love him, and we are going to be back together." That was her confession as she walked in obedience before God.

Now, we all knew the husband's heart. He was a sweet man caught up in confusion. But when he got rolling with God, there was no stopping this guy. It was a just a matter of time before he became one of the greatest men of God ever. And he is that, and has been back with his wife for several very happy years, and their family is following after the Lord.

This woman was always very quiet before God. Everything was going to be all right, and she believed that, by faith through grace. Not one time (and I had several brief talks with her)

would she ever say anything negative about her husband. She just would not do it.

Occasionally, I would say to her, "How are you taking it today?"

"Fine," was always her answer. "I love my husband—everything will work out."

Once she finally said to me, "If there is anything I want to express about the situation, I express it in prayer to God. Then, I find that I am filled with peace."

Oh, what beautiful obedience! I wish I could take some of this woman's spirit and distribute it among people all over our church. It would be such a great thing for the Holy Spirit to do in our midst.

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him" (Job 13:15). This was that woman's attitude. How can you defeat someone who obeys God in this way?

Obedience leaves the door open for me to be filled with love. Obedience makes love a reality in my heart for everyone—even for my enemies. Obedience releases love. Obedience expresses integrity. Obedience reveals the divine patience of God.

Obedience leaves us edified and edifying—

edifying others through the meekness of wisdom (James 3:13).

Desire produces an appetite, and an appetite produces a hunger and thirst—a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness. God then takes over with all the rest. We are filled with the One who listens to us when we come to Him.

Obedience Reveals Amazing Grace

God gives us an amazing grace through our desire and hunger. This is how we can see what God's heart is all about. His heart is all about loving everyone. We see God's heart in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24).

The father in the parable always had a heart that said, "I want my son to come home. I am just going to wait quietly. I am not going to talk about it, except to God."

Never once did the father talk to anyone about the prodigal. I can guarantee that. The son was out with the whores, partying and squandering all of his inheritance. But the father just kept watching and waiting for his son to come home.

Every morning the father thought, "Could this be the day my son comes home?" Personally, I think the father staked out a spot where he

could see as far as possible. He wanted the best view that he could have so he could see anyone drawing near to his house.

Then the day came when he saw his son in the distance.

"There he is!" the father must have shouted. Then, the father ran to meet him. He ran. He grabbed his son and kissed his neck again and again. He never talked about the son while he was gone. He could not wait to hug him. The son tried his best to confess his sin, but the father would not listen to that. He just wanted to fetch the new shoes, the precious ring, and a clean robe to put on his son who had come home.

It was time for a real party now. There was a great celebration because obedient faith released forgiveness.

Faith purifies our hearts. Obedience reveals the dynamics of God's divine characteristics of His resurrection life.

A Life of Buds, Blossoms, and Blooms

The frosty cold of death is challenged by the sunlight of resurrection life. Every single child of God is budding. The flowers are already budding in many areas of our lives. In some areas,

there are already blooms and blossoms. There is the budding, the blooming, the blossoming, and the beautiful full growth of the flower.

I love to look at believers who are filled with the great things that are budding in their lives. They have not reached their full potential or their full purpose, but they are budding. Resurrection life is bringing out the dynamics of obedience in them.

My prayer for those who are not budding is for God to create in them a capacity for obedience in resurrection power. I never want to talk about them. They can talk about me all that they please, but I will talk about them on my knees.

I can barely wait for the day to see them living in obedience as they blossom into full-grown, mature, grace-filled believers. The fruit of obedience will bring glory to God, it will edify the Body of Christ, and it will seek and save the lost. That is the heart of God and the whole purpose of our lives.

CONCLUSION

It is quite a thing to be a little creature on the earth, living in a body of death and a body of sin. Every member of the human race has an old sin nature. It is amazing how we get to know brothers and sisters throughout the different parts of the world who have the same desire to love God, to love each other, and to reach the lost.

The key to obedience is to start every day with God. Just come to the Lord and say, "Hello, Lord. Oh, God, I love You. This is just another one of Your children coming to You, wanting to be blessed through an intimate relationship with You.

Dear Father, I want to bless You through our relationship. Lord Jesus, thank You for Your obedience to the plan of Redemption. Please, Holy Spirit, fill me. I know You will do that in an instant. Thank You, and please help me to obey the Truth. I want to obey the Truth, the inner Truth, with my entire being—

with my unconscious, subconscious, and conscious mind.

When I wake up in the morning, quicken me to get on my knees to say, It is time for me to praise You, Lord. I am not going to ask You for anything. I am just going to praise You. I am amazed by what You have done through my family and my extended family. I can hardly believe it. It is rarely heard of. We have so many strong friends and strong body members in our church, and it is a joy for us to live in outstanding obedience. Thank You, from the bottom of my heart. In Jesus precious name, Amen.

The Eyes of a Loving Savior

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine the eyes of the Lord. Picture Him, as the prophet Isaiah did, in heaven's temple, high and lifted up, seated upon His throne. Then see Him, as Peter and the other disciples did, on Golgotha, high and lifted up, hanging upon the Cross.

Whether it was on the shores of Galilee, in the press of the crowds of Capernaum, or in the garden on the morning of the Resurrection, the most powerful aspect of Christ's appearance were His eyes.

Isaiah 53:2 says that He had "no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Yet over and over in the Gospels, we read how He beheld all manner of men. People were healed and the lost received eternal life.

This booklet is about the eyes of our Savior. Soon we will see Him as the Eternal Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, seated upon

the throne of God. And in spite of all the beauty of heaven, I believe that once we behold Him face to face, we won't want to take our eyes off of the eyes of our loving Savior.

Chapter One

THE EYES OF A DOVE, THE POWER OF THE LAMB

"His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set" (Song of Solomon 5:12).

In Song of Solomon 5:12, the eyes of the Lord are "dove's eyes"—the manifestation of His purity. Eyes are like windows of the soul. Looking into His eyes, we see who He is—His tenderheartedness, His kindness, and His love.

Consider this, please, as you read this message: His eyes are like doves' eyes. But He adds that they are like doves' eyes "by the rivers of waters." Out of the emotions of a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit come rivers of living water (John 7:38)—sparkling and filled with energy and freshness.

"Washed with milk" is a phrase that speaks of tender thoughts in the mind of God, filled with all the tenderness of His compassion.

"Fitly set" describes His eyes that are always properly proportioned, properly expressing His character of love and His nature of redemption.

Behold the Lamb of God

As you think of the eyes of the Lord, first consider Revelation 5:6: "In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

Here we see Jesus Christ as the Lamb in the midst of the throne. Notice that He is still a Lamb, even though the crucifixion is past. After His resurrection, He is still the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

We will have no trouble knowing who Jesus is when we get to heaven. He is still the Lamb "as it had been slain." Throughout all eternity, the fresh wounds will remain in His side, His hands, His feet, and His brow. We will see the Lamb glorified. The wounds will have no blood because it was already poured out. He will be glorified forever as a Lamb who had the power to take away the sins of the world.

In Scripture, horns speak of power. The seven horns in Revelation 5:6 refer to seven manifestations of the Finished Work for sinners. The first horn stands for the power of God's love that accepts us by grace through faith when we believe, which receives us just as we are when we express faith in Jesus Christ. It is the power of God's love (John 3:16).

Second, Jesus Christ had the power to become sin for us when He knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Third, He had the power to die for our sins and to pay for them, satisfying the justice of God the Father (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2).

Fourth is His power over death so that it has no sting (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Fifth, Jesus Christ demonstrated His power over the grave. Because of the power of Resurrection, the grave has no victory (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Sixth, He possessed the power to defeat the devil through the power of the Ascension. When Satan attacked Him with all the demons of hell, Jesus Christ ascended (Colossians 2:15), brushing off the demons that tried to stop the Ascen-

sion in their last effort to abort the Finished Work of Christ.

The seventh power is His ability to present us faultless at the Throne before God the Father (Jude 24) even though we are not perfect.

Thank God for the seven horns of power that belong to the Lord.

Seven Eyes

After God mentions the seven horns of power, He refers to seven eyes and seven spirits. Regarding His tender eyes, the first is the eye of mercy. In Psalm 85:10, mercy met truth, and righteousness and peace kissed each other. As a result, truth has sprung out of the earth and righteousness is revealed from heaven. So the first eye speaks of mercy—which means that God withholds the judgment we deserve because His justice has been satisfied with the perfect sacrifice of His Son.

The second eye of the Lamb is the eye of grace—God's grace which always gives us gifts and blessings we do not deserve (Romans 5:15).

The third is the eye of redemption. He redeemed us freely and completely with His blood, by His grace (Romans 3:24).

The fourth is the eye of reconciliation. Satan

erected and has maintained all the barriers that keep sinful men from God: the barrier of sin, the barrier of the old sin nature, the barrier of spiritual death. Every single barrier is gone, and we have been reconciled to God according to His Word (2 Corinthians 5:19-20; Colossians 1:21).

Fifth, we have the eye of forgiveness (Psalm 130:4; Colossians 1:14).

The sixth eye reveals that right at this moment, we are seated above in heavenly places in our position with Christ (Ephesians 2:6).

Seventh is the eye that makes us overcomers (Romans 8:37). When we sin, grace abounds much more. Grace reigns through the righteousness we received as a gift the moment we were saved (Romans 5:17).

The seven horns and the seven eyes represent the seven spirits of the precise manifestation of the Finished Work in the detailed account of God's nature toward sinful men.

Chapter Two

WHAT JESUS SAW TEACHES US HOW TO SEE

The eyes of Jesus are tender, intimate, personal, and very compassionate.

In John 4:7, Jesus saw a Samaritan woman who had five husbands. Now she was living with a sixth man but was not married to him.

Samaria was a place where the Lord Jesus and His disciples normally would not go. His disciples did not like the Samaritans. The Samaritans inhabited the land of Israel during the Babylonian captivity and therefore were despised by the Jewish nation (see 2 Kings 17:24-41).

But Jesus was kind to the Samaritans (Luke 10:30-35). He went to that well on purpose, met the woman at noon, won her, forgave her, and made her a soul winner in the same moment. Consider that! He saw a woman. We wouldn't call her a good woman, but He saw her, evangelized her, forgave her, and made her His own in

a moment.

In John 9:1, Jesus saw a man who had been blind from birth, and He healed his eyes. The Lord understood his blindness. He understood what was going on in this man's heart and healed him.

In Matthew 8:2-3, He saw a person who was a leper. The leper said, "Lord, will you heal me?" And He said, "I will. Be thou clean." He saw that single individual. Jesus saw the leper.

In Matthew 9:2, He saw a person with palsy. Jesus forgave his sins and, in verse 6, healed him. But even beyond that person, the Word of God says in Matthew 9:2 that He saw *their* faith —the faith of four people who had brought the man to Him. Jesus saw their faith.

The Eyes of God Are upon You

The eyes of the Lord are everywhere as they behold good and evil and the needs of individuals (Proverbs 15:3). In Zechariah 4:10*b*, His eyes are described as seven lamps, going to and fro through the earth. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus saw the faith of men and women who believed He could heal them.

And today, Jesus sees your faith.

In Matthew 14:14, His eyes saw a multitude.

They were sick, and some were oppressed by demons. Moved with compassion, He healed all the sick. He saw them pass, His eyes fell upon them, and immediately He was moved with compassion.

In Matthew 15:32, He saw people who were hungry. Here was One who Himself, at times, had no place to lay His head (Matthew 8:20). They did not have food, and He was moved with compassion to feed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes.

He saw the crowds, but He also saw individuals. He saw the woman with a blood disease. He saw a blind man. He was always looking with tender eyes. As long as you live, remember and consider the tender eyes of Jesus.

The Eyes of the Responder

In terms of her response, the Word of God says that the eyes of His Bride, which is the Church, were "like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim" (Song of Solomon 7:4).

A pool is not a fountain, and it is not a river. A pool is quiet. It is open to receive light, to receive what heaven gives it, but it is quiet. Therefore, that verse is speaking of a soul that is quiet. This is a soul that receives from heaven. It

speaks of a growing soul that is more contented to simply receive than to exercise works or to fret. This soul is a Christian who has not yet become a fountain, but he is one who is in the process of growing by receiving grace, the love of God, and the power of His Word.

A great example is when the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord upon His throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple (Isaiah 6:1). Isaiah's eyes were opened after King Uzziah, whom he loved and respected, died. Convicted by what he saw, Isaiah said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

In the presence of perfect holiness, Isaiah was aware of his sinful state. So, one of the seraphim attending God's throne took a live coal from off the altar and laid it upon Isaiah's mouth. Immediately, the prophet was purged from sin and his iniquity was taken away with the fire from off the altar.

Then hearing the voice of the Lord, which said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah replied, "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

Isaiah was like that pool. Now he was in a place of receiving what he needed, gladly accepting it by grace and through faith, willing to do what he was told to do. He was not yet a river. He was not yet a fountain. But he was a quiet soul being still before His God and not living in anxiety.

The Perfect Servant

"Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the LORD'S servant?" (Isaiah 42:19).

This speaks of someone who has been accepted in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is perfect in Him, and who can walk by faith and not by sight. It is a believer who is no longer hurt by the rejection of people nor by the fear of God's rejection. They are blind, because they trust Him completely, having faith in what God says and not in what things look like by sight (Isaiah 11:3).

The Syrophenician woman had that quality of faith (Mark 7:25-30). Even when Jesus discouraged her and did not answer her, insinuating that He agreed with the disciples that she was a dog. Then He delivered her daughter and

declared that this woman will always be remembered for her great faith. She had to believe Him while she exercised faith, and she couldn't see Him any other way than through the eyes of faith.

Chapter Three

LIFT UP YOUR EYES

A servant of God has to trust God without wavering. We can see that throughout the Word of God. In John 11:6, Mary and Martha waited four days before Jesus went to raise their brother from the dead.

When Jesus didn't come while Lazarus was still alive, Mary and Martha became upset, which revealed that they did not trust Him. A mature servant will trust God despite circumstances. He will believe God despite his feelings. He does not feel rejected just because something doesn't happen when he asks.

The servant trusts God when He takes loved ones home to heaven instead of healing them on earth. He trusts God through faith in God's Word, believing that He is faithful. He knows that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth (Zechariah 4:10) and that God always does the right thing, in spite of all the

sad things that happen in this world.

"Thou Hast Found Grace in My Sight"

In the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11), Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3), speaking of someone who is broken.

Paul said in Ephesians 3:8 that he was "less than the least." Responsible for the deaths of many Christians, Paul became a broken man; and God said, "Yours is the Kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted"—not just in the future, but immediately (Matthew 5:4). When Paul became broken, he mourned, and God comforted him.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Meekness is a gift from God and it means to be God-conscious, to always have His thoughts as our perspective and frame of reference.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Once a person becomes meek, he begins to hunger and thirst after God's righteousness, and he is constantly being filled.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7). Then, God says,

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Their eyes see God in the tenderness of His compassion.

Matthew 5:9 says, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." And, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10).

That is how a Christian grows, under the convicting and caring eyes of the Lord as He teaches us the Word of God.

Do We Have Our Father's Eyes?

In Song of Solomon 1:15, we see the tender eyes of a woman: "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes." The Bride's eyes are tender, like doves' eyes. The most beautiful thing about a dove is his eyes.

In Proverbs 27:20, the Word of God says, "Hell and destruction are never full, so the eyes of man are never satisfied." Instead of having eyes that are never satisfied, the Bride's eyes are satisfied, fulfilled, and every desire is met.

Even when it seems by sight that Jesus didn't come through, faith knows that His eyes are tender. Faith knows that He has paid for every sin. Faith understands the seven horns of power

and the seven spirits that reveal the Finished Work of Calvary, imparting seven "eyes" or attributes of God for sinful men.

The Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at the well began to win souls as soon as she was saved. Yet, even though they witnessed her conversion, all the disciples could think about was food. When they encouraged Him to eat, Jesus was still rejoicing over one soul who was saved. He said, "I have meat that ye know not of," referring to the fullness that comes from being filled with the Spirit (see John 4:25-34).

Seeing Is Understanding

To get their eyes off worldly constraints and details of life, Jesus told the disciples: "Do not say, 'Four months, and then we'll be ready for the harvest.' Lift up your eyes now; for the fields are ripe. They are white and ready to harvest" (see John 4:35).

For all the countries we go into as a ministry, that is our prayer. We need to lift up our eyes with the tender eyes of the Bride—eyes that have grown from the quiet fishpools of Heshbon, only receiving without giving, into eyes that are fountains and rivers, reflecting and pouring out the seven spirits of God in the Fin-

ished Work.

As we begin to understand what it means to have those eyes, we see men, women, and young people in terrible situations, and we are able to help them see what God sees in them. We see people who need a touch from God, and our eyes are filled with what God has given us through the eyes of faith. Our new eyes are tender, sensitive, and intimate, because the Holy Spirit reflects through us and in us the truth that love is never going to change, that grace will reign beyond sin, and that mercy will rejoice beyond judgment. God's light is eternal, and it will never, never fail as it lives in us and flows through us like a river of living water.

CONCLUSION

In Revelation 1:14, the Lord Jesus Christ has eyes as a flaming fire—all-seeing, all-consuming, and all-penetrating. The flames of that fire consume all of our sins. His eyes look with tenderness upon every need that we have. When we allow Christ to minister with His eyes, they penetrate, satisfying every need.

One day soon, we shall see Him as He is. We shall behold Him in all of His glory. For now, we are learning to walk by faith instead of by the sight of our eyes. We begin as pools that receive from heaven through the faithfulness of a pastor-teacher who imparts truth by the Word of God. Then we will be fountains that overflow with eternal life, giving glory to God. At last, we become rivers that flow out to others in fellowship with like-minded believers, bringing Christ to the nations.

Thank You, Father, for having eyes that see everything about us in the Finished Work of Re-

demption. May we have those eyes when we look in the mirror and upon people and situations. But especially, we pray that we would reflect your eyes of compassion, reverence, and awesome gratitude as we look upon each other and the lost souls to whom You lead us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Family of God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Consider what families mean to us. They are such a precious part of God's eternal program. A healthy family will manifest strong relationships and a real representation of the order of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This booklet speaks of the most important family on earth, and that is the family of God. As you will see in reading these pages, God longs to draw us to Himself and to see us draw together around truth in the life of the Holy Spirit.

Just thinking about family brings to mind one of my favorite songs. When we sing this old Bill Gaither song in church, we encourage those in the service to walk around, greet each other, and have good, old-fashioned, personal exchanges. Read and meditate on the words of this old song, and please take to heart these thoughts on "The Family of God":

I'm so glad I'm a part of the Family of God,
I've been washed in the fountain,
cleansed by His Blood!

Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family,
The Family of God.

You will notice we say "brother"
and "sister" 'round here,
It's because we're a family
and these folks are so near;
When one has a heartache,
then we all shed a tear,
And rejoice in each victory
in this family so dear.

From the door of an orphanage
to the house of the King,
No longer an outcast, a new song I sing;
From rags unto riches,
from the weak to the strong,
I'm not worthy to be here,
but PRAISE GOD! I belong!

—William J. Gaither, 1970

Chapter One

"I" FRACTURES THE FAMILY

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

"And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

"And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:7-9).

"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Psalm 42:7).

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

"Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6-7).

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to

the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:12-14).

Families are such an important part of God's operation in His creation. Follow these thoughts with me very carefully. Lucifer was in a family in heaven. He was created by God and set in his place by God. He possessed an awesome responsibility to lead the host of heaven and all of creation in bringing praises to the throne of God. The Trinity was open and available to Lucifer as he walked in the midst of the eternal counsels of eternity.

Lucifer did have volition. He had to make choices in his areas of responsibility. Even in that atmosphere, there were details of life to perform. Serving God was not automatic; a response was necessary.

In one moment, however, Lucifer lost his sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. No longer was he content with the place where God had put him. His change of attitude resulted in his alienation. That word is an important one to understand. It speaks of someone who denies his origins and who refuses to recognize the debt he

owes. This, I believe, is the essence of iniquity.

Lucifer, who is now known as Satan, forsook the One who made him. He did not originate in himself. God created Lucifer and set him in the place he occupied before iniquity was found in him. At that moment, Lucifer stopped recognizing where he came from, and he also refused to acknowledge that he owed his very existence to the God he had been serving to that point.

The Origin of Sin

This anointed cherub had an awesome job. A number of commentators indicate that Lucifer's chief function was to bring light. That is, he communicated the mind of the Trinity to the rest of God's creation, and then he also stirred and carried the praises of that creation before the Throne of God.

Before he changed his attitude, there was really one will in operation over all of creation. That will belonged to I AM THAT I AM. God introduced Himself to Moses with this title. It represents the always existent, eternal nature of God. He is, always has been, and always will be. The concept of time belongs to our existence. It does not belong to God's. He created time for us, but He reigns sovereign outside of time. He sees the beginning and the end of all things at all times.

When iniquity was found in Lucifer, another will began to operate. "I" will be as the Most High, Satan declared. That new "I" represented a choice to focus attention on self rather than on God. This was the start of competition, comparison, rivalry, and sin. We see from the Bible that a third of the angelic host decided to follow in the "I" adventure with Satan. Volition and responsibility involve choices, and every choice essentially comes down to this one: Do I go God's way or my own way?

More subtle than any beast, the serpent spoke slyly to Eve from his viewpoint. His deception turned Eve from her focus upon God, the One who met and communicated with her and Adam in the cool of the day. Lucifer got Eve to enter into the "I" life apart from I AM THAT I AM.

That decision fractured the order which the Lord had established for the first family. Adam and Eve made a choice, and that choice had a consequence. God meant what He said when He warned the first human beings not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The I AM told them the result would be death. Death came to them, and decay became a part of life.

Frustration, fear, envy, jealousy, and trouble entered the picture on that day. We see that it got out of control quite quickly in the human race. Cain got angry and killed his brother, Abel. The

struggle for oneness in the family continues to this day.

Chapter Two

LIVELY STONES

"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created" (Ezekiel 28:13).

"And he put them on the shoulders of the ephod, that they should be stones for a memorial to the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses.

"And he made the breastplate of cunning work, like the work of the ephod; of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.

"It was foursquare; they made the breastplate double: a span was the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof, being doubled.

"And they set in it four rows of stones: the first row was a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this was the first row.

"And the second row, an emerald, a sap-

phire, and a diamond.

"And the third row, a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst.

"And the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper: they were inclosed in ouches of gold in their inclosings.

"And the stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, every one with his name, according to the twelve tribes" (Exodus 39:7-14).

Ezekiel 28:13 speaks of the covering of stones relative to Lucifer. Then in Exodus, we have the references to the stones that were fastened to the High Priest's breastplate. These stones have always stood for the characteristics of God. It was not an explanation of the expensive stones in the way that Hollywood speaks of them. Rather, these stones relate to the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Those are the nine stones we see in Ezekiel. The first three stones refer to God's character that is worked inward. Then, there are three that represent God's character as it goes outward. The last three speak of His character in us as it goes upward toward Him.

Remember, Lucifer was created. He was perfect and bright and wise. Yet, he made a choice of

dissatisfaction. He wanted something for himself.

Now, there were three stones that Lucifer did not have for his covering, and these are particularly related to the work of Jesus Christ. In the ancient world the ligure was a gem that related to obedience. Jesus was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, during His ministry on earth (Hebrews 10:7; Philippians 2:7-8).

The agate stone included many stripes and colors, which referred to the many-faceted grace of God. This gem stood for the Lord's diversity and how we are healed in the cloud and incense of His presence.

The other stone that was on the breastplate, also not listed with the nine stones of Lucifer, was the amethyst—a clear purple stone that referred to the hypostatic union of Christ, the union of divinity and humanity in His person. As the Son of Man, Jesus never became intoxicated with the details of His life here. Our Lord was never overwhelmed because His perfect humanity totally trusted in God the Father.

Christ's covering did not cover Lucifer's fall. His death could not redeem Satan, but Jesus did redeem us. As a result, we are now "lively stones." We are filled with God's Spirit and fitly framed together.

Part of a New Building

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19-22).

We are now part of a holy habitation that is linked to the Chief Cornerstone—Jesus Christ. The cornerstone represents the most significant stone in any building. Every other block must be correctly related to the corner. If a block is off in its correlation to the cornerstone, then the whole building will become crooked and compromised. It becomes a dangerous building because it is not square and right.

The family of God is a great building. Any family can be a great household, a great building. The husband and wife nourish and cherish each other. Each one develops an inner life with God. There is confidence because the home is set upon the foundation of truth. Good self-images

develop with a wonderful plan. In this kind of family, children learn what real life is all about. Their training, their development, their spiritual life, their practical life, and their responsible life come through the covering of a family.

Chapter Three

ABBA, FATHER

Family means a lot to me. I was one of seven, and my father died when I was three years old. We had huge long table and I had my place. My brothers always made sure that I was in my place, or they would put me there. It was wonderful.

My mother rose up very early every morning and worked her heart out to raise this family. I can never remember her raising her voice. Every Saturday my dear mother would bake beans with pork and fix some homemade rolls and homemade pies. When she was in her mid-70s she could hardly move her fingers because of arthritis, but she never quit. I have so many precious memories that I will always cherish.

Made Heirs with Christ

"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made

under the law,

"To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:3-7).

Even though I had a wonderful family to grow up with, I always wondered what it would be like to have a dad. Then, I got saved. I found Christ, and God became my Father. Now the Holy Spirit witnesses to me that I am a son. I am a child of God. I have no reason to fear because underneath me are His everlasting arms.

It is a beautiful thing to know that in the depths of our hearts we have a heavenly Father. This Father knows us and hears us and sees us. By His power, we have been placed into a precious, sacred family.

Our Father is the God of all comfort, the God of all grace, the God of all patience. Our Father is the God of all. No good thing will He withhold from us! He will never leave us, nor will he ever forsake us.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the

grace of God should taste death for every man.

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

"Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Hebrews 2:9-12).

Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call us "brethren." Christ sings with us in the midst of the great congregation that He has called out from the world. In Song of Solomon 4:10, the bridegroom speaks to the bride saying, "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!" He was saying, as Christ is saying to His family, His Church, "You are everything to me. You are my family forever."

This is the deep calling unto the deep. God's deep love is drawing out things that we never knew were inside of us. Just as a father or a mother's gentle ways can bring out the best in their children, His gentle way with us makes us great.

CONCLUSION

We are complete in Christ. We are perfect in Him. Jesus is our Savior. He is our Brother, too. We say, as He said and as He taught us to say, "Our Father" when we pray. Having not known my father, who died when I was very young, I have really seen how important it is to know my heavenly Father. He is the Father for all those who are fatherless.

We are so dearly loved by God! The promises He gives us are always "yea and amen." He calls us to go forth. And we go forth. We have other places to touch, other countries to reach. New cities are there, waiting for us to pioneer. God has opened up so much for us. Yet, there is so much more for us to do.

We can shine for Him and not whine about our situations and circumstances. Start with today, and just plan on shining and not whining. In your families, at your jobs, in your churches—shine on and refuse to whine.

The Lord has hid us with Christ in God. We are complete in Him who possesses all power

and all knowledge. We can bloom as we rest in His love. We will bloom and not live in the gloom. Our life will be one that looks up and away from this world to a city whose builder and maker is God.

That is our purpose. That is our calling. That is our life.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)*.

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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The Father Knows Best

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine your young son or daughter coming to you and asking for permission to go roller-skating on the highway. "No" would be your answer, of course. You would then probably explain the danger of doing such a thing. The child may express some disappointment, but he would probably follow your instructions. Your direction kept him safe and out of danger.

As parents, we make decisions for our children. They sometimes disagree with the choices we make for their lives. Still, we make those choices for them, understanding that our experiences and knowledge are better developed than their own.

Christ was directed by His Father in everything He did (John 5:19-20). In the same way, our heavenly Father is eager to guide and direct our lives. We would be wise to allow Him to direct us by His Spirit and His Word. Yet, in His sovereignty, He has chosen not to violate our

freedom to choose.

In this booklet, we will examine the value of giving the control over our lives to God the Father. Through these pages, we will see that the all-wise, all-powerful, and everywhere-present God will always do what is best for us and for our families.

Chapter One

COME BOLDLY TO THE LORD

"How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

"How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (Psalm 13:1-2).

I find it very unusual to see the boldness of David when he addresses God. The king is amazingly open with God, and that makes what He says very interesting.

Of all the men in the Bible, I do not believe that any man spoke to God more boldly than David did. He had a way of being very upfront with God—and I think God liked it. I believe it is one of the reasons God called David "a man after mine own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22).

Pleading for the Sheep

"O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?

why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

"Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt" (Psalm 74:1-2).

Look at this statement by David: "Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?" That is a bold statement. Do you ever talk to God like that? I have never dared to talk to Him that way. I mean, I believe that God is right in whatever He does. So, if you were to ask me, I would vote for whatever God says every single time. Still, I find it interesting that David had the boldness and intimacy to trust God in this fashion.

"I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me" (Psalm 77:1). This is how David addressed God. "Answer me speedily, God!" David had great boldness.

God loves this approach, and He wants us to have the same kind of boldness. I have told this story many times, but it deserves repeating. My daughter Melody always knew how to get something out of me. "Daddy, you are the best! I love you," she would say.

A few minutes would pass and then again. "Daddy, I am so glad you're my daddy."

Then came the kicker.

"Daddy? There is this dress at the store in town. It's only this much—but if you don't have it, that's okay."

I could not wait to give her the money for the dress. What happened? She just came boldly and asked for it.

God really wants us to know and love Him and trust Him this intimately. Now, of course, there were other times when I had to tell my daughter that she couldn't have something or couldn't do something. That is because I had to look out for her best interests.

The Lord does the same thing with us.

Delight in the Ways and the Word of God

"I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

"I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word" (Psalm 119:15-16).

I have a mental exercise that I love to go through when I am having trouble understanding why things happen to me. I have used it again and again, and I believe this exercise will help you, too, because there will come times

when you cannot understand why certain things are happening.

Like Ezra in Psalm 119, I have to meditate on God's precepts. I have to park there for a while and have respect unto His ways. In this way, I get built up as I meditate on God's love for me and the fact that He wants what is best for me.

The first part of this exercise is to recognize that God loves me individually. I start by saying to myself, "God loves me and wants the best for me." That comes first. God loves me, He calls me by name, and He wants the best for me. His love is perfect.

Chapter Two

GOD WORKS ALL THINGS FOR GOOD

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

The second part of my mental exercise is to see that God knows everything, and He knows what is best for me. This is extremely crucial. The eyes of the Lord are in every place. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Him (Colossians 2:3).

So God knows everything, and God knows what is best for me. If He loves me, then He knows what is best for me. Because He knows everything, He knows how to provide the best for me in every situation. I have to remember that.

God always has to work around the wrong decisions we make. Don't ever forget that. God

will never violate human volition. He gave us a free will, and He will never violate it. Free volition is the first gift and institution of God toward man. It is part of His sovereign plan.

On that basis, His plan is different from what we think, because even though He knows the wrong decisions I will make, He will not stop me from making them. Still, His sovereign plan will make something good out of those decisions, according to Romans 8:28.

Working Around Our Weaknesses

The Word of God says, "Be patient in tribulation and instant in prayer" (Romans 12:12). Unfortunately, we don't always follow this truth. God, then, has to work around the fact that I don't always pray when I should. He has to work around the fact that I don't always fellowship intimately with Him. I may not do bad things per se, but I am just not always in tune with the intimacies that come from His wisdom.

Are we faithful to hear God's perfect will for every matter we encounter? I am sure each of us can think of times when we were doing fine, but then we stepped out of His will. There is no sense in worrying about that now. Just know that God knows all, and He knows exactly what

is best for you and me.

God is all-powerful; therefore, He can do what is best for us. When we recognize this, we begin to trust Him.

Suppose someone marries outside of wise counsel and the perfect will of God. God will not force a husband to get right and to serve Him. But God will give grace to the wife. In His omniscience, God the Father knows everything about the situation. The Lord will work on that husband in the sovereign process of time. He did not put this woman in this marriage, yet God will do the very best for her in the situation.

He loves us through it all—even through the results of our unwise decisions—and He will never leave us nor forsake us when we fall short of His perfect will.

Chapter Three

TRUST IN THE WISDOM OF GOD

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17).

The next thing to consider is that God is full of wisdom; therefore, He will do the best for you. Not only does He want what is best for you, but He has the power to do what is best for you. Furthermore, He knows and will only do what is best for you.

As a parent, I have to admit that I have not always known what is best for my children. I believe I have been a good parent, but I am sure if I could relive my life with the wisdom I have now, I could have been a better parent. I am not living in condemnation; still, I must admit that my experiences would make me a better parent.

One pastor I know appointed his seventeen-year-old son as the youth leader in his church. It didn't work out. The temptations and pressures

were too great for the young man and he failed miserably. This pastor said, "If I could change that decision, I would. But I can't now." Fortunately, the son came around, and everything worked together and the pastor's ministry was blessed and continued to grow.

Making the Most of Marriage

We do try to do what is best; yet we just don't always know what is best. It bothers me tremendously when I have counseled couples where a husband is so busy with his ministry that he is insensitive to the needs of his wife. The responsibilities of the church are never to take the place of the needs in a marriage. Sometimes leaders neglect their wives and families, but the church is there to encourage and edify couples and families.

There have been times when my wife has battled severe physical illness, and I have told her I would stay home instead of coming to preach. She has never said, "Yes, please stay home," and she knows that I would. In other words, I don't care how big my work is, if I am a failure as a husband, I am a failure in life.

I am not trying to lay a guilt trip on anyone. Yet, I want to be clear about this. As pastors, our

wives are to be second only to God in our lives. We are to build them up publicly, and we are to watch and be careful about letting women hang around us.

My wife is not a jealous woman. She always encourages me to minister. I do not always know what is best for my wife, but I will give her the best that I know to give her. I do everything I can to make my marriage effective.

I thank God for a man who will come back from the foreign field when his marriage is not what it should be. Perhaps you find it hard to believe that I hold this opinion, but this is what I believe. I can never expect my wife to be what the Bible says she should be unless I first become what I am supposed to be for her. If I do not love my wife with all of my heart, I can never expect my wife to be what I want as a wife.

Bringing Up the Children

The same practice should apply to our families. There is a way to bring up children. None of us will do it perfectly. Still, we have to decide what is best for our children considering their individual makeup, while dealing with them without compromising. We have to consider

how best to love them into victories and how best to help them overcome weaknesses. We want to honor and respect them without being critical.

On an individual level, God will teach us the best possible way to parent a certain child. Why? Because He knows what is best. He knows everything. He has the power to help us do what is best if we follow after Him (John 8:12) and fellowship with Him.

We just need to keep receiving the Word of God in meekness. In meekness, we allow the fruit of the Holy Spirit to be cultivated in us (James 1:21). Then, we will be humble before people because we love them and count them as precious. We will treat them as God treats us. We give them God's best as He gives us what is best for us.

CONCLUSION

God loves me and knows what is best for me. God knows everything, so He knows what is best for me. God is all-powerful, so He can do what is best for me. God is full of wisdom, and He will do what He says He will do for me. He will work all things together for good.

Think of the times when God has worked around your weaknesses to bless you. Believe me, He does it. And that is one of the big reasons I love Him.

He loves us, and He will do what is best for us, because His love is infallible. No one who knows His love can resist His Word. No one who knows His grace can reject His provision. No one who understands His holiness can neglect the process of progressive sanctification through His Word and His Spirit (John 17:17; 1 Peter 1:2).

God has the wisdom to take your marriage and turn it around into a most amazing thing.

“Oh, God help me. You have the wisdom. You have the knowledge. You have the power. Give me what I need for my family. Give me what I need for my wife!” When God finds you flat on your face, praying, He will hear your prayer, and He will work to make a difference very quickly.

The Father knows best, and He will make all things beautiful in His time (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

The Final Evaluation

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

Picture a scene in a courtroom. Now take that scene into the future, into the Supreme Court of heaven at the Bema Seat of Christ. According to Romans 14:12, we are there alone; no one else is standing with us—an awesome thought to consider. We are there to give an account of every moment of every day we ever lived on the face of the earth. Our opportunities will be brought up. Our decisions. We will be there to receive the eternal evaluation of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). The question will be this: Were you spiritual, or were you carnal?

In God's eyes, there is more to carnality than immorality alone (Romans 2:1-6). Sometimes, people who are outwardly moral are filled with self-righteousness, insecurity, fear, criticism, comparing themselves with others—all differing degrees of carnality. Being depressed, living in unbelief, internalizing stress because of circum-

stances, people's reactions, and daily pressures: all of these are carnal traits.

This booklet will help to prepare us for the day when, all alone, each born-again believer will stand before God, in the Supreme Court of heaven. There, God will open the Book which will evaluate our lives—the precious Word of God. He will reward each believer for every act done by faith, in obedience to His Word.

Chapter One

PREPARATIONS OF THE HEART

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Imagine being alone with God—the God of creation, of redemption, of reconciliation. There will be millions and millions of people in heaven, yet each one must appear before Him alone. There will be no marriages, so you can't look to your spouse. Your best friend can't be there to help you out. You will be there alone.

According to John 12:47-48, the procedure is simple. God will open up the Bible. You will not be able to offer any excuses. Talking will do no good. You will not express why you did what you did, why you did or did not get victory. There will be no communication on your part. You are in the presence of who God is: His om-

niscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence, through the integrity of His essence. Every time you obeyed God by faith, it was recorded in a book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16).

One of the first things He will address is your Christian walk. Were your actions motivated by God's love? Were you faithful to His commandments? You won't answer that; He will tell you. Faithfulness will be the main issue. If you were godly, your reward will be gold, silver, and precious stones. If you lived a self-righteous life judging people, that will all be revealed, because we have no right to judge anyone (Matthew 7:1-5). When problems come up that must be dealt with, God has established a process through the table of organization (Matthew 18:15-17). It begins with going to the person alone in a spirit of meekness. This is designed to win him back and cover him if he is willing to repent.

A Finished Work Evaluation

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47). This verse reveals the Finished Work. There is no judgment now. We receive discipline, but no

judgment—that is, for now.

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

What will judge us? The Word. Man must live by every single word of God (Matthew 4:4). Mary said, "Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). To the blind men who wanted to see, Jesus said, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). When Jesus prayed for His disciples, He said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Before that, He told them, "…the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

That is why when we stand before God and He opens the Book, we will not be able to speak in self-defense. At the Bema Seat, there is not one indication that there will be a dialogue. We will give an account of what has already happened. Of course, our sins have been placed under the Blood and forgiven, and they will not be brought up. Yet, the heart attitude will be addressed. Were our actions motivated by love?

As we stand before Him, the Lord will bring up the two great commandments, Did you love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind? Did you love your neighbor as yourself? (Matthew 22:37-40). That will be the tough one. Then, He will let you know how you did.

He will ask whether you loved your enemies as He did (Luke 6:27, 35). He loved them by dying for them. He didn't talk against them. Did you live in reactions toward people at your workplace? Did you talk too much for years about people who hurt you? For all of those years, by just reiterating old wounds, you lost rewards. It doesn't mean we must have fellowship with our enemies. Yet, according to 1 John 3:14 and 16, by loving and laying down our lives for the brethren, we perceive the love of God, and we know that we have passed from death to life.

The first thing that we will be judged for is the character of God's love manifested through our lives. We will stand before Him at the Bema Seat all alone, and we will come away either happy or ashamed. The Bible doesn't say how long the shame will last, but it will not last for-

ever, because heaven is heaven.

So, love is the first thing.

Be Willing to Be the Victim

"Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12, 13:34). This shows you are truly saved (1 John 3:14). Yet, how many of us understand that to love someone with God's love may mean to lay down your life for them (1 John 3:16)—to be willing to be the victim? How do you respond to being the victim? Do you run away from the idea? Are you afraid of it? Is it fair? Where did this principle come from?

Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

"All we like sheep have gone astray.; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

The servant is not above his master (Matthew 10:24-25). If the world despised Christ, they will also despise His representatives on the earth. In your marriage and in your dealings with others, including the unsaved and the unmerciful, you will be evaluated for your willingness to be the victim. Were you a loving victim,

regardless of the unfair attacks against your character at times? In your marriage, were you able to love unconditionally. The Word implies that we did not deserve God's love, so we should love others freely as well.

Of course, if you are being physically abused, you must bring that to the attention of people who can help you. But if you were just being selfish and stubborn, withholding affection and defrauding, you will suffer loss of all rewards in your marriage. It will be a sad day for you when that is revealed by the Book.

How we respond to the Word now will prepare us for our appointment in eternity, in the courtroom of heaven. Therefore, let your words on earth be few and let them be edifying.

Chapter Two

MEASURED BY THE WORDS GOD HAS SPOKEN

Jesus will open up Ephesians 5:25, and say to the husband, "Did you love your wife as Christ loved the Church?" Imagine the look on some people's faces when that verse is brought up. We will be judged by God's Word that has been spoken.

He will reveal to us whether or not we were conformed to His image by grace (Romans 8:29) while we heard the Word preached. He will reveal whether we believed that every word of God was inspired, and then, whether we lived by every word of God (2 Timothy 3:16).

He will show us whether or not we received the Word with meekness (James 1:21). If not, did we get right quickly? He will have it all written down. He won't mention sin, but He will mention our faith response to the Word preached, because it is a fair evaluation.

Children Will Be Accountable

Parents need to teach their children about the gravity of the Bema Seat evaluation. I would never let one child ever say to his mother or anyone else, "Shut up!" I would deal with their attitude instantly, because if they say that today, a year from now, they will say something worse.

Many teenagers are not taught to be Spirit-filled with the Word. They are good children, but they have never been trained in a loving way to be Spirit-filled. I am talking about the importance of being trained to be filled with the Word and the Spirit.

So many parents battle their teenagers' flesh and demand their obedience, and get them to try to become something in the flesh, but they can't do it. In a sense, some parents train them to lie by training their flesh to do better. The Bible says that the flesh profits nothing; it is the spirit that gives life by the Word (John 6:63). But proper training starts with parents or caring people who live real Christian lives with compassion, love, and fun around that Book, making it practical for their teens.

While we are being evaluated by every word of God, He will not mention the sin issue because our sins have already been forgiven, forgotten, and washed away. Yet, He will bring up what we did in obedience to the Word.

Five times, the Holy Spirit recorded the commandment to go into all the world with the Gospel. Therefore, at the Bema Seat evaluation for the believer, the Lord can look us right in the eye and say, "I gave you the Great Commission just before I left. It was recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-48, John 20:20-22, and Acts 1:8. Here are the words; you can see them for yourself. Now I will show you what you did with My commandment."

He continues, "I am evaluating you according to the words I spoke. And by the way, I have recorded all the times your pastor brought up each verse—whether you were there or not. So now, either your record of evangelism was terrible and you will be ashamed, or you were a hero of obedience."

That is why for forty-seven years I have gone soul winning on purpose every week, unless I am away. Why would I do that for forty-

seven years? Wouldn't that wear anybody out? I don't look at it as "work." I look at it as fulfilling a mandate from the One who made me. I go because of the Holy Spirit's love for the lost.

As a pastor, I feel bad for Christians who hear the messages but never evangelize. I am not here to condemn them. But their next evaluation in eternity will reveal their obedience. Did they obey every Word of God? Did they obey the Great Commandment to love with God's love? Did they obey the Great Commission to evangelize?

Can you imagine what it will be like for those who don't go soul winning regularly, at least once a month? Excuses will not be accepted. Our vocation, which is what we have been called to, is Christ. Our occupation, though important, is how we make money to support our needs. When we are faithful to the call of God and have the proper perspective, we will be able to do what is necessary on our jobs.

You may excuse yourself by saying, "Well, I went out when I could," counting the few times you went.

That is not going to make it with God. Our example is in Acts 2: The New Testament Church went soul winning daily.

Kicking against the Pricks?

There is no need to get upset about this message. It is simply a picture of what will happen when we face God as believers. There is not a single thing you can do to stop it from happening. We will all be evaluated at the Bema Seat according to how we responded to God's Word. Every theologian agrees that the Great Commandment is to love, and the Great Commission is to witness on purpose.

We witness because we plan to go out soul winning—for instance, from house to house (Luke 6, Luke 10, Acts 20:20). The Twelve, the Seventy, and the apostle Paul all evangelized from house to house.

Some people are saying, "Well, I witness by being a thoughtful neighbor."

Yes, but did you go from house to house? Did you go on purpose with the Gospel? We have to make sure that we have godly priorities included in our daily schedule so that we can go out and evangelize the lost. How will they hear if we don't tell them?

Jesus Christ will reveal your thought life through the Word of God.

Chapter Three

NOTHING IS HIDDEN

When He was born, His name was Jesus. When He started His public ministry, His title was Christ. Then, when He ascended, He became Lord.

He must be the Lord of my life (Romans 10:9-10), and I must submit to His authority. As the Bible says, "Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus."

My mental attitude and the condition of my heart will be revealed. Even my thought processes—which God could see when nobody else could—will be revealed by the Word.

Then, He will evaluate my confession. What was my confession in my home? Did I curse? Was I an angry person sometimes? Or did I confess and manifest Christ according to my faith, even when things were not going well? All of my confessions must be dealt with, not as sin but according to the evaluation of the Bible,

through categorical doctrine.

Fruit Is Revealed

Next, He will examine other fruits of the Holy Spirit revealed in my life. Did I have joy? Peace? Did I experience longsuffering through the Holy Spirit? Was I, practically speaking, a gentle person, using rebound when I failed? Did I live in divine goodness? Was I faithful—faithful to love, faithful in outreach, faithful in thinking?

My faithfulness will be revealed according to the Word. Did I submit to and obey the Word that was preached through my pastor-teacher, or, was my walk with the Word conditional and seasonal? Did I faithfully attend services and fellowship around the Word much more as I grew older in Christ (Hebrews 10:25)? In Acts 2:38-48, the believers gathered daily. Paul spoke twice a day to the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:29-32).

Did I reveal meekness, which is God-consciousness? Did I show temperance—divine control of my emotions? I will be judged for my love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance, because these are the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

A husband will be judged for how he honored his Head, Jesus Christ and how he let Christ's love flow out to his wife. A woman will be judged for how she was a helpmate to her husband—a subject that is so misunderstood. Recently we taught that according to Proverbs 31, having an excellent helpmate was how a man became the chief elder above the other men in the land. It was her ability as a helpmate, her virtuous life, that did it. She helped him become what he could be, and he praised her for it. The children rose up and called their mother blessed.

Through humility and meekness, a man recognizes divine authority because of maturity. He doesn't compete with those whom God has placed in positions of authority.

At the Bema Seat of Christ, we will be rewarded for all good things we communicated with the pastor-teacher (Galatians 6:6). I receive many beautiful comments, calls, and letters from people who appreciate me and the messages I speak. That communication is precious because it comes from hearts that know what this verse means.

To "communicate" means to enter into fel-

lowship as a partner or an associate. It means more than having an emotional response because you were stimulated by a certain theme. The question will be, "Did you get down in the trenches and share Christ's burden for people? Did you share his vision to go into all the world and support that vision in any way you could—with prayer, with finances, or by going?"

The honor code will be an important topic because in heaven there is perfect honor. And with the sixty-eight things Jesus gave you when you were saved.* You have already been honored to the highest possible extent, in terms of your position. Imagine what that means! You can never add to it. There is not a thing you can ever do to be honored any more than you are right now. You can be blessed and gain rewards, but you will never be honored more.

Rebound to Always Abound

When I understand that I will be evaluated by every single word of God, then it seems important that I should take in as much of it as I can. Moreover, the Word I take in ought to dwell richly in me (Colossians 3:16). I ought to be set apart by the Word. I ought to sing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace

in my heart to the Lord all the time.

Do you realize that you are around God all the time? You may not feel it, but there is never a time that God and you are not together. Does that cause fear? It ought to stir up a godly fear, which is reverence for the Lord—enough to cause you to rebound every time you think something is wrong in your walk with God.

Thank God for recovery, and thank God that when we recover, and rebound, and do not condemn ourselves, we can go on with God, having fellowship with Him all the time. We can have a ball with God and never be affected by people or circumstances, except to draw nearer to Him in prayer.

All we can do is the best we can, and then give the rest to God. So do your best, and cast your burden on God. That is all you can do. Amen? Amen!

**For a complete list, read* What Happened When You Received Christ?, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

CONCLUSION

You and I will be all alone in the Supreme Court of heaven. With billions of the redeemed outside the courtroom, each one of us will go before Him alone, and God Almighty is going to open up the Bible.

So many will have their excuses for not obeying God. For those who had a problem with moodiness, God will show in the Book why they were moody. He won't ask. He already knows. Then He will show them the message their pastor preached that could have set them free.

"Well God, I missed that message. I went to the beach all summer. I'm sorry."

"Oh, I wasn't going to bring that up. I am just going to bring up what you missed while you were at the beach, because you are being evaluated by the Bible."

God doesn't mind your going to the beach if you like it, but you need to plan on purpose to receive the Word. Don't take lightly your place

in the Body. Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, but do it much more as you see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25). That "day" points to the end of time as we know it, when we will face the final evaluation at the Bema Seat of Christ.

D*ear Father, we are so thankful that you are preparing us so well for the Bema Seat. Help us to recognize that every detail of life can be a blessing when our focus is on Your purpose. Please help us to live in the joy of our redemption.We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The Finished Work of Christ

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth" (1 Corinthians 8:1*b*). Consider these three points regarding our response to Bible teaching: First, people who are well-taught in the Word of God will either be broken before God or become puffed up.

Next, every person is equally responsible before God for every opportunity He provides to hear the Word being taught. This also produces the equal responsibility of receiving faith from every message.

Finally, we are to have a faith that serves every person at all times—mentally, verbally, emotionally, and physically—by unconditional love (Galatians 5:6).

The message of the Finished Work is fundamental to what Christians profess to believe, yet few ever grasp it. "It is finished" is the most powerful rebuke to whatever demon is plaguing you, but it is also the most uplifting word you

can offer a soul lost in sin. As you study this topic, focus on the importance of internalizing what you *know* of the character of God, who finished the work and bids us to come.

Chapter One

ADAM LIVES

"Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isaiah 1:5-6).

Adam is alive, and he is in us. He has never been eradicated, and he never will be (until we go home to be with Christ). In the unconscious, subconscious, and conscious mind of Adam, there is death. We are never healed from what is in Adam. What Adam was yesterday, he is today; what Adam is today, he will be tomorrow. Adam's problem is incurable, and he is condemned by the Law, which is God's perfect will according to the 'letter'.

This is why the struggle in the flesh becomes

extremely difficult. A sincere person may become weary in the way. A person who is striving will begin to faint. Though they experience moments of inspiration and days of victory, within is a diseased man that is incurable. For any of us, it doesn't make a difference whether one is a pastor or a professor at a Christian college. The diseased man is always in us, and there is not a thing we can do to cure him.

It is in this struggle that many sincere believers consistently frustrate the grace of God. They want to give up, but they can't because they believe the truth about Christ's love for them.

Adam is in us, but since we were saved, *we will never again be in Adam*. When we allow Adam to have dominion over us, the letter of the law regarding the character of Christ condemns us. It reinforces our problems, our guilt, our low self-esteem, and our spiritual poverty.

Adam will never change. His head is sick, he is distorted, and he is diseased. He has running sores that will never be closed nor mollified with ointment. And God says, "The ox knows his owner, and the ass knows his master's crib, but My people do not know. They do not understand" (see Isaiah 1:3).

This condition is a problem even for those who believe in the Finished Work. It is not because people are not sincere, but according to 1 Corinthians 8:2, no one knows any subject as he ought.

It's the Law

"Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?" (Romans 7:1). According to Romans 3:19, the law was given that every mouth may be shut. That is our condition. The law *always* condemns Adam; it was given as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). But in Romans 7, we can see that by the grace of God, we have been delivered from the Law by the body of Jesus Christ. It was His physical body on the cross and the shedding of His blood that paid for our sins and iniquities; He who knew no sin became sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

"Wherefore, my brethren, *ye also are become dead to the law* by the body of Christ; *that ye should be married to another*, even to him who is raised from the dead, *that we should bring forth*

fruit unto God" (Romans 7:4).

We have been delivered from the very thing that condemns our flesh. It condemns Adam, who is always in us and never changes. We were delivered from the Law that condemned Adam, even before we are delivered from the sin that the Law condemns!

And now that we have been delivered from the Law, we are married to another, even Christ. We are married to Resurrection life, a higher law that says if you are angry with your brother without a cause, you have committed murder (Matthew 5:21-22). Moses' law doesn't say that. The higher law says whoever lusts after a woman in his heart is guilty of the act of adultery (Matthew 5:28). Moses' law doesn't say that.

We are under the higher law of the Spirit of life, which overcomes the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Romans 8:3-4). This doesn't mean that we are always operating in the Spirit, but we are always walking *after* the Spirit.

Romans 7:6 tells us that in the past, being dead, we were held by the Law. But now we can walk in the "newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." This is where the honest struggle comes in.

Romans 7:15-19 tells us that when we truly, honestly, and earnestly want to do good, we cannot. This was written by Paul, an apostle who held the highest ranking office of that day. He said, "the things I wanted to do, I couldn't; and the things that I did do, I shouldn't. That was the strife of my flesh, trying its best to keep the letter of the law, which is holy and good. But remember, though the flesh is in me, by the grace of God, positionally I am never in the flesh."

You say, "But everyone gets in the flesh." That reveals our ignorance.

In 1 John 1:7-10, we read that if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. But if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But if we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and His Word is not in us.

Yet, back in Romans 7:17 and 20, Paul made one of the most astonishing statements: When I

sin, "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Though Adam lives in me, I am no longer in Adam.

When I try to do good, evil is always present with me. The government of Satan tries to condemn me with the perfection of the Law, and he uses the righteousness of God to condemn my unrighteousness. Paul said in Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Then in verse 24, he cried out, "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*"

Paul's Prayer for Us

Every Christian who reads Romans 7:14-25 needs to understand what it is saying. That is why Paul prayed as he did in Ephesians 1:17-23:

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding"—that is, the perceptions of your soul—"being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the r*iches of the glory* of his inheritance in the saints,

"And what is the *exceeding greatness of his power* [that operates within us] who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places"—as a glorified Man in session at the throne of God where He has seated Himself in a Finished Work for redeemed sinners,

"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Then, in Ephesians 2, Paul begins to reveal something good about "you": "You hath he quickened, who were dead"—helpless and hopeless—"in trespasses and sins." Every day that you can, receive the Good News about yourself. In this life, we need to receive the Good News of God's exceeding greatness.

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now

worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

"*But God*, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Ephesians 2:2-5).

Under this new, higher law, under the Spirit of life, we are always under grace (Romans 6:14). We are never taken out of it. We stand in grace (Romans 5:2), even when we fail. Though He lovingly disciplines us, we are still in grace. Even when we sin, it's the sin that dwells in us. Sin works itself out while we are still in Christ. That is a true Finished Work message!

Though we were dead in sins, we have been quickened together with this miracle of grace and raised up together with Christ where we are seated with Him in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:6). That is where every Christian is today: quickened, raised, and seated at the right hand of God.

It doesn't even matter if you don't understand it. *God* says you are! At this moment, you are seated in heavenly places in a union with

Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the *one* baptism into which we have been called (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Ephesians 2:7 explains why we have been seated with Christ: "That in the *ages to come*"—speaking of eternity—"he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through *Christ Jesus*."

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,"—divine good—"which God hath before ordained *that we should walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:8-10). In the Greek, that last phrase (verse 10) is an unusual form of the aorist tense, represented by a dot, then a space, then a dot, then a space. It implies that there are interruptions in our walk where we will need to use rebound because we do not understand that we are in Christ—both in our position and in our condition, in our union and our communion.

Kept by a Wall of Fire

"For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a *wall of fire round about,* and will be the *glory in the*

midst of her" (Zechariah 2:5).

The people of Israel always had a wall of fire about them (Isaiah 4:5), and it protected them from everything that demons and the flesh could do. This wall was indestructible, regardless of their inconsistency and murmuring. And, "…the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory [within]" (Isaiah 60:19). The glory of God speaks of the manifestation of His presence.

God is saying to us, "I have placed a wall of fire around you, a wall of categorical doctrines joined together with the fire of the Spirit, and it is because of what I accomplished. I have quickened you, raised you up, and seated you in heavenly places. That is the fire and glory. I will never take you out of that place."

Chapter Two

WE ARE DEAD, AND SIN HAS NO DOMINION

"*If* ye then be risen with Christ,"—and the first-class condition of "if" says you are—"then seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your [mind] on things above,"—on the Finished Work of Jesus Christ—"not on things on the earth." Why? Because, "ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God," and you can now live as someone who has been raised from the dead—because you are!

Obviously, a man who has been raised from the dead would know it. Similarly, a person who has been quickened should know it. A person who has been raised up to heaven should know it. A person who is seated with Christ at the right hand of God, positionally, should know it. A person who has Resurrection power should know it. These things are written that you may

know what benefits you have in eternal life *now* (see 1 John 5:13).

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6). Paul said, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man. *But I see another law* in my members, warring against the law of my mind,"—working in the motion of my physical body—"and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:22-23). The "other" law is the law of sin and of death.

Then, Paul comes to a revolutionary conclusion: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And, in Romans 8:1, he cries out two words, "No condemnation!"

There is no condemnation. "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?…What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Romans 6:2,15). The principle is true when you have the good news that though Adam is in you, you are never in Adam again. We are *in Christ*. We have been accepted in Christ (Ephesians 1:6). Colossians 3:3 says we have been hid with Christ in God. Old things have passed away, and all

things have become new.

Start at the Right Place

People go on with the same struggles. They are good people, and they love God. But they can't grasp this message spiritually, though they know it intellectually. They cannot experience it because they don't start at the right place. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus, the crucified and glorified Lamb. This is the Christian life.

God forbid that I sin, but if I do, it is not I. It is my flesh working out the Adam nature that is in me. God forbid that I do sin and then reap the trials and testings and consequences of experiential sin and possibly bring reproach to the precious Master.

Always start with the fact that you are in Christ. Never use that fact to continue in sin, but use it to be like Him, to be conformed to His image, to be renewed in His mind (Ephesians 4:23), and to be transformed by His Word.

We are protected by the "wall of fire" (Zechariah 2:5). As we avail ourselves to the teaching of God's Word, categories of doctrine are woven together to become a strong wall. Through those doctrines, God's glory reflects His nature within. That wall of fire is a Finished Work provision

that can never change—even when a believer is taken home early.

A woman came to me recently and said, "I don't understand why I can't do better." Her problem was that she was letting Adam have dominion—and Adam is *not* going to change. "I speak to them that know the law" (Romans 7:1). If you know the Law, you must remember this: The Law has dominion. And what does the Law do? It is perfect; therefore, it condemns imperfect people.

A Truth that Brings Deliverance

If there is any legalism in you, any self-righteousness or religious pride, you will end up condemned, living in guilt, trying to live the Christian life. But according to the apostle Paul, that is not how you do it.

Do you want to know what to do? You simply thank God. Thank Him, though you know the warfare, the battles, and that Adam is in every one of us. But always remember that we are accepted in Christ, hid with Christ, and seated with Christ. Every born-again believer is a new creature in Christ, and as He is in heaven, so are we in this world (1 John 4:17).

The Father wants us to have a revelation of

the wisdom and knowledge that is in Christ. He desires that our eyes would be opened, that our understanding would come into the light, and that we would realize the exceeding greatness of His power that goes beyond everything—a power that is toward us who simply let it work in us because we have faith.

What release we would experience if we ever got a hold of this truth! It is so humbling, yet it is so magnificent. It is a higher law, therefore it requires a higher response. Still, it is always under grace, and this law never withholds grace when we break it.

"The strength of sin is in the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56). That is because when we sin we say, "I did it again seven times in two days" instead of going to Christ to rebound. Then the Law strengthens that sin because we are powerless. The motions of sin begin to work out in Adam because we feel guilty. But God said, "There is now no condemnation."

We have been delivered from the law that condemns us because it has been fulfilled by Christ (Romans 10:4), *forever* (Matthew 5:17). That is why Matthew 5:20 says that our righteousness exceeds the religious self-righteousness of the Pharisees. Because we received it as a

gift through the abundance of grace, we can reign in life by one Christ Jesus (Romans 5:17).

We do not say that we cannot or have not sinned. We have. But we will continue to apply the Ephesians 2:10 principle of rebound (a dot, a space, a dot . . .) because of a magnificent Christ. Paul said in Philippians 1:20, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death."

Paul said in Philippians 1:21, "Don't you understand that for me to live is Christ? It is not my sin, though I went through some terrible times in Romans 7. It is not the Law, though it is precious. The Law has been fulfilled, and I am no longer under it."

We need to be motivated by Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The love of Christ constrains us. We judge that if One died, all were dead, that we should not henceforth live unto self (which causes all the problems), but unto God who raised Jesus from the dead (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Because we are now married to Another, we can bear the fruit of that union in our lives.

We bear the fruit of not being condemned but accepted in the Beloved, the fruit of not being under the Law but under grace, and the fruit of rebounding in the process of growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). We have the fruit of letting grace teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live quietly with doctrine in this present evil world.

Grace accepts us when we rebound. *Grace* will teach us—not the Law or guilt. Grace is our only teacher, but it is not given for lasciviousness (a lifestyle without restraint). It is given so we will come through as winners, weak as we are, because God sees us in His Son forever—quickened, raised up, and seated above. We are members of His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). We are joined to Him in one Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). He sees us on earth as He is in heaven (1 John 4:17).

Some people who are weary in the battle will hear these remarkable truths and say, "I don't understand it, Lord!" Then just accept the truth and let it liberate you.

I thank God for every pulpit that preaches

Christ. But some will preach about King Saul and end with his failure—and well they should. But we also need to show God's provision of grace for his life. Those same pulpits will give repeated warnings about the dangers of apostasy, but they don't give equal time to the grace and mercy available to men in their lowest estate. They do not represent the living Christ but the letter of the Law. That is *not* what Jesus Christ came to give us. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

One of the greatest verses in the Bible is found in John 1:16, "And of his *fulness* have all we received, and grace for grace." The Greek word *pleroma* speaks of fullness that goes beyond completeness to abundance.

As believers, we already have the fullness of grace. We may not be using it for the glory of God, but we received it when Christ said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). That was His message when He said to Mary, "I ascend unto my Father, and *your* Father" (John 20:17). It was Jesus' message when He said, "If you continue in My words, you will be my disciples indeed, and you will know the truth"—the system of truth about the Finished Work—"and it will set you free." That message will lead us to know the Son, and

He will make us free indeed (see John 8:31-32,36). This is the Glorious Gospel of Grace!

A Message of Hope

This message does not bring condemnation to the weak. It brings hope. It does not bring the letter of the law to the guilty. It brings hope that they can, indeed, be set free. This message doesn't take advantage of people who are going through a process, to manipulate their lives, to control them, or to hammer them with a righteousness that even the pastor can't live up to.

In this Finished Work message of the Glorious Gospel, the Lord says, "You can have a *blessed* hope right now; because, everything I am, you are. And everything you are is because of what I have imputed to you." And that imputation never stops in the process of our development.

David said in Psalm 18:35, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." Try that one. "Your gentleness, Lord, has made me great." Only gentleness can bring out God's greatness in a man's frailty so that a man, to the glory of God, becomes great. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

Chapter Three

WE HAVE BEEN RAISED

We have already established the fact that Adam will always be in us. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and make God a liar (1 John 1:10). But if we rebound the moment we fail—confess our sin, name it, and isolate it—He forgives us and cleanses us from all known sin, as well as the sins of ignorance (Leviticus 4; 1 John 1:9).

Today, we are quickened, raised, and seated with Christ before God the Father. Billions of years ago in His predeterminate counsel, the Father knew everything we would ever do in our lifetime (Isaiah 46:10; Acts 2:23). Still, His love is eternal toward those whom He foreknew would accept His Son.

"*For sin shall not have dominion over you*: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). Sin will never have dominion, because we are under grace, and of His fullness (*pleroma*) we

have received grace for grace. It is important to know that when I sin, it is no longer "I" but sin that dwells in me (Romans 7:17, 20). Yet, will I continue in sin so grace can abound? God forbid. Grace teaches me to deny sin and to live through doctrine (Titus 2:12).

Here is the key. God the Father *never* sees us in our sin. He has accepted us in His Son, Jesus, "…in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7*a*). The Holy Spirit who dwells within us convicts, and the love of God disciplines. But the Father never sees us in our sin because we are hid with Christ in God. It is no longer "I" that sin, because *I* am crucified and buried, and my sin and iniquity cannot be imputed (Romans 4:7-8).

"I" Am the Object of Eternal Love

Certainly God deals with us on a personal level of love when He has to discipline us (Hebrews 12:6-11). But the greatest news about the glorious Gospel is this: There is no other way to approach sin, iniquity, and the governmental evil of Satan but from the standpoint of the Finished Work. From this point of view, God reveals to us the authority, power, and fathomless scope of His grace. It teaches us what eternal love has

done, is doing, and will continue to do. *We are the objects of that eternal love*—if only we could grasp it.

If you ponder this love through the Holy Spirit, you will begin to be overwhelmed as the weeping prophet Jeremiah was. The apostle Paul wept day and night for three years as he considered it (Acts 20:29-31). He was so broken because he understood the power of God's love, which has made it impossible for Satan, or circumstances, or anything that happens in our lives to separate us from God. Like the closest of friends, we are inseparable (Romans 8:38, 39).

Through the Finished Work, God has imputed His righteousness apart from works (Romans 4:6). And because God is for us, no one can ever come against us. Every Christian must understand that, then receive it, believe it, and walk by faith in it.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace *with* God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). That is *objective* peace. "Being justified" is an aorist participle, a past fact that can never be changed. We experience the peace *of* God when we keep on receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness to reign in life by One, Jesus Christ. But the positional, ob-

jective peace *with* God is ours through justification by faith. It's the Finished Work.

"Rejoice in the Lord…"—Relax!—"Let your *moderation* be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (Philippians 4:4-5). "Moderation" comes from the Greek word *epieikes*. It refers to the judicial system of God in the Finished Work, whereby He gives grace and mercy with a love that goes beyond the justice we deserve because of our sin. In this courtroom where mercy rejoices against judgment, the Father is fully satisfied with what Jesus Christ has done *as* us and *for* us on the cross.

"Be careful [(anxious)] for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6). Prayer is the breath of love responding to God's promises. "And the [(subjective)] peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall [guard] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). In Romans 5:1, I have objective peace, but here I have *subjective* peace. That means that instead of Adam (who lives in me) controlling my mind, subjective peace controls my conscious mind and guards my unconscious and subconscious mind when I rejoice, pray, and show mercy that

goes beyond justice.

Overpower the Problem: Three to One

Where do our problems come from? We know that Adam is in us, but we are not in Adam. We are in Christ. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. The Father indwells us (John 14:23). One will prevail, and two will withstand, but "a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12). A threefold cord speaks of the communion of the Holy Spirit, the love of the Son, and the power of the Father working in us through the Word.

When a problem keeps coming up, it means we have gone back into something that we are not. We transgress what we know to be true, for "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4*b*). We go back to defend Adam. But Adam has been judged in Christ: he was found guilty, he was crucified with Christ, and he was buried. Now we are accountable to a higher law, the royal law of love (James 2:8). We can operate in it since we have peace deep within because of our justification by faith.

"We have access by faith"—which comes by hearing the Word of God—"into this grace wherein we *stand,* and we rejoice in hope of the

glory of God" (Romans 5:2). "Stand" is a perfect active indicative, which means we keep receiving the action of standing in grace forever. We stand in the grace that justified us. It is the "God of all grace" who has called us, and "to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (1 Peter 5:10-11).

The Reason We Rejoice in Tribulations

"Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations" (Psalms 145:13). The King rules with His righteousness from sea to sea, so we can "rejoice in hope of the glory of God…" —not just in the future, but moment by moment in the succeeding minutes that lead to eternity. "…And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also…." How is that possible? We know that "…tribulation worketh patience" (Romans 5:3). Furthermore, Jesus said in John 16:33*b*, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In other words, we begin to receive attributes of God that we never experienced until the tribulations came. I never knew the anointing until God put me in the furnace. I never understood the power and victory of deliverance until

I was totally delivered unto death to my self. I never knew what it was to have a mental attitude of love toward my enemy until God gave it to me in a trial.

Tribulation works patience, and patience, experience (Romans 5:3-4). If only we understood how much we need experience with God. The reason tribulations come is so we can have divine patience through the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And when God's patience is worked in us, we will be able to experience Christ as all and in all (Colossians 3:11).

Then, experience works hope. It is a lively hope (1 Peter 1:3), and because we know He is there, we can trust Him with our whole heart. This hope "maketh not ashamed," because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is not wishful thinking. It's something we experience throughout our entire being. This hope influences our motivations, thought processes, and understanding of God's precepts.

This is the Christian life. Adam is in me; I am not in Adam. I have been accepted. I am a new creation, and that will never change. Old things have passed away, and everything is continuously new. That will be my experience if I will accept what the precious Word of God says.

Chapter Four

NOW TAKE DOMINION

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8).

While we were in our wicked and sinful state, Christ saw beyond our iniquity and died not only for us but *as* us. Every sin was blotted out at Calvary. With that understanding, we hear Jesus say, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: *continue ye in my love*" (John 15:9).

Jesus was saying, "Do you understand how much the Father has loved Me? His love is perfect. There is not a flaw in it. And that's how much I love you. I *am* love (1 John 4:10). And now, I will ask you to do something—but don't

try to perform it. Just fellowship with Me, and I will do it. This is my commandment: that you love one another just exactly as I have loved you! Though that seems impossible, you will be able to do it through the love of God that is shed abroad in your heart."

He will perform what He asks us to do (Job 23:14). "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it"(1 Thessalonians 5:24).

When you become bitter toward one another or get off into moods, it is Adam relating to sin; it's Adam relating to iniquity in the emotions; Adam relating to self-preservation. That is not how to solve the problem.

It is possible for me to receive the same love God has for His only begotten Son. It is entirely possible for me to receive the love of the Son through the Holy Spirit, then to love myself as much as God loves me. Through grace upon grace, I can love every person just as much as God loves me. Loving through God's love does away with pettiness, anger, resentment, and discord. The love of God in me does away with all of the ugliness that comes out of the abundance of the heart (Mark 7:20-21).

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that

loveth not his brother abideth in death....Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:14-16).

The greatest thing in the world is to be standing forever in the grace of God—grace that depends upon Him and not me. The second greatest thing is that we have access into this grace by faith. I can have hope every time I go to the Father through Christ, in the glory of God, reflecting God's nature as I make my request.

We Have Authority

Our God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has dominion and authority from sea to sea, is the King. He gave His servant authority and dominion to be a watchman (Mark 13:34). And the same authority He gave to the Twelve over the devil and unclean spirits (Luke 9:1; 10:19), He has given to us.

Christians must understand that we have that authority through the power of love, the power of prayer, and the power of *epieikes*—mercy that excels any judgment that God could legitimately give us, because of our substitute, Christ.

In Nehemiah 9:37-38, because the nation of Israel kept sinning, their enemies were able to

take authority over their bodies. But God's people have authority over the works of the enemy; everything is under our feet (Hebrews 2:5-8, Psalm 8:5). Still, so many of God's children don't realize who they are. We often don't understand the life we have and the protection of that wall of doctrine and God's glory in our midst.

We have this indescribable authority, and each of us has the opportunity to fellowship without a root of bitterness or any other distraction from the enemy. Because Jesus said, "My little children, sin not," it is possible for a child of God not to sin. This is accomplished by choices, moment by moment.

But if any man does sin, thank God we have an advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ is pleading our case day and night before the throne of God. We can love ourselves without striving and struggling. We can love every person through the love of God, without negativity or reaction. We don't need to let Satan pierce us with his accusations and lies.

The enemy wants to bind up believers so they are not free. If a believer is not focused but becomes distracted by the details of life and takes his eyes off of Jesus, the enemy will take advantage. In 2 Timothy 4:10, he made Demas

leave a wonderful missionary journey and forsake Paul to go back to the world's system.

Don't go back! Don't even think about it. Don't allow the reflection of a projection to get in. Diotrophes usurped authority in the Church and conspired against John (3 John 9). Diotrophes exalted himself above the Word of God, above the table of organization, and he entered into an arrogant complex.

But thanks be to God that Romans 5 speaks of five "much mores":

"*Much more* then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:9).

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10).

"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, *much more* the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many" (Romans 5:15).

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; *much more* they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17).

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did *much more* abound:" (Romans 5:20).

Four times it mentions "free gifts." Sin can only reign unto the death of the Cross, for grace reigns through God's righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ (Romans 5:21).

No Peace? Give Up

The most precious thing is to have subjective peace, meaning, it's all settled. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). In Luke 15:17, the prodigal son recognized his need. "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" When he came to the end of himself, the issue was settled. He got up and went to his father.

Perhaps you would say, "But I'm a basket case!" Well, so is everyone. There are just different sizes of baskets. Maybe you are saying, "But so often I have wanted to give up!" Many of us in Adam *have* given up. And when we gave up, we finally trusted Christ to take our place. Not that any man can have sufficiency of himself, for

our sufficiency is of God (2 Corinthians 3:5). Therefore, we place no confidence in 'self' (Philippians 3:3).

Most of our problems come when we become brats in the flesh. And God says that every time we get that way, our flesh has an odor. So, don't you think the people around us can smell what's coming out of our mouths? We have an odor! There is only one answer: Die to your self and seek those things which are above.

Remember, Adam is incurable. Set your mind on things above, and not on things below. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:1-3). Learn to praise Him in everything and for everything. Let Him love you through everything. Never reject who you are, just reject Adam's operation in you and let the love of God have dominion.

Unclean spirits have no dominion. That dominion was given to God's servants (Mark 13:34). *We* have authority. Some will reign with God in eternity. Start reigning with Him now. Sin can only reign as far as the Cross. But grace reigns forever and ever through righteousness by Jesus Christ who has given us dominion (Romans 5:17).

When a Christian begins to grasp what it is

to walk in the Spirit, he will begin to experience that dominion. Walking is just taking one step at a time. All I am concerned with is being filled with the Spirit in my next step. I give thanks as I go, and then I take my next step. That's all I care about. Why should we care about anything else? We are kept moment by moment.

Step by Step, Moment by Moment

Some people follow a motto that says, "One Day at a Time." But in Isaiah 27:3, we need to go for one moment at a time, because one day can present too many unforeseen problems. Just take your next breath with God. Take the next step with Him. Speak your next word through Him. Receive your next thought from God. That's all! It is just a series of moments. And as we take each breath, He gives the inspiration of the manifestation of His presence (Isaiah 60:19).

Psalm 49 speaks of those who receive honor from their fellow men and who trust in their riches. But their end is destruction: "Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and *the upright shall have dominion over them* in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling" (Psalm 49:14).

God's people have been given dominion for

all of eternity over those who are trusting in temporal honor and riches. We don't covet what others have, but God wants to take away from the devil and give to God's people so we will use it for God's Kingdom. As far as I go, it is not so that I as a pastor can prosper excessively, but the church needs finances to reach the lost. Then a ministry can grow and go into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature, and make disciples of men.

So often Christians hear wonderful truth like this, and they acknowledge it in passing but do not drink it in. But God says the upright—those believers who live in the upper righteousness of God, who think, walk, and talk with God, who love through God—will have dominion.

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:13-14). God says that one word summarizes everything. One word takes care of all the commandments: Love.

When love isn't there, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping and enduring all things (1 Corinthians 13:7), then my life will be con-

trolled by the influence of demons, and I will have taken Satan's hand. Though he can't possess me, I can agree to cooperate with him. If it is because I have been "hurt," it is my flesh that is hurting because Adam refuses to experience his death *with* Christ (though Adam has experienced death *by* Christ).

Tribulations are for our sake. They work in patience that only comes from God. And that patience works experience so we can have a lively hope that maketh not ashamed. Let's take up our dominion and live in the abundance of the work that Jesus Christ has finished!

CONCLUSION

"A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon" (Song of Solomon 4:15). God desires to have in us an abundance of fresh gardens fed by living waters. That is what He will produce in us as we give over Adam's reign to experience life in the One who has done it all.

This is the real Christ. Through a message like this, we can get to know Him better. Instead of a message that criticizes, condemns, and brings the letter of the law only, the Gospel of grace through the Finished Work makes a person want to embrace Him and to receive His embrace. This message does not produce a desire to go out in sin. It produces purity.

Heavenly Father, allow this message to produce holiness as it reveals Christ in our lives, but always with a guaranteed hope that we are loved and never left forsaken. In Christ's name, Amen.

The Full Thought

on Repentance

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

When the Holy Spirit convicts believers of sin, the individual's part is to repent. To repent means to have a thorough change of heart, mind, and consequent actions toward God and His Word. If we respond through grace and through the power of God with an attitude of true repentance, which includes a godly sorrow, we will turn from our sin without looking back. Having been turned, we will look to Christ as the sole provision for our souls in the area of our need.

Unfortunately, many well-intentioned Christians misunderstand the place of grace, which is God's unmerited favor toward sinners. Though it sets people free from the weight of sin, grace does not eliminate the need for repentance. The Word of God is very clear that repentance is required of anyone who wants to have an abundant life. To be saved, a person must change his mind toward God and the truth of God's plan,

and be willing to forsake sin and iniquity when God turns him.

Like salvation, grace is a gift. It always goes toward an individual, and the only requirement is to receive it. But neither grace nor salvation can have an effect on a soul that has not repented. Since the natural mind cannot comprehend the things of God, we must be turned from our old ways to see the Lord and be saved. Then, we need to always be available to be turned so our minds can continue to focus on Christ and His Word. Only then can a real change occur in our souls.

As this booklet shows, repentance will lead us into tremendous blessings from God. When our minds are rightly related to Him, we can enjoy His visitations, receive the impartation of His breath, and become the manifestation of His life to a world that needs to turn to, and be turned by, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 20:19-23).

Chapter One

CONVERTED TO GOD'S VIEWPOINT

"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.

"Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." (Jeremiah 31:18-19).

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you" (Acts 3:19-20).

The command in these verses is very clear: Repent—change your mind to God's divine

viewpoint. Change your mind because the Word of God is quick and powerful in what it says and what it can do. Then you will be converted, your sins will be blotted out, and you will enjoy times of refreshing through the presence of God.

Initially, repentance is what brings us to salvation. But after we are saved, we need to repent daily to maintain a close walk with God. The Holy Spirit, who lives in every born-again Christian, is very sensitive to anything in us that is not right with God. Therefore, if we sin, the Holy Spirit will convict us of the truth. We need to have God turn us so that we can repent and turn our minds from self and sin to the Savior and His Word.

Isolated Christians in every congregation do not deal with their sins according to the Word of God. They depend upon the gift of imputed righteousness but without repentance. Repentance is also a gift. It is something God offers to sinners as a way to restore fellowship. It does involve a change of mind, a change of speech, a change of habits, a change of thinking, and a change in relationships. If these changes are not evident, even though a person may confess that they have repented, then there has been no repentance.

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

"Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

"Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

"Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-20).

The Bible conveys a strong warning in these verses, loudly and clearly. Based upon the Word of God, how can a man or woman live in forni-

cation or adultery and think that they are saved? No Christian can get away with such a thing without being heavily disciplined by God. Maybe you go to church, sing hymns, and love your preacher, but if you are living with someone out of wedlock (or otherwise unlawfully), you may not be saved. The Bible makes it crystal clear that we are not even to fellowship with those who do such things. We can minister the Gospel to them but that is to be the extent of our contact.

What do these people need? Repentance.

We have been commanded to preach the whole counsel of God. That means we are to speak out against those who live continually in sins such as fornication. God has given us quite a catalog of what is unacceptable to Him. If I were living in any one of the sins mentioned in those verses above, it would cause me to think seriously about my eternal destiny.*

For the purpose of definition, idolaters are those who put anything above the Lord Jesus Christ. Adulterers are married people having sex outside of their marriage. Fornicators are single people having sexual relationships without being married. Also included in the list are the effeminate, speaking of homosexuals, and

those who abuse themselves.

I want to make this very clear: I love grace. I love God. And I have to tell you that the glorious gospel of grace will never be glorious to anyone who does not repent. We will minister and offer help to anyone who is weak and desires to be set free. But the Cross is the only place we can meet. This pulpit will not be guilty of fellowshipping with those who will not repent.

Furthermore, true repentance also means to change our minds about foolish jesting and suggestiveness. We cannot receive honest-to-goodness refreshing from the presence of God unless these sins are repented of. Once there is repentance, we can receive the gift and the power of the glorious gospel of grace. God then can indeed turn us, beginning on the inside, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**We strongly suggest reading* The Great Detective: Sin, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998, as well as* Eternally Secure *and* The Reality of Hell, *both by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2002.*

Chapter Two

THE VITALITY OF VISITATIONS

"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old" (Psalm 44:1).

"I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands" (Psalm 143:5).

The times of God's visitation are so precious. Divine effects come through divine causes in a divine visitation. A divine visitation will not come through emotionalism, through sincerity in church attendance, or through fellowship with other believers, as important as that is. Divine visitations only come when we thoroughly comprehend the meaning of Acts 3:19: "repent…and be converted."

When a Christian congregation commits itself to preaching the entire counsel of God as a Word of God ministry of revival, then God can pour forth a visitation. The Word comes forth

with its divine invitation, and immediately we can receive divine impartation to live in divine participation.

When the Lord visits, we do not receive just ceremonial, properly tuned, but dry, evangelical messages. Instead, we enjoy spontaneity in every presentation as we receive precisely the revelation, the inspiration, and the illumination God communicates at that moment of visitation. It is not that we enter into something we have never entered into. The visitation enables us to advance in the inspiration and growth of what we have already received. This is what revival is meant to do—leading us and advancing us as we are quickened by the Word of God.

Miracles Do Happen

Miracles happen when members of the church begin to operate in repentance, and they purpose to dwell together in unity, in the bond of peace (Psalm 133:1; Ephesians 4:3).

The church was doing great. We had just started our Bible college, souls were being saved daily, and at every service we had a full house. During one of those services, I noticed some activity in one of the aisles, and when I looked down, I saw a woman slumped over. Two nurses

who were sitting nearby attended to her, and both of them said they could find no pulse. I was stunned. Her husband was obviously fearful and distraught. At that point in the visitation, God said, "Tell the congregation to sing."

That congregation began to sing like they had never sung before. The presence of the Lord was so real. There was no confusion. Everyone had turned their minds toward Jesus and the whole congregation was singing then praying. I can only describe what happened next as divine participation through a divine impartation because of the visitation of the Lord. As we prayed, warmth began to return to this woman's body. The Lord Jesus resuscitated her. With no lingering weakness, she marched up to the pulpit and sang, "Because He Lives"!

When our focus is on Christ, there is no fragmentation. There is a time of great refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Then comes the time of impartation, and by faith we enjoy our participation in the visitation of the Lord Jesus.

After a fantastic time of worship, the entire congregation became very still as the overwhelming presence of God took over the service. Many people sensed what they described as penetrating heat, accompanied by the sound

of a low roar. For those of us who opened our eyes, it was evident that no person in the room was singing, and yet we heard the sweetest, most magnificent chorus that could only come from the voices of angels.

What led to this kind of visitation? It was no coincidence. It was because of repentance. People's minds were turned from petty complaints and natural dispositions to become one in divine participation with the plan of God for that moment.

Specific Gifts, Specific Results

Another memorable visitation came during my first trip to Finland. Speaking to the audience with a group of people who did not understand English, the Holy Spirit said to me, "You have got to get up and speak in another language."

I did not believe or participate in an exercise of the gift of tongues. I was frightened. I had to repent. I had to change my mind about this gift and allow God to use it through me. So on that night I spoke perfect Finnish for several minutes. My interpreter, a graduate of one of Finland's top colleges, said that it was absolutely perfect Finnish. I didn't know what I was doing

until I heard the interpreter say, "Thus saith the Lord from the Finished Work glory of the throne of Jesus Christ."

God gave me definition that night, and I learned that "tongues" does not refer to gibberish and untranslatable babblings. "Tongues" are national languages. God gives this gift at times when people need to get saved. They are given for the sake of those who believe not (see 1 Corinthians 14:22).

During the feast of Pentecost, in Acts 2:4, which commemorated the giving of the Law (Exodus 23:16), the Holy Spirit descended with fire. Those who gathered in Jerusalem for the feast heard the Gospel in their own national languages. In Finland that day, the most important thing was that souls were getting saved. In a fellowship of oneness, the corporate joy of happiness and abundance and obedience to the Word of God, God supplied, pure as gold, the national Finnish tongue to this preacher. There was a great visitation of the Lord Jesus in the midst of His frail and weak, yet obedient and repentant people.

Chapter Three

OVERWHELMED BY REVELATION

"And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?" (Isaiah 10:3).

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:11-12).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

The visitation of God comes to churches like ours, where the people are willing to count the

cost and accept the price that has been paid for them to the glory of the One who did it all. When it happens, God's glory invades our humanity and invades our souls, and the Word of God invades our minds. The Holy Spirit has already conquered death in us through our co-crucifixion and co-burial in Christ, and the habitation and impartation of God Himself begins to move in us.

Then, we experience something more than a divine visitation and a heavenly impartation. As we cooperate with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we enter into a divine presentation: that is, we present ourselves as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1). It is a presentation based on mercies that are new every morning and compassion that does not fail (Lamentations 3:22-23).

God overwhelms us in our personal faith through the experience of His presence, the invasion of His divinity in our very humanity. The abundant life fills the capacity of our souls through the human spirit and the new heart. We experience what it means to say, "For me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21).

People who refuse to repent simply do not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by what God is doing. Isolated individuals come to church and never really grasp the truth of the Word and their resurrection with Christ. They come from some pretty deep places (Psalm 40:2), and they don't realize where God has placed them. Though they have been seated above, in Christ (Ephesians 2:6), and are hid in the midst of Christ's Body on the earth, they don't participate in the visitation of the Spirit or allow themselves to be baptized as a member in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Let me reiterate. God does not wink at adultery, fornication, masturbation, and pornography. You may think He does because of His great grace. But the Word says otherwise.

We must never taste the grace of God and turn it into lasciviousness (Jude 4). We are not to profess to know God and then in our works deny Him (Titus 1:16). We are not to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Grace is more than just something we are given. It leads us to a Person whom we live in, fellowship with, and commune with, in honor

and love, publicly and privately. We worship and love the One who is indeed grace and truth. And when we have a heart of repentance, ready to be turned the moment the Holy Spirit convicts us, then we will receive His fullness (John 1:16). Then we can enjoy the riches and treasures of heavenly places.

The Anointing Comes Down from the Head

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

Some Christians need to allow God to change their minds concerning assembling together. We cannot afford to forsake the assembly of believers. We must choose to be in the midst of God's revival so that we can have a part in every soul that is saved.* Everything that goes on in the local assembly is important because Jesus Christ is the Head. The assembly is where the Head communicates through the Word and a pastor-teacher to the members of His Body. These members receive Christ's mind, understand His interpretation, and enjoy His visitation as they sit under the presentation of the Lord Jesus.

God inhabits contrite and humble spirits, re-

viving them and taking away any preoccupation with situations, circumstances, details, and relationships. I thank God for those who do repent and use rebound in the earnest fervency of truth when they fail. God has divine promotions for these faithful believers. Those who humble themselves will be elevated.

Our relationship is first with Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is in us. We sup together. We talk. He listens to our prayers. He gives us divine guidance by His Holy Spirit so we do not go back into bondage (Romans 8:14-15). He counsels us with His precious Word so we do not wander into iniquity (Psalm 119:133). He is indeed our Lord, our God, our King, our Lover, our Savior. He is the Lord Jesus, and His name is Holy.

When we understand this, our capacity for the anointing of God will increase. First, every one of us must be taught what an anointing is.** No one can ever become a disciple without understanding that the anointing, the special unction of the Holy Spirit, comes down from the Head and into our hearts, breaking every yoke of bondage (Isaiah 10:27). We don't have to live in our yesterdays—the faded glory of our victories or the harsh memories of our failures. The

problems of our will are overcome as God comes in.

"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit" (Ecclesiastes 7:8)

"When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

"Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

"The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

"Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way" (John 4:47-50).

"…Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

"And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet" (Luke 11:28-29).

God moves us; He turns us toward the truth and draws us to Himself, and we change our minds concerning our sinful ways. He has

brought into our midst a Word of God revival that stirs us to be occupied with the Person of Jesus Christ, morning, noon, and night. This revival brings real repentance. Humble, broken people become so one with Christ that there is nothing between them but God. They simply walk on, in the power of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

**To understand blessings we receive by association with the local assembly, read* The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

**Living an Anointed Life, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999, explains the importance and the availability of God's anointing for every believer.*

CONCLUSION

It is so important that as Christians we avoid fragmentation. We cannot afford to live in bits and pieces of the thoughts of God. I have presented God's Word the best that I know how. The only reason I am able to do it is because of the Lord's habitation, impartation, and manifestation. I pray it will be used to mobilize His Spirit of love in our hearts.

Raise your hands to our Lord, and worship Him in spirit and in truth. Respond to His initiations. When the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin—whether it is in thought, word, or deed—repent and rebound immediately. Do not allow laziness and slothfulness to control you. Instead, repent. Turn your mind toward the Lord and enter into the divine truth of the light of His Word. Let God show you what sin is and how it keeps you from being revived in the refreshment of His visitations.

Experience the Word of God revival that is

available to us in these last days. It is the revival that glorifies Christ. He created the universe by His Word. His Word holds all things together (Hebrews 1:3). His Word is forever settled in Heaven. But that same Word is also living, abiding, and dwelling in us. Honor it, submit to it, walk in the light of it. Obey it. Give it out to others.

Father, we commit our souls to You. With Your divine life flowing through our human spirit, You have set us free from depression, set us free of worry, and set us free of living in sin. We give You praise as we are made ready to take Your Gospel to our Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Bless us in the fervency of conviction through Your Word and Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Glorious Cross

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Foolish to the world but precious to the saints, the Cross occupies that place in time and eternity where every man must take a stand: for or against it. The issue is eternal life. The means? Death.

No man can escape it. Every man, however, has an opportunity—and a choice. Calvary, and all that it stands for, represents an even place for everyone who is drawn there.

The greatest man of God with years of wisdom and service is reduced to trembling with exceedingly grateful rejoicing when he touches the truth of what happened on a wooden cross nearly two thousand years ago.

As you read this booklet, consider the price, consider the cost, but most of all, consider the gift.

Chapter One

THE KEY TO BEING CONFORMED TO CHRIST'S IMAGE

According to the Word of God, many people have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. The life they live seems right. It is a certain shape of Christianity that looks like the real thing. But it is only a form, and they deny the power of true godliness.

The natural mind-set of the Christian is *not* to be spiritual, but to *try* to be spiritual. Though he may experience sincerity and measures of integrity, the natural mind becomes familiar with the Word of God instead of being inspired by it.

When a believer is operating in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, every time he reads the Word or even thinks of God, he is continually filled with the sense of an eternal purpose.

But for the person who lives in a form of godliness, there is no real power. The one who is depressed does not get delivered. The one

who is lustful may be temporarily delivered but goes back to his old ways. The person who is moody and easily offended does not get delivered, though he or she loves God. Many of these individuals desire to follow God, and the majority of them are probably sincere. But theirs is a *form* of godliness.

Blind Spots

On occasion, members of my congregation will meet with me privately (usually after a convicting message) and ask me if I could help them discover anything that needs to be corrected, spiritually speaking. They may sense undefined anxiety, a lack of peace and joy that they once had. Often the problem is due to what we call "blind spots."

A blind spot is an area in the believer's soul where he cannot receive categorical doctrine that would set him free. It may be due to wrong decisions, rebellion, ignorance, or bad experiences. Blind spots are usually located in the subconscious* (2 Peter 1:9, 1 John 2:4,9,11). When the old sin nature refuses to be crucified, areas of the soul are darkened to conviction by the Holy Spirit, and undefined impulses start to influence the personality.

When a Christian who has blind spots makes a conscious effort to self-correct a problem in the subconscious, he will most likely end up with a form of godliness that denies the power of God. And though we have all experienced it, we shouldn't practice spiritual surgery in an attempt to restore Adam. Remember, his wound is incurable. The only solution for a sin-sick soul is the old, rugged cross.

This is why, when the apostle Paul wrote to the rebellious church at Corinth, he said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Before that, he said in 1 Corinthians 1:18, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

The most noble, virtuous, loving, transforming, transcending, dynamic, powerful, forceful, energizing object in this world is the Cross. Still, there are many sincere pastors who believe in the Cross, but their teaching does not *include* the Cross. Oh, they preach *about* the Cross and they may even encourage their people to take up their cross. But no pastor—no matter how godly, how well-intentioned, or how pure he is — should ever speak a sermon unless his fellow-

ship with God is solely *through* the Cross. Meaningfully and experientially, the Cross must always be our ultimate frame of reference.

**For more about the workings of the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious mind, read* Imaginations of the Heart, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

THE KEY TO OVERCOMING THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL

Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God from eternity past, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Galatians 1:4). It is the Cross! The Cross delivers me from this present, infectious, evil world. The Cross delivers me from novice traits. It was Christ on a cross in a place called Calvary that now delivers me from sliding into passivity and carelessness every day of the year.

Every believer should have an altar in his home, and every morning he should kneel there and embrace the Cross with all of his heart. Let the experience be continually new. Be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind (Ephesians 4:23). Let His mercies that never fail become new

every single morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

The Cross is not to be something we "know," nor is it to be something we "believe" in. The Cross is something we *take up*. It should be in every part of every believer's life. We ought to embrace the Cross more than any other thing in this world.

Dealing with an Undesirable Past

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). We can't fight the world. We cannot overcome the world. We are human beings with an old sin nature. We have genetic lines that go through our ancestors back to Adam (Romans 5:12). According to Psalm 51:5, I was formed in iniquity and conceived in sin.

I cannot overcome the temptations of the world system. I cannot overcome the power of the devil in my adamic heritage. *I* cannot do it. But the Cross delivers me from the world and the world from me as I take it up and go beyond believing in it. *The precious Cross*.

How does a man become a better husband? The Cross. How does a woman become a better wife? The Cross. How do I become a more

thoughtful, meaningful, realistic Christian—one who goes beyond sight, who measures value beyond the world's viewpoint? By the Cross.

A man whose spirit is not enmeshed in the Cross is a man who may be a "good" man, but he has only a form of godliness. Part of his life denies the power of the Resurrection because he doesn't understand that the Cross eliminates Adam. It eliminates negative effects of the genetic inheritance that reigns in our mortal body, which we received from our ancestors. The Cross doesn't struggle with those effects; it simply delivers us from them. The Cross does it *all*.

Victory over "Me"

Not only does the Cross separate me from Satan's world system, but consider this: The Cross is the only thing God has ever given that can finally give me victory over *me*. That precious gift was offered to someone who has an old sin nature, whose whole head is sick, and whose heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.

"I am crucified with Christ:"—I am—"nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in [my humanity] I live by the faith of the [precious] Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not

frustrate the grace of God" (Galatians 2:20-21*a*).

The Cross doesn't place me in a battle to live right; instead, the Cross crucifies what is wrong. It crucifies the evil. It crucifies the old sin nature's dominion. The Cross eliminates Adam's power, his practice, his accusations, his guilt, his condemnations, his pride, his arrogance, his inflated ego. The Cross eliminates the devil's power, because it was through the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascension that Satan was defeated. The Cross eliminates the power of the world's system that greatly outnumbers us (by all outward appearances), and that is why it is the Cross.

It is more than a theological concept. It is more than something about which to write a three hundred page text. The Cross means to fall in love with the One who died for me when I was yet a sinner. Then, with thanksgiving and tears of the intensification of joy, I begin to recognize that I was crucified with Christ two thousand years ago.

New Every Morning

There is so much familiarity and redundancy in quoting it. But, oh, the reality and fresh experience of *knowing* this: *The old man is crucified with Christ*. I thank God that it is a past tense!

Reckon that you are dead indeed, that you have already died unto sin (Romans 6:11).

I am so grateful, and I do reckon on my death with Him today. Therefore, I yield my body to God as an instrument of righteousness unto Him, as a member in particular in His Body. I now live as one who has been spiritually raised from the dead (Romans 6:13). That is the meaning of the Cross.

Chapter Three

THE KEY TO REAL FREEDOM

The apostle Paul wrote that "the love of Christ [compels] us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that [Christ] died for all," that we should not live unto ourselves, but unto God, who raised Jesus from the dead. Therefore, we do not know *any* man after the flesh (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-16).

We do not know anyone after the flesh because of the Cross. It is the reason we can forgive people without remembering what they did against us. We are able to love them back into victory—all because of the Cross.

Thank God, the Cross is where we find forgiveness for ourselves and one another. For a wife, for a husband, for a pastor toward his people, or for the people toward their pastor, forgiveness is in this: We know *no* man after the flesh because God raised Jesus from the dead, and we were included in His Resurrection.

The Cross is the basis for the dynamics of a ministry that has power, of the preacher with an anointing, of a ministry that manifests God. It is the reality and spiritual experience of knowing Jesus Christ in His Ascension and in His Finished Work ministry on earth but through the power of Resurrection because of the Cross.

People get offended because they know nothing about the Cross and the power of it. They may desire to be delivered, but deliverance is slow. They enter into striving and struggling because there is no Cross that wipes out "self" and puts in God.

Is it any wonder that Paul said, "I determined not to know any thing among you…."? I don't want to know about your sins. I don't want to know about the things you have done that you shouldn't do. I don't want to know anything about you except the Cross. That is all I want to know.

Whose Cross Is It?

Do you want victory? Do you want power? Do you want to go beyond a form of godliness? Then, just take up *your* cross.

We need to understand that there is no way a man can take up God's Cross. But am I going

to leave Jesus Christ alone with that bloody death? No. I died with Christ, therefore it is *my* cross. He took me *with* Him so I could be successful and victorious in Satan's world, going forward with a resurrected, offensive life against the kingdom of darkness. Every born-again believer has this glorious privilege.

As a result of taking a stand in this victorious position, all of the fruit of the Spirit comes into my life. I have a new desire to worship God and to love people. In the morning, I go to God, and in Resurrection life, I take up my cross. He died on His Cross, and now I take up my cross, which means I am crucified with Him—past tense! That is my cross: that I would accept His Cross and my death, burial, and resurrection with Him.

The Eternal Cross

Paul was in prison, waiting for his captors to lead him to martyrdom. In 2 Timothy 4:6*b* he wrote, "The time of my departure is at hand." He knew that soon they would be coming for him, to place his head on the block and cut it off. So is it any wonder that before he went to his death, Paul wrote, "I want to know Him"?

Philippians 3:10 says, "That I may know

him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death"—which is able to be revealed in life.

The Cross was everything to Paul, who was a great man of God. And God will make every man great through the Cross. King David thanked God for making him great; he believed, without sight, in the future Finished Work of the Cross. Because he believed it with all of his heart, David could boldly say, "thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psalm 18:35*b*). He wasn't bragging. He was giving God the glory for the Cross that was to come.

Remember, it was David—the Old Testament king—and not Paul, who said in Psalm 32:1-2, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,...unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." He learned it because of the revelation he received of a future Cross. That Cross became the substance of the Finished Work mind of God. Now, the truth of this glorious Cross, applied in David's heart by mercy through faith, is ours to rejoice in forever.

CONCLUSION

"I will glory in the Cross,
lest His suffering all be in vain.
I will weep no more for the Cross that He bore,
I will glory in the Cross!"

– Author Unknown

The Glorious Gospel

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it" (Galatians 1:13). As a "Pharisee of the Pharisees" before his conversion, Saul's full-time job for Satan was to persecute the Church. Five other times in the epistles the apostle Paul mentioned his part in killing Christians (Acts 22:4, Acts 26:11, 1 Corinthians 15:9, Galatians 1:23, Philippians 3:6).

People who persecute the Church are persecuting Jesus Christ, who is the Head (Luke 10:16). They may have well-thought-out religious motivation. Yet, according to the Bible, Saul was a murderer. And when God spoke to him on the road to Damascus, He said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *Me*?"

In one moment, God revealed Himself to Saul, flooding him with a glorious light that removed every natural barrier to believing. Saul

became Paul, totally broken and humble after he was converted. He became immovable in his faith and commitment to preserve the Gospel, which changes many lives (1 Timothy 1).

Likewise, when we go forth with the Gospel message, we never know who will be behind the next door we knock on. We don't know what extraordinary plan God may have for the lives we touch. This booklet came from a class taught at Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Applied Bible Doctrine, covering the book of 1 Timothy. From this message, we understand that the Gospel is not merely a story to tell, but it presents a personal God of love who sets the captives free.

Chapter One

CALLED, COMMITTED, AND COMMENDED

Paul was not a handsome man. He was short, his speech was contemptible (2 Corinthians 10:10), and historical records indicate that he probably had serious problems with his eyes. He was also a scholar who was very aware of the temptations of ministers of the Gospel to get off in doctrine and the letter of the law (1 Timothy 1:3-7). Writing to Timothy, Paul admonished him to avoid doubtful disputations and to uphold sound doctrine "according to the *glorious Gospel* of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (1 Timothy 1:11).

When I study the Word of God, I stop and ask the Holy Spirit to minister eternal life to me through the words on the page. Then, alone with God, I can hear what He is saying. While I was studying this chapter early one morning, it hit me: *The "glorious Gospel" is the Finished Work!*

That is why Jesus could say, "Father, the glory You gave to Me, I have given to them" (see John 17:22), reflecting the nature of positional truth through the impartation of His grace.

"According to the glorious Gospel…." Satan tries to blind the minds of people so they cannot hear the glorious Gospel, lest they see the light of it (2 Corinthians 4:4). The Greek word for Gospel here and in 1 Timothy 1:11 is *euangelion*, "a good message, having a content of good news." Then we read, "…of the blessed God…." Paul is speaking of Him who is worthy of all praise: the blessed and only King of kings and Lord of lords—Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 6:15).

God's Standard for Measuring Mercy

The glorious Gospel is the standard of God's mercy and grace toward the entire world. There isn't another thing like it! This glorious Gospel refers to the manifestation of the love, kindness, and mercy that finished the work of redemption on Calvary. It is the good news that anyone can be saved by grace through faith. What a marvelous, magnificent provision.

Then it says, "…which was committed to my trust." And this is what breaks me. The word used here is the aorist passive indicative form of

pisteuo, which means to be entrusted with the care of something. Paul received the action dogmatically in the assertion of reality of God committing the glorious Gospel to his trust.

For example, in Romans 3:2 Israel, His client nation, was entrusted with the oracles of God to present the Gospel to the world, yet they rejected the plan. Paul, on the other hand, received and presented the Gospel with a fervent yet broken heart.

Why Me?

"But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is *committed unto me* according to the commandment of God our Saviour" (Titus 1:3). Paul was saying, "God has committed His Word to me through preaching." We have been given a gift to share: it is the glorious Gospel!

God did not predetermine anyone to be lost. Indeed, Jesus Christ died for the sins of the *whole* world in the unlimited atonement, and it is according to free volition that every individual either accepts or rejects the gift of grace. Yet, each believer has said in his heart, "Why *me*?" Every preacher has said that. Every evangelist. Every believer-priest. "Why have you entrusted all of

this to me?" After being touched by this love of God, do you think a man would turn his back on it and go another way? No, he wouldn't.

Millions of years ago, in eternity past, God spoke about you. He knew you would receive or reject the Gospel through your volition. He talked about a plan for your life that was based upon your choices and yet was always derived through His love and grace.

When something is committed to you, it becomes a part of you. It motivates and gives purpose. The glorious Gospel has been committed to you, and me, and every Christian. Many go to serve and share the Gospel in difficult places. They go because something was committed to them.

We keep going out knocking on doors and reaching the lost in many ways *because* of that commitment. In eternity past, it was committed. We didn't earn it, and we did not deserve it. If it were based on human merit, we wouldn't be here. But we have been given the glorious Gospel, and it was committed unto us by God's grace.

A Holy Calling

God saved us and called us with *an holy call-*

ing, according to 2 Timothy 1:9, "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." In eternity past, before the foundation of the world, every believer on the face of the earth received the action of grace that called us to live in God.

To be holy means to be separated unto spirituality in categories. Because God is holy, and because He called us, we are to be holy in all manner of conversation (1 Peter 1:15-16). We have been called and separated to preach the Gospel because of that action of grace. We must appropriate it in time: *We are to share the glorious Gospel*.

No wonder 2 Peter 1:10 says to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Election is the result of a choice, of selecting a person to fill an office or position. Peter is referring to a divine choice, something God does through grace. The Lord designates the plan for each believer's life through our election in foreknowledge.

To make our calling and election sure, every day that we get up, we make a choice to walk in the Spirit of God. We are taught in the Spirit, we think and we listen in the Word, and we com-

municate in the Word. Every time we make those choices, we are making our calling sure. We don't have to do anything to be called, but we are making our calling sure as we keep right on going in the process of our election that was determined before the foundation of the world.

Picture the apostle Paul in a cold dungeon in Rome, inspired through the Holy Spirit to write boldly to his people and thinking, "I know that You chose me because of grace, but *why me*, God?" Imagine the hours and hours he spent in jail. According to Acts 20:31, before he left the people at Ephesus, he warned them every night and day with tears. Paul knew the words that he gave them were inspired by God, though they were written by the hand of a person who, before he was convicted, had his part in taking the lives of many Christians.

God's Thoughts Are Higher

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (1 Timothy 1:12) Though he was in prison, Paul was able to thank God from the depth of his soul, because the thing that God had committed to him affected every part of his life.

"…Who hath enabled me…." Paul was "enabled" by God, *endunamoo* in the Greek, which means God caused him to have ability, strength, and power. We are enabled by faith (Romans 4:20). He makes us able (2 Corinthians 3:6). We are "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power" (Colossians 1:11).

"…And counted me faithful…." In 1 Timothy 1:12, "counted" is the aorist middle indicative of *hegeomai,* which means to think something through to a specific point. In other words, God thought it over and He said of Paul, "This man will respond when he hears the Gospel; and because he will respond when he hears, I will call him." God's thoughts were to call and to appoint Paul for this amazing ministry long before he was saved. And Paul understood that he was called to be a servant.

Paul was put into the ministry, *diakonia,* "a position of serving." The aorist middle participle *tithemi* reveals that the apostle was placed in a particular location on a specific assignment in a specific place for a specific function with a specific call for a specific ministry of serving God. He realized that he was in prison, enduring unusual hardships, because God counted him faithful to be put into a position of serving!

Chapter Two

THE PANORAMA OF GRACE

"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: *but I obtained mercy*, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Timothy 1:13). God gave Paul mercy because not a single thing but mercy would work for him—and not a single thing but mercy works for anyone!

"And the grace of our Lord *was exceeding abundant* with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 1:14). The abundance referred to here is an aorist active indicative of *huperpleonazo*. The grace that Paul sensed was so great, it could not be measured. It was so abundant, there was nothing to compare it with.

Then, "…with faith and love which is *in* Christ Jesus…" (1 Timothy 1:14). This defines a special position *within*. In Ephesians 6:23, faith and love are *from* Christ. Philemon 5 says that we have love and faith *toward* the Lord Jesus. But here and in 2 Timothy 1:13, faith and love

are *in* Christ.

Determined by Grace, Not Circumstance

The only way the apostle could fulfill his ministry was through the panorama of grace. Like the word used in 1 Peter 4:10, *poikilos*, the manifold grace of God means we have grace in every direction, on every side, in each detail of life. That is the panorama of grace. And when grace is allowed to penetrate and permeate the life of a believer, the authority of that grace determines that changes will occur. This principle is called *grace determinism*.

Determinism refers to changes, actions, and events determined by causes. In physics, determinism is studied in terms of cause and effect in the physical, cosmic realm. For example, if you add heat to water, which will speed up the movement of molecules, the water will boil and eventually change its form and become steam, which can cause a serious burn if mishandled.

According to the principles of cause and effect, *physical determinism* could be dangerous to any one of us. By being careless, not having proper priorities, and not redeeming the time, decisions that are not thought through properly can lead to devastating effects. For instance, if I

were late for an appointment and decided to speed on the highway, I could get a traffic ticket, possibly lose my license, or get into an accident. In every case, I would most likely miss the meeting, not to mention the other negative consequences that would be added to my life.

Then, in the realm of the world system controlled by Satan, spiritual projections from the demonic world are sent to affect the unconscious mind. If the mind is left unguarded by the Word, the attack can cause changes and certain behaviors in the human soul.

That is why 1 John 2:15-17 says we are not to love the world, nor anything in the world, because the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life are of the world. If any man loves the world, he does not love the Father. "…The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Next we have the principle of *genetic determinism*. In addition to a number of positive characteristics, we have inherited many negative tendencies passed down through the genes. We have, therefore, a tremendous need to be regened with the incorruptible Seed of the Word of God. Then we will have a spiritual genetic

structure and new spiritual DNA, which overcomes the effects of damaged genes.*

Environmental determinism speaks of the social, political, and economic environment a person has been exposed to, including the kinds of schools he attended and the kinds of people he had as friends. So many changes, actions, and events are determined by causes in the environment.

But what excites me the most as a believer is grace determinism. It is amazing that the grace of God can take a life as terrible as a murderous self-righteous Pharisee and produce effects that would make him one of the greatest Christians to ever live. Paul was used to write most of the New Testament epistles and to lay the foundations for much of the New Testament Church through preaching and teaching the Gospel (1 Corinthians 3:10). Grace determined that he would be the one to be used in this way. It depended upon God and not Paul.

Less Than the Least

"Whereof [of this glorious Gospel] I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me *by the effectual working of His power*. Unto me, who am *less than the*

least of all the saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:7-8).

That is why Paul said, "I am less than the least" (Ephesians 3:7). He realized that God placed him as a servant in the ministry by the gift of grace, and God did it according to the *effectual power* at work in his soul.

There are several Greek words used for "power." *Dunamis* speaks of the force of divine ability. *Energeia* is the operating power of grace, which causes the Word of God to be transferred from the purely perceptive lobe of the brain (channel "A"), through the human spirit (channel "B"), where perceptions go through the Cross, and into the heart (channel "C"), which houses the five parts of the soul. At that point, knowledge becomes wisdom that we can apply to every situation.**

Because you listen in meekness and you are Spirit-taught, all the work of the transfer is done by the power of the Holy Spirit. The effect of that transfer is *ischus*, which is the power of a divine, supernatural memory in a new frame of reference, because you are receiving God's viewpoint.

When Paul said, "I am less than the least,"

he was serious. He was saying, "Nobody could be lower than I have been. Nobody! I am less than the least, even with this gift of grace God has given to me." That power was given so Paul could preach among the Gentiles the *unsearchable* riches of Christ, "and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:8-9).

Paul was saying, "God placed me here with this message. They can confine me in prison, yet I am in the center of God's plan for the world, and I don't deserve it at all! My purpose is to make all men see the *mystery*, which was hid in God, way back in eternity past."

The manifold wisdom of God has been given to the Church. We have the appropriation of doctrine living in the members of the Body of Christ. We want people to see our fellowship, our unity, and our oneness. As a result, by applying the Word of God in their lives, the Church would reveal the mystery of grace to principalities and powers, to the demons in the air. It is all according to God's eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus. (see Ephesians 3:10-11).

An Eternal Purpose

When we get up in the morning, we have an eternal purpose, fulfilling a plan that was made millions of years ago. We didn't earn it and we do not deserve it. But God had an eternal purpose by giving us grace. He places us in the center of the world through a panorama of grace for every step, every detail, and each direction. According to grace determinism, every action and every event in God's plan for our lives is caused by grace. What we do, what we think, where we go, the money that supplies what we need—it is all the result of grace.

That is why Satan is after businesses that support the work of God. The devil wants to attack dedicated, committed Christians who share so freely with people in so many places, and he wants to stop their "*grace causes.*"

A Kingdom that Cannot Be Moved

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28).

In Hebrews 12:26-27, God declares that He will shake both heaven and earth so those things which can be removed will be, and the things

which cannot be shaken will remain. When situations are happening in your life, regardless of the causes, remember that God is taking away the things that can be shaken. You may not want Him to, but He is going to do it. He may give you grace and go along with you for a while, but sooner or later God will take away those things that can be shaken.

Finally, through the operation and energy of grace, when God is done, the only things remaining will be what cannot be shaken. That is God's eternal purpose and the provision of His plan. *We receive a kingdom which cannot be moved.* Every Christian in the world has received a kingdom, a government, that cannot be moved. We can experience divine stability because we have the Father's plan, the Son's execution of the plan, and the Holy Spirit's revelation and glorification of Christ. We have been given definition from the Word of God on how to live, how to walk and think and feel and confess.

Persecutors, sentimental people, the world, and all the demons of hell can't touch believers in the Kingdom of God because we have received grace. We have received this grace that we might have reverence and fear toward God (Hebrews 12:28*b*). This is why King David said,

"I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Psalm 16:8). If we set the Lord Jesus Christ before our face, we cannot be moved! According to 1 Corinthians 15:57-58, because we have been given this victory, we can be steadfast and immovable.

In the eternal plan of God, grace was determined by a loving God to work in our behalf. It was based on His knowledge of everything we would and would not do. There are many things I can never give to God because I don't *have* them. But I *can* give Him steadfastness. I can be immovable. And it is all because of grace.

**Read* Re-Gened, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

***Read* The Hearing Heart, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Three

THE WAY OF THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

"Afterward he brought me again unto the *door* of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from *under the threshold* of the house *eastward*: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came *down from under from the right side* of the house, at the *south side* of the altar" (Ezekiel 47:1).

What a beautiful picture of the glorious Gospel. Christ is the door (John 10:9). The waters that "issued out from under" speak of humility that comes from the cross. "East" speaks of resurrection from the dead, a body coming up out of the grave. East is where the sun comes up, and in Malachi 4:2, "the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings." The waters came down from the *right* side of the house at the *south* side of the altar. Because the work was finished at Calvary, Jesus is

now seated at the Father's right hand, indicating approval by the One whose love flows down—southward—from heaven to the world.

"Then He brought me out of *the way of the gate northward*, and led me about *the way without* unto the utter gate by *the way that looketh eastward*…" (Ezekiel 47:2). Here we see the way of the Word, the way of the Cross, the way of love. It is the way of quickening, of power, and of divine illumination.

Without the Way, there is no going.
Without the Truth, there is no knowing.
Without the Life, there is no living.
Without the Gift, there is no giving.

Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). He has *brought* us, and our conversation is from heaven, which is the gate northward. He has *led* us by the way with categories of doctrine—grace, mercy, and forgiveness—in the Body of Christ. He brings us unto the outer gate so we can share the glorious Gospel with those who have not heard. We are brought by the way that looketh eastward—not looking at our flesh but looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

Looking "eastward" is so important. We do not look unto people, circumstances, or how the

job is going, although we are very accountable to those things. We look unto Jesus as our motive for life.

"…And behold, there ran out waters on the right side." Thank God, the Holy Spirit and the water of the Word come through the Finished Work. Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. In the Old Testament tabernacle, no one could be seated in the holy of holies; but now, Christ is seated, and everything comes through Him. *It is finished!*

Get into the River

"And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles" (Ezekiel 47:3).

The measuring line is the Word of God. It measures who we are—our capacity, our ability, our obedience, our disobedience—while it keeps giving us the measure of grace and the Holy Spirit, which cannot be measured. They are unsearchable and past finding out (Ephesians 3:8*b*).

This line is in Jesus' hand. He went forth with the Word, and He measured one thousand cubits. "One" always signifies unity; it cannot be

divided, in terms of primacy. It speaks of singleness, sufficiency, omnipotence, power, help, independence. It stands alone, unchangeable, in a state that perpetuates its nature. *It excludes difference*. One is God.

"One thousand" is the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are all completely one. Truth is the identity of the Trinity, speaking of supremacy, sovereignty, and headship in connection with the mind. It implies a plan, a counsel, a purpose, and a will because of election. That is what "one thousand" is.

God said, "I am one." The Three are one, and they do not have differing opinions. People who have oneness are continually building up others in the Body of Christ. They do not criticize or cause division. Instead, their communication and their actions always edify. Of course everyone has moments that are bad, but what are moments? God takes care of our moments (Isaiah 27:3).

He Brought Me

"…He brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles." Watch the progress of grace—the progress of growing, knowing, and going. The next two verses describe how

God brings us into the waters to our knees (representing intense prayer), to our loins (representing the production of our life in Christ), and finally, into a river that we could not pass over. It is so comforting to read that He *brought* us. Each time, He measured one thousand, and that speaks of the purity of the Word of grace through the unity of the Trinity. Paul said, "I commend you to the word of His grace to build you up (Acts 20:32).

Think of it: "…He brought me…." Perhaps you are in the midst of the world with very little fellowship for a season, but you are making wonderful decisions in the place where He brought you. So when somebody comments on how well you are doing, you reply, "He brought me." You say to a teenager, "You are growing. You have purpose. I notice how well you concentrate; you are taking notes in the service." Many of our young people could honestly say, "He brought me."

"He brought me." And the measure was always one thousand. God plus nothing. Grace plus nothing. The Trinity's provision plus nothing. The word of grace.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

We have been commended unto God and to the word of His grace. A ministry that does not magnify the Word based on grace is a ministry that is still in the Old Covenant. Except for a few choice words that complement the New Testament, some people have never come out of the old. Yet, God wants to bring us into His river of life where everything is new every moment. The power of God is so great, so beautiful. The power of the river carries us through; we do not swim. The current comes from heaven, flowing in the marriage, in the family, in friendships. Even in indifferences, God takes us over.

"Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were *risen*, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over" (Ezekiel 47:5).

The river is eternal. It cannot be passed over. You can never pass over. *It is eternal*. It is the river of the Spirit of God (John 7:38-39).

"Then he brought me, and *caused me*…"—that is grace determinism—"…to return to the brink of the river." (Ezekiel 47:6*b*).

"Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then He said unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed" (Ezekiel 47:7-8).

Do we really understand that the waters shall be healed? With this growth into maturity and stability comes the miracle of healing and the Tree of Life. In Revelation 22:2, there was a tree in the middle and a tree on each side. God has provided a tree for our past, a tree for our present circumstances, and a tree for our future—the Tree of *Life*!

What Past?

God has no plan for the past. The past is gone. There is no need to get into it. It is over, and that is why we should not bring up the past unless it is to deal with something and clear it up once and for all. Still, He has provided a tree—the Cross—to deal with wounds from the past that might linger in the subconscious and

unconscious mind.

But God has a plan for now and for the future. That plan has an eternal purpose, *and it shall come to pass!*

"And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and *there shall be a very great multitude of fish,* because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and *every thing shall live* whither the river cometh" (Ezekiel 47:9).

We send out missionaries into all parts of the world to minister Christ to the unbelievers And every time they come back, they say, "Those people are living now. *Those who were dead in their sins are alive!* They are alive forever, and they are in God's plan."

They are alive! Oh, to know that is to be blessed beyond measure. We allow God to bring us into the river and He sends us to these people. They receive the glorious Gospel, and now they are alive.

CONCLUSION

"And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto Eneglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many" (Ezekiel 47:10).

Waters that never flow out become stagnant pools, which are breeding grounds for infection. But in Ezekiel 47, because the waters come forth, they shall be healed, and everything in that river will live. Not only that, a great multitude of fish are there. And what does God do? He makes us fishers of men (Matthew 4:19).

In Africa, Europe, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, the Far East, Australia, North America, Central America, and South America—God has promised that we will gather fish everywhere. This is the practical application: They will be from different nations, according to their kind, a great multitude of fish. There shall be healing,

and they shall live.

Dear Lord, never let us be familiar with the river of life, but help us always to recognize the Source. It is the river of Your Holy Spirit that causes us to go into all the world with this glorious Gospel. Please use us so we can glorify You and see many come into Your kingdom. In Jesus precious name, Amen.

The Glory of Grace

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour", an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Grace is a word of indescribable depth and significance to the Christian. In reference to God, this word represents the instrument of His unconditional love. Romans 3:10 states, "there is none righteous, no, not one." No one deserves the divine favor of heaven. Yet in His mercy, God has chosen to deal with all men according to grace—unmerited favor—despite the deceitfulness of their hearts (Jeremiah 17:9), the sickness of their heads (Isaiah 1:5) and the continual wickedness of their thoughts (Genesis 6:5).

The greatest expression of His grace is, of course, His Son, Jesus Christ. In order to bring men to Himself, God chose His Son to endure the wrath of sin. He was sacrificed upon the Cross and now all people have access to the throne of grace in Hebrews 4:16.

Taken primarily from an exegetical, verse-by-verse study of Ephesians 2:1-10, this booklet shows that man is the chief beneficiary of grace,

and that God's ultimate aim in using this instrument is to bring glory to Himself.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

Chapter One

GRACE—UNMERITED FAVOR

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

The first three verses of Ephesians 2 explain a man's helpless condition before God. Whether he knew it or not, every believer walked "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2*a*) before he received Christ as his Savior. Satan, who has dominion over the lower atmosphere (*aer*), manipulates the world system to project, initiate and persuade men to live as "children of disobedience"—his plan is to keep them from coming to Christ. He uses the career syndrome, attempting to preoccupy people with their occupations. Educational, political, business and social realms of society have been af-

fected by the devil's influence. His aim: to keep people—believers and non-believers—from walking worthy of the vocation they are called to in Ephesians 4:1. God created man in His image (Genesis 1:26) and, like all things, man was made to glorify the Creator (Revelation 4:11).

"Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." (Isaiah 43:7).

A Christian's vocation is to glorify God by hearing and implementing the Word. His occupation simply provides him with the necessities of life. Therefore, it can be said that each believer lives a life of full-time service in the Kingdom of God as a pastor, housewife, laborer or teacher. Whatever his occupation, the Christian is totally centered on Christ as a vocation. "Full-time Christian service" means that the heart is after Christ full time. Each is called "to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Satan's outward dominance together with the inherent adamic sin nature in all men (Genesis 5:3; Romans 5:12) render it impossible for a person to fulfill this vocation himself. However, there is Ephesians 2:4, which begins with the

beautiful words, "But God." "But" is *de* in the Greek—a conjunction indicating a great contrast. What a contrast it is! God is eternal, men's lives are but a vapor (James 4:14). He is absolutely just, while thoughts of the human heart are "only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Despite the fact that His character and essence are completely opposite of men's, in His mercy and love, God makes alive those who are dead in sins.

How does He accomplish this? The answer is in Ephesians 2:8*a*, "For by grace are ye saved." *Chariti este sesomenei* is how this phrase appears in the original Greek text. Together, these three words represent one of the strongest, clearest structures available in the Greek language. *Chariti* is the instrumental case, which indicates the means or vehicle of action, of *charis* or "grace." *Sesomenei* is a perfect passive periphrastic indicative of *sozo* (save). What this means is that God, using the instrument or vehicle of grace in the person of Jesus Christ, saved us in the past and the effect of that salvation persists now and exists forever. Each believer was "quickened with Christ" at the point of regeneration and is continually kept alive in Him through grace.

Grace is unmerited favor. It means that be-

cause of the richness of God's mercy and the supreme depth of His love toward all men, He makes available to them the opposite of what they actually deserve.

Chapter Two

SEATED IN GRACE

Watchman Nee made this statement: "Christianity begins not with a big do, but with a big done." He was speaking of the Finished Work performed by Jesus Christ at Calvary. There, nearly 2,000 years ago, each believer's complete salvation was accomplished through grace personified. Galatians 2:20*a* expresses that the Christian was crucified "with Christ." Ephesians 2:6 reveals that God also has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This is an aorist active indicative, explaining a tremendous truth about a Christian's position. Positionally, each Christian has already died, risen and ascended because of his faith in Christ.

No one can change these facts. In His sovereignty, God designed the plan of grace. He recognized the frail design of men and understood their inability to fulfill any system of righteous-

ness in themselves. With that in mind, the Father provided the way to salvation.

The Father sent the Son as "the way, the truth, and the life" in John 14:6*b*. Jesus went to the Cross after living a life of perfect righteousness. His death satisfied the justice of God, and thus, His love is now free through grace to be expressed to all sinners no matter how guilty they are.

Personal sins are not mentioned in Ephesians 2:1-3. Part of Satan's program of distraction involves getting people occupied with failures. But 1 John 2:2 explains that since Christ's crucifixion, personal sins have never been an issue: "And he (Jesus) is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." God, in His infinite plan and foreknowledge, knew every man would need a Redeemer. "Therefore as by the offence of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Romans 5:18a). Adam's transgression was imputed to all men, and each person entered this life condemned and spiritually dead. However, he also is born with his sins already paid for. All one has to do is to receive redemption in this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31*a*).

This word "believe" is *pisteuo* in the Greek, and it has a far deeper meaning than just a head knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is a trusting, a clinging to, a total reliance on one's own good works or in any human merit. Believing is the only work left to men (John 6:29). And through this instrument of faith, they are made children of God, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17). "Joint-heirs" is *sugkleronomos*, meaning "co-participant; participant in common." The believer has an unchangeable position as an heir or brother of the Son with an inheritance in heaven.

Even if his experiences seem to indicate otherwise, God perceives the Christian only as he is "in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6*b*). What caused the believer to become a joint-heir, raised up and seated together with the Son? Not a religious program of works, but a personal relationship to Christ through an adoption of grace (Romans 8:15).

"That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).

No Condemnation

"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:20-21).

"There is therefore now no condemnation" (Romans 8:1*a*).

Christians who experience feelings of condemnation simply do not recognize their position as expressed in the Word of God. "Condemn" (*kataginosko*) in 1 John 3:20 and 21 speaks of "self-judgment." Every personal sin was judged at the Cross, but some believers dwell on their failures to the point where they develop guilt complexes. In this state, one esteems his guilt above the Word of God, which tells him there is no condemnation. Often, the self-condemned person has difficulty dealing with others because things they do remind him of his failure. There is one solution: he must believe on "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2*b*). Once he views himself and his sins as dead with Christ, he will be free from guilt and empowered to serve in grace.

Forgiveness

First Peter 5:10*a* reveals God as "the God of

all grace." Despite this fact, many believers do not trust His grace in forgiveness. The Galatian church in particular had this problem. These believers exercised faith in receiving Christ as Savior, but were trying to become mature by striving in the flesh (Galatians 3:3). Needless to say, it was not working. Thus, Paul wrote, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11).

Christians must realize that grace is responsible for their entire justification and sanctification. In the worst situation of his life, the Christian still can only "believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29*b*). Even after a series of wrong decisions, one returns to experience communion with God through exercising the instrument of faith in the following verses:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Grace Glorifies God

One of God's attributes is omniscience—the ability to know all things at once. In other words, all of the past, all of the present and all of the future is ever in front of His eyes. Foreknowledge—His aptitude to know things to come—is a sub-category of omniscience. He knows the results of His instrument of grace.

Grace is bestowed not only for man's sake, but for God's benefit as well. This fact is illustrated in Ephesians 2:7: "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." "Shew" is *endeiknumi* in the middle voice, a voice used to indicate that the subject is producing the action of the verb for his own advantage. God is the subject here and the action of His saving men through grace is in His best interest. Grace glorifies Him. Jesus said in Matthew 5:46, "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? God loved and sacrificed His Son for those who did not love Him and His reward, according to Ephesians 2:7, will be manifest in "the ages to come" or eternity. Sinners saved by grace are the prizes of God, and

throughout eternity they will be on display for the angels to marvel at and exalt the richness of His mercy.

Grace also offers God the way for Him to embarrass Satan, the "accuser of our brethren" in Revelation 12:10. The very next verse details that believers "overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 12:11*a*), which was completely spilled out in mercy for men. This is the reason joy breaks out in heaven when a sinner repents and comes to Christ.

Chapter Three

GRACE: THE BEGINNING AND THE END

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

The phrase "for by grace are ye saved" appears also in verse 5 of Ephesians 2. Why did God have it repeated? He knew the heart of man. Men have always been stubborn in the belief that they can produce something good in themselves.

The first-born of Adam and Eve, Cain, offered God "the fruit of the ground," the product of his own labors in Genesis 4:3. Cain's offering, like anything produced in natural energy, was rejected on the basis of Isaiah 64:6: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

At this point, Paul expounds and further supports the premise that salvation is entirely of God through grace. Even the instrument of faith is from heaven. It is not of men, it is of God. Romans 10:17 explains the origin of faith: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The law was given to show man's incapability to keep it. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). Also consider John 20:31: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Simply, the Gospel exists to expose men to their helplessness and utter need for a Savior.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

The Word is the power of salvation; the vehicle by which men come to know the grace of God. Man certainly had nothing to do with what is in the Bible, according to 2 Timothy 3:16. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." "For ever,

O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" explains Psalm 119:89. The Word was given in grace, and by the hearing of it, faith is produced. And, faith is exercised in grace results in salvation, which is…by grace. It could not be made any clearer. This logical progression plainly shows that the believer's salvation and position in God's plan begins and ends with grace. The Christian believes, that is his only role in the plan. A life in Christ is a free, unmerited, undeserved gift of God. "Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 3:9). No one can boast nor will they ever be able to. There is not a Christian who can take an ounce of credit for his position. All he did was accept God's grace provision. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). All the glory must go to the Lord.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Chapter Four

HIS WORKMANSHIP OF GRACE

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

The word "workmanship" in this verse is *poiema*, "something that is made." A Christian is what he is by the grace of God. No believer "made" himself: he is God's handiwork. The next portion of this verse, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works," clearly expresses the divine order of the spiritual life. Notice, the first child of God was created or saved in Christ Jesus, then he possesses a life "unto good works." Apart from Christ, he can produce nothing of eternal value. "For without me you can do nothing," Jesus said in John 15:5*b*. In other words, the Christian's redemption by the Son is what makes him a "vessel unto honour" (Romans 9:21). Even the works that the believer

does in Christ were "before ordained" by the Father. God knew everything before the foundations of the world. In His omnipotence and omniscience, He called the Christian to a specific, divine purpose that was prepared and settled in His grace. "Walk" is *peripateo*, which speaks of "ordering one's behavior or conduct." *Peripateo* appears as a verb in the Greek aorist subjunctive tense, which refers to simple undefined action instead of continuous action. It is an action performed at different, separate points of time.

This creates a beautiful picture for the believer. The examination of the original text shows that God understood that the Christian would not live a life of continuous "good works." The Father knew there would be times of failure for each believer. He perceived beforehand that they would not "walk" in good works and He therefore prepared a plan of recovery as recorded in 1 John 1:9.

Grace According to Truth

"For the law is given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

"Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in

you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth" (Colossians 1:6).

Grace cannot be separated from truth. A believer's position can never be disturbed; his salvation is eternally secure. He will forever be seated in heavenly places. But the Christian's experience on earth is according to truth. The beautiful plan of grace for the believer's life is nullified in his experience when he deliberately violates truth. Jude 4 warns against making grace a license to sin:

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

To separate grace from truth is to separate grace from Jesus Christ since He represented the embodiment of both. God desires that each believer be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). Not just for His glorification, but for his own sake. He who lives in truth has a life of joy. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16). To live experientially outside of truth is to walk without

grace "in truth," according to Colossians 1:6. Psalm 119:11 explains that the Word of truth is necessary to keep the believer from sin: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

The Word is God's testimony of His grace. The myriad of His promises, provisions and blessings are listed in the Bible. Each line is good and acceptable before God and able to encourage and build up the believer. In His Word, the Father goes on record. He says He is not a liar in Titus 1:2 and Numbers 23:19.

Christians today would do well to follow the example of the Berean church in Acts 17:10 and 11. These believers "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11b). Those who take a "precept upon precept; line upon line" (Isaiah 28:10) approach to the Word will grow to become like Timothy "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1*b*).

CONCLUSION

Simply, grace includes all that God has done. The Christian believes this through the instrument of faith and in doing so activates all of the promises and provisions in the Word of God for his life. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). In grace, He has freely given believers all things in Romans 8:32. It means so much to God that He closed the canon of Scriptures speaking of it.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21).

The Father, the Son and the Spirit are full of grace. Through grace, sinners are called (Galatians 1:15). It causes them to be saved (Ephesians 2:5) and it keeps them from ever being lost (John 6:37). In grace, men receive power to pray with boldness (Hebrews 4:16). Through it, believers' lives testify of His glory in a world of darkness (2 Corinthians 1:12). Where does the Christian

find strength (2 Corinthians 12:9)? Where can he find the power to give in liberality? Where is his sufficiency?

All of these are found in grace. And God gives all things in grace so all glory will be His for eternity.

"For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4:15).

The God of All Blessings

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

A lie has invaded the hearts of many Christians today. The lie is that it is possible to limit the grace of God and thereby limit our chances for a blessing. Many believe that God can withhold a blessing because they do not deserve it. In fact, it is their lack of belief in the love of God that keeps these people from forgiving themselves and others. It is a lack of confidence in His character that keeps people in a cycle of sin.

This booklet reveals the true meaning of "blessing." It will show that when we submit to God's order, seeing it as His design for maximum blessing to every believer, we can stop striving for perfection. Instead, we can just rest and receive what He desires for us. Then we can take the blessing and become a blessing wherever we go, manifesting the intimacy of God's love to people who will receive His free gift.

Chapter One

CONCERNING THE NEW CREATION

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

According to this passage, the man who is in Christ is not *becoming* new; he is new. But what about the "old things"? The old things are not passing away—they are *passed* away. And all things are become new.

The Greek word for new—*kainos*—means that every single thing about the new creature is brand-new. Still, we need to realize that while God has a plan for individuals, Satan has a plan too. Satan's plan is to get people to withdraw or to react in their emotions and submit to his pressures. Then he tries to make us think obsessively over whatever details we are concerned with, and to always compare ourselves with others,

which is not wise (2 Corinthians 10:12).

In short, Satan's plan is to intimidate, to accuse, and to leave us without a good self-image. He wants to be in charge of our "skeletons"—the old things—because he thinks that he has access to our past. But in fact, as born-again believers, we were sealed by the Holy Spirit at the moment of our redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14). We are new creatures. We are a new creation. And I thank God that the old things have passed away and that all things have become new.

What's Gone Is Gone

In Zechariah 3:1-4, when Satan came to God to point out the sins of the high priest, the Lord rebuked him. He was not allowed to say a word, because Satan does not have access to the skeletons in our closet. That is because we do not *hav*e any skeletons hidden away.

If old things are really passed away, that would include any skeleton—the bones of a smelly old corpse that was left to rot in the grave. The problem is that when a burial just covers up the remains, there is a possibility for them to be uncovered. The Finished Work of Calvary, however, makes sure that there is nothing left to hide.

The Definition of a Blessing

What God is after is to bless us. "Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee" (Hebrews 6:14).

Do you know what the word "bless" means? It speaks of the manifestation of a deep, intimate love life, which brings much happiness. So God says, "I want to bless you."

And we can say back to Him, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Psalm 103:1-2).

Here we are, sinners saved by grace, and God is *blessing* us! God is the great Blesser, and we do not deserve it. Of course, if you want to go your own way, you do not have to receive His blessing. But He is the great Blesser, and that is what He longs to do for us.

The Responder's Dilemma

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3).

When Satan wants to control an individual, he does it by attacking the volition. Do you know why he got through to Eve so quickly?

She chose to step outside of her covering, and Adam failed to cover her when she went out on her own.

Satan would love for the woman to be the head of the house. He wants the woman to usurp her husband's authority because she is a responder. In fact, Satan was able to deceive Eve first because she responded to him. As soon as she did that, he had her.

Women are most vulnerable to deception because, by God's design, they are responders. Many Christians have wonderful homes where the husband submits to God's order and takes authority without "lording over" his wife and family. When God's order is honored in the home, it is a place of rest and continual edification. Individually, family members may go through tests and even fail. Yet with God's love ruling, people are quick to rebound and receive the blessing that God commands (Psalm 133).

But the devil goes after responders and tries to get them to be depressed and negative, to talk a lot and mean little. He does everything in his power to usurp God's authority in the home, and when we do not guard our hearts, it can happen in a moment.

Blessings from Honoring God's Order

The Lord wants to bless the husband as the head of the home and let him be the head of the home in love. That doesn't mean the wife should be a doormat. She has a vital role in the family as a helpmate. A godly husband who is not insecure will delegate authority to her where her gifts complement his. Perhaps, as an example, she is stronger in handling the budget. They still make decisions together, and she submits to his headship for the final say. But he recognizes and honors her strengths as much as he covers her weaknesses. That household will be greatly blessed, because God is honored above all.

According to 1 Corinthians 11:3, the husband is the head of the house. He is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25). But where a strong woman is the head of her house and she calls all the shots, that family is divided, spiritually and mentally.

Because of our relationship to God as the Bride of Christ, I often think of Ephesians 5:25, as I did again this morning. I wake up and I say, "Good morning, Jesus. Thank You for a good night's sleep." I never want to take that relationship for granted or become familiar with His

presence.

And before I go to sleep tonight, I will get on my knees and say, “Good night, Jesus. You are still in my heart, and I thank You for blessing me even while I rest.”

Chapter Two

RECOGNIZING THE BLESSER

The manifestation of intimacy is such a beautiful thing.

When that intimacy is manifested between a husband and his wife, he loves her, he shows kindness to her, and he covers her with a great covering. He prays with her and they read the Scriptures together as they live according to knowledge (1 Peter 3:7). Because he honors her as the weaker vessel, and because he recognizes that they are heirs together of the grace of life, their prayers are not hindered.

It is wonderful to know that God is going to bless. He will bless your marriage, He will bless your children, He will bless your job, and He will bless your health. God is in the blessing business. His great joy is to manifest His intimacy to a believer who loves His appearing (2 Timothy 1:10; 4:8).

There was a seven-year-old boy who had a

brother and a sister. Their dad—an alcoholic who always screamed and hollered at them—left home and stayed away from his family for a number of years. They all hated him. Years later he had a heart attack and became very weak, and nobody would go to see him.

That wounded young man eventually heard the Gospel and received Christ as his Savior. He began to learn about God's heart. He learned that as our heavenly Father, He just wants to bless all of His children. He also learned how the Father's heart breaks when people reject Him. And then, God said to that young man, "Now go and see your daddy."

He said, "No!"

"Go see your daddy."

"No."

Then he had a dream of his dad dying—and, in fact, he was dying. So the son got up in the middle of the night, put on his clothes, and drove a long way to be with his dad.

When he went into the bedroom where his dad was dying, that rebellious old alcoholic wept as his son ministered to him, gave him the Gospel, and told his dad how much he loved him. His father said, "Son, I have no friends. I am dying. I have nobody. Thank you for com-

ing. And thank you for forgiving me."

They shared the most intimate time, and everything—just like that—came together. That young man recognized God as the Blesser, and he was able to pass on the blessing.

Confidence That Defeats the Deceiver

"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (Ephesians 3:12).

Dale Evans and her husband Roy Rogers had a daughter (Robin) who died. Then when their adopted son grew up, he went away to law school. But while he was there, he went to a party where he drank so much whiskey that he died of alcohol poisoning. Neither of his parents knew that he had ever touched a drink.

Afterwards, Dale Evans said, "Our hearts were broken."

But then she said this: "Today I am going to look for a blessing. Christ is the Blesser, and I *know* He will bless me."

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14).

Why can a believer have such confidence? The power of Satan is defeated when we let God bless us. Satan does not want us to be intimate

with God. He does not want a woman to respond to and appreciate her husband. In fact, Satan's plan is to have a wife talk against her husband behind his back. He wants us to be occupied with everything from A to Z—everything, that is, except for Christ. That is what Satan wants.

But thanks be to God, when a husband loves his wife properly, he manifests God's holiness, God's grace, and God's love to her. There is nothing more beautiful than to have a husband love his wife as Christ loved the Church. And when a wife honors her husband (Ephesians 5:33), she blesses him, they bless one another, and God can bless their relationship.

The woman is a helpmate, and she is designed to respond to godly authority. As she submits to proper spiritual authority, she honors her husband, she blesses her husband, and she blesses her family. It is a beautiful combination.

The Pleasant Ointment Flows Down from the Head

Husbands, love your wives. No matter what she does, love her. You will not always have her. That goes for all of us. Whether it is our family members or dear friends, it is an amazing thing

to be a part of God's blessing.

It is also an amazing thing when the wife manifests intimacy in her response to her husband's initiations, and she just loves him back as she was taught (Titus 2:4). As she becomes a real helpmate and responds to his love, the children are blessed, and they become a wonderful family. Christ is the head of that home, because He is the head of the man.

We never want to think of God's order of delegated authority in terms of ruling harshly and demanding obedience. God is not after dictatorship but leadership. God is looking for leadership where He can lead us in His nature. People want to obey and support those who lead and guide in meekness (Psalm 25:9).

It is so important to be a good leader. Whoever you have under you, be a great leader. In your words, in your thoughts, and in your actions, be a leader whom God has anointed.

Chapter Three

IRREVERSIBLE BLESSINGS

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

"Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them" (Numbers 23:19-21).

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for the Brethren to dwell together in unity!….for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm 133:1-3).

God has commanded us to be blessed, and He cannot reverse it. He has commanded that we would receive the manifestation of the intimacy of His love and to have communion with

Him in our hearts.

Let me repeat that: God has *commanded* that we would be blessed. What's more, He cannot reverse it. He has not seen the perverseness of Israel, nor has He seen any of Jacob's iniquities. He will only look upon us through the viewpoint of the Finished Work—through the Blood of Christ. It is on the basis of Redemption that we are blessed.

The Difference Is Revealed in the Blessing

"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing" (Genesis 12:2).

"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (James 3:10).

What a difference it makes when we live according to the blessing of God—that whenever others are talking about how bad somebody is, we can talk about how good they are. This separates us from the ways of the world, while it manifests to the world the possibility of an intimate relationship with God.

It is so overwhelming to know that blessing, He will bless you. He is *waiting* to bless you. He *has* blessed you. He *will* bless you. When we stay

on the right channel with God, we will have the greatest blessings of our lives. We can expect to be blessed all the time.

We are all members of a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). As an overseeing pastor, I am responsible to preach the Word to hundreds of men and women who are also believer-priests. But the moment I have finished preaching and the service ends, everyone who heard the message must stand or fall before God alone. We must honor that position of royalty in one another.

Your life, and what you do with the message, is between you and God, because you are walking with God as a member in particular of His royal family. Furthermore, you are seated above (Ephesians 2:6). Your affections are from above (Colossians 3:2). Your conversation is from above (Philippians 3:20). You bless people because of your position in Christ. You are living in a new dispensation of grace (Ephesians 3:2).

New Possibilities with a New Attitude

We can have the right attitude, the right mind, the right volition, the right life, the right love, the right life, and we can go forward with Jesus Christ our Lord, being blessed—being

blessed in heavenly places and down here below.

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us how to be blessed by grace. “I will give you all these things you don’t deserve, because I am the grace Giver. I am the Blesser. I am the Lover of your soul.”

A little boy lost his father in a car accident. His mother was an alcoholic, and somebody asked me if I would counsel him. I got on my knees, and when he came in we prayed and I wept with him.

Many of us would get together and we would bless him and edify him. We would do things with him, take him places. I would send him notes often, just to bless him. As a result of the investment in his life by many people in our church, that young man is a missionary today.

In blessing, He will bless us. And that is what God wants to do for us. He just wants to bless us continually. As we submit to His order as the design for maximum blessings and we recognize Him as the Blesser, we will receive the manifestation of an intimate love life that He desires to impart to His Bride.

CONCLUSION

A couple I know and love deeply went through a terrible trial. He gave up his wife and family for something that he knew could never last. The shame he felt and the fact that he had broken fellowship with God kept him from coming back sooner. But all during that time—and it was a few years—she never lost hope. She never talked about him with her friends, other than to let her pastor counsel her.

From time to time I would see her, and I would ask, "Is everything okay?" And she would say, "I'm praying, and everything is going to turn out all right."

I never heard her say one negative thing, but I did hear her say, "Everything is going to turn out all right."

Today, their marriage is an example to us all, and that couple will be reigning above certain people in heaven that you thought were so spiritual. They simply agreed with the God of all

blessings and began to receive from Him all that He desires to give His children.

God is good! We have every reason to feel like a multi-billionaire every morning when we wake up. When we say, "Good morning, Jesus!" we are greeting the God of all blessings. We are greeting the Lover of our soul, who desires to manifest His love to us continuously. All we need to do is recognize Him, receive Him, and respond to His blessings.

The Great Cover-Up

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INTRODUCTION

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).

In order for this booklet to have the impact upon us that God desires, it is vital that we consider a very relevant eternal premise. God establishes a premise for every category of truth and then we, by faith, allow the Holy Spirit to amplify, reiterate, and magnify that category so we may implement it in our lives.

The premise for this message is the righteousness of God. Without the operational force of God's righteousness in my life, I am unrighteous. I am unrighteous if I establish my own righteousness in any area of life. Any thought or concept outside of the gift of God's righteousness is unrighteousness. I am unrighteous if I look upon another believer in any way apart from God's righteousness.

Today, men and women, both in the Church and outside of it, are filled with unrighteous thoughts toward others and toward themselves. This should not be so, for God has clothed us with His salvation and covered us with His righteousness. *This is the greatest cover-up in history!* May these words release and revive us as we consider what it means to be hid with Christ in God.

Chapter One

THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17).

"For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:3-4).

"My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt" (Psalm 71:23-24).

These verses teach us that God's righteousness is imputed without works as a free gift at

the point of salvation. If God declares every single believer to be righteous, then I cannot think a single thing outside of the gift of righteousness. Any thought toward myself or others that falls short of the gift of grace is an unrighteous thought.

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6). All human righteousnesses are as filthy rags before God. People live in poor self-images because of their unrighteous thoughts. Their self-images are desecrated and experientially depraved.

The Psalmist, in Psalm 71, determined to declare the righteousness of God all the day long. The righteousness of God's testimonies is everlasting and they give understanding (Psalm 119:144).

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Romans 3:3-4).

When a person believes, his faith is counted to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6). God's

righteousness has been purchased by Jesus Christ's redeeming blood and is imputed by grace through faith to undeserving recipients. In Romans 3:4, God is saying that He wants to teach us the way to be overcomers when we are being judged.

On the other hand, Romans 3:5 teaches that there is no possible way for self-righteousness to commend God's righteousness, and neither can unrighteousness judge God's righteousness that acts in justice to forgive or condemn, depending on the recipient's response or reaction to God's Finished Work.

Thinking in Grace

Any thought outside of grace is an unrighteous thought. Any conversation detached from a Finished Work position is a human conversation without divine consent. Any principle of evaluation without redemptive values is a principle that operates in the realm of Adamic relativity.

God is a just God. He is righteous in all His ways and His work is perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4). There is no unrighteousness in Him (Psalm 92:15). Psalm 5:4 tells us there is no evil in Him. God doesn't promote sin in His Kingdom (Habbakuk 2:13). Then how can God, who

loves righteousness and justice (Psalm 33:5; Isaiah 61:8), forgive someone who falls seven times in a day? Proverbs 24:16 says that the righteous man falls seven times and gets up, but the wicked falls into mischief and stays down. What kind of God would cover up something like that?

How can a God who is perfect in all of His ways (Psalm 18:30) tell us that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness? How can He do that when someone simply confesses? Without evidence, without works, without proof, He forgives and cleanses. How can God say that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound? The following Scriptures tell us how:

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

Is it right that Jesus Christ died for the sins

of the whole world, bearing them upon His own body? Is it fair for God to cover up the sins of the Church—when those in it should be more responsible than anyone else—and yet allow the unsaved person to die in his sin (John 8:21)? Was it sensible for Jesus to bear every sin that mankind has ever committed? It was sensible to the Father, because He so loved the world and wanted to make a way so that believers should not perish but have eternal life in Him (John 3:15-16).

Covered by His Hand

"And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a [cleft] of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by" (Exodus 33:22).

The greatest cover-up of all time is for God Almighty to take an imperfect man or woman and hide them in Himself, to cover them with His hand, so that He cannot see their sin. We are hidden in the Rock, our Savior, Jesus Christ. We have been covered by His nail-pierced hand. His glory passes by us and He covers us with His hand so He cannot see our sins. This is unheard of! The average Christian never considers what this means, and it is so difficult for Finished Work

believers to communicate in a world of Christianity that hasn't experienced something that is finished.

We are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). We are in Christ as new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are seated above (Ephesians 2:6), and joined to His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). We are one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17). Purchased, redeemed, bought, hidden, cleansed, perfected, and complete—we are all of these things!

Growing in grace, we will become in our experience what He has already made us to be in our position. We use recovery, by naming our sins and forsaking them, to get up and go on with God.

Chapter Two

WHO COULD STAND?

"Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psalm 130:2-3).

When I pray for myself, that is supplication. Praying for others is intercession. What I want to focus on in this chapter is the great statement made in verse 3 of Psalm 130: "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" If God were to take account of sin, who could stand before Him? If He were to scrutinize and give careful attention to iniquities (Job 13:26), none could stand before God, before men, or before angels.

We can be thankful that marking iniquities is not a part of God's character. Instead, Christ, in all His glory and majesty, sees opportunities in our failures, opportunities to manifest His

great love. Why else would He say of the harlot in Luke 7:47 "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

The Holy Spirit is grieved when we sin. Our iniquities quench His activity in our lives and break fellowship with Him. If we continue in sin, God will bring chastisement to restore the believer's relationship with His character and nature, just as a loving father would do with his child.

Covered All Day Long

"And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12).

"I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live" (Psalm 119:141-144).

God covered Benjamin all the day long.

Deuteronomy 33:12 calls him "the beloved," and the Word of God says that he will dwell in safety and that he shall be covered; *God* shall cover him all the day long. Yet, if you read the story of Benjamin, you will find some shocking things about him that would repudiate any appreciation that you'd ever have for the man.

Benjamin was not the sweet little boy that Deuteronomy 33:12 pictures him to be. We will not go into details of his life here, but Benjamin's life was not a credible one; I'll just say this very carefully, neither was his tribe or the group that was built around him. Still, the Word of God says that God would cover Benjamin all the day long and forever! The reason is found in this message.

In Judges 19-21, an awful incident at Gibeah prompted the other tribes of Israel to nearly wipe out Benjamin as a tribe. A man's concubine had been raped and murdered, and the Benjamites of the town refused to turn over those who committed the crime. Those other tribes attacked Gibeah and Benjamin; only six hundred men of Benjamin remained when the battles were over (Judges 20:47).

Who was to be one of the descendants of those six hundred survivors? None other than

the Apostle Paul, "For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Romans 11:1).

Surely, the righteousness of God's testimonies are from everlasting to everlasting. His testimony was that Benjamin would be beloved and covered, and Paul's work—the fruit of which continues to this day—is the result of God keeping His testimony.

This is why it is so important not to forget His precepts, which include the authoritative rules of divine redemption, divine grace, and divine love, and which govern the authoritative implementation of His forgiveness and grace.

The Psalmist said that he opened his mouth and panted in longing for the commandments of God, for he knew that God's Finished Work perfection was the end of all the commandments (Psalm 119:131).

Chapter Three

GOD'S FORGIVENESS AND MAN'S FORGIVENESS

"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psalm 130:4).

The forgiveness of God is a merciful surgery, a cutting away of iniquity and sin. He separated our sins from us. The Hebrew word *celiychah* indicates that God's forgiveness is *not* man's forgiveness. Men have a forgiveness that is based upon thoughts outside of the gifts of grace and righteousness (Romans 5:17-21). God's forgiveness comes from a perfect justice that demands the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto

justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:17-21).

Because the demands of justice have been satisfied through the perfect righteousness of Christ, God is saying, "I am free to give divine forgiveness, and with my forgiveness comes divine forgetfulness of all sin. I remember your sins no more (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12; Hebrews 10:17). 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins (Isaiah 43:25).' "

A Forgiveness That Is Not Ours

Jesus Christ is revealing something that is vital for us to understand. He forgives with a forgiveness that is not ours! Shame on believers who, in the name of forgiveness, still talk for hours with counselors about their past. "I am the Lord," He says. "I forgive and forget through a divine decree of perfect justice. When your un-

righteous thoughts remember what you or someone else has done, you are not all right with me." When we dwell upon our past, we are acting as if God's merciful surgery was never accomplished. The divine cover-up is not understood.

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8).

Jesus came not to be ministered unto. He came to minister and give His life as a ransom for all (Matthew 20:28). Our sins were paid for and covered at great cost. For this reason, Jeremiah 50:20 tell us, "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

If I judge another for his sins, I am seeking something that can't be sought, trying to find something that cannot be found. God has forgiven and forgotten *all* of our sins. God will take the chastisement for the sins of the person I am judging and put it upon me.

In relation to the party being judged, the sins are already gone and covered; God cannot deal with him after his sin because the sin has been

paid for by Jesus Christ. And, because I will not recognize His payment for their sins, I reap the effects of what I am talking about, for I have rejected the covering of grace, redemption, and the Blood.

God forgives with a forgiveness that we will never understand unless we believe His Word, live by it, and allow ourselves to be sanctified by it. What does Psalm 130:4 mean when it says there is forgiveness with Him that He might be feared? It means that once He's forgiven someone, we are not to toy with that forgiveness, even as it relates to ourselves.

His forgiveness is divine, produced by an eternal decree coming out of perfect justice. His forgiveness is not to be presumed against. Jesus Christ has paid for all sin and sins—who I am and what I've done—taking them all upon His own body. He did it once and for all and we are not to play games with the subject. I must fear Him in reverance (Hosea 3:5). I must accept His forgiveness and not presume against it by competing with unrighteousness expressed by my self-righteousness in human forgiveness.

CONCLUSION

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

This is the glorious Gospel. He puts us in the cleft of His Rock, Jesus Christ, and covers us with His hand. We don't put ourselves into that Rock. He puts us there Himself: "When you believe, I put you in the cleft of the Rock and then I cover you with my redemptive hands." Therefore, who can lay any charge to God's elect? Christ has justified us; therefore, who can condemn? He died and is risen and is making intercession for us. If God be for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)?

"In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my

strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man" (Psalm 71:1-4).

The Lord is stating a great principle here. He delivers the believer out of the hand of those who are cruel and unrighteous. Who are the cruel and unrighteous? Those who think outside of grace, those who uncover what He has covered by His Blood. Anyone, no matter how noble and good he appears, is cruel and unrighteous when he acts outside of the redemptive rights of God's forgiveness.

God's dealings with us are always in mercy (Psalm 119:124), and His mercy endures forever. By His mercy, He has covered and forgotten our sins and they are to be remembered no more.

The Great Detective:

Sin

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23*b*).

"The children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan…took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel" (Joshua 7:1).

"Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed…" (Joshua 7:11*a*).

"…It shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man. And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel" (Joshua 7:14-15).

According to these verses, sin is the greatest detective ever known to the human race. This

message reveals the shocking story of how one man's sin kept an entire nation from victory in a battle against their enemies. It also shows the measures God will take to deal with sin in the lives of His people.

1 Peter 5:10 reveals God as "the God of all grace." How can a God, Who only deals with His people in grace, take such extreme measures in dealing with sin? Can He ever cease to be the God of all grace? Absolutely not! "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6). "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

Chapter One

FAITH OBEDIENCE

Satan wages a strategic warfare in his attack against Christianity as he tries to prevent believers from thoroughly understanding the divine dimensions of faith obedience.

Few Christians have a problem with the principle of *mental assent*. Mental assent has never saved a single person, and it never will. It is simply believing—like the demons do—that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose again. According to James 2:19, demons believe the Gospel, and they tremble, but they have never been saved. Therefore, it is possible for a person to profess to believe the gospel and never be saved.

He could be a pastor or an evangelist as those mentioned in Matthew 7:21-23. He may cast out demons, do many wonderful works across the world, and profess Christ as his Savior, and still never have been saved. This is re-

vealed later on in a person's life.

In Luke 8:18, Jesus tells us how it is revealed. God takes away from that one what he *seems* to have. If a man could live in sin and never be chastised for it, then he was never saved, even though he is a pastor. *If we can continue in sin and do not get chastised, then we were never saved.* That issue is between the individual and God.*

I have always loved knowing that before God, we can't get away with a thing. If we take a couple of steps over God's boundary lines, we sense God beginning to spank us though we may never tell another person. One thing about God: when He chastises, He does it perfectly because He was there when you sinned. He has full knowledge, and He knows why you did it, how many times you did it, and how much you have lied about it. To say the least, His judgment is perfect as He evaluates our lives.

Faith obedience is the greatest thing that a person can give to God. James 4:17 says that "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." If I know what is right and don't do it, it is a transgression (1 John 3:4). If it is sin and transgression to know what is right and *not* do it, then it is godliness to know what is right and to *do* it.

After working long hours to prepare messages, I am always so thankful to see an overflow crowd in our church services. That's what it means to communicate with your pastor-teacher (Galatians 6:6). Gathering faithfully is a communication of love in response to the Word of God that he preaches. When people in my church tell me with their kind notes and personal messages how much the Word of God did for them in service, I thank God.

Spirituality is very simple. Jesus said in John 8:31, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." The key word there is "continue," a present active infinitive in the Greek. The active voice means that the subject acts upon the verb: the believer produces the action of continuing. The infinitive means you've purposed in your heart to continue.

Purpose in your heart that you will be one who continues. Purpose in your heart that you will not be a casualty or a member of the Laodicean church (Revelation 3:14-20). Decide that you will not be someone who is distracted with personal sins or involved in satanic evil. Purpose to continue in Jesus Christ's Word.

Many men are good husbands, and they will continue to be good husbands because they have purposed it in their hearts. Many ladies are godly wives, and because they have purposed it in their hearts, they will continue to be godly wives. Others in our ministry are good students and conscientious friends to God because they have purposed it in their hearts.

Every Christian who receives rewards at the Bema Seat judgment in heaven will do so because he made a decision, purposing in his heart to continue in God's Word.

If we continue in the Word then we are disciples, "learners" of the doctrines of Christ; *then* we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. God says, "There is a way to be free from bondage. There is a way to be free from carelessness, worldliness, and the fashions of this world. There is a way to be free from lust and self-centeredness; just continue in the purpose of My Word so that I can make you free."

If you know the Son, the Son will *make* you free indeed (John 8:36). Before that, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). "He that followeth me" is a present active causal participle. A truth

caused it, so it's a causal participle (a participle which gives an underlying cause for an action). And according to Matthew 4:19, if we continue following Jesus, He will make us fishers of men.

A Faith that Serves by Love

In Galatians 5:6, external circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing to the Spirit-filled New Testament believer. Religious rites and ceremonial duties mean nothing. God desires a faith that serves by love.

Faith obedience must always bring me into serving. Therefore, when I hear the Word of God, it is crucial that first I enter into *faith*. Second, I must enter into faith *obedience* (Romans 1:5). Third, it's imperative that I enter into faith obedience that *serves* others by love. These three characteristics are so lacking in the Church today.

Instead of getting a divorce, a wife can serve her husband by love. The marriage is not a "slave and master" relationship. Certainly she can receive help through counseling if she's being abused or if her husband is committing adultery, but a woman has the privilege of glorifying God in her purpose on earth. Having faith in God's provision, obeying God's mandates,

and being filled with the Holy Spirit of God's love, she has a faith obedience that serves her husband by love.

Sometimes people want to be counseled when all they need is to obey—and usually they know that before they come for counseling.

"What do I do in this situation?"

"Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). Obey as soon as you hear (Psalm 18:44). Have a faith that serves others by love, though they don't deserve it. That is what it means to be a good steward of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10); you give grace because you have received grace (John 1:16). Still, many people don't realize that living the Christian life without divine love leaves a person empty—unable to experience the grace of God.

Be Filled with the Fullness of God

One of the most unusual things that a Christian faces is the possibility of being empty while he is under the teaching of God's Word every day. An empty soul is like a vacuum cleaner that sucks in the dust from the world's system of demons. Because the soul is empty, it receives worldly spirits and projections from the atmosphere, and begins to be conformed to the world

That is why it is necessary to keep the soul filled with God's Word.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend [(possess)] with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Oh, what a privilege to have the love of Christ possess us on earth in three dimensions of time!—to have that love pass all knowledge of my past and my sins. What a privilege it is to be filled with all the fullness of God (*pleroma*) so that He may do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the operational power and ability that works in us. "Unto him be Glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (see Ephesians 3:20-21).

How can I remain filled with all the fullness of God? By continuing to hear the Word of God which produces faith (Romans 10:17).

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God—not first from reading it, but from *hearing* it. Then immediately that faith gives me the grace to obey what I hear, because of the Holy

Spirit's operation and divine ability. And when I obey (as soon as I hear), my faith begins to serve others by the same love that I've been rooted and grounded in. There is a manifestation of love because of my obedience to the Word through the activity of faith.

Occasionally I see Christians go through times of emptiness. Some people may be in Bible college classes every day, yet when they go through those periods of emptiness, their empty soul, like a vacuum cleaner, begins to suck in the dust—the vanity of the world—to fill the void. They are sublimating by socialization as they rationalize God's precepts. But God has called us to take in the categorical authority of His Word and meditate on it day and night.

**Read* Salvation: Profession or Possession? *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997, to understand presalvation experience versus eternal security.*

Chapter Two

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

The seventh chapter of Joshua reveals that the three-fold process of faith obedience that serves by love was not functioning. Achan thought he could get away with something less than total obedience, "but the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing" (Joshua 7:1*a*).

Get the picture: God told the Israelites not to take a single thing out of Jericho, and anything they took would be called "the accursed thing." Likewise, I must not take that which is of the world or that which is from the atmosphere as my possession, because it will become an accursed thing.

Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai to view the country and bring back a report. When they returned they said, "Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to

labour thither; for they are but few. So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men" (Joshua 7:3-4*a*). "And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water" (Joshua 7:5).

When Joshua came back from the battle he "rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads" (Joshua 7:6).

Israel took the powerful city of Jericho, but then took it for granted that they would also conquer Ai. Instead, they were defeated and lost thirty-six men.

Joshua, however, did the right thing. He came back before the ark of God, tore his clothes, and put dust upon his head along with the elders of Israel. Then he asked God why this had happened (verses 7-9). In verse 10, "…the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?"

When I'm in my most intense relationship to God, privately, I go before Him and fall completely prostrate. Why? It happened all the time

in the Old Testament, and all I am saying is, "Oh my God, You are here! You love me. You have accepted me. I am Yours, and You are mine. Look at me. *Just look at me!* Creator, Redeemer, Lord God—look at me." And that's exactly what Joshua did.

Israel Hath Sinned

Though Joshua was not the one who sinned, God says in verse 11, "Israel hath sinned."

I hope I can get this across to you, friends. I say it lovingly, I say it kindly, and I say it in frailty as a person who needs to grow continually, always guarding my heart. If we allowed fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and lesbianism to go on in our church, do you know what God would say? "Greater Grace in Baltimore has sinned."

Someone may say, "But God, I'm not committing those sins."

And God says, "Greater Grace *has* sinned because you are members of one another."

That's why we are so accountable to each other, and why we are so responsible to the Word of God. It has been said, "Just one life, it will soon be past, and only what's done through Christ will last." *Forgiveness is right around the*

corner. If the Lord marked iniquities, no one could stand. There is forgiveness with God that He may be trusted (see Psalm 130:3-4).

Yet, because we are one corporate organism, when one member sins, before the angels the entire church is guilty; however, the entire church doesn't have to be chastised to the same degree. If the church deals with the sin, they are left without chastisement. If the church does not deal with it, the church gets the same chastisement as a couple committing fornication!

Trying to straighten people out on issues of sin is not condemning them. On the contrary, it's loving them so much that you correct them before God has to chastise them. If a church hears the Word of God, believes in the Word of God, obeys the Word of God, and serves one another by love, then chastisement is avoided.

"Israel hath sinned" said God in Joshua 7:11. I don't want to have to go to God and hear Him say, "Greater Grace is living in sin," when the majority of us are not practicing any known sin.

Not only did God say that Israel had sinned, but He added, "They have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have

put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies" (Joshua 7:11-12*a*).

God is going to get right down to business. I do not care what anyone says, *if there are hidden sins and secret things going on among your members, you will not stand before your enemies*—and neither will any ministry.

Chapter Three

YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT

"Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel….In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households…*man by man*" (Joshua 7:13-14).

One by one, dear friends, they all had to come before God and before Joshua, God's pastor-teacher.

Some people who teach the 'doctrine of privacy' fail to read verses such as this one, which doesn't appear to offer much privacy. God declared in Numbers 32:23, "Be sure your sin will find you out." And you can bet it will. It will find you out in your physical health. It will find

you out in your soul. It will find you out at the Bema Seat judgment.* Your sin will find you out.

The Principle of Accountability

"So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites, and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me" (Joshua 7:16-19). These verses speak of *accountability*.

Some women confess their sins to other women when they shouldn't tell anyone at all. Besides confessing it to God, they should only tell their pastor-teacher because of the principle of accountability.

If you're in bondage to a particular sin or you need to overcome something in your life, it's a great privilege to be able to say to your pastor, "I know you won't tell anyone. I know

you will keep it totally confidential, and I know you won't tell your best friend or your wife, as much as you love her." What you're saying is, "I want to be accountable to someone, because I'm extremely weak, and I won't lie to you because I know you won't tell one other person."

Joshua made Achan accountable. Though Achan's ultimate personal accountability was to the Lord Jesus Christ, Captain of the host, he was accountable to Joshua as his pastor-teacher.

"And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it" (Joshua 7:20-21). Then Joshua sent a messenger to Achan's tent to bring back the spoils.

The God of All Grace Judges His People

Imagine for a moment that you were there, as a stranger, to witness what happened to Achan and his family.

Something unusual is going on. The elders

of Israel are bringing out a man from the crowd. Then they stone the man until he dies. God is still the God of all grace, but now He's judging one of His people.

Next, a woman is brought out. You find out that she is the man's wife. The elders throw stones at her, until finally, she dies too. Then they bring the children out. *The children*. Again, the elders throw stones until the children are all dead. Finally, they bring the family's tent with everything in it, and burn it before the crowd.

You turn to the man next to you and say, "Sir, I am a stranger here. Could you please tell me what's going on? It seems so devastating that this man, his wife, and his children have been killed in front of all these people and all their possessions burned. Could you tell me why?" Then the man looks at you and says, "My name is Moses." (Remember, the law came by Moses, in John 1:17.)

"Your name is Moses? Well, why did you do this, Moses?"

Moses replies, "God said if we didn't do this, we would never win another battle. The children of Israel were told not to take of the accursed thing or they would be punished by death. But Achan deliberately disobeyed. He lived in per-

sonal sin and transgression. Therefore he and his entire family had to die."

Sin Unto Death

Sin is a terrible thing. The thing I fear most is that when I teach a series in my church on the pure grace of God, someone will abuse the precious message of grace and lovingkindness thinking they can get away with it. But truthfully, sin cuts us off from fellowship with God. It brings us into divine discipline. And ultimately, if we do not repent, it brings us into physical death years ahead of time.

You may ask, "Was Achan really saved?" Yes, I believe he was. But he was disciplined by God and taken home years early.

You also may be wondering, "Why did God have to take his children?" Because, as the head of his family, Achan made a decision for his household, and God had to use that family to tell all the other families, "Don't do this!"

Sin unto physical death is not just something God did in the Old Testament under the law. He took Ananias and Sapphira home early because they lied before God about how much they received through the sale of their land (Acts 5:1-11)—and that was in the Church Age, the Age of

Grace!

In 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, there was a man who was living in incest with his mother. In verse 5, Paul delivered him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." That man was saved, and as soon as he heard Paul's letter to the Corinthian church, he didn't wait to think things over. He repented immediately.

Once the man had repented, God said to the Corinthian Christians, "Love him now. Don't condemn him, or Satan will take advantage of you" (see 2 Corinthians 2:6-11).

There are some people who periodically go back into practicing sin and use excuses to justify it. Those who do that will not get away with it. Keep your vessel clean and pure for God! Be sure your sin *will* find you out.

**Read* The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief? *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996, to understand how believers will be rewarded or suffer loss of rewards in heaven.*

CONCLUSION

Sin is not the easiest subject to preach on, but if I am going to preach the whole counsel of God, this message must also be preached.

Israel was not chastised as a nation, and neither was Joshua chastised, because he and the elders dealt with Achan and his family according to the Word of God. We too can deal with our sins on the basis of rebound—God's Finished Work provision of grace (1 John 1:9). Obedience to God's Word reveals a living faith, which is sponsored, motivated, and energized by God's love at Calvary. Instant obedience to the doctrine of rebound keeps our relationship with God free of chastisement so that we can go on to pursue and conquer our enemies in the Promised Land.

May God bless us with conviction in His Word that leads to conversion, communion, and the communication of love that serves others in faith obedience.

The Great White Throne

Judgment

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Every age has had a voice that cries out in the wilderness—messengers who are faithful to preach the Word of God in season and out of season, who stay true to the whole counsel of God.

Early in his ministry, Pastor Stevens received illuminations on Revelation 20:10-15, the final judgment for mankind—the great White Throne Judgment. It is the time when everyone who never personally received the blood of Christ shed on his behalf will be cast down into an eternal abyss called hell. But the horror of that event will be immediately preceded by a moment when each lost soul sees for the last time the eyes of his loved ones and, more horribly, the piercing eyes of the Savior, who no longer knows him.

This message is timeless in its intensity, and devastating in its clarity. It is good to be devastated by the reality of souls going to hell. God

forbid that we ever become familiar with this message. Let it burn ever more intensely as we see the day of our redemption draw nearer, when time for the lost shall be no more.

Chapter One

PERFECT JUSTICE DEMANDS PERFECT JUDGMENT

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

"And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and

reigned with Christ a thousand years.

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

"And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

"*And I saw a great white throne,* and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; *and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life:* and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

"*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire*" (Revelation 20:1-15).

The First Five Judgments

Today there is much confusion among Christians regarding the judgments of God, but careful study of Scripture reveals eight specific judgments. Some people use John 5:28-29 to speak of one general judgment, yet Luke 14:13-14 distinguishes a judgment for the just and the John 5:29 judgment unto damnation. We will present these judgments as they are separated in time.

The preeminent judgment in human history

was when Jesus Christ—in the hypostatic union of absolute deity clothed in perfect humanity—was judged for all of our sins (1 Peter 2:24). He became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. This was the first amazing judgment, and through it we are saved by grace through faith. Those who are saved will not enter into condemnation, because they have already passed from death unto life (John 5:24).

The next judgment is found in 1 Corinthians 11:31 and Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." This is called the rebound judgment, and it means that believers avoid the chain of discipline and chastisement when we judge our own sins, reckoning on Christ's full payment. Using immediate rebound, we shake off the dust of the old sin nature and go forward.

A judgment that is seldom taught is the judgment of the saints of the Old Testament and the Millennial Reign. "And…thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great…" (Revelation 11:18).

Next is the judgment of the living Jewish people (Matthew 24:1-25:13). *"As it was in the days of Noah"* so those of the Jewish nation who are still alive at the end of the Tribulation Period will be judged. They will see the nail scars in His hands and feet, the marks of the thorns on His brow, and the wound in His side—marks that will remain throughout eternity. As they gaze upon the One whom they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10), in one day the Jewish nation will become believers.

There is a judgment for the living Gentile nations, which is described in Matthew 25:31-46. This judgment also relates to "as in the days of Noah" spoken of in Matthew 24:37-40.

How God Judges Satan

The end of the Great Tribulation comes seven years after the Church is taken out of the earth in the Rapture to meet the Lord in the clouds. The next great event is called the Second Advent, when Jesus Christ returns to the earth with His Bride, the blessed ones who were taken up in the first resurrection, or Rapture (Revelation 20:6). At that time, God will judge the earth, baptizing it with fire.

Some say that the fire refers to the effects of

an atomic weapon destroying the earth, but that is not true! God is going to do it all by Himself. After that, He will begin the one thousand-year Millennial Reign. It will be a brand-new earth, brand-new heaven, and a brand-new, perfect environment at the start.

In Revelation 20:1, at the end of the Millennial Reign, John saw an angel (Jesus Christ) come down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit. According to Revelation 1:18, He held the keys to *hell* and *death*: first 'hell', where the souls of the dead were sent (and remember, the soul never dies), then 'death', where the body is held. Because God is no respecter of persons, Jesus Christ allows Satan to be let loose for a little while at the end of His perfect reign on earth. He does this to test the volition of those born during the Millennium to see what they will do and how they will choose toward the One who is reigning on the Throne.

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10). When Jesus Christ laid hold of him, He called Satan "the dragon" because of his cruel leadership, "the old serpent" because

of his treachery, and "the devil" because he went out to deceive the world. As "Satan," he is his own attorney, out on appeal, as he has been since he was sentenced at the start of human history.

The devil will be cast into the lake of fire and *brimstone*, which represents the degrees of torment and the singular punishment he will suffer in hell for all of eternity.

Let God Be the Judge

Matthew 7:1-5 declares that the measure we judge will be the measure that judgment will come back on us. And in Romans 2:1, in the measure we judge, we condemn ourselves. The same principle applies for Satan and his judgment in hell.

As the accuser of the brethren who accuses us day and night, Satan will receive from God the judgments for what he accused us of. Even if we were guilty, God's perfect justice always comes back on the accuser because of the first great judgment—our sins on His body!

This is why I never listen to an evil report unless the one being spoken of is present, and then, only if it is a sin that affects me and needs to be dealt with one-on-one for the sake of restoration. Though Christ met the judgment for

our sins, we will be chastised for other people's sins—sins that we never committed—just because we judge others and live in shocking pride that refuses to confess judging as sin.

Please understand that there is a major difference between using biblical discernment and judging with a spirit of accusation. The law was given that *every* mouth may be closed (Romans 3:19). First Corinthians 4:5 says to judge nothing until the time comes, when God will bring to light the motives of the heart; then, everyone shall have praise for God.

The Bema Seat Judgment

The next major judgment will take place at the Bema Seat, directly after the Rapture and before the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when the Father gives us to His Son to be the Bride of Christ for all of eternity (Revelation 19:7-11). At the Bema Seat, pastors will introduce and give account of all the people they pastored (1 Corinthians 11:2; Hebrews 13:17). Then, one by one, every born-again believer will give an account of himself personally, before God (Romans 14:12). Every man's work will be manifested, and there will be no excuses in the light of perfect justice.

The Word speaks so clearly about this judgment in 2 Corinthians 5:10. *What we do with what we have received in this life matters.* How we build will determine the rewards we receive at the Bema Seat. According to 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, there is no other foundation for this life but Jesus Christ. We build upon that foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones which will be added to our account for eternity, or we build with wood, hay, and stubble which will be destroyed by fire when tested, leaving us saved, "yet so as by fire."*

The Judgment of Angels

In our new capacity as the Bride of Christ, our rewards will include authority delegated to faithful ones who will rule over cities and nations. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?…Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).

Think of it—the church at Corinth, with all the carnality and no grounds for unity, will be used to judge the world with Christ on the throne, and they will also judge angels! That will be an astounding experience for any of us. With brand-new glorified bodies, the degrees of glory

will vary, depending on how positive people were in their response toward Christ when placed under pressure.

Then in Revelation 20:4, the stage is set as these saints reign with Christ in judgment. The ultimate triumph is found in Revelation 20:8-10, when the devil is cast down for the final time into the lake of fire and the judgments are heaped upon him in the most scorching degrees of brimstone.

**Read* The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief? *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away…." Then, ransomed believers will witness what is perhaps the most distressing scene in all of eternity: "…*and there was found no place for them*" (Revelation 20:11).

Some people will be seeing brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, teenagers, friends, and neighbors who never were saved. Some may have made professions but they never got beyond a presalvation experience.*

There will be multitudes of religious people, multitudes of churchgoers who will not find a place to stand before the great White Throne. We know that God will always hear the cry of the humble (Psalm 9:12) and will revive the spirit of the humble and the heart of the contrite ones (Isaiah 57:15). "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast

up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20-21).

It is a great white throne. Now, picture the scene carefully: A battle has raged throughout time, but now we see the end of time.

A study of ancient history reveals that when battles were won by great nations, there was always a day set aside when all of the officers and soldiers who fought in the battle (commissioned and non-commissioned) would stand in special uniforms that heralded their victory. The leaders of the defeated army and all of the soldiers under them were forced to march in humiliation for hours as the victors looked on.

At the White Throne Judgment, before the final judgment of Satan, the devil and all of the demonic powers under him will be forced to march before Jesus Christ and the Church. After Satan and his angels are cast into hell, all of the rebellious crowd will be made to march before Jesus Christ and the Church Age believers. They will parade in the humiliation of defeat because they rejected the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only provision for their sin.

"I saw a great white throne…*and there was no place found for them*."

Notice this next verse, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:12).

Remember, the unlimited atonement means that Jesus Christ knows the name of everybody who has ever lived on the earth, and every name was entered in the Book of Life. The principle here is that Jesus Christ was in His humanity, not imputing the world's trespasses to them (2 Corinthians 5:19), dying "for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). The sins of every man, woman, and child were paid for on Calvary because of an agreement among the Trinity in eternity past. Therefore, every name could legally be entered into the Book of Life, but the names in that book could also be blotted out (Exodus 32:32-33).

Here is the good news: The moment a sinner turns to Christ and accepts the covering of the precious blood of the Savior, his name is entered into the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27;

13:8). And the names entered into the Lamb's Book can *never* be blotted out or removed in any way, for any reason.

But for those whose names were listed only once and later blotted out, though their sins were paid for, *they will go to hell*.

The Defeated Tormentor in a Bottomless Pit

The White Throne Judgment will be the most shocking, unbelievable event in all of history. Hell has already been stirred up from beneath. The chiefs of the earth and the kings of the nations will be there. The prophet Isaiah paints the picture:

"Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

"All they shall speak and say unto thee, *Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?*

"*Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.*

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down

to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

"Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

"*They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;* That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?" (Isaiah 14:9-17).

The people who now face eternity in hell will look upon the deceiver and accuser of the world with disgust and unbelief as they say to Satan, "Are *you* as weak as we are?" For all of eternity he will suffer the most indescribable torment, uttering noises yet with no relief, and the "worm," or the conscience, unquenched, will always relive the terror of the final defeat.

It Would Change Our Lives…

Consider the spiritual analogy Jesus reiterated with such fervency in Mark 9:43-48: "And if

thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, *into the fire that never shall be quenched:*

"*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

"And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into *the fire that never shall be quenched:*

"*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be *cast into hell fire*:

"*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*"

Over and over, the Lord cries out a warning. The fire is not quenched; the worm never dies. He is speaking of the memory, the conscience, the unmet desires that will plague people without relief—and they are all under Satan.

In Isaiah 5:14: "*Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure*: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it."

Hell keeps enlarging itself. Do you see this? Hell is a prepared place for unprepared people! According to John 3:16, God never intended that any should perish in the lake of fire, which was originally prepared for Satan and his angels. Yet for everyone who rejects salvation, hell must expand its capacity.

If Christians truly believed this, it would change everything. It would change our prayer life. It would change our conversation. It would change our motivation to evangelize.

Heaven—the precious place where the redeemed will spend eternity—is upwards. But hell is described several times in Revelation as a bottomless pit. Of all of the fears that disturb people, the most common is the fear of falling. Imagine the dreadfulness of falling and falling, alone and in utter darkness, always anticipating a devastating and crushing end, and yet unending *and with no way out*. This will be reality for people we know.

Picture a mother, saved; a father, lost; a daughter, saved; a son, lost. Seated in the grandstands around the great white throne, all of the saved will be there with glorified bodies. Those who died without accepting the Savior will be judged according to their works. One by one

they will be brought before His throne for the final judgment. He will bring their souls out of hell and their bodies out of the grave, and He will give them bodies that will remain in hell forever. "Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

Death and hell are together now. For the first time, the bodies are united with the souls, so designed to live forever in the lake of fire. But they are not in the lake of fire right now. (Though when they are, their place in the lake of fire will reveal the degrees of their punishment. And Satan will always occupy the lowest place.) These condemned ones are struggling to find an even place as they face the awesome throne of God, "*…and there was no place found for them.*"

**Read* Salvation: Profession or Possession?, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997*

Chapter Three

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY TO PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

How would you feel if you were that mother or daughter seeing your loved ones for the last time, knowing where they will suffer for all of eternity? Would you be careless about television? Would you be careless about allowing filthy books in the home? Would you be careless about swearing as a Christian? *Would you?* And all of a sudden, for the last time ever, you see your son, and you see your husband, you see your neighbor, and they will look upon you.

Remember that the Word of God says in Revelation 4:2 that the throne was in heaven. Now the throne is on earth. Saved believers will be in the grandstands as they witness the White Throne Judgment. This scene is found in Revelation 20, where they have been reigning with Christ for one thousand years (if, indeed, they do reign with Him.)

What will it be like?

What will it be like for the man who never got beyond a presalvation experience? He may be one who goes to church regularly—a good evangelical church. He may have become immoral and left his wife. He is cocky, arrogant, yet he still goes to church to appease his conscience. He consistently lives in immorality, yet he *thinks* he is saved.

Although the Bible clearly teaches eternal security, the Word of God gives no guarantee to the conscience of one who deliberately chooses to live in sin. If he is not experiencing degrees of chastisement (which will ultimately lead to either repentance or being taken home early), then that person has no assurance of salvation.

Suddenly, the reason that he didn't communicate a good attitude, the reason he lived in immorality is revealed: his profession was limited to presalvation acknowledgment of the truth without inward transformation. God took away what he *seemed* to have (Luke 8:18). And now, here he is, a presalvation believer (Hebrews 10) being judged at the White Throne Judgment with no excuses.

Do you think there will be screams? Can you imagine one terrifying scream after another? Oh,

yes, there will be crying out such as human ears have never heard.

A whole lifetime will play before us. And as lost loved ones are being cast down into the lake of fire, Christians will be, as it were, in the grandstand, knowing that *this* is the last look. There will be no more words, ever. In Revelation 21:4, those thoughts will be the last thoughts. God is going to wipe away every painful thought so heaven can really be heaven, and all the former things will be wiped away.

The thing I envision that makes me weep more than anything is the sight of lost teenagers. As a pastor, I can often see things from the pulpit: teens coming in late and behaving with such arrogance. I see adults asking them to be quiet and they hurl back sarcastic words and gestures.

I know we have many young people in our church who are beautifully saved and they are doing well. But we must be so certain that they are not living in presalvation professions, where they go to church just to please their parents. Of course they need to go to church, but they also need to be sure they are born again.

I can't imagine seeing a group of teenagers cast into hell. But you can be very certain of this: There is an age of accountability that is based on

intellectual capacity, maturity, and opportunity. Very young people will stand before God in the final judgment. Teenagers will go to hell.

What Do You Really Believe?

Think of some of the scenes that will play before us in the future. A father who saw his whole family get saved, but he never accepted Christ. A young man who comes to church but is secretly an alcoholic. He will not stop drinking, he lies, he will not care for his family, and there is no evidence that he has ever turned from the power of sin unto God. There should at least be some indication of lifestyle changes, even though he may have to use rebound as he grows in a process. There should be something in his heart that keeps him from that sin.

Then think of the proud woman who is wrapped up in the fashions of this world, arrogant and indifferent toward what the Word of God says about the assembly, prayer, humility, meekness, kindness, and genuine spirituality. She keeps putting off getting serious with God, and she would rather go shopping than go to church. She makes it very clear that she will go when she wants to.

These attitudes reveal that there is no com-

mitment to the Cross, no commitment to love, no commitment to obedience, and no commitment to grace. Some of those people *are saved*, and they will be in the grandstands viewing the White Throne Judgment. But as they look on, they will see the opportunities God gave them that they never took seriously.

Many will see the lost opportunities for potential fruit. *If only* they had spent time on their knees. *If only* they had cried out for the lost, "God, life is *so short!* (1 Corinthians 7:29). Oh God, please use me, and please help me. Please give me the love, the discernment, the sensitivity that I must have. I truly want to be occupied until You come. I want to glorify *You*, Lord, with maximum glorification."

To be sure, there will be buckets of tears shed by the redeemed who look upon this scene at the great White Throne Judgment. But perhaps many of those tears will be because we know we were not faithful witnesses.

Recently I drove around my neighborhood with another pastor and his wife. In front of every street and every single house in our entire area, we prayed, "Oh God, maybe some of them are saved, and we thank God if they are. Bless them! But if they are not, we are responsible to

at least pray for them and do what we can before it's too late."

The end of time is nearer now than it has ever been. The orthodox Jews believe that the six days of creation relate to six thousand years of time on earth before the Lord comes to reign on the "seventh day," or the final one thousand years. At that time, Israel will be God's client nation, and they will finally have rest in the Lord.

Second Peter 3:8 says, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Hosea 6:2 says that the Lord will come back for Israel after two days and they will live in His sight for one day. It is now nearly two thousand years since Calvary, and according to Isaiah 65 and 66, Israel will regain her client nation status during the Millennial Reign.

As we see this and begin to understand with what clarity the Lord speaks, this message should motivate us. We should be motivated with the stewardship of grace and faithfulness (1 Corinthians 4), daily commitment to the Cross, resurrection power to glorify God, presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice. Is this our belief system?

We need to ask ourselves, "What do I really

believe?"

When Truth Spoke from the Flames

Remember that Revelation 20:14 said, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire," meaning the soul and the body united will live together forever and ever. In Revelation 19:20, the beast and the false prophet "both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone," and they "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10b). Do you get the picture? One thousand years later, they were still being tormented.

Is it any wonder that the rich man who died without Christ, said of the beggar who died in the Lord, "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for *I am tormented in this flame*"? Is it any wonder that he prayed, "Send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, *lest they also come into this place of torment*"? Is it any wonder? Luke 16:19-31 is a true account, it is not a parable.

The Bible has two hundred and thirty-two road signs to hell. Heaven is mentioned eighty-six times. Is it any wonder? Would Christ lie?

But here is a beautiful promise for believers.

"In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve" (Jeremiah 50:20). Thank God! There is no record book of our sins. Thank God, we are saved by grace; we won't have to face that judgment.

Don't allow secret pride to creep in; prepare your heart to be pure. You see, the Bible is *real*. It is the Word of God. The time is very short (Revelation 12:11-12), and we are exhorted to redeem the time because the days are very evil (Ephesians 5:16). And because this is true, even if we have no strength, God will help us. "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; *neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee*" (2 Chronicles 20:12).

We need a fresh approach, a new kind of seriousness, a new kind of commitment. We need to allow the precious Holy Spirit to break down the walls of fear and insecurity. Most of all, we need to break down the walls of pride. There are twenty-seven kinds of pride, and we need God to break us so the Holy Spirit will unite our hearts as cells in the local organism to be His

Body, the fullness of God on earth.

Thank God for the faithful ones. Thank God for the many who love God deeply. Let's pray for one another fervently as we pray for our city, for our nation, and for the lost. The problem isn't with the leadership of the government. The problem is that the Church doesn't have the proper power. God uses political leaders to humble us and reveal to us that we are not taking our place as the poor wise man who delivered the city (Ecclesiastes 9:14-18).

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

One soul is worth more than all the world. Let each of us allow this truth to motivate us as the love of Christ constrains us. The greatest enemy to humility is pride. The greatest enemy to obedience is unknown pride.

We need to become broken and meek. Let's seek God's face, receive the power of love, and go forward in the joy of the Lord, doing whatever we can to keep precious souls from the White Throne Judgment.

CONCLUSION

Precious heavenly Father, that day will come when we will say our final good-byes. Many of us have already said good-bye to our mothers and fathers. I said good-bye to my first wife, my sister, my mother, my father, brothers, scores of loved ones. In almost every case, we remember their last words. For my mother, it was, "I love you so much," as she squeezed my hand. For my first wife, it was "You are a king," and I said, "You are a queen."

Last words. Last looks. Last thoughts. We will meet those people in heaven. But we are at a place now where the details of life and the pride of life must not prevent us from having the most effective and committed lives unto you as soul winners. Give us Your heart for the lost. Let us have the reality of this vision—the great White Throne—ever before us, always with a heart of thanks for your provision. Amen.

The Greatest Battle

Ever Fought

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The greatest battle ever fought is described in Colossians 2, referring to the time when all the forces of God met with all the forces of hell. The place of that battle was the hill of Golgotha, preceded by the Garden of Gethsemane. That battle was the battle of all the ages. It was the battle of battles. Here is the scenario: If Jesus Christ were to remain dead, Satan would succeed in ascending above God. But if Jesus Christ were to come forth from the dead, then Satan would be defeated, and Jesus Christ would be God and Lord over him and over everything he produced.

Let me repeat that. If Satan were to win the victory, then he would succeed in ascending above God, and he would be lord above all (Isaiah 14:12-14). But if Jesus Christ were to come forth from the grave and win a victory over the thing that made Satan victorious (up to that point), then Jesus Christ would be the Lord of all

and the God of all. Positionally, from the standpoint of eternity and the perfect oneness of the Trinity, this is not true. Experientially, however, because of His commitment to identify with us, it is true. In one sense, once He committed Himself to identify with us, Jesus Christ was not Lord of all until after the Cross.

Do you understand it? From the standpoint of His omnipotence and from the standpoint of His omniscience, He was not God of all until He actually defeated all that Satan caused and had done away with all that Satan produced. This message will reveal that, of all the battles that have been fought, even those by men with right motives to set people free, the Cross of Christ was the scene of the greatest battle ever fought.

Chapter One

SIN ENTERS THE PICTURE

This is the story. This is the earth-shaking battle of all the ages. Sin entered into the human race through a woman, Eve, because of Satan's subtlety in the Garden of Eden. Sin completely corrupted and polluted all of her seed, and since then, every person born was born of a corruptible seed. And since then, each one goes astray as soon as he is born (Psalm 58:3). Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Iniquity is Satan's sin that produces sin because of man's sin. Any sin that is derived from that iniquity is equally bad, but in order to relate to something that identifies completely and absolutely with Satan, we use the word "iniquity." Ezekiel 25:18 tells us that "iniquity was found" in Satan. What was the essence of his iniquity? It was a desire to exalt himself. Five times he declared that he wanted to exalt him-

self and be like God—and not only to be like Him, but to rise above Him (Isaiah 14:12-14).

What did Eve want? She desired something that she was not supposed to have, in order to be like whom? In order to be like God. Do you get the point? That is iniquity. Iniquity is simply the first sin. There are many sins that derive from the first sin, but iniquity was Satan's sin, and it was Eve's sin also.

Eve reproduced herself, and she produced children who sinned. Because of God's justice, it takes an individual's free will to commit the act before he is classified as a sinner. Nevertheless, the inherited nature, which is sinful, makes it certain that every single person will choose to sin with his free volition, inasmuch as the only nature he has is a sinful nature.

Satan Wins One

What was Satan's victory? It was simply this: "God, You placed a man and a woman, both free of sin, in the Garden; but You gave them free volition," Satan said. "I simply came along and tempted them, and they followed me. And the moment they obeyed me, You had to step out, and I stepped in. I not only won control of the first woman You made, but I won con-

trol of her husband too. I knew that if I could get to her, I could get to him because he was one with her. I deceived her, and, because of his desire to be one with her, he followed in her sin."

Eve was a helpmate, made from his own rib, and Adam didn't want to be detached from the only helpmate that God had given him on earth. When Eve sinned, part of Adam sinned, because Eve derived from Adam.

Follow this carefully. God created a man and a woman. They were created without personal sin, but with volitions that could choose to go against God if they wanted to. If they didn't, they would glorify God. If they did sin, they would be separated from God (Genesis 2:16-17).

God Takes Responsibility for Adam's Sin

Adam and Eve were created in a perfect environment, with perfect hearts, but with a choice. And the responsibility that came with that choice left God with the consequences of that choice.

Inasmuch as they were made by God, for God, and through God, if they sinned, God had taken upon Himself a personal responsibility to take care of the consequences for what they did. Why? Because He made them. "But," you say,

"He made them perfect." That's right. Nevertheless, He did make them, and that included a free will, with an ability to make a choice. It was His plan, and if something happened in His plan, He must provide for the consequences of a wrong choice. They were derived from Him because of His love, and His love would make possible a provision if they went wrong on the negative pole of human volition.

So, they went wrong. At that point, because Eve was taken out of Adam's side, and because she was absolutely a part of him, Adam had a responsibility. His responsibility was that if she went wrong, he would identify with her. Why? He couldn't help it. She was a part of him. She was his other self. He loved her as himself, and she went wrong. Loving her as himself, Adam found he must identify with her when she went wrong. He was not deceived as the woman was (1 Timothy 2:13-14), but Adam was willing to sell all he had with God to identify with his other self. Was she guilty? Yes. Did she go against God? Yes. Was Adam willing to go against God to identify with her? Yes.

Christ Became Sin for Us

Jesus Christ created us. Were we guilty when

we sinned with our own free will? Yes. Did we go against God? Yes. Was He willing to become sin to identify with us? Yes. That is how deeply He loved us. He was willing to become sin, to become everything that we are, in order to redeem us. He felt the responsibility for the consequences of our negative choices; therefore, He who knew no sin became sin, just as Adam who knew no sin became a sinner.

He created us in His own image, even as Eve was made in Adam's image. Eve was taken out of Adam and produced in the image of Adam, and we were made by Jesus Christ in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Therefore, though we had a fallen image, God said, "I must identify with my fallen image to get them back through Redemption and restore them back to the correct image."

God wanted men to love one another as themselves, even as the Trinity loves each member as themselves with a coequal, immutable love. Adam was to love Eve as himself, and Jesus Christ loves the Church as Himself; therefore, He must do to the Church what He wants her to do to Him. He absolutely entered into identification of total love and total commitment to restore that which had been lost.

So, Satan said to God, "You said the wages of sin is separation. You created men for fellowship, but, according to Your own spiritual laws and Your own moral attributes, You have no right to fellowship with them because they are sinners.

"The very purpose for which You created man has been lost. I charge You with Your own Truth that You have no right to fellowship with this man that You made, because the man You made violated the spiritual law that You are."

Chalk that one up for Satan.

"Secondly," Satan said, "You said that the day they partake of the fruit of that tree, they will die. Well, they took it, and "death" means to be separated from You—and separation from You means fellowship with me. Just keep that in mind! God, that is according to Your own Truth, so leave my crowd alone!"

And Satan went on, saying, "God, You said You cannot look upon iniquity (Habbakuk 1:13). What did Eve do, God? She committed iniquity, which was my original sin. And even as iniquity was found in me, and You had to kick me out of heaven, iniquity was found in her, so You have

to kick her out. She was out of fellowship with You, so now, because she is the mother of all living, all are out of fellowship with You."

"In other words, God, they are all mine. You created them for your pleasure (Revelation 4:11), for Your glory (Isaiah 43:7). But now You must admit, they are not Yours at all. They are all mine. The very purpose You created them for has been dethroned and absolutely nullified. You have got to admit, God, that I have risen above you on the basis of my victory!"

According to 2 Corinthians 4:4, God could see that Satan was the "god of this world." Satan was telling the truth. The whole world is under Satan's government (1 John 5:19). The Lord says that this is true; therefore, He has nothing to do with Satan or the world's system (John 14:30).

All of this prepares the stage for the greatest battle ever fought.

Chapter Two

THE TRINITY MOVES

All the Old Testament sacrifices did not cleanse the consciences of those that brought them, because the battle had not yet been won. It was only a theoretical truth that Satan challenged. The reality was that, experientially, the greatest battle had not yet been fought.

Satan challenged God. "Go ahead with the blood of animals, but that will not produce cleansed consciences. God, You are operating on a theory with your religion for Israel. The religious rituals and ceremonies, I don't buy them! You haven't proven a thing!

"I will show You that You haven't proven a thing. When You come unto them, they won't even receive You. The world that You made won't recognize its Creator (John 1:10), and Your own people will reject You.

"They will not receive You, and that should prove to You that I am in control. And with all

Your blood animals and all of Your substitutes and all of Your religion, I will prove to You that it doesn't redeem, that it doesn't deliver, and that it is not effective! It is just a theory. I am really their god, and you know it! I am their god on the basis of truth. They have chosen me and rejected You."

The Plan

The plan of the determinate counsel of the Trinity (Acts 2:23) had its day and its hour. They made their move, and I thank God that it is behind us. Not only can we have the consciousness of the Throne in its victory, but also the cleansing of the Blood of Christ in our experience. This is something that Old Testament saints could never have, and that is why each succeeding generation since the New Testament covenant is so responsible for the privilege of having Jesus Christ's Person for total personal victory.

This is what happened. God had His time, God had His appointment, and the Cross came into being. Jesus was born of an incorruptible seed and born of a sinful woman, who was a virgin chosen among women not above women (Luke 1:28). She was a beautiful and pure

woman, and she called Jesus Christ her Savior, in Luke 1:47. She was a sinner, and she needed a Savior. She was pure, and she was a virgin; but she was also a sinner, and she needed to be saved.

You and I were born of corruptible seed through Eve. Jesus Christ was born of a woman who had a sin nature, but His seed was incorruptible because it was of the Holy Spirit, not of Adam and not of Eve.

Consider God's amazing victory. Satan tried to defeat God through a woman, and God, in return, used another woman, or a second Eve, in His plan to defeat Satan. God used that which was natural to introduce the supernatural, and Satan, who had a supernatural origin, used the supernatural to introduce the natural.

We thank God that Mary was pure and chosen, not above women, but among them. Through her, God brought an incorruptible seed, Jesus Christ, with no personal, inherent sin but with a free volition.

I thank God that Jesus Christ had a free will, and in that free will He was tempted in all points, just as we are (Hebrews 4:15). Therefore, with His free will, Jesus said in the Garden, "Not my will but thine be done." If for one second He

had thought anything outside of the Father's plan, He would have fallen, and we would have been plunged into hell with no hope. He could not afford even to think against the Father.

Every single thing Jesus did was "not my will but thine be done." Because of that relationship to the Father, He did not stray outside of God's plan with His free volition. Adam trusted his perfect humanity. Satan trusted his perfect angelic creation. But Jesus Christ wouldn't even trust His own perfect, sinless humanity. And if He had, it would have been against the Father, and it would have been all over for the universe.

Had Jesus Christ made one single decision apart from the plan of God, there would be no family of God, no Bride, no Church, no heaven for us. He did not sin, though He was surely tempted.

The Assault at Gethsemane

So, the greatest battle ever fought now began in the Garden of Gethsemane. All the forces of Hell were ushered in from the four corners of the earth.

"This is it," Satan said to his legions. "We are going to kill this One who claims He is the Messiah. We will crucify Him. We will show Him up

against the people by finding Him guilty. He will be tried and found guilty. They will call Him a winebibber, a friend of the prostitutes, a friend of publicans and sinners. We are going to destroy Him before our own angels, and we will destroy Him before the angels of God who are watching. We are going to destroy Him right in front of God.

"He doesn't have a chance because my entire world's system is joining me. My entire host of demons and every person in the universe are all going to join me. All of their sins and my supernatural power will become one, and we will kill Him."

The strange part of it is that it was our sins, also, that figured in to this battle. He deserved to die, but only because He identified with people who were guilty. He was pure, perfect, innocent, and just. But because He chose to identify with us, He deserved death. On the basis of Truth, because Jesus identified with wicked sinners, Satan had a right to have Jesus killed.

God had to turn His back (Matthew 27:46). Satan proved Him guilty before the Father. He proved Jesus guilty because He identified with the guilty, as the guilty, because of love.

Up to this point, Satan had his victory over

God based upon Truth. Satan was still operating in Truth from the standpoint of the Kingdom.

The Darkness Descends

Can you comprehend the darkness? Can you see the forces of Hell gathering around the Garden of Gethsemane? Demonic spirits, millions of them, were celebrating and shouting in the invisible atmosphere of that night, filling the environment with their presence.

Can you imagine the demons in the Garden doing everything in their supernatural power to kill Jesus before He reached the Cross? If they had succeeded, that would mean that He could not die for the sins of the whole world. It would have been a death that could not be considered redemptive because it would have been apart from the Cross.

Can you see His face as the blood poured out of His pores, and He came within an eyelash of dying? Can you imagine how Jesus felt? The demons said, "We've got Him!" Satan said, "Look at Him. We've got Him! His disciples are asleep, and He is just as good as dead. We have almost defeated the very best God has to offer." Oh, how they partied.

But Jesus got up. You know why He got up?

Because God the Father heard His prayer.

On to Calvary

God let Jesus walk up the hill of Golgotha with His Cross. In weakness, He could not carry it all the way on His own. This is a picture of Jesus Christ, as our representative, needing us to help Him make that Cross a resurrection victory over the devil. Literally, this was the true physical condition of His body, mind, and emotions. He was almost dead, premature to Calvary. But the reason, spiritually, that He didn't carry His Cross alone is that Jesus Christ wanted us to be a part of carrying up His Cross. That way, when He was resurrected, everyone who would take up that Cross would be resurrected with Him. It was His Cross. Yet, it was not only His Cross because it was my sin He bore. Therefore, it was my Cross, too.

Finally on Mount Calvary, the spikes, the nails, the wagging tongues, the crown of thorns, the spitting, the scourging, the cat-o'-nine tails—all had taken their toll. The Son of God was getting weaker and weaker.

The Angels Could Only Watch

Can you imagine how the angelic forces of

God hovered over the Cross saying, "Can't we save Him?" But the Father responded, "I am not even looking."

"Let us go and take Him from the Cross. One of us can do it. Let us do it!" the angels pleaded, I'm sure.

And the Father said, "I can't even look upon Him. He is guilty!"

Can you imagine how the angels felt when they saw God the Father turn His back upon Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son? They had to realize that Jesus Christ was guilty of death because He had chosen to become one of us. It was His choice. Therefore, He had to pay the consequences because He too, as a man, had free volition. He had a right to choose, and He did choose. And because of His choice, He had to pay.

Jesus experienced public shame, public defeat, public frustration, and public weakness. Finally, before the public, God died—as a man—before their eyes. As *they* saw it, Jesus the man died—not God, but the man. The man, representing men, was God. But as a man, before men and before God, for God and for men—He died.

Can you imagine the amazing parties—the shouting and the victory cries of the demons?

Can you imagine the unbelievable satisfaction of Satan? It was all over, and they were successful, or so it seemed.

Because of Truth, sin killed Jesus because He identified with men. In other words, Satan said, "He got what He deserved because He became one with them. Now I am not only god over all the people, but at the Cross I proved I was an equal match with Jesus. Truth convicted Him, and Truth condemned Him, because that was what the Father said sin should do. It should kill, and that is what it did. I am the victorious one, and I am still the god of the world. The whole purpose of creation has been altered and handed over to me.

"I caused the storms to come up," Satan continued, "and I caused Judas to do what I told him to do. I caused the disciples who walked with Him three years to forsake Him. I did all of that. I caused the crowd to find Him guilty, because they walked by sight, and I gave them all kinds of sight to walk by. I even completely fooled Jesus. He didn't know that what He experienced in the Garden would be as bad as it was. I proved to Him that I was god, and He had to beg for mercy. He almost died prematurely, but we got Him anyway."

Chapter Three

A SEEMING DEFEAT GIVES WAY TO VICTORY

The greatest battle ever fought. When Jesus died, it seemed as though He was finally being judged. It looked as if the One who could redeem the world had lost, and He was the only One qualified to do it. When the second day rolled around, it looked as if He had lost His case in His effort to redeem man. It looked as if mankind had no other way out.

It also looked as though Satan would be in control forever. The devil appeared to have ascended above God, defeating God's plan and interfering with God's Person by overcoming God's purpose. That is how it appeared. The whole earth was filled with gloom.

Consider this: Those on the earth were so confused that even the words of God seemed to have no effect. The things that Jesus had said about how He would rise again had no effect.

Why? Because it was Satan's world—that's why. Satan, at this point, appeared to be victorious, and the entire creation, including God's people who had followed Jesus, had accepted the lie that the Savior was not the Savior and that this was a hopeless cause. Jesus was now dead. It was all over. And they were filled with fear, gloom, darkness, bleakness, sadness, heartache, sorrow, and frustration. Not only was Jesus judged and found guilty, but we were found guilty, forever, with no hope. That is how it was.

Resurrection: The Ultimate Victory

Then, it happened. In Romans 1:4, the Holy Spirit, who is God (Acts 5:3-4), went to work and raised up the body of Jesus Christ, the man, from the dead. He had gone into hell and announced His victory, then He came forth from the tomb and appeared to Mary Magdelene. After that, He appeared to the disciples and then to the five hundred. He said, "Here I am! Peace."

Can you imagine how Mary's heart felt? It was not over! It was not hopeless. Hell and death and sadness would no longer reign. He who had won and was now alive from the dead appeared first to a woman. It was a woman who fell in the Garden of Eden; it was a woman who

was used to bring Him into the human race, and it was a woman to whom he first appeared after the Resurrection.

Can you imagine how she felt when He said, "Mary"? Can you imagine her heart leaping? Can you imagine how Peter and John and James felt, in John 20:22, when He passed through the wall into the room where they were assembled together for fear of the Jews? Can you imagine how they felt when He said "Peace be unto you"? Can you imagine how Thomas felt as Jesus went to him on the second Sunday and said, "Reach hither thy finger" (John 20:27)?

Can you imagine how each one felt when they realized they now had victory for eternity through a personal Lord who became a personal deliverer as their personal Savior? Can you imagine how they felt when they saw Him ascend into heaven (Acts 1:11)? Can you imagine, in Matthew 28:16, when they went back into Jerusalem with joy, praising God and waiting in that upper room? Imagine them saying, "We are not lost. We are living! It is not hopeless; we are saved. It is not death; it is life. It is not sorrow; it is Jesus. It is not fear; it is love!"

Jesus didn't condemn the disciples for forsaking Him. He said "peace" to them because

His was a message of peace and not condemnation.

Satan's Judgment Revealed

In the greatest battle ever fought, what appeared to be a judgment that would never end for man was placed upon the God-man, Jesus Christ. The judgment intended for us had turned around and become Satan's eternal judgment. Now there is no hope for Satan. What appeared to be a hopeless case for Jesus Christ and the human race was now a hopeless case for Satan and all the demons. For them, it was over forever! They shot their last bullet, and it was over.

All have sinned. Yes, Satan, that is right. The wages of sin is death. That's right, Satan. But there is more Truth to it, Satan: The just died for the unjust and paid for all their sins, and you can never accuse or condemn or judge again, because they have been judged in the death of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, Satan, when Jesus came forth from the grave on the third day, you were judged. All of the accusations are over. No longer can you abide in Truth. Anything you say now is a lie. The sins of the human race are paid

for.

He died in our place, once and for all (Romans 6:9; Hebrews 10:10). The demands of holiness were met for us in Jesus Christ. We are hid in Him. In Him, we are saved, redeemed, restored, and delivered.

Satan, there is nothing you can do. All you have left are emotional lies. You have been judged, defeated, and crushed. We reign and rule with grace, according to Romans 5:21. We are more than conquerors. We are always going to triumph, and not a single thing can defeat us. The only ones who will be defeated are those who accept your lie.

The tables were turned, and Resurrection reversed Satan's decision completely. Had Jesus remained dead, He would have proven Satan's victory, but the Resurrection has further proven the devil's defeat. It proved that Jesus Christ is God. There is no other name to bow to. It is not Buddha or someone else. Only Jesus Christ is God, and He is the only one who paid for our sins. He is the only one who ever identified with us and came out of it alive.

Since the moment of the Resurrection, all Satan has been able to do is to lie against the truth, against God's life, against God's way, and

against God's Body. All Satan has to offer are lies, whether they come by feelings, mental problems, or circumstances, but his lies can never stand against God's truth.

That is why we live and are sanctified by the Word of Truth (John 17:17). That is why we live by every Word of God (Matthew 4:4).

CONCLUSION

Before the Cross, Satan could tell the Truth; but since the Cross, all he has is a lie. The Redeemer has come—and Satan no longer has a theoretical argument. Once and for all he has been experientially defeated, and it is all settled.

We are living in the divine establishment of the eternal Truth, through the eternal Blood, in the eternal Person, for eternal Joy. No one can touch us. We are out of the devil's reach. We are out of death, fear, condemnation, and lies. We are seated in a victory that is forever. Therefore, there is now no condemnation. Our prayers are answered, and we can never be overcome (Acts 5:39). Jesus Christ is the eternal Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world. For us, He overcame the enemy by His Blood, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and He won the greatest battle ever fought.

The Greatest Reward:

Go for It!

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Time is growing short. We are living in the last days. Only in this life can we exercise faith and build up rewards and privileges to enjoy throughout eternity. Therefore, we should take every opportunity to manifest the nature and character of God.

Some people claim that heavenly rewards are of no concern to them. They say that they will be happy just to be in the presence of the Lord. It is true that being in heaven will be wonderful, but knowing that there are greater rewards should stir up every Christian. God created us with an expectation. He enables us to "will and to do of His good pleasure." I look forward to that day when Christ Himself will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

My prayer is that this booklet will motivate each of us to live a life "well done" through the power of His grace and mercy. May these pages say to each heart, "Go for the prize of His high

calling and experience heaven for all it is worth."

Chapter One

PLEROMA FAITH—FULLNESS THAT FULFILLS

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:11-16).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (John 13:20).

"He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).

Through careful study, we know that there were two thousand years from Creation to the Flood, and two thousand years between the Flood and the Cross. Now, nearly two thousand years have passed since the Cross.

Because the hour is so late, the world needs to see Christians who understand the fullness of Him that fills all in all (Ephesians 1:23)—*pleroma* believers who are broken and know that not a single thing can separate them from the love of God. By these believers, the Body of Christ increases itself through evangelism and is edified in love.

Pleroma is a Greek word that speaks of the fullness that Christ can give. *Pleroma* faith fills up every empty place—filling all the deficiencies in a man. In this kind of faith, the scars and wounds of the past are taken away, bringing in a brand-new abundant-life relationship with the Word of God through the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ.

As Christians alive at this hour, we have received a mandate to grow into that fullness. We are to decrease in ourselves and increase in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:30).

"For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

"And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:17-19).

Here, Peter is referring back to Matthew 17:2-6 and the Mount of Transfiguration, where

He saw Jesus in raiment "white as the light," talking with Moses and Elias. For Peter, that picture was an empirical reality. He *did* see Jesus in that form, and he heard the Father speak. But, as he was writing his second epistle, Peter was no longer dependent upon empirical realities; he now depended on metabolized truth from the Word of God. He learned how to be a winner through *pleroma* faith.

Winners' Recognition

When Jesus Christ returns to earth in the Second Advent, the elect angels will be right behind Him, riding on horses, as heaven's armies descend to Armageddon. There, Jesus Christ will win the final battle simply by speaking the Word. The angels were first to come and see Him at His birth and resurrection, so they will be first, entering before the believers, at the Second Advent.

Next, after the angels, will be the victorious "winner" believers—those who laid up eternal rewards through a life of faith obedience on earth. After these will be the believers who did not receive any rewards (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). They lost rewards because of the eternal opportunities they missed while on earth—opportunities

to choose for Christ and to reveal Him by faith.

All born-again believers will return for the Millennial Reign, a thousand-year honeymoon on earth. But only the winners will have authority to rule with Christ over nations during this time, while the others will just be there to observe. Though they will all have glorified bodies, those who receive no rewards will have no authority.

Winner-believer or a believer who has lost all rewards—how would you prefer to be recognized forever and ever? Winners understand Ephesians 4 and what it means to have *pleroma* faith. They understand the local assembly principle (Ephesians 4:16). Many people are saved, but they won't be declared winners at the Bema Seat of Christ. On earth, *pleroma* believers reveal the nature of God which fills up all things in the universe.

God does not want us to rely on empiricism. Many scientists operate in empiricism through observable facts. But they are not credible in God's eyes if they do not recognize and acknowledge the reality of divine laws. No scientist has ever enforced one scientific law in the universe. The Word of God's power holds all things together (Hebrews 1:3). All things were created by Him and for Him, and by Him "all things con-

sist" (see Colossians 1:16-17). Scientific laws are based upon the veracity, omnipotence, and immutability of God. The Word of God is the treatise on how the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ holds all things together.

After the Millennial Reign, God will remove all of His physical laws. For now, the force of gravity is a part of this planet, maintaining physical order. But in the new creation, it will not be necessary. The law of gravity is something that scientists *discovered,* but scientific laws are always based on divine laws established by Christ through His Word.

Chapter Two

LIVING BY THE SURE WORD

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19).

Peter is saying, "I saw and heard in person, by a revelation of God, the glory of His transfiguration. I saw Jesus Christ as He will appear in the Second Advent. But more than that, I received a more sure Word, which is now circulating in my soul." In this case, empirical reality became internal reality, and it led Peter to a fullness of faith that kept him during tremendous trials.

Think of the story of Lazarus and the rich man. As he looked to Abraham from hell, the rich man asked that Lazarus be sent to his five brethren so that they would believe. Abraham could only tell him that his brothers wouldn't believe through empirical observation for very long. Only by constantly hearing the Word of God from Moses and the prophets would they

believe, because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God—not by seeing miracles or experimental observation and emotional experiences.

Doctrine in Control

In 2 Peter 1:19, we have an interesting Greek phrase: "…until the day star *arise* in your hearts." The key word "arise" is *anatello*. The phrase refers to doctrine arising in your heart to the extent that it totally controls your essence by the Spirit and the Word.

Numbers 24:17 told of a Star that would arise out of Jacob and a Scepter out of Israel. Daniel 12:3 declares that those who lead many to righteousness shall shine as the stars. In Matthew 2:2, the star in the east led the wise men who found Jesus—the bright and Morning Star.

God wants the "day star" of doctrine to arise in our hearts. He desires that doctrine would come through our human spirit and go down into our heart through the mind, emotions, conscience, self-consciousness, and volition. It will completely take over the streams and rivers of life that flow from God, through us, to others, and back. Doctrine permeates and perpetuates

the life of God's nature within us when we are filled with His fullness. Every deficiency is filled up. The *past* with its problems is gone forever. The *present* is filled with the promise and provision of His power. The *future* is sure, as we know we are being conformed to Christ's image in His perfect plan.

"Knowing this first…" is a precious passage of Scripture in 2 Peter 1:20. The text speaks of an action that will be repeated, and Peter is telling his readers, "Above everything you read, know *this* first: No prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation." Winners—those who have doctrine arising in their hearts—understand this. They have a pastor-teacher who studies isagogics and the original languages. He brings forth the Word and helps members of his church avoid undoctrinal movements of the day.

For this reason, a believer should be faithful to the assembly where he was called and support it. Just as a husband is to have one wife, every Christian should have one church and one pastor-teacher (Ecclesiastes 12:11).

Chapter Three

OVERCOMERS RULE

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my *works* unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star" (Revelation 2:26-28).

The "works" referred to in that passage speak of a faith walk (John 6:28). Power over nations will be given to those who "overcome," or win. It won't be one nation that these men and women will reign over, but they may rule over a number of nations. Women will have equal opportunity to reign because in that day we will all be as angels, neither male nor female (Matthew 22:30).

Why would God concentrate so much power in the hands of these believers? Because He loves winners. "As soon as they hear of me,

they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me" (Psalm 18:44). "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to them that are in Rome also" (Romans 1:15).

God loves obedient people; they are His treasures on earth. He watches how overcomers innately love and believe the Word of God with their mental attitudes, emotional stability, and positive volition.

Winners will receive the honor of the Morning Star Order (Daniel 12:3). Even though they are far from perfect, winners obey God. They honor the local assembly and "come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a [mature] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Recognizing the Head

Winner believers speak the truth in love and grow up into the head of all things, even Christ. They are effectual working parts of the whole Body of Christ, and they are always available to the assembly. It is God's *pleroma* at work. Just as Jesus Christ was God's *pleroma*, now it is the *pleroma* believers in local assemblies who are filled with God's Word. The Word goes into the

human spirit (channel B) from the perceptive staging area of the mind (channel A) where all information is received as academic knowledge. Then, by faith and meekness it is filtered through the Holy Spirit and the Cross and transferred to the human soul (channel C).* The mentality is now filled with God's thoughts. The conscience operates by norms and standards of grace. Self-consciousness focuses on Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2). The emotions respond magnificently to the things of God, with joy as their strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Volition is positive toward God and His Word, and all the fullness of God comes in and keeps filling believers.

A winner keeps obeying the Word of God, using rebound when he fails. He reveals the nature of God and plans to be in the assembly because he is a *pleroma* Christian.

There are people who make careless statements such as, "I don't care if I get any rewards. I'll just be glad to get to heaven." That is not the attitude of an overcoming winner, but of someone who has no vision. Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize" (Philippians 3:14). He wanted the prize of the high calling.

God has placed in us a desire to win the prize. It is part of our expectations, part of our

being, part of living on earth. Thank God that when Christ returns, the winners will be with Him, right behind the elect angels. We have one life and it will soon pass, and only what was done with and in Christ will last (Matthew 7:21-23). The year is 1999—it is later than we think. "Now it is high time to wake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11). So, let's redeem the time for the days are evil (Ephesians 5:16).

The Importance of the Pastor-Teacher

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17)

Paul makes a very serious point in 2 Corinthians 11:2. After the Rapture, in divine order, in divine etiquette of the magnification of the table of organization, pastor-teachers will introduce their church members to Christ. The pastors will present each one by name. That is why a per-

sonal relationship with one's pastor is crucial (Hebrews 13:17). Is it any wonder that godly pastors are so zealous for the work of God?

Paul told the Corinthians, "I am jealous over you; I am competing with the devil and the demons of hell for your wandering minds." He was jealous with a godly jealousy because he wanted to present them to Christ as "chaste virgins." This doesn't mean that he expected them to be perfect. But he did want them to practice rebound when they failed, to draw close to Christ, and to be purified through faith in Christ.

Don't Be a Loser—Come!

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

"For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him

that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:14-17).

When the Spirit and the bride say, "Come," in this passage, it is an invitation to come and be a member of the Morning Star Order of winner believers. Receive the Word of God. Talk it over, reiterate it, magnify it, keep studying it, and never stop studying it.

In Revelation 2 and 3, seven times, to seven churches, it is written "to him that overcometh" —to him who is a winner—God will give a special reward, such as the Tree of Life. All Christians will be invited to attend God's celebrations in heaven; however, only a limited few will be allowed to eat from the Tree of Life, which gives eternal knowledge and eternal wisdom forever and ever. The winner believers will eat of something that those who are saved but suffer loss of all rewards cannot have.

"Whosoever therefore shall *confess* me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33)

"Confess" implies having precise obedience to Jesus Christ in each thing we are supposed to do, by grace through faith, because we love Him.

If I am asked to go soul winning or on visitation and I do it, I confess a precise act of obedience before Jesus. Jesus then tells the Father, so any obedience can be credited toward the order of the Morning Star.

Every act of denial or disobedience is also recorded, because it subtracts from the potential for the Morning Star Order.

People need to be stirred up with this message. Be an edifier when you speak! (Ephesians 4:29). Say, "Hallelujah!" "Praise the Lord!" "Jesus is coming." Have a prayer meeting, even on the telephone. Be alive, and commit to godly decisions. Talk with other believers, and have communion in the Spirit of God. Act and live as one who has been raised from the dead spiritually (Romans 6:13).

**For more about spiritual thought processes in channels A, B, and C, please read The Hearing Heart, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Four

THE QUESTION OF SUFFERING AND DISCIPLINE

If we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12). To suffer with Christ means to take up the Cross—death to self—in every situation, by an act of faith through an eternal purpose. If we take up our codeath and coburial, we "suffer" the exclusion of rights to our self. And if we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him.

Then, in 2 Timothy 3:12 we read, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Once, when I was going through a particularly difficult trial, I said to God, "I don't like how I am being treated." He said, "Then get out of the furnace and quit. Are you greater than me? Are your circumstances greater than what I can handle?" Humbled, I got down on my knees and asked for forgiveness.

He said, "If you don't like the furnace, just

get out—I will let you out anytime you want. But if you are willing to suffer with Me, you can reign with Me." This is part of God's order. Would you, by grace and mercy, love to become a member of the Morning Star Order? Then go after it by grace through faith, and not by works.

Divine Discipline: A Process of Grace

People need to grow in their potential in Christ. Discipline is for Christians who are outside of fellowship with the Word of God. It never means a loss of salvation or condemnation. Discipline comes when a believer chooses certain areas of self-preservation through pride, vanity, or self-exaltation.

Godly discipline is defined in Hebrews 12:6-13. First, with God's precious patience toward us (Romans 15:5) and longsuffering (2 Peter 3:9), come repeated warnings from the Word. Next, He brings multiple warnings that intensify—using disease, accidents, marital difficulties, and financial problems to get our attention.

Keep in mind that many people go through these trials as tests of faith and are *not* being chastised. Satan, on the other hand, works to defeat believers who want to glorify God; so, often, these problems are *not* evidence of chastisement.

After intensified warnings, comes chastisement, which is often marked by mental problems as the mind begins to wander spiritually. During this period of divine discipline, hunger for God decreases, and there is a loss of what was learned experientially and operationally.

After the warnings and the chastisement, if the believer hasn't corrected his course, comes the sad period of scourging (Hebrews 12:6). It is the worst kind of treatment a Christian can experience and one of the last things God allows before physical death. Remember, first there were warnings, then intensified warnings, and chastisement. If warnings are ignored, scourging comes in. Those who are really honest know when they are being scourged.

If we confess and name our sin, seeing it for what it is and dealing with it honestly, then the discipline is lifted. If we have completely repented and yet continue to suffer, we need to understand that the suffering is for our blessing in the Morning Star Order (Job 5:17-18).

Once we have repented, confessed, and forsaken our sin, any suffering we experience is for the glory of God. Even if we fail seven times in a day, when we continue to grow in grace and decrease in ourselves, we will fail less and less

because of the integrity of our walk in the Spirit by faith.

But if, after warning and scourging, a believer continues in his sin, it may become the sin unto physical death. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16). At that point, God takes the believer home before his time (for that believer's sake), and he suffers the loss of all rewards.

King Hezekiah (Isaiah 38) and King David (Psalm 118:17) came very close to death but repented in time. Yet, Ananias and Sapphira (who were believers) died because of the sin unto physical death (Acts 5). King Saul also died the sin unto physical death (2 Samuel 1:23), and he definitely was a believer.

In 1 Corinthians 11:30-31, the Word speaks of many being weak, sickly and asleep because of taking communion "unworthily." That was chastisement in the midst of one assembly. This church wasn't operating in conjunction as members fitly framed in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 2:21). They were not functioning as members in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27) where God had

placed them (1 Corinthians 12:18). This local assembly was not operating as the *pleroma* of God, manifesting the nature and attributes of the Almighty. They were saved and enjoyed the benefits of grace, but they did not reveal grace to glorify God in the details of life, and they were sinning against God continually in that specific area.

Patience Has a Perfect Work

Our first marriage was to the Old Sin Nature and its counselor was the Law (Romans 7). Our works were of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). Our second marriage, however, will be to Jesus Christ. Our counselor is the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit are the works of the second marriage (Galatians 5:22-24). We can recover and rebound; we can name and forsake our sins, interrupting the chain of discipline. Chain discipline develops when there is bitterness, when we blame others, and when we bring up the failures of others to distract from our own lack of obedience to God. It comes when we are full of jealousy and envy.

When we forsake and name our sin, God immediately turns our life into a blessing. "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and

faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:3-4).

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11).

So we are to lay aside the sin that so easily besets us and run with patience the race set before us, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (see Hebrews 12:1-2).

James agreed when he said that the trial of our faith works patience. Therefore, "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be [mature] and entire, [lacking] nothing" (James 1:3-4). Know this: Obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22).

What is God after in these last days? Faithfulness to His Word, His headship, and His assembly. Be faithful to the Truth and it will set you free. Truth doesn't lead us into bondage, though that is what Satan tries to tell us. Truth brings true liberty so we can be transformed into His glory.

CONCLUSION

In the latter days, many will depart from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1). When Christ comes back, there will be hardly such a thing as faith (Luke 18:8). The love of many will wax cold (Matthew 24:12). In Revelation 3:14, the last church Jesus addressed was Laodicean—the church that was neither hot nor cold but lukewarm. Apostasy and lukewarmness will prevail in the last days, and many Christians will be spiritually asleep.

"Wherefore he saith, *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead,* and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:14-18).

The divine will and government of God have no power in our responsibilities unless we have

positive volition toward Him. God can say anything, be anything, and do anything, but if we don't have positive volition toward Him, nothing works.

In a marriage, God's essence has to be imparted in God's loving order. First, the husband is to treat his wife in the love of Christ. Then, every wife is to give reverence to her husband, or she is a rebel. God's plan will never be effective as long as the volition isn't positive toward God's order. A wife can destroy the family by degrees if continually she does not respect her husband's headship and love.

The blessings of obedience are limited to free volitional behavior patterns. No one has to respond to spiritual authority; but if they do, nothing can stop them from being blessed spiritually, physically, and financially in the perfect will of God. Until we submit to spiritual authority on every level—at work, at church, and at home—spiritual production will not come. In every area of life, even in business we conduct day to day, we are to submit to those over us with respect. Then, fruitfulness can abound.

Do you want to receive the Morning Star Order? Then purpose that no matter what struggles or battles come, no matter what has to be

excluded from your life, you will do what is necessary to be a candidate for the greatest reward. Go after the prize of the high calling.

Dear heavenly Father, thank You for blessing us with abundant spiritual lives to become Morning Star Christians for eternity. Thank You that when we have recognized our death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus Christ, we can go after the greatest reward —eternal fellowship with You at the Tree of Life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Hearing Heart

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INTRODUCTION

"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15).

"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:15-18).

This booklet deals with the reality of God's provision to counteract the tremendous impact

of Satan's government, which we encounter every day.

The principles presented here offer to every individual the possibility of a life without emotional problems, free from the onslaught of moods, insecurity, fear, and guilt. As we grow in the reality of it, we can experience a life full of happiness, poise, and peace; a life that can wait upon God and not be anxious or reactionary. We have the possibility of a life of never lusting, a life that doesn't have to go back to sublimating with alcohol or drugs.

Through the Word of God you will see why some people never experience real peace, even though they are part of a Finished Work ministry, or why some can't stop criticizing and complaining. You will see how a person can be overwhelmed with the work of God, only to become distracted and eventually withdraw.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. As our hearts are established in the ways of God and His thoughts toward us, we will be victorious and will "bring forth fruit with patience."

Chapter One

THE PROCESSES OF THE HEART

The essence of a man—who he is—is not defined by outward characteristics (what he looks like or what he does). Rather, it is found in the inward man where thoughts are received, processed, and established. Physically, these operations occur in the left and right lobes of the human brain. For our purposes in spiritual application we will refer to channels A, B, and C.

Channel A is located in the left lobe. This channel is the perceptive area, the staging area where thoughts are received, and we become aware of information and stimulated by knowledge and events. Here, information is processed for future decisions and is the basis for determining self-essence.

Channel B is in the upper part of the right lobe. It contains the human spirit, the part of a Christian that makes him God-conscious and gives him the content and substance of God's

mind when he mixes faith with the objective Word of God (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Here, natural thoughts are crucified (Galatians 5:24).

Channel C, in the lower part of the right lobe, contains the heart and the soul with its five parts. The heart is the premise for all motivations, the basis for all operational behavior, and the supreme communication center for all thoughts, feelings, and decisions. It is the totality of man's inward and outward nature and characteristics.

For the unsaved, the human spirit is nonfunctional, due to Adam's Fall. However, even the unsaved man has a measure of God-consciousness through moral light (John 1:9; Romans 1:21). Everything he receives goes directly from channel A to channel C, which determines who he is in his self-essence, without the benefit of input from the Holy Spirit in channel B.

People constantly receive stimulation from many directions. These stimuli determine, guide, and produce their effects in the heart. Scores of believers have processed many messages from the Word of God in channel A, but have never gone beyond that channel to appropriate truth in practicing Christian doctrine. They are aware of truth. They have the stimulation of truth, the

information of knowledge. But, these people do not experience the application of truth in life through a spiritual IQ (Matthew 13:13). They may be privileged in the sequence of their methodical understanding of human realities without the finalization of God's viewpoint. Their wisdom is from below (James 3:15).

On the other hand, every Christian can experience a beautiful process of thinking. First of all, he has the indwelling Holy Spirit. Secondly, his human spirit has been quickened and now functions in channel B. When the Word of God enters into channel A, he mixes with it a living faith in God's person, humility toward His Word, and meekness toward the Spirit, making it possible for knowledge and information to penetrate his human spirit (Hebrews 4:2). His human spirit, which makes him conscious of God's thoughts and gives the content of God's mind, then brings into his heart the wonderful provision that he has received. His heart is the substance for the mentality of his soul.

Being Made Whole

Every person can be made whole. One day, I heard that I was a sinner. I knew it because my heart said it was so. My conscience, through

moral light, revealed to me that I was a sinner. Then, I heard the Gospel. I heard that Jesus Christ died, shed His blood, was buried, rose again and went to heaven. At first, I was only aware of these truths. Then, the Holy Spirit brought in conviction. I perceived it.

Next, I said, "Lord, I am weak and frail, but I accept you as my personal Savior." I mixed faith with what I heard and, for the first time, it was transferred from channel A to channel B. My human spirit was quickened (Ephesians 2:1) and the Holy Spirit began to witness with my human spirit, bringing new life into my heart, in channel C. Then, my heart was ready to process all of God's thoughts into the mentality of my soul.

When a person receives Christ, he becomes a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and walks in the newness of life (Romans 6:4). *New* is *kainos* in the Greek, the word means that there is not one single thing that is old in it.

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Chapter Two

THE CAPACITY OF THE HEART

"My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Proverbs 23:26).

"Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18).

The heart is where the entire process and operation of human life prevails. It takes over the structure and mentality of the soul and produces a capacity for progressive thinking in the mind.

The emotions would have no capacity at all, except to reflect and respond to what the heart feeds them. They have no capacity in themselves; they respond to what the heart feeds them. Is it any wonder that Proverbs says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23)? *Keep* is a Qal imperative. In the Hebrew grammar, the Qal is the simplest form of the verb. Here in this context, it means

to guard. The imperative is a command for the believer to keep or guard the precise categories of truth that have been processed by his human spirit into his heart. This begins to produce a capacity for the emotions and the body to become completely whole.

"The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge" (Proverbs 15:14*a*).

"The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy" (Proverbs 14:10).

"O ye simple [those who cannot think with God], understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart" (Proverbs 8:5). In the original language, the last part of this verse commands us to be of an understanding heart, which produces a divine experience. Truly, out of the heart proceeds every issue of life!

The Structure of the Conscience

"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15).

The conscience is made up of a memory and a vocabulary based on experience with information and knowledge. The conscience defines a

person's self-image. It measures the guilt, fear, or happiness experienced in the soul.

I have had many calls and letters from people who have been molested, raped, and abused. They tell me they cannot get victory over the effects of these terrible experiences. They feel defeated. What has happened to them? The incident of being abused entered into channel A. It rushed into the memory of their consciences and began to determine how much value they placed on themselves and on others. The incident became an experience, through which they formed a negative vocabulary.

The Gospel came into the lives of many of these people. They received Christ and sensed His forgiveness. They were aware of forgiveness and perceived cleansing from God positionally. But, because their human spirits were not activated by faith, categories of doctrine were not able to convert their souls. So, for those who had been molested, the experience of being molested remained in their consciences, bringing fear, pain, sorrow, and guilt. Because of this kind of experience, some turned to drugs and liquor, which affect the chemicals of the body and defile the emotions. This produces a demand for even more chemical stimulation to handle future

problems.

Others entered into self-condemnation. Still, others entered into intellectual pursuits, taking on the challenges of life with their high IQ's, while a poor self-image remained with them.

Many of these people are saved and attend church faithfully, but for years they have lived only in partial victory. Their consciences have never been dealt with to bring new experiential processes in their hearts.

A young man, who is now healed from his experiences, gave me permission to tell his story. He was abused, beaten, and molested by his brother and his conscience was filled with memories of being beaten and molested. His soul took on infections. The sorrow of his heart, which was the wrong kind of sorrow, began to curse his soul (Lamentations 3:63-66).

When a person is cursed by this type of sorrow, it affects his self-image. His heart is filled with unhappiness, his emotions have no capacity to respond to truth. He can strive in his emotions and try to live up to someone else's Christian standards—entering into a works program. He can try any number of things, but the experience remains in the memory of the conscience. Then, what is in the conscience is reflected in

channel C, so that the mentality of his soul takes on the continual experience of being abused. It may be suppressed in the subjective part of the mind, but the experience is still there, locked up in the subjective part of his self-essence.

As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7*a*). In this verse, God is not only referring to the conscious part of the mind. He's also speaking of the unconscious mind and its undefinable stimulation, processed in the mentality of the soul. Counselors try to address the unconscious; wisdom from below attempts to change it. Many avenues, including education, are explored in an effort to produce a change. While this stimulation may make a difference for a time, it can never change the heart. A person rushes into works and human good, but without a changed heart, the past is still there as a part of the self-image.

A woman once called me and said she was raped by her father, her brother, and her uncle. Father, brother, and uncle! What tragic things she must have encountered. She was born again, but still infected and very deeply hurt. *Her heart needed to hear and be healed.*

There are those who have had secret affairs. Others have fallen into homosexuality and les-

bian activities. But there is something locked inside of their subjective minds. It is deep in their memory. No matter how liberal they become, they cannot erase it because God didn't design them to be immoral or perverted. We are designed to be healthy, well, and free.

God's Design for Deliverance

Here's the way a person can be delivered. When Word of God is preached, it enters the mind, then the Holy Spirit transfers it into the heart, by way of the human spirit. It is God's perfect, categorical design for illuminating a man's soul (Psalm 119:105). Suddenly, the person confesses his sin, and he's instantly forgiven because Jesus bore that sin upon His body at Calvary. This is the glorious Gospel! The Word becomes quick and powerful in his life. One moment he's aware of some truth; the next moment he is mixing it with his faith in Jesus Christ. When this happens, Truth goes into his human spirit, enters the heart, and begins motivating and energizing him to live by every word of God.

What has happened? The heart has become the seat of God's viewpoint, where He is present in the process of the operation of grace. It has

become a place where the believer can begin to initiate faith, respond in mercy, and apply God's nature in the reality of the details of life.

Chapter Three

THE FIXED HEART

"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies" (Psalm 112:7-8).

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise" (Psalm 57:7).

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19:7-8).

A person hears that God loves him. He perceives it, he's aware of it, and he mixes faith with it. Oh, how he needs it! The Holy Spirit then brings in the character and power of that love through his human spirit. It goes down into his heart. The very motive of his heart now becomes loving himself. There is no condemna-

tion, for the blood of Jesus Christ has gone into his conscience and changed his frame of reference. Jesus Christ now becomes his point of reference and the Word of God becomes his frame of reference through grace, with mercy and love. The experience in this person's heart is now forgiveness, his vocabulary now consists of praise and words of faith toward God. He has faith in the promises of God for the future. His conscience has been cleansed and purged (Hebrews 9:14).

This is way beyond theology. It is, indeed, a living relationship with Jesus Christ, who's made the soul alive with a new covenant. He is now a new creation in a new dimension of human experience. That individual begins to have an abundant life. The heart then controls the soul: the volition, mind, emotions, conscience, and self-consciousness. The heart has begun to understand; it's been fixed, made totally new. The memory and the motives are new, and the content of the soul is thinking with God in grace from above.

The Conversion of the Soul

Is it any wonder that in the original Hebrew, Psalm 19:7 says the doctrine of God is perfect, making the man whole. *It is perfect!* Converting

the soul speaks of making a person's self-essence whole—not partially whole, but whole. It converts the soul. His heart rejoices. That means it always relaxes.

If I have been made whole, then I no longer have to sublimate with drugs. My heart now feeds my emotions, which begin to respond and appreciate what the heart is feeding them. The emotions begin to sing and to praise God, for they have been wonderfully healed. My feelings correspond to how I think with God.

God continues to communicate with my heart, saying, "Now that I've cleansed you, keep on receiving categories and let doctrine after doctrine go into your human spirit. Let them be communicated to your memory center, and I promise you that the Holy Spirit will bring into your thinking everything you've allowed me to objectively teach you."

There's a woman whose husband continually beat her. I have a letter on file that she wrote to me. She prayed, wept, and trusted God, and one night that vile, wicked, corrupt husband heard a message on the prodigal son, and came forward to receive Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit brought the Word into channel A. He heard that God loved him and sent Jesus Christ to die for

sinners. He heard that Jesus' blood was shed on his behalf to pay for his vile, wicked habit of beating his wife. The man mixed faith with what he heard, and the Holy Spirit took that Good News, established new life in him, and raised up his human spirit. As a result, his heart became brand new with God. Today, his wife, once beaten so hard and so often, says of him, "He's a model husband—I'd put him up against anyone in the world!"

The Quick and Powerful Word

What Jesus Christ does with His Word is quick and powerful. He who made us can cleanse, purify, and purge the conscience. He brings in a brand new self-image of love, a reflection of the new nature, and a revelation of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that he shall speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13-14). This is the beautiful part of being led by the Spirit: the Holy Spirit takes the things of the Finished Work and the glorified

Christ and shows them to you (Romans 8:14-15). These things become ours; we possess them, and they become a part of our self-essence (Mark 4:20).

There are those who hear the Word of God with an honest and good heart. Having heard the Word, they keep it and bring forth fruit with patience (Luke 8:15). *Honest* is *kalos* in the Greek text, a very unique word in its origin. It means something that has been beautified by God; something that's been made so whole that it's transparent and beautiful in God's eyes. It's the new heart.

Then, the word *good* in the Greek, *agathos*, speaks of something more than good. It means upper righteousness. This speaks of a believer who has been given a brand new heart of integrity because the content of his thinking is God. He's been given a righteousness above what men can produce, a derived righteousness and a derived life. And it's beautiful, and it's good, because it's his new heart. This believer brings forth fruit with amazing patience.

Think of what this does in a woman when she is confronted with a problem in her marriage. She treasures the privilege and potential of her marriage and is enabled to wait until God

works in her husband. She brings forth fruit with patience! She reveals Christ to him, even though he doesn't deserve it. She loves mercy, she loves God, she loves herself, and she loves him. It isn't something she does in self-effort, it's something being produced in her heart by the Holy Spirit. She possesses a divine derivation of life with a brand new refreshed heart that controls everything about her mind and feeds her emotions. Her conscience reveals the vocabulary of grace. Her memory is what Christ does, and what He can do, and what He has done for her, and what He can do through her. She's always feasting and meditating upon these thoughts. The problem she is having with her husband just gives her an opportunity to put these things into practice and to see her living faith work as she totally trusts in God.

Obscuring the Light

"No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel…" (Luke 11:33). This is what a woman does when she fights and argues. She rolls up her sleeves and tells her husband off. Regardless of who is at fault, she has taken the Light, that precious provision of life that God has

given to her and has hidden it under a bushel. The privilege of living in theantric action—God's divine nature combining with her human nature to bring the government of heaven into the situation—is lost to her. God says, "This is not what I intended for you to do. Don't cover your lamp. Put your lamp on a hill so it can shine in every direction, even toward your husband."

This is what happens with some Christians: They get up in the morning and go to work, they become overwhelmed with the cares of this life, but they're OK. The human spirit has stopped functioning for that day. They dwell on their finances, or some other detail of life. They go to work and look at another man or woman, all the while their consciences are not receiving the right reflections from the heart. So, the devil starts in with his projections and the old sin nature is given permission to communicate its subjective evaluations. The mouth begins to confess what the emotions are experiencing. Even though they are Christians, they become a representative of the cosmos: Instead of thinking with God, they think with Satan's world system. They are not happy and they are seeking shortcuts to deliverance, rather than accepting their co-crucifixion with Christ in their human spirit.

God comes in and says, "Draw near. Come to me. Come directly to me—just as you are—and let me fill you and revive your new heart. Through meekness and humility, the Word will quicken your spirit. Just come! Come in that condition, whatever it is, and the Word will renew your heart in a moment of time, and you'll be able to live according to the Word in divine viewpoint. Your conscience will bring in grace, and you will experience newness of life in a moment by the miracle of grace through faith. But, do not tarry, come, and guard your heart (Isaiah 57:15)!"

I want to tell you about some people who were very close to suicide. One of them, after hearing the message "He Looked Beyond My Fault and Saw My Need," came to God in tears and didn't take his life.

Another person had survived three overdoses—the third one should have killed her. A relative called her and asked her to listen to *The Grace Hour,* our radio talk show. She didn't get anything out of the program the first time and turned it off. But out of desperation, she listened again and heard a message entitled "Mercy Rejoices Against Judgment." She sent for a copy of the tape, listened again and was completely set

free. Today, she continues to follow after the mercy message.

Another woman was very deep into alcoholism and drug abuse. She was miserable, hanging out in barrooms. Now, she's one of the most beautiful Christians in the world. She hasn't had a drink for two-and-a-half years. She heard a message that said God will accept you just as you are. In that message I said, "He loved you and died for you when you were living in sin, and He loves you, loves you, loves you! I'm not asking you to do anything but receive His love and respond to Him." She did! What happened? The message became a part of her self-essence.

She began to understand the Word sown in her heart (Matthew13:23). She dug up the information, meditated upon it, received it, and applied its true meaning. In that desperate condition, she began to live in the true meaning of the Gospel. She now makes sure to hear one or two taped messages every day. "I don't dare not to," she says. "For some people, it's going to self-help groups; for me, it's the Word of God."

Is it any wonder that, in Proverbs 23:26*a*, the Bible says, "My son, give me thine heart." The Father is crying out for your heart. He knew that when a heart is given to Him, He will fix it, change it, and transform it. He will make it new and give a new beginning. God will give your heart a brand new point of reference and frame of reference, with new motivation, energy and power. There is no condemnation, no frame of reference to sin, no frame of reference to fear, guilt, or failure. The subjective mind is healed because when the Blood comes into the conscience, the first place it goes is to the subjective realm. The Blood cleans up the involuntary, uneducated part of the mind, and whispers, "You're whole, Jesus just came through."

CONCLUSION

The Word of God makes it clear that every revelation of grace is experienced in the heart. Here, mercy is realized, love is enjoyed, and the promises become real. It all comes down to guarding the heart. The believer who has a hearing heart has the mind of God controlling the mentality of his soul. His emotions are quiet and calm. He has a capacity for the Word, prayer, faith, soul-winning, and missions. A capacity for forgiveness and for life in the Body of Christ is established, because the mind of Christ came in to create a new heart.

This, indeed, is God's viewpoint for every person's problem. The answer isn't another counselor; it isn't some course promoting wisdom from below, with God tucked in at the end. No, the answer is coming to grips with Jesus Christ and saying, "You created me. You died for me. You love me. Your Word is pure, forever settled in Heaven. And though heaven and earth

will pass away, your Word will never pass away. It's quick and powerful, and it alone can pierce my soul and spirit. It's become the wonderful motivating critic of my heart."

We have an eternal purpose. "For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name" (Psalm 33:21). When our hearts are rejoicing, it means our thoughts, capacities, meditations, reflections, and vocabulary are based upon a new, living experience that derives life through perception and awareness of grace and mercy in the conscience. Once we have learned of the love of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit can shed that love abroad in our hearts and we will love Him with all of our hearts and minds and we begin to love ourselves and others.

Trust God to supernaturally change your heart in a relationship, in your marriage, with your family. Trust Him to change your heart toward finances and other hindrances. Wives, trust God to become helpmates to your husbands, instead of picking them apart because of circumstances. Husbands, pray with your wives; fast with them. Have your hearts changed. Let's trust Him! May our love help mold others into a capacity to receive what they need: a hearing heart.

The Heart of Christmas

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Thousands and thousands of souls are in hell today who exchanged gifts at Christmas and celebrated the day with parties and folly, but who never recognized that Jesus was born on this day into the world to be a Savior. On the other hand, thousands of well-intentioned people observe Christmas by just attending religious ceremonies, but while they follow to the letter their obligations, so many miss the heart of Christmas.

The Word of God says in Galatians 5:4, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." In 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, the cross of Jesus Christ is of none effect to those who do not love it. People despise the Cross when they do not bring it into a ministry of reconciliation for their marriages and in their families. The Resurrection is of no effect to those who live in carnality. The Word of God is of no effect to peo-

ple who do not understand the Holy Spirit's power and life.

As you read this booklet, begin by carefully reading Matthew 2:1-25 and Luke 2:1-20, considering even the historical details. God wants to impress upon us that He is a God of great detail—that the things and people we tend to "hurry by" are portions that reveal a masterpiece from a heavenly perspective. Let Christ fill your heart with the true meaning of Christmas.

Chapter One

KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT: THE PERFECTION OF GOD'S PLAN

Octavius, the ruler of the Roman Empire at the time of Christ's birth did not want to be called a king. In his mind, to be a king was not high enough. He also did not want to be called a dictator, because dictators were only temporary. So the Roman Senate consulted, and they decided to give him a title that implied deity: Caesar Augustus.

There was no war during the reign of Caesar Augustus, and for one reason: Everyone subject to him was in unbelievable bondage. When he put out an edict for the entire empire to register for taxation, there was no appeal, because no one *dared* to appeal.

Many miles away from Rome in a little place called Nazareth, in the midst of all the people in

Galilee and Judea, lived a unique couple—Mary and Joseph. In Mary's womb was the Son of God.

Joseph carefully guarded Mary as they went to enroll in the city of Bethlehem. But when they finally arrived, there was no hotel, no caravansary, no place at all. Even the *kataluma* (translated in the King James version of the Bible as "inn"), a place for cattle to stay during the night, was filled with livestock. There was no room for this apparently insignificant family to stay.

That left one other possibility. There were several sheds, and Joseph took Mary into one of these tiny shelters. There, Mary delivered the baby Jesus.

Imagine the scene. They could not stay where people were, because there was no room—no palace for the King of kings, no hotel. They could not stay where cattle were, because there was no room. So Mary went into a shed, and gave birth to the Son of God.

Mary was a virgin. She conceived by the Holy Spirit. But on the day that would change eternal destinies, there were no midwives or ladies-in-waiting attending to this holy birth. She had no one to help her deliver the baby. *She* wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes. Mary,

Jesus' mother, had absolutely no help.

If you can, fathom this: From all parts of the world people came to honor Caesar's command. Patricians dressed in purple and splendor, the plebeians dressed in rags—such a diversity of people coming from every walk of life to enroll for the census. And from heaven, God's eyes were upon a little peasant girl and her husband, Joseph.

The Fulfillment of a Promise

Seven hundred and fifty-four years before Christ was born, the Holy Spirit told Isaiah in 7:14-15, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good."

Butter and honey speaks of poverty. It meant that Mary and Joseph would have no measure of food to give this child, as poor people who for days and weeks only had milk and honey and gathered a little bread.

And this is why I'm so excited about the Bible—why I love the Word of God, to preach the Bible, to be in a Bible-believing ministry that goes into all the world. We declare a Savior who

identifies with the poor and the weak. And in Micah 5:2, the Word of God says, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting."

Seven hundred and fifty-four years before, as Isaiah had predicted, when King Ahaz did not believe and did not want a sign, Isaiah said that a sign would be given to the dynasty of David.

Jesus Christ's birth was prophesied; His poverty, His priesthood, and His righteous government were prophesied. Along with His Kingdom, His suffering, rejection, and death were prophesied. But Jesus Christ's victorious resurrection and His ascension were also foretold.

The Veracity of His Word

Only in the Word of God do we have a book so absolutely accurate that every detail is prophesied. We have sure words that have been proven again and again. And because Jesus was prophesied to be born of a virgin in a poor family, He came not as a speculator, nor as a president of a country, nor as an engineer, nor as a

financier. He came as the Savior.

The Word of God says that Jesus was Mary's firstborn. He came to a depraved society, where a man who considered himself to be Deity was ruling the Roman Empire. But Jesus Christ was the firstborn in creation, the firstborn among the brethren (Romans 8:29), the firstborn from the dead.

Isaiah 53:9 says, "he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." Matthew 27:38 reveals that while He hung on the cross, a thief was on His left side and a thief was on His right. Verses 57-60 prove He was buried in a borrowed tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man who was Jesus' disciple.

Jesus Christ our Savior came to us in the most unusual conditions. Acts 8:32-33 says, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his sheerer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth."

Chapter Two

HE CAME IN MEEKNESS

When we consider the announcement of Jesus' birth, it is important to understand that the angels appeared to the *shepherds*, as they praised God with glorious, overwhelming praise. The sky lit up as the angels began to praise this Christ—this Man whose meekness and humility were predicted. This Man "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men....he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:6-8).

Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Savior. He came into the world with a gentle and meek kind of spirit that was willing to be born in a shed. There was not even room for Him to share with the cattle overnight. He couldn't be born in any other room but a

shed.

And this Man, brought up in the poverty-stricken city of Nazareth, showed us what it means to be a servant, what it means to have a meek spirit. He could have complained about His Father's plan. "Why can't I be born somewhere else but a shed?" He could have complained, "Why couldn't I at least be born where the cattle are? Why can't there be someone to help Mary?" He could have asked for so many things. "Why did Herod have to kill all the first-born so he could try to kill Me?" He could have asked about that. But He did not.

Open Our Eyes, We Want to See Jesus

Most people do not understand how fortunate they are. Most have a home. At the least, we have shelter, food, and clothing. Many have insurance programs, and most of us have decent health. We have jobs, security, and money, or some provision to meet basic needs. Yet in our comfort, often striving and struggling goes on in families because many will not accept the humble birth of Jesus Christ into their heart. They will accept neither the Pentecost of the Holy Spirit nor the reality of the living God. People murmur and complain because there is no

meekness.

This world is full of problems, but thanks be to God for the amazing grace that has been given to us. We should be singing praises to God and giving Him glory in the highest! We should be worshipping Him, because He has told us everything that would happen. Everything about Him was prophesied.

And this One who cared for the little children said, "Let them come to Me, for such is the Kingdom of God." This One who visited common people like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus because He lived as a common person; this One of whom it is said, "there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2); this One who now condescends to come to live inside of our hearts—*this* One indwells our lives with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

He is the One who inspired common men to write the sixty-six books in the Bible, the complete canon of Scriptures. It is the written Word of God that reveals we don't have to live in these problems. Instead, we can be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through the living Word, Jesus Christ. He says we can reckon that we are indeed dead unto sin (Romans 6:11). Then He tells us not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies

(Romans 6:12).

Present Yourself

Every child of God needs to present himself to this One who is God. His Holy Spirit comes into our life and reveals the truth about Jesus Christ and the validity of every single word of God. He reveals the reality of the coming Rapture, the truth about the Bema Seat evaluation for believers in heaven and the Second Advent of Christ, when we come back with Him riding white horses.

The Holy Spirit reveals the power of Christ's life to Church Age believers. We live in a time when each one has access to God directly through Jesus Christ. We are members of the royal family, kings and priests unto God (1 Peter 2:9). We were made that way by Christ, washed from our sins by His own precious blood. We live in an age with the work so finished that *every* Christian is complete in the sight of God the Father (Colossians 2:10).

Philippians 3:15 says that as many who are perfect *in their position in Christ*, should forget the past and press forward for the prize of the high calling. If you are not experiencing your position because of something wrong in your

life, God will reveal it unto you.

Privileged People

We have such a privilege now because of the birth of Christ and because of His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. We are members of His body, flesh, and bones, joined to Him as one spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). Jesus Christ is closer to us than anything we can see with our eyes because He is living inside of us. We have a privilege of fellowshipping with Christ as we redeem the time because the days are evil.

We have such a privilege to present the Gospel, through which we can pull men and women out of hell's flames into heaven's glow, into heaven's journey. We have the privilege to offer people God's forgiveness for their sins.

We have a privilege to live clean, pure, holy lives, and to have a single-eye toward God, receiving His love that casts out fear. It is our privilege to be close to this One who created us, this One that was so humble that He left the splendor of heaven and came to a shed for His birth.

We have such a privilege to pray to God and to see God change this nation, our families, and unsaved loved ones. We have such a privilege to talk with God and see our businesses prosper,

our families prosper, and our Christian life excel beyond our expectations.

We have such a privilege to see God move, bringing what heaven desires to give us: the Savior, our Lord, and the joy of His Holy Spirit, with praise and worship.

We have such a privilege to be changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of God instead of staying in the same old ways. Instead, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and we are changed. We come before God in meekness and in humility, and we understand that whatever our lot is in life, there isn't a single thing that can compare to the lowliness of His birth. And nothing can compare with the way Mary and Joseph were treated when there was no room in the *kataluma*.

Receive the Gifts of His Promises

"This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our [personal] faith." (1 John 5:4). "God always causes us to triumph" (2 Corinthians 2:14). "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

"God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"

(2 Timothy 1:7). The spirit of fear comes from the devil. The spirit of depression, anxiety, and sadness comes from the devil. God has given me a sound mind and power in my thinking. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice. *In* everything give thanks. *For* everything give thanks" (Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20).

We are members of God's royal family, royal priests, seated above. We are not second-rate citizens. We have an inheritance, and we have access to the Father for all things. All I have to do is believe, receive, and draw near to the throne of grace and mercy.

We have a birthright, and it is revealed in the promises of God. All of His promises are yea (2 Corinthians 1:20). Not one of them has fallen to the ground (1 Kings 8:56). Marry those promises; kiss those promises; court those promises. Go out with those promises, and go to bed with those promises! They are ours!

Chapter Three

CHRIST'S PURPOSE: OUR PERFECTION

We who have received Jesus Christ as our Savior understand that He came to earth as a man—flesh and blood—to purchase our salvation and to deliver us from the penalty and the power of sin. But the Lord Jesus Christ was born in a lowly manger in a tiny shed in Bethlehem of Judea for one reason: to perfect every single Christian and to bring us into the perfect environment of heaven.

Everyone desires to be in a land where there is no sickness or death, where there will never be another act of violence. In heaven, there will never be another divorce or a person leaving the cemetery in tears because they have lost a loved one. There will never be the sound of sirens coming to rescue victims of an accident.

The Lord Jesus Christ limited Himself to our free volition. But for those who are willing, He

is perfecting His people, conforming us to His image. Only when we have our new glorified bodies will we be perfected. In the meanwhile, He came to make us positionally acceptable. By adjusting to the grace of God, it is possible for our position in Christ to become our experience. But only after we have been perfected, will we begin to realize the glorious work of Calvary and the glorious purpose of His birth in a manger.

Chosen by the Father

When Christ was born, it was a very dark time in history. The country was overwhelmed with taxation, immorality, and trouble. The Father chose that time for this baby to be born in a manger to a poor young girl from Nazareth and a carpenter.

Then God chose shepherds to be the first to hear the angels announce Christ's birth. History describes the shepherds as people who were rejected—wounded, hurting, and in pain. Many became shepherds *because* they were outcasts. Rejected by leaders in religion and society, they preferred to be alone with the sheep.

Jesus came to these wounded people who were considered "damaged goods." Religious

leaders thought the shepherds were thieves. And yet, the birth of the Savior was not announced to the noble people in the palaces, nor to the politicians on the hill, nor to the wealthy. The angels appeared to the shepherds. They were so thankful, and they came to Him singing praises.

It was Mary who was chosen. It was Joseph, a carpenter. It was a manger, the feed crib of an animal. It was a shed. That is how Jesus *chose* to be born. It was to a group of lowly shepherds that the angel of the Lord appeared and said, "Fear not." The angels sang and the sky was brightened as the glory of God shone around them.

Jesus Christ is always appearing to those who think they have no value, who think they have nothing to offer. Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds—what a story!

Who Is on the Throne?

But there was a king named Herod who took the throne in Israel after his father was murdered. He acquired great power, and his plan was to control the country and to keep his power. So, he invited all of his enemies to a banquet, and had every one of them killed. He

killed his wife's grandfather, her brother, and three of his sons in the last few days of his life when he suspected that one of them was after his throne. Therefore, when he heard that wise men were seeking a king who was born in the city of David, Herod was deeply troubled.

Afraid he was dying, Herod invited the well-respected and the common people to a banquet in honor of himself. But when nobody wept or expressed the respect he hungered for, he planned to have them all killed. He even tried to gain the respect of the Jews by purchasing goods to build the temple, but he was not motivated by respect or love for them.

Though he possessed great power, Herod was a lonely man who was deeply troubled. He lied when he said to the wise men, "Tell me where He is so I can go and worship Him." Herod lived in the deception that he knew so well. He was vexed by the thought that a King was born in a manger, because that King would confront the terrible power he possessed.

Christ Comes to the Captives

Jesus Christ comes to many kinds of people this time of year. They may not be like Herod, but they are troubled. They want to control one

another. They want to be in charge of what goes on in their marriages. They don't want to lose control, so the fight goes on. And in some cases, each person is striving for the upper hand.

There may be a case where a woman will nag until she turns the household upside down. Jesus comes and confronts the controlling, driving spirits that continue year after year, but she will not let Jesus Christ be the King of her life. She will not let Him confront her weakness, so she goes on living in it, and then she feels guilty while she causes sadness in those around her because of this driving spirit. She is a captive of her own contention.

Somebody else may have a spirit of pornography or the spirits of illicit imaginations, lust, and promiscuity, but he lives in denial. Jesus comes to give him victory and to bring his life under control by the Holy Spirit. But when a man refuses to give up his control over this devastating self-destructive weakness, he limits the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78:41).

Yet, Jesus still comes to those who are troubled and those who will not relinquish themselves to Him.

There He was. The Savior for all men had appeared on the scene. Herod couldn't stand it,

so he had every male child two years old and younger killed. The shepherds found the Christ child and worshiped Him because God had spoken to them through the angels. The wise men who studied science, medicine, and astronomy came because they were seeking truth. By following the star as they came from the East, they found the Truth.

Chapter Four

CHRIST COMES TO COMMON PEOPLE

The Christmas story has so many details. But the most beautiful thing is this: When the Holy Spirit moves and the Word of God becomes real, the Lord Jesus Christ especially comes to the common person. Mark 12:37*b* says, "The common people heard him gladly." The common people were those who go through so many struggles of life, those who have not known what it means to be elevated into high positions.

The Lord came to David, the youngest of his family. He raised up David to defeat Goliath. The one who was not recognized by Samuel or anyone else was chosen. To those who are not noble, those who are abased, Jesus comes and wants to make magnificent things happen—great things—to those who are called "insignificant."

Gideon was from the smallest tribe. This short young man felt so ashamed and so insecure, and the Lord raised him up to defeat the Midianites. God came to Gideon, who was the least of all of his tribe.

This is why the Bible says that God is *for* us. Because He is for us, no one can come against us in the end. God doesn't register our sins. He doesn't reject us when we fall. One day we will live in a perfect place in our new glorified bodies. God is for us!

Jesus went to a cursing fisherman and let him become the leader of all the disciples. Peter ministered to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles, and he had the key as an instrument of God to open all three doors. Though Peter would fail and deny Christ, Jesus Christ mightily used him. He was God's man despite the cursing and the failures of his life. God used Peter, and He will receive all the glory for it.

God could have used a tall, handsome man to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, but instead He used a very short man who had a tremendous eye problem and a squeaky voice. The apostle Paul was considered ugly in his appearance. They said, "…his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Corinthians

10:10). He was rejected in Corinth; the people preferred Cephas or Apollos because of Paul's appearance. But God used this little man with his eye problem and raised him up to reach all the Gentiles.

God is always using the little people, and He always uses people doing "little" things, like giving the cup of cold water. He uses the things that seem insignificant, like the swaddling clothes, the manger, and the animals' crib. He always uses the small things and the little things—but in His eyes, they are very big. Why? Jesus Christ is for us.

Certainly, God will bless the affluent. Certainly, He will save anyone who is wealthy if they will humble themselves and come to Him by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Of course He will prosper His people according to His will for the furtherance of His Gospel. But the Lord wants to teach us a great lesson in the Christmas story: He always uses people, and He doesn't look on the outward.

Moses could not speak well, so he used Aaron to speak for him. Because of a speech impediment, he thought he could not be used. But God used Moses to lead two and a half million people out of Egypt.

God used the quiet, silent Andrew, who was withdrawn into his own personality. He used the impulsive, boisterous Peter, who was presumptuous and always overdoing it. He used John and James, the "sons of thunder," who, before they met Christ, were angry men with vicious tempers.

The Lord uses so many different personalities, and He doesn't care how little you are in your own sight. He doesn't care where you came from. He will go to the slums of Nazareth to be born into a family of a carpenter, unto a little peasant girl to bring forth this wonderful Savior.

The Depths of God's Love

The Lord Jesus Christ was hunted by the tyrant King Herod, but He escaped. He confronted this king who wanted to kill Him, and Herod died in defeat and frustration. But remember: The troubles that plagued Herod could have all been forgiven and relieved by Jesus Christ.

Think of what God said in Isaiah 5:4, "What more could I do unto you than I have done?" To us He is saying, "I took away all of your sins. I became sin. I paid the price of your judgment. I

died in your place. I have paid the price for everything you have ever done. I paid God the Father's price of holiness, justice, and righteousness with My sacrifice of love."

Now Jesus Christ is waiting to be gracious to us. If we believe, He said, "I will come into your life and give you a gift of eternal life. If you are already saved but troubled, it is only because you don't trust the power of My resurrection, My love, My forgiveness, and the renewal of your mind by My grace. If you are troubled, I will heal your troubles. I don't care what your burdens are. I understand every burden you carry."

It is said of God (Isaiah 63:9), "In all their affliction, he was afflicted." I have never been able to fully comprehend that: With *all* of our afflictions, He was afflicted. That is empathy, it is compassion, it is identification, it is oneness.

Because His love is so great, Jesus said, "If you are weary; if you are heavy laden; if you haven't been healed and your heart has been broken and hasn't been mended; if the burdens have overwhelmed you and no one seems to understand it—if you are going through these kinds of battles, *come unto Me*, and I will give you rest. I will!" (See Matthew 11:28.)

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

Confess Your Provision

All that Jesus did on the earth, He did as a common man with common people. He will bless anyone, but those who understand the nature of His commitment can trust Him in everything, whether it is a family problem, a financial need, or any other kind of problem. If He died, shed His blood, was buried, and rose again because He loves you and calls you by name—if the Father spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all—will He not freely give us *all things* (Romans 8:32)? That is what the Word of God says!

All of us need to discover this precious life of Christ in a new birth of Resurrection fellowship, in a new birth of Ascension joy, in a new birth of fervent prayer, and in a new birth of confessing our provision in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That manger scene ought to lead us to Christ. Let Him be the Lord over disease, the Lord over sin, the Lord over pain, over hurts, over mistakes, over iniquity, over passivity, over

finances. He is the Lord over all the gold and the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10). He is the Lord over the universe, the One who controls history, the One who is in charge of every detail of life. And this One is waiting for us to simply come.

All He says to the believer is, "Come." *Just come*. It is only one word. If you have a driving spirit, get the victory and let a new birth of Resurrection life take over at this time. Fear and anxiety affect not only the central nervous system but the entire physical body. If you have a nagging spirit, or a spirit of fear and anxiety, will you come?

When you receive your healing for those problems, you will be healed of physical diseases and symptoms which come from nervous tension. This is the cry of the Savior: "Will you come and let Me heal your heart and your wounded relationships? Will you come just because I want you to come?"

Don't you think that if Christ died for you and calls you by name that He will also take care of anything you bring to Him? Bring it all to Jesus and lay it at His feet. Come, because He loves you with an everlasting love. He will never leave you, and He will never, no never,

forsake you. He will perfect you and bring you into a perfect place.

Christ's desire for us is this: "I want you to get to know Me, respond to Me, serve Me, be a family with Me, honor Me, and release My life while you are on the earth."

Our time is short. We have a privilege to exercise faith and trust God's Word. Express His life in the details of little things. He came to us. And now, we can come boldly to Him.

CONCLUSION

Are you thankful that Jesus Christ was humble enough to be born in a shed? Are you thankful that Mary had the strength to deliver Him without help and to wrap Him in swaddling clothes? Are you thankful that He grew up in poverty? That Joseph was a carpenter? That because of those humble beginnings, He can identify with every one of us? Jesus left heaven's best and the corridors of glory when He condescended to a position lower than the angels and became the least on this planet.

We have a Savior; He is the Lord of the universe. Make Him your Lord today. Make Him so precisely yours: He wants to be the Lord of your health, Lord of your wisdom. Make Him your sanctification, the One who fills you with His Spirit. He is the Lord who loves your soul, the Lord of all grace, the Lord of all mercy, the Lord of all forgiveness. Let Him be the Lord of new beginnings. Let Him transform your marriage.

Let him transform your mind. Crown Him Lord!

Dear Heavenly Father, You are the Light, and all that You are You offer freely to every person. You offer us an abundant life in Your Spirit. You have given us the best.

Thank You that though You were rich, You became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). We are thankful that through Your poverty, we are becoming rich in grace, and rich in forgiveness, and rich with the Holy Spirit. We can overcome everything by faith, because, "Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). We love You, Father, and praise You and thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Heartbeat of God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

I have never known a time when so many people are crying out from their souls, wanting to talk to someone, wanting somebody to love them, wanting somebody to share with them, wanting somebody to listen to them. And oh, there's such a need for us to give up our self-life and to enter into the heartbeat of God's life by sharing His life with them. At the expense of our own priorities, at the expense of our own time, at the expense of our own success, we must go to the Cross and discover the heartbeat of Jesus Christ.

I think of those who go out to the nursing homes, visiting the elderly who may be sick and tired, just plain worn out, or in some cases senile. But because of love, there are people who take the time and go into these nursing homes week after week. What a ministry. They have the heartbeat of God.

Every time they go, angels are recording such

visits, and Jesus is saying, "Inasmuch as you did it to the least of one of these, you're doing it unto Me." God is keeping the record books. Now, we don't do these things for that reason, but we serve because of love. We do what we do because we have the heartbeat of Jesus Christ.

More and more, as you will understand in reading this booklet, I am beginning to realize that the time is so short. And the only thing to do is to let the love of God—the very heartbeat of God—be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

After reading these words, may you say with me, "Lord, by the Cross that You bore for my sins, I want to enter in to Your heartbeat."

Chapter One

SWEET REMEMBRANCES

"Anew commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

The heartbeat of God is such a great theme to consider. John the apostle, "the one whom Jesus loved," was always so close to Jesus' heart. At the Last Supper, as he was leaning on Him (John 13:23), John could actually feel Jesus' heart beating. But more than that, he understood what the heart of Jesus expressed. The letters of John are full of the love of God.

The apostle Paul also understood the heart of God. Notice how Romans 16:3-4 reveals his heartbeat:

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

"Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles."

Then he gives a long list of people he wanted to honor. In verse 16 he wrote, "Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you." He spent an entire chapter saluting different saints for what they were doing. Paul had the heartbeat of Christ.

I love Philippians 1:3. As the Spirit of God moves, this is a very beautiful verse to my heart:

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

Isn't that beautiful? Of all the remembrances that he had, Paul said, "I thank my God for every remembrance of you." I like the fact that he said "every remembrance."

In 1 Corinthians 12:28, speaking of gifts God has given in the Body of Christ, after prophets and teachers he mentions the gift of "helps." God recognizes and highly esteems every individual he has placed in the Body, whether they are noticed by men or not.

These scriptures are most revealing. They reveal who has God's heartbeat and who just talks about it. A number of people have it. A number of people talk about it but don't live in it.

This message came to me as I thought of the number of people who do not fulfill their purpose. They are just going through the motions, living for their education, living for their home, living for their selfish reasons.

Thank God for Faithful Friends

One evening back in Maine, while waiting for people to arrive at church, I sat in my car and observed, and I had time to think. I thought about the Lord Jesus, His church, and our ministry.

My first thoughts went to a lot of people, the entire corporate Body, with love and thanksgiving to God. And then my thoughts went to individuals. I thought of Fred Lowell who put in so much time on that church building. Anything that you ever gave him to do, he was the first, and the last, and always in between.

So I thanked God quietly in the car for him, and I said, "Lord, I just thank You that we have an opportunity to know Fred, to fellowship with him, to work with him, and to see that kind of dedication, which I think is a very real example of a Spirit-filled Christian life in every practical way that a man could possibly live on earth."

Fred didn't have the greatest gift of commu-

nication on house-to-house visitation, but he surely went out and always gave it all he had with every single opportunity. He never missed unless he had to work.

There was something about him. He was unique, different. He possessed something that seemed to say, "If there's a job to do, I don't want any of the glory. I'll just go out and do it. While everybody else is talking about it, I'll go out and get the job done."

That was Fred Lowell.

I'm mentioning his name because God brought his name to my heart. And as I remembered the old church building, from a side view, with all the memories that went into my mind, that was one that impressed me deeply. And I said, "Lord Jesus, thank You for the remembrance of Fred Lowell."

Folks Who Live Only for Others

Well, on and on it could go. I thanked God for the elders who have stood with us through thick and thin. In every kind of victory and every kind of problem, they have never been anything but wonderful and spiritual and beautiful men of God you can be proud of in Jesus Christ.

And so I said, "I thank God for the remembrance of them, for the deacons, for their wives, for the officers, for the choir, and for all the servants of God." I just started thanking God for them by name. For the remembrance of every single one of them, I just thanked God.

Then my mind went to Framingham, Massachusetts and other local churches. I still rejoice over the fantastic Body of Jesus Christ that God raised up in those places. I thought of the tremendous dedication of people who love God deeply. Whenever there was a need, they had the confidence to do anything because they served God with their whole heart. Their love for God's Word went beyond fellowship. True fellowship is not as some people think of it. It is a spiritual exercise of love toward God and toward the Word, having a deep spiritual union with Jesus Christ and with those that love Him.

I thank God for every remembrance of them.

One by one, people from different places come to my mind—people from all over America, Europe, Africa, Asia, South America, and even Australia. My heart is flooded with joy and tears as I could honestly say with Paul, "I thank God for every remembrance of you."

When the corporate Body begins to grow

and begins to know Jesus Christ as Lord, there is not a thing upon the earth that can remotely compare with the beauty and magnitude of our fellowship, which is based upon the love of God.

I recall one couple that always wanted everyone who visited the church to stay at their house for dinner. You could send fifteen to their house on a Saturday night or Sunday and there would never be anything but absolute rejoicing. I thank God for every remembrance of them.

Acertain fellow and his wife had many children, and not much else. But they were always available if there was ever a need.

"If someone needs a place to stay, they can have our food and our bedrooms. If there's a family here that wants to go to dinner or doesn't have a place to go to dinner, they can come home with us."

It wasn't the fact that he said it. It was what was behind what he said that blessed me. He had a heart that was always willing to do whatever it takes—a heart that doesn't just do something for duty's sake but for love's sake.

If I knew of three families that needed a place to stay, I could call this family up at two o'clock tomorrow morning, and I would receive nothing but an absolute "yes" with no condi-

tions set forth and nothing but love responding. If they had to sleep on the floor themselves, they'd do it gladly, without a second thought or a single regret.

I thank God for every remembrance of those people. They did more than just talk about it. They always expressed the very heartbeat of God.

Chapter Two

JESUS WAS ALWAYS MOVED WITH COMPASSION

In Romans 16, Paul sent personal greetings to many individuals by name: to Priscilla and Aquila who laid down their own necks for him. Before that, he mentioned, Phebe. "She's a faithful servant of the church, and whatever her business is in the Lord, you be sure to help her in her business." Some people have tried to say that Paul was not favorable toward women, but Paul was not a woman hater. Besides mentioning Priscilla and a few others, he thought Phebe was all right, and he thought the church ought to cooperate with what she wanted to do with the Lord. He didn't think she ought to sit down and do nothing. He knew Priscilla was a special gem in the corporate Body.

After honoring and saluting all of his fellow servants in Romans 16, Paul wasn't insecure. He wasn't fearful. He wasn't always thinking in the

suspicious realm. He said, "Greet one another with a holy kiss."

For us, it is a handshake, which is acceptable in our age. But Paul wasn't living in insecurity. There was emotion in his love. There was feeling in the expression of it. There was the heartbeat of Christ involved in the relationship. It wasn't cold, passive, or indifferent. Rather, it was sweet, beautiful, thoughtful, and heartwarming.

That is the way Christianity ought to be. It ought to beat with the heartbeat of the Lord Jesus.

Think of the Lord Jesus on the Cross, and of what He said. Before He ever said, "I thirst," He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Before thinking of Himself, before He ever said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," He looked down at His mother, Mary, and said, "Woman, behold. There is your son—John. He will take care of you" (see John 19:26-27).

Before He ever said anything about "Why hast thou forsaken me?", He poured out His heart and poured out His love for everyone around Him. In the Garden of Gethsemane, in the beauty of that love, in the royalty of His own

dignity, in the majesty of His own divinity, the Lord Jesus Christ prayed and prayed. But before He ever prayed for Himself, He put the interest and concern of others first.

That is the heartbeat of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 14:14, He had compassion on the multitudes and was moved to feed them. Again, in Matthew 15:32, He was moved with compassion. In Luke 19:41, again moved with compassion, He wept over Jerusalem. In John 11:35, He wept at Lazarus' grave. Again, He was moved with compassion. In Matthew 23:37, He wept a second time over the city, and again He was moved with compassion. He said, "How many times I would have gathered you unto Me, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not." Again and again, He was moved with compassion.

The heartbeat of Jesus Christ caused Him to come to earth with this mindset: "I identify Myself with sinful men, and I will take their sins on My body, to suffer as a guilty murderer, a liar, a sinner, and an adulterer. I will suffer and pay the price for their sins because I love them. I'll give Myself for the world. They have done nothing to deserve it, but I will give Myself for the world because I love them and I want to help them."

He did shed His blood for the world, always considering the world ahead of His fellowship with the Father. His heavenly fellowship with God the Father and all the angels came after He considered the need of the world. He wanted to lay down His life because He loved people. He just loved people.

Jesus Loved the Little Ones and the Weak Ones

In Mark 10:13, the people brought their children to Jesus. He loved the little children and He picked them up and held them in His arms, but the disciples rebuked the parents and said, in so many words, "He's tired. He's weary. Don't bother Him." But immediately, in spite of the exhaustion of His terrible schedule because He walked so many miles during a day, He said to His disciples, "Don't do that. Let these children come unto Me, for such is the Kingdom of God."

The heartbeat of God would not turn away a child. When that child wanted to be in the arms of Jesus, He would always let the child come into His arms.

In Luke 7:38-50, when the woman came to Simon the Pharisee's home and began to wash Jesus' feet with her tears and wipe His feet with her hair, Simon thought to himself, "She is a

common sinner, and if Jesus were a prophet, He would discern it and would rebuke her." But the heartbeat of Jesus Christ was not to condemn her. His heartbeat was to forgive her, to lift her up, to save her, to make a lady out of her. He wanted to help her become something other than a woman of the street. His heartbeat was to help her become a woman of God, and so He did.

Before she left that house, Jesus repudiated the condemnation of Simon and looked at this woman as if she were a queen. And He said, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

That is the very heartbeat of Christ.

When a religious and intellectual Pharisee named Nicodemus came to see Him, the heartbeat of Jesus did not turn him away. He was concerned for Nicodemus, who was also a teacher and who expressed a desire to know Him. Jesus wasn't about to condemn this Pharisee who was against Him because of ignorance. Nicodemus was born-again because he received the Savior. The heartbeat of Christ wanted to save this intellectual religious man who was simply on the wrong track, and He did.

In Luke 19, when Zacchaeus was up in the tree, he was just a crooked publican, a tax collector. The streets were crowded, so he got up in the tree to get a look at what was going on. Well, the Lord Jesus Christ was not about to just go by when somebody was interested—somebody guilty, someone burdened down with sin, somebody who was trying to find out what He was like.

So Jesus stopped, and the multitude stopped. He looked up, and He said, "Zacchaeus, hurry up and come down." Shocked, surprised, and astonished, Zacchaeus was told to come down by the Master who was seeking a little man in a little tree. And the Master said, "I want to go to your house to eat."

Jesus wasn't supposed to do that. He wasn't supposed to eat with a sinner—a cheap person who was renounced by the social strata of His day. But Jesus went on house-to-house visitation and had dinner with a crook.

When Jesus got to the house, He looked into the eyes of that crook and He said, "Do you know that salvation has come to your house today?" The revelation of the Master in his pres-

ence began to flood Zacchaeus with grace and mercy and he knew that he was saved, because Jesus Christ had a heartbeat for crooked publicans.

Then, there was the woman caught in the very act of adultery (John 8). She felt so guilty and condemned. The Pharisees caught her in the act and brought her to Jesus. Oh, how easy it would have been to be angry. How easy it would have been to say, "Stone her. She's filthy. She's unclean." How easy it would have been to embarrass her with a sarcastic remark.

That would have been easy for One who was so holy, so perfect, so just—for the Master who never did sin, who never could touch sin, who could not even look upon sin (Habakkuk 1:13). He couldn't behold sin; He hated it (Isaiah 43, Psalm 45:7). But the Master did not reject her, because He had a heartbeat, and that heartbeat said, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more."

The heartbeat of Christ was not to condemn but to forgive, because in John 3:17, He came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. The heartbeat of Jesus was to save her. The heartbeat of Jesus was to forgive her. And the heartbeat of

Jesus was to deliver her from the terrible, sarcastic, embarrassing tactics of her accusers. The heartbeat of Jesus was to set her free.

Chapter Three

PEOPLE JUST NEED TO BE LOVED WITH GOD'S LOVE

"For the Love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

I am convinced that when the heartbeat of God is moving in us, the constraint of love will enable all the beauty of the vision of God to motivate us to get the message out to a lost world. Our message will go out to help those who are weak and suffering, those who are hungry and starving, and those who are lonely and suffering from guilt and condemnation and all the terrible results of sin in a mixed-up world system. I'm convinced that when we have the heartbeat of God, we will have that vision.

I remember hearing a missionary to Calcutta, India, saying, "Of all the suffering in the world of pain and starvation and leprosy, there is something worse. People who are not loved—they are in the worst state."

She said, "I've seen all the privation and starvation and poverty and all the sickness and all the terrible things that disease and sickness can do. But one thing is worse: that is, somebody who has no one to love them."

When you have the heartbeat of Christ, you have a way of knowing who those people are. You have a way of being led to them. You have a way of knowing what to say. You have a way of being the revelation of Jesus Christ in the person of your humanity, with the very cause of His own divinity manifesting and effectively working out His compassion toward them. You have a way of being the one available to the Lord Jesus to find those who have no one to love them.

We don't need more money and we do not need bigger and better churches. We do not need better teachers. We do not need better books. We do not need more entertainment. We do not need more services. But we do need the heartbeat of Jesus Christ.

When the Lord Jesus was suffering on the Cross, the Just for the unjust, and said, "Father, forgive them," all I can think of is this:

There was One who loved beyond sin.
There was One who loved beyond failure.
There was One who loved beyond pain.
There was One who loved beyond duty.
There was One who loved because of love.
And how can you explain it?
It's the heartbeat of Jesus Christ.

The greatest moments of my life as a Christian have to do with the way God is helping me to grow into the heartbeat of Christ. The greatest moments for some of you have to do with growing into the reality and the truth of His heartbeat. I have watched many beautiful people let the Word of God so touch them that they begin to understand God's heartbeat.

We do not have a lot of time left. Young married couples should be touched by the Word of God. Some of you who put other things ahead of the Word of God should let Him touch you. Some of you that have become cold, you should rush to the altar to get warm and to stay on fire through the Holy Spirit with the heartbeat of

Jesus.

Let Christ Live Through You

The way to discover Christ is to discover the needs of people. Once you have found Him as your Savior, once you have received Him and He is living inside of you, once you trust Him and read His Word and pray and fellowship with Him, you begin to have His heartbeat. Then, the way to discover Christ in reality is to give what you've got—which is Christ in you—to others.

That is the way to discover Christ.

When they had presumed against him, Job prayed for his friends (Job 42:10), and God gave him twice as much as he had before his trials. He discovered something by praying for others.

In the seventh chapter of Acts, when Stephen was being stoned to death for preaching the Gospel, he looked up into heaven and saw the glory of God. He saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God the Father. Then he said, "Father, lay not this sin to their charge." Stephen definitely had the heartbeat of God.

Once you have received Him as your own through salvation and once you begin to study His Word, the way to discover Christ is to be

concerned for others.

The way to experience Christ is to experience His vision. The way to discover Christ is to enter into His very compassion, to enter into His very purpose for coming. Learn to seek the lost and love the weak and help the sick. The way to discover reality is to enter into reality. The way to discover life is to enter into His life for others to share it and to lay it down. Lay it down so that it's a matter of giving Christ's life out through the death of the Cross in your old life, so you can discover the reality that is the life-giving, beautiful compassion of His life.

I do not know how much longer we'll be here on earth. In everything we do, we have the privilege of having the heartbeat of God. Every type of person in our congregation can have it. You do not need an above average intellect to have it. You cannot buy it with money. You do not have to be popular to have it. You do not have to dress well to have it. We can have God's heartbeat when we come to the Lord Jesus and receive it, moment by moment, through the Cross, through the Word, seeing the needs of other people.

CONCLUSION

Oh, the heartbeat of God in the ministry of compassion! May we have the heartbeat of God that is willing to share Him in the various possibilities of life. Oh, that God would raise up not just a handful, but that God would raise up men and women and teenagers and young people who would burn with God's heartbeat, believers who would be constrained by love, believers who would be dedicated to the task of the Great Commission, in its balance and in its completeness.

Oh, for Christians who would pray, *Lord Jesus, here I am. I have Your heartbeat. I will go. The insignificant job, I'll help in doing. I want to be a helper, and I'll lay down my life for the Body and for the leaders. Lord, I'm available. I've got Your heartbeat. It's the only reason I'm here.*

The only reason I'm here, Lord Jesus, is for Your heart to beat in me, for Your compassion to be ministered to and through me. The only reason I am here

is to be an instrument of Your love, a method of Your manifestation, a vehicle of Your righteousness. The only reason I am here is to be a home for Your indwelling Spirit, to be the light bulb for Your indwelling power. The only reason I'm here, Lord Jesus, is simply to manifest who You are.

Lord Jesus, may Your heart beat through me today. In Your precious name, Amen.

The Highest Authority

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The word "authority" conjures many images in people's minds. It is something many feel a great need to question and challenge. Ultimately, perceptions of authority are colored by experiences—both bad and good.

Few things have done more damage to the perception of bona fide authority than the abuse of power by those in positions of authority. Families, churches, and governments have been crushed by it, as it leaves behind broken hearts and lives.

As this booklet will show, there is an authority beyond all human authority. It is God and His righteousness. When His Kingdom is first in our lives, we gain the proper perspective of life and the ability to make real commitments that last, even in the face of adversity.

Chapter One

WHAT DO I PUT FIRST?

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:33-34).

"Seek ye first…." Consider what the Lord Jesus Christ was saying when He made this simple yet profound statement. "There are many things you could seek, but I am asking you to seek My Kingdom *first*."

I may have a very real need—and I must be responsible to make myself available to God's provision, whatever it may be. Still, I am to seek His Kingdom first. All kinds of conflicts may come, but instead of keeping my mind on those conflicts, I seek first the Kingdom of God.

That little word "first" makes all the differ-

ence. The Kingdom, or the government, of God—the supreme authority of the triune Godhead represented in the written and Living Word—is to be first. I must seek first the Kingdom "*and* His righteousness." It wouldn't be of much value for me to seek the Kingdom and not seek *His* righteousness—the righteousness that is not my own, that is not based on my own capacity for goodness.

The Problem of Compromise

This morning I awoke with a tremendous burden for the lost. To me, there isn't anything more satisfying than to go out on purpose with other believers to seek and to save lost souls. That is what we do every weekend here at our church. We plan to go out and seek the lost, because it is part of seeking His Kingdom first.

Sadly, certain Christian publications have released studies declaring that hell is not an effective topic to be preached in most pulpits these days. Preaching is being tailored to appeal to people. Compromises are made in order to boost attendance. Surveys are conducted. "What kind of church would you go to?" unsaved people are asked. The remarks and results of these conversations are accumulated and these churches sim-

ply accommodate what these people tell them.

This approach, however, is not one of seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

God made a promise that if we seek His Kingdom first, He will add unto us the things that we need (see Matthew 6:25-34). In seeking first the Kingdom of God, the gifts of righteousness, eternal life, and grace are already ours. Then, He will add other things—things we have wanted all of our lives. He will even add things that perhaps we didn't think were right for us. God is making a contract between Him and us.

We don't have to go around being worried about how something will get taken care of. Seek first the Kingdom. In whatever area this pertains to us, we seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness. The righteousness of the entire Kingdom is given as a free gift so that people can receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness as we reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two

ENJOYING GOD'S ADDITIONS

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

"That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

"Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

God has given me such a hunger to pray, to seek, and to lead lost souls to Christ. It is such an intense hunger, and *He* has to relieve it. Only the Lord can save people, and only He can satisfy my desire to see them saved.

Real Authority Reigns

God has made soul winning so enjoyable for me. It doesn't require seeing people accept

Christ to make it fun. When I am "in the way," going from house to house, I make so many quick friends, because I am able to introduce them to Someone who can meet their needs. The old sin nature may tell them that they have a need and suggest another way to satisfy it, but the Holy Spirit witnesses to their hearts that what I am telling them is right and that He will fulfill all their needs.

We have a witness who testifies of the truth. Our witness is the Holy Spirit. Once, while visiting door to door in the inner city, we came upon a large man who had his music turned way up loud. Yet, the moment the Gospel was mentioned to him, he went over and turned off the radio.

"You won't have any problem leading me to Christ," he said. "I have had a desperate need for what you're sharing with me today. I have put it off again and again. I have lived in every kind of sin, and I have never been happy with my life."

Gloriously, this man was led humbly to the Lord.

By sight, everything about that kind of situation could forecast another outcome. The music was blasting. The man had a terrifying appear-

ance. Yet, one word of the Gospel set things in motion. He went over on his own and turned off the distracting music. And then, he said, "I have delayed accepting Christ. I am convinced God sent you to me, and I am very grateful. Just lead me to Christ. There is no sense in your saying any more."

This is what happens when we seek His Kingdom first.

Righteousness Imparted through Us

When we seek the Kingdom of God first, He imparts His righteousness to us. What's more, He keeps giving us His righteousness so that we may experience it in our personal existence, in our personal conviction. We experience His righteousness and come to know that we are the objects of His righteousness imparted.

We never know how God is going to add to us. Once we seek the Kingdom of God with an attitude of faith-rest, get ready! We must realize that Jesus Christ is going to add to us.

The Lord has added so much to our ministry. He has added a Bible college and Christian day schools for our children. He has added so many friends to our lives. He just keeps adding and adding more blessings, and we thank Him for

all that He sends our way.

Chapter Three

AN AUTHORITY THAT NEVER FAILS

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:2-3).

"Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

"And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (2 Corinthians 8:4-5).

God multiplies grace and peace through the doctrine of Jesus Christ. As He does this, a

Christian gives himself first to God, then unto the body of believers where God has called him God's authority is supreme.

Aperson in delegated authority may fail and disappoint a believer, but there is always the next level of authority. A husband may fail his wife, and she may find out about it. He was the delegated authority in their home, but there is another level of authority—God Himself.

The Principle of Supreme Authority

All authority has it source in God. His is the supreme and most magnificent authority we could ever have. He will never fail us. He will not let us down. So when delegated authority lets us down, we should not get discouraged, withdraw, or quit. There is always another level of authority on this earth. Physically speaking, God will bring someone into our lives to take care of delegated authority. God always has another level.

This is a necessary principle for us to understand. It would be so easy to place blame and say, "That person ruined my life. I will never be the same. I can't trust anyone anymore." That attitude dismisses the whole principle of the authority of doctrine—the governance of the Word

of God in our lives. Doctrine doesn't stop governing us when a person fails. Instead, it ushers in a better level of authority that is sure and uncompromising.

Commit to Commitment

A commitment is like a guarantee. It is the basis for accountability in a relationship. The provision of a commitment must be made long before we need it. A good example is that of someone who is not married and not even dating. He can make a commitment to God at a young age that when he does marry, he will be committed to his spouse regardless of what happens in their relationship. He makes his commitment long before he meets the woman he will marry. In making that commitment, he is making sure that he won't have to deal with questions about his position when a situation comes up. The issue of faithfulness is settled before the commitment is challenged.

Our relationships with each other are based upon our relationship to the highest authority, which is God. When my relationship to God is right, I will have a good attitude toward people. It won't matter if they agree or disagree with me. My attitude toward them stays the same.

Maybe I have been in their shoes and maybe I haven't; however, my whole attitude to others is different because I have a right relationship with God, who is the highest authority.

CONCLUSION

Whatever we face in life, it all comes down to seeking first the Kingdom of God. By letting the authority of God and the rule of doctrine have preeminence in our lives, we develop the proper perspective for life. This perspective will govern our commitments and even our disagreements.

If we find at some point that we disagree, we do not gossip about it. Instead of maligning and hurting people behind their backs in the midst of disagreement, we can submit to one another in brotherly love (Ephesians 4:32 and 5:21). Our love may become much stronger because these are the times when Calvary must come in between us.

As Christians, God's righteousness has been given to each of us. This is the ultimate authority. Regardless of what we do, this righteousness must be the source of our identity. Understanding this enables us to face every situation in the

light of Truth.

The Hindering Strategy of Satan

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Since his unsuccessful rebellion against God (Isaiah 14:12-15), Satan has continually sought to inhibit God's plan. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent beguiled Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which ended the dispensation of innocence. Genesis 6:2 refers to "sons of God," or angelic beings, taking human wives in a strategy to nullify the purity of the human seed. It was an attack designed to prevent Jesus from being born a man to die for all men. Thus, His sacrifice would have been an unacceptable sin-offering.

In Numbers 14:6-10, the nation of Israel was successfully hindered by fear and did not proceed to the Promised Land. In Matthew 2, Herod had all children under the age of two killed, in his plan to do away with Jesus. And when Jesus was in the wilderness, Satan tempted Him in an attempt to get Him to operate outside of the will of the Father.

Today, Satan similarly tries to hinder Christians from progressing in God's plan for their lives. This booklet is written to help Christians understand the hindering process of Satan's intricate battle plan against God and His people.

Chapter One
DEVICES AND WILES

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).

"Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Galatians 5:7).

Satan has specific strategies designed to hinder Christians from doing God's work. These hindering spirits attempt to keep the believer from praying and from studying the Word. The devil despises the premise of Christ and the effect it has in a person's life. He will stop at nothing to interfere with the ministry of the Church.

An examination of two Greek words provides a picture of Satan's purpose in hindering the children of God. Anakoptois is translated "hinder" in Galatians 5:7. Here, the prefix ana, which signifies repetition, is combined with

kopto—to cut; to impede. Incorporating the literal Greek meaning, Galatians 5:7 could be read this way: "Who has been breaking up the road you were traveling so well and who has stopped you from advancing?" The devil likes to stop the Christian in his tracks, creating an attitude of uncertainty about the path in which God is leading. Thus, Satan's intent is clear; not only does he seek to stop the progress of believers, but he also aims to impede their relationship and fellowship with God.

Strains and Pressures

Mental strain is one device that Satan often uses to accomplish his purposes. Through demonic atmospheric projections and pressures, the devil induces believers to toil in their thoughts. Those who permit this kind of attack to affect them are characterized by unexplained tiredness and a lack of emotional control. Details cause tension. This person often complains about being overworked. Satan's attack has him paralyzed, and he cannot move ahead in God's plan for his life.

In the midst of a busy schedule, a believer may receive projections of weariness. This is not to say that Christians never need rest. However,

there are times when Satan will arrange details and deterrents in order to drain a person's energy. If he is not aware of the continual atmospheric warfare between the forces of heaven and hell, the believer under this type of attack grows dull and lethargic. He is not sharp and may even feel too drained to pray or to study.

Another demonic technique is designed to form an attitude of frivolity and carelessness. A believer affected by this type of attack generally displays contempt for discipline and leadership. This may be reflected in poor work habits or in a failure to meet financial obligations. Wrong decisions on his part have permitted hindering spirits to influence him into a lackadaisical disposition.

Other satanic tactics are aimed at hindering believers through anxiety, nervousness, and materialism. As varied and different as they may appear, Satan's "wiles" or methodeia (carefully planned attacks) in Ephesians 6:11 basically are rooted in his principle purpose to distract Christians from concentration upon God and upon His Word.

Chapter Two
ACKNOWLEDGE THE LORD

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

"Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil" (Proverbs 3:6-7).

What will remedy and remove satanic hindrances? Only a re-focus of the attention upon Christ can bring release to the Christian caught in any device Satan has put before him. Hebrews 12:2a explains that Christ alone should be the focus of the believer's attention: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

The word that must be understood in Proverbs 3 is the word "depart." It is translated from the Hebrew cuwr, which literally is defined as "to turn off." Herein lies the key to battling satanic hindrances. The believer who will consistently acknowledge the Lord and allow Him to order his steps renders evil powerless against His spiritual capacity. This believer may experi-

ence afflictions as Job did. And though there will be persecution (John 15:20), he will remain peaceful.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way" (Psalm 37:23).

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

The problem for some believers is that they simply do not acknowledge God. The Lord will not violate a person's free volition. Yada is the Hebrew word for "acknowledge." In the context of Proverbs 3:6-7, yada refers to someone who chooses to recognize and follow the omniscient wisdom of God above his own limited knowledge. Christians who do not do this become frustrated by their incapacity to apply the Word of God in their lives.

Martha had this problem in Luke 10:40. Her intentions were good, but she did not acknowledge the Lord at that moment. Hence, she grew irritated and reacted by complaining to Jesus. But Mary remained calm, as her attention was on the Master.

"And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

"But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone, bid her therefore that she help me" (Luke 10:39-40).

The believer who exercises his mind in the Word of God gradually acquires a divine, eternal perspective on life. The temporal details are not a source of worry for him as he puts on the mind of Christ in every situation (1 Corinthians 2:16).

About God's Business

It must be understood that there is a great difference between being busy for God and being about the Father's business (Luke 2:49). Mary was about God's business. Meanwhile, Martha was "cumbered about" or fenced in by her emotions. She allowed seemingly important duties to weigh heavily on her mind, and thus, she was hindered from receiving the Word of God. Romans 8:8 explains, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Many people do good things in the name of Christ, but they are hindered in the process of maturity and fruitfulness because they have not recognized Him as the author and finisher of their faith.

"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

Demonic spirits continually try to disturb the Christian's occupation with the Lord. Jesus was not exempt from these types of projections. During his forty-day fast described in Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus was approached by the devil. Three times, it is recorded that Satan tempted Jesus to do something outside of the Father's plan. What was the Lord's response? He counterattacked with the Word of God.

Jesus would not receive the temptations, saying, "Get thee hence, Satan" (Matthew 4:11). His heart was fixed upon doing the Father's will. Many hindrances can be overcome by simply standing fast in the faith according to 1 Corinthians 16:13. This faith, of course, must be founded upon the Word. Like Christ, believers do not have to receive demonic interruptions. When a wearying mood or tired spirit tries to hinder prayer or study, the answer is concentration on Bible doctrine. This counteraction produces energy and life.

"This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy

word hath quickened me" (Psalm 119:50).

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

Chapter Three

THE POWER OF TRUTH

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10).

The above verse instructs Christians to hear and study the Word in this way: "Line upon line, line upon line; precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little." In doing this, the believer stores God's thoughts in his memory center so that they can be recalled in times of need by the Holy Spirit. What a provision this is for the child of God! Even the most difficult situation cannot hinder the Christian whose mind is stayed upon Christ. This type of believer is relaxed and at rest under pressure. Beyond that, he always seems refreshed and full of energy.

Why?

He appropriates the mind of Christ (Colossians 3:16). This believer's thoughts are "line upon line" and "here a little, there a little." He

reflects upon the myriad of God's promises. Continually, he asks himself this question: "What am I occupied with at this moment? Christ or my circumstances?"

Overactivity of the mind exhausts and frustrates a person's capacity to proceed in his walk with God. The best thing a Christian can do in the midst of details and pressures is "wait upon the Lord" (Isaiah 40:31).

Qavah is the Hebrew word for "wait" in Isaiah 40. Qavah does not speak of a passive submission to circumstances. Instead, it refers to "patient expectancy." Christians who experience the truth of this verse place confidence in the promise of His return and ultimate victory (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3). These believers are secure in their union with Christ. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ" (1 Corinthians 6:15).

Full Joy

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

There are Christians who accept it as normal when they are crushed spiritually by situations and details. Their joy is not full because they

have not esteemed God's precepts.

The church at Corinth was among the most gifted of the New Testament churches, but divisions, immorality, and confusion over key doctrines such as the resurrection prevented it from effectively revealing the life of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15). The Corinthians were far from experiencing the joy the Lord had intended for them. Paul exposed the root of their troubles in 1 Corinthians 2:5, explaining "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Believers must be mindful of the provision they have of being in Christ. His victory is theirs as well. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Satan hinders Christians in an attempt to keep them from manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, for this expression spoils the devil's strategies.

Some Christians become trapped in a progression of trying to "die to themselves." In other words, they desire to die to their selfish desires and natural preferences, but they go about it in the wrong way. They struggle with emotions and weaknesses in an attempt to produce godliness.

But this is something that cannot be produced by men. Colossians 3:3 states that the believer is "dead and his life is hid with Christ in God." He does not need to be concerned with how to die to self; rather, he needs only to recognize the fact that he is already dead and that he now has Christ's life.

The death of the old sin nature is a positional reality because of Christ's accomplishment on Calvary. It becomes a part of a believer's daily experience as he abides in Christ and makes continual positive decisions to receive the Word of God. Paul dealt with this in his letter to the Galatian church. "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3). In John 15:4, Christ's command was simply this: "Abide in me." Our part is to rest in Christ and allow the plan of God to make our positional crucifixion experiential.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

CONCLUSION

"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" (Colossians 1:29).

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16).

The Christian who focuses on Christ will not be hindered. As he considers the power of the Lord at work in his soul, he begins to labor and move forward in the plan of God. Daily, the refreshment of the Word energizes him for service.

He is not relying on his limited resources, but casts all of his cares upon the Lord (1 Peter 5:7). Thus, he experiences victory and peace as he operates in the domain of Satan, who is the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), and "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The believer must rejoice in his redemption and recognize that Christ's power protects him from the attacks of the enemy. Thus, his life ma-

tures into a confident, productive expression of God's grace.

The Impact

of the

Unborn

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FOREWORD

On January 22, 1973, with the stroke of his pen, signing the majority opinion of the Supreme Court of the United States, Mr. Justice Blackmun ended criminal penalties for abortion.

In the case of *Roe v. Wade*,* Justice Blackmun declared that it was unconstitutional for any attempt by a governmental authority to restrict a woman's ability to obtain an abortion. Prior to January 22, 1973, the governments of every state, as well as the federal government, had laws protecting the sanctity of life in the womb. Tragically, with the advent of this decision, infanticide of the unborn became legal in the United States.

In the wake of *Roe v. Wad*e, the federal government, and particularly Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, resisted efforts to legitimize abortions at federal military facilities throughout the United States and overseas. However, on January 22, 1993—20 years to the

*410 U.S. 113, 93 S. Ct. 705, 35 L. Ed. 2d 147 (1973)

day after the Supreme Court announced its decision in *Roe v. Wade*—William J. Clinton, in his first official act as president of the United States, signed an administrative order that amounted to a death warrant for all unborn children whose mothers desired to abort them and could now do so with private funds at federal military institutions. With the stroke of his pen, President Clinton furthered the dastardly work launched by the Supreme Court almost a generation before. Meanwhile, in the United States alone, more than 30 million viable human beings had been murdered in their mother's wombs.

Early in 1996, Congress was confronted with facts and testimony regarding a particular type of abortion where the head of a viable child (one capable of surving outside the womb) is held inside the mother's womb by a physician. The child is then subjected to an unbelievably cruel, ugly, inhumane, and murderous procedure. The physician ends the life of the child prior to delivery so that neither he nor the mother can be charged with the murder of a living human being.

This procedure, known as partial- birth abortion, was investigated by Congress. In the summer of 1996, both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed legislation prohibit-

ing this gruesome and immoral procedure. Public opinion polls showed that nearly 80 percent of American's opposed partial- birth abortions and supported the ban.

When the legislation landed on President Clinton's desk to be signed into law, the president, bowing to pressure from the interests that support prenatal infanticide, vetoed this popular and morally appropriate pro-life legislation.

After an impassioned plea for the unborn by Rep. Henry J. Hyde, a Roman Catholic Republican from Illinois, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly voted to override President Clinton's veto. A few days later, however, conservative forces in the more liberal Senate failed to obtain the 67 votes needed to override. Regrettably, the president's veto was sustained.

In the United States, it is now legal to murder a child in the mother's womb, even though that child is capable of living outside the womb. The fact that the child is held within the womb when the act is perpetrated is the *only* thing protecting the physician and the mother from criminal penalties for murder.

Michael E. Marr
Attorney at Law

INTRODUCTION

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

America is in critical condition. She is reaping tragic consequences from the plague of liberalism. Unborn children, the most innocent among us, are the real victims of this plague. More than 35 million have had their lives terminated since 1973, when the U.S. Supreme Court, with its *Roe v. Wade* decision, determined that it is a woman's right to have an abortion.

Liberal politicians and abortion-rights supporters talk of keeping abortion "safe, legal, and rare." The fact is that in the state of Maryland, where our church is located, more than 50 percent of those receiving abortions have had more than one. Abortion may be legal, but it is hardly rare. If a memorial similar to the Vietnam

Memorial were constructed and engraved with-the names of all the babies aborted since 1973, it would have to be as tall as the Washington Monument and a half-mile long.

Parental consent is required for minors to attend certain movies, yet in many states a young girl can get an abortion without notifying her mother and father.

Consider this: The federal fine for killing a bald eagle in the United States is $25,000. Any harm done to the nest or the eggs of a bald eagle brings a $12,000 fine. Yet, it is all right, the government says, to kill a baby in the woman's womb. In South Carolina recently, a farm owner was denied the right to sell a large portion of his property because it was deemed vital to the protection of the habitat of a rare frog on the list of endangered species.

Sadly, unborn children enjoy no such protections.

Even more tragic, there are men who claim to know the Word of God—men esteemed among the top theological scholars—whose teachings and books provide a rationale for abortion. I have studied their positions and I am convinced more than ever that they are apostate in this area of doctrine.

These pages will examine the biblical viewpoint of the beginning of life and the impact of the unborn.

Chapter One

THE ORIGIN OF THE SOUL

"And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:2).

When I hear a doctrine that I already know, I need to understand its fresh application for today. Jesus Christ must increase. I must decrease. If I receive the Word without decreasing, then I have academic possibilities without spiritual reality.

This happens frequently to pastors. They interrupt and try to explain a subject before the other person is finished speaking. They have entered into their field of knowledge, but not into brokeness in the field of reality. They have entered into familiarity, the plague of the New Testament Church.

As we study the truth about the unborn, we must begin by seeing that we know nothing as we ought to know it. My hope is that you will

come to a conclusion resulting in a conviction based upon the absolute truth of a doctrine relevant to our society.

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7).

Certain theologians have taken the position that God creates a new soul every time a baby is born and that God breathes a living soul into a baby *when* it comes out of the womb. According to Charles Hodge in his *Systematic Theology*, God creates the soul and immediately unites it with the body. The soul comes from God, and the body comes from earthly parents. Since the nature of the soul is immaterial, it cannot be transmitted by natural generation.[1] This viewpoint in theological terms is known as creationism. If it were true, then we would have to conclude that abortion is not wrong, because according to their rationale, the fetus does not have a soul until it is born. But if they are wrong (and they are), then abortion is murder.

Many of these theologians use Hebrew and Greek texts to complement their views. Theologically, they are brilliant in their academic explanations, but, they are wrong. These men are

excellent in explaining other doctrines, but they have left the spiritual application of truth regarding the origin of the soul. Even Jehovah's Witnesses display a logical brilliance in dissecting the Word of God. Yet, they do not know Jesus Christ. They are wrong and they are of the devil.

The Completion of Creation

God's creation was finished after six days. He does *not* create a new soul every time a baby is born. His work is finished, including the creation of the universe and the creation of souls. However, many theologians say that the only thing in the womb before birth is the soul's format, or "motility reflex"—mere muscular activity distinct from human life.

The Bible teaches that the spirit and the soul are united with the baby at the point of conception. "As you know not what is the way of the wind or how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a pregnant woman, even so you know not the work of God who does all" (Ecclesiastes 11:5, Amplified Translation).

Since the time of Adam and Eve, we have natural generation. With each conception, a mystery of formation begins. Even as tiny

hands, legs, and ears are mystically formed, so the soul is mystically formed in the womb. It is real human life in a real human soul connected to a real human body.

1. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 2:70.

Chapter Two

DIVINE VIABILITY AND ETERNAL DESTINY

The abortion-rights crowd argues that the unborn child is not viable—not capable of surviving outside of the mother's womb until the 26th week of development. This speaks of *human viability*.

Before human viability, there is *divine viability*, referring to God's thoughts about us before the foundation of the world. Long before human conception, we were conceived in the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent plan of God. This viewpoint is correct in every phase of human development—academically, biologically, physiologically, realistically, and spiritually.

Speaking to the prophet Jeremiah, God said, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5).

Can I abort what God knew before human

conception? Did God *only* foreknow motility reflex, muscular activity with no essence of human life? I don't think so. It would have been very sad if Jeremiah had been aborted. He had divine viability in a prenatal plan. He had an eternal destiny that was personal, and so does every believer. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). The One who knows all things formed you and me before we were born.

Made in Secret, Curiously Wrought

The soul is united to the little body in the mother's womb at the time of conception. It is a work of God, and the formation of this life is a mystery.[1]

This is divine viability. The conception of a baby in the mother's womb is part of God's prenatal plan, according to Psalm 139:13-16:

"For You did form my inward parts, You did knit me together in my mother's womb. I will confess and praise you, for You are fearfully wonderful, and for the awful wonder of my birth! Wonderful are Your works, and that my inner self knows right well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was being formed in

secret and intricately an curiously wrought (as if embroidered with various colors) in the depths of the earth [a region of darkness and mystery]. Your eyes saw my unformed substance, and in Your book all the days of my life were written, before ever they took shape, when as yet there was none of them" (Amplified Translation).

Every individual has an eternal destiny through the eternal purpose of God's sovereign plan. Before I was conceived, God saw all of "my unformed substance" (Psalm 139:16, Amplified), which is translated from one Hebrew word *golem*., Albert Barnes, in his commentary on the Psalms, says this word "occurs only in this place, though the verb—*galam*—is found in 2 Kings 2:8, where it is used in reference to the mantle of Elijah: 'And Elijah took his mantle and *wrapped it together*.' That is, he rolled it up, or he folded it. The noun, then, means that which is rolled or wrapped together."[2] Barnes goes on to say that "the embryo, or the fetus, where all the members of the body are as yet folded up, [is] undeveloped" in the eyes of men, but these members are clearly known and developed according to God's foreknowledge.[3]

The King James translates Psalm 139:16*b*, "All *my members* were written…." The original

language does not say "my members," but "the days that were ordained for me."[4] All my days, all the periods of time in my life, were written in God's book before I was even born. As I was being shaped in my mother's womb, the days of my life were determined; the whole matter was settled, not by anything that can be seen in the embryo, but before it was formed.

"Made" in Psalm 139:15 is *asah* in the Hebrew text, and *morphoo* in the Greek. These words mean *inward* and *real*. What God forms is inward and real; it isn't just muscle tissue jumping around in the mother's womb with its motility reflex. The life in each little baby's body is inward and it is real. It is mystically growing and maturing, according the plan of God. The veins, the muscles, the nerves, everything in the miracle of the human fabric, is alive and growing, as much as it ever will be — it just hasn't been exposed to the real world yet.

Destined for Glory

Charles Spurgeon, the great English preacher from the 1800s, said that God was so "intimately acquainted" with him before his birth that God knew every tear he would shed, every step he would take, and every problem that Spurgeon

would encounter.[5] God had a perfect provision for Spurgeon's life before he ever became a pastor. This is all a part of God's prenatal plan. Our bodily members were fashioned by God before they were formed or shaped physically in the womb.

These thoughts bring Romans 4:17 to mind: "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."

Isaac may have been born when Abraham was 100 years old, but God knew Isaac even before Abraham was born. The Lord had a plan, a purpose, and a name picked out for Isaac before the foundation of the world. "And God said [to Abraham], Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my convenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him" (Genesis 17:19). Knowing this, Abraham could trust God to bring Isaac into the world, as long as Sarah did not murder him in the womb. Would *you* abort a baby, in light of the knowledge of God's thoughts and plans concerning the unborn?

1. Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, (Nashville, Abingdon, 1826), 3:834.

2. Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes; Notes on the Old Testament*, vol. 3, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 296.

3. Ibid.

4. Frank Charles Thompson, ed., *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible* (Indianapolis, B.B. Kirkbride Bible Co., Inc., 1983), 604, margin.

5. Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* , (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1984), 3:263.

Chapter Three

WHOSE LIFE IS IT?

God sees His Church as perfect in her heavenly position. She is being fashioned, but she is not yet glorified. God sees every believer in the same way. Would God want to abort us knowing that we will someday be glorified? No! Everything about us is written in a book before we are born. God transmits the miracle of human life when the sperm from the man unites with the egg of the woman. From that point, the Lord is committed to perfecting that which concerns us (Psalm 138:8). He finishes what He starts (Philippians 1:6), and whatsoever He does, He does forever (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

The mother is not the *source* of a baby's life. She is the *instrument* for God's life in the baby. Because of this, the mother has no right to kill what belongs to God and comes from Him. The soul belongs to God, and the body and soul are fashioned in the mother's womb through the

miracle of God's transmission. She is not the cause of life.

Before he was born, John the Baptist had life in the womb of Elisabeth. It wasn't just motility reflex. John the Baptist responded to the presence of Jesus Christ in the womb of Mary: "And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy [Spirit]" (Luke 1:39-41).

The Progression of Life

Within 17 days, the unborn child has developed blood cells. By the 18th day, pulsation of muscular tissue begins. The nervous and digestive systems are established by the 24th day after conception. The spinal column is formed by the 25th day. Within 26 days, the arms and the legs begin to appear. At the end of 30 days, the unborn child has the appearance of a tiny human being.

In the second month, the baby responds to touch and can feel pain. By the 40th day, brain waves can be detected.

In the third month, the child measures approximately two inches and weighs about an ounce. Yet, the baby has facial expressions, and can exercise each limb independently. There are fingerprints, fingernails, and toenails; the baby's genitals are clearly distinguishable; he has periods of sleep and wakefulness. The respiratory system is functioning. The baby can distinguish between sweet and sour and many suck their thumbs.

The baby begins to grow at an incredible rate in the fourth month. By the end of this month, the unborn child weighs around one-half pound and measures eight to 10 inches. Hair, eyebrows and eyelashes begin to grow.

By the fifth month, movements can be felt in the womb. The baby is able to recognize the sound of his mother's voice. Most babies born at this premature stage survive with proper care. Yet, many unborn children are killed *after* this point, without calling it what it is—murder.

Perhaps the most diabolical procedure is partial-birth abortion. In these cases—many of which are performed in late second-trimester and third- trimester of a woman's pregnancy—only the baby's head remains in the womb. The body of the child is manipulated with forceps to

deliver the entire body into the birth canal, except for the head. A puncture is then made at the base of the baby's skull and the brain is extracted, causing death.

Reasons to Kill?

According to a March 31, 1989 article by Ethan Bronner in *The Boston Globe*, the majority of abortions—*including* partial-birth abortions—are sought for social and not for health reasons. The article was based on the findings of the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of Planned Parenthood—one of the nation's oldest and largest pro-abortion organizations. The study showed that women almost never abort babies to protect themselves.

Women who have abortions do so mostly because they are concerned about how having a baby could change their lives, because they think they cannot afford to have the baby, and because they are not ready for the responsibility.

Exodus 20:13 gives the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." The Hebrew word for "kill," *ratsach*, speaks of premeditated murder. We are commanded not to murder, yet the Word of God gives three reasons for killing. First, we may kill to protect our freedom, our property,

and our personal rights. There is a time for war, if it is for the right cause (Deuteronomy 7:1-2; Ecclesiastes 3:3, 8; Mark 13:7). Our nation would not be here today if soldiers hadn't gone to war to protect our freedom. Secondly, killing is allowed for self-defense (2 Samuel 21:17), and, thirdly, for capital punishment (Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:4).

A Child is a Child

Brephos is the Greek word used to refer to "an unborn child, embryo (Luke 1:41, 44)"[1] and "a new-born, an infant"[2] or young child, up to two years of age (Luke 18:15; Acts 7:19; 2 Timothy 3:15). You were as much alive at conception as you were at age two.

The unborn have a destiny. Psalm 102:18 says, "This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD." God wants these people to be born; He wants them to be saved and to praise Him.

Paul was chosen and set apart by God before he was born (Galatians 1:15). Samson was also set apart before his birth, and so were you. God's wisdom is unsearchable. Our lives were purposed, planned, and settled billions of years

ago. Therefore, the issues of death belong to the Lord, not to the mother, or the Supreme Court (Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6; Psalm 68:20).

Perhaps you are thinking, "Pastor, why are you giving us all this information?" It's because I want you to have a precise conviction concerning the Bible's viewpoint of murder.. I am communicating these truths thoroughly because I have seen former students and teachers turn away from truth. They use rationalizations to condone abortion, when God clearly views it as murder. They have compromised their convictions in order to be academically accepted.

1. Joseph Henry Thayer, *The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* ,(Lafayette, Ind., 1979), 105.
2. Ibid.

CONCLUSION

"If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life" (Exodus 21:22-23).

From 1973 through 1995, there have been nearly 35 million murders by abortion that we know about, murders allowed by the Supreme Court, by liberal politicians in the Congress and in State Houses around the United States. According to a fact sheet published by the National Right to Life Committee, at least two thousand partial-birth abortions are documented each year. Many have been performed on healthy teenaged girls who concealed their pregnancies until it was too late for conventional abortion procedures.

Surely, our nation is reaping what it is has sown. In light of these facts, is it any wonder

that we are plagued with problems of violence and murder, with divorce and dysfunctional families?

The value of life has been diminished by mankind and mischief has followed with devastating results. Today, there is a debate on whether doctors should be allowed to assist terminally ill people in committing suicide. The Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision did more than sanction a woman's right to seek an abortion; it called into question the value of life. Millions of babies have been murdered over the past three decades. Now there are cases where the sick and the diseased are encouraged to terminate their lives.

When will the murders stop?

The Inseparable Power:

The Sword and the Spirit

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Many believers do their best to live according to the letter of the Word of God. Their intentions are good, but they often become spiritually exhausted from the strain of living up to a standard that the flesh cannot attain. Others are tempted to operate in subjective impressions of being moved by the Spirit. These people have no objective frame of reference from the Word of God. They may experience great emotional highs but are easily disturbed when they can't "feel" God's presence.

Though we are indeed new creatures in Christ, we still have to deal with an old sin nature and a mind that needs continual renewal by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. If we only rely on our own ability to obey what we know to be true, we may never experience the tremendous miracles God wants to perform in us through His two-edged Sword.

Revelation 1:16 speaks of the two-edged

sword that went out from Jesus' mouth. God intended His people to live by His Word *and* in the power of the Spirit. Trying to live by one without the other only results in frustration.

This booklet will describe how every Christian can enjoy a balanced walk with God, led by the Holy Spirit and governed by truth.

Chapter One

HAVING A SET PURPOSE

"Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand" (Psalm 149:6).

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

"And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength (Revelation 1:16).

Everything about Jesus' life on earth revealed a set purpose. As He went about preaching and teaching, His face was set toward Jerusalem

(Luke 9:51; 13:22; 18:31). Jesus fulfilled His purpose on earth when, in Jerusalem, He finished the work of Redemption (Luke 23).

Every spiritual individual has a goal set before him that completely controls his desires. The "congregation of saints," the meek, beautified by God's salvation, are said by the Psalmist to have "high praises" in their mouths for the Finished Work and for their eternal position in heaven. They also have a two-edged sword in their hand.

In Ephesians 6:17, the apostle Paul revealed what that sword is when he instructed believers to take up "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

As believers, we have to recognize the value of God's two-edged Sword. The Holy Spirit must never be separated from the Sword, and the Sword must never be separated from the Spirit. When a man knows how to use the sword—the Word of God—and how to be led by the Spirit, he has what it takes to be an effective Christian.

As we often think of Him—the Crucified Lord who was buried, but who is now risen and ascended—our mind centers on Revelation 1:16. In this passage, His countenance was like the

sun, and out of his mouth went "a sharp two-edged sword."

In His hand, Jesus held the seven "stars" (representing the seven churches in Asia Minor), and from His mouth came the "two-edged sword." These edges refer to the Word and the Holy Spirit working together. "The flesh profiteth nothing: the words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," Jesus said (John 6:63).

There Is No Sword Like It

A most unique thing can happen when a Christian really understands how to use the Sword of the Spirit—not just the Sword, not just the Spirit, but the Sword of the Spirit. People who feel condemned after hearing a message from the Bible are taking only the Sword. And people who don't want to implement truth in their lives, but who still want to "feel" spiritual through the gifts, take only the Spirit. Yet, the Word of God never separates the two. We are to take up "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Pertaining to Goliath's sword, David said, "Give it to me. Put it in my hand, for there is none like it" (see 1 Samuel 21:9). David was saying, "I know how to use the Sword. There is

nothing like it"—and there is nothing like the Sword of the Spirit, the powerful Word of God.

Moses, in Deuteronomy 1:17, said to the children of Israel, "If you can't handle your problems, bring them to me. Give them into my hand. I will hear, and I will answer the problems." Both David and Moses had confidence in God's Word and confidence in the Spirit.

Every pastor who studies and meditates on the Word will be faithful to instruct his congregation in categories of doctrine. As we grow together in a progressive revelation of the Word of God, we know we will never fully comprehend all of it. Yet occasionally, people will attend service after service, hearing the progression of the messages but not applying what they have heard to their situation. Then they say, "I need more counseling," when really, there isn't much more anyone can say to help, outside of the revelation of the Sword of the Spirit from the pulpit.

The pastor may be able to help people get through a problem, but the point is this: If a believer receives the Sword with the Spirit, the Sword and the Spirit will separate the human spirit from the human soul to straighten out the issue. A person who won't receive the Word when it comes from the pulpit won't take the

Sword with the Spirit in a private counseling session either.

We may enjoy the Sword whether it reveals grace and mercy or deep conviction. But, the Sword will be ineffective without the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will do nothing for us without the Sword.

"The words that I speak unto you: they are spirit, and they are life," Jesus said (John 6:63*b*). The question a believer must ask himself is this: "Do I want the Sword *with* the Spirit to really change my life?" The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. The two edges are said to represent God's goodness and His severity (Romans 11:22); but ultimately they speak of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God at work together in us.

Chapter Two

THE SPIRIT GIVES LIFE; THE LETTER KILLS

Some people are able to quote the Bible fluently, but the Word never changes them. Though they are convicted, they never have a conversion because they don't let the Spirit take the Sword.

Paul said, "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The Spirit must have the Sword, and the Sword is the Word. If the Spirit's Sword isn't at work in our lives, change will not come, even if we are teachers or preachers. Only the Sword of the Spirit can bring change.

Second Corinthians 3:6 warns that "the letter killeth." Some flaunt their knowledge of the Sword and debate what they know about it. They tell people what they think about it. They describe their interpretations of it and end up wrongly influencing someone who knows less about the Bible than they do. Those who listen

to such people don't understand that they are using the Sword without the Spirit.

When our old sin nature uses the Sword, harm comes to people. The letter kills when it is expressed apart from the Spirit. We can counsel by the Word, giving chapter and verse; but without the Spirit, we hurt the person being counseled, every time. When the *Spirit* takes the Sword, however, the human spirit is separated from the human soul, bringing in God's provision, God's solution, and God's presence to execute God's power. There isn't anything like the Sword and the Spirit doing their two-edged work.

One-Edged Existence

The reason many are not healed is because the Spirit isn't allowed to use the Sword in their lives. Marriages break up and are not reconciled because couples don't have the Sword being used by the Spirit. The reason many addicts are never delivered from drug abuse is that they may have the Sword, but they do not have the Spirit taking it up.

A one-edged sword is not effective. The two-edged solution to any problem—the Sword of the Word handled by the Holy Spirit—is the

only thing that works, whatever the issue is.

There are Christians who emphasize the Spirit without the Sword. Others emphasize the Sword and no Spirit. Both examples use one edge without the other, and both need the two-edged Sword of the Spirit in their hands—the two-edged Sword that went from Jesus' mouth in Revelation 1. The two-edged Sword is the only one that works.

Without the Sword and the Spirit, believers easily become subjective and proud in their spiritual concepts, evaluations, and communications about God. If there is no Word of God, a believer can only be subjective; if it is all the Holy Spirit without the Word, there is no objectivity. A ministry only grows, develops, evangelizes, and makes disciples honestly and realistically with God when its members live under the power of the two-edged Sword.

When Jesus healed the woman of her issue of blood, He said, "I perceive that virtue is gone out of me" (Luke 8:46). The power of the Spirit of God went out from Him. Then the woman came forward, and Jesus said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace"—that is the work of the Word of God. The two-edged Sword brought a miracle. Acts 10:38 tells us that Jesus

of Nazareth was anointed of the Holy Spirit and went about healing all who were oppressed of the devil. Once again, the Word and the Spirit have to work together.

The singers who sing in church need to have more than the Word of God; they need to have the Spirit of God, too. A missionary on the foreign field needs more than just the Spirit, more than just the Word; he has to have the two-edged Sword in his hand.

Any Christian marriage could be healed this instant if the Spirit could take the Sword and deal individually with each person. If the couple really were to seek after God, the Spirit could take the Sword and make a difference. Instead, what often happens is that they argue about their interpretations of the Sword and there is no power in that. They wind up killing each other with the letter. They become separated by the very Word that could bring them together if it were being used by the Spirit. Oh, can you see how crucial it is for us to understand this?

The Power of "It Is Written"

In Luke 4, the Spirit of God led Jesus Christ to fast in the desert for forty days and forty nights. There, He was tempted by Satan physi-

cally, psychologically, and spiritually. Jesus was hungry when the tempter came and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (Luke 4:3). Jesus' response was, "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4).

Jesus was confessing, "The Spirit led Me here into the wilderness, and I have the two-edged Sword in My mouth and in My hand. Yes, I am hungry. I am very hungry. I have a tremendous need—but, 'It is written….' I will base everything that I think on 'It is written.' Do I have strength? No, I have none. Am I hungry? Yes. Are all the demons of hell after Me? Yes, but it is written that man shall not live by bread alone, even when he is hungry." That is how Jesus overcame the physical temptation.

Next came a spiritual attack, when Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world in return for a moment of worship from the Son of God. "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4:8). Jesus resisted Satan with "It is written."

In the next temptation, Satan applied psychological pressure by taking Jesus to the holy

city, setting Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and daring Jesus to cast Himself down. This time, the devil used the Scripture: "For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Luke 4:10-12). Jesus fought off all these temptations with the two-edged Sword: "It is written."

Chapter Three

THE COMFORTER IS ALWAYS THERE TO HELP

We cannot comfort people by preaching at them and casually throwing them verses of Scripture. We have to weep when they weep and rejoice when they rejoice (Romans 12:15). This is what God does to bring comfort. In all of our afflictions, Jesus was afflicted (Isaiah 63:9). When we are afflicted, God doesn't come down and tell us to change. He feels what we feel. That is what the Spirit—the Comforter—does as He picks us up by identifying with us. The Comforter comes along side of us, ready to lift us when we fall.

"I will weep with you, and we will get through this together." This is how the Spirit speaks to us (Romans 8:26). This is how God works with His two-edged Sword. "I will be with you through it all. I will pick you up as I weep with you." He knows what we are going

through (Hebrews 4:15).

With God in the Holy of Holies

A believer is the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). The body is the outer court of who we are. Often, we find remedies for the outer court without going to the Holy of Holies first. We will do everything to find help for our outer court, fixing up the shell that everyone can see. The soul represents our middle court, where many people can come in. We share with them and they share with us. The human spirit is our Holy of Holies. No one but God can enter into our Holy Place.

The Holy Spirit takes up the Sword and sweetly separates the human spirit from the human soul so that God can minister to us. God wants us to go past the outer court, through the soul, and into our human spirit where He dwells —just God and you, in your Holy of Holies. We have beautiful fellowship when we stay in the Holy of Holies where God lives, and that fellowship spreads through the middle court of the soul to the outer court, to be revealed on our countenance and in our conversation.

This all happens when the Word of God becomes a two-edged Sword in our lives. Though

we may be pierced, it does no damage; it isn't done to hurt us, it is done to heal. When the Sword of the Spirit pierces, it opens us up to God-consciousness—to God's comfort, conviction, and compassion. It opens us up to God's wisdom, direction, and deliverance in our lives. God's way, truth, and life now have a way to work.

CONCLUSION

So many people follow God's Word, but they don't follow God's life. They follow the Sword, but not God's way. They have a one-edged existence without the two-edged Sword of the Bible. God's truth is in the two-edged Sword—it takes the Spirit and the Word together to work as our offense as well as our defense.

The Sword of the Spirit is always motivated by love. It always manifests grace. And even in discipline and correction, the Sword of the Spirit brings forth peace and the fruits of righteousness.

If we let the Word and the Spirit work deeply in our lives, we will be transformed more and more into Christ's image, and we will manifest Him through our lives.

The Integrity of

God's Promises

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Consider something extremely precious: God's promises. Many times we take them for granted; often we don't think of them at all. Yet, God backs up every one of them with His integrity.

God promised Abraham that all of the land of Canaan would belong to his descendants (Genesis 12:3), and that promise came to pass. He promised to lead Israel into the Promised Land and drive out all the enemies for them (Deuteronomy 7 and 8).

Not a single word of God's promises has ever fallen to the ground (1 Kings 8:56). Not one promise has ever failed. Not one! Not one pertaining to my family; not one pertaining to the Body of Christ; not one! Instead of living in defeat or despair, instead of getting worried, we should always just head for God's promises.

Acts 27:25 says, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." What God says, He

will do. What He has done for others, He will do for you. This booklet is written to help every believer recognize just what he has in Christ: a vast array of promises that never fall to the ground.

Chapter One

YEA AND AMEN

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

"Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it" (Numbers 23:19-20).

When God says something, He supports it with His integrity (Psalm 33:4). It doesn't matter what the promise is, God will keep it. He who began a good work in us will be faithful to perfect that work. That is a promise I claim for our young people when they are going through difficult times. And, I have watched so many come through because God was faithful to keep His promises.

He Perfects What Concerns Us

"The LORD will perfect that which concer-

neth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands" (Psalm 138:8).

"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25, 26).

God perfects everything that concerns the believer. All of His promises are "Yea and Amen." We who believe in Him will never taste death. What is left of our bodies will go into the grave, but our soul and our spirit will go straight up, to be with Jesus. We will simply change our address: "33 Golden Street of Heaven, Mansion number 73." There we will live with our saved loved ones for ever and ever.

Jesus told the disciples, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John 8:51).

Will these promises fall to the ground? No. When we all get to heaven, there will be a great reunion, a fantastic gathering together. We will have such a day of rejoicing. This is His precious Word. Believe it!

Chapter Two

IRREVERSIBLE BLESSINGS

Apastor from another denomination was removed from his church after being caught in one act of adultery. The church leaders made him get up in front of the congregation, confess what he did, and then they kicked him out. They did this even though he had forsaken his sin and reunited with his wife.

This man was ready to give up on his life, and all because his church forced him to confess all his faults from his pulpit—before a congregation of sinners. That is not the scriptural way of dealing with sins. In fact, some of those people will be thinking about what he did for the next twenty years.

When I heard what had happened, I called him and said, "Please don't give up. God has a plan for your life. You have repented; you have forsaken your sin." Then, I just started relating promises to him.

"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," I told him. "Can you believe it? God doesn't remember your sin. He is merciful concerning our unrighteousness. He will never remember our sins and iniquities. You have repented. Receive His cleansing. You know that God can never lie."

The beautiful thing is that this pastor grasped it. He recently called to tell me that he and his wife are moving to pioneer a work in a new area. The heart of God expressed to him through my telephone call changed his life. I never met the man face to face. I just gave him the Truth. The integrity of God's promises did the work in his life.

Jesus Came to Save

Jesus Christ did not come to destroy people. He came to save them (see John 12:47; John 3:16-17). Anyone who tries to destroy is not of God. Jesus came to save sinners. Everyone is a sinner, so everyone needs saving by the Blood of the Lamb, by grace through faith in Him.

Paul wrote, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). He considered himself to be

"less than the least." You cannot get much lower than being less than the least.

Once we who are less than the least receive eternal life, we can never lose it. No one can pluck us out of the Father's hand (John 10:28). That is a promise. Will God's promise ever fall to the ground? No, never. Never! Our Father is greater than all. He does not see our sins because He has agreed with the Son that the Blood shed on Calvary covers them all.

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

My mind goes back to a beautiful lady in our early ministry. She had four children. The youngest, a daughter, got saved. But the three sons refused to receive Jesus. This woman just prayed and prayed. She believed her household would come to Christ.

This lady came down with leukemia and died very quickly. She went to heaven claiming the promise for her family to be saved. At her funeral, I preached on Acts 16:31 and then watched as those three boys came forward to get saved. That promise was fulfilled right before our eyes.

Not one of God's promises ever falls to the

ground. They are all yea and amen. There is no greater way to live than to be a Christian. There is nothing more precious than to have a Redeemer, Lord, and Savior such as we have.

Chapter Three

UNDERNEATH ARE HIS EVERLASTING ARMS

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

Moses was on his deathbed. He was 120 years old, and soon the angels would hold a funeral for him. God did not allow the people to bury Moses. (Sometimes I imagine that the angels had a funeral and that Gabriel did the preaching while Michael sang the songs!) Moses' body has never been found, but we do know that his soul body appeared with Jesus' glorified body on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-3).

Before he died, Moses gathered his spiritual leaders, the priests and the Levites. He taught them, saying, "Listen, I am going home to God. You have a tremendous responsibility on your

hands. Trust God, love Him, and believe in His promises. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

Remembering God's Faithfulness

Consider that as Moses was dying, he was remembering how he failed miserably and then spent forty years wandering through the backside of the desert. He remembered the day he met God in the burning bush. God caused a fire in the bush, but it was not consumed (Exodus 3:2-3). It was as if God said to Moses, "Moses, you failed, but you will be victorious as you get to know Me in your desert experience. Israel has gone against Me. Yet, just as the fire is not consuming this bush, she will not be consumed."

Then Moses remembered how God said, "Stand still and go forward" (Exodus 14:13-15). He recalled how God told him to stretch forth his rod, and the waters of the Red Sea parted. Israel walked to the other side on dry ground. God told him to stretch forth his rod again and the sea washed away the chariots of the Egyptians so that they would never be seen again.

Moses spoke of the time when God brought water out of the rock. He remembered the time

when he put a tree in the bitter waters, and the waters became sweet (Exodus 15:25). He thought of the manna that fell from heaven to feed the people.

If Moses' life flashed before his eyes, I am sure it was not his sins that were coming back to him. I believe that he saw all the promises that God had fulfilled for him. God doesn't remember our sins so why would He bring them up before us when we are getting close to going home? We are protected by a wall of fire (Zechariah 2:5), the fire of the Holy Spirit. Positional truth reveals the foundation underneath us—our new creation in Christ.

God Is at the Bottom

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27*a*).

When I hit bottom, Jesus Christ is still underneath me. Perhaps my "bottom" is a health problem; maybe it is failure or despair. The bottom could be bereavement. No matter what kind of bottom I hit, He is there, under me, holding me up.

This has always captivated me. Moses failed with his anger in the first forty years of his life,

but then he became the meekest man on the face of the earth. In Deuteronomy 33:27, he spoke of the God of the Finished Work. Even way back then, the Finished Work was being exalted. "Refuge" speaks of the sheltering sanctuary where we are with God. "Underneath" means God is present under the lowest of our lows.

Finally, Moses commissioned Joshua, whom he had trained to preach and to lead. Later, Joshua heard this promise from God: "Every place the sole of your foot shall touch, shall be yours, just as I promised Moses."

In marriages, in businesses, in families, our God shall supply all of our needs. Let's take up a promise and put our foot down upon it to claim it in faith.

Consider God's promise in Acts 16:31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." That is a great promise for those who have unsaved loved ones. Take that promise, put your foot on it, and say, "I am standing in the grace of God and believing in this promise. Hell will not stop me. I will have faith-rest in this promise."

Get to know the integrity of God and recognize that He loves everything about you. He paid for your sins. God desires to show His in-

tegrity to you verse by verse, promise upon promise. There is not a promise He won't fulfill for you.

Many of you who are sick can take a promise, stand on it, and get healed right now. Do not let the devil cause you to think otherwise. Believe on the grace of God, and by faith claim the promise for yourself.

CONCLUSION

"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner" (1 Peter 2:7).

"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand" (Psalm 37:24).

"The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down" (Psalm 145:14).

Do you know that the promises you have claimed have already been proven? They have already been given. Every place the sole of your foot shall touch shall be yours.

Are finances a problem? Do not despair. Reach out in faith to God and trust Jesus as you claim His promise that He will take care of you (Psalm 37:25).

Are you battling sickness? He sent His Word to heal you (Psalm 107:20).

Whatever the issue, God has given us a promise. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2); it is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18).

Read your Bible and believe that God's integrity is behind every word. Have you ever stopped in the middle of reading and said to yourself, "That is a promise I've been waiting for—and now I have it!"? The more you read the Scriptures, the more promises you will have to stand on.

No one ever gets out of God's range. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Sin reigns unto death, but grace reigns through God's righteousness unto eternal life (Romans 5:21).

Let these words build you up today. Get to know God so intimately that you can go to Him with everything, casting your cares upon Him. Discover how much He cares for you!

Father, we desire to have Your integrity in every area of our lives. We have the Holy Spirit, and we know that You will never leave us or forsake us. Comfort us, bless us, meet our needs, and give us hope. Underneath us are Your everlasting arms. In despair, in financial distress, in incompatible relationships, You are still there. Thank You for the integrity of Your promises. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Language of Tears

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, I was thinking about a precious man of God, Bill Bright, who founded one of the great ministries of our day—Campus Crusade for Christ. This man's body is failing, but he still faithfully preaches from a wheelchair. Just considering his life brought tears to my eyes.

Maybe that sounds unusual to you, a grown man crying over another grown man. Those tears were not the kind meant to stir up an emotional response from an audience. They were tears moved by God as I considered the life of one of His dearest servants. Mr. Bright is suffering in the midst a great angelic conflict, and God moved upon my heart as I identified with a man whose ministry has gone places no other ministry could go.

Not enough genuine tears are shed in our pulpits today. The language of tears is a language many no longer speak, because the Word and Spirit of God are not allowed to move upon

humble hearts.

This booklet will show that tears are precious to God. Behind each tear that falls because of a heart of love is a story to be told in eternity. They are so valuable to Him that He carefully bottles each one.

Chapter One

STRONG CRYING

"Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?

"When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me" (Psalm 56:8-9).

In the Word of God, many kinds of tears are mentioned. Hebrews 12:16-17 refers to the tears of Esau. His tears were shed out of selfishness and regret for having missed a blessing, but those tears did not lead him to a place of repentance. Many of the children of Israel covered their altars with that kind of tears, according to Malachi 2:13. God rejected their offerings because they had rejected God's way.

The tears that God cherishes are genuine tears, shed by individuals who reckon on God's grace and mercy for every breath. Those tears are the kind that He bottles and saves in eternity.

David declared in the Psalms that those tears

are kept in God's bottle. The Lord knows those tears as intimately as He knows all of our members—our eyes, hands, feet, ears—every part of us (Psalm 139:16).

"Only God knows what I have done," David said. "I committed adultery with Bathsheba. I plotted to kill her husband, Uriah. I was the cause of hundreds of deaths at Nob (1 Samuel 21, 22). I wouldn't let my son Absalom see me for two full years because of what he did to his stepbrother. In the end, he turned against me, and his rebellion resulted in his death. I caused these things. I know You are for me, Lord God, but I am devastated."

God did not leave him comfortless. "Yet, You bottle my tears. I have shed a bucket of them over my many failures."

The tears David shed were tears of sorrow, tears of regret, and tears of repentance. These are tears that God remembers.

Jeremiah was called the weeping prophet. He wept before God because he was so broken over the sinfulness of his people and the impending judgment of God. So many tears poured out of Jeremiah that his eyes failed him, according to Lamentations 2:11. In the same verse, he spoke of being greatly troubled. In Je-

remiah 14:17, Jeremiah's eyes ran down with tears night and day, and it seemed that they would not cease. Surely, God bottled those tears.

Agonizing for a Lost World

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:7-8)

In the days that Jesus walked on earth in the flesh, He shed many tears as He offered prayers and supplication (John 11:33, 38). Often He was moved to "strong crying."

"Strong crying" indicates Jesus' physical response as He prayed with all His might. He was about to endure the most intense suffering known to anyone in the flesh, and He groaned under the weight of the pain He would soon experience. Picture the Son of God suffering on the Cross, crying to the Father who could not hear Him because the sins of the world were upon Him (Psalm 22:2). Imagine the indescribable sighs and groans that He uttered.

"LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why

hidest thou thy face from me?

"I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.

"Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off"' (Psalm 88:14-16)

The Lord knew from His youth that He was going to die for the sins of the world. He was distraught by the separation He would have to go through. He knew the punishment for our sins that He would have to experience in His humanity. But there was nothing in Jesus' experience that could prepare Him for the anguish He would suffer as He who knew no sin *became* sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). With every step that He took, He was occupied with His purpose for living, which was to die on the Cross for our sins (Luke 9:51; Hebrews 12:2).

It was difficult for the Son to think of a time when He would be separated from the Father. It would be the first and only time that this would ever happen. This is what He was talking about in Matthew 26:38 when He said His soul was "sorrowful even unto death." In His humanity, Jesus feared being separated from the Father. The sins of the world would be upon Him, and He knew that His Father could not even look

upon Him in that state.

Groaning as the Sin-bearer

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus knew that death was imminent. As the time drew near, He said, "My face is set stedfastly toward the Cross. I can't think of anything else. What is this going to be like? Here I am—God and Man at the same time—yet in My humanity I cannot comprehend what it will be like when the Father turns His back on Me, when the sins of the world are upon Me."

For this reason, Jesus shed many tears with strong crying. It speaks of physically shaking in agony. The Son of God shook and groaned and cried out because He was becoming the Sin-bearer. He was to be numbered with the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12), therefore the separation He was facing was real. But there was something else beyond that trial that made those tears precious, and it was the joy of an eternal reunion set before Him.

Chapter Two

THE STORIES OF TEARS AND SCARS

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one" (2 Corinthians 11:23-24).

"Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews" (Acts 20:19).

"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31).

The apostle Paul was a man always broken and in tears. Night and day, he wept because of intense compassion for those he was serving. Tears came to his eyes because of an intense desire to preach and to teach the glorious Gospel.

Tears came because of wanting to help others. Tears came because of the sorrow he carried for what people were going through. He shed tears because he experienced the pain people were enduring physically and spiritually.

"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you" (2 Corinthians 2:4).

Much affliction and anguish accompanied Paul, and it was evident in everything that he wrote. He wrote of his tears, not to grieve his readers but to express his abundant love, which came from God.

"Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy" (2 Timothy 1:4). Timothy, Paul's disciple, was also a broken servant of God who wept for Paul and for others.

The apostle Paul understood why Timothy would weep, longing to see Paul. Paul knew firsthand the agony and scars that sometimes come with the ministry. But these scars, these marks, were the marks of Jesus Christ.

"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

"For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16).

Every scar tells a story. I once read of an American slave who was beaten again and again during the course of the Civil War. He could relate the situation and tell the story behind every scar upon His body. The apostle Paul bore scars that were the result of his suffering for the Gentiles. His stories have given hope and understanding to everyone who has ever encountered sorrow for the cause of Christ.

In heaven, we will all be perfect. There will be nothing to remind us of any physical pain or emotional trauma we went through on earth. Yet, the Lord Jesus—the Savior, the Son of God, the Lamb of God—will have fresh wounds in His hands and His feet throughout eternity (Revelation 5:6). Those wounds will be the only reminder of the price that was paid for our salvation and the great grace we have received.

Think of the whipping He endured with the

cat-o'-nine tails, with the bits of stone and metal designed to tear flesh. Consider the crown of thorns jammed down upon his head, the sword that pierced His side after He died. The suffering in His humanity left its marks on Jesus.

In His humanity, Jesus sweat great drops of blood while praying in Gethsemane because of the terrible pressure He was experiencing from the demonic atmosphere. His scars and tears were combined in His love for lost souls that were going to hell. This is what made Him the Savior.

Many people carry tremendous mental scars in their souls, and we have asked God to deliver them again and again (Psalm 116:4). As real as those scars are, as intense and undeserved as the suffering is, we have a Savior who has already been touched with the infirmity caused by those scars. Hebrews 2:18 says that He was tempted in all things so that He could ultimately identify with us.

God understands the tears we shed because of godly sorrow, supplication, and intercession. Every tear, when it belongs to the Lord, tells a story. And because God bottles them all, we will see those stories completed, each with a Finished-Work ending, all to the glory of God.

Chapter Three

TEARS AND THE SAVIOR

"And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

"And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment" (Luke 7:37-38)

Think of the prostitute at Simon the Pharisee's house and the tears that fell upon Jesus' feet as she wept. Her tears streaked down across His dusty, dirty feet. Then she wiped His feet with her hair and anointed Him with oil. She shed her tears because Jesus had forgiven her and she was saved. These were now tears of thanksgiving, for she had been forgiven much. Her tears fell on the feet of the Master, and throughout eternity those tears will tell a won-

derful story.

God wants every person who hears His voice to understand the value of tears. Atear can reveal love and compassion beyond explanation. Instead of sentimental tears or tears of anger, those tears express God's heart.

God gives to many believers a special capacity, a tender heart that cries because of love. We cry for the lost. We cry for our children and for our marriage. We cry because we care so deeply. Tears such as these have something special that binds people in unity to God.

The Time of Visitation

"Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

"And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

"Jesus wept.

"Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

"And some of them said, Could not this

man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

"Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it" (John 11:32-38).

"Jesus wept." Some know these words only as the shortest verse in the Bible. But it reveals so much more about our Savior. He was moved by the sorrow of Mary and Martha over the death of their brother Lazarus. He groaned and wept because of the great unbelief of his friends. He had done so much among these people, yet still they had trouble grasping the truth that He was indeed the resurrection and the life.

Finally, according to a very accurate translation of the original text, He shouted "Out, now!" and Lazarus came forth alive from the grave.

Weeping for the World

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

"Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

"For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and

compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

"And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19: 41-44)

Seeing Jerusalem made Jesus weep. He knew what would become of this city. He knew that in A.D. 70, Titus of Rome would lay siege to Jerusalem and force many of the Jews to die. There would come indescribable pain and suffering. Jesus longed to see God's people return to Him. In His humanity He revealed the Father's heart of love, through tears.

Oh, how precious our tears are. Tears because we love God. Tears because of what He has done for us. Tears of joy, tears of thanksgiving, tears over answered prayers. Tears that come because someone makes an uncompromising stand for God. Tears from God also come with a great promise of reward:

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:5-6).

CONCLUSION

There are so many languages. In the spiritual realm, we are learning to communicate with the language of love, the language of grace, the language of mercy. These are languages we must learn as believers. But let us not neglect the precious language of tears.

In our church, you will see a weeping preacher. My tears come from a heart broken before God and warmed by His Holy Spirit. The people who come to my church faithfully have seen a lot of tears from the pulpit over the years. Some may call it emotionalism. I call it a deep-rooted concern and compassion for my people, my community, and my world. I call my tears the result of a tremendous love for the good old-fashioned Book, the Bible.

Do not be ashamed when God speaks through you in the language of tears. Yes, sorrow is part of the human condition, and every one who loves God will also share in His suffer-

ing. But after all the tears have been shed, there is coming a day when darkness and sin and death will be no more. In heaven, God will wipe away all our tears (Revelation 7:17; 21:4), and there will be no more sorrow or pain.

The Love of God

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THE LOVE OF GOD

by Frederick M. Lehman

The Love of God is greater far
than any tongue or pen can tell.
It goes beyond the highest star
and reaches to the lowest hell.
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God sent His Son to win;
The erring child He reconciled
and pardoned from his sin.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
and were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
and every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
though stretched from sky to sky.

Oh Love of God! How rich and pure,
How measureless and strong!
It shall forever more endure the saints' and angels' song.

INTRODUCTION

The love of God is one of the most misunderstood subjects in the Church today. Even without meaning to, many pulpits limit God's love. They may preach on John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Properly understood, however, the emphasis in that verse is not on us keeping the commandments. It is in receiving the power of love that the commandments are kept. In other words, this love is not something we *do*; it is something we *receive*.

Psalm 53:2 says that "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God." God wants us to understand His love. He wants us to understand that He is love, and that before He ever created anyone to love, He was love for all of eternity.

We pray that you will meditate on these verses so the doctrine of God's love will be planted firmly in your heart. His desire for every

one of us is to know the length, the depth, the breadth, and the height of love in an objective communion that can freely pour out unconditional love to those who can't yet respond. One day, we will rejoice with each saint—every one of us a trophy of the grace that triumphed over hell, each one a miracle of redemption—because of our great God who is love.

Chapter One

GOD'S LOVE MADE PERFECT

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:17-19).

Consider the words, "Herein is our love made perfect." Multitudes of Christians today lack an understanding of how to make love perfect. It is not intentional, but if only we could grasp how this love is made perfect in us then we would enter into a brand-new understanding of spiritual life.

The Word of God in 1 John 4 says that there is no *fear*—no torment—in love, and that perfect love casts out fear. This is vital because according to Genesis 3:10, the first emotional result of Adam and Eve's failure was fear. Fear was the

first sin after unbelief. Job confessed, "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me" (Job 3:25).

Because of the fear of death, people live their entire lives in subjection to some kind of bondage (see Hebrews 2:15). If you feel insecure when you hear the news that you have cancer or that you will have to file for bankruptcy, it is because you are filled with a deep-rooted subjective fear. But there is something that casts out all fear: *perfect love*. How does it work? When I am filled with love, which is the subjective nature of God, that love will drive out subjective fear. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us…" (1 John 4:10*a*).

The Nature of God's Subjective Love

"God is love" (1 John 4:8). Verse nine goes on to say, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

First, God *is* love. Then, that love was manifested to the world through the Son. But in many cases, that is as far as love ever goes in the Christian's experience. "God is love" means that

God "is" love before He ever created angels, the earth, or the human race. In Revelation 1:8, Jesus Christ says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending…which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

Next, God's love is *subjective*, a love that depends completely on the subject (in this case, God) and never on the object (man). Subjective love is unconditional. Subjective love only belongs to God. God is love, but I am not love. Only to the degree that I receive love from God do I actually have love. Only as I receive love can I *be* love. I must have this love shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

What did subjective love do? It manifested itself on the Cross in the unlimited atonement to pay for the sins of the world (see 1 John 2:2; 2 Corinthians 5:19). This love is unconditional. Now, whosoever will may come to God and be received of Him, and as many as receive Jesus Christ, receive power to become the sons of God (John 1:12).

Objective Love

Objective love—in contrast with subjective love—depends upon the response of the object to the subject who is expressing the love. It is

based on the value that has been placed on the object, or something attractive in the object. Unsaved people can have measures of objective love toward one another. For example, a respectable woman could marry an honest man and they could appreciate the moral values in each other. That would be objective love, but it is not necessarily spiritual because it is based upon an education in human goodness.

The moment we were saved, we received a robe of imputed righteousness—the righteousness of a holy God placed on our account, with no works on our part (Isaiah 61:10). Positionally, we were declared righteous (Romans 3:25). But at that point, the only way God could love us objectively was in our position in the Finished Work. This is not an experiential love where He initiates and we respond. It is an unconditional love that extends from the Subject because He is love; but as yet, there was nothing of value in us as the objects of His love. His love was for us, and toward us, but it was subjective. There is no real response on our part until we begin to have a hunger and thirst for the Word of God. But as we receive the Word of God, we are filled with *imparted* righteousness (Matthew 5:6), which gives us objective value.

Objective love is conditional, just as rewards are conditional. Therefore, we must first develop a capacity to understand how much God loves us. He will always love us, and we will always be the objects of His love for salvation, but His all-encompassing Alpha-Omega love must be imparted. When it is not imparted, then we do not receive the many benefits that are ours in Christ. We may have the benefits of positional truth, and we may know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13), but we do not yet have everything that belongs to us in our experience.

God's Perfect Hatred toward Esau

"Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Psalm 45:7).

"Do not I hate them, oh LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them my enemies" (Psalm 139:21-22).

For perfect love to be perfect there must also be perfect hatred. Perfect hatred has nothing to do with bitterness, vindictiveness, anger, retaliation, or mental negativity.

Christians who do not understand the dif-

ference between subjective and objective love do not understand God's declaration in Romans 9:13: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (see Malachi 1:2-3). The truth is that God meant exactly what He said. It was not an "anthropopathic" statement, where the Holy Spirit ascribes human emotions to God because of our limited understanding of the reality of who He is.

There was no objective value in Esau. Though Jacob was the supplanter, he desired to have a greater blessing from God. Esau, on the other hand, was consumed with temporal blessings for his flesh, and his heart was not after God. Subjectively, the Lord loved Esau no less than He loved Jacob. That was an unconditional love that will never change. But objectively, God could not manifest His love toward Esau.

Because objective love is conditional, its manifestation changes depending on the response of the object to the subject. For example, when a saved loved one dies, the dynamic interaction of objective love is gone because the object of my love can no longer respond to me. But if I have entered into an objective love relationship with God by putting Him first and responding to His promises, then I will experience the fragrance of memories in a subjective attitude of

love for the one who died. Rather than being devastated by the loss, though I will miss our fellowship, I will thank God that my loved one is in heaven, rejoicing in a perfect soul body.

Before Lucifer "the son of the morning" fell, God had objective love for him. As the angel closest to the throne of God, Lucifer was filled with doctrine, joy, and peace, and he had objective love. But when iniquity was found in his heart and he accused the character of God's love toward the angels, Lucifer entered into emotional rebellion, was cast down from heaven, and took one third of the angels with him (Revelation 12:4-9). When that happened, objective love stopped. No longer did God love him as an object because he had become God's enemy, rejecting God's authority.

God does not have love for the devil, but that doesn't change the fact that God is love; He will never be anything *but* love. But perfect love enters into perfect hatred, and God sends people to hell because they reject His Son Jesus Christ who is the only basis for objective value to be found in a man.

That is why we don't like certain people. It is not because of bitterness or anything to do with "self." It is only because they have no value

in terms of their character with God. Second Corinthians 6:14*b* says, "What fellowship hath light with darkness?" What agreement is between Christ and Belial, the personification of wickedness? We have no fellowship with unbelievers because there is no basis for objective love, even though the subjective love of God is always toward them and will never change.

Blessed beyond Others

As we begin to respond to God's subjective love toward us, we begin to love ourselves. We love who God has made us to be in Christ. Then we have the power to respond to the first commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:30). This brings us into a special relationship with God—an exchange of objective love.

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" (Proverbs 8:17). This verse is speaking about objective love, which is based on a response from the object and flows back to the subject. As a result of this communion through the Holy Spirit, the love of God is shed abroad and poured out, as already

stated (Romans 5:5).

"If a man love me, he will keep my words [doctrine]: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). This means that when we begin to respond to God's love by receiving His words, the Trinity will love us in a special way and make Their habitation in us.

According to Deuteronomy 10:12-15 God is saying, "If you love Me, I will love you beyond all other people." Please understand that this doesn't happen because of works. It doesn't happen because all of a sudden we decide we are going to be good and do better. Psalm 116:13 says that we receive the cup of salvation. The "cup" speaks of our capacity for life. No matter how bad we have been or where we are in our walk with God, we must receive grace. Remember, our spirituality is not in what we do, but in receiving something we don't deserve: *grace*.

Chapter Two

SPECIAL MERCIES: HOW TO HAVE MORE OF GOD

The secret to our spiritual life is this: We put ourselves in a position where we will be blessed by God more than other Christians on the earth. It will happen, unless God is using us in a trial to glorify Himself in the angelic contest. But I love to put myself in a place where I am loved by God with objective love.

"Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy *with them that love him* and keep his commandments" (Deuteronomy 7:9). God is saying, "If you learn how to receive My grace and the filling of My Spirit, using rebound when you fail, then I will share with you an unusual portion of love." We receive special mercies that others do not, all because we keep on receiving the manifestation of His nature. We get more love back than others because we are using our

love to love God and people. This is why James 4:6 says that God gives greater grace to the humble. He gives more grace, more love, more mercy, more forgiveness, and more patience.

If we will be still before God and let His righteousness produce quietness and strength, and if God becomes the portion of our lives (Psalm 73:26; Lamentations 3:24), then God has to love us more than other Christians. His love does not change toward others, because that is who He is: God is love. Yet, the manifestation of His love changes. That is why He says, "I love them that love me."

And that is not all. He will forgive us more than He forgives others when they fail. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37). This is speaking about experiential, *objective forgiveness*. God has already forgiven all believers positionally, yet, if we will not forgive others, then we will not experience forgiveness in our fellowship with God.

But when we live in a relationship of objective love with God, expressing that same love to others who fail, then God's love intensifies in its manifestation toward us and we receive more forgiveness than others. God's love is still unchanging, but for us—as objects of His love, now

that we have opened up to receive it—more of God's love flows in and through us.

Respond to God's Gift of Grace

In Deuteronomy 10:12, God requires us to love Him. But what happens to a believer who never enters into a response of love toward God as the object? The answer lies in 1 Corinthians 16:22: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *Anathema Maranatha*." That means, let him be accursed or disciplined by God until the Rapture, or until God takes that believer home early by the sin unto physical death. This is not an Old Testament verse; it's a New Testament epistle!

Loving God is crucial. Do not confuse the reason for chastisement with the issue of works or performance. Chastisement to this degree is purely a result of a believer neither responding to the gift of God's grace nor receiving His love through the Spirit. We are not to receive His grace in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1); we are not to fail grace (Hebrews 12:15); and we are not to fall from grace by going back into works (Galatians 5:4). The only way we can abide in grace is by abiding in His objective love and communing through the Holy Spirit.

In Deuteronomy 11:22-23, God says that if we will love Him, walk in His ways, and cleave to Him, He will drive out our enemies. Then in verse 24, He says, "Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours." Jesus Christ is our Head, and He has put all things under our feet (Ephesians 1:22). God is saying, "If you learn to love me objectively through faith and the filling of My Spirit, then you will tread on all the negative things that have affected your life in the past."

We can have victory. It is not by works; it is not by trying to change. Victory is in receiving a change from God through His gift of grace.

Loving Others As the Object

So many Christian marriages are filled with corruption, confusion, and negativity. Because of familiarity and a misunderstanding of God's subjective love, many couples lack true objective love toward each other. Objective love toward people must first be based on my response to God as the subject who loves me unconditionally. When I am filled with the subjective love of God, then I can have a positive attitude toward the potential of the object, whether it be my wife, another believer, the unsaved, or even my

enemies.

For example, I can lay down my life for my wife as the object of my love (1 John 3:16) and give her the manifestation of subjective love that is in me. As my love for her is imparted, it goes inside of her, builds her up, and gives her more value. This is what it means to grow in grace and knowledge and to decrease as Christ increases (2 Peter 3:18; John 3:30).

Whenever a person as the object is responsive, subjective love will be poured into him until the well springs up and the river flows out (John 4:14; 7:38-39), then righteousness is revealed from faith to faith (Romans 1:17).

Loving My Enemies

I must realize that the same Bible that tells me to love my enemies also tells me to mark them and avoid them that cause divisions (see Romans 16:17-18). Because I am filled with the Spirit, I can have an attitude of love toward my enemies that is free from mental attitude sin. I hold nothing against them personally. I don't internalize anything they have done to me; yet, I cannot fellowship with them if there is no spirituality, no value in them as objects. If they would let me minister to them, I would. My love

is available to forgive and to help them the moment they respond. In the meantime, I remain filled with subjective love toward them, but I can't express it outwardly.

The reason God takes some Christians home early is that they refuse to respond to continual initiations of love. That is also why people are in hell. The unsaved only go to hell because, as objects, they never accepted redemption, therefore they have no eternal value.

The Wrong Kind of Subjectivity and Objectivity

Apart from God's subjective love, man's subjective nature can be very destructive. Man's subjectivity is based on his evaluations of sight and rationalization in the flesh. As a result, he has the wrong kind of objectivity. For example, much counseling is done where the counselor tries to evaluate the nature of the object who is being counseled. This evaluation is not valid because the counselor does not know the heart of the object. The natural man can only make his evaluation based on what he sees and what he hears.

A person may look at a woman by sight and determine that she is an emotional wreck. What

he doesn't know is that she has never been loved properly during her life, yet she is being evaluated as an object based on what she *appears* to be because of her behavior, but without seeing her potential. Imagine the difference if her potential were understood and she was evaluated through a divine approach in the Finished Work of Jesus Christ.

It is very interesting that the Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity had "quick understanding in the fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:3). The Word goes on to say that He never judged after the sight of His eyes, nor reproved after the hearing of His ears. John 8:1-12 is a good illustration of this. The Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman who was caught in the very act of adultery. In their natural subjectivity, the Pharisees judged this woman based on the Mosaic Law, therefore their objective evaluation fell far short of mercy and grace. But after He caused the religious crowd to depart through the conviction of their own consciences, Jesus said to the woman, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). Though she was taken in the act of adultery, Jesus saw her as the object of a finished work, not as a future adulteress. God saw her potential in grace.

Chapter Three

CHANGED BY RECEIVING GOD'S GRACE

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith *virtue*…" (2 Peter 1:2-5*a*).

A believer can be the weakest person in the world and still have virtue because of what he is receiving. Virtue is the integrity of receiving God's grace. It is the integrity of receiving something for nothing, something that I don't deserve, as a gift from God because of love. Virtue is hav-

ing integrity to receive the things that make me like God on the inside (see 2 Peter 1:5-7). That is why 2 Peter 1:8 says, "*If these things be in you*, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

God has never told us that we should change. The integrity of receiving grace changes us! We are changed when we recognize our need and receive the grace of God. There is not a verse in the Bible where God says to "change." Instead we find 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty [to be changed]. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *are changed* into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:17*b*-18).

More Christians today are trying to change and "give it up." But this is impossible, based on Romans 7:21: "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Even though we cannot change, we can *be* changed. And if we need to rebound seven times a day for the same thing, then we will do it until the victory finally comes—and it comes by receiving. We keep on receiving until the words of life and the words of grace penetrate the conscience, where the

norms and standards for right and wrong are established in my soul. The Holy Spirit can then lift up these godly standards within when the enemy comes against us like a flood (Isaiah 59:19*b*).

The prophet Jeremiah said, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned… after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed…" (Jeremiah 31:18*b*-19*a*). The whole issue is my attitude toward believing, receiving, and having God's love. Jesus said in John 6:29 that "the work of God is to believe on Him whom the Father hath sent." Believing and receiving is what changes us. I am not love, but I can receive love. I am not gracious, but I can receive grace. I am not merciful, but I can receive mercy. And if I keep receiving God's attributes abundantly, they will flow out as a river.

Many Christians do not understand that they can never change themselves. We say in our frustration, "If He is going to change me, then why doesn't He just do it?" Yet we fail to understand that change will only come as we continue to receive something from God. We must keep on receiving until we enter into faith rest. And what is our faith resting in but God's subjective, unconditional love for us (Zephaniah 3:17).

Victory is ours through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57). It is not by works; it doesn't come by trying to change. Victory comes by receiving a change from God through His gift of grace.

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness" (Micah 7:8-9).

When this was written, the prophet Micah had fallen into sin. He was struggling. He was hurting. But he knew Bible doctrine. His enemies were mocking him because he was down, yet Micah said, "Don't rejoice over me when I fall. I will arise, and *you* will be ashamed." Micah didn't deny that he had sinned. At the same time, he knew the Lord was right there with him pleading his case, ever living to make intercession for him (see Hebrews 9:24; 7:25). Therefore, he could say, "I will arise." What a beautiful attitude to have in the midst of failure!

What was the premise for Micah's change?

He understood God's subjective love. He knew this love was unconditional. Micah understood that God's subjective love had not changed one iota toward him when he was down. Jesus was with him and would never leave or forsake him.

The whole time Micah was down, the Lord was down there with him, just waiting to be gracious to him—waiting for Micah to let God change him. "Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isaiah 30:18).

In Battle, Confess the Victory

When you go through a period of time in your lives when you are extremely weak, then confess, "I will arise." Don't confess that Satan has won the battle. The devil has been defeated. He may have won a round, but he can't win the fight because your life belongs to God.

When you're falling and failing, don't accept defeat. Don't confess your frailty, your weakness, or your feelings to those around you. Make your confession to God because He is *waiting* to be gracious to you. He is not waiting to give you grace *after* you have changed; He gives you

grace to *be* changed!

Imagine a Christian failing, *not* because of wrong choices but because he did not freely receive the grace that would keep him from wrong decisions. If a person comes to me struggling with discouragement, I don't suggest to him that he try to *do* something to get out of it. I tell him he needs to *receive* something from God.

When we receive grace, mercy, and love through the Word of God, and when we keep those words through grace, using rebound when we fail, then we have objective love. Objective love is so desperately needed in friendships, between husbands and wives, and in the sacred family values of the home. That quality of love is not produced because of a works program or because we go soul winning more than someone else. It is based upon us receiving the divine nature of God, which brings in virtue and the integrity of grace through His precious promises.

Subjective Love Upholds Us

We are always under grace. If we fail, we fail in grace. If we stay down, we are still in grace. When we get up, we get up in grace. And then we are healed by grace. The psalmist said in Psalm 41:4, "Heal my soul; for I have sinned

against thee." The prophet Jeremiah cried out, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed" (Jeremiah 17:14).

Think of those who struggle to have victory in their lives. God loves them so much that He manifested His life for them on the Cross. His unconditional subjective love always holds them up when they fail. Psalm 145:14 says that God upholds all that fall. No one in the world would do that.

Because of God's subjective love, when we fall, we are not utterly cast down, though we may think we are (see Psalm 37:24). Our sin says we are cast down. Shame says we are. Failure says we are. But the Word of God says we are *not*.

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them" (Deuteronomy 33:27). This is one of the greatest passages in the entire Bible. Think of someone who has failed. There is no place lower. His soul has hit the bottom. Yet this verse says that underneath the bottom are the eternal arms of God!

With this kind of love, God waits to impart His nature, His grace, and His mercy. But He is

also waiting to impart His power so we can stand. Romans 14:4*b* says that God is able to make us stand. In Jude 24, He is able to keep us from falling. We may have to use rebound seven times a day (Proverbs 24:16), but we keep rebounding because our hearts are after God. We keep seeking after God and receiving from Him until finally the Word becomes resident in our souls. It becomes our possession, a well of water that springs up into everlasting life, and a river which flows out to others (John 4:14; 7:38).

CONCLUSION

God is always glorified by giving grace, and He is exalted by giving mercy. When His love is manifested inside of us, then our knowledge is illuminated, His wisdom is applied, and we have peace. Is it any wonder that Proverbs 23:12 says, "Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge"?

Remember, though the manifestation of God's objective love may change, His subjective love never changes—but it always changes us. The love of God never fails, it is always toward us, and God is just waiting for us to receive it.

Dear Father, we are Your children, and we are just beginning to learn about Your amazing love. Our prayer is that together we would learn this message. We desire to keep on receiving this love so our capacity can be enlarged. As the Word of grace is able to build us up, we can begin to experience the characteristics of Your love and the awesome power that changes us. Thank You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Makeup of the Mind

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

"I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Just consider the things that are connected to the human heart. Guilt, anger, resentment, bitterness, poor self-esteem—all of these things spring from a deceitful, desperate place. And what is produced outwardly from such a place? Adulteries, fornication, thefts, murders, covetousness, wickedness, lasciviousness, blasphemy, pride, foolishness—the natural heart is just waiting to throw all of it out there when given the opportunity (Mark 7:21-22).

The good news is that we don't have to give in to deceitful, desperate thinking that will lead to wicked, harmful actions. We can have the mind of Christ. We can choose to think His

thoughts and have those thoughts develop a sacred frame of reference in which we love ourselves and esteem others.

As you will see in these pages, Satan's attacks are against the believer's mind, and he wants to keep it in a state of disorder. This should come as no surprise, for the devil is the author of confusion. But God gave us a free volition, a will to choose, and we can use that will to choose how our minds are made up. If we will allow the Holy Spirit to teach us how to think with God according to every word of God, then we will have Christ's mind. Our minds will be rooted in truth and we will be able to resist any assault from the enemy of our souls.

Chapter One

THE MIND OF SATAN

"Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

"Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

"Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in

thee.

"By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

"Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

"Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

"All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more" (Ezekiel 28:11-19).

In eternity past, Lucifer was a bright star, the light-bearer who served in the presence of the Trinity. One commentator, Donald Grey Barnhouse, has speculated that one of Lucifer's chief functions was to carry the praises of the uni-

verse before the throne of God. But his brightness and ability to behave as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) will help to set him up as the great counterfeit to Jesus Christ. This day is described in Revelation 13:11-15, and Revelation 20, where he is called Satan. The head of all of the angels, his authority extended over the music programs of the angels, and he taught angelic doctrine. As Lucifer, his responsibilities were extensive, and he enjoyed great honor in his perfection. Then, iniquity was found in him.

One of the main things about iniquity is the stand that it takes against governmental authority. Any action that goes against bona fide authority springs from iniquity.

According to Ezekiel 28, Satan had access to the Garden of Eden. Before his fall, he enjoyed the major privilege of walking upon the earth. His covering consisted of precious stones that represent the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. The pipes that Lucifer sounded in eternity were made of gold. This same chapter declares that Lucifer was an anointed and perfect cherub during the days he served upon the holy mountain of God, walking amid the stones of fire.

What are the stones of fire? The Scriptures give us the answer. Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone (Matthew 21:42, Ephesians 2:20). The Holy Spirit is called "the spirit of burning" in Isaiah 4:4. God is the Rock, according to Deuteronomy 32:4. Today, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are fitting together a house, a temple fashioned of lively stones. These lively stones are believers who form the Church of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5).

Brought Down

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

"Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit" (Isaiah 14:12-15).

Lucifer walked among the Stones. He had access to the Trinity, and he heard the plans that God was making with regard to men, to redemption, and to the role of angels in serving

men (Acts 2:23). Perhaps that last item is the one that sparked Lucifer's rebellion. For whatever reason, being the anointed cherub was no longer enough for him, so he set his sights on being "like the most High." In rebelling, Lucifer came out from under the covering to the Stones of fire and was "cut down to the ground."

Rebellion is as the "sin of witchcraft," according to 1 Samuel 15:23: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." The Hebrew word for "witchcraft" speaks of divination and false prophecy. "Stubbornness" refers to pushing or pressing against something. This verse, directed at King Saul by the prophet Samuel, reveals that rebellion and stubbornness are linked to rejection of the Word of God.

Satan rejected the order of the Lord. What he heard in the convention of eternity (in Acts 2:23) did not sit well with "the anointed cherub." So he struck out on his own, introducing his will against the will of God, and a third of the angels followed his lead.

The devil and his demons now have turned their attention toward God's people. He consis-

tently uses his supernatural powers to destroy because he has brought himself out from under the covering of God. He has no love so he kills and murders. He has no joy so he promotes alcoholism and drug addictions. He has no peace so he uses manipulation to bring people under his control. He has no patience, no gentleness, and no goodness. Satan's whole operation is to attack, attack, attack—to go against the plan of God and the people of God in order to fulfill his desires as the god of this world.

Chapter Two

THE MIND OF SELF

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:1-4).

Because of the war Satan is waging against believers, it very important for us to stay under the covering of God. The comfort and consolation of Christ comes to us as we fellowship around God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. Simply, we make up our minds to think with God. That decision draws people together

in one accord and brings us under His covering.

This covering keeps us from the terrible onslaught of satanic division. Conspiracies and slander do not affect us. We are protected, and we desperately need protection from God. That is the whole purpose of God's covering for our mind; it is all about protection.

Paul was addressing the Philippian church from his prison cell in Rome. His primary theme in this epistle is joy and confidence in God. In Philippians 2:3, the apostle to the Gentiles describes how likeminded churches should operate—without strife and vainglory. This operation comes only when there is lowliness of mind present in each believer.

Strife comes from division. People start taking sides, and this is what happens when the fruit of the Spirit is not evident. If we are on God's side, then we are gatherers. If we are not on God's side, then we are scatterers, even if we don't really mean to scatter (Matthew 12:30). The fruit of the Spirit covers us as we gather, and the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified.

Love Yourself, Love Others

Division is detoured when we make up our minds to esteem one another as better than our-

selves. "Esteem" is from the present participle of the Greek word hegeomai, a word that speaks of the continuous action of putting someone higher in our thinking. Another should be set at the top of my mind.

This idea encompasses the principle of honor. I honor others. I honor their volition and freedom to choose. There is no interference, no manipulation, no carnal expectations, no soul attachments.

Esteeming others better than ourselves does not mean what many people take it to mean. It's a very wonderful principle if we understand it correctly. I am to love myself. I am not putting myself down in order to raise someone else above me. I think more highly of others, but my thoughts about myself are not in the gutter. Think about what Jesus said:

"…Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

How am I to love my neighbor? I am to love

him as I love myself. A person who has problems loving others really has a problem loving himself. He sees everything he dislikes about himself in others, therefore he cannot love others.

God can give us godly self-esteem. That is, He teaches us just how precious we are to Him. The make up of our mind must include His thoughts toward me, which are thoughts of peace, thoughts that always consider an expected end (see Jeremiah 29:11).

After I have learned to think with God regarding myself, then I can use my volition and choose to see others as better than myself. I honor and esteem others in terms of their rights and privileges to live unto God.

Chapter Three

THE MIND OF CHRIST

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name;

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

"And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:5-11).

Remember, the mind of the devil is a mind of selfish advantage. But a very different mind is represented in Christ.

Jesus was born to die. He became a man in order to pay for every sin the human race would commit. He took upon Himself all of our iniquities. Even though it was within His rights and power to demonstrate His omnipotence, He never did a thing in His humanity that was not led by the Holy Spirit.

There is no way for us to possess the mind of Christ apart from hearing the Word of God consistently. Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Our problems of unbelief have a simple solution: Hear the Word, hear the Word, hear the Word! The Word provides us with the mind of Deity, the mind of the Creator, the mind of wisdom.

Are you having trouble surrendering to God? Hear the Word and have it give you the mind that led Christ to Calvary where He bled and died in your place.

God will give you the mind that forgives and forgets any wrong committed against you. The Word will make up your mind so that you will be absolutely convinced that He will never

leave you nor forsake you.

Satan understands just how much power resides in the Christian who has the mind of Christ. For this reason, the devil relentlessly attacks our minds.

Overcoming Our Weaknesses and Defeats

One of hell's great attacks is to keep someone rooted in his past. Perhaps you were hurt as a child or as a young person. Maybe there was an incident of molestation or abuse. That kind of wound can linger long in a person's life.

I can remember one young girl who struggled with such memories after many months of coming to church and private counseling sessions. Then, a Sunday morning sermon released her. She finally recognized that she had to start thinking with the mind of Christ. She simply had to agree to receive what the Word said about her. Now, she chooses to think about being free and clean and pure as one of God's cherished children.

God knows that we are human and that we are frail. We are weak. It is up to us to realize our needs and to realize that only God can meet those needs. We can try many things, but ultimately we have to come to the understanding

that only God can give us His mind through His Word.

We need to understand that sooner or later we will rise to the level of our character. If we are lax and passive, that will come out somehow. Circumstances will unveil such realities. On the other hand, if I am hungry and thirsty for the Word of God and I receive it regularly, my life will reveal that I have the mind of Christ.

Let's communicate the Word to each other in the power of the Spirit through the grace of God and watch what happens. Imagine the conversations we can have and can enjoy. Imagine what we can do in this world when our minds are renewed day by day. Imagine what can happen when believers look at each other and confess, "We are one, we are likeminded, we are in Christ, and we are His forever."

CONCLUSION

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:12-16).

We have the mind of Christ.

It is contained within the pages of our Bibles. Let's just use it. Let's have it become the means

of everything that we say and do.

Sure, we are human and we will fail. But the Book tells us how to handle even these situations. I simply name my failure, confess it quickly, rebound, and return to thinking with the mind of God again.

By letting God's mind be in us, we can do all things. The attacks of Satan won't hinder us. We will understand our position and our standing in Christ, and we will live under the banner of love that He has raised up over us.

The Meek Will He Teach

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ…" (2 Corinthians 10:1*a*).

The doctrine of meekness is one of the most precious subjects in the entire canon of Scripture. Meekness goes along with gentleness. According to Galatians 5:22-23, if we have the fruit of the Spirit, which is love—the love of God—we will also have joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. The seventh ingredient is meekness.

Jesus Christ is our primary example of meekness. He represented it to the world in the way that He surrendered the power of His deity and lived as a man among men, according to the leading the Holy Spirit.

In this booklet we examine this great principle, a principle that is so needed in Christian circles today. As you read these pages, my prayer is

that you will come to understand what it means to live in the strength of God, and God alone.

Chapter One

THE MEEK AND LOWLY HEART

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Just picture it now: The Lord Jesus is speaking, and you are in the front row, and Jesus says, "Come to Me. You don't have to be afraid. Whatever state you're in, just come. I'm meek. I'm lowly."

It's a beautiful thing for Christ to characterize Himself in this way.

He is speaking to all who "labour and are heavy laden." Here, "labour" refers to the times when we have sinned and when we have failed miserably. "Heavy laden" speaks of the times when somebody has hurt you terribly and you

are carrying that burden. So, no matter if you did something wrong or someone did something against you, the invitation from Jesus is, "Come."

He is saying, "Whatever your state is, come. Maybe you fell flat on your face. Maybe people have hurt you. But, you will find rest if you'll just come to Me. If you yoke up with Me, you'll find that My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." This statement, coming from Him, is so beautiful because so often ministries and preachers characterize God outside of meekness. Oh, the Word of God has so much to say about meekness.

In Psalm 147:6, the Word of God says, "He lifts up the meek." So here is a person who is meek and who may have fallen. He has fallen but he is honest. He is very meek, but he did fall. That is reality. But what does Jesus do? He lifts this one up. Psalm 147:2-3 also tells us that He gathers the outcasts, heals broken hearts, and binds up the wounds. Do you understand this?

The Even Place of Meekness

I want to share with you what meekness

means for us. In Psalm 76:9, the Word of God says that Jesus Christ came to the earth to save the meek. Psalm 25:9 says, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." In other words, the meek will hear the Word of God.

Meekness, in the Bible, speaks of an inward condition of the mind and heart, expressed to God first. We are meek when we do not inwardly resist God but accept whatever He does with us as good, believing that it is for our benefit.

Ameek person may fall; a meek person may sin; a meek person may have weaknesses; but he is meek, meaning he is honest. He recognizes His need for help and is very willing to receive help. So God will teach this one who is meek, and he will be Spirit-taught.

It all happens because of meekness.

Psalm 26:12 says that we stand in an even place, and in the midst of the congregation we bless the Lord. That "even place" means I am no better than anyone and I am no worse than anyone. Calvary is an even place.

My mother communicated this to me years ago when I was being mocked, coming from a poor family. She said, "You're no better than anyone and you're no worse than anyone."

That's what meekness says. You stand at an even place.

Meekness is manifested in a person who will not allow distractions to get the best of him. He is one who will not allow failure to keep him down; he will not allow being hurt by others to disturb him; he will not allow circumstances to stop him from coming to God just as He is. That is the way a meek person is.

If someone says to this person, "Hey, you failed last night," his answer is very simple:

"But I came to God, and He was meek and lowly in His heart. I yoked up with Him, and I got rest. His yoke is easy. His burden is light."

Chapter Two

COME BOLDLY TO THE THRONE

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of our need" (Hebrews 4:16).

To be meek does not mean that we let people walk all over us, but that we transfer our rights to ourselves in order to honor the plan of God. To be meek does not mean that we live in the excuse of our old sin nature. It means that we transfer our rights to the flesh and put on Christ. The meek person knows that we have access to God every moment of our lives. Not only do we have access, but we can be bold about it. We don't have to be ashamed or shy. Instead of being ashamed, we can rush in to the throne of God. We can come boldly to the throne of grace.

Don't let your shame stop you from running there with all your heart. Come boldly to the throne of grace and obtain mercy and grace to help in the time of need. Boldly! He tells us to

come boldly.

And this, too, is meekness.

Go to Jesus

Meekness means that I live in the consciousness of God's love, and meekness is the ingredient, or characteristic, of love that He expresses toward me. I live in the consciousness of God loving me, so I have His love. Meekness expresses His attitude toward me and reveals what He does in me and through me as an ingredient of love. This is God-consciousness.

When we are God-conscious, all kinds of pressures and burdens come upon us and we go to Jesus.

In meekness, He receives us.

In meekness, He forgives us.

In meekness, He teaches us.

In meekness, He loves us.

In meekness, He lifts us up.

In meekness, He comforts us and consoles us.

In meekness, He says, "Come to Me seven times a day if you have to."

Jesus does all of this in meekness to those who are meek.

The meek stand at an even place—Calvary—and they are conscious of God's Finished Work

and love all the time.

A meek person understands that without Christ, he can do nothing. (John 15:5).

And I will keep saying this, over and over again: If I don't have charity, I am nothing (1 Corinthians 13). If I don't have charity, it profits me nothing. He that sows is nothing. He that waters is nothing. But it is all God who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:7).

That is the attitude of a meek person.

Nobodies Are Made Somebodies in God's Plan

A meek person doesn't live in condemnation. He lives in the reality that without Christ, he cannot do anything.

Oh, but with Him—and here's the contrast—with Him, we can do all things (Philippians 4:13). He will supply all our needs. God supplies everything so that it is not you and I who live but Christ who lives in us.

You don't have to be anybody. God takes nobodies that are nothing and makes them saints, members of a royal family. He calls them special treasures, a holy people, a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). That is what God calls the crowd who understand that they are nothing.

The most beautiful thing about Jesus is this:

He died for everybody, He accepts everybody who believes, and He will bless anybody who is meek.

"But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalm 37:11).

Chapter Three

RESPONSES OF MEEKNESS

Say you come to me and shout at me. Perhaps you are angry, and you shout harsh words at me. By grace and in the meekness of God, I would hope that I would just look at you with eyes of compassion and respond with silence—first with silence, then with words of love.

If that is my response, then you will be exposed to Jesus Christ's spirit of meekness. Even if I don't agree with you, I will be very careful to give you the fruit of love in the midst of your anger, in your problem, or in your confusion.

That is what meekness does.

Jesus Christ takes the worst sinner and lifts him up. So if you fail, come to Him. Come if others have hurt you. Learn what Jesus is like. Learn of Him, because He is meek and He is lowly.

I love Isaiah 40:11, where it says, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the

lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

Gentleness with Meekness Precedes Greatness

Gentleness. David wrote that the gentleness of God made him great (2 Samuel 22:36).

No matter what circumstances prevail, no matter what dispositions are revealed, here is the meek and lowly Jesus, and He gently says to us, "Do you know that I paid for what you just did? Do you know why My blood was shed for what you just did? Do you know that who you are in your old sin nature was crucified with Me at Calvary? Do you know that?"

The Cross of Calvary—that is an amplification of the greatest demonstration of meekness.

In the Old Testament, much is said of all the sins that David committed. Yet, David still wrote in Psalm 32:1-2, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." For those who believe on Him who justifies the ungodly, our faith (without works) is counted for righteousness (Romans 4:5-6).

The Heart That Follows After God

The one thing that made David a man after the heart of God (Acts 13:22), the one thing that made David do all of God's will is this: David just relied all the time on meekness from heaven. He relied on it. Fail as he did, David would come to the One who is meek and lowly, and he would find rest.

Then, David would sit down and write another inspired Psalm.

I can just imagine David communicating very intimately with God. "Lord God, Your gentleness has made me great. Not my gifts. Not the fact that I'm a king. Not my military genius and ability. Not the fact that I killed Goliath. That is not the reason You made me great. You made me great because of who You are, expressed in how You have treated me all these years. I know I should have died because of what happened with Uriah (Psalm 118:17-18). I know that. I came close—one step away from death—but You decided not to do it. Nathan gave me quite a lesson (in 2 Samuel 12), but he also said, 'God has put away your sin and you will not die.'"

God's Judgment: Imputed Righteousness

"The bruised reed he will not break, and the

smoking flax he will not quench until He brings judgment unto truth" (see Isaiah 42:3).

People preach on the first part of that verse, but they don't preach the last part of that verse.

What is the judgment? It is meekness, forgiveness, the Finished Work—judgment unto the truth about God. What is the truth? A bruised reed He'll not break. That is the truth. A smoking flax He will not quench. That is the truth. He brings forth judgment unto truth.

When you understand the characteristics of our Lord, worship always produces obedience. Praise always produces joy. The Blood always produces cleansing and spiritual purging.

In Exodus 2, a man who had a terrible temper murdered an Egyptian because his weakness was anger. But God took that weakness and then made meekness his strongest point. In Numbers 12, Moses is referred to as the meekest man on the face of the earth.

God will take our worst weakness— Please pay attention to this, because we all need to understand this principle: God will take our worst weakness and make it our strongest point because of Who He is and what His Holy Spirit does in us.

It is a very beautiful thing.

I want you to see that in this precious meekness, there is never a time that a meek person in an assembly won't be taught by the Spirit. It is a guarantee that he will be taught by the Spirit. The humble will hear and the meek will He teach, and God will show them the way (Psalm 25:9*b*). He will show them His way.

Jesus Uses the Bruised and the Battered

Consider the emphasis that Jesus Christ made on that one characteristic of His love. When you are discouraged, remember what Isaiah 42:1-4 says: God doesn't get discouraged. He doesn't get discouraged when we are a smoking flax or a bruised reed. He never gets discouraged with us. That is what this passage is really saying!

A bruised reed is worth nothing. Reeds were made into an instrument, like a flute, used by shepherds to call the sheep back to the fold. When one reed was "bruised" or broken, they'd have to throw away the whole thing. They couldn't repair it. But God says of bruised people such as us, "Well, everybody else would throw you away, but I'll use you. I'll use you."

We had kerosene lamps in my home when I was growing up. Of course, we didn't have elec-

tric power when I was very young, and we used the little oil lamps. The glass would get all black, and the lamp would be smoking when the wick became short and the kerosene got low. It would be all smoked and there would be no light that you could distinguish. You couldn't see much, so you'd have to clean it. You let it go out, clean it, and put some more kerosene in it.

But Jesus says of us, "I will not quench that smoking flax. I'll just stay with it and not get discouraged until I lift it up," because He lifts up the meek. That is the Lord Jesus expressing one of the most beautiful things for our lives: His love toward us. In Mark 1:31, it was Simon's mother-in-law. In Mark 9:27, it was the child He delivered from demons. The Son of God came to earth as a man to give us His life forever (Philippians 2:6-8)—perfect love expressed in meekness.

CONCLUSION

If there is anything that will lead people to Christ, it is the meekness they see in the people of God. Just the gentle attitude of Jesus will reveal this sweet fruit of the Spirit. If you want to solve a problem in your relationship with somebody, just let Jesus Christ's meekness come through. Let gentleness be your attitude expressed in your Christian manners.

Christ's meekness is the reason that for all eternity, you will see the scars on His glorified body. It is the reason you will see the wound in his side and the prints of the nails in His feet and on His hands. The reason is that when you and I—now betrothed to Him—become His Bride at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19), and we come back to earth in our honeymoon as the Bride of Christ, these things will always remind you that your Husband for all eternity is meek.

The Lamb! The Lamb of God, even with His

glorified body, is still the meek and lowly Lamb. He was the Lamb before we were created. He was the Lamb when He was here. He is the Lamb now and forever.

Oh, the meekness of the Lord Jesus! Let us run to the throne no matter what happens. Run to Jesus in our worst state. Run to Jesus, to the throne of mercy, to obtain mercy. Let's get help. How do you get help? By going to the throne of grace and obtaining mercy—that is how you get the help. You get help by racing to that throne just as you are, by grace through faith.

Father, bless our hearts with these truths today. Fill us with this meekness. Encourage us and satisfy us with this meekness that is in us, because the most important thing right now is for us to enjoy the fruit of meekness.

The Meekness of Wisdom

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible tells us not to despise the day of small things (Zechariah 4:10). So many Christians, however, do not understand that our attitudes in the small things, in the details of life, reveal the essence of wisdom in our lives.

The difference between what we are doing and what we could be doing is the key to our potential of walking in wisdom. God is far more interested in our willingness to yield to Him and His Word than He is in our talents or gifts. We are never to measure ourselves except by the Word of God—what God has to say about us.

This booklet deals with real, pure Christianity. In these pages, we will learn how the Holy Spirit comes in, beyond the communication of words, to order our steps and lead us in God's wisdom. That requires both meekness and humility. We will be face to face with God so quickly. Only when we learn to operate in the meekness of wisdom will we be properly pre-

pared to meet Him. We can truly understand God's wisdom only if we lay aside our own opinions. To be able to do this, however, God must break the proud areas of our hearts.

Chapter One

REQUIRED: A BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

The Hebrew word for broken is *shabar*, and it speaks of brokenness because of sin. David used this word because of his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and his sin of sending her husband, Uriah, to his death on the battlefield. After Nathan confronted him, in 2 Samuel 12, David had a broken heart. The prophet creatively told him the story of a rich man who owned flocks of sheep and lambs but who took away the only lamb of a poor man to make a meal for a guest. Enraged, David made this statement: "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die!"

Then Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man."

David had sentenced himself. "Oh, I have

sinned," David cried, broken and devastated when faced with the reality of what he had done. For this reason, David would pray, "Let me experience the joy of my salvation once again. Help me to get back to my relationship with You, God. I am so hurt by what I have done with my life" (see Psalm 51:12-15) Often when circumstances and adversity come against people, they are broken because everything in life is coming against them.

In Deuteronomy 1:21, the Hebrew word chathath is translated "discouraged," which means "broken or discouraged because of violence." This type of brokenness could come from devastation due to hurricanes, tornadoes, robberies, fires, or any number of things. These events break people.

In Psalm 38:8 and Psalm 51:8, "broken" (dakah in the Hebrew) refers to someone who is broken or emotionally crushed under tremendous pressure because he doesn't understand grace. He will not confess, receive, and live by grace and thereby refuses to grow in grace. Therefore, he is tremendously afflicted and affected in his emotions because he is not established in the grace of God.

Wisdom always considers the long term effect of our choices and actions. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2). Godly jealousy has virtue because of its motive and its object. Jealousy outside of wisdom lacks both a divine motive and love toward its object. It has no virtue. Instead, jealousy is a terrible, self-destructive emotion.

Paul revealed a godly motive when he said, "That I may present you espoused to one husband as a chaste virgin." "Chaste" means pure. When was the last time that you considered yourself as pure? You are engaged to Jesus Christ as your only Husband for eternity, (while not forsaking your present one). "A chaste virgin" speaks of one who is extremely pure, having the proper mind and manner of speaking; one who allows the resources of the property of his soul to be expressed as a brand-new creature through the Holy Spirit of God. This expression is what the Word of God calls wisdom.

God says that wisdom can only be related to

the instruction of the knowledge of God's nature (Proverbs 15:33). Knowledge can only be understood in terms of wisdom, and wisdom always reveals the nature of divine love. For this reason, Proverbs 8:33 says, "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not." Why? "That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who...is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:29-31).

Wisdom Knows When to Be Quiet

"[Jesus Christ] was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

As He was led to the slaughter, Jesus Christ did not open not His mouth. That is so important, it was said twice in one verse. I find it extremely unique that Wisdom, who is God, cried out in Proverbs 8:1. But Wisdom also chose to open not His mouth in front of His accusers when He made the decision to die for us, laying down His life while we were yet sinners. When

He identified with our sins as He hung on the Cross, He expressed the solemnity, the sacredness, and the holiness of wisdom.

Before we can have understanding, we must have wisdom. Before wisdom comes knowledge, which we receive through instruction. The Bible says in Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Then it says in Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." These verses do not contradict each other, but instead they reveal the progression of how we can grasp truth that comes from Infinite Wisdom. The way into the Holy Place is through understanding, but fools do not accept it (Proverbs 1:7).

Wisdom is far more than knowledge. The nature of God is revealed through knowledge but expressed in wisdom. It represents concentration on the truth of divine life through the reality of the Resurrection. Wisdom is a revelation of meekness and humility of the Creator in the life of the believer. The Christians who really live by the Book are those who lay down their lives. By doing so, they reveal the life and nature of Wisdom as it cries out on the street.

Chapter Two

A CONVERSATION OF MEEKNESS

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13).

This verse means that my heart will deal honestly and objectively with a situation, providing I am filled with the Holy Spirit. Who is the wise man? He is someone who is endued with knowledge, who shows the meekness of wisdom through a divine conversation, even when confronted.

"Meekness of wisdom" is a magnificent phrase. It is the basis for every great statement in the Bible inspired by the Holy Spirit to and through men. Our first prayer should not be that we would do a great work for God, but that we would have God's wisdom as workers. God is more interested in the worker than the work.

We must also consider something else the Word of God says: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. And whosoever hateth his brother does not have eternal life but abideth in death. As much as Jesus Christ laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for one another" (see 1 John 3:14-16).

James 3:13-14 says our conversation (not just the words we say but the life we live) must reveal His works by His faith with meekness of wisdom. "…But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth." If my conversation is not motivated by the Holy Spirit's love through faith, based on the truth without compromising the meekness of wisdom, then I am a Christian revealing a lie against the truth of God. When someone raises his voice in reaction, his life is a lie at that moment. It is perfectly in order to tell the truth, but it must be done in love, inside the Kingdom of love.

Avoid Wisdom from Below

"This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:15).

Bitterness, envy, and strife in the heart rep-

resent the opposite of meekness. When we display these attitudes, the Word of God makes it very clear that this is wisdom from below, revealing a system of thinking in self-preservation. A bitter or envious person has a vocabulary that is conditioned by what he has learned through bad experiences, wrong initiations and negative reactions.

This person has a very definite system of thinking. His wisdom descends not from above. It is, instead, earthly (epigeios in the Greek), in James 3:15. It is conditioned by the cosmic system of the world. The satanic government is earthly, and it maintains a whole system of music, a system of education, a system of social engagement in life. This demonic world of Ephesians 6:12 controls the entire world system and what those who are subject to it will do.

This type of wisdom is "sensual" (psuchikos), which means "soulish." The demons take this wisdom, as it has been constructed by the armies of hell, and they impart it to the soul of the recipient. Then, the presence of soulish wisdom allows certain demons to hypnotize the memory center, introducing devilish wisdom (daimoniodes), or demon activity inside the memory.

"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isaiah 50:4).

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

"The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth" (Proverbs 10:20).

Through the creativity of Isaiah 50:4, the motive of love in 2 Corinthians 5:14, and the wisdom of Proverbs 10:20, my soul is able to access the "grid" of God's Word. A grid conducts an electrical current through a storage area, in this case the soul. I must guard my soul and use wisdom to discern what can have access to it. When the grid of doctrine in categories form a divine current in my soul through wisdom from above, which is pure, peaceful, and gentle, then I am "easy to be entreated, full of mercy, full of good fruits, full of good works, and without hypocrisy." I have what it takes to make peace with others because there is peace

within me. This is wisdom with meekness.

Wisdom is always rooted in the government of God's grace (Luke 2:40), and wisdom always has a capacity to be quiet, even when it has a right to speak. It is kind and gentle, even when it has a right to react to someone's flesh as far as the wisdom of the world is concerned. This precious wisdom, the fruit of righteousness, is sown by those who make peace.

Chapter Three
THE WISE WALK IN LOVE

"Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning."

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is [experiential] understanding" (Proverbs 9:9-10).

Give discipline to a wise man in words of wisdom, and he will be even wiser through the words that convey discipline. This beautiful passage speaks of "instruction," which in the Hebrew speaks of someone "in a school of wisdom." If a teacher communicates God's wisdom, then a wise man will be taught; he will learn and become a wiser and greater person because he has received proper instructions through the school of wisdom.

"Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end" (Proverbs 19:20). In Hebrew, the word for counsel is etsah,

which speaks of receiving the very testimonies of God. The Hebrew word for instruction is muwcar, which again means the "school of wisdom."

Psalm 119:98 declares that the commandments of God make me "wiser than my enemies." Wise, here, is chakam, which is to become wise through instruction. We become wiser than our enemies when the life of God becomes the main ingredient of our lives through the commandments of Jesus Christ.

Laying Down Your Rights

"And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

"Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

"Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

"Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

"But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly" (Genesis 13:8-13).

Now Abram is a man who was laying down his life for his younger nephew. He wasn't interested in usurping his authority to get the best of the land. Lot lifted up his eyes toward the green grass of Sodom and Gomorrah, but Abram did not care. He said, "You take what you want, and I will take what's left."

He who would become the father of our faith (Romans 4:12) was demonstrating not just the knowledge of wisdom but the life of wisdom. There was no argument, no strife. "Strife" means "sides." Abram would not take a side.

"And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

"For all the land which thou seest, to thee

will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

"And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered" (Genesis 13:14-16).

Letting God Work

In Exodus 32:32, after the Israelites had failed utterly and danced before the golden calf, Moses was angry, and God was angry—so angry that He threatened to wipe out the nation and start over with Moses' family. But Moses responded so beautifully in the identification of love and in the identity of wisdom. He told God, "If You are going to blot them out of the book of life, blot me out too." He identified with those who didn't deserve a thing.

Christ died for us while we were yet sinners—representing the best example of wisdom. When Christ restored Peter, it was such a gracious example of grace and wisdom. All of the disciples forsook Jesus (Matthew 26:56b), yet He used all of them again except for Judas Iscariot, who committed suicide.

These are tremendous examples of God's wisdom. Meekness applied allowed the treasure to come out through earthen vessels, people,

who became broken under pressure and circumstances (see 2 Corinthians 4:7).

Interceding for Those against You

By the same token, Moses interceded for his sister Miriam when she was stricken with leprosy for attacking Moses when he married an Ethiopian woman. God gave her the disease for seven days, but Moses prayed for her to be released from it. The fact that Miriam was trying to control him, a man of God, by interfering in his personal life meant nothing to Moses. He cared for the person, not what she had done. He didn't hold it against her. He just loved the person. "She's my sister. Please heal her" (see Numbers 12:13).

Oh, that brothers and sisters and families could have this attitude of love! This meekness of wisdom reveals the knowledge of God's life in the love of God through a yielded life. Again, God cares more about our ability to yield to Him than He does our gifts. Yielding to the Finished Work of Christ is the greatest response that I can give my Savior and my Lord.

In Romans 9:3, Paul made this amazing statement about the Jews who were always attacking him: "…I could wish that myself were

accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Paul is saying here, "If I could somehow go to hell so that my Jewish brothers and would be set free, I would gladly do it." That reveals the meekness of his wisdom. He would gladly have done it.

Consider Stephen in Acts 7:60 as he prayed for those stoning him to death. His very last words were, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." In amazing pain, he told God, "Do not charge them with stoning me and killing me." There is the life of love revealed in the wisdom of knowledge, in the meekness of the Holy Spirit's power, visibly being revealed from an invisible source within the inner man of Stephen.

"For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it" (Ecclesiastes 7:12).

Our true defense is a life of resurrection. It is a life of love revealed through words in the spirit of power. Wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense, too. But wisdom gives life to them that have it. God speaks to the wise hearted, whom He has filled with the spirit of wisdom (Exodus 28:3).

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

There isn't anything that we need more than brokenness—brokenness when we're alone, brokenness when we are with others, brokenness before our God. It takes brokenness to really experience 1 John 3:16.

"Perceive" is an intensive perfect active indicative of the Greek word *ginosko*. The intensive perfect is a finished product of thinking something through. The intensive perfect describes moving on beyond old ways of thinking to thinking toward an ultimate end, based on God's truth, until the issue is settled. His love is the answer. Once I perceive God's love and recognize the Finished Work regarding any situation I am facing, I am determined to walk in that love. I do not have to strive trying to enter the framework of love by reaction and rebellion. Even after I have rebelled and become broken, I have learned simply to walk in love as a dear child.

So often when someone is going through a

situation in his life, he tries to rush into love instead of walking in love. When you are walking in love, you are spontaneous in loving, even in difficult circumstances. If you have to get into love after reacting, you may try to get spiritual for a couple of minutes, but the truth is going to come out through your flesh by your attitude, your words, and the way you speak them. The one who walks in love as a dear child of God in the Holy Spirit has a life that is a sweet incense to God, manifested to others (Ephesians 5:1-2).

Ginosko—perceive—also emphasizes understanding or grasping the truth. Here, it embraces the life of knowledge, and the knowledge gained by experiencing the life of love in this specific context.

"The love of God" is *ten agapen*: a feminine noun in the accusative case that speaks of a love that is never self-seeking but chooses to love, just as Christ laid down His life for us because of love.

"Laid down" is the verb *tithemi*. A laid down life takes risks because of the way it loves. It risks being lied about, it risks being hurt, and it never fights back in reaction. It risks getting the short end of deals. Such things do not matter to a life laid down and expressed through the

premise of John 3:16: “For God so loved...He gave.” That is the meekness of wisdom.

CONCLUSION

We need to operate in the meekness of wisdom toward each other. We need to pray for each other. We need to intercede for each other. We need to become members of an army of intercessors for the Lord. We need to understand what supplication means, what intercession means, and what it means to have this kind of prayer life.*

Whatever we do—whether as a pastor, a teacher, a businessman, a mother, or a housewife—is an opportunity to express meekness. What we do and how we do it reveals a picture of our inner man. When wisdom is energizing our souls, meekness will be revealed in all these things.

We will not demand our rights or allow the desires of our flesh to assert themselves. We will instead express God's nature with laid down lives that cry out as a witness to a world controlled by the wicked one, who touches us not.

*Read Do I Really Know How to Pray? and Intimacy in Prayer, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications (1997 and 1998).

The Monster Sin

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INTRODUCTION

There is a certain sin that is the monster of monsters. Many of us have no idea how close we may be to entering into the progression of this sin. It can come in so quietly. It can come through a progression of time.

This sin can come in when you are very sincere. It can come when you are very busy and serving God. It is one of the most dangerous sins we can face. Unless we learn about it, understand it, and really spend time studying it, I guarantee that we will fall into it.

As this booklet will show, this great monster is the sin of pride. It is what prompts Christians to lift themselves above God's Word and His plan on this earth. But God, who is rich in mercy and full of grace, has a plan to deliver us through humility and to make us more than conquerors against the monster sin of pride.

Chapter One

LUCIFER'S DOWNFALL

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

"Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

"They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms" (Isaiah 14:12-16).

"Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (Ezekiel 28:14-15).

Since the moment Lucifer fell, he became an enemy who wants to destroy anything that could bring glory to God. The English phrasing in these verses may make it seem as if the rebellion of Lucifer (who was cast down as Satan) took place over a period of time, but the Hebrew tenses make it clear that it did not. If his fall were progressive, he would have been living in sin while in heaven, which is impossible.

Adam and Eve fell into sin when they made a series of wrong decisions, influenced by the deceiver himself: Satan. Since then, all men are born with an old sin nature and bound for trouble, as sure as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:7). And when a Christian, who has been redeemed and delivered from the old sin nature, falls into sin, a progression of wrong choices can be traced to the sinful act.

The angels, however, were created as perfect beings in a perfect environment, with no volitional constraints. God did not create evil, and He tempts no man (James 1:13). Therefore, though it might seem otherwise, Satan's fall could not have been progressive.

Just what happened to Satan? In the light of Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, one possible context is the following. Perhaps Satan saw things he did not like, yet he still respected God. He must have begun to question the preeminence of God. Then, one day, the questioning turned into iniquity. That iniquity led to an inward, mental rebellion against the nature and authority of God.

Satan rebelled against the character of God because it seemed as though God was a respecter of persons. As the highest of all the angels, he had been present at the counsel of the Trinity and heard the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit discuss the eternal program for Redemption (Acts 2:23; Ezekiel 28:14):

"We will let any rebellious angels go to hell, but there will be another creation. We will create the human race a little lower than the angels. They will sin, but they will be able to go to heaven by choosing to be redeemed through the eternal plan of salvation."

Lucifer must have thought, "Save mankind? Impossible. Save people who belong in hell because they are sick from the soles of their feet to the tops of their heads? The angels make one

wrong choice—just one choice—and that's it, they are in hell forever. That is not fair!"

God's plan for His creation was perfect. Consider this: The angels were in an eternal state, and they could not have been in a more perfect state. They were perfect creations, no matter what their deliberations were. So I believe that when Satan and the angels who agreed with him rebelled against God, they made perfect and final decisions. They revealed perfect hatred just as God reveals perfect love.

From Deliberation to Devastation

As one-third of the angelic host, created perfect to glorify God and to serve Him, made the decision to rebel against God, it was an eternal decision. People on earth do not make such eternal decisions, except for when they accept Christ as Savior, even on their deathbed, or when they reject Him forever.

The angels cannot have a deathbed repentance. They made eternal decisions based upon the opinion that God's love is not fair. This is the point where they forever turned against the character of God. They don't think God's grace makes sense. In setting themselves against the character of God, they stand against the author-

ity of God, revealing their pride against God and His plan.

Every one of us is in danger of falling into the sin of pride more than any other sin in the world. This sin is different from other sins, such as the sin of adultery. The normal person who falls into adultery feels guilty, and he grows fearful and scared.

On the other hand, this monster sin of pride reinforces a person in his boldness and arrogance. Adultery, lying, and cheating do not tend to do this. But pride will reinforce you in self-exaltation against God and His Word with reason, logic, and intellectual arguments, substantiating that what you are doing is the right thing.

The great danger is to fall into this sin and then let it slowly, mentally, gradually affect you. Eventually, it will draw you away because you refuse to submit to some aspect of God's character, to some part of His Word, or to some part of His authority over your life.

Following the Leader

Pride is based on iniquity, which differs from sin. Iniquity involves a distortion or perversion, according to the Hebrew text. Apattern of pride, through iniquity, develops because of choices.

Evil is iniquity finalized because there is so much infection that not a single thing will correct it. Yet, though iniquity can be corrected in mankind, it could never be corrected in the angels.

What is worse is that this monster sin in a person derives strength through identification with others who share the same opinion. Pride causes people to identify and blindly follow an ungodly leader, one who draws them with flattery and deceit. In the case of one-third of the angels in heaven, the followers would face eternal damnation for him. According to Ezekiel 28:14-15, one day in eternity, Satan came to the end of himself with God. Whatever deliberations he had in his heart crossed over the line and turned into iniquity.

The heart is the center of our mind, emotions, volition, conscience, and self-conscience. It is the essence of everything we are. Ultimately, it involves our motivation with a frame of reference and a definition of what we are going to do. Decisions that are made in the heart, whether godly or evil, produce certain behaviors and consequences.

For example, believers whose hearts are after God can't wait to get to church. They purpose to gather with the assembly, expecting that some-

thing is going to be imparted to them that will change their lives. Their hearts are guided by conviction from the Holy Spirit. Some believers, however, do not purpose to come to church on some days. They end up being distracted and not getting to church. Something is off in their hearts. It may be something very small, but it can grow into a monster that controls them.

Iniquity was found in Satan's heart and God said, "That's it." Satan fell like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18). God allowed him to dwell in the lower part of the second heaven and permitted him and his armies access to the entire earth. In this day, I consider it most important that we understand the role of these satanic armies. I try not to become preoccupied with the attacks, but I know that if I were commanding military forces I would want to know my enemies and develop a strategy to defeat them. Spiritually, we have to be ready to stand as part of God's army against the onslaught of the enemy. We have to know what it means to be part of God's army.

Chapter Two

PROTECTION THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

"Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Proverbs 16:18-19).

Here we see the result of rebellion against the authority and character of God. Pride is subtler in the believer than it was with Satan. Lucifer had perfect knowledge. No one had ever made the decision that he would make. He was the leader of the angels, and he had a supernatural mind and will.

"Haughty" is a key word. It speaks of going in a different direction from what you have been taught because you misinterpret the truth. This is the mindset of a person who changes his viewpoint on fundamental doctrines of the Bible. That is haughtiness.

Self-Exaltation

Pride involves exalting ourselves above the plan of God, exalting ourselves above the whole counsel of the Word of God, exalting ourselves above the Cross, and—here's the big one—exalting ourselves above the Body of Christ and its leadership.

Leaders are more subject to pride because of the positions of authority they hold. Pride can come in when they do not have a provision for correction through accountability. Every leader should make himself accountable, lest he exalt his own authority. Some will scoff at this idea because of their natural make-up. They just want to do things their own way, revealing independence and arrogance.

As the overseeing pastor of a worldwide ministry, I am accountable to a schedule that has me showing up for work seven days a week. I am accountable to the people in my church to study and prepare messages that never deviate from the old pathways. I submit to a schedule of visitation because of accountability. My accountability involves being available for prayer meetings and counseling sessions. Furthermore, along with the entire body of believers, I submit

to a church growth program that keeps us growing together in a vision.

Accountability does not mean having people that manipulate and control every move, but we must have an accountability that is practical, biblical, loving, patient, and honest.

Protected by Doctrine

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

"(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

"Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

This passage instructs Christian leaders to be very careful to stay within the unity of doctrine and the truth of the Word of God, which has passed the test of time in the trials of life. We must be very sure that we stay in the unity of the call of God for the entire assembly—understanding that there are diverse callings within that call, as every joint supplies (Ephesians 4:16).

We must be willing to surrender self-preservation and self-exaltation, submitting to one another in love to glorify God. Through the Holy Spirit and prayer, we must leave the novice stage and honor the Body of Christ. We operate as members in particular, hid with Christ in God. This way, we honor the eternal purpose of Christ.

Chapter Three

PROTECTED WITHIN THE WALLS OF GOD'S KINGDOM

The monster sin is pride. How does pride come in? Slowly, subtly, and invisibly. Understand this: Lucifer did not intend to become Satan. He was heaven's number one song leader, leading the angelic host in worship before the throne of God. Because of his position, he most likely had insight into many doctrines, instructing and having influence over the other angels. Lucifer was one of God's beloved. He was the one that was the best, the one that had the most going, the one who reflected only teachability and humility and surrender every moment of his existence. Then pride entered the picture.

When people refuse to come to church on a Sunday morning and they are absent for no good reason, missing out on God's appointed message for the hour, they are disobedient to the Word of God (Hebrews 10:25). They are proud

and bored, and they are flirting with the enemy.

The Kingdom of Humility

We must examine our hearts to see whether or not we are operating in God's kingdom—the kingdom of humility, the kingdom of meekness, the kingdom of submission, the kingdom of unity. We must function in the kingdom of God with an attitude that reveals that we care about what is happening among godly churches worldwide, and specifically with what is happening in the ministry God has called us to. We respect what individuals are doing in the plan and where the church is going.

Pride says, "This is what I think—and I am right."

Humility says, "This is what God thinks—and He is right."

Pride says, "This is what I am going to do, despite what God says."

Humility says, "I am praying to see what God wants me to do, and I am seeking the Body's mind about it. I will do what God wants me to do."

The Table of Organization

"Now there were in the church that was at

Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

"And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Act 13:1-3).

Paul and Barnabas did not get up and say, "Goodbye! God is leading us. See you later." They didn't just come up and say, "Pray over us and we are off." They asked their peers in leadership to pray. That prayer was an example of submission to authority in oneness and unity. They heard from God that they should go out, but they proceeded decently and in order, without usurping authority.

Nothing Paul and Barnabas did took away from their rights and priesthood before God. They understood this matter of protection that comes with the Body's blessing. They figured out what God wanted them to do and acted accordingly.

Recognize that obedience to God is an open door to accountability in the process of growing

in meekness as one new man. Submission to God's authority offers protection when I enter into agreement with God and take my place in the Body of Christ as a very particular member. Godly leaders never usurp God's authority or invade a believer's privacy. Instead, they cover those under them with proper delegated authority. This is for our protection and we should not be afraid of it.

Paul and Barnabas certainly earned the right to go ahead and do what God told them to do without seeking the approval of others in the church. Many in the Body of Christ have earned that same right because of maturity, faithfulness, and doctrine. Integrity and humility, however, leads them to bring their plans before the church elders. Their decision to do so promotes unity and production and blessing, as it leaves no place for pride.

CONCLUSION

The monster sin of pride is so subtle. Arrogance is the mother of pride. Her sisters are envy and jealousy. This is why pride is such a monster. It brings all these destructive characteristics into action.

It all starts with just a bit of self-exaltation. This is why it is so important to define this monster when it rears its head in your life. If left unchecked, pride will always lead to self-exaltation against the plan of God in your life.

The important thing is that we learn how to follow God under the covering of the Body He has provided for us. The life that overcomes grows in maturity, faithfulness, and doctrine as it edifies and builds the Body of Christ. What develops is a record of integrity as we say, "Yes" to His provision and protection.

The Morning Star Order

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and *they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years*.

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and *shall reign with him a thousand years*" (Revelation 20:4-6).

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my

Father. *And I will give him the morning star*. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:26-29).

Heaven will be a glorious place for everyone who goes there. Whoever accepts Christ as His personal Savior will be there, but not everyone will have the same experience. Facing the facts as the Bible presents them, it is clear that not all Christians will be rewarded equally.

There will be degrees of joy and privilege in heaven, just as there will be degrees of suffering and punishment in hell. If Paul went after the prize of the high calling, why can't we? Paul never said, "I'll be glad just to get into heaven." Rather, he gladly spent his life and was spent—for others. By the circumstances we go through in time, we are being trained to reign in eternity. Those believers who overcome and keep His works will be specially honored by the Father. They will receive the Morning Star Order and enjoy unmatched blessings in heaven.

Chapter One

FROM DUST TO GLORY

"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:47-49).

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

Think of the validity, veracity, value, and virtue of God's Word. The Bible says in Genesis 2:7 that God made man out of the dust of the earth. (The human body is made up of the same elements that make up the dust of the earth, and we have the scientific evidence to prove it!) Then

the Lord breathed into man the breath of life (the human spirit) so that man became a living soul—a spiritual, moral being with understanding and an intellectual capacity to expand to be like God (Genesis 1:27; 2:7).

God is Building a Glorious Church

God did not create both man and woman out of the dust. First He made the man and then took the woman out of the man. In the same way, the Church came out of Christ—out of His life. The same life that is in the Head, Jesus Christ, is also in His Body on the earth, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:23).

The Lord said through the apostle Paul, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself *a glorious church*, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). Imagine a perfect body in heaven, with no defects or impurities, and nothing gets old there, *ever!*

A song that we sing says, "From glory to glory He's changing me…from earthly things to the heavenly." God is building this glorious

Church through a process of transformation. As we continue to look into the mirror of God's Word, we are being changed from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

What does it mean when 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"? During the process of transformation, the Lord liberates us from the old sin nature through the written Word that becomes a living Word by the inspiration of the Spirit. We are becoming just like Jesus Christ. As He is in heaven, so are we now on the earth (see 1 John 4:17).

Riches of Glory

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, *to the praise of the glory of his grace,* wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:4-6).

"To the praise of the glory of his grace" means that God has given us the riches of grace so that we may be complete in Christ.

Paul prayed in Ephesians 3:16 that God would grant each of us "according to the riches

of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." How are we strengthened? According to the riches of His glory.

God is rich in glory. His name, which reveals His nature, His character, and the essence of His glory, is Mercy, Grace, Longsuffering, and Abundance in Divine Goodness and Doctrine. He wants to extend the riches of His glory toward us, in us, and through us, to others. And as we are transformed from glory to glory, we have the potential to receive the highest honor God could ever give to His children—the declaration of the Morning Star Order.

Chapter Two

THE MORNING STAR

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:41-42*a*).

The heavens reveal varying degrees of brightness. Moons and planets reflect the light of the stars, and the stars are measured and known according to their degree of brilliance. As the stars differ from one another, there will be different degrees of glory or brightness among believers in heaven. While there will be no unhappiness, there will be *degrees* of happiness, because of the degrees of glory.

Daniel 12:3 says, "They that be *wise*"—those who know Bible doctrine categorically and precisely in the light of grace and the Finished Work—"shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteous-

ness as the *stars* forever and ever." As we will see, these degrees of glory are stored up while we are on the earth and can lead to the declaration of the Morning Star at the Bema Seat of Jesus Christ. But, what is the Morning Star Order?

Jesus Christ: The Bright and Morning Star

According to Numbers 24:17*b*, "There shall come *a Star out of Jacob,* and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel," speaking of the first advent of Christ. In Revelation 22:16, Jesus Christ is "the root and the offspring of David, and *the bright and morning star*." He came out of Jacob's house and through the royal line of David.

The wise men came from the East to Jerusalem asking, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for *we have seen his star* in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2, also speaking of the first advent).

Then, in 2 Peter 1:19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, *until the day dawn*, *and the day star arise in your hearts*." This refers to the Rapture of the Church, when we will meet Christ in the air.

When studying a category such as the decla-

ration of the Morning Star Order, it is important to compare spiritual with spiritual, line upon line, and precept upon precept. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20). Why? Because "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

So, we read in Revelation 2:26-27*a*, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron." But in verse 28, He adds, "And *I will give him the morning star.*"

Rewards at the Bema Seat

The fact that any of us will go to heaven is the result of pure grace and mercy, only made possible by Christ's sacrifice. But God is also very clear about the fact that he rewards people according to their faithfulness. What an honor it will be to stand before God at the Bema Seat and to have Him declare us "winners!" The Lord will then distribute the crowns described throughout the New Testament.

First, there is the *soul winner's crown* (1 Thessalonians 2:19). Next is the *incorruptible crown*

(1 Corinthians 9:24-27). This crown is given to those who did not give in to lust, mentally or physically. They didn't involve themselves in pornography, promiscuity, or any form of sensual evil, but they kept their bodies under subjection.

Then there is the *crown of life* given to those who are faithful unto death (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10). The *crown of righteousness* in 2 Timothy 4:7-8 is for believers who lived in imparted righteousness by consistently receiving categorical doctrine. Finally, the *crown of glory* will be given to pastors who did not "lord it over" their flock, but used their office to lead, guide, and teach the Word of God in the classroom of the local church (1 Peter 5:4).

These are all crowns; however, there will be a group of people in heaven who will go beyond the crowns and receive the declaration of the Morning Star Order. A declaration is different from a crown. And the greatest privilege in all the world is to come before God at the Bema Seat and receive by grace one of God's declarations for all eternity (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Manifold Temptations? Celebrate!

Remember, the Bema Seat is not a place of

condemnation; it is a place of *evaluation*. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:5-7).

The believer who is an overcomer, a victorious winner through grace—will receive the reward of the Morning Star. He will be given power to reign over *nations* (plural), not just one nation. Being declared a winner doesn't mean that the believer won every battle. Job failed in his third trial six times, but he finally came out on top. He was a definite winner!

When we are faced with manifold temptations, the Word says we can "greatly rejoice." The Greek word is *agalliao*, which is translated literally "to jump for joy." When trials come against us from the outside, then line upon line, the categories of doctrine in the soul unite through the joy and power of the Holy Spirit, causing an inner celebration of the illumination of God's light.

Instead of withdrawing, getting bored and frustrated, and wanting to be a part of the world, when my faith is tested I have a celebration. With the Word of God dwelling richly in my soul, I begin speaking to myself in psalms and hymns, singing with grace in my heart unto the Lord (see Colossians 3:16). This is my privilege as a redeemed child of God.

So, as the Word dwells richly in your soul, it becomes the Word of His grace that builds you up (Acts 20:32). When trouble, pressure, projections, and accusations come against you, have a party inside your soul.

Doctrines come together and you can have an inward celebration to meet the outward circumstances. The doctrine of grace celebrates with the doctrine of mercy. The doctrine of mercy celebrates with the doctrine of compassion, which in turn celebrates with the doctrine of forgiveness, the doctrine of peace, the doctrine of honor, and the doctrine of faith. All of these doctrines gather together in your soul and pour themselves through your streams of consciousness making you God-conscious in the midst of Satan's cosmic world system.

Agalliao means that in *everything* we give thanks to God (Ephesians 5:20); we "rejoice ever-

more" (1 Thessalonians 5:16); and we "rejoice in the Lord alway" (Philippians 4:4*a*).

These manifold temptations could also be called "sanctification tests." When you hear a specific doctrine, and you receive it with meekness so that it is borne in your memory center; then, you are sanctified or "set apart" in that category. This is what Jesus was saying when He prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

How Long?

There are two adverbs of time in 1 Peter 1:6 that reveal the length of time we may be under manifold temptations: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though *now for a season*…." "Now" is *arte* in the Greek, meaning for this moment. "For a season" is *oligon*, a longer period of time. But while the trial is going on, we are being conformed to Christ's image. We glorify Christ before the angels—both the elect and the fallen. God promotes us by giving degrees of glory far beyond anything we ever dreamed of. We can't even conceive of it! But by the grace of God we will continue to store up degrees of glory. Who knows how far we can go?

Once we have internalized categories, God will try our faith before the angels and the world to see if we will use the doctrine we have to go against trials and attacks. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). When the Word that has been worked in is worked out, I can have an inner celebration for the maximum glorification of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:31).

For example, suppose I am in a trial where people or circumstances come against me, and I choose to be positive in my decisions toward the Word of God. What happens when I respond with positive volition? 1 Peter 1:7 says we are "found unto praise and honour and glory."

"Praise" *(epainos)* presents a picture of giving praise and commendation with applause. Imagine your angel (or angels) clapping for you! You can't hear them or see them, but they are clapping.

The second word in 1 Peter 1:7*b* is "honour" *(time)* which stands for the honor code of heaven's royal family. It means to place value on someone, with very high esteem.* As believer-priests, we respect one another, honor one an-

other, and see great value in one another's potential, no matter what's going on by sight. We love each other in the honor code of Christ.

The third word is "glory" (*doxa*), which speaks of glorious praise and worship. The Holy Spirit takes a category that we have learned and uses it to celebrate with other categories. As this happens we begin to reflect the glory of Jesus Christ's nature of love, mercy, grace, patience, wisdom, and peace during the trial of our faith. Every time we are positive in our volition toward the Word of God in the trial, a degree of glory is added to our soul bodies now and to our future glorified bodies.

A Raiment of White Light

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Revelation 3:4-5).

The word for "white" in verse four refers to a brilliant white light that is over the already glorified body. Each believer has a soul-body

separate from his physical body. The amount of doctrine you have circulating in your soul will determine the size of your soul-body and the degree of the brightness of the light over your glorified body in heaven.

This raiment of white light will be brilliant beyond description for those who receive the declaration of the Morning Star Order. Those who remain positive under pressure and live by the Word of God so consistently, store up thousands of degrees of glory. They internalize the nature of God in their souls because "to live is Christ"—they have His life through the sanctification of doctrine (Philippians 1:21; John 17:17).

Why would anyone want to dismiss this declaration? It is the highest honor in the universe. According to the parables of the pounds (Luke 19:12-27) and the talents (Matthew 25:14-29), some people will reign over ten cities, others will reign over five, and still others will reign over one. But some Christians will not reign over any cities because they never mixed faith with the doctrine they heard (Hebrews 4:2).

**Read* Love Comes through Honor, *by Pastor Paul Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK

Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). What is the prize of the high calling? It is a Christian becoming mature. At the end of his life while Paul awaited execution in a Roman prison he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Therefore he could say, "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (verse 8).

The Word of God says in 2 Timothy 2:12, "If we suffer [through persecution and rejection], we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us [the privilege of reigning with him]."

Paul also said in Romans 8:18, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the *glory* which shall be revealed *in* us."

These are the qualifications of the Christian who will receive the Morning Star Order, who will shine as the stars forever and ever:

He is oriented to the pure grace of God.

He is oriented to the categorical doctrines of Jesus Christ.

He has the right pastor-teacher.

He is in the right local assembly.

He is a faithful steward of the grace, the love, and the mercy of God (1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 4:2).

He lives in *theantric action*. (Theantric action is when the government of God operates in a man: The Father's plan within, the Son's execution of the plan, the Holy Spirit's revelation of the plan that glorifies the Son, the Word's definition for each thought and confession in the plan, and a Spirit-filled life using rebound when we fail.)

He believes and lives in the greatest commandment: to love one another.

He believes in the Great Commission to go into all the world and make disciples for Jesus Christ. It is not only believing, but being a part of a church that does these things. He is to be

personally involved with outreach in whatever way he can.

He is a true disciple of the Word of God, a member in particular in the Body, one who supplies the Body as well as receiving from it (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:16).

He has joy, faith-rest, and peace that passes understanding.

Called unto Glory and Virtue

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

When there are problems in a marriage, the husband and the wife are not called to get a divorce. They are called to reflect the nature of God toward the guilty party. They are called to go on to another degree of glory through taking on the power of the mind of Christ through the inspiration and manifestation of God's nature.

Though two people in a marriage are not perfect, they can use the grace of God and be pure in their motives toward each other. They have the privilege of expressing virtue love, first toward Jesus Christ—because He initiated it (1 John 4:19)—and then toward each other.

There are scores of Christian marriages where the husband does not have virtue love toward his wife, nor the wife toward her husband. They are not kidding anyone. This issue must be cleared up if they are ever going to receive degrees of glory. More than any other place, right decisions have to be made in the home.

Stars in Heaven

It will be one thing to receive crowns at the Bema Seat. But, friends, what an honor it will be for Jesus Christ to allow us to enter into the Morning Star Order through a declaration.

Jesus said, "I will give you the Morning Star." Even as He received from His Father and shared that glory, we shall receive from His Kingdom and share in a kingly glory. At the Bema Seat, everyone who receives the Morning Star Order is considered a star. (The unsaved "stars" in Hollywood have nothing on Christians!)

Daniel 12:3 says, "They that turn many to righteousness [will shine] as the stars forever and ever." Long after the arrogant crowd is in hell (and I pray they would be saved), Morning Star Christians will continue to shine for all eternity.

Let's not become familiar with the Word,

with the Body, or with Bible classes. Why should we? Every day is a step forward to new degrees of glory.

So why have a bad day if it's cold, or raining, and you have the flu? You are going to have a brand-new body forever in heaven. For now, just place your body under the dominion of the Holy Spirit, praise God, and live moment by moment singing praises, celebrating in your soul, because God is keeping His vineyard (Isaiah 27:2-3).

Knowing the promise is true (because the Promiser cannot lie), we can face tomorrow. When we consider the rewards that await us, we will have the energy and motivation to be Spirit-filled as we press toward the mark with our eyes on the Lord.

CONCLUSION

This Book I would rather own
than all the golden gems
From off the monarch's coffers shown
and all his diadems.
Yea, were the sea of crystal light
and the earth a golden ball,
And diamonds for the stars each night,
This Book is worth them all.

The Word of God is our provision to experience maximum glorification for all of eternity. Please consider this message. Please consider the Scriptures that have been given. Do not be forgetful hearers. After Jesus spoke a parable on the four kinds of hearers He cried, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 8:8*b*).

What an opportunity we have to forget the things that are behind and have a fixed heart toward our purpose on earth. Everything in life is an opportunity to be covered with the riches of

God's glory for all eternity. Every thought can have an eternal purpose, every confession an eternal meaning.

You can receive the Morning Star Order. Make this confession to God: "I'm heading for the prize of the high calling." The pulpit provides the food that enables you to understand and go after this great declaration.

Be settled in your heart at all times. Purpose in your heart that neither circumstances, people, feelings, nor moods are going to take you away from pursuing the Morning Star Order.

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The Most Precious Blood

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INTRODUCTION

Satan attacks churches that obey the Great Commission and the Great Commandment—churches that teach categorical doctrine according to the Finished Work.

The devil has no need to attack lukewarm Christians; but he fights, head on, Christians who are on the front line, who are deeply inspired to impart truth. Very often, he will attack in subtle ways, and some Christians don't even know it is happening.

In recent years, doctrine concerning the blood of Christ has come under tremendous attack. Without the precious Blood, there is no remission of sin. This booklet will show that it is only through His blood that was shed for us that we can have victory in our Christian life.

Chapter One

GIRDED BY TRUTH

"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

"And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand" (Exodus 17:8-9).

The people of Amalek, descendants of Esau (Genesis 36), are a type of the carnal man. In Exodus 17:8-16, they went up against the people of Israel (also see Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Moses told Joshua to choose men from among the people to go out and fight. With the rod of God's authority in his hand, as long as Moses' hand was raised, Israel prevailed. Yet, when Moses became weary, his hand went down, and Amalek prevailed. So Aaron and Hur placed a large stone under Moses, then they held up his hands until the sun went down, and Israel won the battle.

Moses was resting on a stone that represented the Chief Cornerstone, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:6). Moses' hands were held up by Aaron and Hur, a type of the Body of Christ. Joshua defeated Amalek with the edge of the sword, which is the Word of God.

According to Deuteronomy 25:18, Amalek came behind Israel, attacking her back parts when she was feeble. "Feeble" indicates the weakness of the flesh. Israel had a small soul at that point. The people were weary and they fainted, so Amalek easily attacked them from behind. There is no defense in the natural realm for someone attacking from behind, but God has a defense.

God's Defense Strategy: Master the Word

The Word of God says in Ephesians 6:13, "Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

The Bible is such a masterpiece, the way it correlates Scripture—line upon line, precept upon precept. For example, Isaiah 30:21 correlates with Ephesians 6:14*a* in its supernatural revelation of complete truth.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt

about with truth [doctrine]," the Bible says in Ephesians 6:14. The largest part of the armor was for the loins. It wrapped around the back and came together like a belt in front. God said, "The first thing I want you to put on is the armor of doctrine."

Isaiah 30:21 tells us how to receive doctrine: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Therefore, having our "loins girt about with truth" speaks of doctrine, having the truth of the Word of God directing us, which takes care of the enemy that tries to attack us from the back.

Put on the Armor and Take up the Sword

Ephesians 6:14 goes on to say that we are to put on "the breastplate of righteousness."

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

"Above all, taking the shield of [a living] faith, [(which comes from hearing the Word of God)] wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:15-16).

And after all this, Ephesians 6:17 says to put on "the helmet of salvation…." This means we

are to have our minds protected by the helmet of deliverance with the Finished Work of grace and love. Then, we are to take up "…the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." We are to use God's Word skillfully (see 2 Timothy 2:15).

Finally, after putting on all this spiritual armor, we are instructed to be "praying always for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

The whole armor takes care of every part of our lives. It includes doctrine to take care of what we cannot discern by sight. As a result, we will hear a word behind us saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it…." That is divine guidance: divine direction from behind.

Satan's Strategy

In Deuteronomy 25:18, Satan attacks those who are feeble: those who are tired due to overwhelming schedules, weary through mental stress, and fainthearted through threatening projections.

This is why Ahithophel proposed to Absalom, "I will get David, but not until he is weary" (see 2 Samuel 17:1,2). Similarly, the enemy came up from behind to attack Israel when they were weak because of their circumstances in the desert.

A Christian grows weary when he doesn't have on the whole armor, including the precise light of the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit, to help him serve God with his loins girded with doctrine. He will want to stay home. He will confess tiredness and weariness. What he doesn't realize is that he is being caused to faint because he doesn't have on the armor, with the girdle of truth taking care of his back parts. The enemy defeats him by attacking him from behind.

Chapter Two

STAYING IN TUNE WITH GOD

When a Christian doesn't attend church services, he doesn't take in doctrine. He is like a guitar with its strings slowly growing loose and out of tune. The guitar loses pitch because the strings are not being tended to properly. First, it gets off key just slightly, so that it is hardly noticeable, and then a little more. Finally, like a believer who gets weary and faints, that guitar can no longer carry a tune.

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall

renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:28-31).

"Renew" speaks of a believer going forward with the whole armor, filled with the Spirit all the time. Believers who do this mount wings as eagles. They wait upon the Lord first. Then they mount wings as eagles. Then they run and are not weary; they walk and do not faint.

A person who is not renewed can only grow weary. With all the demon armies on attack, there is no other way to prevent weariness. What happened to Moses' hands? They became weary.

In a Word of God ministry, godly leaders will be viciously attacked by demons in the physical realm. Moses wasn't living in sensual sins, but physically he was weak, and he became weary. He needed to have Aaron and Hur hold up his hands, and the Chief Cornerstone had to be underneath him.

God has given each of us the ability to live by faith and to use the whole armor of God. We need to recognize that we are members in particular in the Body of Christ. As we take our place, fitly framed, holding up one another

(Ephesians 2:20-22), we will not grow weary or faint.

Precise Thoughts for the Precise Battle

It is crucial that we understand how Satan battles in the details of life. We must think thoughts through until God controls our soul. Then, we will begin to receive precise life for the precise battle, with precise faith for a precise decision in a precise response to a precise attack.

A godly church is part of a work of God (Ecclesiastes 7:13 and John 6:29). This is why a godly church needs people who are covering first base, second base, shortstop, third base, catcher, pitcher, left field, center field, right field, bull pen—we need everybody there. If we don't have the players, then the game is canceled. It's a forfeit.

We are fighting principalities and powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places—it is not about flesh and blood. If our enemies were made of flesh and blood, it would be different. But we are fighting invisible, inaudible, indescribable, supernatural powers. They will come against us by attacking our body, our soul, our schedule, our purpose, and our decisions. We are fighting

a supernatural enemy, and everyone needs to have all six strings in tune with God: the mind, body, volition, emotions, conscience, and self-consciousness.

The demons are more informed than they were a year ago. That is why we need to assemble much more to hear the Word of God (Hebrews 10:25), to learn more about their strategies.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction" (Matthew 7:13). But verse 14 says, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Few ever really find the strait gate and the narrow way. That way is the Finished Work message of grace.

Chapter Three

SET FREE BY THE BLOOD

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

"This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest:

"And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper;

"Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:

"And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water:

"As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water:

"And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to

be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field" (Leviticus 14:1-7).

This passage in Leviticus pertains to the law for the cleansing of leprosy. The cleansing ceremony required two birds. The Levitical priests had to have cedar wood, which speaks of humanity, and they had to have scarlet thread, which refers to the blood. Then they had to have hyssop.

One bird was killed, and they had to dip the live bird in the blood of the dead one. Then they let the live bird fly out in the open field. The blood was then sprinkled on the leper seven times, pointing to the Finished Work of Christ, and he was healed.

What healed the leper? The blood that was sprinkled on his body.

In the celebration of communion, the bread represents the body of Christ that entered into death. The blood speaks of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. What brings healing? The Blood, which stands for resurrection and ascension, brings the healing.

Entering the Presence of God

According to Leviticus 16, before he could enter into God's presence in the holy place within the veil, the high priest had to follow detailed instructions, which included wearing special clothing and preparing sacrifices. Then he would take coals of fire from off the altar and finely ground sweet incense in his hands—and finally enter in to the holy place. Once the cloud of incense covered the mercy seat, the priest had to sprinkle the blood of the bullock on and before the mercy seat seven times—pointing to the Finished Work.

The incense from the altar of incense would cover the Holy of Holies so that the priest could not see God's presence. This speaks of the fact that we no longer know Christ after the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16); He is a sweet-smelling, resurrected, heavenly Savior.

In Exodus 20:18-22, the people were afraid of God's presence, but Moses "drew near unto the thick darkness where God was," and God spoke directly to him. Moses was learning the doctrine of the entire life of Christ. But in the Holy of Holies, the high priest couldn't see. He made an offering for himself, then he made an offering

for the people. But without the cloud of incense covering the mercy seat and the ark of the testimony, he would have died in the Holy of Holies.

The Blood on the Threshold

In Exodus 12, Israel was still in the land of Goshen when the Angel of Death came to take the firstborn in Egypt. In the homes of every family that had the blood of a lamb on the doorpost, the firstborn male would be saved. The death angel would "pass over" those homes. But in the homes that did not have blood, the firstborn males died—all because the blood wasn't on their doorposts.

The lamb for the Passover offering was killed at the step of the door. The blood had to be put up over the door and on the doorposts with hyssop. This was a picture of Christ being crucified—the crown of thorns causing His head to bleed. His two hands were pierced and bleeding, so the blood was put on both sides of the door. But His feet were pierced as well, and blood and water came out of His side (John 19:34); so, there had to be blood on the threshold, at the bottom of the door.

Exodus 12:22 says that the hyssop had to be dipped in the blood at "the bason." The Hebrew

word *caph*, translated as "bason" here, is the same word used for "threshold" (Judges 19:27). With hyssop, the blood was taken and put above and on the sides of the doorpost, but the blood was already at the threshold of the door, because that is where the lamb was slain.

The hyssop, in Numbers 19, was a little but very important weed. It represents the sinner, a human being, used to apply the blood. Romans 3:25 speaks of the propitiation for our sins through faith in His blood; whereas His righteousness was for the remission of sins, because God approved of His Son's perfect sacrifice. The hyssop, therefore, speaks of the application of a living faith by a sinner who simply believes that the blood of Christ is enough to wash away sins.

The Blood Is in Heaven

"…This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

"Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with

these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:20-24).

The tabernacle and every vessel used for service had to be sprinkled with blood. Our bodies, tabernacles of the Holy Spirit, must have the application of the Blood of Christ. Every vessel must be covered by the Blood, for without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.

"…Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18-19).

If His blood had just fallen on the ground, as some teach, it would not have been precious. The blood that redeemed us is the precious blood of God.

According to Acts 20:28, pastors are to "feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." Hebrews 9:12 says, "Neither [did he enter into heaven] by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he en-

tered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Where did Jesus go? Into the holy place. What did He have with Him? *His own blood.*

In John 20:17, Jesus said, "Don't touch Me, Mary: for I have not ascended to my Father." But in John 20:25, He said, "Thomas, you can touch Me," because Jesus had already been up to heaven and had come back. He had taken His blood to heaven.

I know that the Blood is in heaven because, in Revelation 11:19, the heavens were opened, and there was an altar of the ark of His testament. On top of the ark is the mercy seat. And on the mercy seat is the Blood. Where is it? It is in heaven. Jesus Christ has already taken it there.

In Exodus 12:13, God didn't say, "When I see this, or when I see that, I will pass over." No, He said very clearly, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

A Perfect Life, a Perfect Sacrifice

Before the Passover offering, the animal had to be brought in, and it was kept three days and three nights before it could be killed. It was examined to make sure it was without blemish. In

the same manner, Jesus Christ's human life was tested, and it was found without blemish. He had no sin.

Understand this about the shed blood of Jesus Christ: Not only does it cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:9), but the precious blood of Christ, which Jesus offered through the eternal Spirit without spot or blemish, also purges our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. "Dead works" means anything that does not have the Blood applied.

If we become weary in the battle, it is probably because the Blood is not involved in our efforts. Not that we can't get physically tired. All of us do. But if we faint in battle, the Blood is not involved, and we get weary. When we do things through the eternal Blood, we are quickened according to the Word of God (Psalm 119:154), His righteousness (Psalm 119:40), and His lovingkindness (Psalm 119:88). With the heavy schedules so many of us have, we must be quickened by the Holy Spirit.

Three witnesses in heaven are referred to in 1 John 5:7: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. The next verse refers to the three witnesses on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

Obviously, the Bible wouldn't mention the Blood if Jesus was supposed to endure spiritual death only. I believe in spiritual death. But I believe that His precious blood was perfect blood that didn't have an old sin nature. It cleanses us, and it keeps us eternally secure. It keeps us so that we can rebound, and it keeps us so that sin is never imputed to our account.

"When I see the blood, I'll pass over you"—not, "When I see works," not, "When I see something else." God said, "When I see the *blood*."

Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22).

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11).

Who did they overcome? They overcame the accuser of the brethren, who accuses from morning to night and who deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9-10).

Think of it! It is the Blood that overcomes accusations. It is the Blood that overcomes the devil. It is the Blood that cleanses our norms and standards of conscience. It is the Blood that gives us a brand-new life. Every day, it is the Blood. The Blood is alive in heaven, right now

(Hebrews 12:24).

When we receive mercies and compassions that fail not (Lamentations 3:22), God withholds the punishment we deserve and He pours out unconditional love that we do not deserve. The Mercy Seat principle of the Blood declares that the Blood takes care of the effects of sin. It is the Blood that takes care of the pain and struggles of weariness. It is the Blood that keeps renewing us every morning. Thanks be to Jesus Christ, it is the Blood that atones us and gives us our joy (Romans 5:11)—the precious blood of Christ.

CONCLUSION

I thank God with all of my heart today that the Lamb of God shed His own blood, then He took His own blood to heaven to take away our sins. If He bottles our tears (Psalm 56:8), can't He bottle His own blood? If He knows our thoughts afar off, can't He take care of His blood? Of course, He can.

Anytime we are involved in sin, all we have to do is appropriate the blood of God. Satan despises, hates, resents, and rejects the Blood, because he has been judged and condemned forever. Yet all of us sinners are justified by Christ's blood.

Isaiah 43:25 and Isaiah 44:22 tell us that the Lord has blotted out our sins. How? In 1 John 1:7 and 9, the Blood cleanses all. The Blood! Not death. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins.

If the priests only needed to kill the animal for a sacrifice, it wouldn't have been necessary

to bring the blood into the Holy of Holies. There was no presence of God when the animal was killed on the altar of sacrifice. The presence of God was in the incense, in the Holy of Holies, where the blood was sprinkled.

That precious Blood was human like ours, but with no old sin nature—the human blood of God. Try to picture it: He sweat drops of blood. Then His brow, His hands, His feet, and His side were bleeding when He was on the Cross. The Cross was represented on those doorposts in the land of Goshen. And in the Bible, who is the door that we may enter in, according to John 10? The door is Jesus.

We overcome the enemy by the blood of the Lamb, by the Word of our testimony, and by not defending our flesh. The Blood speaks of the fact that the believer is perfect in Christ and that Satan has no grounds for an attack (Revelation 12:11). The Blood reveals Satan's complete defeat.

The door to heaven is open because Jesus shed His blood for us. All we need to do for Salvation is believe on Him. If you have never prayed and asked Jesus into your heart to be your Savior, simply bow your head and say, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive You as*

my personal Savior. Thank You for loving me so much that You shed Your precious blood and died for me, so I can have eternal life with You. Amen."

For those of us who are saved, we must never let a day go by without thanking God for the precious blood of His Son.

The Narrow Way Called Grace

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The average sermon preached from Matthew 7:13-14 about "the narrow way" is focused on what people must avoid to stay on that road. In the mind of the listener, walking the narrow way might as well be like a walk on a tightrope, where works and legalism are needed to make it. This view does not reflect the heart of God, and those who approach the narrow way from this mind-set will only experience frustration.

The narrow way is the way of grace. God calls it the "narrow" way because it cannot be walked except by the power of the Holy Spirit. Nothing can be added to this way. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy [Spirit]; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5-6).

The way of God is grace and all grace. Anything we might attempt in our own strength is

unacceptable. Our prayer is that as we grow in understanding God's character of grace, we will be drawn nearer to Him who draws us with cords of love. We do not mean for grace to be a license to sin but a provision to grow out of weakness into the strength of God's manifestation of His presence.

Chapter One

THE ONLY WAY TO FIND LIFE

"If ye fulfil *the royal law* according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well; But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are [convicted] of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

"For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath [shown] no mercy; and *mercy rejoiceth against judgment*.

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? *can faith save him?*

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute

of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

"Even so *faith, if it hath not works, is dead*, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: [show] me thy faith without thy works, and *I will [show] thee my faith by my works*.

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. *But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"* (James 2:8-20).

Consider that passage in light of Jesus' words in Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait [(narrow)] gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and *narrow is the way which leadeth unto life*, and few there be that find it."

What is the narrow way? What did Jesus mean when He said we are to enter in to the gate that is strait and the way that is narrow? He was talking about grace, the only way a man can ever come to God and be saved. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of your-

selves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The Only Way We Could Make It

Billions of years ago in heaven, God longed to reveal His character and His nature—what He is like. So the Trinity in the persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit held a meeting ("the determinate counsel," Acts 2:23). There, God the Father presented a plan for the ages that the Son would execute in time on earth. In this plan, Jesus voluntarily died on the Cross. He shed His blood and bore all of our sins in His body so that we might believe on Him and have eternal life. With this revelation and inspiration by the Holy Spirit to the hearts of men, the whole plan of eternity was designed to show us the very narrow way called grace.

Many people fear Matthew 7:13-14 because they don't understand it. The legalistic preacher will say that to walk the narrow way means to keep the Law. Those who always preach the letter of the law teach that it means we must follow a set of rules, living in "dos and don'ts." Many people spend their lives trying their best to live *under* the law, completely missing the meaning of the narrow way.

This "narrow way" is strictly the grace of Almighty God. You may ask, "Why is grace a narrow way?" It's simple. There is no possible way we can make it apart from grace! We must understand the economy of God's grace—He did it all. That is the narrow way.

Jesus Christ came to bring grace and truth to sinners. "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17). Even though they are inseparable, grace must come before truth. We cannot experience truth about God's holiness and righteousness unless we first understand grace. The focus is upon what God does *for* us: He is constantly pouring into our lives grace upon grace upon grace.

That is the narrow way. It is a way so narrow that if we try to add one thing to grace, it will profit us nothing, and God will not accept it.

The Way to Have God's Heart

Grace gives faith to the weakest person. It gives hope to the backslider. It gives encouragement to the person who has failed over and over again. And when a fallen man turns to the Lord, the first thing he must learn is *not* to change

himself but to release the grace that he has received. Only then can he reveal the same character that brought him redemption and forgiveness through the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7).

The most difficult thing to understand is that grace is *pure* grace. "And if by grace, then *is it no more of works:* otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6). When we receive unconditionally the grace of God that motivates His love and reveals the characteristics of mercy, then we place God in His rightful position of headship in relationship to our walk on earth. Our submission to a throne of mercy does away with hypocrisy and legalism.

There is no way we can ever teach too much grace, and this is why: Grace always takes us into the heart of God as it puts the heart of God inside of us. Grace keeps leading us to know Him, to know the power of His resurrection, and to know the fellowship of His sufferings. Grace always brings us into an eternal perspective so that we will begin to comprehend the compassion and the scope of God's love toward every single person on earth.

Chapter Two

A LAW AND A CROSS: DEMONSTRATING GOD'S CHARACTER OF GRACE

"Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a [practicer] of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:21-25).

If we receive the love of God by the Holy

Spirit who sheds it abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5), then we will be motivated by love (2 Corinthians 5:14), and we will walk in love (Ephesians 5:2). As we receive the gift of God's grace, we will minister the same to others as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10).

"*Grace and truth* came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Grace is the truth about the nature of Jesus Christ. Therefore, if we taste the grace of God, if we receive the grace of God, and if we appropriate the grace of God, then the nature of God controls us.

Grace can never be separated from truth, nor can truth ever be separated from grace. Why? Because we are all incurably bad (Jeremiah 30:12). We are desperately wicked. We fail and fail again. Yet, a holy God sent His Son to die on the Cross. He came to take our penalty, to take everything that we deserved, so He could demonstrate the reality of His grace to us.

The Royal Law of Love

God ordained civil law, and we should obey it (1 Peter 2:13). Also God has given us moral law, written in the hearts of every man, which teaches us right from wrong and protects the

property and freedom of every individual. But after the moral law comes a higher law: *the royal law of love*. "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well" (James 2:8). Also, Jesus said in John 15:9, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Then in verse 12, "Love one another, as I have loved you." This is the royal law of love. Jesus manifested this love by taking *all* of our sins, *all* of our perversions, and *all* of our guilt upon Himself on the cross at Calvary. That was the royal law of love in action.

It is one thing for me to receive this love, but what a magnificent thing it is when I become the *revelation* of perfect love to others as a living epistle (2 Corinthians 3:3). Pharisaism, legalism, criticism, slander, gossip, and guilt can be completely erased when I begin to reveal the Son of God in His *true* nature of grace, of love, and of mercy. Now, though a person has failed seven times a day in one area of sin, he is able to get up and receive the righteousness of God which comes by faith (Romans 10:6).

If I fulfill the royal law of love—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"—then anything that I want for myself, I will do for my wife, because she is my first neighbor. I will love her as I

love myself, and she will love me as she loves herself. The royal law of love also applies to children as they are reared up under the stewardship of grace. To live outside the royal law is to be a respecter of persons—giving to those who can give in return but withholding from the needy. "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are [convicted] of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:9-10).

Consider James 2:11: "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." Do you realize what this means? If I offend any one of the Ten Commandments, I have broken the entire law. The truth is, we do that all the time. It is vital for us to understand this passage if we are going to truly understand the narrow way and the strait gate.

The Law of Liberty

"So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12).

The law of liberty means that the royal law of love has eternally paid for every sin and doesn't

keep a record of them. "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? *But there is forgiveness with thee,* that thou mayest be feared [(trusted)]" (Psalm 130:3-4).

We are to speak and do as those who are judged by the law of liberty. The key in understanding the law of liberty is in James 2:13: "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and *mercy rejoiceth against judgment*." After we have been cleansed by the blood of Christ and received forgiveness for every sin we have ever committed, why would we want to turn around and judge people without mercy? Yet the Church today is filled with people who have no understanding of the royal law of love and the perfect law of liberty.

If a Christian judges without mercy, he will be judged without mercy. Can you imagine standing in the Throne Room of God as a believer saved "so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15), and having God say to you, "I saved you through unconditional grace and mercy, but you did not show mercy to others. The people who were around you never got to know My heart. They never knew My life. They never knew what I was like, because you didn't show them mercy."

"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:15-18).

This is saying that when I turn to the Lord, I have the liberty to live in grace and to be pure, liberty to love and to think properly. I have liberty not to lust and not to consider fornication at all. I have liberty to be kind and forgiving, even to turn the other cheek. I have liberty to trust God in every situation. The royal law of love combined with the perfect law of liberty—where mercy rejoices against judgment—is the most magnificent wonder of God ever revealed to man.

Chapter Three

LIBERTY TO REVEAL GOD'S NATURE BY OUR WORKS

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:15-17).

The book of James has been referred to as the "epistle of straw," having an emphasis on works rather than grace as the basis for our justification. Some scholars assert that this epistle is not in harmony with Paul's teaching on grace. But if we have received the grace of God and the love of God, James 2:15-17 would not be interpreted as a system of works. This is what we need to ask: Are we being good stewards of the manifold grace of God and the royal law of love? Do we live in the perfect law of liberty? Is

grace, through the Person of Jesus Christ, doing an effectual work in me? Am I manifesting God's nature as I interact with those around me?

James 2:20 says, however, that "faith without works is dead." What "works" does this verse refer to?

The Work of God is to Believe

When the disciples asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" (John 6:28), Jesus said to them, "*This is the work of God, that ye believe* on him whom he hath sent" (verse 29). The work of God is believing in a non-meritorious system. It is believing in grace "plus nothing" and receiving unconditional love. It is simply sharing God's love through the filling of the Holy Spirit.

There is no contradiction when we compare line upon line and precept upon precept (Isaiah 28:10): Faith without works—without revealing God's life—is dead.

James wrote, "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith *by* my works" (James 2:18). To James, his "faith by works" meant a faith that reveals mercy. The entire theme of James 2 is the royal law of love and mercy that rejoices against judgment (verses 12

and 13).

If we were to ask God today, "Lord, what do you desire?" He would say, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). Jesus quoted this verse in Matthew 9:13 when He said to the self-righteous Pharisees, "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." The original Greek is translated, "Go and study what I am saying. I did not come to call the righteous but to call sinners to repent—to change their mind about mercy!"

Grace Produces Joy on the Way

The substance of these verses goes way beyond any commentaries that mix in works of the flesh with their interpretation. Everything God offers us is based on the unbelievable, unsearchable riches of His grace. When we begin to receive grace upon grace, love upon love, and forgiveness upon forgiveness, then the nature of God, through His promises, begins to penetrate the very soul of our being and the very depth of our hearts. We begin to relax as we are filled with joy, living in Faith Rest.

No failure can remove His grace from us. No mistakes can disannul it. Because Jesus Christ is

in us, the process of growth goes on. Our way is enjoyable because we are being conformed to Jesus Christ's image on the journey. We are becoming the epistles of the nature of God. From eternity past to eternity future, God Almighty has included us in His perfect plan to reveal His perfect will through His nature of grace and love.

Faith that does not reveal the character of Calvary is vain. But it is a joy just to obey God and be upheld in our own integrity (see Psalm 41:12). The Psalmist said in verse 11 of Psalm 41, "I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me."

"Trust in [the Lord] at all times," says Psalm 62:8. The Lord will always come through because He cannot do anything but love us with His love. His love casts out fear. It takes care of guilt. It will take care of our weaknesses. It will take care of everything, once we begin to be occupied with Who God is in His essence and nature. When we look to Christ, we will embrace the One who is all and in all (Colossians 3:11).

The Nature of Christ's Love

Song of Solomon 2:6 says, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." This is a picture of the Lord Jesus

Christ embracing a believer, showing how much He cares for us individually. Tears ran down His face as Jesus gazed down at Jerusalem, longing for Israel to be saved (Luke 19:41).

God desires so much to get through to each one of us on a personal basis. Consider Jesus' words as He wept over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, *and ye would not*!"

Jesus was weeping for a city filled with people who did not know Him or understand that he was full of grace. They did not know that He represented the Father's love when He spoke these words:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:28-29). God's one desire is to give His people mercy and rest.

As we begin to understand the narrow way of grace, our fellowship becomes sweeter. We no longer need to sublimate through worldly diversions, because His grace satisfies completely. His

ways are past finding out. There is no way we can measure grace because we haven't begun to understand what God is like. The richness of our relationship can only be measured by the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8*b*).

God will allow us to go down to the bottom of a pit so we can really get to know Him. Those who have been forgiven much, love much (Luke 7:47). God never plans our failures, but He allows them so that we can see that His love is genuine at all times.

Let us enter into the royal law of love and reveal mercy that rejoices against judgment to everyone we see. This is the narrow way of grace.

CONCLUSION

Grace promotes and magnifies the life of Christ while we are on the earth. Those who walk in grace will not accept an accusation against themselves or others, nor will they receive an evil report.

On the narrow way, everything is manifested in the light of what God has done for His creation. We can see that in God's economy, one soul is worth more than all the world. Therefore, we desire to narrowly define our thinking and our speaking to that which edifies and supplies grace to the hearer. Every vain imagination, any thought that exalts itself against the grace God has given to us is cast down. Every negative impression against ourselves is to be cast away.

May our fellowship become so close to Him that immediately, in every situation, we will hear the voice of the Spirit of Grace saying: "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isaiah 30:21).

The Perfect Church?

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

We all have heard people say, "There is no perfect church." In fact, there is no church that is *not* perfect. The problem is that people make their assessment by looking at men instead of beginning with God.

Of course, none of us is perfect with regard to our behavior. We understand this. Certainly, we all fail, and we all use rebound. Sometimes we hurt each other. But in our daily lives, by yielding to the Word and the Spirit, we are working out growth, which leads to maturity. We are working out what God works within us.

"There is no perfect church!"? The problem with people who make such a statement is that they don't agree with God on the position of the Church.

Consider this: God had chosen each of us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love (Ephesians 1:4). This booklet will show that

God's perspective, from eternity past, sees the Church and its members only in eternal life. Indeed, from the Father's viewpoint, the Church *is* perfect.

Chapter One

THE FATHER'S VIEWPOINT

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, *that we should be holy and without blame* before him in love:

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:3-7).

"Let us therefore, as many as be *perfect*, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Philippians 3:15).

"And *ye are complete* in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10).

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

" For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3).

Some who have been Finished Work believers for years completely ignore the principle of the perfect Church when a crisis comes up. Philippians 3:15 means that if I am in a church and I am going through a trial, I adjust to the Father's view on the church. If I understand Ephesians, I am accepted in the beloved. I am complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:10).

God calls each of us to a local assembly (Hebrews 10:25). The Father sees that assembly—provided it preaches and teaches the whole counsel of God—from His viewpoint of eternity past and eternity future. Yet, members of the Body of Christ often will not agree with the Father about the church when trials and problems come.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

The next verse says that from now on, we are to know no one after the flesh, not even Jesus Christ, who was crucified in weakness.

Perfectly Hid in Christ

There is not a reason in the world for any of us to forsake being part of a perfect Church. Even if we fail, we are to be thus minded: Name the sin and go back to being perfect in our position once again, understanding that we are accepted, hid, and protected by the Finished Work.

The Lamb was slain for us in eternity past; thus when we believed, we became perfectly hid with Christ in God.

Yes, we sin (1 John 1:8). Yes, we must rebound (1 John 1:9). But go back to the premise—that the Church is perfect in the Father's eyes. That is the only reason He can even fellowship with us.

"Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Psalm 78:19).

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5).

The table is a place we gather around for a meal. Food is arranged on the table. Family members gather around the table to eat, and what is placed on the table is very important. Even the most modest meals can provide proper nourishment to keep a body healthy and able to function in normal activity.

If a person is expected to work very hard, in more stressful situations, he will probably eat a more hearty meal. Furthermore, he will be thankful to the one who provided the food as well as the one who prepared it. One meal a day, however, is not enough.

When David was out on that lonely Judean hillside, he had a "table" of doctrine. He rested in green pastures—a field of mercy, the place of provision through grace; he had doctrine in his soul. David was advanced in his belief system,

and he understood that he had a table prepared by God in the wilderness.

Demonic Snares

"Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (1 Corinthians 10:21).

The devil has set up a table where he serves doctrines of demons, according to 1 Timothy 4. These doctrines promote religion and the efforts of the flesh. "Don't marry. Abstain from meat" (see 1 Timothy 4:1-3). These are rules from a table of false doctrine.

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:13-14).

The table of demons becomes "a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto *them*"—speaking of those who refuse to eat from the Lord's table of grace (see Romans 11:9; Psalm 69:22). In Malachi 1:12, God says that Israel "polluted my table." God's table was profaned with familiarity and the doctrines of

demons.* He declared that they "polluted my bread upon mine altar" (Malachi 1:7).

One attitude that reveals familiarity is a lack of appreciation and thankfulness. When circumstances overwhelm us, we need to learn how to draw near to the Lord. To the weary and heavy laden, He simply says, "Come" (Matthew 11:28-30). Then, we learn how to draw near to the Body of Christ, where our hearts are comforted, being knit together in love (Colossians 2:2).

The "perfect" church is filled with imperfect people who give thanks to the Lord often (Colossians 3:15) and communicate their appreciation to the pastor (Galatians 6:6). They may go through hard times, but they count it all joy (James 1:2). They may fall seven times in a day, but they help each other to get up and go on (Proverbs 24:16, Ecclesiastes 4:10). They have been taught that the work was finished for them two thousand years ago on the Cross, and they are very thankful.

* *To read more about the sin of familiarity, read* Living an Inspired Life from the Breath of God*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997, and* Love Comes through Honor*, by Pastor Paul M. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

FEAST AT THE RIGHT ALTAR

"My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee.

"Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye.

"Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart" (Proverbs 7:1-3).

"They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge" (Ezekiel 44:16).

Who would want to sit down to eat and just have a teeny sandwich every day, when God provides a table full of godly food and godly doctrine?

God has organized a table of bread from heaven that provides food for the soul. There, we eat His flesh and drink His blood by eating His Word and entering into the cleansing power of the Blood, which is ever cleansing us (1 John

1:7). When we hear doctrine preached by a man of God, we are eating from a table that has been furnished for us by God and the pastor-teacher.

Ezekiel 44:16 says that when we come to God's table, we worship God by receiving the doctrine from the table. Then, as we receive the doctrine from the table, we minister to the Lord with it.

Receive Truth Daily

Proverbs 7:3 tells us to receive God's doctrines and "bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart." The more we hear doctrine, the more our soul is developing into a table; and on that table is every kind of godly nourishment. Think of it as the table on Thanksgiving Day! Spiritually, it is possible for every believer to eat from that kind of table every day.

"Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink: arise ye princes, and anoint the shield" (Isaiah 21:5). When the pressure is on, God's people have a table prepared for them as they go forward with God in the battles.

Song of Solomon 1:12 says, "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." This refers to our fellowship

with the sweet scents, the aroma of God: grace, love, and the Finished Work.

Changed at the Pure Table

"And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but you have forsaken him" (2 Chronicles 13:11).

The table must be pure because that is where God changes us. In Genesis 35:2, "Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away [your] strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments."

The Hebrew word for "change" here is *chalaph*, meaning to enter into something new, or to come into newness. The grammar indicates that it is an action made in response to an order or command.

Second Samuel 12 tells how God confronted King David through Nathan the prophet. David was responsible for killing Uriah after making Bathsheba (Uriah's wife) pregnant through an act of adultery. King David repented and the

prophet told him that his life would be spared but that the child would die. The child was born, and for six days the king fasted and sought God; then, on the seventh day, the child died. His servants were afraid to tell him; yet, when David heard the news, instead of grieving any further, he got up. He washed, anointed himself, changed his apparel, and went to the house of God to worship. After that, David went home and ate a meal (1 Samuel 12:1-20).

There was a change. And what happens at God's table? He changes us with His Word and by His Spirit.

"The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars" (Isaiah 9:10).

Building and changing. That is what happens when we keep coming to the table. This is what God can do when we see that His Church *is* perfect.

Glory to Glory, Day by Day

"There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease" (Job 14:7). The tree will sprout again; there will be a change.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Every day that we walk in the Holy Spirit, God changes us into someone who is more like Christ. When we woke up this morning, it was to be changed today from yesterday. Yesterday was good, but we are alive today to be changed.

The Christian has so much to look forward to. Daily we can look in the mirror of God's Word and let the Holy Spirit change us.

The word for "changed" in 2 Corinthians 3:18 is the Greek word *metamorphoo*. It means that we receive the action of a dogmatic assertion of a divine reality. This indicates that the change is ongoing, as we keep receiving from the table that He establishes in our lives through His Church.

Chapter Three

GOD HEARS THE HUMBLE

Our lives are always changing, and most of those changes are according to God's will. There are, however, some things that should never *change*. Proverbs 24:21 says, "meddle not with them that are given to change." That word in the Hebrew is *shanah*, and it implies a diversion from the old pathways spoken of in Jeremiah 6:16: the proven ways of God's redemption.

"For I am the LORD, I change not" (Malachi 3:6).

As we consider this subject of change, we must remember that verse. God does not change. His attributes—His nature of love, His mercy, and His grace—never change. Look at His declaration in Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." The next verse tells us that it is a good thing to be "established"— but more specifically, to be established with grace. Do not remove the old landmarks!

(Proverbs 22:28).

We may think God is changing, because of our limited perspective, but He never changes. We are always the objects of His heart, even when we are out of fellowship with Him because of sin. Therefore, He uses that table, the Holy Spirit, and the plan of God to break us. And as God breaks us, He begins to tell us what happens when the humble are broken.

The word "humble" in the Septuagint is *pernatos*, and it refers to someone who doesn't get offended, who yields his body and mind to Christ, who becomes inwardly broken by hearing the Word of God inside. A humble person is filled constantly with the Spirit. He doesn't think too highly or too lowly of himself.

The Protection of Humility

One of the greatest protections for any Christian is to experience the doctrine of humility. In a marriage, in friendship, in family, in business, and on the mission field, the doctrine of humility must take precedence over personal preference.

"LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

"To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress" (Psalm 10:17-18).

First of all, God always listens to the humble. Secondly, He prepares their hearts for His plan through the table, through change. Someone who has not been hearing the Word of God is not humble. When you are humble, God causes you to hear. He prepares your heart. He gives you your desire.

"For he shall stand at the right hand of the [humble], to save him from those that condemn his soul" (Psalm 109:31).

"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him" (Psalm 12:5).

Think about this. If you fail but you remain humble, the Lord will protect you while others are condemning your soul. The Lord guards the humble person who faces oppression. He constantly delivers the soul of the humble (Psalm 72:13). When a humble person is wounded, God delivers him (Psalm 109:21, 22). The Lord delivers the humble from evildoers (Jeremiah 20:13).

God has always come along to protect the humble. Think of some wicked people He pro-

tected:

The Lord protected King Ahab—as in the wicked Ahab and Jezebel. "…because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days…" (see 1 Kings 21:29). Ahab became humble and God reversed the direction of his life.

Then there was Manasseh, a king who began reigning at age twelve. After his father had effectively destroyed idolatry in Jerusalem, Manasseh raised up idol worship and abominations involving heathen gods (2 Kings 21). But when the Assyrians bound him and carried him into captivity, Manasseh became humble before God:

"And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

"And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God" (2 Chronicles 33:12-13).

Humility Takes Away Judgment

Acts 8:26-39 tells how the perfect Church operates through imperfect people. Here, the Lord directed Philip to an Ethiopian eunuch

who became saved and baptized—just from hearing the Scripture. "The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

"In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth" (Acts 8:32-33).

That is such a beautiful passage. Through the humility of Jesus Christ, who was broken for our transgressions, our judgment was taken away. Think of that for a moment. *Judgment was taken away by humility.*

And now, because of Calvary, we are members in particular of Christ's perfect Church, though we are imperfect people. He still desires to change us more and more into His image, to be more like Him each day. But, How will He perform it? He changes us on the table of doctrine in our hearts.

Then, when He humbles us, He gives us our desire, takes away oppression, and He causes us to hear. On your worst day, if you are humble, you will hear—because the Word of God says it is so (Psalm 34:2).

How does God do it? He uses a perfect Church full of imperfect people. This is His design.

CONCLUSION

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I will dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).

Revival comes through humility and meekness. Every individual can have his heart revived, his soul refreshed, and his entire life changed through the doctrine of humility exercised in Christ's perfect Church.

When we are not being changed, God will reveal to us what our hearts are like. He will use various trials and circumstances to bring it out, and whatever comes out of us under pressure is who we are. God allowed Israel to go around and around in the wilderness to show them what was inside of them (Deuteronomy 8:2). For forty years they walked in large circles; but the Lord's purpose was to bring humility into their

lives so that ultimately they could know God and be conformed to His likeness.

We will always be in a process of being changed into God's image until that day when every member of the Body of Christ will experience the greatest change of all.

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

Oh what a day that will be! At last we will see the perfect Church with perfected people.

The Perfect Law of Liberty

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

So many Christians have fallen into different traps that hinder their walk with God. Strife and differences often rule their lives, and they cannot break free. Many people are stuck living under a system of legalism, constantly feeling the strain of trying to live up to a standard they were never meant to live up to, and not being able to achieve it. Their Christian experience contradicts what they know and what they [are trying/desire] to be.

When Jesus, the Son of God, sets believers free, He sets us free indeed. The only law we are to live by in these days is the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25). And even more, when we live according to that law, God brings us to a place where we are free to express the royal law of love (James 2:8).

This booklet examines the perfect law of liberty, which made it possible to operate in the royal law of love. Furthermore, it reveals how

living according to a higher standard that has already been met in Christ, transforms our relationships like nothing else can.

Chapter One

NEW TESTAMENT, NEW LAWS

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

"For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

"For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a

forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:19-26).

After free volition, marriage was the second institution established by God for man. But to make it work the way God intended, certain laws were given. In particular were the perfect law of liberty and the royal law of love.

The perfect law of liberty came first. If we lay aside "all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," mentioned in James 1:21, and receive Spirit-taught messages in God-consciousness, then our souls are delivered into the perfect law of liberty. If we are more than just hearers of the Word and practice what we have received, then we develop a Finished Work mind, a Finished Work heart, and Finished Work emotions. We live in a Finished Work mental attitude of love where there is no striving or struggling.

Look into the Mirror of the Word

James 1:23 speaks of someone who only listens to the Word but never applies what he hears. This person is someone who looks in a

mirror but forgets what needed to be applied from the Word to his own life. My need to continue in something that has already been fulfilled is reflected when I look into the mirror of the perfect law of liberty. I must look into something that has been fulfilled for me by Jesus Christ so that I don't live under the law that condemns but under the gift of grace (see Romans 6:14).

Many people attend church, but they are forgetful hearers. They don't practice enough of what is preached to even reach first base in their Christian walk. I have had some folks tell me very sincerely, "That was a wonderful message!" But in between hearing the message and getting to the car, they forget. Thus, they cannot live in the perfect law of liberty with a Finished Work revelation of what they heard.

Be Merciful

"If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

"But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law,

and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:8-10).

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:36-37).

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge" (James 4:10-11).

If we fulfill the royal law of love by loving our neighbor as ourselves, then we are fulfilling a principle that we have already received in our personal experience. Having received the royal law of love, we are to be very careful to speak as ones who hear and obey the perfect law of liberty.

The problem with many couples is simply that they do not live in the perfect law of liberty and the royal law of love. Once we have been established in the perfect law of liberty, the royal law of love is ahead of everything we can think of. It is perfect love. It is the love that paid for our sins through Christ on the Cross. There, per-

fect blood was shed. Now, because of the Father's perfect sacrifice of His Son, we are justified by faith (Genesis 15:6). We are blessed as those whose iniquities have been forgiven and whose sins are covered. We are men and women to whom God cannot impute sin. That is the royal law of love.

Chapter Two

ONE HEART, ONE MIND, ONE SOUL, ONE FLESH

A husband who is right with God loves his wife through the Holy Spirit in the royal law of love. In doing so, he loves her as Christ loves the Church, that he might sanctify her. As Christ set apart the Church, the husband sets apart his wife through initiating the Word of God, which cleanses her. He loves her so much that she never has to live under a sense of guilt. He never makes her feel badly about what she does around the house. Cleansing and sanctifying, he gives her the Word, and he never condemns her because he lives in the Finished Work.

In approaching personal problems, a couple must always start with the Finished Work. They discuss the issue, say what has to be said, but they always line up with doctrine, Spirit-taught in the Word of God. They don't judge the doctrine, because judging it will only lead to a re-

fusal to accept the royal law of love and the perfect law of liberty.

Some people judge being merciful. Mercy means to withhold from someone what he really deserves, which is judgment and punishment. Grace means to give him all that he doesn't deserve—love, peace, joy, and all the fruits of the Spirit. But he who shows no mercy shall be judged without mercy for mercy rejoices against judgment.

Husbands and Helpmates

The Word of God says that a wife should be a helpmate to her husband (see Genesis 2:18). This means she is knit together with him as one heart, one soul, one mind, and one flesh. She is a resting place for her husband. When he is weak and without power, she comes to him with all of her love and grace, knowing that charity never fails. The animals were all created before Adam. Then, Adam was instructed by God to name them. He saw all the animals as having mates, and he said, "Woe is me, I have no mate." So God put Adam to sleep, took one of his ribs and made him a mate. When Adam woke up, God brought him gorgeous, beautiful, magnificent Eve. His response? "Wow!"

Once, he said, "Woe," and now he said, "Wow!" And believe me, every husband should view his wife that way.

"Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries" (Daniel 11:34).

"Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me" (Psalm 86:17).

In her helpmate role, the wife even helps her husband when he fails. She comforts him and understands him. Beautiful things happen when a wife knows how to hear from God. A godly wife draws near to the Word and bows down in humility before the Cross. This is what a hearer and doer of the Word does. He bows down to Calvary, receives God's love, and ministers with Resurrection love. And the more he obeys God, the more God intervenes in his behalf.

Chapter Three

CONSTRAINED BY LOVE

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:14-17).

The royal law of love is when I love you as I love God, and I love God as I love myself. Because He loves me, I can respond to others with His quality of love.

Every day of my life, I am to love my wife as Christ loves the Church. Every husband needs to do this because it is so easy for a wife to be unprotected. If a husband isn't right with God, his wife is not protected. She doesn't have the proper covering because the husband is not living in co-crucifixion, co-burial, and co-resurrection (see Romans 6:6, 11, 13).

Covering of Protection

The most important thing a husband can do is to become a covering for his wife by living as one raised from the dead, imparting that Resurrection life to her. This is one of the great privileges God has given to men.

A husband who loves his wife protects her mind, her emotions, and her physical body. This is a part of laying down his life in love. Then, because mercy rejoices against judgment, when he fails, mercy is on his side. It is such a great thing to have mercy on our side, following us all the days of our lives (Psalm 23:6).

A couple came in for counseling who were fighting all the time; they couldn't even come to church in the same car. They both attended church services regularly, they even heard the same messages, yet they just couldn't get along.

They had become real enemies.

One night, a message put the husband under great conviction. He took his wife by the hand and wept, saying, "Please forgive me, I have been a terrible example of Christ's love for the Church. It has been my fault all along because of my constant indifference toward you."

"It's about time," she said with a smile, and then she kissed him and hugged him and they enjoyed a wonderful evening together for the first time in months. That marriage was gloriously healed.

The Only Laws That Matter

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

"For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law" (James 2:10-11).

Imagine being judged by the law of Moses with its dos and don'ts. Offend one point and you have offended it all. But God is saying to us, "I want you to live in the perfect law of liberty. That is what will judge you. Beyond that, I will keep you from falling. I will help you stand. I will hold you up. I will do all of this for you. All

you have to do is have a mindset that you are going to be judged by the perfect, fulfilled law where mercy rejoices against judging you."

When the Holy Spirit sheds God's love abroad in our hearts, then we aren't going to judge a brother or a sister or a wife or a husband. If one fails, you help him.

In this type of setup, a husband will love his wife as Christ loves His Church, and that wife is going to be a tremendous helpmate. They will have harmony, unity, and oneness all because of God's provision for the marriage: Jesus Christ. God's provision for marriage is unconditional love. God's provision is not only mercy, grace, and love, but it is also forgiveness and patience.

Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and temperance are in a Finished Work marriage, and they flow out of a godly husband as he pours out his vessel into his wife and then receives a fresh supply. What does my wife need today? Joy? I give her joy. Does she need longsuffering and kindness? I give her longsuffering with a meek and kind spirit. Our provision is Christ, and He uses our vessels to bless others.

The most unique thing is that these two New Testament laws are the only laws that remain, in

God's judgment. The Old Testament law was given to Moses when Israel demanded it because they were not comfortable with trusting God, whom they could not see.

Today, the law is to love God, love yourself, and love your neighbor, because you have been set free by the perfect law of liberty. As a result, a special kind of grace and love comes into your heart, and you can be happy in all of your relationships.

CONCLUSION

God's love is so creative. I love knowing that mercy rejoices against judgment and that love takes the place of condemnation. Having put on the Lord Jesus Christ, we can be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and walk in love (Ephesians 5:2), making no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). And as we continue in doctrine, we are free—free indeed.

That is the law of liberty. I am free in Christ, even if I fail—free in Christ, even if I sin. And because I don't want to hurt Him, as soon as I am convicted of the smallest mental attitude sin, I use the principle of rebound instantly. I agree with the Holy Spirit about my sin, bring it to God, isolate the sin, get up, and go forward, cleansed and forgiven.

We are free in Christ to be believer-priests—free in Him to be members of God's royal family (1 Peter 2:9-10). In our worst failure, we can rebound because we are free indeed.

If we did not have the perfect law of liberty and the royal law of love operating on our behalf—two perfect laws filled with grace, mercy, and rejoicing—then our bed would be too short and the covering too narrow to wrap ourselves (Isaiah 28:20). Without the perfect law of liberty, we can have no rest. Without these laws at work in us, we would malfunction in all of our relationships.

Thank God, charity never fails. Instead, it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13). The answer for everything is Calvary. The Cross is the foundation for our liberty, because of His love. On that, there can be no compromise.

The Place of Brokenness

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INTRODUCTION

"For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

"And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God" (Mark 3:10-11).

"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

The key to the life of Jesus Christ was the meekness and humility that He revealed in His humanity. He was so meek toward the Father, and so humble toward people and circumstances, that He was an amazing channel for the Holy Spirit to flow through. Magnificently, He was always in touch with the Father.

Oh, but He was human. He got tired—He went to sleep on the boat. He got weary and cold. But Jesus always submitted Himself with total surrender to the Father, regardless of the circumstances. He demonstrated an absolute faith in Him. He always humbled Himself before men and never retaliated—Jesus always revealed meekness and gentleness.

This is what David was talking about when he wrote Psalm 18:35: "Thy gentleness hath made me great." He was talking about Jesus Christ's meekness. Despite all of his sins, David understood that Christ would reveal the meekness of His own humanity on the Cross. As we will see in these pages, Christ's walk of brokenness would take care of David's sins. That meekness would bring blessings to David no matter where he was.

Chapter One

THE SECRET OF JESUS' LIFE

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).

I think this verse represents the secret of Jesus' life. Within the framework of Isaiah 57:15, we see a tremendous solution for the multitude of problems in the Christian church. It was not the demonstration and manifestation of His deity that made a real impact. It was humility and surrender and meekness toward the Father.

Long ago, in eternity past, Jesus volunteered to come and lay down His life as the ransom for us all. He had the power to do that. "I will die for the world, I will die for people while they are ungodly. While they are yet sinners, I will give my life for them," He said.

That's amazing humility.

Let the Holy Spirit teach you the quality of the humility that prompted Jesus to say, "I will die for the sins of the whole world." He had to suffer and learn obedience in His humanity—His deity *could* not sin and His humanity *did* not sin.

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge" (James 4:10-11).

God wants us to learn this kind of humility. If we will humble ourselves before God in our relationships with people—and if we will be meek before God in our relationship to the Trinity and the Cross—then the Spirit will lift us up above the plagues and the evil spirits. He will set us above all principalities and powers in our human experience. Greater is He who is in us than the one who is in the world. We are lifted up above all of that.

Even if you are the weakest Christian on earth, God will lift you up if you humble yourself before Him. This is so important, because

the entire world system is infected with evil. No one can possibly make it unless he learns personal discipleship in Christ Jesus. More than just making it in this world system, evil spirits will flee from us because of the quickening of the Word of God (Psalm 119:25). God only does this for people who are broken and humble.

Beware Unclean Spirits

Sometimes a wedding will come up and people will get angry with each other and start acting funny. A beautiful occasion becomes strange because unclean spirits get in. Some people don't even realize it, and they rationalize their attitudes away.

There could be an amazing revival in our midst. We could see great healing meetings through messages on meekness and humility. We could see great deliverances —there doesn't have to be a big scene or magnified human experiences.

God revives the humble person. He quickens and strengthens the contrite. He is the Lord who inhabits eternity. He is in the high and holy place. God will come in with His deity and go to work on the humanity of anyone who is humble and contrite. A broken and contrite heart He will

not despise.

God carries us through with prayer, praise, and worship. He carries us through with power, victory, and divine motivation. We enjoy energized living in the Holy Spirit of God. We develop a love complex in our souls and we grow in spirituality through the resurrection power of the Cross.

Jesus said, "I do not mind becoming you and, therefore, guilty."

That's amazing meekness.

"I do not mind taking the blame for every single sin you have every committed."

That's humility.

"I don't mind paying the penalty for those sins of yours."

That is amazing gentleness.

And that is what made Jesus great.

Chapter Two

THE BROOK DRIES UP

In 1 Kings 17, the Lord spoke to Elijah and Elijah moved from Gilead to Jezreel. God was preparing a mighty servant, but right then Elijah was just a smoking flax, a bruised reed. He was as weak as they come.

God came to Elijah and told him to go to the brook Cherith. "Cherith" means "a place of being broken." What was Elijah doing there? God could not use Him yet. He was over there by a brook that was now dried up—the very thing he desperately needed was gone. This mighty man of God was all alone by a brook with no water.

A pastor from Vermont called me once and said, "My ministry is all dried up. I have gone from 150 people down to 30 people. I don't know what's wrong. I have prayer meetings in the middle of the night. Nothing seems to work."

I knew what was going on. Every man and

woman who is going to be used by God has to go through a time of being dried up. Anyone who is ever going to be anything for God will only be able to stand in the blessing if the brook has first dried up.

God led Israel out of bondage—and right into the desert. He provided them with bread from heaven—manna—and water from the rock. Still, there were many times when things were bitter and difficult. God is in the business of training people through circumstances and relationships.

Have your finances ever dried up? Has your marriage ever dried up? You go to your spouse and there's no water there. It's all dried up. There's not a thing there. Have you ever had friendships that used to be so meaningful and now they are dried up? Have you gotten up in the morning and your health seems to be deteriorating? Your bones seem to be all dried up.

Fed by the Ravens

God did something beautiful at Cherith, the place of brokenness, the place of training. Ravens brought food for Elijah. He was in God's perfect will where God controlled the ravens to bring him food—but the Lord was emptying Elijah.

Soon, Elijah would be standing before 400 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. There would be an amazing victory—but Elijah was not yet ready for that.

The Lord may want to use a man to pastor a congregation—but not right away. He has to experience faith in Jesus Christ and have meekness. This means absolute trust in God—sometimes in the most humiliating circumstances. He needs total humility toward men and women. When he learns the meekness and humility of Christ, he yokes up with that meekness. His humanity is still there, but he throws his natural life on God and derives his strength from Him.

One Year with a Widow

"And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

"Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

"So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray

thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

"And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

"And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

"And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

"For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah" (1 Kings 17:8-16).

God had another stop for Elijah to make—Zarephath, the place of testing with fire. The

Lord was saying to his man, "You're not done yet. You were broken at Cherith. Now go down to Zarephath."

After a long journey, Elijah wound up at a widow's house.

"Can you give me some bread?" Elijah asked her.

"I don't have anything left—just a little meal and little oil. I am going to make a little cake for me and my son and then we will die," the widow answered.

"Fear not. Make something for me first and God will take care of you," Elijah said.

Why did he say something like that to this widow? Because when you give to the work of God, God will always bless what you have left. For those who give sacrificially, just as this woman was doing, God tremendously blesses what remains. The widow's cruse of oil and barrel of meal remained full for an entire year.

God wasn't through with the widow yet. Her son died, but Elijah stretched himself on the child three times and the life came back into the boy. This made a big difference for the woman, who now believed the Word of God that came from the prophet.

"And Elijah took the child, and brought him

down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

"And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth" (1 Kings 17:23-24).

Chapter Three

FROM TROUBLE TO TRIUMPH

Why was Elijah sent to Zarephath? Because God empties the flesh, empties the pride, and bankrupts everything about our Adam nature. God was bringing Elijah to the end of himself one step at a time. God put him into places where there was no popularity, no personal glory—where he was only going to trust God. Elijah came to a place where he would only be moved by the Spirit of love and relate to Jesus Christ in personal faith. In his meekness, Elijah would absolutely trust God in the midst of personal difficulties.

Elijah learned contentment. He became patient and gentle. He made wonderful confessions and obeyed the Word of God. He learned how to listen to God with meekness and love through humility.

Some people get into this business long before they are ready. God has a Cherith waiting,

however—there will be a Zarephath. Some come to Bible College and their brook dries up—their finances disappear. That is part of coming to college for those folks, because God is training them.

When we make our best decisions, our b rooks dry up because God wants to empty us of everything we would rely on apart from Him. After we are emptied, meekness and humility come in and can say, "If I perish, I perish! I trust God."

A pastor in our ministry lost four children in a fire. I remember the phone call that came that morning. I did the funeral and I remember the pastor and his wife's courage and bravery. Their testimony that day was so sacred. They did not wear black. "My four kids are dancing on streets of gold," the mother said.

Satan wanted their brook to dry up—he wanted them to dry up with it. But what happened was revival in their little New Hampshire town. Scores of teenagers were saved and chose to follow Jesus.

Fire Falls from Heaven

"And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that trou-

bleth Israel?

"And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

"Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

"So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

"Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men" (1 Kings 18:17-22).

"And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy ser-

vant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

"Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

"Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

"And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God" (1 Kings 18:36-39).

On Mount Carmel, Elijah was outnumbered 850-to-1. His short prayer—that lasted maybe 28 seconds—brought down fire from heaven. He had set up his offering and had them soak it with barrels of waters. He made it just as difficult as possible for God to burn up his bullock. The false prophets kept shouting and crying and piercing themselves—and got no answer. Their god never answered. Elijah knew that his God, the Lord of lords, would not take too long to answer his prayer.

"Will you show them who the Lord God is?"

Down came the fire. It consumed the offering. It was a wonderful experience. However,

Elijah first had to go to the dried up brook. Then he had to be with a widow. He had to grow weary and learn to trust God in adversity. God worked in meekness toward the plan in the circumstances. God worked in humility through the places of brokenness.

Imagine Jesus on the Cross. Surrounded by mockers and railers, He says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). What amazing humility. Three days later, Jesus Christ was gloriously resurrected in tremendous victory.

CONCLUSION

Our ministry is named "Greater Grace" because we understand that God gives greater grace to the humble and He resists the proud (see James 4:6). He gives greater grace over disease. He gives us greater grace in prayer, in marriage, in love, in manifesting the Holy Spirit's power over evil. He gives us greater grace over plagues and over the atmospheric negativity that comes against us. He gives greater grace over our natural life and our decisions.

Just be humble before God. He will give us a burden—a burden that is light, a yoke that is easy. All of our tribulations will work into us experience and patience. Yes, we will go through trials, but God will not take us beyond what we are able to bear. He will bless us and bless us.

Through these times of brokenness, we become so strong. We get yoked up with Him. Everything is fine. We are able to face mountains and cast them into the sea because of this beau-

tiful yoking up with meekness and humility.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)* .

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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The Power of an Active Faith

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ is in the business of restoring unnatural things in life to reflect His nature. Sickness and diseases that affect the body, mind, and emotions are unnatural to Him. It is not part of God's nature of compassion and grace to allow His children to suffer. Rather, His purpose for marriages, families, and the Church is to make men whole.

It isn't natural for a husband or a wife to be distracted into an affair. God made one man for a woman and one woman for a man. That's the way it was meant to be. That's the way it can be.

Acting in faith should come naturally to every believer. We were made to bring glory to God as we respond by faith to His love and mercy toward us (2 Corinthians 4:13-15). God wants the mind to be a center of inspiration, occupied with Christ in the midst of the angelic conflict warring between heaven and hell.

It is strange that Christians who are living lives of faith in action are labeled and ridiculed as being radical and unnatural. Very often these charges are made by folks who profess to know Jesus Christ, which shows how Satan has succeeded in deceiving some believers.

The enemy strives to corrupt divine revelation and darken divine illumination in our minds. This booklet will show that although distractions from the voices of strangers can interfere with God's initiations, we have divine resources for victory.

If my mind is occupied with Christ and the inspiration of His Word dwells in me, I will be quickened to reveal God while opposed by temptation and hell.

Chapter One

PREOCCUPATIONS AND DISTRACTIONS

So many troubling things happen in our lives. Those things are sent from below to preoccupy us. Even the best Christians become overcharged with preoccupation; we don't mean to, but we do. These preoccupations become serious, sincere distractions. We don't intend to get preoccupied, but we do.

Now, Jesus wouldn't have told us to live by every word of God if it weren't possible to live that way. Yet I guarantee that each one of us lives outside of certain Scriptures because of distractions. It isn't because of rebellion, it isn't willful, but it is something we do.

If you think about it, the areas in our lives where we have problems are the areas where we live outside of the Scriptures. These problems are never really settled; they are dealt with only

on a surface level.

This message is going to encourage us to live by every word of God through grace, through love, and through mercy.

One of the most serious problems in the Church today is men refusing to live under spiritual authority. Until we understand God's order in spiritual authority, we will not have proper protection, we will not have proper provision, and we will not have proper covering for our lives. Most of all, we will not be in the perfect plan of God. As a result, we leave ourselves open to distractions.

He is a Rewarder

"… For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6b).

In the original Greek text, *must believe* appears as *pisteusai dei*, an aorist active infinitive. Let me explain this very simply. This word reveals that God understands our belief system will have gaps in it. In other words, He wants our walk to be straight and narrow with Him, but He's well aware that there will also be times when we get distracted.

Knowing this, He has provided for our re-

covery in Jesus Christ. When we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us (1 John 1:9). When we get off the track, He picks us up and puts us right back on.

The word *rewarder* in the Greek speaks of God paying unlimited wages to the one who diligently seeks Him. Can you picture it? The person who produces the action of continually walking in this truth will, continually, receive all kinds of rewards because his faith pleases God.

Do you know why so often people are depressed and withdrawn and think they have no friends? They simply do not exercise what they believe — their faith isn't put into action.

1 Timothy 4:7 says "exercise thyself rather unto godliness." The Greek word for *godliness* here is *eusebiea,* which refers to a spirituality that is rooted in sound teaching — teaching that exalts the character of God, teaching that promotes the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Can you see why so many Christians have damaged emotions? They aren't rooted in sound teaching. Faith established in sound teaching builds spiritual muscles. The muscles in my arms and legs would become out of shape, even useless, if I decided to stop using them. It's the same with my faith. If I'm not exercising my faith in

the plan and purpose of God, then it becomes useless.

Child-like Faith

Suppose I've been standing for a long period of time and I'm at the point of exhaustion. Then I find a nice reclining chair. Would I sit in it? Certainly! And doing so, I would be exercising a measure of faith by trusting that the chair won't collapse when I sit down. I also trust that I'll feel more refreshed and rested after taking a break from standing. This is a very child-like faith; even little ones know how to sit on a chair.

Jesus Christ wants us to have this kind of faith in Him — simple, confident, secure. If I were to really believe that just as that chair wouldn't let me land on the floor, so Jesus would never let me down, then I would begin to grow in grace and knowledge of Christ. He would become my occupation, and unnecessary distractions would not bother me.

Romans 1:17 speaks of God's righteousness being revealed "from faith to faith." As I exercise my faith, His righteousness is revealed. I start out with a measure of faith. As I exercise, I develop a measure of faith and then a greater measure. Just as weightlifting adds inches to my

biceps, faith muscles grow and grow, and as they do, the righteousness of God is revealed more and more. How? Through His rewards to me.

Imagine being able to get up every morning and honestly believe that God is going to reward you! Jesus asked the two blind men in Matthew 9:27-31, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" They replied, "Yea, Lord." He then declared, "According to your faith be it unto you." They received a grace reward of healing because they put faith into action.

Those blind men recognized that Jesus was present to heal. They believed that He had the power to heal and that it was His nature to do it. They opened their eyes and, for the first time, they were able to see a sunrise and a sunset. They saw their little children and their parents and their families. Oh, what a supernatural reward from God!

Why We Don't Get Healed

Let me show you why we don't get healed. It's not because we don't believe. Remember, "the devils also believe, and tremble," (James 2:19); so, believing is not the issue. In John 5, a man had lain by the pool of Bethesda for 38 years, waiting for his chance to be healed. At certain seasons, an

angel stirred the pool, and whoever got into the water first would be healed. But it didn't happen for this man. He was preoccupied with his need for someone to put him in the pool. The water would be stirred and he would think, "Is there anyone here to put me in first?" He believed something would happen if he could just get into the pool, but he couldn't bring himself to act on his belief.

Then Jesus passed by.

Jesus simply said, "Rise." The Lord made an appeal for action. "Take up your bed and walk." He wanted this man to walk, to trust His healing power and to act upon it. Jesus was addressing the man's ability to trust His nature, His ability, His power, His love.

The man must have thought, "What have I got to lose? I've been here 38 years and still haven't gotten to the pool on time. No one's going to put me in the pool, so here goes . . . . "

As the man began to act on the words Jesus spoke, God rewarded his faith and healed him miraculously. This is faith action in the power of unconditional love, in the nature of His mercy, in response to the God of all compassion.

You would think this move of God would have excited those in the synagogue, the reli-

gious leaders of the day. Oh, it did excite them! It excited them to the point of wanting to kill Jesus Christ for violating their policy against healing on the Sabbath. The man was walking for the first time in 38 years, but instead of rejoicing over his miracle, the leaders rebuked him for carrying his bed on the Sabbath. He was walking! But they couldn't see it. Their religion left them blind.

The sad thing is that same religious spirit is a hindrance to many healings today. We confine God and refuse to trust His ability to reward our faith obedience. Don't feel condemned. Be encouraged. I'm just trying to help us understand that God wants us to exercise a particular quality of faith, a faith beyond what we've known before.

Let's get to know the heart of God for healing. Forget rituals. Put doubts aside. I don't even want us to get distracted by an overemphasis on the doctrine of faith.

We can read what the Bible says. Just get to know the heart of God, and I think you will find that, more than ever, He wants to set you free and make you whole.

Chapter Two

THE WORD IS NIGH THEE

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." (Romans 10:6-11).

Notice how this passage starts out, speaking of "the righteousness which is of faith." Faith

righteousness, which comes from God, is righteousness imputed and imparted in unconditional love and mercy to men by God. This righteousness makes the word of faith "nigh thee," as it says in Romans 10:8, and "even in thy mouth, and in thy heart."

Because of the righteousness that we receive from God through coming to Jesus Christ, the Word is now in us. Faith is a part of us. It's not outside of us. It's right there, in us, ready to be communicated and ready to be acted upon in a specific way.

Furthermore, we are promised at the end of this passage that "whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." When we get going in faith action, we will not be ashamed; rather, our faith will be rewarded.

Speak the Word Only

Consider the centurion who came to Jesus in Matthew 8:6-13. This is such a unique passage, but many have ignored its meaning in relation to healing. A Roman soldier comes and pleads, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented."

His servant boy was paralyzed and distressed with incomprehensible pain. So, the centurion

asked Jesus for a miracle. What an answer Jesus gave: "I will come and heal him." No questions about theology. No discussion about who and how God heals. "I will come and heal him."

The centurion replied, "I'm not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." What a response from a Roman soldier. This tells me that healing doesn't come because of our worthiness, just as salvation doesn't come because of our worthiness. This tells me healing is by grace.

Don't think this way: "I have a drinking problem; He won't deliver and heal me." The centurion didn't think his house was in order, but he did know the authority that a word from the Lord would carry. "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

The soldier recognized that Jesus was under orders from the Father and that He submitted to the plan of God. He knew Jesus did nothing to please Himself (Romans 15:3) and that the words Jesus spoke were not His own but His Father's (John 14:10). The centurion knew that the words

of love, grace, mercy, power, provision and protection were spoken by One who had the authority of heaven. He understood the power of his own words when backed by the government of Rome; therefore, he understood that the Word of Jesus Christ, backed by the Kingdom of God, was much greater.

"Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed," the centurion said. In other words, "You're the God-man. You're under the Father who planned everything. I know you have the authority to do this." And Jesus did it.

Understanding Authority

I am convinced that every born-again Christian must have an understanding of spiritual authority. Out of it comes healing, love, delegated power, compassion and miracles. Don't be put off by authority as it is exercised in the church. Authority in some form is a part of everyone's life. We have a man in our church who is a sergeant with the Maryland State Police. He has people over him telling him what to do, and he has people under him who have to follow his command.

Unless you have risen to the level of CEO or work for yourself, you have bosses and supervi-

sors over you. They have authority and I'm sure they don't hesitate to use it. But, ever since a few radically unbiblical movements twisted the Scriptures and used them to control their followers, the idea of authority in any religion is challenged as cultic. Don't get me wrong: Every Christian stands or falls before God. No pastor has the right to interfere and dominate a believer. But the Word of God carries the authority of heaven and the pastor has been commanded to speak it.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, in Romans 10:17. The more I hear the Word, the more authority it will have in my faith. It is written! "The entrance of thy words giveth light" says Psalm 119:130. If I want light in my life, then I must allow God's words to enter. The more I allow His words to enter, the more I will believe in the provision, protection and power of His spiritual authority. The centurion understood it, and that impressed Jesus Christ.

The Lord was so impressed with his understanding of grace for healing, and He loved seeing that the centurion was willing to let the Word of God be the final authority for the situation. "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so

great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matt. 8:10).

Matthew 8:13 tells us that the servant boy was healed. "And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."

The centurion recognized Jesus as the authority and wasn't afraid to let Him exercise that authority. "Speak the word only." That was enough for him, and he went away believing that it would be as Jesus said it would be.

The centurion would not allow himself to be preoccupied with his unworthiness. It didn't matter what his feelings were telling him. He ignored the kinds of projections and influence that the demons of the air were trying to exercise.

Preemptive Projections

There are demonic forces whose entire job is to get people to be overemotional, preoccupied and distracted by their feelings. These demons know that if they work up the emotions then some people will withdraw into subjectivity, causing their faith to be hindered.

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm

19:14). When I have faith through the Word as substance in my heart, then the evidence is in my good emotions. I don't live by my emotions, but God has given them to me and they are vital to express Christ and His authority in my life.

So many are trapped with damaged emotions because the words and meditations of their lives are not "acceptable" in God's sight. In other words, His Word is not allowed to be the authority in their lives. We must draw from the objective Word of God. Think of it: He is the author of our healing and we simply exercise trust in His nature. It's faith in the Word that has substance in the heart, and the result is healthy, wholesome, responsive emotions.

Proverbs 23:16 says "My reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things." *Reins* in the King James version often refers to the emotions. The right substance in the heart cleansed by His gift of righteousness produces the right feelings. When you have substance, you can exercise the quality of faith the centurion exercised.

Faith in Him, Not Faith in Faith

Another beautiful thing about the centurion is that he wasn't even conscious of his faith. He didn't make faith an issue. In his mind, the issue

was this: If Jesus will just speak the Word, then my servant boy will be healed. Oh, how different that is from what some are teaching today, where one's faith is put above everything.

Faith must have an objective authority. A person must have faith in the One who has all authority. Faith in faith won't get you anywhere. No, the centurion simply believed that Jesus Christ had the authority and the heart to heal. That was what brought him to the Lord. The centurion knew His Word was life.

How precious is the character of God! He loves us so deeply that He gives us His authority to be saved; His authority over demons; His authority over sin; His authority over disease; and His authority over our needs.

Maybe you feel unfit to be delivered from something that's been plaguing you for years. Don't be distracted. Let Him speak the Word to your heart. Receive it. The same way you trusted Him for His righteousness and salvation, trust His provision. Let His Word become the substance of your heart, and "as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee" (Matthew 8:13).

Chapter Three

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

"For I do not understand my own actions — I am baffled, bewildered. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [which my moral instinct condemns]" (Romans 7:15, Amplified translation).

Imagine Paul, a man of God who spent three years in Arabia receiving a revelation of truth, one of the great men of the New Testament, an apostle of Jesus Christ, used of God to minister to the Gentiles. Yet, here he is saying that his own actions leave him baffled!

The Apostle Paul goes on in this chapter to say, "I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it" (verse 18b, Amp.). The intention and the urge to do what is right is there, but there's no power to carry it out. Lamenting his state, Paul continues, "For the good that I would I do not:

but the evil which I would not, that I do … . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:19, 24).

Every single person at some time or another finds himself in this same Romans 7 boat, just as Paul did. He had seen the resurrected Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, yet the conflict between his flesh and his spirit was overwhelming. However, Paul saw the way out: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," he said in Romans 7:25. "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

Paul came to understand that in himself "dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18). Likewise, I must realize that when I'm acting in the flesh, distracted unnecessarily by its appetites and lusts, I am serving the sin principle, which is warring in my bodily members. But when I submit to the new nature, grace takes over, God takes over. He works in me to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13), as I work out my salvation by understanding the experiential provision of His finished work.

Breaking the Cycle

How did Paul break out of the Romans 7 cycle? He thanked God! That's the first attitude

we must have when we're feeling overwhelmed by the reality of our unworthiness. "I thank God!" Paul put his focus on God, not the sin.

Then in Romans 8:1, Paul delivered one of the most sacred, precious, and beautiful passages in all of Scripture: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (There should be a period there because the original Greek manuscripts of this epistle do not include the phrase "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The King James translators inserted that condition, Paul didn't.)

He wrote "*now*" there is no condemnation. Why? Because Paul recognized that he was *in* Christ Jesus, placed there by grace because he simply believed.

Romans 7 shows Paul experiencing a devastating, destructive battle, then rejoicing and thanking God. To some, that may sound hypocritical or double-minded. To me, it's reality. He was just describing the two forces that are at war within us, seeing the great potential in one and the devastating process of the other. We need to see this, too.

The flesh, which speaks of the old sin nature, is warring in the mind against the law of God, using every angle to keep us preoccupied. But

we don't have to come down to the level of our flesh. No, we can stand on the fact of Romans 8:1: No matter what my state or my condition in this conflict, there is now no condemnation because I am in Christ! Settle that first in your mind.

The Breadth, Length, Depth ,and Height

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height." (Ephesians 3:17, 18).

The Word of God brings in the words of faith to our hearts. These words are rooted and grounded in the love of God, which gives us amazing intensity of divine dynamics in four magnificent dimensions.

First, "the breadth" speaks of what's surrounding me. No person or group can hurt me because the love of God is toward me. He's surrounding me with His love. People can say what they want, try what they will, but this fact remains and will not change: there is no condemnation toward me. His love ensures it.

"The length" refers to God's love going all the way back to Adam and removing from my life the effects of the Fall of Man and of the sin

which was imputed to everyone. His love goes back to the beginning and covers us totally, regardless of our family tree. More than that, the love of God extends forward in time, going beyond the present, to cover us until that day when we shall have new bodies and shall be present with the Lord.

"The depth" correlates with Psalm 119:25: "My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word." Depth is what I do because of wrong choices. It's the personal sins I commit in negative volition toward the Word of God. Still, the love of God covers the depth of the decisions I made while cleaving to the dust of my old sin nature. As Paul said in Romans 7:21, "evil is present with me."

"The height" refers to the demon activity controlled by the prince of the power of the air. These forces operate in organization to oppress, project and impress. They come in through relationships, through a lack of love. Demonic armies strike cities and attack families and marriages. Yet, all the projections and deceptions and conspiracies gathered against us are no match for the love of God.

Be rooted and grounded in this kind of love and you will see the overcoming power of God.

He will not leave us comfortless, but He will deliver us and give us the power to reign as we receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. By this we will reign over the armies of the air, the forces we cannot see and cannot hear. And we will "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19a).

The Basis for Action

Is knowledge important? Yes, because it brings in faith. Proper education starts out with words. These words are the basis for facts. The facts lead us to truth. Truth internalized in the soul leads to principles, and these principles are the basis for our decisions, which lead to action.

See how this works. Knowledge brings in faith (Roman 10:17), but that knowledge can only be residential and dynamic if the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Love surpasses knowledge. God knows us, He knows our weaknesses, yet He still loves us. He loved us even before we loved Him, so much so that God sent His Son to die for our sins (John 3:16).

The love of God in our hearts must surpass the knowledge we have of ourselves and others. That's what Paul was teaching in Romans 7 and

8. Paul knew himself; he understood the law of sin at work in his members. Still, he allowed the love of God to surpass that knowledge and leave it behind so he could say, "...we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

Christ is living in me by faith as I am being rooted and grounded in His love toward me. He's able to do exceeding abundantly above anything I could ever ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). When I have great thoughts, great hopes, and great visions, He goes beyond them all to reward my soul as I submit to the principle of life and the new nature of the government of grace, motivated by love and the law of faith.

God, at Rest in His Love

God rests in His love (Zephaniah 3:17). He is content, knowing that all that He did in love will be enough to keep us in Christ Jesus. That's why I can say, with Paul, "Now there is no condemnation." Receive this Word of God in meekness (James 1:21) and let it revive your spirit and your heart (Isaiah 57:15). The Word quickens us through the Holy Spirit, and His love saturates us, penetrates us, and moves in us.

What a combination: I rest in His love as He

rests in His love, and then I rest in faith. The first place I rest is in His love; the second place I rest is in faith through the love shed abroad in my heart by the Spirit. This amazing love looked beyond Abraham's failure with Hagar and set him up as the father of our faith.

This kind of love proclaims Lot as righteous (2 Peter 2:7), even though the angels of the Lord had to literally take him by the arm and pull him out of the wickedness surrounding him in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Jacob, a conniver, a cheat, and a thief in regard to his brother Esau's birthright, is taken by God's love beyond all that he is and from him God will raise up the twelve tribes of His nation, Israel.

David fell into sin with Bathsheba and sent her husband to his death, yet he wrote a tremendous collection of psalms. Beyond that, I Kings 15:5 says that David did right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of his life.

Can you see the breadth, the length, the depth, and the height of God's love in these men? These were men of faith and action.

CONCLUSION

Faith action deals with getting us out from under the dominion of the law of sin and death. So many psychiatrists misunderstand the principle of Romans 7 and 8. They are always working to patch up the product of sin, the function of sin, the acts of sin. They find reasons to explain why someone is the way he is. Well, Paul explained it all in Romans 7 and then gave the solution in Romans 8:1.

Realize that you are in Christ. That's all! That's the answer. Focus upon Him and gaze upon Him in your heart. Receive His Word with meekness, then be quickened by the Holy Spirit in love. Finally, put your shoulders back and thank God for His new nature that takes us beyond the sin that dwells in us.

Don't magnify the sin principle. Don't overemphasize Satan's influence. Magnify Christ! Hold fast to the truth that there's no condemna-

tion and receive the power that will turn you from darkness to light. Enter into a faith that leaves you purified the moment you step into the principle of the new nature, and walk in the Spirit of the Word and His love.

Jesus simply spoke the Word and there was healing. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the love of God, we can speak the Word and remove mountains of obstacles from our way. We are in Christ. There is no condemnation. We stand complete.

Go beyond what you know. It's not the power of a doctrine that brings healing, it's the love of God. Read the living Word, and let the love that it speaks of motivate you to action.

Amazing, practical deliverance can come at any moment. All that God requires is that you are confessed up to date. No matter how frail you are, no matter how many times you have fallen into the same situation, He is present to heal.

All I need to know to start on the path to victory is right there in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Amen!

The Power of Our Confession

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Every person who is having any kind of spiritual problem talked himself into it. He confessed his way into the problem by reflecting the projections and initiations of the demons in the air instead of resisting them.

That is why, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will give an account for every idle word we have spoken. Jesus said, "…for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (see Matthew 12:36-37). Can you see why it is important for us to let our words on earth be few?

Our confessions can be very powerful. The words we speak go out into the atmosphere and are heard by those involved in the unseen warfare: God's angels as well as Satan's demons. This booklet will examine the effects of negative conversation and the benefits we will have from a right confession.

Chapter One

THE THINGS WE TALK OURSELVES INTO

"My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly" (Job 33:3).

"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (James 3:6).

Emotional reactions to life can produce satanic consequences. A negative confession is like bacteria. Picture that coming out of your mouth and what it does to your heart and to your soul. Every time you utter those words, more infections are spread as the bacteria multiply.

"My lips shall utter praise, when thou has taught me thy statutes" (Psalm 119:171). These words were said by Ezra as a teenager in captivity in Babylon. He was taught the doctrine of God's Word, and his lips did utter praise even while he was going through unimaginable trials. It is so vital that we learn to think in terms of the Finished Work, regarding the heart and the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23).

When we allow our words to condemn our life, those words can affect so many different areas. We can talk ourselves into depression by confessing our thoughts into the air. Satan and his demons can't read our minds, but the moment we say what we are thinking, we have given them ground for their attack.

Sins of the Mouth and a Tongue of Iniquity

"A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth: and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." (Proverbs 18:20-21).

"Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy

voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?" (Ecclesiastes 5:6).

The mouth can cause the flesh to sin, and God becomes angry at the voice that confesses anything that is not according to the law of faith. When we sin with our mouth, we are not just to say, "That was an error. I shouldn't have said it." That is not repentance. We have to specifically confess our sin to God.

When the mouth causes the flesh to sin, we have violated the law of faith and the royal law of love. When we say something negative to or about our spouse, that causes our flesh to sin against them.

Also, through careless comments, we can release sexual vibrations that in turn can cause sinful relationships. The mouth, with its tiny member called the tongue, releases the relationship to sin.

Recently I spoke with a man and a woman who were dating, and I asked them frankly: "Is your relationship a no-touch relationship as you prepare for marriage?" (1 Corinthians 7:1).

"Well," one of them told me, "it's been awfully hard." The moment they confessed that it was difficult, they had already caused their flesh to sin.

I found just the opposite in dating my wife for seven years. Keeping pure was easy because I refused to confess that it was hard. I determined that I would only have pure thoughts. Anything else would have led to frustration and to personal sin down the road. I had no right to do that, so I didn't do it. It wasn't hard. Jesus' yoke is easy and His burden is light.

To confess that something is "hard" is to set yourself up for failure. You are actually confessing that what you are doing is all in the flesh.

It is important to realize that death and life are in the power of the tongue, according to Proverbs 18:21. Every time we open our mouth to speak, we have a decision to make. Do we want to have a tongue of iniquity, motivated by the fire of hell? Or, will we confess that we are taking on Christ's yoke?

Bona fide love is based on faith, not feelings. Examine what love really is. Do you think that Jesus had great feelings of love for those who were spitting at Him as He died on the Cross? Of course not. He felt terrible. But He obeyed His Father and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." That was His confession: "Forgive them."

Chapter Two

RIGHT THINKING EQUALS A RIGHT CONFESSION

"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

"I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation" (Psalm 40:9-10).

The Psalmist did not refrain his lips from preaching righteousness. He confessed positive, edifying, Finished Work messages of the imputation and the impartation of God's righteousness.

There are many who draw near unto God with their mouths and their lips, yet their hearts are far from Him (Matthew 15:8). The Word is in our mouths and in our hearts. We don't need to summon God to our side to hear us. Instead, we

confess words of faith from hearts guarded by the Word of God, and we draw near to Him.

The Rule of Faith

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

As we confess the Word by faith, we are delivered. That verse in Romans 10 is not just about salvation, though that certainly could be applied. Actually, this letter was written to a church full of people who were already saved, but they needed to be set free from bondage to the flesh.

Our confession will deliver us. Consider that carefully, and don't be familiar with the Word of God. We are to confess the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether it is an important business meeting, a counseling session, or a family discussion, we will always have issues to deal with. Yet in every situation, we should only have to confess the Lord Jesus. There isn't a thing you or I can do with a problem. In fact, everyone involved usually knows what the problem is and knows what to do, if they would look at the Word of God.

This is the key: Continually thinking right

things starts out with continually confessing right things. Then, regardless of how we feel or what the situations appear to be and without emotional experiences, we start confessing the Lord Jesus. Because of the law of faith, not a thing can stop our confession (Ecclesiastes 5:6). By the law of faith, we communicate that confession to demons, angels, the world, and ourselves.

Chapter Three

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

"And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

"And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

"And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

"Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

"And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and

the keepers before the door kept the prison.

"And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from him hands.

"And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

"And he went out, and followed him; and wist, not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

"When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

"And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" (Acts 12:1-11).

People need our prayers. Prayer must be part of our confession to the atmosphere. Beginning with the most serious cases—troubled mar-

riages, sicknesses, finances—go to God and pray without ceasing.

In Genesis 18:20-23, the Lord told Abraham of the destruction that would come upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham stood before God and said, "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" Then he prayed for the cities, asking the Lord to spare them for the sake of fifty righteous, then forty, then thirty, then twenty, and, finally, he asked that they be spared for the sake of ten righteous.

Ten righteous could not be found in Sodom, but "it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow..." (Genesis 19:29).

It doesn't say that the Lord responded to Lot at all. God remembered Abraham. Abraham prayed, and his prayer delivered Lot, because God remembered his prayer.

Prayer Puts Angels into Action

What happened in the situations that hindered Lot and Peter is described in Psalm 35:5: "Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the Lord chase them." God's angels will eliminate the source of the damage coming

to us.

How did God deliver Lot? With Lot's angels. How did Peter get delivered in Acts 12? By angels. Prayers were heard, and God sent the angels to deliver Peter. And according to Psalm 35:5, the angels will drive away the enemies that seek to destroy our soul.

This is a fantastic principle. It is difficult to describe the concept of individual power that comes to a person who—no matter what age—is filled with the Spirit and prayer. What's more, we can't begin to fathom what a person who prays without ceasing can do for someone else. The angels will chase away the chaff.

"And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

"And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

"And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

"But the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:21-24).

The angel of the Lord eliminated the source of the persecution against Peter.

First, a man prays. Second, he keeps on praying. Third, he confesses that God has heard his prayer. He doesn't even consider that his prayer is not going to be answered. He doesn't receive negativity, and he doesn't confess a negative thought to anyone.

The prayers are offered, and immediately, the angels come on the scene. Lot was taken out of Sodom and Gomorrah. Peter was released from prison. Then, Herod died. God eliminated the source of trouble.

Confess Calvary's Love

Either we have God's love, or we do not. Intense feelings are merely the result of emotions. If it is God's love, it is derived from Calvary and confesses the Word of God to the air and to our angels. When this happens, our angels go to work to deliver us in times of need.

If we never confess our negativity as sin to God and never really repent but continue to say the same things, the things that we want to happen will not happen. God lets the angels bring to nought the things we desire because our confessions are not of faith and our lives are not confessing His righteousness.

The Word of God makes it clear that the an-

gels are looking in at the events of our lives (1 Corinthians 4:9) and to our salvation (1 Peter 1:12). They encamp around us (Psalm 34:7), and they are always ready to minister to us (Hebrews 1:14).

"He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction" (Proverbs 13:3).

Our confession should always be of faith, "that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure…" (see Romans 4:16*a*). Abide in God without changing, even when circumstances change. Confess God's truth when your feelings are bankrupt. No one will know it, because just as a wrong confession can make the flesh sin, a godly confession makes the heart get right with God.

Chapter Four

MINISTER GRACE TO THE HEARERS

"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips" (Psalm 63:5).

"My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed" (Psalm 71:23).

"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" (Psalm 89:34).

Do not alter a godly confession. We will not talk on the phone and say, "Things are still bad." We will confess that things are good. We trust in God alone. Just as we did at salvation, we trust in Christ by faith. Therefore, if our enemies take us up to slay us because of our faith in Christ, we must not alter our confession. If we die because of our confession (Esther 4:16; Hebrews 11:36-39), we will go home to be with God and be blessed.

We talk ourselves into sin. We talk ourselves into sickness, into depression, into despair. We talk ourselves into presumptuous thoughts against others about things that are not real.

Christians should never be negative toward one another. Doing so causes us to sin and gives a place for the devil to take over. When communication about a problem is necessary, we are to speak the truth in love. We allow our speech to be seasoned with the resurrection life of Christ (Colossians 4:6) because we sit where they sit (Ezekiel 3:15). That kind of communication isn't threatening; it isn't reactionary; it isn't retaliation; it isn't blaming. It is communicating the wonderful truth of love and resurrection power. We sit where they sit instead of blaming them for where they are sitting.

Sacrifices of Praise

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).

"With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth" (Psalm 119:13).

By the fruit of our lips, we give thanks to God for His characteristics, which are related to His name. "Judgment" speaks of doctrine. With

our lips we declare the categories of His Word.

Living by every word of God with a heart that dwells richly with Christ, the believer can say, "I will confess what God says, and that is all I will confess. I will not confess negatives. I will not confess defeat. I will not confess frustration. I will not confess depression. I will not confess that I do not have love. I will not confess a single negative thing."

According to Galatians 5:6, we are to do everything through faith that works by love. That verse says "faith." It doesn't say "feelings." This faith is given by Jesus Christ, and His love is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 2:16, 20; Romans 5:5).

"Well, I feel terrible," you say. "What am I going to do?"

You can only do one of two things: Believe God or not. Choose life or choose death. But don't choose death—that would put you under a curse. Instead, choose life that you may live and be blessed of God. (See Deuteronomy 30:15-19).

The Mouth of Justification

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the

hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

I minister edification to my wife because Ephesians 4:29 says that if I love God, that is what I will do. If I don't know God's love, I will confess bad circumstances, financial problems, health problems—and every negative thing. But these things can't have a place in a believer who walks in faith that pleases God, the One who rewards those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6).

There is a very close connection between the individual and the words that he says. This is why God says, "I am in heaven, you are on the earth. Therefore, keep your words very few on the earth" (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

The point is this: Every time I open my mouth, either it justifies me or it condemns me (Matthew 12:37). My angel is listening to my confession. Based upon that confession, either I am delivered with the Holy Spirit's inner strength and the divine providential plan of His ministry, or the works of my hands are destroyed because of my wrong confession.

It was Abraham, through an angel, who helped get Lot out of Sodom—Lot had nothing to do with it. It was the Church's prayers and an angel that released Peter from jail. But it was

also an angel who destroyed Herod when he refused to confess the power of God.

A Positive Confession in the Call

I was thinking about all the students at our Bible college. These precious students come from all over the world—from New York to Las Vegas, from Brazil to Russia, from New England to the Pacific Northwest. The amazing plan of God has brought Christians from all these cities and countries to a Bible college where they learn to know God and to know each other. As God does this, He teaches them how to develop the character of faith in the nature of love through the discipline of grace according to the Word of Life.

Sometimes, God will call us to leave our present location to have a new challenge of adventure. Once we respond to that call, we should continue until all that we are supposed to learn is fulfilled, and the character of faith is developed in us. Walking by faith causes us to depend totally on the Lord, to have God mystically come through for us in situations that could otherwise overwhelm us. And all the time, we are to confess faith in the Word of God.

Wherever you are at today, the one thing that is going to bring you through is the confession that governs your heart.

Many times as a believer, you have experienced situations that haven't felt good, yet your confession remained godly. Eventually, through the Holy Spirit, that confession becomes anointed and you actually experience what you have been confessing in your heart without tangible evidence or emotional confirmations.

"Yea, my [emotions] shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things" (Proverbs 23:16). Speaking the right things causes the emotions to rejoice. If I don't speak right things, then my emotions will reinforce my negative communication, which is based on iniquity (James 3:5-6). I speak from the fires of hell when I am under the negative power of emotional reaction to the apparent reality of circumstances and sight.

"Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer" (Proverbs 24:26).

Do you want to settle a marital problem? Just start confessing God. Then the other party will kiss your lips—and it will be a good old-fashioned marital kiss.

Job's wife spoke foolishly when she told her husband to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9-10). She was a foolish woman in that she didn't think with God, which would have produced healthy emotions. Therefore, her speech governed her emotions instead of her lips rejoicing in the truth.

The Word of God has so much to say about this subject:

"The lip of truth shall be established forever: but the lying tongue is but for a moment" (Proverbs 12:19).

"Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3).

"A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment" (Proverbs 16:10).

"Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips" (Job 13:6).

"That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform, even a free will offering, according as thou has vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth" (Deuteronomy 23:23).

If you say something with your lips, and you keep on confessing it, it shall be performed. Contrast that thought with what is found in Job

15:6: “Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee.” This happens so many times.

The next time you are faced with a problem, let your lips speak godly truth to determine your will instead of letting your will control your lips. Then, by faith, your godly confession will control your heart, soul, and mind.

CONCLUSION

When God's power controls a person's life, the effects are dynamic, revealing the grace of God's purpose for each of us. Circumstances are not going to change us. The car might break down every other day in the worst heat of the summer—but that doesn't stop a man of God. God didn't call us to failure. So when everything seems to be going wrong, the way to glorify Him is to refuse to confess a negative thought.

Confess God's truth in every situation. For instance, you may want a certain job. But if it hasn't happened, let your confession be according to God's character. That kind of confession releases the Son's faith through His love shed abroad in us by the Holy Spirit.

Our faith is in Jesus Christ's words. That is how we deal with problems in a relationship, with our finances, with our weaknesses, and with our sicknesses. We need to confess God's provision continually. Confess God's power, His

grace, and His love. If circumstances seem to say, “No,” we simply confess, “Yes! God will come through.” He will keep us during times of trouble. Out of our hearts will come the confession that Christ is real, and what He has said will come to pass.

The Power of the Tongue

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The tongue. Everybody has one, but we do not always use it wisely. Therefore, we need to address this subject in the context of the whole counsel of God so that people might be encouraged in the Word of God and prevented from committing any sin that might ruin the ministry of Christ when God is moving in a revival.

God wants to stir up the gift that is within us. With that, He desires to refresh us in some practical truths that will help us to be careful and to help us to go to Calvary's Cross.

The indwelling Christ can give us victory over this very small yet powerful member of our bodies. My prayer is that as we consider this subject, we might be very sensitive and very concerned about how our own lives can affect the lives of others. Each one of us needs to ask God, "Is my tongue under control? Have I been a stumbling block or an offense to someone who may not know You—or maybe they know You

and are just very weak? Have I been a stumbling block to my children or to a young believer or to anyone else?"

As you read this booklet, carefully consider what the Bible has to say about the tongue. Remember that its power is great, not only in its ability to tear down and to wound but also in its capacity to build up and to heal.

Chapter One

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITHFUL TEACHERS

"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

"For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in words, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

"Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

"Behold also the ships which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it de-

fileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

"For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

"But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

"Therefore bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

"Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

"Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

"This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

"And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:1-18).

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof " (Proverbs 18:21).

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and every Christian needs to realize that within his body is a member that can produce either life or death in somebody else.

The Word of God says, "Be not many [teachers]" (James 3:1). God is not trying to discourage people from seeking and training for the office of teaching. There is, however, greater condemnation on those that teach the Word of God, because they are accountable to teach the way of life, which results in eternal life or in eternal death with eternal torment in hell.

If He has given you a gift, we certainly encourage you to pray about it and let the Lord Jesus Christ develop that gift in you for His glory.

But He is inferring that those who desire the office of a teacher or the office of a pastor, or who just desire to go out and be used of God in the highways and byways, need to be extremely cautious, recognizing that there is a greater condemnation that goes with that ministry. Of course, there is also a greater reward, a greater satisfaction, and a greater joy that accompanies that calling, if we remain faithful as stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10).

Effective Communication

"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27).

This tells me one thing, that whether it is I or some other pastor, we need to be very careful to declare the whole counsel of God. If we as teachers don't do this effectively through God's mind and heart, then great is the condemnation upon us. So we must be careful that we do not offend anybody.

When I say "do not offend," I mean that we are to be sensitive to people without tearing down God's standards and minimizing the importance of God's standards before the people.

We don't want them to think that there is an easy road or easy way in this Christian life. We teach the *whole* counsel of God. But we must draw the picture of God's truth in simplicity and emphatically, with a vivid explanation from the Word of God, just as the Lord Jesus describes it in the Bible. We must not teach a sentimental love story as many people do today.

Oh, there is hardly a service where we do not speak of divine love—unconditional love that forgives and forgets as it looks beyond a man's faults and sees his need. We believe in that love with all our heart. Furthermore, we believe that every Christian should have the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5, Titus 3:6).

This love of Christ is a love that does not demand love in return. It is a love that is not based on how the person loves me back. It is a love that is not measured by how people use me or respond to me. It is a love that is an unlimited, inexhaustible, wonderful attribute—God's gift to me through the Holy Spirit. He sheds it abroad in my heart so I can give it to other people.

We must realize that this love is so important; however, we must not be guilty of teaching

a sentimental, lukewarm, easygoing, weak, anemic, spiritually contradictory type of love such as that which is going forth from many pulpits today.

That is why we must study the Word of God and study what is going on in the world of religion. We must realize that there will be a great condemnation for false teachers, who draw many aside and entice them with their own words and ideas of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we cannot divorce our thoughts from the Word of God.

Thus, the Lord Jesus has plainly said, "Do not desire to be a teacher unless you want to go by the entire Word of God. And be careful of offending anybody."

I must be careful that I do not offend anybody. And that does not mean by a strong message, because a strong message always offends the flesh. The Lord Jesus Christ had a ministry that was offensive in that respect. But we must speak the truth in love and let our speech be seasoned with salt.

Present the Truth Clearly

Every pastor and teacher must be very careful not to offend the person who is listening by

giving them a perverted view of the Word of God. Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:

"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (verses 5-6).

In other words, He said, "It is better for you if you never were born than to offend a child or a young Christian, whoever he may be, with the wrong doctrine, wrong teachings, or wrong ideas."

That is why, when we teach the Scripture, we must speak out boldly, without compromise, and without apologizing that we do not go along with hundreds of churches that do not preach the whole counsel of God. Still, we speak the truth lovingly.

I have shed many tears as I have contemplated this subject. A pastor has a tremendous responsibility under God, and he much teach the whole counsel. Many people do not understand the tremendous responsibility of a faithful preacher of the Gospel. Naturally, we know we will be misunderstood. We know that many people will not receive what we teach, and

many will not obey. But our prayer is that some will—and some do—and that they will go out and teach others who will, perhaps, do the same. The entire prayer of the pastor-teacher's heart is that he would be faithful to the Lord Jesus and not given to offending people by refusing to preach the whole counsel of God.

It all starts with the tongue, a subject that is in everybody's mouth. Oh, how the tongue can bring blessings, or harm, to many lives. There is such power in the tongue.

Chapter Two

WORDS IN SEASON ARE WORDS OF LIFE

"For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in words, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

"Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body" (James 3:2-3).

In his letter to the persecuted Church, James has provided several illustrations regarding the tongue. He has presented a principle and laid a foundation, and now he will give illustrations to teach us what this means.

James describes our need to bridle our tongues, even as we put a bit in the horses' mouths. With the bit, the rider is able to steer the horse in the direction he wants the animal to go. He describes a picture of a young horse that is feeling good, full of life and energy. This horse wants to go somewhere.

I remember when we had a young colt, back on the farm. Before he was broken, trained, and disciplined, that colt always wanted to go somewhere. He never knew where, though. (And when we were riding him, we never knew where!) We had to get a bit in his mouth and begin to direct him in the direction that we wanted him to go.

This is the way it is with our tongue, and God says we ought to have a bit. We can easily offend someone by not having control of this all-important member of our body.

Losing Track of Our Words

Think about this little poem:

I lost a little word just the other day.
It was a very naughty word
I hadn't meant to say.
I really didn't lose it,
because from my lips it flew.
My little brother picked it up,
and now he's saying it too.

You know, that is the way it happens. We say a little word, and it is only a tiny, naughty word. Spiritually speaking, however, this tiny word hurts a brother or a sister in Christ and stirs up a

misunderstanding. It was just a little word. We didn't mean to say it. It just came out so fast. But we did not "lose" it at all, because someone else picked it up. Then another one picked it up, and he started saying it, too. Then, you have many people saying it. Before you know it, you have a satanic conspiracy in God's church.

We have to be so careful, because death *and* life are in the power of the tongue, according to Proverbs 18:21.

One of the greatest opportunities we have as born-again believers is to let the life of the Lord Jesus Christ live in us and, thereby, to have a tongue that is under control. It is so crucial to let the Lord Jesus Christ control our tongues. If you can concentrate, the Spirit of God will write something about this on your heart.

Words that Change Lives

I remember a woman in her late twenties who had cancer. She battled for two years, and in the process of dying, while she lay in the hospital bed, she used her tongue to be a blessing to many people. The words of her testimony are still in the mouths of some people because of this young lady. She always had something good to say. She loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and

she wrote many poems in her Bible that were used at her funeral service.

She brought a tremendous blessing to people. At least one person went forward to receive Jesus Christ after she died, and it was because of the testimony of her life when she was in that hospital bed. The words that revealed her life's response to this adverse circumstance touched someone, and her tongue became an instrument to bring a tremendous blessing.

I have always thought how wonderful it is when the tongue can be a blessing like that—to bring people to the Lord Jesus Christ even after we die, and then to bring them out of death into eternal life and the revelation of salvation through the Lord Jesus. That is exactly what this woman's tongue was able to do with a very consistent, steadfast testimony. By the grace of God, day after day and night after night, her tongue became a tremendous blessing to the doctors and nurses, relatives, and friends.

Oh, how the tongue can be a blessing! It can be a tremendous blessing to everybody, all the time, when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ and let Him live through us.

"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary" (Isaiah 50:4*a*). That is what the Lord Jesus Christ received from God the Father. He wants to impart that same wisdom to us—wisdom that is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. He wants to give us the tongue that knows how to speak, who to speak to, and when to speak.

It doesn't take much to say something that will really encourage somebody along this terrible, weary journey of life. I want my tongue to come into captivity, to be a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the desire of my heart.

As we grow in grace and band together, colaboring in the Lord Jesus Christ's ministry here, I pray continually that we would not be conceited, that we would not highly esteem ourselves, and that we would not think that we have attained or that we know it all. I pray that we would get serious with God and let the Holy Spirit of God train us and teach us to be people of God. Let the Holy Spirit be like a bit in our mouth to control our tongue and really begin to direct our heart.

I remember meeting with a man who was an alcoholic, and all that I said was this: "You know, the Lord Jesus Christ really loves you, and He will give you power over that. It breaks His heart to see you doing this to yourself."

This person has shared his testimony several times, and he said that the one thing that got through to him was when he heard that the Lord Jesus Christ loved him. It wasn't very much, but it was enough to set him free and deliver him from alcoholism.

A word in season—using the tongue to bring a blessing: When you see somebody down, never tread on him. By God's grace, take his hand and pull him up and let the Lord Jesus Christ produce His life through you so that your tongue can be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Three

WORDS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In this life, there are many dangers in having a tongue that is quick to be sarcastic. God understands our makeup, and God will give us victory. But we must recognize how dangerous it is. Remember: Within the power of the tongue is death and life. Somebody might listen to words from the sarcastic tongue of a Christian, and it might drive them away from Christianity.

Let us speak with all the love of God radiating through us. May our tongues bring a message of deliverance, speaking words that will really be a blessing to the hearer—the person who is so weary and tired, so disappointed, so frustrated, and so emotionally disturbed.

We must watch the tongue that is hasty to speak. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath" (James 1:19). Silence sometimes

is golden. Sometimes it is better not to speak at all. Sometimes it is better just to listen.

"He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit" (Proverbs 17:27).

Through the Lord Jesus Christ, a man can have understanding and, with that, an excellent spirit. It is a beautiful thing to be able to spare our words and just speak a word in season. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:2, we are to be instant in season and out of season, proclaiming the truth.

God wants us to know that the only way our tongues can be continually under control is to live in the reality of Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

He wants to give every one of us a golden tongue; He wants us to come to Calvary's Cross. It is not enough that I did this yesterday and today. The Lord Jesus wants me to do it tomorrow, for the rest of this week, and every day until He comes back. He wants me to live in this practice one day at a time, even one moment at a time.

I remember hearing a story about John Wesley holding public meetings where many people were getting saved—so many that a few townspeople took him and a group of the Methodists to court. The judge said to the townspeople, "What is your charge? Why did you want these Methodists to come to court?"

One fellow got up and he said, "Well, my wife used to talk and complain all the time, and now she hardly speaks at all," he said, "and I don't like it."

The judge said, "Sir, I dismiss this case. I want to say to Mr. Wesley, I hope he can win a lot more people to the Lord Jesus Christ if this is the result."

Well, may I say that this could be true with the men as well. But in any case, it is a fact in life that when we have the tongue of the learned, the Holy Spirit being the bit to guide our tongue, then we know when to speak, and we know when not to speak, and we know when to spare our words.

Someone once told me that he was just going through the motions, attending church, but spiritually he was not getting along too well. He

was not progressing. Then, out of the blue, someone asked him, "Would you teach Sunday School?"

He said, "No, I can't. I will be honest with you. I don't have any interest in young people."

"All right," the other man answered. "I'll tell you what. Would you just pray that God will give you a love for the young people?"

That is all he said.

The fellow went home and he thought it over and said, "I will pray that God will give me a love for the young people."

He prayed that night, and the next morning he got up and he prayed again, and tears came to his eyes. God gave him a tremendous vision in his heart of a world for young people. "I will teach them, Lord. I'll do the best I can. I will come to You and let You teach me, and I will teach them."

Soon he was teaching and getting along fine. He went back and said to that other fellow two months later, "That was a wonderful thing that you said to me."

And the fellow said, "What did I say?"

"You said, 'Would you go home and pray about teaching young people?' That is all you said, and that is what did it. God has changed

my life. I have a vision for the young people, and God is doing wonders in the Sunday School class."

A Small Member Steers the Ship

"Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor (the helm) listeth" (James 3:4).

The troubled sea, the tempest, the wind and waves, and here is your ship going down in the water, going down in the vast ocean. All of a sudden, just this small helm was able to turn it.

The Lord Jesus Christ is giving us a picture here that we are going through a life that is tempestuous. We are in a body of sin. It is a body that is heading for the grave. It is a life that cannot be controlled by Adam. It is a life that cannot come under the dominion of God until the Spirit of Christ comes into our heart to live. The ship is rocking and the storm is coming. The waves are pounding up against the boat, the wind is blowing, and it's a fierce storm.

All it takes to change the course of a storm is the Spirit of Christ (Mark 4:39). Using my tongue, I ask Jesus to come into my heart and live. This

choice changed how I feel. It changed my relationship to my fellow men. Now I speak the right things, and everything is so much better. God is honored. Things are going much more smoothly for me. I feel better, act better, think better, and talk better. I am more willing to help others because the Spirit of Christ, the living Christ, is taking over my tongue in this tempestuous terrible storm of this old life.

Jesus Christ wants us to be cautious as we recognize the power of the tongue and let the Spirit of Christ take over. He wants us to proclaim the whole counsel of God, to cry aloud and spare not (Isaiah 58:1). He wants us to serve one another in a loving, kind, gracious, tactful way so that we might be edified as we grow in the grace and the knowledge of Him (2 Peter 3:18).

CONCLUSION

Death and life are in the power of the tongue. A foul tongue will never honor heaven. Alying tongue will never honor heaven. A hasty tongue will always destroy and hurt many. A sarcastic tongue is dangerous, and we need victory over that. We must confess wrong attitudes and repent from a tongue that is foul, lying, hasty, or sarcastic, and let God give us victory.

We need to have a tongue that always speaks words of wisdom, a tongue that always speaks the truth, a tongue that always brings out what should be said from God's mind, and always at the right time, instant in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). Let's do it through the love of God, for the love of God and for the welfare of mankind. The soul that is lost needs to know Christ. The soul that is weak needs to hear that encouraging word.

Father, we thank You that You always speak to us with right words at the right time. And Lord Jesus,

we pray that You would help every single one of us to present our bodies a living sacrifice that we might be sanctified wholly, spirit, soul, and body. We are all frail, weak men of the earth. But we pray that You will let the very peace of God and the power of Christ control and have dominion over us.

Dear Lord, take our tongues, these little members in our mouths, and make us a great blessing to one another. We pray that Christ will be glorified in our communication. Let us grow in Your grace because of it. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Power of Weakness

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

So many of us fight weakness. I'm not talking about falling into sin—God forbid! I am talking about the weakness that comes into our lives through trials and circumstances. When we are weak, we want to call on the angels for help; we want to seek people for counsel.

But there's a reason why God allows us to experience weakness. God is saying to us, as He did to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul's response? "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). By the grace of God, some of us are going to be called to go through unusual periods of weakness so that we can experience the power of God resting on us.

Chapter One

THE SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

The apostle Paul was one of the greatest men of God who ever lived—great because of his attitude and his honesty, knowing he was nothing apart from Christ. In 1 Timothy 1:15, Paul called himself the chief of sinners. In Ephesians 3:8, he

said he was "less than the least of all saints." And, in 2 Corinthians 12:7, he had this thorn in his flesh. Paul didn't like the thorn; he didn't want it, and he asked God to remove it.

Glorying in Infirmities

There have been many speculations among Bible scholars as to the nature of Paul's thorn in the flesh. Some think it was a person sent to hinder him. Galatians 4:13-15 gives us a good indication that he may have had eye problems. 2 Corinthians 10:10 tells us that his speech was "contemptible." However, 2 Corinthians 12:7 makes it crystal clear that Paul's thorn was "the messenger of Satan"—which I believe to be a demon—sent to buffet Paul lest he be "exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations" given to him by God.

My careful study in the Greek text of 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, with Acts 14:19-20, reveals that when Paul was stoned in Lystra, he actually died and was caught up to the "third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2*b*) or, "paradise" (verse 4*a*). In heaven, Paul heard "unspeakable words," things he could never put into human language. To keep Paul from becoming proud and arrogant over the things he saw and heard, God gave him this

thorn in the flesh.

So Paul prayed: "Lord, will you remove this thorn from my flesh?" Nothing happened, even for this man who had been used by God to raise Eutychus from the dead (Acts 20:9-10).

Paul prayed a second time: "Lord, please remove this thorn from me." Here he was, the apostle to the Gentiles; he had been in Arabia, where he was Spirit-taught.* He knew what it meant to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He had many of the gifts of the Spirit and was truly a servant of God.

Still, no answer.

So Paul prayed a third time. "Lord, will you remove this thorn? I don't want it." Finally, the Lord answered him: "No, I will not. My grace is sufficient for you, and my strength is made perfect in your weakness."

Immediately, Paul responded to God's answer: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). In these great verses, we see the power of weakness.

Three times, Paul prayed. Three times! God's only answer: "Paul, my grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in your weakness."

Paul said, "Thank you, Lord. That settles it; that's all I need to hear." This is the key to the power of weakness.

What a beautiful response! God's answer probably wasn't what Paul wanted to hear; but he accepted it and was immediately thankful. This was the attitude that made this servant of God so different.

* *Are You Spirit-Taught*, a booklet available from Grace Publications, covers this subject in detail.

Chapter Two

DELIVERED FROM THE BODY OF DEATH

Paul was weak in many other areas; The things he wanted to do, he couldn't do. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me" (Romans 7:18-21).

Contrary to what anyone else may teach, Paul's "Romans 7" experience came *after* he had been in Arabia, *after* he had been baptized and filled with the Spirit of God. Paul understood positional truth, according to Romans 6. He knew what it meant to be resurrected and seated above with Christ (Ephesians 2:6). And yet, he

still had a "Romans 7" experience. He had been filled with the Spirit of God many times. Yet, Paul went out and fell flat on his face.

We don't know what Paul did. We don't know how serious it was. But, we do know that in Romans 7:24, Paul cried out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Whatever Paul did, even if it was small thing, it was still big enough that he felt he was a wretched man.

Paul was hid in the power and holiness of God, yet he asked: "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" He was yearning for deliverance. Even though he was filled with the Spirit, even with his many gifts, even though he'd been Spirit-taught in Arabia—this apostle, this mighty man of God, still found himself struggling with his old sin nature.

God's Throne Ministry

Paul discovered something through this experience: He was introduced to the throne ministry of Jesus Christ. Paul knew what it meant to be crucified with Christ; he knew what it was to be resurrected, but he did not understand the throne.

All of a sudden, Paul came to a new under-

standing, and he declared, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:25*a*). Here, in Paul's heart, was the birth of the throne ministry he had never understood before this time. Then, in Romans 8:1, he shouted two words in an exclamation of victory: "…*no condemnation*"!

Chapter Three

LOOKING TO THE CROSS

As Jesus Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane, drops of blood came through His pores. Eventually, He would be nailed to the cross in excruciating pain and agony. By sight, every single thing seemed to go wrong as He suffered a shameful death for each of us. It appeared as if He were helpless and that the situation was hopeless. But if you look closer, you will see the power in His weakness.

In Matthew 26:53-54, Jesus said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Jesus was saying, "The angels are with me. Don't you know they could deliver me if I called to the Father for them? But," He said, "I'm *not* going to call on the angels and I *don't* want to be delivered. If I were, the Scriptures could not be fulfilled."

Jesus demonstrated the connection between weakness and power. In 2 Corinthians 13:4*a*, He was crucified in weakness: "For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God." He didn't have to be weak, but He was willing to be weak, because there was a purpose which motivated Him and it had to be manifested.

The Lord Jesus Christ is saying that there can be a wonderful reason for weakness. If Jesus had not suffered, bled, and died on the Cross, then, needless to say, every one of us would go to hell. Had Jesus called upon the twelve legions of angels, every one of us would be lost and on our way to a Christ-less eternity. But He was willing to suffer as a weakling. He was willing to be crucified and die in weakness.

You and I are going to be called to go through times of weakness. Why? So that we can manifest the power of God in those moments.

Hundreds of Christians do not want the Cross, and they fight situations that would drive them to it. But the old rugged cross is the only instrument God has to manifest the resurrected Christ and to show people that He has victory

over death. It's the only instrument He has to reveal supernatural love, power, and peace.

Victory at Calvary

The first thing Jesus said from the cross was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34*a*). That was supernatural love. The last thing He said was, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46*a*). That was supernatural faith. Jesus is saying to us, "When I start nailing you to the Cross in different situations, I want you to take on *my* character and *my* power. I want you to offer yourself through the eternal Spirit."

Jesus Christ offered Himself without spot to God through the eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14). How else could Satan be defeated? How else could sin be judged, condemned, and paid for? Only through the cross could the justice of God be met and the grace of God be manifested in its supremacy. Only through the cross could divine love, patience, and long-suffering be expressed. Only through the cross, where He died, could His divine ministry of joy be revealed.

This was an unusual cross. It was a cross where an innocent Man identified Himself as guilty to display God's attitude toward the

guilty as He bore their sin.

"So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Corinthians 4:12). This was the purpose of the Cross. He died that others might live. He died so that God would be revealed in utter suffering. He died in weakness that real strength might be displayed and real power would be manifested—the power to stay on the cross, power not to complain, power not to rebuke us, power to love us and identify with us, power to give His life for us—even when we were guilty.

Jesus showed us a power beyond reacting, a power beyond natural temperament—that so-called power to fight back. He showed us *real* power. He showed us God in action. He revealed what a suffering God would do for mankind, even when mankind put Him on the Tree. "Kill me? I'll still love you," Jesus was saying to us through this scene at the cross. "Destroy me? I will save you."

Chapter Four

REVEALING CHRIST IN WEAKNESS

I once visited an eighty-one-year-old lady, in the hospital, who was suffering from cancer of the intestines. The doctors said her body had built up an immunity toward the medication she was taking. Her pain must have been unbearable. But, I will never forget her face for one reason—she was completely filled with God's glory.

"I don't see how she can stand the pain," the doctor told me. "There's something about her. How do you explain it? She's the best patient we've ever had in the history of our hospital. She's a happy sick person! When I know the pain is literally cutting her to pieces, she looks up to God and says, 'Thank you, Jesus.' She praises God, sweetly and softly, not with a tormented voice, but with a beautiful voice." He was overwhelmed by her testimony of the

power of weakness.

Perhaps you are asking, "How could this lady be filled with God's glory and still have cancer?" That's God's business, not ours. But she had power in her weakness. Her mind was on Jesus Christ. She was so occupied with the Throne of God that she experienced fantastic victory. She was so close to God, so occupied with Him, that she hardly sensed her pain. She testified of heaven while she was still on the earth.

I also saw a sixty-nine-year-old pastor in the hospital; he was suffering with kidney cancer. Nothing could be done. The pain must have been overwhelming because the cancer was slowly eating his body. He was in and out of consciousness. I stayed with him one Saturday evening as he regained consciousness. I watched his face as he kept saying, "Glory, glory, glory!" Then, he would go back into unconsciousness and his body would twitch in terrible agony. When a person learns how to believe and walk by faith, he has tremendous power in his weakness.

Don't Fight Weakness

Christians spend hours fighting their weaknesses and the weaknesses of other people. Jesus

Christ wants them to be crucified in weakness. And He wants that weakness to be brought into death, even the death of the cross.

Picture that old, rugged cross and you will get to know God. You will get to know His character and attitude toward you. Get to know all about Him as you listen to Him and watch Him on the cross. Then, see Jesus Christ as He's placed in the tomb. Watch as He is resurrected and see Him as He visits the disciples in the upper room, announcing "Peace" to them as they were hiding in fear of the Jews (John 20:20). See His resurrected attitude borne from the Cross now born into our human nature through regeneration of the heart.

There are three things the cross revealed: God's grace, sufficient in all situations; God's strength; and God's eternal life, given to everyone who receives Him.

God may say, "Over the next three or four weeks, I am going to allow some people to go through times of personal weakness." If you are one of these people, don't fight that weakness. Let His grace come through you; let His strength be manifested. As a result, someone will live because of seeing God in you during unbelievable situations. Out of you will come God's charac-

ter, God's life, and God's attributes. People will see it right in front of their eyes. They will sense it and watch it, becoming hungry and thirsty through the Holy Spirit.

Don't let people see you fall, backslide, and murmur like the children of Israel. Let them see Jesus Christ come out of you, through the Spirit.

Being Found Faithful

There is one thing I'm praying in these last days—that God would keep me faithful. A great Russian believer, who was in prison, constantly prayed: "God, keep me faithful unto death. Keep me faithful! Don't let me be anything but faithful." Every child of God must know the importance of being faithful from day to day.

Be faithful to let the grace and strength of God come through you. Oh, how important it is to just be faithful! Be faithful in letting the Cross work its way into your life.

The sentence of death is upon us (2 Corinthians 1:9). We are always being delivered unto death so that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal bodies (2 Corinthians 4:10).

It is God's plan that we represent the Cross. Many times, we are going to represent weak-

ness. In the midst of a tremendous demonic attack in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." His heart was perfect and His attitude was submissive to the Father's plan. But, it was impossible for the cup to be removed, and Jesus Christ manifested the power of God in the weakness of His humanity at the moment.

Sometimes in our weakness we may pray, "Lord, is there another way?" No. There isn't. We must die. We must go all the way, because there's no way apart from the Cross. There's no other way but through death—death to ourselves and to our privileges—and out of this death will come God's grace and strength. Out of this death will come resurrection life. Out of our weakness will come life to people who are living in sin so they can be forgiven and saved. Out of our Cross experiences will come rivers of living water, the flow of God's character, because we denied ourselves and took up our cross. There's power in weakness: the power of Jesus Christ in action.

CONCLUSION

If you're born again, you have the eternal Spirit of Hebrews 9:14. God is saying to each of us, "I want you to offer yourself through the eternal Spirit. I want you to take on My character and My power as you are nailed to different situations just as Jesus was nailed to the Cross."

By the grace of God, I can go through trials in the power of the eternal Spirit. I can be nailed to circumstances and situations without whining, murmuring, reacting, or being disgusted in any way. In these last days, I *know*, what's more, I am *convinced* that I am crucified with Christ. Yet, at the same time, I must take up my cross and follow Jesus Christ (Luke 9:23). I can say, there's power in weakness.

Let's not spend our time fighting the Cross. Let's deny ourselves and take up our cross, so that through our bodies will come the manifestation of His life.

The Precious Lamb of God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Since God killed an animal and used the skins to cover Adam and Eve, many sacrifices for sins have been offered to God. The Jewish temple was meticulously designed for offerings and sacrifices (a daily activity for the people of Israel) that would be acceptable to God. And every sacrifice pointed to Christ the Lamb, our substitute.

Josephus, an historian of that era, tells us that 250,000 lambs were slain every year for Israel's various sacrifices. If a family couldn't afford a lamb, a number of families could get together to purchase one lamb. Because of their poverty, that one lamb was sufficient to represent all of those families. So the sacrifices continued, but just as a temporary provision.

Today, there is no more sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 10:26). Even the richest person, convicted of his sinful condition, could not pay the price that God would accept. Faced with eternity in

hell, if he gave even his own life, every man falls short.

The images presented in this booklet are to help us grasp an understanding of God's only provision for Fallen men. It is the precious Lamb of God.

Chapter One

WHERE IS THE LAMB?

In Genesis 22, Abraham was awakened early one morning. Something very beautiful was about to be revealed.

God told Abraham to go on a three-day journey to Mount Moriah. He was to take his son Isaac, and he was to bring the wood for a sacrifice on a beast. Besides himself and Isaac, two others would go with them up into the mountains. The burden was loaded upon the beast—that animal carried *all* the wood upon its back—and they were on their way.

In this story, the wood represents sin. The beast represents you and me as we travel in this life. It was very difficult for the animal to go and find fresh drinking water—difficult, because the wood was upon him. He was limited by the weight of the burden.

Finally they arrived on Mount Moriah where the wood was taken off of the beast and

placed upon the altar. And, in Genesis 22:7, Isaac asked this question. "Where is the lamb?"

Where is the lamb?

The answer from Abraham was beautiful: "God will provide Himself a lamb."

Think of the many times those words have been spoken. Yet their meaning is far different from what the first glimpse would indicate. Abraham, who had failed many times, had started to grow in faith. If we were to study Abraham's life of faith, we would find it extremely interesting. Yes, he had his ups and downs, but he always ended up winning.

A man of God may go back six steps and then take ten steps forward. Or, he might go back eight and then go ahead nine. Every time a man or woman of God goes back in failure, when they look to God, they will always go forward more. So it was with Abraham. Even though he failed, he continued to get up and move forward.

Faith under Pressure

"Where is the lamb?" Isaac asked his father.

And this man, who had grown so beautifully in faith, made an amazing statement. What he really was saying is this: "God will not have

me kill my son. He will provide a lamb for Himself."

Abraham understood the mystery of the centuries in the kaleidoscope of time.

Picture his child there, the promised son (Genesis 15:4). Abraham had waited all those years—until he was one hundred years old. Picture the knife ready to be used for the sacrifice, and in comes a tremendous faith for this situation.

Why? Because, without wavering he said, "God will provide Himself a lamb for the sacrifice. It is not going to be Isaac. You want to test my faith, Lord? Go right ahead. I trust You. Do You want me to come this close? Fine. I trust You. If You have me kill him, You will resuscitate him."

Faith in the Fire

But what about Isaac? His father is holding the knife in the air, and Isaac is on the altar. Not a single thing is said by Isaac. This is a picture of Jesus Christ offering to die for us. Before He became our sacrifice, Christ volunteered to die in our place.

Then the angel spoke, and said, "Abraham! Abraham, don't do it." It was a test of faith.

"God will provide Himself a lamb."

There, in the thicket, was the animal God had prepared for that moment—the *real* substitute. The real substitute, used instead of Isaac, represented Christ as our substitute.

Chapter Two

PRECIOUS BLOOD FROM A PRECIOUS LAMB

The nation of Israel was chosen to be God's people. Through them, He would reveal to every nation on earth His nature of mercy, goodness, lovingkindness, longsuffering, and forgiveness. In God's plan, Israel spent many years in captivity in Egypt under cruel taskmasters. God saw their affliction, heard their cry, and knew their sorrows (Exodus 3:7). So, remembering His covenant with Abraham, God raised up Moses to deliver His people.

When Pharaoh rejected Moses' pleas, he actually was rejecting the Gospel. With the ten plagues sent by God, Pharaoh had ten opportunities to receive the Gospel. Ten times, he rejected it. The final plague was death to all the firstborn in Egypt, including Pharaoh's son.

So, the Lord spoke through the Holy Spirit

to Moses and said, "A lamb must be killed for every family. The blood from the lamb will be taken and put on the doorposts and on the lintel above the door," in the form of the cross. The death angel would go over and pass by every house represented by a lamb (Exodus 12:21-23).

In the land of Goshen, that terrible night came when the death angel visited every house, killing the firstborn sons. But everywhere that the blood was on the doorposts, representing the cross, the people were safe.

Do Not Insult the Spirit of Grace

God instructed Moses on how the blood was to be applied. He said the blood must never go on the floor. For us, that means that we must not ever tread over the Blood with our lives.

Hebrews 10:29 says do not count the Blood of the covenant an unholy thing nor insult the Spirit of grace, wherewith we have been sanctified, by treading it under your feet.

If you can willfully plan to sin and practice sins, fulfilling the flesh, you are treading the Blood under your feet. It is precious Blood. Precious because it was God's blood in human form (1 Peter 1:19). Precious because there was life in the Blood that represented God's life being

given for us. Precious because it blotted out every sin. Precious because it takes care of the unconscious mind (Hebrews 9:14) as it wipes away and purges the past.

It does more than deal with the past. The Blood purges the evil and sin that wants to attack us today. In other words, if we are walking in the light of the Word of God, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us—not just from all sin but from *wanting* to sin. Why? Because we are walking in the light.

So the Blood not only has a saving impact upon us, it also has a preventive impact upon us. It means that if we fellowship with the light of God's Word, His blood is continually working for us, spiritually, in our souls.

Power in the Blood

There was power in the blood on the doorposts. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8*b*). And ever since then, before the human race was created, God's plan has to be seen through a Lamb.

They kept crying out in Old Testament times—throughout the first five books of the Bible, the books of prophets, and the minor prophets. Read Isaiah 1:6 and ask, "Is there an

ointment to mollify our wounds?" In Jeremiah 8:22, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" So many are plagued with problems that stem from a root of bitterness, in Hebrews 12:15. Is there a sacrifice that can deal with the root? *Where is the lamb?* There has to be a lamb. And we know that the blood of an animal has no value—except as it points to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

"*Where is the Lamb?*"

A thousand years went by. Two thousand. Three thousand. Four thousand years went by from the time of the first sacrifice in Genesis 3:21. And still the cry went up, "Where is the Lamb?"

Then one day, the question of the ages was answered.

A Voice in the Wilderness

John the Baptist, who preached a strong message of repentance, said, "…the axe is laid unto the root of the trees…" (Luke 3:9). "Start out your life with God by repentance! Get to the root of the problem." And as he stood there preaching, in the midst of the crowd his eyes beheld Jesus Christ. Then, in John 1:29, he cried out, "There is the Lamb! *There is the Lamb!*" The Lamb of God had come.

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53). He was God incarnate, the God-Man. It was precious blood in the veins of that One who never sinned, sacredly shed to blot out the transgressions of every person in the human race. Those who would receive Him would be free forever. And those who would walk in fellowship of the Blood would have power over sin. Though they would not be sinless, they would sin much less than others because of power in the blood that came from a spotless Lamb.

Chapter Three

THE ETERNAL LAMB

Now the Lamb was slain. The Pharisees rejected the Lamb. The scribes rejected the Lamb. The Sanhedrin rejected the Lamb. But, why would anyone want to reject a Lamb?

Seven times in the Gospels when He represented us as sinners before His accusers, Jesus did not open His mouth. But seven times when He represented God, He spoke out.

Now it is over. The Lamb was crucified. Finally, after 250,000 lambs a year had been slain, the real One came. Therefore, there is no more need to sacrifice lambs. God sanctified us—once and for all—through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:10).

And yet, because of persecution, after thirty years of church growth in Jerusalem, the Hebrew Christians went back to offering lambs again. They did it because as believers they were discriminated against. They were unable to get

jobs and their children could not go to school. That is why God had so much to say in Hebrews 6 and 10 about the backslidden Hebrew Christians. Many of them had given in to persecution.

But now, it is over. *It is finished.* The Lamb was slain. Now He has come forth from the grave—and He is still a Lamb. In John 20:27-29, He said to Thomas, who doubted His resurrection, "Put your finger into My hands, and put your hand in My side. But when you do it, *believe*. I am still the Lamb. Though the wounds are fresh, there is no blood in My body. I poured it out for you."

Thomas said, "My Lord and my God." Here is the Lamb again.

Who Is Worthy?

Now, imagine that we have been raptured, and we have entered into heaven. Above the Throne of God is a magnificent rainbow. More than the average rainbow, it is heavily accented with emerald green, the color of mercy. Here we are at the throne of holiness, finally perfected and with glorified bodies. There is that rainbow, which meant no more judgment—the rainbow that forever stands for our perfection in heaven. But that is not all. There are songs of praise and

continual worship. Really, we cannot begin to imagine the glory that will be there.

So there we are. The Father is seated on the Throne, with the multitudes of saved people. When the apostle John recorded this scene in Revelation 5:5, he said he wept because it seemed there was no one who was able to open the book, to take back the title deed to the earth: There was no man worthy to buy back the birthright that Adam sold out to Satan, the god of this world.

And John said, "I wept much." He said, "Here is a multitude of people, and we can't take back the title deed that *we* sold to Satan."

Only the Lamb

Then he said, "All of a sudden, the eternal provision of the most amazing and beautiful manifestation that anyone could hope to see—there in the midst stood a Lamb as it had been slain" (see Revelation 5:6).

Here is the Lamb again.

Picture all of us together with tears in our eyes. Every one of us, without exception, weeping. Saved, yes, but feeling remorseful that no one can take back that title deed.

And Jesus comes out. We see the wounds in

His side. We see the wounds in His hands. We see the wounds in His feet. The Holy Spirit wants us to know Him instantly, and immediately we recognize Him as the Lamb.

He walks over to the Father. I can visualize the Father's face, because God did all of this for His pleasure as well as ours (Revelation 4:11). And here is this precious Lamb taking the title deed and walking back to His place, at the right hand of the Father.

In Revelation 5:9, "they sung a new song...." What was the new song about? It was a song about the Lamb—the blood of the Lamb! The blood of the Lamb is no more inside His body because it was given for us.

The Fragrance of Answered Prayers

Can you imagine multitudes of people redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, now in a heavenly chorus with perfect bodies and perfect voices, all singing as a choir to the Lamb? This is what the Word of God says:

"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials *full of odours*, which are the prayers of saints" (Revelation 5:8).

Here in heaven, we will see that the Blood took care of our sins, and our prayers have all been answered. And here is the odor of the most beautiful thing in the world. It is the fragrance of prayers that perhaps you didn't think were answered, or you didn't know were answered, *but they were!* Your prayers were answered, but you just could not see the mystery of it all. And now you can see that hundreds and hundreds of your prayers have been answered, and you see it before your eyes.

Chapter Four

LED BY A LAMB WHO IS ALSO OUR SHEPHERD

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and *we shall reign on the earth*" (Revelation 5:9-10). What encouraging words!

Why does it say that all these multitudes will reign? It doesn't say that just some of them will reign. This verse says, "*We* shall reign on the earth."

Follow this with me. He made us to reign over the earth (Genesis 1:26), and He is going to get His way through the blood of the Lamb. People who have not reigned *will* reign, because of the Lamb.

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of

many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

"Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb…"—they say it again—"…that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Revelation 5:11-12).

Taking on the Spirit of the Lamb

There is a God-Man in heaven, and He is glorified. This Man has every right to have everything. Yes, God the Father possesses everything anyway. But this Man, who is glorified, is now as a Man who is worthy, because He was *always* a sinless Lamb. And this is why a number of times when Scripture describes the Lamb, it describes Christ with His wounds.

Christians who follow Jesus Christ often manifest His wounds. In a sense, they are wounded feet that go to places in Europe, Russia, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and South America. They are wounded, in a sense, because the missionaries who go forth are leaving the comforts of their area and probably will suffer in their walk as they identify with Christ.

There is a sense that every person who follows Jesus has some wounds because of suffering, because they have taken on the spirit of the Lamb.

In Romans 8:36, we are all like Him, "accounted as sheep for the slaughter." We are *led* to the slaughter. In other words, we also have been placed on the earth to bear wounds for others.

But, thank God, Romans 8:37 says that "in all these things we are *more than* conquerors through him that loved us." The Lamb conquered.

The Lamb spirit will *always* conquer. It conquers by itself. This means that through our right decisions to obey the Word, the spirit of the Lamb in us conquers the spirit of evil.

Taking up the Yoke of the Lamb

The Lamb spirit is Christ. And when we yoke up with Jesus Christ, we are yoked up with the Lamb. That is why Jesus said in Matthew 11:30 that His yoke is easy, and *His* burden is light.

Our yoke is not with a lion or a beast of burden—we are yoked with Christ, the Lamb of God. The animal that bore the wood for Abraham's sacrifice was set free of its burden. The

wood was taken off the animal and placed on the altar. It was free to go home like any animal, free to roam and drink water with no burden to carry anymore.

Now, likewise, we have no more heavy burden on our back. Oh, we bear the burden of love. And the burden of caring for others is on our back. But we are no longer encumbered with the burden of sin, because the Lamb took it—once and for all.

CONCLUSION

Thousands of spotless animals were sacrificed for sins. Once was not enough. But every single time blood was offered up according to the Law, the foundations of a sure salvation by grace were being revealed.

When a man or woman is exhausted from so many times of trying and failing, they need to see the precious Lamb. That is why Paul said we ought to rejoice in weaknesses and infirmities. We belong to a Lamb! He has conquered over death and hell, sin and iniquity. If we will only look up, the situation will always reveal the Lamb.

Dear Father, thank You for Your perfect plan that saw our potential. Thank You that the Lamb is also our Shepherd. May we always manifest Your nature and be willing to take up our cross as we lay down our lives for others. As Your Spirit abides in us, we can go forward as conquerors by the power of Your Blood and with a heavenly vision. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Price of the Gospel

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word" (John 17:6).

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3).

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

We are preachers, teachers, and stewards of a great heritage. Today in America when I preach the Bible, I am not threatened with death. If I go out witnessing, I am not put into prison. It is easy to take for granted what cost the lives of so many. With this booklet, I will try to convey the extraordinary price that has been paid by ordinary people in order for us to hold that Treasure in our hands, to be able to turn its pages, to drink

in its precepts and savor its truth.

I don't want to neglect the Book, nor what it says. I don't want to forget its precepts and preciseness, its purity, holiness, and righteousness. The Word of God imparts a great mandate to win the lost; it communicates a great commission to go into all the world with the gospel. It contains a wonderful admonition to make disciples. There are its wonderful principles, telling us to love one another and to lay down our lives as Christ did for His Church.

It is easy to say we believe in the Bible, but it's another thing to let it take over and control every part of your life. It's easy to say that the Bible is Truth, but it's another thing to say the Bible has the solution and answer for every problem and prayer. God's Word was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ. His desire is for the written Word to become living Truth, so we will become living epistles to all around us.

Chapter One

THE AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION

"Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having

obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:33-40).

Every time I read these verses, I am tremendously motivated. I could read them every three months and still feel like a little child each time. Recently, while reading them, it felt just like being born again. The reason is this: The Holy Spirit brings *rhemas*—fresh, personal revelations of truth in application—no matter how much knowledge we may possess. Here we have a Bible college and we have a church where truth is communicated daily; but there is nothing like the Holy Spirit communicating to us through the Word of God in a personal way.

Years ago, I memorized the book of Hebrews within two or three days; it was easy for me. But I didn't *know* Hebrews. I memorized Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, too. I knew the basics, which helped me to live a good life, but I really didn't know those passages. So, I stopped my memorization. Then, through studying, the Holy Spirit would speak rhemas to my heart—in the car, at night, anywhere, anytime—as He does with all of us.

The thing I love about Hebrews is that famous second verse of chapter 12, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." I went to Webster's Dictionary and found that *author* means someone "who originates or creates; the writer of a book." I like that! I thought to myself, "Wow! I know where this is going to lead me." Hebrews 5:9 says, "And being made perfect, [Christ] became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Thank God it is not eternal probation; it is eternal salvation! And Jesus Christ is the author of it.

"Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin. I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." God said this way back in Hosea 8:11-12. So, the moral law, the Ten Commandments, the ceremonial law, the sacrifices, and Bible doctrine (the categorical principles on how to think with God) were authored by the Lord for our eternal salvation.

Jesus said, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). In John 14:23, the Lord is speaking

about the value of His words: "If a man love me, he will keep *my words*: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Again, in John 12:48, He says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not *my words*, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth *my word*, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

His Words in the Heart

There are times, when reading verses such as these, I just have to stop and get up, and I'll walk around my basement study; sometimes it's during the middle of the night. At these times I have to say, "Oh, my God, these are Your words, *Your words*."

Then, the Holy Spirit will ask me to consider John 16:13-14: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it

unto you." The Holy Spirit will tell me to speak the verses out loud. I think about what the Scripture is saying and I fellowship around it for hours at a time.

I meditate on a verse such as Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful … ." His name shall be called *Wonderful*? I have to stop right there. Wonderful! Wonderful is His name. The verse continues, "…Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." What a Book—sharing the words of God with us, through men who wrote it under the absolute inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two

THE INSPIRATION OF THE WORD

I often picture the exchanges of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in my mind. The Spirit says, "What do you want me to tell them Lord, Jesus?" The Spirit *is* God, of course, but He asks Jesus Christ about the things He wants to communicate. Jesus said in John 5:46-47, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

The first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, were to communicate Christ. The Holy Spirit said to Moses, "I want to give you five books to write. I will tell you everything that is to be said in them. I will breath into you the Truth." "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly

furnished unto all good works" 2 Timothy 3:16.

The Glory of the Gospels

Years later, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were called by the Holy Spirit. "Come here and sit down," the Spirit said to them, "I am going to listen to Jesus. Then I'm going to tell you what He says and you will write the Gospels." The Spirit goes to the Son, the Son tells the Spirit and the Spirit beautifully tells the writers what Jesus Christ, God the Son, said.

Is it any wonder that every single Word of God is pure, in Proverbs 30:5? Is it any wonder that He commands each of us to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15)?

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do

it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (Deuteronomy 30:11-14).

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach" (Romans 10:8).

I have often thought of the manuscripts, the original copies of the Word of God. At one time I spent five consecutive days studying about these things and the accuracy of translation. The Bible, the most precious book in all the world, is new today and every day. It's the result of Jesus Christ, the Living Word, telling men, through the inspiration of the Spirit, to pen the written Word. As we receive it, the Holy Spirit once again makes it a Living Word in us so we become living epistles among men.

Of No Private Interpretation

The Word of God is not of any private interpretation. His precious Book cannot be added unto and we cannot take away from it. Every teacher, every pastor, every worker, and every believer has an opportunity to be a partaker of the Book that the Spirit inspired. If Jesus were here today, He wouldn't preach anything but what He has authored in this book. He wouldn't

allow any other revelation to take the place of the Scriptures. "…These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). This is Jesus' endorsement of the entire Old Testament.

This precious book, the Bible, contains God's thoughts toward us. The Word of God is as silver, tried in the fire seven times, in Psalm 12:6. Oh, God, Your Word is so beautiful! It's a magnificent Word for us.

Chapter Three

THOSE WHO PAID THE PRICE

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:24-25).

Recently I told the Lord of my need to be refreshed in something I was taught years ago. For several days I studied intensely the lives of men who paid the highest price to preserve the written Word of God for us. I began to think of the year 1536 and the man William Tyndale, of England, who attended the great universities of Oxford and Cambridge. He cried out that the Bible needed to be translated accurately for the common person to read. To one enemy of his work, Tyndale expressed his life's goal: to make it possible that "a boy that driveth the plough shall

know more of the Scriptures than thou doest"!

Tyndale knew he would likely be burned at the stake, which is what happened to anyone who was faithful in getting out the Word. But it was God's Word! Friends betrayed him and put him in a rat-infested prison for eighteen months. Finally, he was strangled, then burned at the stake—the flames burning very slowly up the martyrs legs, while those responsible for his death were celebrating in their cathedrals.

Of the last words spoken by William Tyndale was a prayer that God would open the eyes of King Henry VIII who was behind his execution. Today, the Tyndale translation has survived as the primary source for the most widely accepted versions of the English language Bible.

Miles Coverdale and His Wife

On and on, men stood for the Word of God. After Tyndale came Miles Coverdale. He fought for the faith and produced the Coverdale Bible, using Tyndale's manuscripts as a foundation.

One account tells how Coverdale's wife was told that she would be given a high position if she could convince her husband to change. But she said, "I won't do it. I'm with him."

The English officials replied, "Then we are

taking you with us. Are you going to witness?"

"I am going to honor Jesus Christ," she declared.

"Then after we kill your husband, we'll cut out your tongue and burn *you* at the stake," they told her.

They did what they said they would do. But even after having her tongue cut out, Mrs. Coverdale kept gesturing toward heaven, all the while she was being burned at the stake. She praised God even while she was unable to speak; she just kept motioning toward the sky. Scores of people watching her die were saved that day, and later some of them were killed in the same way.

Oh, the preciousness of the Word of God! What a price some have paid to see it proclaimed. Hebrews 11:37 says, "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented."

"Sawn asunder"—can you picture it? People who believed in the Word of God were taken and placed in a box, and they were sawed down the middle. Even children—seven, ten, and twelve years old—were victims of this kind of

cold-blooded murder.

Others were taken and wrapped in sheep skins and goat skins. After being sewn tightly together, the skins were soaked in water, then tied around the believers' bodies. The persecutors put their victims out in the sun where the heat would naturally cause the skins to shrink and grow tighter and tighter around the victims' bodies. Eventually they would die, unable to breathe. Anyone who tried to help these Christians was also killed.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

Henry VIII said Tyndale's Bible would never come into his kingdom. Yet, while he was saying it, Anne Bulcher and her best friend were smuggling Bibles under their long dresses. They were caught and brutally murdered. Heaps of the smuggled Bibles were burned; every attempt was made to destroy them all, but there were always another thirty or fifty somewhere. Oh, the preciousness of the Word of God.

John Rogers

John Rogers preached, "Hell is hot. Sin is black. Heaven is real. Conversion is wonderful." He spoke against the king publicly and also wrote

against the Pope. He was burned at the stake. Rogers' friend betrayed him and denied Jesus Christ, but his wife and children stood with him. Later, the friend realized what a hypocrite he had been, and confessed that he loved the Bible. He repented and wanted to be killed for the sake of Christ.

Matthew's Bible, the translation Rogers worked on, came to be hated by those in power. But it was the basis for the Great Bibles, huge books which were kept in churches throughout England. One page of the Bible in those days was worth a great deal of money, so the Great Bibles were actually chained to the pulpit to keep them from being taken out of the churches and sold.

About this time, Mary Queen of Scots came to the throne. She ordered death for all the followers of Tyndale and Coverdale. She would give anything to find those related to them. She wanted all of the Bibles burned and buried when they died. William Hunter was a 19-year-old who kept escaping and fleeing from her pursuit. He lived in Brentwood, England, and eventually died as a martyr.

A short time later, several translators took refuge from the Queen by joining John Calvin in

Geneva, Switzerland, where it was unlawful to kill Christians. They produced the Geneva Bible—the Bible John Bunyan was reading while imprisoned in Bedford, England for thirteen years. (He went on to write the great Christian classic *The Pilgrim's Progress*.) Also, the Geneva Bible was used by the pilgrims coming to America on the Mayflower.

Another well known opponent of God's Word was King Philip II of Spain who had the heads cut off of 350 children at St. Augustine in Florida sixty years before the establishment of the first colony on American shores. Later on, in St. Augustine, thousands of believers were brutally murdered. Long before the first city of the United States was established, ten thousand Anabaptists were also killed in the Catacombs in Rome.

Consider the Cost

It is so important to consider the price that many paid for us to have this Book and to hear the preaching of this Book. Those men and women gave their lives courageously. Children, fathers, and mothers gave their lives. One account tells of a father watching his son being burned at the stake, and shouting out, "My son, you are

a great and wonderful example. I'm so proud of you!" He was yanked from the crowd and put on the stake with his son. Oh, what a great price was paid for the holy Word of God! Let's never forget it!

I am so grateful and thankful that heaven and earth will pass away but His Word shall never pass away. Considering the lives of these martyrs, how can I *not* live by every single Word of God? Jesus prayed this prayer to His Father for the disciples and all believers, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:17-20).

There is something that will judge us in the last days: the Word that has been spoken unto us. If we speak not according to His Word, it is because there is no light in us (Isaiah 8:20). Preach the Word, reprove, exhort, rebuke, with all authority. We are going to be taught by the Holy Spirit and we are to teach others also. I love it!

Let's speak the truth in love. Our job is to

win souls and to make disciples. We win people through the power of the Holy Spirit in love. John wrote, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). As a pastor, it is such a treasure to watch those who have come to Christ grow and walk in the power of the Word of God.

When temptation and testing comes, get out the old Book! *In* everything, give thanks; *for* everything, give thanks. Hit the throne of grace with prayer and faith. He will answer our prayers. How do we know this? Because God says so in the Bible. Men have tried, but they can never, never, never destroy the Bible. Not one single promise from the Book will ever fall to the ground. I believe it. Do you? Let God be true in every situation and every man a liar. What a privilege we have to open the Book!

CONCLUSION

Men were able to kill William Tyndale, but they couldn't take away the Book. They did away with Miles Coverdale and his wife, but they couldn't take away the Book. John Rogers and William Hunter were martyred, but the Word of God lives on. Why? It is forever settled in heaven. It is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. It discerns the motives of the heart.

Every word of Scripture is quick and powerful. It proclaims God's eternal salvation, a salvation that comes by grace through faith. By the words of this Book, the backslider can be reclaimed and the sick are healed.

The Bible has outlived its enemies. It has survived the careless people, the carnal people, the one-dimensional people who have misrepresented it because they have never grown in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This

Book, the precious Word of God, is the reason why we can be red hot for God, on fire today and tomorrow, always revealing Jesus Christ glorified.

This Book is the answer to *any* problem for anyone who will believe it is the answer! For such a price to have been paid, can we afford to slight its worth?

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The Principle of Gathering

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30).

Every Christian has so much to learn and to know. It is natural to exalt oneself, always being concerned with our latest accomplishments, yet increasingly becoming insensitive to the needs of others. Comparing ourselves with each other, we develop attitudes that will eventually scatter and divide.

Jesus Christ, however, lived a life of gathering. He went through the highways and byways, compelling the lost, the lame, and the losers to come unto Him. That is the life God desires for us, that we would express Christ in a way that draws and gathers people to Him.

Nothing about Satan gathers. Not a thing about Satan stands with God's people. It is a great privilege to go through a trial and to have people stand with you through that trial with-

out questioning. They gather with you, overcoming the one who scatters, overcoming the accuser of the brethren.

In this booklet, we examine the principle of gathering. It was most powerfully demonstrated when God Almighty left the perfection of heaven to gather a body of believers for Himself. He shed His blood and died on the Cross for us. For that, we will praise Him forever.

Chapter One

THE HUMAN EMOTIONS OF JESUS

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

"For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

"He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

"And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto

death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:1-12).

And We Esteemed Him Not

The Lord Jesus Christ was praised continually in eternity past. The angels praised Him, exalted Him, and adored Him; He was praised consistently in every realm before time began. But then, He put on a human body and came to earth.

The Lord wanted to be praised upon the earth. Psalm 22:3 says that He inhabits the praises of His people. This means He sups with those who praise Him. God loves to be praised.

"I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works.

"I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High" (Psalm 9:1-2).

"Then believed they his words; they sang his praise" (Psalm 106:12).

Jesus Christ loves to be praised. That is not approbation lust, such as the desire of sinful men is. We are talking about praise that reveals a heart response of thankfulness—real commu-

nion between God and man.

"Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power" (Psalm 21:13).

"…For I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance" (Psalm 42:5*b*).

Praise is an amazing thing. People need to learn the secret of praising God* and encouraging each other in a godly way, not to win the praises of men because of approbation lust. The stars praise God with their music (Job 38:7). The wind praises God, and the trees clap their hands in the symbolic language of creation (Isaiah 55:12; Psalm 47:1, 5).

Yet, when the Lord came to earth, He was despised and rejected. We hid our faces from Him. He was esteemed as one who was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted (see Isaiah 53). The One who had been praised for all of eternity past from the beginning was now a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. This One was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, yet by *His* stripes we are healed.

Still, all we like sheep have gone astray and every one turned to his own way. The iniquity of us all was laid upon Him. He was oppressed,

afflicted, and yet He opened not His mouth. Isaiah 53 is a picture of our Creator and the Savior of the world.

No Beauty in Him

Consider the emotions of Jesus, the heart of Jesus. There was no beauty in Him that anyone would desire Him. He didn't come as a handsome man. He deliberately refused to be a handsome man. There was no beauty in Him—not just on the Cross, but from His birth.

Think of Jesus Christ and what He went through. He was born in a place of poverty. The Creator of the universe, the Creator of mankind, the One who has all knowledge selected a poor and unattractive city for His place of birth. The people He created and whom He would eventually die for did not know Him though He lived among them.

The Jewish people who formed the custodian nation in the plan of God received Him not. At the Cross, all of His disciples forsook Him—all of them (Matthew 26:56). His half-brothers and half-sisters born after Him did not believe that He told the truth (John 7:5). Representing the whole world, the crowd before Pilate cried out against Jesus, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him,

and give us Barabbas" (see Luke 23:18-21).

Think of the emotions of Jesus Christ, this Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, despised and rejected. People didn't want to be around Him. They said everything bad that they could say about Him, though all that He did was to be a gatherer.

**We encourage you to read* Praise Him in This Place, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Two

UNITING HEARTS IN MERCY

"The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:2-3). He gathers the saints (see Psalm 50:5), and with great mercies, He gathers His people (Isaiah 54:7).

He has always been a gatherer. He has always said, "Whosoever will may come." Never a respecter of persons, Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.

Often after a message has been preached from the Word of God, people want to talk about what they are doing instead of what God is saying to them. They are occupied with their problems rather than God's provision for them. But Jesus was not occupied with Himself—He was a gatherer.

The Lord Jesus Christ created men to praise Him. He created angels to praise Him. He wants

to be praised. Why? And why does He need to be praised? He wants to be exalted and praised according to His righteousness and His power. In other words, He wants to be praised according to the integrity of His nature.

When was the last time you praised someone according to the integrity of what he has done? Have you ever thought of going up to your dad and just saying, "You have done a wonderful job as a parent. I just want to thank you because you have worked so hard as a dad"? How about going to your mother and saying, "Mom, you have done everything for us—I am so grateful to have you as a mom"?

The family unit is so crucial. Yet, Jesus Christ did not have a family unit to fall back on while he was on earth. They stood outside while Jesus was ministering to the people, desiring to speak with Him right away. But when someone told Jesus this, He said, "My mother and brothers are those who hear the Word of God and keep it. These are the ones who form my family" (see Luke 8:19-21). His own family did not understand it.

One of the amazing things to watch in this world is the battle between gatherers and scatterers. When a person has been through many trials, he is able to understand people and have some sensitivity, perception, and discernment toward others. During a trial, it is interesting to discover who the gatherers are. Who will stand by your side, never flinch, and go all the way with you? Those are the gatherers.

To "gather" means to unite hearts with reverence to God, in mercy and grace (Psalm 86:11). To gather means to stand side by side—children standing with their parents, parents standing with their children, friends standing with friends. They gather.

Peter forsook Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:72-74), and he was a scatterer, but He got right. Judas Iscariot was a scatterer who felt bad about what he did, but he never repented. A person who understands grace will not forsake loved ones in the midst of a trial. He will not listen to a negative word, but he is ready to fight for those who have stood with him in the good times and the hard times. He doesn't side with enemies. He doesn't agree with enemies. The moment he

does, he is a scatterer.

Jesus said, "He that gathereth not with Me is against Me."

The hardest thing in the world is to go through a trial and know that certain people have not gathered with you. They do not want to face precise doctrine in the Scriptures. Ultimately, they are against Christ (Philippians 3:18).

Gathering in the Family

Of course there are times where we may have bonafide disagreements. And when you have disagreements with leadership in a ministry, a school, or in the work place, you can go alone and have a hearing. But when you attack them, you are against Christ because you begin to be a scatterer.

A husband who is not a gatherer in his marriage is against Christ. A wife who isn't a gatherer is against Christ. Children who aren't gatherers are against Christ. Parents must be careful about the language they use around their children about others. Children will repeat your thoughts as their own. It is vital that we teach our young people to be gatherers.

If you have a problem with incompatibility in your marriage, don't set yourself up against

Christ's grace, Christ's love, and Christ's mercy. Instead, say to Jesus, "I am going to be a gatherer for this marriage. We are going to make this marriage the most beautiful marriage in the world. I am going to be a gatherer—I am not ever going to be a scatterer in this institution of marriage."

In Isaiah 56:8 and Psalm 147:2, Jesus Christ gathered the outcasts, about whom the world spoke evil. I have a canned answer for anyone who attacks a ministry that is of God, that is preaching the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ. I say, "I heard that you were a prostitute. Is that true? By repeating your opinion, which is probably based on hearsay, you have just called that ministry a prostitute too. You are a scatterer." They will think twice about spreading an evil report the next time.

Chapter Three

COME UNTO JESUS

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

The greatest thing for a pastor is to have many gatherers around him. Thank God, the gatherers are the ones who will be gathered with the Great Gatherer, Jesus Christ. Jesus says, "I will feed my flock like a shepherd, and I will gather the lambs in my arms. I will carry them in my bosom, and I will gently lead those that are with young" (see Isaiah 40:11).

Jesus gathers the lambs in His arms. He gently leads those who are with young. In His ministry on the earth, Jesus Christ always went after the lost sheep. He was always seeking after

those who needed Him (Luke 19:10).

Today, Jesus Christ is after the alcoholic that no one else cares about. He says to the alcoholic, "I love you so much that I took your sin of alcoholism in My own body. I paid for your sin. Come to Me."

To the drug addict, Jesus Christ says, "Come unto Me. I know you are in bondage to drugs. I understand it more than your own family understands it. Come unto Me with your addiction. I will carry you in My arms. I will gently lead you. I will feed you as a shepherd feeds his flock. The only thing that I ask of you is to come."

The Lord says to the homosexual, "Somehow you have become deceived, perverted, and completely off. Come unto Me. I will take away that terrible perversion. I will make you proud to get up every morning. I paid for your sin of homosexuality. I will make you a brand-new person in a moment of time. Come unto Me and be yoked up with Me. My burden is light. Come to me."

To people living in promiscuity, God says, "I don't think you really want to live that way. There is a certain privilege in not having sex until after marriage. There is something sacred

about the marriage relationship, because I ordained it. But I will forgive you and make you clean, as if you had never done it before. Come, and don't do it again until you are married. Please come unto Me."

"Just come unto Me" are the words Jesus often uses to draw people.

A gatherer doesn't demand that the church has to do anything for him. Rather, he is ready to share, even out of his own poverty (2 Corinthians 8:1-2). When was the last time you got on the phone and thanked someone? When was the last time you encouraged someone? When was the last time you spent a whole week edifying people as one of God's gatherers?

Jesus said, "He who doesn't gather with Me is against Me." And those who don't gather, scatter and divide abroad.

Live in Eternal Values

It is of no value to have a great ministry but to live only for your ministry. I am not living for my ministry. It is God's ministry. I am living for God. I am living for eternal values. I am living for people. People are on my heart day and night. I think of people. I deeply desire to build up people and to help people. As I look at the

faces in the pictures on my prayer altar, I wish that I could be in ten places at once just to help people whom I love so deeply.

Thank God for those who gather. After every service, I get a call from my son, and he says, "Dad, I am so proud of you. How do you do it? That was a beautiful message." It isn't flattery. My son is a gatherer.

I thank God that when troubles and problems come, we can start gathering. We gather those who are in need. We gather those who are brokenhearted. We gather. The world did not want Jesus; the Jewish nation, His own people, did not want Jesus. Likewise, those who identify with Him will also be rejected by the world.

The disciples said, "So long! You are a persecuted Man. You are despised and rejected. Why should we hang around You and risk our lives? We are going to hide our faces from You. Apparently, You have been stricken and afflicted by God. You have borne our grief and sorrows, but as far as we go, You are not popular, and we don't want to be identified with You."

That is the way it went for Jesus. Finally, His own Father had to turn away from Him while all the sins of the world were placed upon His body as He hung on the Cross. That was nearly

all that Jesus could take, and He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34*c*).

The Father forsook Him because He could not look upon sin, and all of our sins were upon Him in that hour. Thank God that He was made guilty for us. And thank God that Jesus Christ was resurrected by the Father and the Holy Spirit so we could have eternal life (Romans 1:4). Praise Him for what He has done for us.

Criticism scatters. Withdrawing into your shell and being negative about some little thing scatters. But more than scattering, it goes against the God of love, against the God of grace, against the God of mercy, against the God Who shed His blood for us.

When a couple refuses to be helped and reconciled in their marriage, they go against the doctrine of reconciliation, the doctrine of redemption, the doctrine of restoration, and the nature of Almighty God.

He who receives a prophet—a spokesman of God—in the nature of his office, receives Jesus Christ and receives a prophet's reward (Matthew 10:41). And whoever gives a drink of cold water only in the name of a disciple shall not lose his reward (Matthew 10:42).

"He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).

The Lord Stands with Those Who Gather

Don't allow the pressures and demands of your job and the details of life to cause you to withdraw from fellowship. Purpose on definite times to be around others in the Body of Christ and be a gatherer. Be an edifier. Be a motivator. Be a builder-upper, even if all you do is make a telephone call or write a little note. Be someone who is ever waiting to bless God with praise and to bless people with edification. Be a gatherer!

The people who scatter think they are getting away with it, but they are not. Many godly ministries that have been infected by scatterers in the past are going strong today, being blessed beyond measure, as never before. Furthermore, God never even thought of doing anything but blessing them.

In Daniel 3, when the three Hebrew boys where thrown into the furnace, the Fourth Man was there to deliver them—but only three came out. Jesus Christ stayed in the furnace, waiting

for the next person who would be put in there. He didn't come out of the furnace because He knew the things faithful believers would face.

In 2 Timothy 4:16, the apostle Paul wrote that no one visited him in prison and that all of his friends forsook him. But in 2 Timothy 4:17*a*, Paul wrote, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."

Thank God, there is never a time that God leaves us. Even in your worst backslidden state (and God forbid that you would get to that point), God is still inside of you. He is grieved, but He loves you still, with all of His heart. He is just waiting to be gracious to you (Isaiah 30:18), waiting to forgive you so He can fellowship again after you have confessed and repented to Him, and Him alone.

Our God will never, no never, no never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He is a gatherer. He would do everything possible in the world to gather the worst of sinners as He already paid for all their sins. God wants to heal, deliver, and give new life, and He brings people together, uniting hearts and minds with His Spirit, making us gatherers too.

CONCLUSION

One day, all of God's people will be gathered up into the clouds to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Every born-again believer will be there. I can't even imagine what that will be like—glorified, resurrected bodies walking on the clouds, suspended in the air supernaturally. Pastors of local churches will introduce their people to Jesus by name at the Bema Seat. Then, after rewards have been given out, we will gather on streets of pure gold in the New Jerusalem with the others who have gone on ahead of us.

There we will be, gathered together with God and with all the holy angels, with all the just men made perfect (see Hebrews 12). We will forever be rid of our old sin nature. It will be totally gone. Jesus has overcome sin and death, and He will gather us into a perfect state. There we will be, fulfilling His heart's desire, praising Him as He sits upon His throne of grace. We will

worship Him, singing songs and hymns that have never been sung about the precious Blood of the Lamb.

Oh, how God loves to hear His people praise Him, worship Him with honor, and adore Him. We were created to praise Him. He created us to praise Him in our minds, in our emotions, with our bodies, and with our acts. Let us glorify God in truth because of His loving grace and let us live in the quietness of faith rest. Even at this hour, Jesus loves to be praised. He loves to hear the prayer:

"Thank you, Jesus, for what You are doing in my life. Thank you, God, for my family. Thank you, God, for this marriage. Thank you, God, for my trial. Thank you, God, for my blessings in finances and provisions. Thank You, God, for Your promises. In Jesus' name, Amen."

The Principle of Unity

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The foundational principles of the Christian faith support far more than our belief in the Savior. The principles that keep the stars in place, that maintain life on earth, that allow airplanes to fly, and that establish guidelines for justice and commerce—every principle of life has been clearly revealed in Scripture.

When the principles in God's Word are highly esteemed and honored beyond lip-service, we receive an outpouring of strength, wisdom, and supernatural provisions. For example, once we discover that God loves us personally, we find that He has commanded a blessing for believers who dwell together in unity. In that place, not only do we love our neighbors as ourselves, but we find abundant joy—the oil of gladness—that comes with serving others. What's more, we can continue to serve with a joyful attitude, even when we are physically exhausted, because the joy of the Lord is our

strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

But until the foundations of a man's belief system are shaken (Hebrews 12:27-28), he cannot fully appreciate the strength and stability that those principles, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, supply. This study of Psalm 133 helps to bring out the precise meaning of those verses that so beautifully express the vital importance God places on the principle of unity in the Body of Christ.

Chapter One

BE WHERE THE BLESSINGS POUR DOWN

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

"It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm 133).

Though this Psalm was written several hundred years before the birth of Christ, the principle of unity that it so beautifully describes reveals God's mind concerning the order and operation of the Church, which is the Body of Christ on earth. Where unity is magnified among God's people, Jesus Christ commands a blessing. It is a special place of blessing, where

God's people receive more than simply "logistical" grace.

Logistical grace is favor extended by God to all men, regardless of their spiritual condition (Matthew 5:45). Whether it is a gift of fresh air to breathe or the benefits of a comfortable lifestyle, many Christians who do not live in submission to the Cross still enjoy the temporal blessings of logistical grace while they rely on financial or domestic security or other natural support systems.

The blessing referred to in Psalm 133 is a commanded blessing that reaches far beyond temporal security. This blessing is a *way* of life, a *Person* in life (Jesus Christ), an *attitude* toward life, and a *plan* in life, in which God commands His people to be blessed.

In verse one of Psalm 133, the word for "behold" is *hinneh* in the Hebrew. It refers to seeing something mentally with a fixed mind, to observe with accuracy and to survey earnestly. It means that a believer looks beyond the obstacles that come against unity and he looks to Christ. He does not express human viewpoint by saying, "Yes, I will forgive, but I can't forget." Instead, he applies the doctrine of unconditional forgiveness to others.

"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21, 22).

Also in Psalm 133:1, "how" is the Hebrew word *mah*, and it is a particle of examination. This means that when we survey with accuracy, we mentally examine what we are considering from every angle of divine viewpoint. We do not allow anything to inhibit our understanding. The word "good" is *towb*, which speaks of something that is beautiful, virtuous, honest, right, suitable, useful, prosperous, abundant, valuable, favorable. The observation is that it is "good", which means that it fits the believer's life and causes him to be happy within, giving him an advantage. What a great advantage we have in dwelling together in unity, having the same mind.

The word "pleasant" is *na'iym*, which speaks of something amazingly sweet and lovely, highly agreeable to the senses, because of its source and substance. Unity is beautiful, delightful, gracious, and abundant. "Brethren" (*'ach*) speaks of having a family resemblance because of having the same father. It is also the term for

affection between blood-bought believers in Jesus Christ. The phrase "to dwell together" and "unity" are both *yachad*. In the Hebrew this is a kal infinitive. It means, "to sit down,to remain and be settled down in the place of your calling." The use of a kal infinitive here teaches that believers are to continue to inhabit God's calling with God's people with an emphasis of not just being in the same place but having the same mind.

Like Precious Ointment

Psalm 133:2 likens unity in the body of Christ to "the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard…" Both the "ointment" (or anointing oil) and the "dew of Hermon" are symbolic of refreshment. It is important to notice that in Leviticus 8:10-12, the oil was placed upon Aaron's head in order to sanctify him.

"And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them. And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed

him, to sanctify him" (Leviticus 8:10-12).

The filling of the Holy Spirit is required in order to empower a believer for the ministry to which God has called them. In the Old Testament, the anointing of the oil was a symbol of being set apart for a particular ministry. Moses anointed Aaron with oil, setting Aaron's life apart for his calling in the plan of God. Also, David was anointed to be king of Israel, and later to be king of the tribe of Judah. Elijah was anointed to be prophet. Because of Calvary, every Blood-bought believer has received the anointing of the Holy Spirit in his life (1 John 2:20, 27).

God Commands a Blessing

The word for "command" in the Hebrew is *tsavah*. God appoints, sets up, establishes, governs, and protects a blessing that He designed for His people. God commands that we would be blessed, and He sends people, messengers, and provisions to bless us. That blessing is *life (chay)* which is described as fresh and flowing water, liveliness, with revival as in the spring time—fresh and new. But it goes beyond a season: *"even life for evermore."* The phrase "for evermore" is *olam*, and it speaks of prolonged

eternity—eternity past into eternity future.

What causes a ministry to carry out God's plan in oneness? In the early Church, the believers gathered in the upper room with one heart and one mind, waiting for the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). Acts 2:1 records that they were "all with one accord in one place." According to Acts 2:4, that promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when God sent the Holy Spirit to indwell them. The Word of God now governed their hearts, positive volition governed their will, and humility governed their capacity. Hunger for the Word of God dominated their minds, and their appreciation and appropriation of the Word of grace was able to build them up in their faith (Acts 20:32).

Guarding against Disunity

Satan is constantly doing everything in his power to divide the unity among members in the Body of Christ. First, he tries to divide hearts (Hosea 10:2). Then, he tries to divide the mind (James 4:8), because he knows that if a man has two masters or is double-minded, he will be unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). Yet, though Satan may have a counter-attack planned to hinder their unity, when believers go to the Cross

and ask for God's divine provision in prayer, God is pleased. It is His desire that we continue in one heart, one soul, one mind, one vision, and one faith, using the diversity of the gifts He has given each one.

After the priests and Sadducees threatened them because of their preaching, the disciples returned to the upper room to pray:

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy [Spirit], and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:31-32*a*).

Heaven on Earth

The disciples spoke the Word of God with boldness because they had been with Jesus, and "great grace was upon them all" (verse 33). In His prayer to His heavenly Father, Jesus prayed three times that His people would share in the oneness that Christ had with His Father before the world existed:

"Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are…That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they

also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:11*b*, 21,22).

God made a provision for this kind of oneness among His people. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Also, Philippians 2:2-5 describes the unity that is possible when believers are humble and likeminded:

"Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves….Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "Likeminded" means having the same content in thinking, while not necessarily having the same capacity or the same identical thoughts. When we are likeminded, each believer can share the same content of grace, with the same qualifying understanding of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two

THINGS THAT HINDER UNITY

The first hindrance against unity in the Body of Christ is the influence of party spirits. Party spirits reveal the influence of personalities instead of the Person of the Holy Spirit. Evidenced by cliques which deteriorate into partisan factions, these spirits hinder unity in the Body of Christ. In the Early Church, Paul reproved the Corinthians for division among themselves, since many believers had begun to follow men rather than follow Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:4). Party spirits have outward conditional unity that is based upon sympathetic, sentimental relationships. This superficial unity can overshadow genuine unity in the Body of Christ. Party spirits always produce self-defense mechanisms and guilt in those who are influenced by them through ignorance. Party spirits feed pride and independence, promote Satan's kingdom, and prevent the development of meaningful,

spiritual relationships.

In order to avoid party spirits, one must be Calvary-centered in Christ, filling his mind with categorical doctrine—storing up categories of specific truth from the Word of God to operate in specific situations. When a believer is broken and filled with the Holy Spirit, he will discern party spirits that could otherwise prevent him from being in a place where God commands him to be blessed.

God commands a blessing on any fruitful ministry that obeys the commandment to love and that fulfills the Great Commission by going into all the world and preaching the Gospel (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Personality Rapport Inhibits Unity

The second major hindrance to unity in the Body of Christ is personality appreciation or personality rapport in relationships, rather than Christ-centered doctrinal rapport. Personality rapport is friendship based on personality appreciation. It is the exaltation of one's natural preference above appreciating Christ in others. It is enjoyable to fellowship over common interests with other believers; however, the common interest itself should not be the basis for unity. A

relationship based on a temporal foundation will lose what appears to be unity when things change.

Christians who enjoy doctrinal rapport learn how to fellowship around the Word of God and the principles derived from the Word. As we learn how to apply the Scriptures to the specific details of our lives, we begin to appreciate the grace, love, power, mercy, deliverance, work, provision, and promises of God. The common conversations become eternal, and everything we do, we do to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

How can personality rapport be avoided? As believers, we purpose to develop doctrinal rapport in all of our relationships in the Body of Christ. The unprofitable time that was spent speaking multitudes of words is converted into study and prayer time, preparing our hearts in quietness before God (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

If some believers shared only doctrinal rapport in love, they would lose many of their so-called friends. Doctrinal rapport in a relationship means that there is a high regard among individuals for the love of Christ and the Word of God. But in personality rapport relationships, conversations revolve around the details of life.

It is all right to talk about those things at times, but to live in constant concern over them more than the provisions found in the Word of God will definitely hinder spiritual growth.

Subjectivity Hinders Unity

The third major hindrance to godly unity in the Body of Christ is subjectivity. Many Christians are plagued with subjectivity in their frame of reference. It happens when an individual voluntarily allows the unknown, invisible impressions from his psychological environment to overtake his emotions. Rather than depend upon the divine standard of objective truth as revealed through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit, his emotions (which were never designed to think but to appreciate God's thoughts) dictate to his mind how he should think.

Subjectivity can be a result of ignorance in how to think with God, or it may be an expression of an ego trip from the realm of self-exaltation or pride. It is often characterized by perceptions that are received by the mind apart from the truth. Some individuals listen to a stranger's voice, which directs them to follow a path that is contrary to the principles of absolutes found in the Word of God.

Subjectivity always feeds the emotions. To overcome subjectivity and enter into real unity with the Lord and with one another, a believer must be continually hiding the Word of God in his heart so that he will not sin against God (Psalm 119:11). The Word of God must become a lamp unto his feet, and a light to his path (Psalm 119:105). When he hides the Word of God in his heart, he is set apart by the Word as it dwells richly in his mind. The Cross is his frame of reference.

The believer is sanctified by the Word because the Word is truth (John 17:17). He learns to use recovery whenever he fails (1 John 1:9) and to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). In order to avoid subjectivity, the believer must be on a constant diet of the Word of God. When a thought comes in that exalts itself against the truth, cast it down (2 Corinthians 10:5) and let Christ raise up a standard (Isaiah 62:10). The application of objective truth in the grace and love of the Spirit will overcome subjectivity.

Natural Preference Prevents Unity

Another factor that prevents unity in the Body of Christ is natural preference. Natural

preference includes every desire that originates outside of the Word of God (Proverbs 19:2). Natural preference limits our vision for God and causes us to privately interpret the Word of God in order to complement the desires of our natural heart. Following the natural desires of the heart allows us to choose a lifestyle contrary to the perfect will of God. That person will begin to rationalize truth with his human reason instead of supporting his reasoning with a foundation of divine precepts.

Natural preference always promotes self-centeredness. A believer can overcome this way of preserving his life by allowing the Cross of Jesus Christ and the liberty of the Holy Spirit to fill him so that he can go from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18*b*). We overcome natural preference by submitting to the divine guidance of the Word of God.

"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Psalm 115:3). God has an absolute will, and a believer is to yield to the absolute will that God has for his life. Jesus Christ will always root out our natural preference through His Word. Therefore, heed the Word of God and be led by the Holy Spirit into the absolute will of God.

Chapter Three

THE OIL: GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR UNITY

"Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him" (Exodus 29:7).

"And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him" (Exodus 29:21).

"Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels" (Exodus 30:23).

The anointing with oil is a divine prescription for unity in the Body of Christ. Not just oil was used on Aaron's head, but we see in Exodus

29:21 that the oil was mixed with blood and sprinkled on him. And in Exodus 30:23, Moses had to mix nearly five quarts of high quality perfumed oil, according to God's precise order, to be used to anoint the head of the high priest. In that day the oil was used for one specific purpose, and it was never used for anything else. This fact reveals the sacredness of the anointing of oil in order to separate and sanctify a man's life to God.

Nothing can compare with the oil of anointing which is given to the believer by Jesus Christ. Every believer's calling is precious in God's sight. In Exodus 29:7, the oil could not be confined to the head; it was poured out on the head of the priest so that it would flow over his entire body. When believers have godly unity, one with another, the Holy Spirit flows through them—from the top down—and God's life is manifested wherever they go.

God Is No Respecter of Persons

In Deuteronomy 10:14-19 is a beautiful principle. Here, the Lord exhorts us to love the stranger, because we were also strangers who were called out because of His great love. He is no respecter of persons, rather He looks upon

the heart.

The grace of God spans and extends far beyond frailty and weakness. We believe in God by faith, and He works in our behalf. Salvation does not depend upon human goodness; it only depends upon the grace of God. In Colossians 3:10-11, God included the offenders and debtors as brethren in the Body of Christ. We receive the oil of the Holy Spirit by grace through faith. Still, our obedience to the plan of God determines the degree to which we are blessed. Abeliever must be in the place of his calling in order to have the oil flow upon him.

When we study this principle of unity, we learn that there is healing power in the oil. The oil was so unique, with such special ingredients. It brought healing as it spread down over Aaron's robe. Healing always comes through love, unity, and oneness. When a believer lets God deal with the division and strategy of the devil, He also takes care of indifference. Coldness, fear, resentment, and bitterness are destroyed when believers dwell together in unity.

The Bible says in Ephesians 4:1-3 that we ought to walk worthy of our calling, having an attitude of lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, "en-

deavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The Spirit-filled believer who derives his anointing from Jesus Christ and the Word of God will forbear the brethren with an attitude of love. He will endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit, which has already been established, in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:32 instructs us to "be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." This verse speaks of the experiential results of abiding in the anointing of our calling.

Grace, Marvelous Grace!

Never give up on people! They deserve to receive the kindness and compassion of Christ. Herein lies the oil of healing, the power of God, and the love of God that motivates us to forgive others without measure. Where believers dwell together in unity, God commands a blessing!

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the

hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

As Finished Work believers, we minister the manifold grace of God. That grace is not dependent upon the receiver. Grace depends upon the Giver, and never upon the receiver. And now, because we have received such grace, we minister grace when we speak.

In Psalm 133:2, the precious ointment flowed down to the skirts of Aaron's garments. The "skirts" is *peh* in the Hebrew, and it speaks of the mouth or opening or edge. Here is a beautiful application of this verse: The oil of anointing affects our speech as it flows down to our mouth. The skirts represent the edge of the portion of the Body of Christ. As God's people begin to obey the Word of God, the oil takes over and Satan is prevented from hindering believers.

Since Christ received us when we were still sinners (Romans 5:6,8), we can receive one another as Christ has received us (Romans 15:7). We can give the same love and grace to others that we have received from Him. We minister to the needs of others through the Word of God, a redemptive spirit, and the ministry of reconciliation. We minister grace, we edify, and we love others as Christ has loved us (John 15:12; 13:34). As a result, believers enjoy oneness within the

Body of Christ. We are not divisive, negative, selfish, greedy, unkind, hateful, cruel, indifferent, or reactionary. Rather, we are thoroughly motivated by His love and the consciousness of truth.

The oil will flow when individual members remain in their calling. Vision, prayer, a heart attitude of love, tears of compassion, goals, desires, delight, purpose—these are realized when sinners in a local assembly magnify Christ in the spirit of unity (1 Corinthians 12).

Remember, the believer who is operating in the power of the Holy Spirit esteems others more highly than himself. Applying this principle does not mean that a believer views himself as having less value to God, but rather that he honors another believer's priesthood, and respects his privacy. He esteems the individual callings of others in the Body of Christ; therefore, his attitude is, "I esteem your freedom and privacy. I must protect your rights as a believer-priest and minister the provision of grace that allows you to stand or fall before God without my interference."

Thank God for the precious gift of unity. Unity in the Body of Christ is a result of the specific prayer Christ prayed in the garden of Geth-

semane (John 17). We become like-minded, without haughtiness, as stewards of the manifold grace of God. In 1 Peter 4:10, manifold grace, *poikilos*, means "grace on every side." We are encompassed by grace and by the Word of God in the Spirit. We experience God's forgiveness as we forgive others. God gives us His grace, therefore we can afford to give grace to others. We respond to divine grace, without works.

When the disciples were in one place, in one accord, power came upon them by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1; 4:31,33; 9:31), and this power sent the Church into Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, as well as to the uttermost parts of the world. The members of the early Church were at rest. They edified one another, and they walked in the fear of the Lord. They went forth praising God while dwelling in peace. As they rested in the Finished Work, the Word of God was multiplied (Acts 12:24).

When the Body of Christ experiences this awesome unity, nothing can stop the cause of the Gospel! Whenever division is destroyed and unity is established for the sake of Christ, believers can proceed unhindered in progress to fulfill the Great Commission. Unity will only be

established as individual members of the Body of Christ take up the Cross and are filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18*b*). When a believer is filled with the Spirit, he is not easily wounded. "Great peace have they that love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165). Believers have been endowed by God with a ministry of reconciliation and a redemptive attitude.

The Oil of Blessing

In Psalm 133, the Hebrew word for "descend" is used three times, emphasizing a vital point. This refers to Mount Hermon. The dew descended both upon the low and high places. No matter how low the valley, the oil will descend there to permeate the land with the life of God. Any ministry that honors the Word of God by living by *every* word (Matthew 4:4) will be blessed with oneness in the Spirit. As believers, we are continually filled by the Spirit of God as we live under the government of God's progressive plan.

Notice that people who are in the valley receive the dew. Every believer, at one time or another, falls into the valley of weakness or despair; but if he calls upon the Lord, he will re-

ceive the precious "dew of Hermon." Symbolically, the dew represents the believer's help from above in times of distress.

When believers dwell in unity and live in obedience to the Word, then God commands a blessing. In Psalm 133:3 the Hebrew word for "blessing" is *berakah*. It is a feminine noun signifying that believers who are unified live in a divine benediction. They live in divine prosperity, in a liberal blessing of grace. The oil releases other gifts and provisions which produce and intensify God's abundant benefits. The oil of blessing descends upon the precious Body of Christ.

A church that honors unity will have God's benediction, as well as His blessing, prosperity, and manifold grace in the midst of trials. They will experience a special freshness and a special power—not just now, but *forevermore*. In other words, there are eternal benefits when believers dwell together in unity. A church that honors this principle of unity will have life forevermore. They will be alive, vigorous, springing up with vital energy.

Therefore, forbear one another in love and keep the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:2). Receive the oil of God's special empowerment for

His specific tasks. Let the oil descend into the valley of your life. The oil will cover you when you are abiding in your particular calling. His blessing is upon any ministry that exalts the principle of unity because He has called us to one Body, to one united purpose—to glorify the Son forevermore.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ entreated His heavenly Father for the fulfillment of unity both now, in this life, as well as throughout all eternity. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

When we love God, we can love ourselves, then we will love others, and as a result the entire Law of God is fulfilled (Luke 10:27-28). But how can we love God whom we have not seen? The answer is that we cannot. That is, we cannot love God until we accept the preeminent principle of 1 John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us."

Remember that the oil *flowed* down. It was not pushed down or otherwise applied through works of the flesh. The key to being covered was to be under the source. When we are in the place

where God called us to be, in one accord, the blessings will flow. Though obstacles may try to divert the flow, let the Word and the Spirit clear the path (Isaiah 40:3-5).

The Purpose of the Valley

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Every child of God is called to go through many different kinds of trials, heartaches, and battles. Every Christian, at one time or another, will be asked by God to go through valley experiences.

Some will suffer because of the loss of someone or something very precious. Others will experience problems that they just cannot handle, naturally speaking. Often humbling and difficult to understand, these situations require a supernatural touch from the Lord.

At times, it seems as if after coming out of one valley, we find ourselves right back in the midst of another one. Still, one thing I know for certain is this: The purpose of every valley is to reveal to us the life of the One who never leaves us nor forsakes us.

Yes, there is a purpose to be found in every valley we pass through. Our prayer, as you read this booklet, is that the Father's love and grace

will establish the specifics of this subject in your heart and help you to see God's purpose in every one of your valleys.

Chapter One

THE ONLY SURE SOURCE OF STRENGTH

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

"O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give

ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

"Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

"O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" (Psalm 84:1-12).

The valley experience is one that places me in a low position. It can be very humiliating. Furthermore, it is something I cannot overcome or understand. Pain and sorrow and agony may surround me for no discernable reason. Sometimes the valley involves a weakness in my flesh that I cannot overcome, even though I have heard the answers preached and taught to me.

In Psalm 84, the condition and attitude of the psalmist was that he longed to be back in the courts of the Lord; he wanted to be in church. His desire was for the living God to hold him, and his heart began to cry out to the Lord. Then, he took a walk outside of the tabernacle—the building where the people of God worship—

and he saw sparrows nesting near the altar of God. The psalmist was deeply moved by this illustration of God's creation, and he compared it to us having faith-rest in the presence of the Lord.

There are many different personalities in our midst. Many different trials and difficulties are causing hearts to cry out for the living God. For some it is a physical disease, perhaps an affliction that is undefined and misunderstood. For others, domestic and financial situations never seem to be resolved. Misunderstandings have left some people feeling very lonely, alienated from friends and relatives. Needs seemingly are not being met in some lives, and these situations are becoming valleys for them.

God wants to open the eyes of our hearts to see His purpose in every single one of these situations.

Rest in His Presence

David, at the time of writing Psalm 84, was discouraged and disturbed. That was when God opened his eyes to observe the sparrows caring for their young. Living in the refuge provided by the house of God, these birds were very content and happy in their habitat with God.

This illustration supplied David with a great revelation of God's care for him. "Oh, Lord," he said. "I am filled with fear, guilt, shame, and anxiety. I am crying out to You, the living God. God, I want You to be Lord in me. Let me be happy, just as the sparrow is happy and carefree living around your altars."

Then, David arrived at a great conclusion: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee." He realized that he was going through a serious and difficult trial. It was a terrific battle, and he had just realized that his strength must come totally from Christ. David needed to become consumed with the Master, because no one but the Lord was in this valley with him.

If we can learn to go through the valleys in God's strength—and only God's strength—then these times will only make us stronger. We will come out viewing the valleys as great sources of blessing and refreshment. We will stand before God in victory and triumph.

Chapter Two

FRESH RAIN AND LIVING WATERS

A young mother lost her baby—a four-month-old girl who seemed very healthy until she died in her crib. The mother had lost her husband in a terrible accident just months before the child was born. She accepted Christ just before giving birth, and now the baby was gone. She struggled mightily, to the point of asking God to take her home so she could be with her husband and child.

What was the purpose of this trial for this mother? We have to go to the Word of God and trust Jesus Christ. The answers are there for us. God wanted her to have Him be her help and shelter, just as He was the help and shelter for the sparrow in Psalm 84. The sparrow nested in the shadow of the temple of God, in the midst of the Lord's beautiful altars. Sparrows dwelt right in the midst of the tabernacle, and that is where

God wanted this young, hurting mother to dwell.

Our Great Need of Grace

No words could explain to that young woman God's purpose for her sorrow. All we can do is help her to see that through it, Jesus Christ wants to be her strength. He wants to lead her along from strength to strength to strength. The Lord wants her to be able to trust Him and to love God no matter what has happened to her. Her great need is to receive His grace so that she can receive His comfort and love, to trust Jesus Christ so that she can see this deep valley become a place of blessing.

God can and will make this woman's valley a place of fresh rain, a place where pools are filled with fresh water, a place where she can come before the Lord in the victory of faith to honor the Lord Jesus. She will stand as a testimony to His faithfulness before the hosts of angels and demons involved in the angelic warfare. We pray that she will be able to say as David said, "The Lord will give glory and grace."

The circumstances we face will not hurt us. The level of difficulty and pain we experience is

not a problem. The Lord will pour out grace and glory to give us strength. His glory is over us, and He will not withhold good things from us.

This is the purpose of our every valley.

This is exactly what God is trying to teach us, and He desires that we would receive His grace and His glory so we can know Him more.

Refreshment for Others

Some parents are raising children who have physical or mental disabilities. They love God and they love their children very much. Yes, they would so much enjoy waking up and finding that their children are just as other children. But that does not happen, and they go forward in a valley that seems to have no end.

Certainly there are times when we are overwhelmed by our circumstances, times when all we can do is focus on our situation. But the Lord is teaching us daily, and He wants to be first in all things that pertain to us. He leads us through the valley where we will learn that one day the trump shall sound and we shall all be with Christ. Every one of us who is born again will have a perfect body, and we will reside in the perfect place that Jesus is preparing for us.

Every valley lasts for just a season, and we

need to receive the grace and the glory of God as we pass through it. The situation, the valley itself, really brings us nothing, but at the end of the valley, we will look back and see how God brought us through. We may not understand how it happened, but we will recognize His purpose.

Valley experiences serve the Body of Christ. As we walk through in the light of the Lord, we will overcome the anxieties and worries that try to distract us. All we go through will work together for good.

Perhaps you are enduring physical pain. This suffering is your valley. Maybe you are experiencing depression. You have heard much about how to overcome this problem, but it is so difficult for you, and you condemn yourself. Please remember that you are only passing through. You cannot save yourself in the situation, yet God will send stronger members of the Body to build you up and to honor you. You can draw life as they minister to you the very grace and glory of Jesus Christ.

Even depression—as deep and destructive a valley as that can be—can have a purpose. Weakness carries purpose. God wants you to know that as you are passing through these

times, you can go with Him from strength to strength. The valleys are never wasted. No matter how devastated you may feel, God wants you to see His purpose in your valleys.

God wants every valley to be a place of great blessing as we receive His grace and replace our strength with His strength. He wants us to experience what it means to rest in Him alone. He wants to bring us to the place where we give Him all the honor and all the glory, and so we can receive all the grace He has to offer.

The Lord will supply fresh rain—rains from heaven that will purify us through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Chapter Three

ABANDONED TO CHRIST AND CHRIST ALONE

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:9-11).

The Lord wants us to learn to go through valleys and allow them to make us stronger. Then we can be blessings to others, filling up the pools with water that refreshes and encourages. In the valley, God and God alone can truly bless us. There is nothing for us to glory in, nothing to rely on, nothing to depend upon but Jesus Christ.

For this reason, we are brought to the end of

ourselves. Some of these difficult circumstances, some of these unusual valleys, are allowed into our lives in order for us to learn to depend and rely only upon Him. He alone becomes all in all in our lives.

Squeezing Out Natural Tendencies

Valleys squeeze the natural out of our lives. We come to the place where there is no strength left in us. We become so downhearted that there is no courage left. We experience such heartache that there is no trace of natural ability. When we come to the end of our rope, all of our natural love, natural desires, natural purposes, and natural affections are exhausted.

It is in the valley that we find we can rely only upon Jesus. We enter a new dimension, a new grace, a new glory, and a new peace that goes beyond anything we have ever experienced. There we begin to receive and to express inexhaustible power that we cannot explain.

Parents who are quietly and lovingly caring for a child with disabilities understand this. Not a whole lot is said, but their lives and the child's sweet and very honest expressions are blessings to all who know them. They go through their valleys, and the pools of our lives are filled with

the refreshing springs that come through them. Watching their attitudes in afflictions helps me through my own adversities.

I know a couple who face tremendous obstacles in daily living because of a physical handicap, yet they always seem so content. They never complain, and they are such a great testimony. God honors them as people who rely on Him and Him alone for their strength. Stronger and stronger they grow as they go through their valleys.

One woman lost a son and then a husband to suicide. But, glory to God, she keeps moving on with Christ through these dark, dark valleys. She knows what it means to pass through and find strength in Christ in the midst of chaos and weakness. She glorifies God and is able to come before Him with grace.

There are many valleys you will be called to venture through, and God's purpose is for you to learn that Christ alone is your strength.

The Way to Total Trust

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

"He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him" (Job 13:15-16).

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

Think about Job. He lost all of his cattle. He lost seven sons and three daughters and their families. Boils came upon his body and then his wife told him, "Curse God and die!"—not exactly what I call encouragement. But Job came to know just what it means to have Jesus as his only friend.

God has a plan for our future. He will keep putting us in places that will reduce us to the lowest common denominator, where Jesus alone is our strength. He takes us where we rely only on Christ in every trial and every temptation.

He has some valleys in front of us. Some may be very deep. The purpose of these valleys will not be to hurt or to chastise. They do not happen because of wrong things we have done. The purpose of these valleys is to teach us to pass through a situation and give God the glory as we see grace meet our every need. The purpose is to open our eyes to see that He will withhold no good thing. He wants us to get as close to God as we can possibly get.

Some of you have family members you desperately want to see saved. That is your valley,

your heartache, your grief. You refuse to quit. You keep appearing before God with prayer and praise. You keep manifesting His glory a little at a time. As you honor God through the valley, you grow in Him.

In the valley, we see the grace of God. We rest in His glory and enjoy all the good things He gives us in the midst of it. We serve others with the grace we are receiving while we honor Christ in the midst of our trials. Jesus Christ is glorified (not a man). We are edified, and we reap the rewards. We get to know doctrine more and more. We learn how to receive His life in the midst of death, and we get to know His grace and to experience His glory.

Chapter Four

FROM DEFEAT TO VICTORY, FROM DEATH TO RESURRECTION

"And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

"And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

"He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

"And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

"And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

"And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire,

and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

"When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

"And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

"But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose" (Mark 9:17-27).

Jesus and three disciples—Peter, James, and John—came down from the Mount of Transfiguration where they had witnessed Moses and Elijah in a meeting with Christ. Immediately, they were confronted with a man with a need. The man's son was possessed by a demon, but none of the disciples could help him.

That is what I would call a major valley experience.

What was the purpose of that experience? It was for the father to meet Someone who could deliver and heal his son.

Some valleys happen for no other reason than for us to meet Jesus personally and to be healed by Him of whatever is troubling us. Jesus wants to meet us and deliver us from afflictions and problems.

Sometimes, we are called to an impossible valley, a situation or circumstance that is absolutely beyond human remedy. Jesus is there to do the impossible, challenging us to meet Him by His Spirit and to discover His particular purpose.

The great thing about the passage in Mark 9 is Jesus' response to the father's honest plea to help his unbelief. If you are having trouble believing God, then honestly come to Him and say, "Lord, I believe; but help my unbelief." Be honest. Tell Jesus all about it, and He will do the job for you.

Meeting God in the Valley

The apostle John was an old, old man—possibly ninety—when he was shipped to the Isle of Patmos. It was a secure place for the Roman Empire to put criminals and the insane. Other disci-

ples had been martyred. Not John. He was burned with hot oil three times. The oil penetrated the skin and was extremely painful, but it did not kill John, so he was taken to a place of no return.

Imagine the pain in John's body and the screams and agony he saw in the other people left on Patmos. This valley was overwhelming.

There, however, Jesus appeared to John in His resurrected, glorified presence. "Fear not," Jesus said to John. The purpose of this valley was to prepare John to meet Jesus and to receive and write down the Revelation—a great vision of the glorified Savior who loved him personally.

Some of you are going through difficult times, and the glorified Christ wants to tell you, "Fear not—I am with you." He desires to help you, to deliver you, to minister to you. He wants to give you faith and strength.

Jesus Went through First

Jesus Himself passed through great valleys on His way to Calvary. He had no place to lay His head. His people, and even His own family, rejected Him. His disciples forsook Him.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was in such agony that blood leached out of his pores. God's own Son sweat great drops of blood. The loneliness of the hour, the terrible excruciating exhaustion of human life, weighed on Jesus.

But Jesus went through to the Cross. Once there, He could hardly speak. All of our sins were placed upon Him, and He sensed the Father turning away from Him. Glory could not look upon the iniquity He had taken upon Himself. The valley was too much and He cried, "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?"

Then, Jesus committed His spirit to the Father and He died, finishing the work of paying for our sins and winning our redemption. Three days later came His resurrection. The valley Jesus went through led to eternal life for us all.

He entered into the valley of death. What He left behind was an empty tomb. What He won for us was eternal life. Death's sting was defeated.

Christ's valley carries a glorious victorious purpose.

CONCLUSION

Out of our valley will come victory. Out of it will come joy. From death will come life. From turmoil will come peace. God will lead us through the valley, building patience and strength in our hearts. In the midst of these times, we will learn to hear Him speak to our hearts, "Peace be unto you."

The joy of God will fortify your faith. When you find yourself in sickness, love and grace will come in and heal your affliction, comforting you in the midst of it. Death will give way to life. Weaknesses will give way to Resurrection power. Trials and temptations will give way to love, grace, and glory. The Spirit comes in with fresh power, giving grace and withholding no good thing.

The purpose of our valley is to learn to live in Christ, to glorify Him in it and to discover Resurrection life in the One who was dead, who is now alive forevermore.

The Quality of Faith

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

If there is one thing a Christian must implement in his daily life, it is faith. Faith responds to a spiritual muscle that must be exercised, and exercised often.

Unfortunately, many people mistakenly think that they must acquire a certain *quantity* of faith. Even Peter once asked Jesus to give him more faith. But God isn't asking us to stockpile faith. Instead, He desires that we have a certain *quality* of faith.

Quality faith will continue to grow and develop according to the capacity of the believer. This kind of faith knows no limits, and it triumphs in all situations. Quality faith cannot be defeated or discouraged.

This booklet will show that the quality of faith that God is looking for brings out the best in us and in others. And when we operate in that quality of faith, which is in fact the faith of Jesus Christ, the love of God is shed abroad in

our hearts and shared with the world.

Chapter One

TRAINED IN THE ETERNAL VALUE SYSTEM

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short…" (1 Corinthians 7:29*a*).

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

"(For after all these things do the Gentiles

seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:30-34).

If, in his day, the apostle Paul wrote that the time is short, just imagine how much closer to the end of time we are today. Yes, the time is short. That is why it is so important to maintain an eternal purpose and avoid living under the world's temporal value system.

Second John, verse 8, warns Christians to "look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought." This verse refers to the eternal benefits we have accumulated through an eternal purpose and an eternal value system.

Many people are quick to judge God's value system as impractical and uneconomical in this day and age. Even in Jesus' time, many of those who were called to follow Him came up with very "practical" excuses for why they could not (Luke 14:18-20). In the end, however, though

they may enter the kingdom of heaven by grace through the faith that saved them, many will suffer loss of rewards and be ashamed because they did not continue to exercise that faith. *

An eternal value system counsels us to seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness first. In Matthew 6:30-34 and Luke 12:22-34, Jesus addressed the disciples because they had expressed anxiety about whether their practical needs would be met. They were fearful and they worried because they did not understand the scope of the Father's care. This is the world's way of thinking.

Many people lose everything they might have gained spiritually because they enter into the world's way of thinking, which is based on a temporal value system. They forget God's promise in Matthew 6:33, that when we put God first, He will be faithful to add unto us all that we need and much more. Chances are, they have never made a proper commitment to study the Word of God, and they never learned to trust God and to obey what He has said. That is why it is so vital for us to be knit in the Body of Christ, as members in particular, and to be established in a local church under a pastor-teacher who teaches the entire Bible, according to Isaiah 28:10

and 2 Timothy 2:15. That is where we receive our continuing instruction in the school of faith.

Seekers Rewarded

The one thing we must train ourselves in through the Word of God is the school of faith. Faith is the substantiation of things hoped for and evidence of things not yet seen. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:1, 6). He rewards those who diligently seek Him because He is constantly looking for a quality of faith that is exercised in the eternal value system of seeking His Kingdom.

For this reason, the New Testament is filled with passages about Jesus looking for evidence of faith. In Matthew 8:23-27, He was sailing across the sea with His disciples and He fell asleep. Aterrible storm kicked up suddenly, and the waves began to swamp the boat. The disciples became so frightened that they had to wake Jesus up out of a sound sleep. To the storm, He said, "Peace, be still" (or, more accurately, "Hush, be muzzled!") and the storm ceased. To the disciples, He said, "O ye of little faith" (verse 26).

"Little" faith springs from a small soul that is dull of understanding and dull of hearing. It is

a faith that does not practice the action of faith. When we were saved by grace through faith, we didn't realize that it was our faith that caused God to impute His righteousness to us.

Abraham's Dilemma

Abraham, the father of our faith, had a problem. He and his wife Sarah were getting old—way beyond childbearing years—and they still had not produced the child God promised them. Oh, he had tried to do it on his own, but he ended up with a wild man, Ishmael, the son of Sarah's handmaid. Regretful and ashamed, he did not communicate with God for thirteen years. Yet, Abraham believed God.

"And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

"And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:19-21).

Abraham's faith did not waver toward the promise God had given him (see Romans 9:9).

He was persuaded that God was able to perform what He promised.

Faith Is Developed

We need to train ourselves in the school of faith. We need to develop our faith in the Word, our faith in the Lord and Savior, and our faith obedience when faced with difficult situations. For example, I want to go forward in faith; therefore I must train myself to be a student of faith, a consistent faith responder, and a great faith initiator.

We have such a privilege because the righteousness of God is revealed in us as we go from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). His righteousness was given not only to Abraham, but also to us. Therefore, when we get on our knees and hear from God, we receive from His Word, which reveals His character. Then we can personally demonstrate objective faith in the plan and the Planner, because He has a history of always being faithful.

**To understand more about the Christian's gain or suffering loss of rewards in heaven, be sure to read* The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief? *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

FULLNESS IN MAXIMUM FAITH

"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy [Spirit] and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord" (Acts 11:24).

Acts 11:23-24 refers to Barnabas, an ambassador of God in the early Church, as one who was filled with joy and encouragement, having the fullness of faith. In 2 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul writes of brethren whose faith was growing "exceedingly" (*huperauxano* in the Greek), and it means that their faith increased beyond measure. Hebrews 10:22 describes a "full assurance of faith" (*plerophoria* in the Greek) that could be defined as "faith to the maximum." God says we can operate in maximum faith, which speaks of quality, not quantity. As a result, we will experience the "riches of faith" (James 2:5) and enter into a superabundance of spiritual wealth as we go from faith to faith to faith.

As an individual believer, I am learning as a

student in the school of faith, developing my gift of faith. I want to have the maximum of faith for every subject, every need, every situation, and each person that I deal with.

"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

"And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

"And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

"And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (Luke 17:3-6).

Peter wanted a faith increase, but Jesus answered him, saying, "There you go again—always wanting more. You don't need more faith; you just need the right quality of faith. The mustard seed grows into an amazingly large tree from just a very small seed."

Persistence with Power

The story of the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15 is one of the great faith stories in the

Bible. She came to Jesus, begging for deliverance for her demon-possessed daughter. The disciples told her not to bother Jesus, and He just kept silent, seeming to ignore her.

The woman was desperate, so she kept asking Him for help until He met her pleas with the statement that He didn't come to help Gentile dogs. The woman would not give up and said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Matthew 15:27-28).

Jesus kept challenging this woman's faith and she kept answering the challenge. Oh, how He longed to find faith like that among the children of Israel! The Syrophenician woman had developed a faith that would not be hindered by delays. She developed a faith that would not be squelched by silence. She developed a faith that could not be robbed of its fulfillment simply by the disciples' discouragement. As Abraham had faith without encouragement, so this woman had faith without encouragement, and I am sure that the Lord could hardly wait to answer her cries.

We all need to go to the school of faith. We need to develop the gift of faith that we all have received. Learn to have more than faith in salvation and faith in good messages. God wants you to have a personal and living faith in a personal, living God that will bring personal results in the moments of time you have, according to the precious will of God.

Chapter Three

REVEALING THE RADIANCE WITHIN

"Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29)

Faith is the one thing that receives what it needs from the hand of God. Furthermore, God honors the hand of faith as it stretches out and opens up to receive with expectation from Him.

In the school of faith, our hearts are developed in the life of faith as we grow in the Word of faith. The goal is to have maximum faith that operates without subjectivity, without presumption, and without becoming crystallized in a form of emotional, religious movements. Maximum faith is based on the reality and premise of God's promises. Not one word of all His good promise has failed (1 Kings 8:56).

Seeing versus Seeing Clearly

"And he took the blind man by the hand,

and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

"And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

"After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly" (Mark 8:23-25).

Jesus did three different things with this blind man that He didn't do with anyone else He healed. First, He put His hands upon the blind man's eyes and asked, "What do you see?" The man said he saw men as trees walking. In other words, the man's vision was still blurred.

This man's healing was not spontaneous. His healing came slowly.

Then, Jesus did something unique. He put His hands on the man's eyes again. This time, he said he could see "clearly." The literal definition of the compound word *telaugos*, translated as "clearly," in Mark 8:25, is "far and with radiance"—to see even at a distance, with the clarity that comes with the brightness of the daylight.

Warming Up Faith

The thing I love about that account is the part about seeing men as trees. Trees without

their leaves have plenty of sap inside, but there is nothing to show that on the outside. They are dull and somewhat ugly looking. They are just waiting for the sunshine and warmth to bring out their radiance. So many Christians are in this state. They just need the warmth of the Son to help them become someone who operates in a faith that serves by love (Galatians 5:6). As a result, the radiance of the life they have within will show forth as their inner resources are tapped and they begin to pour out.

Lewis Sperry Chafer, a great theologian and former chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary, was challenged by some of the evangelists of his day. He was a man who at that point had not actively engaged in winning souls outside of preaching salvation by grace through faith from the pulpit. So he responded to the challenge and made a trip to New York's Bowery. There he encountered a drunkard staggering around with his bottle, just outside of the neighborhood's mission.

Chafer began talking to the man, and confessed how poorly he had cared for men's souls, even as the president of a great Bible seminary. It turned out that the drunkard was a backslidden pastor who had been told by his denomination

that he was no longer fit for the ministry.

Within an hour, Chafer was embracing the man despite his filthy, unlovely condition. Chafer gave him a new suit of clothes and put him up in a nearby house. Later, he brought him to the seminary in Dallas, and soon the man was back in the pulpit. An hour's encounter restored this pastor. He was an ugly looking tree who just needed a bit of sunshine—a bit of warmth from a man of God.

This is how we need to view the people we see who are living in deep sin. Some of these folks may never repent, but some just need the warmth of the sunshine and to have their eyes opened, so they can see clearly. We are not called to judge them, but like Barnabas, we are called to bring them the Gospel, and to be filled with joy, hope, and encouragement.

Some marriages are like trees without leaves, trees without buds, trees frozen by winter's harsh conditions. These marriages are barren of faith. More problems occur when couples who profess to be saved enter into a temporal value system, which is measured by the things they achieve in this lifetime instead of the rewards they will gather in eternity. Sadly, in many marriages there are individuals who will not get

right no matter what they hear. They will not receive or become accountable stewards who reflect the gift of eternal life that God has unconditionally given to them forever. They could be so free if they would simply receive a gift of faith to operate in an eternal value system.

Ministry of Faith

I think of the various churches I have pastored over the years and all the folks who have been saved in those places. I would not trade any of those souls for all the money in the world. I just thank God that we, as a ministry, have played a part in going out and bringing the sunlight of God, the sunshine of love, and the rain of blessing to some barren looking trees in need.

In particular, I recall a truck driver—a big, rough looking guy, known for his cursing. He listened to our radio program, got saved, and became a man with such a sweet, tender confession and a sweet, tender life. He was just an ugly looking tree that needed someone to bring the love of God to him.

We have seen prostitutes and drug addicts get saved, come to church, and never carry the label of prostitute or addict again. Someone took

the time to go to them with the light and love of God, and to keep going back, loving the unlovely. Sometimes it didn't appear that they would ever change. But change they did.

We have a great ministry of faith—a faith that serves by love, a faith that operates by trusting God, a faith that will not look at self, a faith that will not let circumstances or people rob it of what God has promised and what He will do. We have a faith that will be pure until we meet God face to face. God's faith: this is what God's people need.

CONCLUSION

Enter into God's school of faith. Develop a personal faith in a personal Savior, for a personal provision, a personal power, a personal peace, a personal purity, and a personal protection. Learn to refrain from saying anything that doesn't have faith in it. Do not receive things that don't involve faith.

By faith, the righteousness of God Himself is revealed. The goodness of God, the greatness of God, and the kindness of God are revealed from faith to faith to faith. The glory of God's nature is reflected by this faith.

God offers us the quality of faith that allows a terminally ill person to overcome the accusations of the devil, though he may not be healed. It really doesn't matter how broke a person is if his faith in God is greater than his financial circumstances.

The school of faith can give us a quality of faith in a great, big, glorious God. This quality

of faith pleases Him, and by it He rewards all those who diligently seek Him.

The Reality of Hell

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INTRODUCTION

Hell is real. It is not a state of mind. It is not a temporary condition. It is a real place set aside for those who will not accept the gift of salvation. God offers that gift to whosoever will come to the person of Jesus Christ and receive Him.

But as a pastor and a soul winner, I have a great concern. Certain trends in many churches today obscure facts that Jesus Himself reinforced again and again. When we share the Gospel, we must tell people that God loves them. And once they are saved, they must be told that He will never leave them nor forsake them. But we must tell the *whole* truth. The full counsel of God must be presented accurately and in detail. The truth is that there is a literal hell. It is not a party place. It is full of torments that will last for eternity.

How do I know? Jesus told me so in the Bible.

This is a very solemn booklet. Keep in mind as you read these pages that we cannot add to

or take away from the Word of God (Revelation 22:18-19). All Scripture is inspired, and God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19). Therefore, this doctrine should have as profound an effect on us as the doctrines of Grace, Mercy, and the Finished Work. If we understand it properly, our compassion for the lost and our desire to win them will grow stronger as our love for the Savior grows deeper.

Chapter One

DARKNESS, FIRE AND TORMENT

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:17,18).

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having

two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-48).

Understanding the Terms

The Bible is filled with references that use many different words to describe hell—warnings that tell us it is a real place and why people will go there. In the Old Testament, the word *sheol* is often used. Overall, *sheol* refers to the place and state after death (Genesis 37:35, Psalm 16:10, Proverbs 16:25, Numbers 16:30,33). In Isaiah 14:9-23, *sheol* is pictured as a place where people are very much alive. In this passage, it is also mentioned as the place where the devil will go. *Sheol* is a place for sinners who do not know God (Psalm 9:17, 49:14, Proverbs 5:5, 7:27, 9:18). *Sheol* is never satisfied as it devours sinners (Job 24:19, Proverbs 27:20), enlarging itself to make room for more (Isaiah 14:9). Furthermore, those

who are sent there cannot go on sinning (Psalm 31:17). It is a place of sorrows, pain, and corruption (Psalm 18:5, 116:3).

In the New Testament, several words are used to describe hell. *Hades* is that place where the souls of the lost who have died are sent (Matthew 11:23; Revelation 1:18, 6:8, 20:13,14). *Hades* never refers to the grave, nor is it the permanent region of the lost or eternal hell, but it is a temporary intermediate place between death and hell. It will give up or release the dead for the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:13).

The parable of the beggar Lazarus and the unnamed rich man is an illustration of *Hades* (Luke 16:19-31). There is already a division between the righteous and the unrighteous that cannot be crossed. Jesus went to Hades to proclaim His victory, and then He went to paradise to take the Old Testament saints with Him to heaven (Ephesians 4:8,9).

Paradeisos is the word in the original texts for "paradise," in Luke 23:43, 2 Corinthians 12:4, Revelation 2:7. It is a Greek loan word of Persian origin, which spoke of a walled garden, the enclosed parks (pleasure grounds) of Persian kings and nobles. One view holds that paradise was

one of the compartments of *Hades*, the place where the righteous dead were carried before Christ finished the work of reconciliation and where Christ's soul went while His body was in the grave. Some further hold that Christ in His victory over death took all the inhabitants of paradise to the third heaven. (See C. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, p. 578.)

Considering that paradise was a part of *Hades*, this explains why the thief on the cross was able to be with Jesus immediately after he died. Jesus descended into hell before He ascended to His throne in heaven (Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, Romans 6:9, 1 Corinthians 15:17-23, Ephesians 1:19-23, 4:9, 1 Peter 3:19).

Gehenna (*geenna* in the Greek) is another name for hell. It refers to the Valley of Hinnom, or a place of punishment (Matthew 5:22,29,30, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 23:33, Mark 9:43,45,47, Luke 12:5, James 3:6). In the gospels, Jesus describes hell by comparing it to a place called Gehenna, the garbage dump of Jerusalem, where all the garbage as well as the dead bodies of the poor, criminals, and animals were thrown on fires that were never quenched but always smoldering. He calls *Gehenna* the place of eternal punishment (Mark 9:47,48). *Gehenna* differs from *Hades*, which

is only a temporal place of punishment. *Gehenna* refers to the lake of fire and brimstone, the place of eternal judgment, where souls will be tormented forever with fire and "brimstone" (from the word *basanizo*, which means to torment, to torture, to inflict pain upon, in Revelation 14:10,11; 20:14,15).

Chapter Two

WHY DOES GOD SEND PEOPLE TO HELL?

First, hell was created for Satan and the fallen angels (Matthew 25:41). God never intended anybody to go to hell. Adam and Eve were created in a perfect environment. But after they were seduced by Satan in the Garden of Eden, the consequence of their action was death (Genesis 3, Romans 5:12). Adam and Even chose what God had specifically warned them not to choose, and sin became a part of our nature.

Still, true to His character, when sin and death entered the human race, God already had a solution (John 3:15-18). God the Father would send Jesus Christ to the earth to die for the sins of all men, once and for all (Hebrews 9:25-28; 1 Peter 2:24, 1 John 2:2).

The work was finished on Calvary, nearly two thousand years ago, when Jesus shed His blood and died for our sins, rose from the dead,

and went to heaven to reconcile man to God (2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

There remains one thing that every person must do to make all of what Christ has done, and all of who Christ is, part of his life. We must believe in Christ as our Savior. When we receive Christ, God imputes His own nature to us (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is why we can enter heaven.

People do not go to hell as a punishment for their sins; they go to hell because their sinful nature has never been changed. God cannot allow the old wicked nature to enter heaven. He is too holy and He cannot behold sin (Exodus 3:4,5; Habakkuk 1:13; 1 Peter 1:16). The eternal souls of the unsaved—all those who reject God's provision to be made new and acceptable—must go somewhere, and the only place they can go is hell. They enter hell with all their sinful desires and lusts still alive, but never able to fulfill them. But because hell was not designed for the human race, hell has to be enlarged for every soul that goes there.

Once you are saved, you are saved forever. You have eternal life the moment you believe on His name (1 John 5:13). You have a place in heaven. You will fail—every one of us does—but

the moment you fail, you can rebound and restore your fellowship with God. Failure, however, will not keep anyone out of heaven.*

But if you are not saved, there is a place for the souls of all who refuse to receive the Savior. Jesus described this separation in great detail in Luke 16:

"And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

"And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

"And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (Luke 16:20-23).

There was a certain rich man who fared sumptuously and lived a very comfortable lifestyle. But he never accepted God's provision to be saved, and he wound up in hell where he didn't even have a name. He didn't go to hell because he was rich on this earth. Abraham, the father of our faith, was very rich; so was Joseph of Arimathea, the man who owned the tomb where Jesus was buried. These rich men were

saved, and we will see them in heaven. The rich man in Luke 16, however, never received salvation. He didn't accept the promise of the Messiah, so he went to hell.

In this true account, Jesus mentioned a beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at the gate of the rich man's house every day. This beggar was full of sores, and dogs came and licked those sores. It isn't a pretty picture. Yet, this beggar knew God. When he died, the beggar was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. With a great gulf fixed between them, the rich man in the torment and flames of hell could see the beggar, who was safe in Abraham's bosom.

Let me explain a few things about this man in hell. First, Jesus is the one who told the story. It is a true story; it is not a parable. Parables never include proper names; yet, in this account Jesus uses the names of Lazarus the beggar and Abraham. Jesus said it, and He cannot lie.

The rich man in this story cannot be comforted or relieved in any way. There is fire in hell, and even as you are reading this, he is still experiencing the torment of the flames. He begged for a drop of water to be placed on his tongue, but it cannot happen. This hell is literal. The torment of it is real and the Scriptures reveal it.

"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

"And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

"And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

"For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

"Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

"And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if

one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

"And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:23-31).

Notice how the rich man could see and talk to Lazarus and Abraham. That makes hell all the more painful because he could see what he missed. Knowing what his brothers were facing, the rich man began to cry out for Abraham to send Lazarus from the grave to testify to his family on the earth. Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets, if they will not believe them they will not believe if one is sent from the dead."

People who go to hell become praying people. We don't think of that very often. I wonder how many in hell pray for those who are not living right with God, pleading that they will get right. They would beg for believers to start seeking and saving people from the torments to come.

Lukewarm Christians have no urgency, but this rich man in hell certainly had an urgency. I think that he also believed in soul-winning like no one ever believed in soul-winning before.

I pity those who support abortion. Judging by what happened to the rich man, I believe they will get a view of all the souls they sent to be with Jesus before they were even born. Millions upon millions of unborn babies are at home with God, safe in heaven.

How do we know this? Isaiah 49:5 tells us that the Lord forms His servants "from the mother's womb." Ephesians 1:4 says that He chose each of us from before the foundation of the world. God looks into the dust and sees each one and He writes their names in a book the moment they are conceived (Psalm 139:13-16). Only when a person finally rejects Him is that person's name blotted out of the book.

Just think of what hell will be like for those who have killed all these babies. Those who die in the womb possess more than just life. Each one has divine viability. In other words, they were *people* for whom God had a destiny.

The rich man's destiny was now determined. He will live forever in his condition—a condition that will never change. Perhaps he heard about this condition from godly preachers, but he did not accept their preaching. Now there is nothing he can do about it.

**For more about the irrevocable quality of salvation for the be - liever, be sure to read* Eternally Secure*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2002.*

Chapter Three

NEEDED: UNCTION AND URGENCY

"And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death" (1 Samuel 20:3).

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:47-48).

Oh, so many are lost today. They are just one step from death. Jesus spoke words from the Bible that explained how simple it is to become saved. But the ones who refuse those words will one day be condemned by those very words.

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

"And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:7-10).

Hell is real. In the Bible, Jesus gave 232 road signs to hell. He spoke about it more than He spoke about heaven. People who enter into witnessing, ministering, and preaching the Gospel have beautiful feet (Isaiah 52:7; Romans 10:15). The Good News they present about Christ can keep others out of hell. They bring people into an eternal destiny with God.

We cannot afford to be lukewarm Christians, appreciating salvation but remaining independent of living by the whole Bible, independent of being faithful to a local church, and indepen-

dent of the urgency to seek the lost. The Holy Spirit wants to constrain us by love, motivate us by grace, and energize us by truth in the illumination of the reality of our eternal destiny and the eternal destiny of others.

There is joy in heaven when one soul is saved because those angels know the reality of separation from God. They were there during Lucifer's rebellion. They watched as a third of their number were driven from the presence of the Lord forever when they joined Satan in his rebellion against God (Revelation 12:4). When they see a soul get saved, the angels are overwhelmed with joy. Just one person's decision to receive Christ brings rejoicing in heaven.

Lord, Where Would I Be Without You?

I cannot fathom what it would be like to go to bed every night as one who is lost. Yet, there are so many who breeze through life without an inkling that they are lost, destined for hell. Some of your best friends and family members, perhaps, could care less about hell. But one day, they will suffer the reality of a Christless eternity. They will experience wailing and gnashing of teeth if they don't come to Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:42, 50).

We must recognize the urgency of this message. It is imperative that we have God's heart to seek the lost. The Blood of Christ is the foundation for our salvation. Jesus died to pay for our sins. When He rose from the dead, He went to heaven to present His blood to the Father as the price to buy us back from Satan's dominion.

One thing that makes the reality of hell so terrible is that salvation is a gift. We don't earn it. By grace, we are saved through faith. It is not even that we "choose" to be saved. Salvation is not of ourselves. It is a gift of God. Our choice is simply to be utterly dependent upon Christ, who completely fulfilled the Father's will on the Cross of Calvary. Eternal life is a gift (Ephesians 2:8-9), and we only need to receive it by faith. To reject that gift makes hell an ever more horrible, indescribable experience full of unsatisfied appetites and memories that cannot be quenched.

A Final Glimpse into Hell

"And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (Isaiah 66:24).

Isaiah 66 is talking about a glimpse into hell

at the end of the Millennial Reign, the thousand-year period when Christ rules the earth, right after the Great Tribulation and the reign of the Antichrist.* The point is that one thousand years after Satan and his demons are tossed into the lake of fire, they will still be there—alive and in torment. Isaiah 66 explains that God will pull back the veil and will let us see exactly what He saved us from. We will have the mind of Christ to complement our glorified bodies, so our attitude will be different and we will be able to bear that encounter—as terrible as it will be.

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20*b*).

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).

"This is what I saved you from," God will announce. "See their consciences, see the fire, see that all flesh is abhorred down there. That is

what you have been saved from."

In heaven, after we have witnessed the White Throne Judgment of the unsaved—a time when more tears will be shed than ever before, in one day—God will wipe away all the tears of the believers. He will remove all their sorrow and pain, and the saved will enter into unending joy.

But in hell, as it is enlarged for the last time, when the last soul is cast into the bottomless pit and the lake of fire, unimaginable torment will have just begun—unending misery with no remedy. No one had to go there. And as long as a lost soul on earth has a breath of life, his destiny is not decided. With God, all things are possible; only believe (Matthew 19:26; Mark 5:36).

** For more about the events of the end times, we suggest reading* The Pre-Tribulational Rapture, *by Dr. Daniel E. Lewis, Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

The Bible says that believers who witness, minister, and preach the Gospel help people to get saved. They introduce people to the prospect of an eternal destiny with God by accepting Christ as their personal Savior.

The seriousness and the reality of hell should motivate us to live a serious Christian life. Daily devotions should be a practice in the home. Prayer and evangelism should be priorities in our schedules. We should love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We need to be bearers of the Good News. Knowing what we have been saved from should cause us to be occupied much more with Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2). We should always be so thankful that we will never be condemned and that we will never face the wrath of God.

For this reason, so many Christians are dedicated to serve God. Many are willing to give and to go without, not counting the cost but es-

teeming the value of a soul. This is why Christians need to be more than Sunday morning Christians. We need to take our walk with God very seriously, allowing it to affect every area of our lives.

Jesus Christ cannot lie. Hell is real. I thank God for those who are saved. May God bless you and motivate you to seek the lost. Don't be condemned by these words. Receive them. Be thankful that you know the truth about hell, and let this truth transform your life.

If you are not saved, please pray and ask Jesus into your heart. Right where you are, say, *Dear Jesus, come into my heart and save me. Thank You for shedding Your blood and dying on the Cross in my place. Thank You for all the things You have used in my life to prepare me for this moment. Help me to seek You first in everything I do, to depend on You completely, and to be used to win lost souls back to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

The Sanctity of Marriage

and the Family

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

Everyone, whether single or married, should read the Word of God again and again on the subject of marriage and family. We should study these verses until the Holy Spirit burns them into our conscience, penetrates our heart, stabilizes our soul, and gives us capacity through divine ability to reveal Christ to one another.

So many people become familiar with their families. Don't do it! Do not be familiar with your family. Don't take one person for granted.

The Bible says that Jacob's brother Esau was profane and a fornicator and couldn't find a place for repentance, though he tried to repent with tears (Hebrews 12:16-17). In other words, Esau did not accept God's provision. "Profane" means he was familiar. He was familiar with God and with the blessing God intended for him to receive from his father as the eldest son.

God has mercy for our need, grace for our self-image, power for our weakness, love for our

motivation, and peace for our maturity. As this booklet will show, He desires to give us everything we need to develop relationships that bring glory to His name.

Chapter One

MARRIAGE: GOD'S PLAN TO UNVEIL THE MYSTERY

"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the

fear of God.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife,

and they two shall be one flesh.

"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:14-33).

Billions of years ago, the Lord ordained a plan for the human race. That plan included marriage and family. He said to the prophet, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel" (Jeremiah 31:1).

In Jeremiah 2:4, the Word of God says, "Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel."

As part of His eternal plan, God said, "I want to represent the unity of the Trinity and the mystery of Jesus Christ and His Bride, the Church, through the institution of marriage." Christian marriages grounded in the Finished Work are the number one way of revealing the mystery of Christ and His Church to the world. Therefore, this kind of marriage must be diligently sought after, fervently understood, and consistently and stedfastly our pursuit by faith.

Neglect: Where Marriages Go Wrong

When marriages go wrong, often the first thing that happens is that husbands neglect their wives. She was not created to be neglected. Yet, a husband who neglects his wife wonders why he doesn't receive the response he needs from her.

Do not ignore your wife's needs. She is very sensitive, therefore be discerning to her sensitivities and do not ignore them.

Furthermore, do not neglect your own household. God is first, marriage is second, and family is included. I don't like to call the family "third," because if you have a family, it is a part of the marriage. The wife is to love and honor her husband, but many wives love their children more than they do their husbands, and that is very wrong.

Equal Partners

According to 1 Corinthians 14:40, we ought to do all things decently and in order. If only people would learn this about marriage and family! There is no inequality between husband and wife. In God's eyes, they are both equal. He has a position to protect her, to provide for her, and to love her with God's love. And she has a

position to submit to that protection and provision for love.

This may sound strange, but the Word of God does not say that a woman should obey her husband. It says she should *submit* to him voluntarily. He is never to legislate to her, but to operate in his position of spiritual headship lovingly, as a covering. If he gets off and demands her to do things that are wrong, it is better for her to obey God rather than man, in terms of the flesh (Acts 5:29).

If either the husband or the wife is unsaved, remember that Jesus Christ died for them. If, as in 1 Peter 3:1 and 2 for example, the wife has a partner who is unsaved, she may win him by her testimony, without preaching to him. The consistent life of a godly wife causes the unsaved spouse to be set apart, sanctified. When that is the case, he will not interfere with her Christian life, and he may get saved because of her godly life (1 Corinthians 7:14).

Expressions of True Love

Jacob worked for seven years to have Rachel as his wife, and in Genesis 29:20, the Bible says that it "seemed unto him but a few days," because he loved her. That is a beautiful verse.

In Genesis 24:67, Isaac loved Rebekah, and she was a comfort to him after his mother's death.

In 1 Peter 3:6, Sara called Abraham "lord" out of respect. She was saying, "You are the leader of this marriage." At the same time, according to Genesis 21:12, when Abraham was wrong, Sara told him to cast out the bondwoman, and God backed her. God said, "Do what she says." There is the balance.

Wake Up and Start Singing

The entire chapter of Ephesians 5 deals with marriage, while chapter six concerns the family. God designed the institution of marriage to represent Christ and His Church—the Bride, whom Christ marries for all eternity.

Read Ephesians 5:14-20 again. People need to awake from their sleep and let Christ give them light. We are to walk circumspectly, in wisdom and not as non-thinkers. We are to redeem the time because the days are evil. We are not to be misunderstanding but understanding as to what the will of God is.

Do not be drunk with wine but be filled with the Holy Spirit. We are to be happy on the inside with a melody in our hearts to God, always giv-

ing thanks to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two

GOD'S ORDER OF SUBMISSION

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

"That he might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:21-27).

Notice how the Bible says we are to submit

to one another. Then, it says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands...." But it also it says, *"…as unto the Lord."*

This means that we are to submit to one another as unto the Lord. The wife is to submit to her husband as unto the Lord, which means that he is to love his wife the way that Christ loved the Church, by giving His life.

Your hands do not consider it degrading to submit to your head. If your head tells your feet to take steps, your feet do not feel that is degrading. They love their head, and they respond by doing what they were designed to do (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

We are made to have one head. In God's order of delegated authority, God the Father is the head of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1-3). Christ is the head of the Church, and every husband has one head, which is Christ. Every wife has one head, and that is her husband, while the children submit to mom and dad.

Christ Is the Standard

A good marriage is the greatest way to reveal Jesus Christ on this earth because that is what marriage is supposed to do. Study the times that Ephesians 5 says, "even as [Christ]…."

He is the standard for how we should treat one another.

Please hide this in your heart. If a wife submits to her husband as unto the Lord (and that is entirely up to her), she glorifies God in her womanhood. And if her husband loves her as Christ loves the Church, he glorifies Christ in his manhood.

This is how the apostle Paul presented it, in Ephesians 5:25-30: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he may sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word."

"That he may present it to himself as a glorious church, not having *spot*" (that means sin), "or *wrinkle*," (that means familiarity with age), that it "should be holy and without blemish."

Then it says that a man ought to love his wife as his own body.

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh…." He is to nourish and cherish her, the Word of God says, even as Christ loves the Church. And if he loves his wife as his own body, he loves himself.

Then it says, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

The relationship of Christ and the Church is

a mystery as they go up against Satan's attack, which is against God's nature in the angelic conflict. Satan attacks marriage and family more than any other thing in the universe. After free volition, marriage is God's number one institution. Therefore, the life of Jesus Christ must motivate the marital union.

Things That Go Against Oneness

Anything that would divide the individual's heart will be used to divide the individual's relationship with his partner. Hosea 10:2 talks about a divided heart, which always leads to a double mind (James 1:8). So, anything that will divide a person's heart in his own decisions will be used to divide the union he has with his wife in their marriage.

That is why homosexuality, promiscuity, pornography, immorality, and passivity are all enemies to a marriage. Think about it.

Satan has produced immorality for this reason: If a person has sex with a harlot, he becomes one flesh with the harlot (1 Corinthians 6:16). That is why they go back and do it again. They are now one flesh because of the influence of libido waves on the central nervous system.

According to 1 Corinthians 6:17, "He that is

joined unto the Lord is one spirit" with the Lord. But verse 18 says, "Flee fornication...." Other sins are sins outside the body. But if your sin is sexual immorality, it's a sin inside the body.

Don't Defile the Temple

After 1 Corinthians 6:18 speaks about sinning inside your body, verse 19 says that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and you are not your own. You have been bought and paid for with the price of His blood: therefore glorify God in your body and in your human spirit (verse 20).

Proverbs 6:32 says that he who commits adultery lacks understanding and destroys his own soul—all because of wrong sexual relationships. Proverbs 6:33 says, "A wound and dishonour shall he get."

I studied that word "wounds," and it means that unless this person is made completely brand-new, for the rest of his life he will have a wound that will not set him free in sex in marriage.

The wound is a sexual wound that bars proper sex as God intended it. The wound produces a sense of dishonor so that a married couple cannot experience sex as it should be in

the marriage union. Thankfully, God can deliver anyone from that. God can bring in deliverance and transformation and clear up the past, so they can start out brand-new.

Satan is also attacking marriages and the family through people who do not support godly family values. Much of the entertainment industry attacks the family, even when they promote their product as family entertainment.

Satan also promotes drugs and alcohol to hurt families. And although the warfare intensifies, consider God's premise: The family is sacred. Every person we meet, regardless of his condition, was created to be a part God's family, to become perfect—without spot or wrinkle.

Keep Your Relationships Fresh

A marriage should be renewed every day just as our relationship with God should be renewed each day. My commitment to my wife should be renewed daily, and likewise, her commitment to me should be new every single day.

If you are single, and God has ordained that so far for your life (1 Corinthians 7), you are to have a relationship of love with Jesus Christ that will fulfill all your needs.

Chapter Three

NOURISH AND CHERISH WHAT YOU LOVE

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:28-33).

In marriage, as people get older and they

have been married for quite a while, they become closer and closer.

I knew a man and woman who were married for seventy-five years. She was ninety-five, he was ninety-seven, and they were having their platinum anniversary.

I had led them to Christ and visited them often. He acted just exactly like her and she like him. They looked alike. They talked alike. Everything about them was the same. If he wasn't around, you could count on it; she would do exactly what he would do if he were there. It was fun to watch them.

Do you know why they were so alike? As they were being conformed to Jesus Christ, whom they loved, they were also being conformed to each other's image. Do you see it? They loved each other so much that they were conformed to each other's image in God.

True Respect

As I understand the Bible, if I love my wife as Christ loved the Church, she won't have any problem submitting to me. Some husbands like to holler and scream, "You are supposed to submit to me!" But I don't hear them hollering, "I am supposed to love you as Christ loved the

Church!"

If a man lays down his life for his wife, it will be easy for her to submit to him. She will grow in her ability to respond to him, to appreciate his initiations, and to respect him.

In Ephesians 5:33, the last part of this verse says the wife ought to "reverence her husband." To reverence means to give great respect. And when her husband loves her as Christ loved the Church, it is because he loves himself as Christ loves him. A man doesn't hate his own flesh. *No* man hates his flesh. If you think so, see what happens when something falls on your foot. See how much it hurts. No, he nourishes it and cherishes it. And as Christ does the Church, so men are to nourish their wives.

It is said of Joseph that while a great famine was going on, he "nourished his father, and his brethren" (Genesis 47:12).

To "nourish" means that a husband gives his wife everything he can to bless her. To "cherish" her means he is single-eyed in his affections—that there is nobody but her in his life.

Genesis 2:24 and Mark 10:7-8 say that a man and woman leave their father and mother and become one flesh. "And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one

flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:8-9). Let no man separate what God puts together. They are one flesh. Let no man put it asunder. That's what the Bible says.

Perfect Oneness

It is an amazing thing to have one heart (Acts 4:32) and one mind. That doesn't mean you don't have diversities. It doesn't mean you don't have creativity to share with each other. You do. You are not a puppet. But it means that you have the love and wisdom of God as one heart, one mind, and one soul. But when you are married, you are also one flesh. That is why you must stay away from pornography and suggestiveness on the television.

Make a covenant with your eyes (Job 31:1), and do everything so that your heart is one flesh with the one you're married to—husband with wife and wife with husband. Don't sin against your central nervous system, which really does a job on your future sex life in marriage. It damages the soul. It wounds you and affects your capacity for the person you marry. It hurts you so that sex doesn't provide the pleasure God intended, unless you become right with God and

receive a gift of repentance. Be completely filled and renewed with the Holy Spirit every day.

Do Not Become Familiar

A woman was very rebellious to her husband. Then, when he was thirty-one years old, he died suddenly. During the funeral, she started screaming, and a friend had to take her outside.

When asked what was wrong, she said, "I never loved him like I was supposed to. I was rebellious. I always nagged him. He could never do anything good enough for me." She went on to say, "He was a tremendous worker. He got promotions at work. He was a great provider. He took care of us. He was a fine husband. He was never angry. But," she said, "I always nagged him to death. Now he's not going to be here to tell him I'm sorry. It's too late."

We ministered to her, and finally she realized that God forgave her.

The point here is that if you are married, make it be the greatest thing that ever happened to you, and be faithful. If you have a family, consider that family the most sacred thing you have ever considered on earth. As Christ is our Head and loves us, let's reflect that love that He has for us, the forgiveness that He has for us, the

mercy and grace that He has for us. Let's reflect it, because in marriage, we have a relationship.

Build your relationship. Cherish your partner. Be sensitive. Honor one another. Reveal God in your relationships. Be wise and use sound wisdom in your marriage. Train your children how to have proper relationships in the family and with others. Marriage is a continuing relationship—one that should be kept alive, one that can be glorious, and one that can be filled with joy and happiness when Christ is the center.

CONCLUSION

Relationships are so vital throughout our lives. Once we become saved, we start by having a relationship with God the Father. Then we have a relationship with the Son, then with the Holy Spirit, and then with the Word of God. We learn to develop beautiful relationships with one another as a family, knit together in the Body of Christ.

But Satan also has a family. In Job 41:16, the Word of God says that there is no air between them. He has an amazing plan to destroy marriages and families and the Church. The demons have shocking unity to defeat us, frustrate us, and bring us down in our marriages.

In marriages that are very good—where no one defrauds, where the wife complements her husband and edifies him behind his back, where he is sensitive and loves her as she needs to be loved, because she is human—both partners are operating in the Holy Spirit. They have some-

thing that is rare on the earth. Christ is amplified through their marriage to reveal Himself and the Church to the world.

Pray in faith that God will make us what we ought to be with His precious love and with His grace. That way, we can enjoy the fullness of everything we have going for us. God wants us to be blessed.

Father, we pray that You will help us to be filled with all the fullness of God and to reflect Christ in the Church, in our relationships. Please help us. That is what we want. We don't want any subtle rebellion.

Teach each husband how to love his wife and honor her needs. Help each wife to see her husband as You see him and to reinforce his leadership in Christ by honoring and respecting him. Above all, never let us become familiar with any member of our families. Bless us in our relationships, in Christ's name. Amen.

The Shepherd of My Soul

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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PSALM 23

(A Psalm of David)

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through
the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life: and I will dwell
in the house of the LORD for ever.

INTRODUCTION

Through the Holy Spirit, the born-again Christian has the Chief Shepherd in his soul: the Great Pastor, the Great Bishop—Jesus Christ. One of the worst things that can happen to a Christian is when he takes counsel from the mind and the emotions of his soul apart from the Word of God and the leading of the Spirit.

Instead of submitting to the Bishop of their soul, however, most people are living in the counsel of their soul. King David was not such a person. He always put the Lord before his face. We read in his psalms how the power of the Great Shepherd got him through want, defeat, and despair.

In this booklet, we will examine Psalm 23, which the Holy Spirit gave to David at a particularly difficult time in his life. Each line of this psalm reveals deep truths that show how Christ shepherds His people through the valleys. He brings us to quiet resting places of doctrine

where we can weather any storm.

Chapter One

THE SHEPHERD ABIDES INSIDE

"How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (Psalm 13:2).

"I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee" (Psalm 41:4).

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23*b*).

"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25).

God designed man to function as a trichotomous being—spirit, soul, and body—reflecting the image of the Trinity (Genesis 1:26-27). But when Adam fell, his spirit died, and the human race was left to function with only a fallen nature governing the five parts of the soul (the conscience, self-consciousness, emotions, free voli-

tion, and mind). Now, if he does not choose to receive godly counsel, a man's own soul will counsel him.

Through redemption, when we received Jesus Christ as our Savior, He gave us the Holy Spirit. Breathing new life into our human spirit, He enabled us to receive heavenly counsel, leading us with His still, small voice. Yet, we see good, sincere people struggle because they take counsel in their own souls. This means that instead of receiving the counsel from the Great Bishop who lives in their soul, they are counseled by their feelings and their own understanding of God.

Hearing His Still, Small Voice

When a person is saved, the Holy Spirit dwells within him, and it is possible for Jesus to pastor his soul. The still, small voice we hear is Jesus' voice. Inside our soul is the Great Bishop. Our pastor and our friends can't be everywhere we go, but the Great Bishop is, and He wants to counsel us.

King David had lost just about everything he could lose. Out in the Judean hills, he was fighting a war against his son Absalom. With David's army outnumbered, he didn't expect to

return from the hills. David believed he would be defeated—that he would never again hold out his scepter nor wear the shiny armor of a king.

What was David to do now? He had made mistakes, but he had been used of God mightily. He went off by himself, telling his six hundred men that he needed to be alone with God. Then, David declared, "The Lord is continually shepherding me, and I shall not want" (see Psalm 23:1).

The Touch of the Holy Spirit

Do not be familiar with this psalm. Allow the Holy Spirit to touch you, and do not be occupied with people and circumstances. So often we have wept, feeling hurt and defeated because of people. But every time, God says, "I am shepherding you. I am the Great Bishop of your soul. You shall not want anything." The intense witness of the Spirit agrees, saying, "This is right." We enter into a "faith-rest drill": resting in His love, resting in His promises, and resting in the Person of the Great Bishop who lives inside of us.

There may be times when we think we don't have any friends and things seem worse than

they actually are. Then we hear the still, small voice: "The Lord is shepherding you; you shall not want anything." Oh, we could spend hours in fellowship with the Great Bishop. He will supply everything we want that we truly need—no matter the circumstance.

David didn't know how it was going to go with Absalom, but he did know that inside His soul was the Great Bishop. The Great Bishop has vowed never to leave nor forsake us. The Great Bishop promised that He wouldn't let us hit the bottom, because underneath are His everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27). The Great Bishop has vowed that sin shall never be imputed to us (Colossians 2:13-14). The Great Bishop has promised that we won't have to pay for our sins (though we may be disciplined if we refuse to get right).

I can picture David on a starry night in those Judean hills, looking out into the sky, wondering what will happen. Either he could cry and become depressed, or he could go to God. David made the choice to go to the Lord.

Chapter Two

RESTING IN MERCY AND DOCTRINE

Matthew 11:28-30 speaks of the Great Bishop: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The Holy Spirit has used these words throughout the ages: "The Lord is shepherding me; I shall not want anything. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures" (see Psalm 23:2). "Green" is a picture of mercy and rest in "pastures" of doctrine. He makes us lie down in doctrines of mercy; the Word of God becomes our pasture. Notice that we are to "lie down" there —to have faith rest in the love, the promises, and the Person of Jesus Christ.

Every Christian has the Great Bishop inside

of his soul. We don't need our soul to counsel us—why would we ever want that? We have the Great Bishop who shepherds us, the Word from the pulpit that teaches us, and our friends who edify us. God makes us to lie down in green pastures by the motivation of love. Then, "He leads me beside still waters." The "still waters" refer to God's righteousness. The work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of God's righteousness is quietness and assurance forever (Isaiah 32:17).

First, He shepherds me continually—yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Secondly, I shall not lack anything.

Discuss the Shepherd, not what you "want." Discuss what God says, not how you feel. Discuss what He has done for you, not what is happening to you. Discuss the provision, not your problem. Discuss His power, not your weakness.

Restoration Within

God is shepherding me, I shall not want anything. His motivation of love makes me lie down to rest in green pastures of merciful doctrine. He leads me in His righteousness which produces quietness and assurance in my soul.

Then, "He restoreth my soul." God keeps on

restoring my soul by leading me in the paths of *His* righteousness for His name's sake.

The issue was never David's righteousness, because that would emphasize what *we* are able to do. The righteousness we have comes from the imparted righteousness of God through doctrine. He leads us in the paths of righteousness "for His name's sake"—because of His nature. His leading has nothing to do with what we do.

Have No Fear

Consider what had to be going through King David's mind. "My son is fighting me. He has me outnumbered, and he hates me. I may never go back to the throne; I may never be king again. Many of my intimate friends have turned against me. But here, on these hills, the Lord is shepherding me. And He keeps right on shepherding me, therefore I shall not want *anything*."

Notice what it means to have God counsel the soul. David was made to lie down in green pastures. He was led beside still waters, where there is no want, but only green pastures and quietness. Still waters were there, not troubled waters. It is the same for us. Our soul is restored as we are led in paths of righteousness because of His nature and the gifts of grace and right-

eousness (Romans 5:17).

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

In the original text, the word is "valleys" plural. David faced more than one valley, and this was another valley for him. It was wrong for him to keep Absalom from the palace after Absalom killed his half-brother (2 Samuel 13). It was too late to undo the damage that was done there. But now, God was telling David not to fear the evil works of Absalom. The rod of power and the staff of comfort remained with David.

Feasting from the Prepared Table

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5).

In his situation, there were pastures where David could lie down. David could rest in green pastures of doctrine that are filled with mercy and grace. There is a table in front of David, put there by God. "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Psalm 78:19). Yes, He can. There is always a table prepared.

When the Chief Shepherd, the Great Bishop, does the counseling of our soul, there is always a table, and it is always prepared. Whatever comes our way—the sting of the death of a loved one, the failure of a family member you love with all of your heart—and no matter what happens, there is a prepared table. God sets it before us with the green pastures of His Word. He keeps restoring our soul, so there is no fear of evil, and we are comforted. He anoints our head with oil, and our cup (referring to our capacity) runs over.

Chapter Three

FOLLOWED BY GOODNESS AND MERCY

The night in the Judean hills was coming to an end for David. This man of God was growing, maturing, and becoming very stable. He ended up believing. David was a faithful man who overcame with victory after victory. The secret of his overcoming was this: He knew God.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life…." (Psalm 23:6). Picture David, a man who thinks at this point that he will never be king again, speaking the psalm in the night. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life..."—what an amazing, precious statement this is in the midst of this beautiful psalm—"…and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

Assurance, confidence, and peace were David's. There was a prepared table, and he wanted nothing, even in the worst adversity.

David felt guilt *and* love toward Absalom: Guilt for keeping him out of the palace for two years, and love because Absalom was his son. David was very sorry for not making things right before it was too late. In 2 Samuel 18, he wept when he heard that Absalom had died, saying "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! I would God I had died for thee…." This was David's heart. When King Saul was pursuing David, determined to kill him, David refused to touch God's anointed, even in self-defense. David's heart was after God.

The heart of David was not the heart that failed—it was the heart that overcame. The Great Bishop controlled his soul. He enjoyed the table that God prepared. He knew mercy; he knew the comfort of grace. He knew how to handle the valleys, because he followed the pathway of righteousness provided by the nature of God.

Positive Faith, Positive Power

There is nothing negative in Psalm 23. Everything you could want can be found there. The beauty of this psalm is sometimes missed when people quote it at funerals and do not understand the historical setting that motivated

David to write it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Let's look at the situation: a son warring against his father; the father's army outnumbered; a father's heart of love, knowing that he failed. He longed to have it to do all over again—but he knew he could not. Yet, David recognized that God forgave him, so he put it all behind him. Instead of focusing on what happened during those two years apart from Absalom, David saw goodness and mercy following him. He set the Lord *before* his face; goodness and mercy were *behind* him, and the Chief Shepherd was *within* him. Now he wanted nothing.

Oh, it is a beautiful thing to get up in the morning, look at the sky, see the people you love, and realize, "There's nothing more I could want. I have everything because I have Jesus."

Jesus Is All We Need

After sixteen years of problems and battles on the mission field, but growing in the grace of God, Hudson Taylor finally could say, "I have never needed anything but Jesus."

D. L. Moody said, "One day I thought I needed something, but God filled me with His Spirit. I didn't need anything—I just needed the

One I didn't know."

How true and wonderful it is to walk with Him day after day, to talk with Him month after month, and to know Him more, year after year. Realize that He will *never* fail you and that He will always have a plan that is better than yours. God always works things together for good; He is always there to counsel us. The Great Bishop, the Chief Shepherd of our soul, will never leave us, and His goodness and mercy will follow us wherever we go.

CONCLUSION

Psalm 23 is for every one of us. Jesus Christ, our Great Bishop, will make it real. We do not need to have our soul counsel us. Even though we may sin, our soul can be healed (Psalm 13:2; Psalm 41:14; 1 Peter 2:25). There is no need to fear; our sin is not following us. It was paid for on Calvary, and goodness and mercy are following us all the days of our lives. Mistakes are not following us; goodness and mercy are following us. If we take a look behind us, we should not see people but only the goodness and mercy of God.

David always set the Lord before his face (Psalm 16:8). This truth means so much to me. By putting the Lord before my face, I have the Lord between me and everyone else. Before my face is my death, burial, and resurrection with Him. If I come up against anything, the Lord of Resurrection is there, and the Great Bishop and Chief Shepherd is inside of me, counseling me.

The greatest treasure on earth is to have the Chief Shepherd inside, controlling our soul. It is so wonderful, so sacred, and so real. While others are saying things, He is restoring. While people are pointing fingers, Jesus is comforting. While others are making evaluations, Christ is bringing us into rest.

The Great Bishop who created the universe knows how to handle it all. He knows how to counsel our souls. Thanks be to God, He redeemed our souls from destruction and set us in the path of righteousness—because of who He is.

The Sin of Discontentment

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The desire for change rules much of society. People are constantly looking for a change, trying to find the next new thing. Many are under the assumption that this next thing is what will make them happy and content. So they move from job to job, from house to house, and from city to city in search of contentment.

Christians are not immune to this trend, as the ever-growing numbers of churches and ministries reveal. Some individuals, of course, are legitimately called by God to go out and start new works in new places. Others, however, just keep moving around because, in reality, they are driven by discontentment. They have grown familiar and frustrated with all that is going in their lives, so they just get up and leave.

This booklet outlines my conviction that discontentment is the one of the greatest sins for Christians today. This sin creeps into the Church, and it is what causes believers to meddle with

change (Proverbs 24:21).

The problem, I believe, is that many people do not understand the call of God for their lives. What we need is to receive the call of God and grab hold of the substance of eternal life that is always fresh and new, every moment.

Chapter One

BEING LED BY THE LIGHT OF GOD

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy [Spirit] said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

"And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

"So they, being sent forth by the Holy [Spirit], departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus" (Acts 13:1-4).

Acts 13 shows how missionaries in the early Church were sent out. Barnabas and Saul didn't just come up and say, "Pray for us. We have decided to go somewhere,"—though that is the style of many people today.

In these verses, we see that first, they ministered to the Lord. To find out God's will, men of God began by ministering to Him. They followed the model set forth in Leviticus 16 and Ezekiel 44, where the priests appeared before the Lord in linen and ministered to Him. Afterward, they changed their clothes and went out to minister to the people.

This is a very deep principle. The priests could not minister to the people with the same garments that they wore to minister to the Lord. This is because we minister to the Lord with *imputed* righteousness, but we minister to people with *imparted* righteousness. To God, we minister with the righteousness that has been "reckoned" or placed on our account. To people, we minister with the righteousness we have received from God.

Walking in Imparted Righteousness

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the

light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:5-7).

We walk in the light, as He is in the light, that we may have fellowship with one another. When we receive doctrine from the Word of God, the Holy Spirit connects us as individuals to cooperate in our hearts as one body, according to our capacities.

The righteousness of God that was imputed to you and me through the death of Christ made it possible for us to receive the righteousness imparted from the Word. Our study of the Word of God, our inspiration through the grace of God, and our love in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit brings in a beautiful communion and communication as we minister to others. We are working out (imparting) what God has already worked in (imputed).

Unfortunately, the Holy Spirit is not the One to send out most people nowadays. Individuals purpose to go to the mission field, but in many cases, their decision is not a result of fasting and ministering before the Lord. Instead of being called and sent by God, people pick and choose according to the need and their ability to meet that need.

As the pastor of a church with a worldwide vision, having trained scores of missionaries and having profited from prayer and fasting, I have learned something. Too often, people have forgotten how to get together to fast and to pray. They simply are not in that spiritual realm. Furthermore, as we have often taught, the need does not constitute the call. We are not to rely on natural thinking, which would lead us to the obvious conclusion. God's thoughts and ways are not ours. They are much higher—and He *will* accomplish His purpose (Isaiah 55:8-11).

What happens too often is that someone gets bored where he is and decides to move on. And, really, he takes off and then does very little in the next place. With a genuine call from God, however, I will not be tempted to move on until I have fulfilled God's call for me where I am. We have to first fulfill the call of God for where we are. Don't forget that He who called us will also do it! (See 1 Thessalonians 5:24.)

Chapter Two

CONTENTMENT BRINGS GREAT GAIN

"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity" (Philippians 4:10).

"And, when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

"And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

"And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

"And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm" (Matthew 8:23-25).

As a pastor, it is so important to know that I have people co-laboring who are called to serve with this ministry in Baltimore. But too often,

people wrestle with discontentment. While they are involved in the ministry, they are not absolutely content. These people are always looking for the next place to go.

The meaning of the word "contentment" goes far beyond the imagination of our natural dictionary in the human soul of explanation. Jesus exhibited contentment when he was sleeping on the boat in the midst of the storm. Peter couldn't handle it, and he shouted for Jesus to wake up. Jesus was content, while Peter was discontent.

We see this contrast again when Jesus was walking on the water, in Matthew 14. Peter said, "If it is you, Lord, bid me to come." Jesus said, "Come," and Peter walked out on the water in contentment. But then, the gust of wind came, a severe burst of a storm came raging, and Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink.

Throughout my ministry, I have learned how to be content in the midst of persecution. It didn't take much for Peter to become discontented. But having an attitude of contentment is so profitable to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"But godliness with contentment is great gain.

"For we brought nothing into this world,

and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Timothy 6:6-7).

The original Greek text of this verse puts contentment into an even stronger context. It reads this way: "To have the power, the presence, the provision, and the peace of God is tremendous, divine gain."

We need to understand that where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. One crucial lesson we can learn in this world is to be called and sent into an area, become established in grace, and, as a result, give everything we have to glorify God in everything that we do.

Godliness in Action

I think of our church orchestra. I am so thankful to each member from the bottom of my heart. What would I do without them? So many new people come into our services and they are immediately affected by the way they are taken care of and the love they perceive in the Body of Christ. Some of these folks are very selective in the churches that they visit, and they notice the things that make us different. So when they hear our musicians play in a professional *and* spiritual manner, it makes all the difference. Those musicians reveal a contentment that brings great

gain.

One night recently my wife and I were talking and thanking God for the ushers. "Our ushers are so beautiful, aren't they? The part they play in the church is amazing" she said. "Do we really realize what our ushers mean to us?"

"Probably not," I answered.

Those statements really broke my heart. Our ushers have been such a blessing to me and to all of our people. I am so thankful that we haven't had to change them every month because of discontentment. Some people may not consider ushering as a very important job; however, I have had church members tell me that the conduct of the ushers during their first visits to our church made a big difference in their decision to keep coming. They stayed because they liked the way they were treated by the ushers.

Others have been impressed by the precious attitude of our security staff. Many have remarked on the professionalism of the nursery staff, the quality of our printed material, the organization of our youth ministry and the Christian education department. The list could go on.

If you are doing one of these types of jobs, let me ask you this: "Are you content?" Your contentment makes a difference in people's

lives. It brings great gain.

Chapter Three

FIND VICTORY IN A VISION

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

"So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

"My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change" (Proverbs 24:21).

Discontentment opens the way for people to meddle with change. This one decides suddenly that it is time to go live with Aunt Josephine. In the will of God, it may, in fact, be the time to go help Aunt Josephine. But outside the will of God, it is discontentment.

Discontentment causes anxiety and frustration. It is one of the culprits that hinder and hurt an individual Christian's life. Discontentment is

the problem behind most divorces. Some people find trouble in their marriage, and the first thing they want to do is take off. What is that? Discontentment.

What is behind most church splits? Discontentment. A group doesn't like the way things are done, so they go off and start their own ministry.

Discontentment always leads to familiarity in listening and to incapacity for appropriating the Word of God.

The Best Defense

The most effective defense against discontentment is to have a vision. When a man of God oversees a ministry, he needs to have a vision, and he needs to communicate that vision to his people. He must make it clear to everyone that they are going to play major roles in the vision. The godliness of their lives will make them successful in these roles. They have contentment because of godliness, and their work brings great gain. They have all grace in all times for all things. Grace is exactly what they need in every emergency for all the work that they do.

Unity is another thing that prevents discontentment. Unity in prayer (Acts 2:1), in purpose,

in praise, and in service (Acts 5:12) brings contentment with great gain. It reveals unity in the presence of God and recognition of God's servants and what they do.

Going Out in Faith Rest

Now, certainly, some dear people are going to be called to the mission field—both in the United States and to foreign lands. As a ministry, we cannot be discontent when God really does issue a call on someone's life. This will happen because of our worldwide vision from Jesus Christ, and we can do nothing to get in the way of God's call.

Those who are called, however, will be those who are have learned to be content with what they have where they are now. They are people who live in faith rest. They are learning the lessons that must be learned in the situations and in the places where they are. These people recognize the provision God has for them, and they love the people with whom they serve. They have contentment. It only makes sense that these are the people God wants to use.

One of the most difficult things we face is discontentment. God will guide us when it is time to do something. He will show us what to

do, and no one can judge us when He moves us.

Still, the Holy Spirit has been communicating to me, speaking to my heart and saying this:

"My son, I want you to be content. No matter what happens to you or to your church, I want to start with you being content. That is your test of Me in you."

CONCLUSION

I cannot begin to tell you how our church has profited from the faithfulness of contented servants. It makes me weep just to think about it. Their contentment has made it possible for me to minister effectively. Their contentment with God has made all the difference.

The musicians in our orchestra don't show up a half-hour late. No, they come early, stay late, and work their hearts out. They reveal great contentment in giving their time. They give until it hurts. So many others do the same in soul winning and in all the various outreaches we have.

I could go on and on about it. I just want to say this to all of those who serve with me: Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for not letting discontentment hinder the work of God in our midst.

The Spirit of Thanksgiving

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

What do we have that we have not been given? All things come from the hand of the Lord. We cannot claim any of His marvelous creation as our own. Even our position as His children was purchased with His Blood. Our eternal life is revealed in the power of His resurrection.

Still, it is so easy for us to slip into disappointment. We tend to complain when things don't turn out the way we had planned. We worry over money, over relationships, over health. An entire industry is devoted to mental and emotional counseling and treatment because of anxiety, which is rooted in the flesh.

God offers a simple solution for these problems: the spirit of thanksgiving. In this booklet, we aim to reveal the true potential that is within all of us: a potential to be a fountain of life, expressing praise and giving thanks to the God of all grace.

Chapter One

GOD KEEPS HIS VINEYARD

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee" (Proverbs 23:7).

In Proverbs 23:7, the Hebrew word for "thinketh"—*shaar*—means to hear something that has substance and then to reflect upon it, allowing it to dwell in our hearts richly. After hearing something from the Word of God, we can think upon the topic with the substance of faith through grace. Then, we estimate its value, evaluate its meaning, have a mental attitude of praise for it, and guard the content of the message. This is how we develop an attitude of thanksgiving.

Kept Every Moment

"In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.

"I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every

moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isaiah 27:2-3).

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

The vineyard of red wine speaks of the filling of the Holy Spirit whereby God's people sing praises to Him. The "vineyard," speaking of His people, is kept by God. He waters it, not just every day but every moment, so that none may be wounded or hurt.

Next, we see that God keeps the vineyard through the night as well as the day. Why does He keep us through the nighttime? God allows the conscious mind to sleep while the unconscious and subconscious are awake. He keeps us so that whatever we have been through during the day is not lying in wait to trouble us during our sleep. That way, the Holy Spirit can minister and deal with certain issues while we rest, and then give us inspiration for circumstances when we awaken (Job 33:15-17; Song of Solomon 5:2a; Isaiah 50:4).

Doesn't that make sense? Thank God for the way He keeps us.

"I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:

"That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works" (Psalm 26:6-7).

"Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High" (Psalm 50:14).

"I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving" (Psalm 69:30).

"Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God" (Psalm 147:7).

This is where our orchestras, choirs, and singers come in, always singing and playing songs unto God's name with thanksgiving. The listeners hear with thanksgiving because they practice *shaar*.

Often in Scripture, the word "fountain" relates to praising God (Psalm 36:9; Proverbs 14:27; Song of Solomon 4:15). Psalm 102:18 speaks of a generation to come that shall be created to praise God. Praises shall come from these people like water from a fountain as the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ in this generation.

We are of this generation, and the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth. He never speaks of Himself, but always glorifies Christ (see John 16:13-14). Wherever the fountain of life is, the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ inside our hearts, our minds, and our souls, and we have a consistent attitude of praise.

Chapter Two

OUR SPRINGS OF JOY ARE IN HIM

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name" (Psalm 100:4).

This verse shows what it means to have a mental attitude that is kept by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always glorifies Christ. Therefore, we come through the church doors with thanksgiving. We enter His courts—His church—with praise. We don't go in and just sit down like someone who is spiritually malfunctioning. We thank Him and bless Him for who He is.

Church should be the place we go to enjoy the Body of Christ. Psalm 116:14 says that we pay our vows and bless God in the midst of the congregation. Praise God by being happy! Do not dwell on the details of life; do not be preoccupied with negativity and natural viewpoint.

Being thankful is one of the greatest things that happens when we come to the Father through Jesus Christ. I cannot think of anything greater than to be genuinely happy and to be able to express it with the spirit of thanksgiving.

The Springs of True Praise

Before everything that is, God was already there. Before there were fountains or depths or mountains or springs of water, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were already there. God's character did not evolve. Proverbs chapter 8 beautifully describes this as wisdom personified. According to Proverbs 8:28, God strengthens the fountains of the deep.

Isaiah 51:3 illustrates what happens in the Christian community: "For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."

Jesus Christ comforts the waste places. Her wildernesses He shall make as Eden. Her deserts shall be made into gardens of the Lord. Then, joy and gladness, thanksgiving and melody, shall be found therein.

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:20-21).

Every person has the potential to be comforted by the Spirit, to have his waste places comforted, to have his wildernesses made like Eden. Desert places can be made into gardens of the Lord, having God's gladness and joy flowing through them.

The heathen (those who do not acknowledge the God of the Bible) are without excuse, because each one has God-consciousness through creation. In certain times and places, it may seem that the Holy Spirit has no conventional means to witness, concerning the Savior—no way to get the Gospel in there. Still, the Holy Spirit witnesses of Someone who made all of this magnificent creation.

People may not know the God of redemp-

tion, but they can know His character (which is the manifestation of His name, Exodus 34:5-7) through the creation. But, having revealed Himself, if they do not treat Him as the God of Creation, then their imaginations become vain, and their foolish hearts are darkened (Romans 1:21).

When we let the Lord comfort us, we find something we may have never known: true godly joy and gladness with thanksgiving. Something special can be found in everyone who responds to God: an attitude of thankfulness and praise to the Lord.

Tapping the Fountain Within

Let me tell you about a man named Eddie.

Now, Eddie didn't smoke and didn't drink. He seemed like a nice man. But his wife came to me and said, "My husband is suicidal, could you come over to our house and talk to him?"

After meeting Eddie, I knew that God-consciousness was working in Him. I knew that he had a potential within him and that we could find a fountain of gladness and joy and thanksgiving.

After several visits, Eddie grew to like me. I took him out for coffee and showed him the love of God. As he grew to trust me, he told me that

twice he had come within an inch of taking his own life. The Holy Spirit began to minister to the deep places of his heart and the Treasure was released. Eddie became gloriously saved.

I still can see Eddie and his wife worshipping God, hands raised, clapping with the music. What happened to Eddie? His life was transformed by the Holy Spirit glorifying Christ through the fountain of life within him. Out of that fountain came the spirit of praise and thanksgiving.

Chapter Three

LET THE LIVING WATERS FLOW

"For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills" (Deuteronomy 8:7).

"And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur" (Genesis 16:7).

The fountains for Hagar and Ishmael were in the wilderness. According to Zechariah 13:1, the fountains of God flow even to someone who is sinning, because the Lord wants to get that person's attention. God waits to be gracious so that His mercy will be exalted (Isaiah 30:18).

In my first church, I kept visiting one particular house for three years. A seven-year-old girl who lived there came to our Sunday school, but her parents had yet to come to church. The church was growing so fast during those years; at that time, attendance had grown from six to

six hundred. Well, that little girl was such a sweetheart. After service every Sunday, she would pass me a note asking me to pray for her parents.

One day I stopped by and the mother motioned for me to come in. That had never happened before. "Don't say anything," the woman said to me as she got her husband.

They took me to the door of their daughter's room. The girl was on her knees, and her mother said to me in tears, "My daughter is praying for her pastor."

That couple got saved right then and there. Later, we baptized the whole family, and they became one of our very faithful families.

The little girl did not know I was coming at that moment. She was just seven, but she was praising God Almighty for her salvation and praying for her pastor. When the mother saw her on her knees, that little girl was a fountain of life for her parents.

Everlasting Springs

"Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water

that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13-14).

When we come to Jesus and drink from His well, rivers of living water flow from our emotions. We become like fountains with our attitude of praise.

In Noah's day, when the rains came down in the beginning of the Flood, Genesis 7:11 says, "the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up." The Hebrew word translated as "broken up" also means to tear into, to rip apart, to dig up. There are times when the Word of God and the Holy Spirit must dig inside to find the fountain of our potential.

Each of us has God-consciousness. When we are born again, we have the Holy Spirit. We have eternal life. We have the grace of God and the love of God. Now our only need is to recognize, realize, estimate, evaluate, praise, and guard all we have been given through Christ's life in us.

In Everything Give Thanks

"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

"Rejoice evermore.

"Pray without ceasing.

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:15-18).

I take these verses seriously, and I pray that the Holy Spirit will continually impart the truth of this passage to my heart.

The Spirit glorifies Christ within you, and that is a fountain of thanksgiving. A fountain is made for its waters to be dispersed everywhere. The waters that come from within you can flow into the streets where you live and bring people to Christ. This is a wonderful picture.

In *everything*, give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you. You may not be able to do a lot of things for God, but surely you can be a thankful person, and that is the will of God.

Defeating the Doubts

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

"The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not

believe.

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you" (John 20:24-26).

Thomas doubted that Christ had risen from the dead. When Jesus came into the room again, He went directly to Thomas. "Reach your hand into my side," Jesus said. Thomas never did that. He saw Jesus and that was enough for him.

This doubter went on to become a great missionary to India. According to Church history, he won hundreds of souls to Christ because he was so grateful for God's forgiveness. Eventually, Thomas died as a martyr. Those who were around him during his persecution said he was always such a joy to be around. Even in the midst of trials, he always acted as if there were no persecution going on. It was written of Thomas that he had such a beautiful countenance, and that he was continually giving thanks.

When Peter was being nailed to his cross, he asked the Roman guards to place him upside down. "Put my head down and my feet up—I am not worthy to die as My Lord died," he said.

He was weeping as he died, weeping that God would count him worthy to give up his life for the Lord after all the things that he had done. He shouted out thanksgiving and praise to God as he was on his way to receive the crown of life (see Revelation 2:10; James 1:12).

CONCLUSION

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

If I have a fountain flowing inside of me, if its source is the Word of God that I have guarded in my heart, if the Holy Spirit is glorifying Christ in me and through me, and if His life is flowing out of my emotions with praise and thankfulness, then that should take care of any problems I have. This is the best preventive medicine for sin. What is more, it becomes a tremendous ministry toward the people around me—though I may not say a thing.

When I give thanks in everything, then I am not living in my self. The Holy Spirit is being allowed to glorify Christ in me as I grow into a Christian who will reign for all eternity. All I have to do is accept God's provision.

In Revelation 7:17, the Lamb of God is in the midst of the throne to feed those who were

saved during the Great Tribulation. Then, He leads them to the "living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

"It is done. The work is finished!" Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, calls out. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (see Revelation 21:6).

If you are thirsty, just come and let the Holy Spirit comfort your waste places. God will make your wilderness like Eden, the deserts in your soul will become gardens of the Lord. You will have gladness and joy and melody with thanksgiving springing up within you—a fountain you never knew you had. It will spring up to glorify God, and a river will flow from you that will bless everyone you see.

The Substance of Faith

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

There is nothing in the world like the Bible. When heaven and earth pass away, the Word of God will remain forever (Matthew 24:35).

Why do marriages, families, and friendships have difficulties? It is because they do not know, understand, receive, or appropriate the words of this Book. They may have a faith that is very religious, a faith that is very sincere. Sincerity, however, does not define a person's character. Sincerity relates to a person's disposition. Unfortunately, people can make a profession of faith and truly be born again but ignore the principles of 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

In this pilgrim journey, led by the Word of God, we will face steep inclines, sharp curves, and dangerous precipices. But the Bible provides an answer for every sharp curve, steep in-

cline, and danger we will encounter living as God's children in Satan's world.

I hope that by reading this booklet your spirit will be quickened to hear from God and to abide in the substance of faith. Let the living Word of God produce in you a living faith that will give you a living expectation and absolute liberation in Christ.

Chapter One

THE IMMUTABLE WORD OF GOD

The Bible has three tremendous qualities: excellence, relevance, and permanence.

Its excellence is revealed by the hundreds of specific prophecies about the life of Christ, beginning in the book of Genesis, that were precisely fulfilled.*

Also, the Bible is relevant. No matter what man needs, whether he is fearful or failing, lonely or sick, if he will go to the Word of God, he will find precisely what he needs.

Next, the Word of God is permanent. "Thy word is [forever] settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). When heaven and earth pass away, the Word of God abides forever.

The Word of God is indisputable. The Word of God is ethical, in that it has virtue in its moral meaning. The Word of God is historically correct. You cannot mention a single thing in the Word of God and find it to be incorrect histori-

cally. In spite of all the doubts of men, the Bible has been used throughout history as an accurate account of events that have taken place throughout time. I love the following poem:

This Book I would rather own
than all the golden gems
From off the monarch's coffers shown
and all his diadems.
Yea, if the sea were of crystal light
and the earth a golden ball,
And diamonds for the stars each night,
This Book is worth them all.

For Doctrine, Reproof, Correction, Instruction

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

"All" means "in its entirety." That it came "by inspiration" says that the words of the Bible came to us through men inspired by God's divine absolute dogmatic authority. The fact that it is "profitable" means it is useful, offering the reader a great advantage. Therefore, the entire Bible is profitable, instructing us in how to think with the mind of Christ in every situation.

"Doctrine" represents the highway of truth in every detail of life. The Bible is also good for "reproof," which speaks of God's red lights. In the Bible, when we see or hear warnings or commandments not to do certain things, they mean, "Stop, do not go through the red light." "Correction" means that if we have gone through one of the red lights, we may turn around and get back on the right road again.

Then the Word of God gives us "instruction in righteousness." That simply means it gives us God's divine viewpoint as it orders our steps in a precise way. Every man or woman of God may be thoroughly furnished and equipped unto every good work just by being a faithful steward of God's Word.

Unparalleled, the Bible is a remarkable and unusual Book.

The Old Testament prepares us for what the New Testament unfolds: Emmanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23). The book of Acts reveals the propagation of the Gospel, taking the Word into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world.

The epistles are an explanation of the Living Word and how a believer can appropriate it. The book of Revelation gives us the culmination. It

tells how everything in life will end in personal victory for God's people who will pay the price of taking up His Cross until it becomes their own.

Be Ready to Hear

"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2).

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

"And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

"By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name" (Romans 1:5).

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your soul" (James 1:21).

The word "receive" in James 1:21 is the Greek word *dechomai*, which means being available to hear the Word of God with deliberation, purpose, and obedience, redeeming the time. That is why a Christian ought to attend church services three times a week—not because the preacher said so, but because the Bible says that our attendance is recorded in a book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16; Hebrews 10:25).

Dechomai means that we should receive the Word of God in such a way that it forms in us an attitude of integrity toward the Promises, a confession of faith against the atmosphere, and honesty in our behavior. It means to lay aside all superfluity of naughtiness and receive the Word of God with meekness (which is God-consciousness without distractions, James 1:21), unlike the people Jesus referred to in Matthew 13:13. Hearing, they did not hear; seeing, they did not see. A person who receives the Word of God without distractions, in the soil of meekness hears properly and receives the substance of faith.

*For a comprehensive study of the faithful testimony of God's Word, read the following booklets by Pastor Carl H. Stevens: Fulfilled Prophecies from the Bible, (Grace Publications, 2000), This Book (Grace Publications, 2000), and The Price of the Gospel (Grace Publications, 1996).

Chapter Two

OBEDIENCE THAT PRODUCES AN EVERLASTING CONSEQUENCE

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

Everything in our lives now and in eternity depends on how we hear the Word of God, how often we hear it, and what we do with it after we hear it. Hebrews 4:2 tells us to mix faith with what we hear so that we will have faith rest. But there is something else that is so crucial: Faith, the substance of things hoped for.

"Substance" in the Greek is *hupostasis*. *Hupo* means "under" and stasis means to have absolute truth as a stand. "Substance," then, is where I stand, under the absolute truth. By faith, I stand in the Lord in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10). I also stand against the wiles of

Satan (Ephesians 6:11).

Now if faith is the substance of things hoped for, that means in every circumstance that comes my way—whether it be failure, temptation, heartache, or success—then faith remains my substance. I am standing in an absolute truth in the grace of God (Romans 5:2). But it does not stop with substance.

The Evidence of Faith Obedience

So much that we call faith is not substantial. The Word of God says it is the evidence of things not yet seen. "Evidence" means absolute proof of an absolute faith without an absolute present solution. It means that a person is not double-minded (James 1:8), and he does not have a divided heart (Hosea 10:2).

Let me illustrate to you what faith is. I received a call this week from a pastor in Europe. Once again, I saw what kind of a man of God he is when he said, "Pastor, I am very serious about this. I am willing to come home and just stay and work at home base if that is God's will. I'll be there in an instant."

I became very broken, because this man has a tremendous ministry in Europe and he is certainly needed there. But he said, "If I were to

come home, I would do anything that needs to be done. When I'm there, I see the tremendous need you have for co-laborers, for people just to help you. One word from you, and I am on that plane."

That is called faith obedience. As he spoke, tears were running down my eyes because of his heart.

Our obedience to faith releases all that God is and reveals what God has done in us. Faith obedience releases the energy of God's love, the character of God's grace, the mercy of God's lovingkindness, and the compassion of God's plan into the person who is God's child.

The Doctrine of Reciprocity

Reciprocity, in our relationship with God, simply means hearing from God and then responding to Him. A believer who practices reciprocity is someone who has integrity in the soil of his heart. He has an honest heart, and when he hears the Word of God, it is the most sacred thing in the world.

The Word of the living God produces an everlasting consequence in every believer: To think about it is to love it; to talk about it is to desire it. To reveal the Word is the greatest reve-

lation in our lives, as the apostle Paul said in Galatians 1:16. The more we receive it, the more we are conformed to Christ's image.

Obedience Releases Faith

I want you to see what faith obedience does. A woman was going to get a divorce five years ago, but when she prayed, God told her not to get the divorce. She began to treat her immoral husband extremely well. She was quiet and did not share her problems with others. One day, he had a very serious accident. And, who do you think was the first one he called? He called someone who had wept in front of him three times in the past two months—someone who told him that she loved him, without one single indictment. Today, they are completely reconciled.

What happened? She entered into Galatians 3:2, receiving the Spirit by hearing properly. She received a spirit of faith. Not just faith, but the spirit of faith. This is not wishful thinking or religion. She expressed what she believes with all of her heart. Her faith was not in a man but in God.

In another case, a five-year-old boy saw his daddy lay unconscious for several weeks, due to

a serious illness. He kept saying to his daddy, "Daddy, don't die. Daddy, don't die."

Supernaturally, the father returned to consciousness three months later. He says that over and over again, he heard these words in his unconscious state: "Daddy, don't die, Daddy don't die."

On the other hand, a thirteen-year-old girl with leukemia did not get healed, yet she was a most incredible young lady in terms of contentment. She showed us the substance and evidence of her faith during her short life. The substance of her faith was contentment, and the evidence was perfect peace when God took her to heaven at the age of thirteen.

Hearing with Meekness

One of the greatest secrets of experiencing Jesus Christ is to hear in meekness and to mix faith with what you hear. It produces a faith that obeys God by grace through love in the intimacy of knowing who God is. To know God is to love Him. To love God is to think with Christ. To think with Christ is to speak His words. And to speak His words is to show His character.

Some people are motivated by self. If we are motivated by self-interest, self-absorption, or

self-deception, we will withdraw when things do not go well. We will cry easily. We won't want to be with the people who love us, and we will start acting strange because we don't have a faith that serves by love.

Obedient faith serves everyone by God's love (Galatians 5:6), a love that does not fail (1 Corinthians 13:8a). The Bible says that no one can please God without faith. And when you come to God, you must believe that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Chapter Three
THE COVERING OF GOD'S FAITH

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" (Romans 3:3).

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ…" (Galatians 2:16a).

"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Consider what it means to have the covering of God's faith.

For thirteen years, Abraham was out of fellowship with God. Still, it was the faith of God the Father, the faith of God the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit that kept him alive. On his own, Abraham didn't have any faith.

In Genesis 17:1 God said, "Abraham, walk

before me." He went through the situation of sinning with Hagar (influenced by his wife, Sarah), which resulted in the birth of a wild man. But at last, the faith of God the Father and the faith of Jesus Christ was imparted to him, and it became Abraham's faith. Now, he is called the father of our faith (Romans 4:11-16). But during the thirteen years when he withdrew from God, Abraham was covered by God's faith.

God forbid that we fail. But most Christians do not know the Finished Work absolutes of God's faith as it applies to their failure. God wants us to receive something very fresh out of this principle:

The faith of God and the faith of Christ in His perfect plan in the Finished Work covers us until we can be restored by our own faith in Him. God's covering is explained by Proverbs 17:9: Those who cover transgressions seek love; but those who repeat a matter separate even friends.

Accountability to God

Jacob was covered for twenty years by the faith of God and the faith of Christ. In Genesis 28:16, God initiated to Jacob who responded, "God was in this place, and I did not know it."

Later, in Genesis 32, Jacob was traveling between Peniel and Bethel when he had an all-night wrestling match with the Lord. Jacob was left with a limp to remind him that though he had prevailed, God won.

If we refuse to be accountable to God, then we will experience a life without substantial faith that overcomes. But when we come to the end of ourselves, as the prodigal did in Luke 15:17, faith comes inside, and we can say, "I am going back home to God." We begin to experience faith in love, and we desire to serve the One who truly loves us.

Moses spent forty years backslidden in the desert until his encounter with the presence of God in the burning bush, in Exodus 3:1-3. For Peter, it was only a few weeks before he was restored, after returning to his job as a fisherman. Though he had no faith in the Cross or in the blood of Christ, all the time that Peter was backslidden, the faith of the Father and the faith of the Son covered him.

When Thomas did not have faith, Jesus said, "That's all right, I'll let you walk by sight." So Jesus came to him and said, "Here I am, Thomas. You missed Me last Sunday. Go ahead now and put your hands in the nail prints and in my

side" (see John 20:27). By sight, Thomas received faith through the faith of God and the faith of Christ.

Motivated by Resting in His Love

God is resting in the work of His Son and not in our works. This is why Zephaniah 3:17 makes it crystal clear that He rests in His own love and rejoices over us with singing.

Many people are motivated by guilt. Sometimes it is bona fide guilt and sometimes it is not. Other people are motivated by shame. Some are motivated by jealousy, by sight, and by envy. More are motivated by bitterness, and some are motivated by pride.

But thank God for the Christians who are motivated by the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Jesus said, "I call My own by name, and I go before them and they follow Me." We follow Him into all the world to bring the Gospel of faith and the gospel of forgiveness.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their tres-

passes unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

Verse 18 tells us to have a ministry of reconciliation. Verse 19 refers to words of reconciliation. Verse 20 commands us to be reconciled to God.

Instead of withdrawing when we feel hurt, we ought to minister to others with the reconciliation of the love of the Cross (see Colossians 1:20). Now our faith is living because the soil of our soul is filled with God-consciousness, and that is meekness. With an honest heart, we begin to speak words of faith.

Chapter Four
FINISHED WORK FAITH

After creating the universe, God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2). Once a day for six days, Israel marched around the walls of Jericho. On the seventh day, they marched around the wall seven times (Joshua 6:15-16). In 2 Kings 4:32-36, Elisha was in a place where a child died. When he put his lips on the child's lips, his hands on the child's hands, his body on the child's body, the child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. In 2 Kings 5:14, Naaman, who had leprosy, was told to go down to the dirty Jordan River and to go into the river seven times.

Seven is God's number for resting in everything He says and does. Finished Work faith brought down the walls of Jericho so that Jericho was defeated by God's people. The Finished Work faith of Elisha raised up the dead child. Finished Work faith also healed Naaman. In each situation, someone responded in faith.

There is a rest for the people of God. And as we rest, He wants us to enter into a living faith that rests in everything. If we have God's faith, then we can rest in His love.

Made Whole by Faith

"My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

"And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."

"And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

"And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke 7:46-50).

In Luke 7, Jesus addressed a prostitute. At the end of their encounter, He said to this prostitute who was now saved, "By the way, I want to speak something inside your heart. Your faith has made you whole." By speaking words of life, He spoke faith into her soul.

The woman who had the issue of blood (Luke 8) touched Jesus, and virtue went out of

Him. Jesus looked at her and she was very afraid because she was not supposed to be out around people. Because of her blood disease, she was divorced from her husband, excommunicated from the religious community, and ostracized by her neighbors. But when she heard that this man named Jesus was coming near, she went out anyway and touched the hem of His garment.

Jesus said to her, "I want to speak something into you. Your faith has healed you and saved you." Her faith came from His word; it saved her and healed her. He spoke healing into her soul, but He did more than that. He spoke healing into her physical body. He did that also for blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:51-52) when He stood still and He said, "Your faith has made you whole."

Speaking Faith to Others

Jesus spoke the character of a living faith into the souls and bodies of people, and that is not understood today. Most people do not understand that instead of gossiping about somebody who is failing, we are to cover them with faith motivated by love and not relative righteousness. We should not say a word about them.

We cover them and go to them alone in meekness (Matthew 18:15).

It is so crucial that Christians enter into a living, precious, sacred faith in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the power of God's energy. This faith is activated by obedience; it is activated by confession. This is why Paul said (2 Corinthians 4:13), "I believed, and therefore have I spoken." We believe and therefore we are going to speak.

This is what a person does in witnessing, because faith goes into all the world when believers are obedient (Romans 16:26, Romans 1:5). That is why we have worked in nearly 200 countries. The gates of hell cannot prevail against a work of God. God is on the side of grace and love and obedience to His Great Commission.

"Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

A lady in my earlier ministry was eighty-eight years old, and she had every problem that you could think of—arthritis throughout her body, a heart disease, and then cancer. She was a very faithful, loving, precious woman of God. Her skin was wrinkled, and her hands trembled

every time I saw her. And yet, every day she imparted faith to me through the things she said. She spoke faith into my soul, and that has affected my life to this day.

Her testimony, often communicated in tears, was this: "How God has ever treated me by grace for eighty-eight years, I will never know. He is the most amazing, the most beautiful God. I just can't wait to go home to be with Him, in His time."

She said, "For eighty-eight years He had a plan for my life, and right now, this is the plan. I thank God for your ministry and for every single person who has been so gracious to me."

The reality of it all was that she had been gracious to all of us. That woman's faith had substance. That is our desire. We need to have a faith that lives without wishful thinking, without presumption, and without a religious subjective attitude. It is time we realize that faith has energy. As we grow in our meditation with Jesus Christ, reflecting His life, thinking with His thoughts, and communicating His heart, we will experience the substance of His faith.

CONCLUSION

Scientists tell us that we encounter billions of natural vibrations per second. We can taste, hear, and think because of these vibrations that pass through the central nervous system.

Either God or Satan can invade these vibrations, and when we are filled with faith, miracles happen. Paul, in Acts 14:9-10, saw faith energized in a crippled man when the apostle said to him, "Though you haven't walked since you were a baby, Get up! I see faith in you." Paul saw the energy that was available to heal this man.

When the woman touched the hem of Jesus' garment, He said, "Virtue went out of Me." He was speaking of the energy of faith.

When our faith rests in God's Word and God's faith through right hearing, commitment, and obedience, we have the substance of faith.

The Sweet Savor of Grace

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:14, 16).

Every part of the humanity of Christ was saturated with grace and doctrine. And of that fulness, in its totality, we have received grace for grace.

First, grace is what God has done for us, apart from us.

Second, grace is totally detached from any human merit.

Third, the gift of grace depends upon the character of God and not the character of man.

Fourth, grace is freely given as a gift to those who will receive it and believe on Christ.

Fifth, for this reason, the Lord Jesus does not and will not work with any single person out-

side of His provision, which is grace.

This booklet will give us a description of the many sides of grace, mercy that endures, and love that cannot fail because it is the essence of God.

Chapter One

CALLED TO BE A SWEET-SMELLING SAVOUR

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14).

"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are a savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life..." (2 Corinthians 2:15-16*a*).

God has called us to be a sweet savour of His knowledge in every place. Have you ever wondered what this means? Unto those that are in death, we are savour unto death. Unto those that are saved, we are a savour unto life. Therefore, the Word of God says, we do not corrupt the Word of God in His sight, but we speak in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:17).

What is a sweet-smelling savor? In isagogics,

(a study of the historical frame of reference of the text), the sweet-smelling savor derives its essence from three different kinds of flowers.

One certain flower, a wildflower, had a most wonderful scent. A very beautiful flower to look at, they called it the "flower of mercy."

Another flower was called the "grace flower." When trampled on, that flower produced a sweet aroma.

The third flower made an amazing combination with the other two. When it bloomed, it gave off a tremendous fragrance without being trampled. Even the secular world called it the "love flower."

The Ultimate Expression of Grace

We have a Savior who came to the earth with one thing in mind: to make His grace visible to sinners. This grace is multifaceted (*poikilos* in the Greek), meaning "grace on every side" (1 Peter 4:10).

Abundant grace (Romans 5:15) speaks of an overwhelming influence. Exceeding grace (2 Corinthians 9:14) means it is above everything known to man. "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus"

(Ephesians 2:7). Transcendent, it goes beyond everything.

Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound (Romans 5:20), and that speaks of ever-increasing grace. This means that when a person fails, grace increases. Can you grasp that? "Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

A person fails, and grace increases. Imagine it! In the Old Testament, the correlating verse is Proverbs 24:16, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief"—and he stays down. Yet, the sinner who is justified by God through salvation responds to truth and practices rebound every time he falls.

That We May Know Him

"For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:15-16).

This speaks of a grace that spreads forth its scent further and further because it comes out of

our hearts as a sweet-smelling savor. The knowledge of it has a sweet aroma—knowledge that goes way beyond academia. This knowledge has a sweetness.

Remember, *mercy* is a wildflower that has a beautiful fragrance. *Grace* is a flower that had to be trampled on to bring out the aroma. But *love* was the one that would give a sweet smell without effort, because love releases the righteousness and justice of God.

When the righteousness of God condemned Jesus Christ because of our sin, the justice of God had to condemn Him. After Christ paid for our sins on the Cross, the love of God could bring in forgiveness and His imputed righteousness to everyone who would believe.

What is going to be the most spectacular sight in all eternity? The sight that will be so overwhelming is when we see the Lord with His fresh wounds—wounds that revealed His great mercy, grace, and love that will be evident throughout eternity.

Chapter Two

THE MANY SIDES OF GRACE

"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who hath blessed us* with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will"

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:2-7).

Here is Abraham. He would not speak to God for thirteen years; yet, in Genesis 17:1, God

initiated to Abraham, making him the father of our faith. Despite the problem with Hagar and Ishmael, we will see Abraham in heaven. When we do, we will have one thought—and this is where the fresh wounds come in. Abraham will be there to the praise of the glory of those wounds.

And here is Jacob. He had that wrestling match with the Lord Himself, in Genesis 32:24-32, and his name was changed from Jacob to Israel. "For as a prince, hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." The place was called Peniel, because there Jacob saw the grace of God face to face. Jacob was left with a halt in his walk as a permanent reminder; his thigh was put out of joint by the Lord. As the head of the twelve tribes of Israel, he had two wives and twelve sons, and we will see Jacob in heaven.

There was no human merit in Abraham. There was no human merit in Jacob. It is not that they were great men of God, but they received greater grace (James 4:6). It was ever increasing. It was transcendent. It was overabundant, always abounding. And that is the reason that anyone is in heaven today.

After escaping from Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot, in Genesis 19:32, had sex with his daughters. The girls decided to get him drunk and went in with him to preserve their family line. As a result, they produced the Amorites and the Moabites—bitter enemies against Israel.

How could Lot ever be called righteous (2 Peter 2:7) when there was hardly a good thing about him? The one good thing was that his daughters were virgins until he offered them up to the men that came to his door. (God didn't allow them to have the girls, because the angels were there.)

But notice it: Lot is in heaven as a righteous man, to the praise of the glory of God's grace.

Oh, if we could realize the power in this: "to the praise of the glory of His grace." It doesn't even matter if it is Paul on the road to Damascus, responsible for the murders of many Christians. Paul said, "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power" (Ephesians 3:7).

Chapter Three

GOD'S PURPOSE: A FRAGRANCE THAT FLOWS OUT

Paul said, "I am less than the least of all the saints, and this grace was given so I might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, that all men might see the mystery of the fellowship, which was hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ" (see Ephesians 3:8-9).

And then he said, "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11).

God's eternal purpose is to show sinners the character of mercy, the character of grace, and the character of love. It is the scent of mercy—a wildflower that smells good, even though it's wild. It is the character of grace that brings forth a fresh fragrance of compassion and forgiveness when trampled upon. It is the character of love that flows out to each one, to the entire world.

The combination of these three brings us into an understanding of eternity.

God's eternal purpose is to give men who are less than the least an understanding that they can be used by God.

Therefore, in 1 Peter 1:2 and 2 Peter 1:2, God says, "Grace and peace be multiplied through our Lord Jesus Christ." God begins to multiply His grace again and again. And why? He multiplies it to reveal unconditional love. He multiplies it to reveal the heart of His compassion. He multiplies it to show us that where sin does abound, grace does much more abound—it is *ever* increasing!—and His mercy endures forever.

Very few people in the world today truly understand grace beyond the premise of a definition. There will not be a single person who will be in heaven and reign with Christ *except* for the praise of the glory of His grace.

"Glory" is the reflection of God's nature. The praise of the glory of His grace means that we will praise the nature of God's love that brings His nature to us through grace.

That is why Ephesians 2:7 says that "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness" will be toward us throughout all eternity.

In heaven, when Jesus Christ takes the title deed to the world back from Satan and places it into the hands of the Father, multitudes will be up there singing. With one voice, we will sing a new song about the Lamb and the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 5:9). Why?

When we see those nail-scarred hands, we will shout with joy. We will have peace in our hearts and a song to glorify our Savior. It will be a song that has never been sung. With voices that are so heavenly, we will sing a brand-new song in a spontaneous way—a song about the Lamb and the blood of the Lamb.

Have fervent charity one for another, because charity is an attribute of God. Grace is not an attribute of God's nature since He created a perfect world. There was no need for grace until Adam and Eve sinned. Grace is a gift.

God's righteousness made a decision to save us, justice fulfilled it at Calvary, and love reveals the Finished Work by the Holy Spirit in us. But love reveals it through the totality of God's grace, giving us every single thing that we never deserved.

I don't deserve being able to preach the

Gospel, let alone being able to talk to God, and neither does any other man or woman. But of His fullness have we received grace for grace.

We are standing in that grace (Romans 5:2), and we are growing in that grace (2 Peter 3:18). When we fail, we truly rebound and get something we don't deserve—*grace*.

Have fervent charity, one toward one another. Have hospitality without grudging. And as you have received the gift, so minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:8-10).

So, we begin to manifest this grace that others may know Him.

Spend Some Time in the Garden

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits" (Song of Solomon 4:16).

Now come the spices of God through knowledge. Knowledge turns into these magnificent spices. It turns into the scent of God's nature "by us in every place." We begin to realize that our part on earth is to be a revelation of God's grace, the most amazing gift that man could have.

Grace starts to abound. It becomes more abundant. And then it becomes, according to Romans 5:17, superabundant. "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

To "reign" means to have this grace, to be an overwhelming fragrance, activated by the love of God so that our scent goes out to all men, wherever we go. Either the fragrance of life unto those who believe or an odor of death unto those that perish, it doesn't miss a single one.

Lot received grace. Abraham received grace. Jacob and David received grace. Peter and John and Paul also received grace. Who gets the glory?

Jesus Christ receives all the glory (1 Corinthians 1:31). No flesh can stand in His presence. Worship Him and thank Him often.

It brings so much pain when someone preaches a gospel of "grace plus something." Romans 11:6 and Galatians 1:6-12 say it is the grace of Christ alone, absent from works, that brings salvation to a lost soul.

Do you see why we must treat one another in tenderness as stewards and caretakers of

grace? Do you see where grace must be between us, motivated by love? We become children of grace because we are motivated by love.

All Things Are New

For Asa, grace brought a revival to a nation (2 Chronicles 15:8-9). For Hosea and Gomer, with her prostitution, grace brought a brand-new marriage (Hosea 2:19, 20; 3:3).

For the prodigal son (Luke 15:20), grace brought a brand-new family life.

For many of us, grace is a brand-new life. In Song of Solomon 7:12, it is brand-new fruit. For many, it is a new thing, where the former things have passed away. In Isaiah 43:19, God declared, "I will do a new thing"—and He tells us before it comes forth (Romans 6:4; Isaiah 42:9).

Grace brings so much to so many people. But when we experience grace in terms of isagogics (the historical frame of reference), that alone makes it powerful. Trampled upon and crushed, all the sweet odor comes out.

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

"He will turn again, he will have compas-

sion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

"Thou will perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Micah 7:18-20).

Chapter Four

THERE IS A BALM IN GILEAD!

A study of Jeremiah 8:20-22 with isagogics reveals a very different meaning than is commonly understood:

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

"For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me."

Then, in verse 22, comes the question: "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

This is *not* referring to physical illness. Furthermore, the balm Jeremiah was speaking of was not just the kind used for physical ailments. Given freely by physicians, this balm was used to take care of spiritual problems and spiritual sickness—a beautiful balm that was called "the love balm."

The love balm! A physician would put it on someone who had been spiritually or mentally wounded and was going through emotional problems. He would rub it on the patient's forehead and around the neck. The ingredients were so powerful that the subject would begin to get better immediately. The physician would apply it freely, and that balm, once again, was called the love balm.

Can you see now what we can get out of isagogics by rightly dividing the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15)?

The Main Ingredients

The wildflower (representing mercy) gives out a tremendous fragrance without touching it, but it is wild. The flower called grace is crushed, and it gives forth a tremendous scent. Then love is represented by the flower that continually gives forth it's fragrance abroad without effort. So we have the ingredients: mercy, grace, and love.

When Paul said in Galatians 1:16 that God did "reveal his Son in me," He revealed something about the flower that was crushed. That flower manifested the most precious, sweet incense. The flower looked good without being

crushed, yet it had to be crushed to manifest this fantastic incense.

For this reason, 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 says, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

"We are [pressed down] on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair.

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." (That means we may be knocked down but not knocked out.)

But then, the Word of God continues, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest [through] our body.

"For we which live are alway[s] delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

"So then, death works in us, [so] life [can work] in you."

In other words, the treasure can only come through the earthen vessel when the flower is crushed.

Mercy was the flower that was wild. God gives mercy to the wild man just as he is—and every single person in Adam is wild. God gives

the wild man what he does not deserve; that is called grace. Also, the wild man does not get what he does deserve; that is called mercy. What's more, God gives to every sinner sixty-eight things that we do not deserve, the moment we believe by faith and receive Christ as our Savior.* What does it? The Finished Work of Christ on the Cross.

Grace flows from a believer who has allowed himself to be crushed. When God allows the crushing process—and most of us have been through it—He always comes through. We get your calls, your letters, and your e-mail with testimonies of God working miracles. Somebody has cancer, someone else is near death, and the wheels are set in motion. We send prayer requests by e-mail to believers throughout the world. With a phone call, the Body of Christ, through each member in particular, goes to work all over the world, praying for the needs of people.

God Delights in Giving Us Mercy

God delights in not giving people what they deserve. He *delights* in mercy. And that is what Micah 7:18 says.

According to Psalm 103:10, God has not

dealt with us according to our sins, and he has not rewarded us according to our iniquities. Just think of that:

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

"For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that [reverently] fear him.

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our [sins] from us.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are [made of] dust" (Psalm 103:10-14).

In verse 17, His mercy is "from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him."

The Word of God says that His mercy is endless. His mercy outlasts everything in the world. Just as grace is supreme and transcendent, abounding beyond anything that man can do, because He is the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10), the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Here's the Catch

He that judges without mercy shall receive no mercy; for mercy rejoices against judgment

(see James 2:13). Mercy "boasts" against judgment (according to the Greek text) wherever there is meekness, humility, and a response to God's love.

The most incredible thing in the world is to understand that God is plenteous in mercy (Psalm 86:5). "Plenteous in mercy" means that whatever you have been given, there is plenty more.

Forty-two times, the Word of God teaches that mercy endures forever. That means it outlives and outlasts everything that could ever come against us.

What brought us into the arena? Mercy met truth. Righteousness and peace kissed each other. Truth about God's nature sprung up from the earth, and heaven looked down.

The Truth about the Nature of God Revealed

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Psalm 85:10-11).

Just imagine that wildflower. God, in ancient times, had men label it the mercy flower. Mercy met with the truth about holiness. Righteousness

(the righteousness of God) and peace (the peace we have through the Cross, in Colossians 1:20) kissed each other.

The truth about the nature of God was revealed on the earth. God the Father looked down and saw that amazing marriage between grace and faith and what happens to the believer as he receives this eternal life package of forgiveness. Now, for the first time, God's children can have hope—at any stage in their life, in any state of being.

The Word of God says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). Therefore, it is according to His abundant mercy when God's children realize the unchanging, immutable attitude of God toward us.

A woman called me and cried on the phone as she said, "I just found out that my son is a homosexual. He hid it from me for many years."

I said something that she didn't expect to hear: "Give him so much love that he will want Jesus more than homosexuality. Give him so much love that he can't deny it. Mercy rejoices against judgment! Of course you hate the sin,

but you can love him out of it."

Another man called in and said that his wife was having an affair, and he caught her in bed with another man.

I asked, "How many children do you have?"

He said, "Two."

I said, "Do you want your marriage?"

And he said, "Yes."

"Love her out of immorality," I counseled him. "Love her right out of it. Give her so much love that she will hate her sin, because Christ will be manifested through you every time she looks at you."

The crushed plant of grace, mercy that brings forgiveness, and love's compassion without compromise: These are the ingredients that produce a sweet-smelling savor. In the measure that we let God work them in, their heavenly fragrance will be released through our souls to be initiated toward others.

**Read,* What Happened When You Received Christ? *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ is in the victory mode at all times. That means that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound (Romans 5:20). When we deserve judgment, mercy rejoices against it (James 2:13). And when we gaze upon Jesus Christ, we are changed from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We have a God whom neither sin, iniquity, nor anything else can stop, as long as Jesus is allowed to be in the race.

Jesus said, "I didn't come to condemn but to save." He is in the saving business. And if anybody has a breath in this life, they still have the possibility of salvation, and that is why they are alive.

The Father of all mercy, the God of all grace, the One who loved us first, and the God that is love—He is the God of all forgiveness and the God who cannot change toward us, because that is impossible. He is immutable. He is now who

He is, and who He was, and who He will be forever.

Only believe, and believe only.

Father, we desire to take the time to use that mercy, that love, and that grace to pray for one another. We have so many needs, emotionally and physically. We want the transcending power of the Holy Spirit to go into each body, soul, and mind. Do a mighty work of healing for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Ultimate Frame of Reference: The Cross

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

A person's frame of reference is that supporting structure upon which he bases all evaluations. The frame of reference provides a foundation for judgments and a support for decisions. Your frame of reference is your standard, and in a sense it decides for you. When your guard is down, your frame of reference is your automatic pilot. Your frame of reference reveals who you are (Proverbs 23:7).

This booklet reveals what I believe God wants every Christian to have as his frame of reference. It is that towards which Jesus set His face like a flint (Isaiah 50:7; Luke 9:51). It is that from which He would not be sidetracked (Matthew 16:23). It is that in which Paul gloried (Galatians 6:14). It is the Cross of Jesus Christ.

More than the wooden stake on Golgotha, we are concerned with what was accomplished there. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21*a*).

Many of us have become too familiar with that verse. For a moment, consider the spotless Lamb. He who knew no sin became sin. He abandoned the state of sinless perfection for that of an adulterer, a homosexual, a thief, a liar, and a gossip. Jesus Christ became our sin—a filthy, vile stench in His Father's nostrils. This identification was to such a degree that the Father could not look upon His Son.

By His expiatory death on Calvary, in our place, Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins (Mark 15:34; Isaiah 53:10). There on the Cross, He finished the work that the Father had given Him to do on our behalf (John 19:30). There, on the Cross, God reached down to man and said, "This is how much I love you" (1 John 3:16; 4:10).

No doubt, you have problems in your life. You may have a bad marriage, a terrible job, or slim finances, and you valiantly refer to these things as your "cross" in life. Well, Jesus Christ has only one Cross, and he wants that Cross to be your frame of reference. He wants you to have *that* Cross as your mental and emotional support structure.

The premise for all that we believe as Finished Work Christians is this: That Cross is *His* Cross, and His Cross is *our* Cross. Therefore,

when we "take up our Cross" it should always be in identification with His Cross.

We must remember that the work of the Cross has been completed. In John 19:30, Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" *Tetelestai*, the Greek word for that phrase, is the ultimate victory cry of every Christian. Coming forth from the trumpet blast of the "horn of salvation" (Jesus Christ, in Luke 1:69 and Psalm 18:2), that declaration makes every accusing demon tremble and flee.

Occupation Produces Application

When a believer occupies himself with that Cross, all of God's *agapao* and *charis* become applicable and are known.

Agapao is the Greek word for God's divine, unconditional love. How true 1 John 3:1 is when translated: "Behold what foreign kind of love is this." His Cross, as seen through the classical Greek, proves that His love takes pleasure in us, prizes us above other things, and is unwilling to abandon us or do without us (Wuest, Ephesians 5:25).

Charis is the word used in the Greek to describe God's grace, which is God's divine vehicle of transportation, making His *agapao* available to us despite our inability to earn or deserve

it. His grace is favor conferred freely, having no expectation of return, motivated by the free-heartedness of the Giver, and it is always leaping forward (Wuest):

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).

The typical Greek pagan mind could never imagine or conceive of offering such a love to an enemy, proving that with Christ comes a brand-new understanding of the infinite superabundance of His care for us. This grace produces adult sons, mature believers, who pass through "no-man's land" experiences, which are the devastations and trials of life. These believers crack the maturity barrier and come into the hidden prosperity of the "treasures of darkness" (Isaiah 45:3).

Oh, this kind of Christianity is rare! We are living in an age when the Gospel is popular but the Cross is not. We see multimillion-dollar campaigns popularizing the Gospel message. Unfortunately, these often produce *professing* Christians but not *possessing* Christians. As A.W. Tozer said it many years ago:

"Evangelism, as we know it today, does produce some real Christians, but the spiritual cli-

mate into which many modern Christians are born does not make for vigorous spiritual growth. Indeed, the whole evangelical world is, to a large extent, unfavorable to healthy Christianity. And I am not thinking of modernism, either. I mean, rather, the Bible-believing crowd that bears the name of orthodoxy. We are making converts to an effete type of Christianity that bears little resemblance to that of the New Testament. The average so-called Bible Christian in our times is but a wretched parody of true sainthood. Yet we put millions of dollars behind movements and buildings to perpetuate this degenerate form of religion and attack the man who dares to challenge the wisdom of it."

According to Matthew 11:30, we bear a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light as we take up our Cross, daily, with a mental attitude of faith and in identification with our Lord's sufferings (Philippians 1:29).

It is through our own death that we grow into *His* Cross as our ultimate frame of reference. Pray that He will increase, and that we might decrease (John 3:30).

Chapter One

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS— MY LOVE AND GRACE —AND FOLLOW ME

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:24, 25).

Every believer must determine with his own free volition to take up his Cross daily. He must count the cost, deny himself, and follow Jesus Christ in a continuous, deliberate act of laying down his life.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be

ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2).

Once the life of the Cross has been experienced, it becomes very precious to each believer. It clearly reveals that we desire to have the Cross of Jesus Christ in our lives above all else. As we take up our Cross—which is Christ's Cross—with a full knowledge of what it entails, that becomes the means of our identification with God. Thus, the Cross is able to be manifested in God's plan for our personal lives.

Only a few people arise each morning in an attitude of enthusiasm and intelligence, having God's divine attributes actually functioning in their soul. In fact, few are the believers who take up their Cross with full understanding of this life-changing truth. Most people accept the plan of God for their lives and enter into it hoping for the best, without having taken up the Cross of Christ. When a difficult situation arises, they consider that particular trial to be their "cross." Much of Christianity has been infiltrated with this type of thinking. So many professing believers have no concept of the practical application of the Cross and what it means to have the Cross

as their ultimate frame of reference.

The Cross: Our Provision for Life

The Cross is God's provision for my life as a whole. I deny myself every day of my life, because I know what the Cross is. I *choose* to take it up. I know very well what I am doing. Psychologically and emotionally, I take up the Cross deliberately every day. Either I deny self entirely, or I have not taken up my Cross.

If in a day we could see what God sees in our behavior, we would realize that the reason we have provocations and confusion is that we have failed to take up our Cross. Often, we think that trials are the Cross—as if they were sent by God to cause us to grow. This is not what the Bible says about the Cross. The Cross is not represented by difficulty. The Cross is something I take up voluntarily, in the same manner that Jesus took up His Cross in obedience to the Heavenly Father.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was

made in the likeness of men:

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;"

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:5-11).

When a person takes up his Cross through a specific act of his will (a definite attitude of mind) and with the consent of his emotions, without reservation, he gains an amazing capacity to reveal God's life. Throughout the entire day and night, he learns that he is not to do one single thing to keep his life. As an act of his will, he does absolutely nothing to preserve himself. He has taken up the Cross as his own, and he goes forward, fully aware that regardless of blessing or adversity, he has already chosen God and His Cross as his provision for life.

This decision does away with questions toward God. It does away with reactions in the

sinful adamic nature. It clearly reveals the believer's commitment and dedication. He has discovered something unique: that he can go forward with God in the power of the Cross.

The Importance of Daily Exercise

Not many people do this. Some get up, have their devotions, and go on with their day, but few fully understand what it means to take up a personal Cross and have it done with for that particular day. Imagine entering into your first situation of the day being dead—psychologically and emotionally—to everything and everybody. "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:3). Your emotions are free from any kind of reaction. You are no longer filled with self-interest or self-preservation.

There is no "duty" in the Cross. There is no going away muttering under your breath at bothersome points during your day. There is no pressure and no stress, just complete availability to God.

Until a person understands this principle, he cannot even look upon Canaan—the land of promise of Finished Work rest. That is how we become vessels of honor (1 Thessalonians 4:4), moldable clay in the Potter's hands (Jeremiah

18:2-6). Life becomes a pleasure when we allow God to be Master, Christ to be Lord, the Holy Spirit to be our guide, the Word to reveal truth, and the abundant life to be our experience.

So often, believers go through trials, and they cannot figure out why. The fact is, we are apt to become upset in situations because we did not deny self and take up the Cross that day. The average believer is not a "practical" believer. He believes at times. He believes if it is convenient. He believes if it is comfortable. He believes when he is at the end of his rope or when he is backed up against a wall at the ultimate end. But he is not an experiential, daily believer; he does not understand that by his free volition, he must daily take up the Cross.

The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:31, "I die daily." Reckoning that he was crucified with the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul had entered into this very definite daily act of the co-crucifixion of his will. With his free volition, he experientially reactivated this truth each day by making a deliberate decision to believe that his old sin nature was included in Christ's death on Calvary:

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like Christ was raised up

from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). It was not an act of fear. By grace through faith, Paul died the way he lived—free from fear, dead to self, and alive in Christ.

Faith Plus Love through Dying Daily

In Luke 9:23, Jesus said, "…If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Notice that carefully. Why did He say we are to take up our Cross *daily*? Jesus was teaching a lesson of living in faith, having God's character of love. You see, it is possible to have faith to remove mountains and not have charity (1 Corinthians 13:2)—to have the faith through the Word but without the character of love. But, if we have the Word of God, categorically, *and* God's Holy Spirit producing God's love in our hearts, and if they are both functioning together in life, then we have faith with the character of love.

Faith with the character of love goes beyond "name it and claim it" faith. It is a faith that serves by love (Galatians 5:6). This quality of faith can remove mountains, but with God's nature of love in the process of removing them.

In Luke 9:24, after He said He was going to

the Cross and that He would be resurrected, Jesus taught the disciples a lesson, but they could not understand the meaning of it. He was saying, "For the details in your soul, in your life, I want you to learn how to lose that you may gain, how to forfeit that you may win, how to enlist that you may have." In other words, don't try to surrender—just enlist. God took care of your surrender when you entered into His co-crucifixion. Therefore, enlist your members to enjoy His resurrection.

The word for "lose" simply means to lose something that you could have had through your volition. "Daily" means every single day. It is referring to our own Cross. For the believer to take up his own Cross means that God will order the believer's steps so that he will have his own Cross in identification with Calvary. Then, the Greek brings out something beautiful: "Take up your own Cross, and keep on following Me while you do it."

Do you know why He said it that way? Often, when people begin to experience a "cross" (as they see it), they stop following the Lord Jesus Christ through *His* Cross. They become occupied with their "cross" which is separate from His Cross. Many end up denying

themselves while they live in legalism or natural good works. Because they are not functioning in a faith that works by love, they get frustrated and enter into mental works and they become confused, bored, and reactionary.

So this is what He is saying: "I want you to deny yourself and take up the Cross that I give you. I ordered your steps for the plan of your life. As you take up your Cross, keep following Me through My indwelling life and My indwelling Word—and don't stop following Me!"

Building Spiritual Muscles

Many people can develop spiritual muscles so that their mind and emotions obey their will. In the morning, you tell your body to get up, and it gets up to go to work. You say to yourself, "I'm not going to eat that junk food today," and when your will has such muscles, you don't eat junk food. You say, "I'm going to get proper rest," and in the Lord, through the Word, your will has developed muscles to make right decisions so you can get the rest you should have. You say, "I could worry. I could get tempted. But I'm not going to do it!" and through Jesus Christ and the Word that is indwelling you, you trust God instead of worrying.

Your will develops tremendous muscles with the Word of God and the filling of the precious Holy Spirit, through faith-rest in the character of God's love. Therefore, your will begins to rule with walls of doctrine. You face Satan, demonization, and all the traps, projections, and stimulation that come from the flesh, so that you see a strange victory. It is "strange" because you didn't have it a while ago. You suddenly find that you are relaxed. You have peace. You are motivated by love. You sense kindness towards others, and if you fail, you are very quick to be honest. It is no big problem, because you isolate it and go on.

The most beautiful thing about this is that by exercising your spiritual muscles, you are greater than a king over a country. You are greater than a ruler over a city (Proverbs 16:32). You can rule over Satan, over demons, over circumstances, over the flesh, over the mysteries, over the invisible, because you have an invisible Christ inside of you. You have doctrine that is tangible—that has substance through faith. You have developed godly character because the Holy Spirit produces the very love of God in which you can rest. You don't have to rest in works or in something else. You rest in His char-

acter, His love, His nature, His promises, His Word.

Instead of saying to God, "Remember this or that," say, "I know I am who I am, but You remember Your Word of grace. You remember Your Word of love to me." (And of course, He does—but it makes you feel good that you are remembering what He is remembering.)

Indeed, the believer who reigns within himself through Christ, who rules over his passions, desires, and fears with faith-rest, is greater than every virtuous and wise man of the world.

Chapter Two

BEAUTIFUL FOR SITUATIONS

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" (Psalm 48:1, 2).

The "situation" of Mount Zion speaks of its placement—its specific setting in God's design—so that people would look to it for generations and remember all that God performed there.

Situations are necessary to reveal that Jesus Christ is beautiful, and to reveal our personal experience with Him in truth. God places us in situations that we might not choose on our own so that He will be glorified. We need to experience a variety of circumstances in order to grow in grace. God needs us in the situation so He can take over and produce life in it; the situation needs us to see grace as we grow; and the world

needs us in the situation so people can see God in action.

Therefore, He is beautiful for all situations. He ordained each and every situation of our lives before we were born. There are no accidents in the plan of God. When we are assured that all is ordained, we can take up our Cross with our free volition and bring pleasure to Him through obedience. He then works out of our lives that which is undesirable.

The Lord Jesus Christ is beautiful for situations, because He wants us to learn obedience, even through suffering. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). We should learn from suffering, rather than kicking against the goads. Instead of resisting the Holy Spirit, which will cause us to be incapacitated and incapable of receiving God's love and grace for the situation, He wants us to learn obedience by denying ourselves with our free volition, and by going forward in joy, peace, power, love, and purpose, taking up our Cross to learn something from Him.

His Grace Is Sufficient

The Lord Jesus Christ wants to show us that

His grace is sufficient for every single situation. He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). There is no situation we can encounter that is void of His faith. He goes through everything with us, to the very end. He is beautiful for situations, because He takes all the things in our lives that are not of God and makes something beautiful out of them.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

"For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4:15).

This makes Him very beautiful. He is beautiful because He has provided a Cross that allows us to deny ourselves, so that the situation itself is not burdensome or taxing.

If we had to deny ourselves without His Cross, the situation would be a burdensome, religious form of doing something for God. It is like being forced to be like God without knowing Him. God has not said, "I want you to perform and be good in situations." On the contrary, He says, "Here is a situation, and here is

My Cross. Deny yourself, through an act of your will, and enter into My death through faith. That way, your 'self' is done away with, and the only power left to work through you is Me."

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

All we need is faith that responds, love that experiences, and grace that is now. I no longer have to strive or struggle. Calvary has made a perfect provision. What can be tough about co-death?

Tragedy becomes Joy in Obedience

James 1:2-4 says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

If we go through a situation in fleshly works and religious form, it is not joyous, but grievous. But the person who has the love of God does not sense a grievous burden in doing God's will. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

This principle would revolutionize lives and relationships if comprehended in areas of faith, realized in resurrection, and practiced in personal application through obedience by taking up the Cross. What the world sees as a tragedy can actually bring joy into every dimension of our obedience. We can truly say that Jesus Christ is beautiful for situations.

To every circumstance there is a divine connotation and an incomprehensible value that is so absolutely true, so complete in its divine validity. It is that any human being can become that vessel in whom Jesus Christ will reveal the treasure of Redemption in time, the eternal value of God's plan, and the very present truth of God's situation.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17, 18).

It is possible that some morning we will get up and, perhaps, find that parts of this country have been annihilated through cataclysmic

events. Some morning you may get up to find that someone very close to you has passed away. We have to face life knowing that just as God had the power to raise Jesus in His humanity, it is that same power that makes situations beautiful for me. My life cannot be shaken if I am living in the "faith-world" of Jesus Christ. The bottom will never fall out if the bottom is grace. And my fellowship with Jesus Christ will never end if my eyes are focused upon Him through the lens of the Cross.

God Is Speaking to Us

The Lord comes to us and says, "Listen, I want to teach you some simple things. That is why your life is going to be filled with a variety of circumstances. I am not going to tell you what they will be, but I will do sudden and strange things right in the midst of the circumstances. I have the right to control every single thing in your life. I will not promise you a single thing in relationship to horizontal domestics. I will promise you many things through Redemption, but not necessarily through the routine things of your life. I do not promise to give you the things that you desire on the earth, and I do not promise to help you realize your selfish dreams on the

earth.

"This is what you have, as a believer, for situations. You are not to know what your future holds. But, I will promise you this, that if you honor the Word of God, if you continue to be filled with the Spirit of God, and if you will take up your Cross, daily, through an act of your free volition, you will go forward in a faith that works by love (Galatians 5:6). Your life will go from faith to faith (Romans 1:17), from strength to strength (Psalm 84:7), and from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18)! Look to Me at all times and count it all joy. Then, I will do My work in you in every situation.

"There will never be a time in your life when My plan will not be in operation. No one will be able to interfere with My plan for your life, because all power has been given unto Me in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:20), and I am ordaining your steps (Psalm 37:23). Everything I do is for your sake (2 Corinthians 4:15), and all things come from Me (2 Corinthians 5:18). Are you ready? There will be many sudden surprises, but they will all reveal God in your humanity.

"Now, if for you to live is not Christ, you will go away crying many times—not tears of

truth, but tears of selfishness. Without the mind of Christ, you will go away with emotional disturbances because you did not get what you wanted for your life. I will cause many things to happen in order to totally destroy your worldliness and selfish desires. In fact, I will do just the opposite in your life, because I want you to be like Me. I gave My life for you. When you think you need someone's attention, I may cause that person to be unavailable. I want you to lean on Me as your resource and to walk totally by faith in the strength of God's patience and the impartation of God's grace."

God is speaking to us so precisely. Are you listening?

Chapter Three

GOING THROUGH SOMETHING OR GOING WITH SOMEONE?

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Only the spiritually illiterate would consider the Cross to be a burden. They would point to their trials and limitations as their "cross," but this is not so. The Cross is something we take up and go through as we deny ourselves. Then, there is nothing left in our lives that can trouble us, because we are dead! The language of self-awareness is, "That is my 'cross'. I must go through this." That is such a contradiction. What do you have to go through? What is there to go through? Is the Bible true?

If my selfish nature, needs, emotions, and attitudes are crucified, what do I have to go

through? I must understand that I am not "going *through* something. I am going *with* Someone. We have the attitude that we are going through something when we do not understand that we are going with Someone. My life is hid with Christ in God, and I am dead. "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). "Christ is my life" (Colossians 3:4).

Check the Source of Your Thought Life

I often hear this type of statement: "For the last two months, I have not been like the others around here. I am going through something!" Well, though we all have our isolated moments, that kind of statement is as out of date as the devil. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). So, if that is what you are thinking, it is not biblical, and it is not true.

There is never a time when a believer has to "go through something." Sure, he may go through the valley of the shadow of death, but that is only a place of shadows. Shadows cannot kill anybody. Besides, there could never be shadows unless there is a light. This tells me that there is a Light in every valley.

The shadows of reflections, projections, and

situations do damage to floundering, easily intimidated, carnal Christians. Their experience becomes an endless cycle of bondage. The person who always says, "I am going through something," will start out the next month with the same old frame of reference. That life is certainly a bore. That person would do well to realize that it is only one's attitude that makes life hopeless. We live in a body of death, and our only hope is to have the life of Christ.

The Cross Brings Us Through Tribulation

We are in a world where God has promised that there will be tribulation. There may be cataclysmic catastrophes, even limited nuclear warfare. A child may die, a beloved family member may die, you may get cancer. You may wake up some morning to a financial crash, with food prices soaring and housing shortages multiplied. Jesus said that there would be tribulation in this world. However, the believer does not look at life as though he is going through something. He is living inside of Someone, and that Someone is God. Thus, the Spirit-filled believer lives by faith in God, denies himself by taking up his Cross daily. This Christian follows Jesus Christ daily, as he lives and thinks with God

daily.

The godly man or woman dwells continuously on things that are true, honest, pure, kind, just, and lovely. He is contented in whatsoever state he finds himself. "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11). Each day, he lives totally for God and has no desire for self-preservation. He has no desire to be occupied with anything other than what God is revealing to him through providential situations in the details of his own life.

The Finished Work believer accepts God's plan as the very best for him, and he believes that it is the perfect will of God. He knows God is loving enough to care for the very details of his life (Psalm 113:6), therefore he counts it all joy. If the very thing that he worked so hard to accomplish goes awry, glory to God! Marvelous! He knows that it happened for his sake, so he will be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus (Romans 8:29).

The Cross Makes the Difference

The Cross reveals God's superabundant care for us, and that superabundant care supercedes any trial we may go through. The Cross makes

the difference. We must remember that all things work together for good, as stated in Romans 8:28, so that through all things, we might be conformed to the image of the Son through the transformation of a renewed mind (Romans 12:2). This can only be accomplished as we take up our Cross daily.

Many go through situations and purposely cultivate their own oppression. They actually find something to "go through" so they will have an excuse to be sad. They choose to live in the weakness of their personality because they are weary of the battle of the flesh, and they are deceived into thinking that it is easier just to give up. The average person lives in the ungodliness of his moods, knowing nothing of the Cross, because of his independence and stubbornness.

There is a wonderful alternative. Through meekness and humility, in Jesus Christ, God will reveal Himself to us in every situation.

He reveals *grace*:

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

He reveals *love*:

"That you may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:18, 19).

He bestows *faith*:

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

He reveals that He wants us to go further into His love than we ever expected to go (Ephesians 3:17). In any situation, we will be able to experience new dimensions through faith and receive a new understanding of God through His own personalized touch. Everything about "situations" now spells out the glory of God with great benefit for man. "He loadeth us daily with benefits" (Psalm 68:19).

When I choose to deny myself and I take up my Cross, I do it to glorify God. I count it all joy, and I do not allow myself to become mean and hateful. I choose to glorify God and enjoy every moment of this privilege. Thinking with God, I become insulated more and more with every word of doctrine that relates to the Cross.

In every detail of my life, I am responsible to choose the Cross with my free volition. Psychologically and emotionally, I present my entire body to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1, 2), so that my mind will be transformed and renewed by His immeasurable grace in the revelation of His inexhaustible Word. Then, I will be completely conformed to the amazing plan of God, through the steps that He has ordained for me.

God's purpose is to make us just like His Son. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Our only purpose is to become like Him. No matter the route He has chosen for us, it is His business to make that happen. He is God. I am only His servant. I do not choose *how* He is going to conform me to His Son, for that would be to exalt my own will against the plan of God. So, the believer must say, "Here I am, Lord, Send me" (Isaiah 6:8). Then, the spiritual adventure begins to happen.

We never know what is coming next. We may not know why things happen, but we

know that we can count it all joy. God's justice will never let the sorrow and torture of wounds inflicted by the malicious enemy prevail. In the meantime, however, we must realize that we are dead, indeed, and we are made alive through Christ.

I do not intend to allow myself to have a bad day, and I do not expect to be depressed for one moment. I do not expect to get angry as a means of saving my self-life. I may get angry at the enemy and his demons because of what they do and people's responses to them, but I do not expect to "go through" a single thing this week. Do you know why? It is because I am seated in heavenly places, above it all (Ephesians 2:6). He makes me lie down in green pastures. I am relaxed. I shall not want.

The Ultimate in Christian Living

So many people live in the frustration of unfulfilled worldly passions and never experience the reality and joy of God's provisions. Yet, the believer who has set his affections on things above (Colossians 2:2) has crucified the carnal passions and desires of the godless human nature (Galatians 5:24). He has not only accepted, theologically, what God has *said*, but he is expe-

riencing what God has *done*. Oh, what a zenith of Christian living! Therefore, he lives in the presence and purpose of God.

That believer can say, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1). Already seated in heavenly places and made to lie down in green pastures before the situation happened, the situation ends in his receiving mercy. God continually leads him beside the still waters. The very thing that seems like a storm by sight is inwardly a still-water situation to him, because he knows who is leading him. "He restores my soul: he leads me in the paths of righteousness" (Psalm 23:3). This believer knows that what is happening in his life is the treading, again, of the path of God's righteousness. This is not such a bad way to go. In fact, it is the biblical way to live. No wonder the Holy Spirit gave psalms, songs, and poetry. They help us to understand the beauty of every situation as we pause and appreciate the impact it can have in our lives.

We were created for God's glory (Isaiah 3:7). We were created for His pleasure (Revelation 4:11). We were created to glorify Him (1 Corinthians 10:31). It is for these reasons that we were created. We must say "thank you" for this revelation.

As a believer with a God who is intensely personal, it does not matter what the situation is. Jesus Christ is beautiful. I have no questions, only faith. I have no frustrations, only love. I desire no changes, only to be changed by Christ. I am not seeking anything for myself. I am only looking for opportunities to reveal Him (Jeremiah 45:5, Luke 19:10, 13). That comes by focusing on the ultimate frame of reference: the Cross of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all the saints, is this gace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"

"…according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:8*b*-11, 16-21).

The Cross is the place of liberation for the believer. The Cross is the ultimate pivot point of all mankind, standing alone between the mysterious darkness of God in the past and the light of His ever-present invitation: that we would behold Him, having free and unhindered access, no matter who we are, what we have done, or where we are going. This is for the ultimate grace Christian (James 4:6).

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1, 2).

The Urgency of the

Great Commission

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Before He ascended into heaven, the Lord Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them…teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20*a*).

The job you perform every day is your occupation—whether it is housekeeping, road construction, or corporate management. But every born-again Christian has also been called to a vocation, which is to win the souls of men to Jesus Christ. We go, we win souls, we invest in their lives and make disciples of men and women, boys and girls. This is our eternal purpose on earth.

All souls belong to God. The soul that refuses to accept Christ shall die, but the soul that is justified by God will surely live (Ezekiel 18:4-9). "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). It is

vital that we understand this principle. Before salvation, we have everlasting life—created life that has a beginning but no ending. Since sin entered the world, we were destined to remain in hell for eternity after our bodies die.

When we accept Christ as our personal Savior, however, we receive God's eternal life—new life that has no beginning and no ending. Instantly, we are seated above in our spiritual position (Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 1:13), having all the rights to our heavenly inheritance on earth, until we go home to be with our Father in heaven forever.

This booklet will reveal the value of a soul, the value of being a soul winner, the importance of redeeming the time, and what this means for all of eternity.

Chapter One

BUILDINGS THAT STAND THE TEST

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

"Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:35-38).

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

"Every man's work shall be made manifest:

for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

No other foundation has been laid but Jesus Christ. How Christians build upon that foundation will be examined at the Bema Seat of Christ in heaven, where God will evaluate the life of every saved believer.

Gold speaks of a believer in whom Christ is able to reproduce His nature. This believer reveals a divine predisposition, having Christ's temperament through the incorruptible seed.

Building with silver speaks of redeeming the time (Ephesians 5:16) through the Word of God. We are to have a prayer life and a schedule where we determine on purpose to bring God's redemption to people and situations through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

"…God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). All things

have to be reconciled unto Christ who reconciled us unto Himself and has given us a ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, we purpose in our hearts to redeem the time with our thoughts and our words, everywhere we go (Daniel 1:8).

Maybe we will not have an opportunity to openly share the gospel of Christ, but we can reveal the gold of His divine nature as we redeem the time.

The Value of a Precious Stone

To build with precious stones is to disciple a new believer, teaching him to live according to his true value and true honor as a Christian. It is to operate under the principle of Matthew 28:18-20, going into all the world and teaching men and women to live unto God.

A precious stone is a person who is developing his true value as a Christian by living as one who is a new creation in Christ. Our rewards—which include gold and silver as well as precious stones—are eternal decorations that shall last for ever and ever. All the wealth in the world does not compare to the treasures being stored up for us in heaven.

Natalie grew up as the daughter of a very wealthy man. She had it all. "Anything I saw, I

could have, and I was always given anything I wanted," she said. "I was just so empty. When I left all of that, I realized how lost I was." Her testimony today is that she was lost and now she is found.

"The important thing is that someone sought me out. My aunt and my mom saw that even though I had everything, something was missing. They cared for my soul. They knew that those things weren't going to work for me for the rest of my life."

"God sought me out through everything I went through," she said. "I don't think I appreciated what I had until I left it all. But when I had nothing, I realized how lost I was—and that I was just as lost as when I had everything."

Natalie's life has completely changed. She can still have anything she wants, but her values are different now. A changed life is the most beautiful treasure in the world.

Materials That Burn Away

On the other hand, there is the wood, the hay, and the stubble.

"Wood" refers to something that produces energy. It isn't an eternal production such as gold, but it does have value as it relates to our

humanity.

Wood, however, in terms of a Christian's life, is something that doesn't last. Even though a person may believe in the Cross, wood represents the energy of human good, the energy of the flesh without the Cross.

"Hay" speaks of the fruit of a Christian who lives in circumstantial moods—how he feels. He experiences life through his feelings. But like hay, the feelings burn up very quickly. There is fire, some energy is produced, and then it is all gone.

"Stubble" speaks of one who is a hearer of the Word of God but not a doer (James 1:22-23). He hears the Word, but he does not practice it. This person is saved, but the Word he receives is aborted before it ever produces fruit. Therefore, the production of his life in terms of eternity is worthless, like stubble.

The Bible commands us to be soul winners. Five times before He left this earth, Jesus commanded that we seek the lost. If these verses are received by one whose reward is stubble, he won't change when he hears them. That person will offer excuses and rationalize away the Great Commission.

Chapter Two

A HARVEST SO READY

Consider the life of Christ and what He did while He was here.

In Luke 8:1, He entered into cities and villages with the twelve. In Luke 9:6, He entered into towns. The disciples entered into villages (Acts 8:25). Philip ministered in cities (Acts 8:40).

Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). That says "*every* creature." Why would God say "be witnesses to every creature?" That is because every creature without Christ is lost, and Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).

Jesus always saw people. In John 3, it was Nicodemus. In John 4, it was the woman at the well. In John 5, it was the man who hadn't walked in thirty-five years. In John 9, it was the man who was blind. In Luke 8:2, it was a woman who had seven demons. Every one of those peo-

ple was lost.

Jesus always sought out individuals, and He always proclaimed to them the Kingdom of God.

The Faint and the Scattered

Matthew 9:35-38 tells us that Jesus went into every city, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Kingdom of God, and healing every sickness and disease. It says that He saw the multitude and was moved with compassion because they fainted and were scattered as sheep without a shepherd.

"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

The laborers are still few, and people are fainting.

Jay came to Christ many years ago, but according to his testimony, he came on his own terms—"playing the odds" to guarantee a way into heaven. Soon after, he fell back into more than twenty years of drug and alcohol abuse. All of that changed when he responded to an invitation from his sister to see an Easter play at our church.

"God touched my heart to the point where, while sitting in that seat, I made a decision to listen to the Word of God. The miracles God has performed in my life are too numerous to mention. He has totally changed me. Now, instead of looking for what I can do for myself, I look for what I can do for God. And in turn, He does everything for me.

"I realize that my life on earth is to communicate the Word of God with others. That's why in the Bible, He told us to go. That's what I try to do every day of my life now. I have tremendous joy and tremendous peace knowing that I am doing God's will. My life is full, happy, and joyous because of it."

Bill was a professional musician who spent years in a lifestyle that left him bankrupt, emotionally and spiritually, until he was left crying out to God for direction.

Someone invited him to church, and by hearing the Word of God and becoming hid in the Body of Christ, his whole life changed. "I enrolled in Bible college, and now I find myself thinking with God more and more," he said. "It's amazing how God works through people to bring us around. He cares for our souls. He sends people to minister to us. Without certain

people coming to me and spending time with me, personally investing in my life, I wouldn't be where I am today. It is just so exciting for me to be involved in the work of God."

People come to Christ in so many different ways. Scores of them had everything, and scores of them had nothing. But each and every one had one need—to be saved.

Elizabeth, by her own testimony, was "on the fast track, in the jet set"—a young executive who achieved much success by the age of twenty-three. By the world's standards and her own, she had it all together. "Then one of my employees had the nerve to confront me and to say that Jesus loved me and that there was value in my soul."

"I was completely angry, and really offended. I thought, 'What audacity!' Thank God, she continued to talk to me. When she said that my soul had value, it touched something deep inside of me. I had believed a lie, and it was causing me to live such a fast life that I probably wouldn't be alive today had I continued down that road. I was amazed at what she was saying. No one had ever told me that before."

"Now I find that it is just so important to share with people the value that they have.

There is such value in each one of us. God loves us so much. He has a reason and a purpose for us to be on this earth. Unless we tell people, there is no way anyone will know."

Chapter Three

GAINING DEGREES OF GLORY

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:40-42).

These passages reveal that just as there is a difference in the degrees of brightness among the sun, the moon, and the stars, there is a difference in how we will shine forever and ever. Varying degrees of glory will be given to us in

heaven based upon our witnessing to the lost and discipling new believers. Some Christians will have an amazing raiment of light over their glorified bodies (see Revelation 3:4), while others will have glorified bodies with no added brilliance.

Families That Are Focused

Every Christian who believes that the Bible is true, who believes that heaven and hell are real, should be a soul winner. Every father and mother should teach soul winning in their home. Following the command of God can do wonders for a family.

Jediah is a teenager in our church. Recently he gave a testimony stating just how thankful he is that his parents answered the call of God and what that has meant to his life. He grew up learning about and loving God, and he remembers asking Christ into his heart when he was four years old.

"But the devil does so much to try to rob us young people," he explained. "The demons put so much junk out there through the television and the radio. They are trying to tell us who we are. But that is not who I am, praise God. Jesus lets me know who I am through the Body of

Christ and the Word of God."

In tears, he thanked God for parents who raised him properly. "I have just had an amazing life knowing God and being raised in a Christian home. I can't thank God enough for that."

Every member of any church should go soul-winning and disciple those who come to Christ. This isn't the policy of a man; this is what the Bible says in Matthew 28:18-20, in Mark 16:15-16, in Luke 24:44-48, in John 20:21, and in Acts 1:8. Jesus commanded it just before He ascended, and the Holy Spirit made certain it was recorded five times in the New Testament. Winning the lost is not to be approached as a matter of convenience. It needs to be a priority.

When I was a young pastor, God gave me a vision for a live radio broadcast. That vision expanded to television, books, tracts, Christian day schools for K through 12, and Bible colleges at home and abroad to train up missionaries who would then go into all the world. Through the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit, God showed me that we were to go into prisons and nursing homes, to set up neighborhood Bible clubs, to have street meetings. He said, "Go into all of America." Then He said, "Go into all the world." And we have.

Today He is saying, "Keep doing it, keep doing it." That is our entire purpose for living. This is our vocation. It is our life.

Wisdom for the Winners

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30).

How much do we really believe that one soul is worth more than every single thing in the world? If it is true, then why is it so difficult to give up one hour a week to win souls? A faithful few willingly go door-to-door or participate in the many outreaches developed to fulfill His Great Commission.

"And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his feet in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron [speaking of discipleship] and brass [no condemnation]; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:24-25).

This passage describes a soul winner. I may not actually win every person that I talk to, but I do make him accountable. If I go out and not one person accepts Christ, I have still made each one I have talked to accountable before the Lord. And I do let these people know that they are now accountable before God.

"Oh, I am a mother. I can't go," you say. I know mothers with young children and babies who go. They arrange times with other mothers and work out a way for all of them to go at certain times. It can be done. We know how vital it is to receive the Word of God from a pastor on a regular basis. And it is equally important that we find time to pour out what we have received to others. It quickens us. It keeps our hearts on fire. It is keeping in touch with the heart of God. Don't settle on your lees (Jeremiah 48:11).

What Will You Say?

Are you a soul-winner? Do you go on purpose? Or, are you too busy? Are you so busy that souls go to hell because you don't have time? What are you going to tell Jesus at the Bema Seat when He is judging you on the basis of silver, gold, and precious stones?

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

Jesus gave His life. He died and went into hell to set the captives free. The Pharisees and priests and leaders of His day said He was guilty of death (Matthew 26:66). They wanted

Him crucified. In fact, Jesus was guilty of everything possible: He took upon Himself every sin that every man would ever commit—past, present, and future.

Jesus did not come to have a comfortable existence. He came to seek and to save the lost. We are called to be witnesses and ministers of the truth. Wherever we go, there is no such thing as an off-duty Christian. We have to give an account to God for what He has commanded us to do.

Go soul winning on purpose. Go with other believers on purpose. Be a testimony on your job. Of course, we must operate with wisdom, having God's love for the lost as our motive. Therefore, if we offend someone—not because of our attitude but because of the truth—that is better than not obeying God.

Chapter Four

THE REALITIES OF ETERNITY

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

"And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

"And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

"And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that me may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou

in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

"And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

"For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

"Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

"And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

"And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:19-31).

The rich man was dead There was no second chance for this man. It was over for him. Now, it is no sin to be rich. Abraham himself was extremely wealthy in this life. The sin that sent

him to hell was that he rejected Christ as his Savior.

Jesus Christ gave this account. He was not lying, and it was not a parable. It was a true story about real people. The people we work with are one heartbeat away from hell. Hell is a real place where there is nothing but endless torment. If you burn wood in a fire, it will eventually be consumed. But the flames of hell cannot consume a soul-body. Revelation 19:20 tells us that the beast and the false prophet will be cast into hell. One thousand years later, Satan will be there, to be "tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10)—and the beast and the false prophet will still be there, alive.

Several times Jesus groaned and wept because of our unbelief (see John 11:33-38). But in Luke 19:41 and Hebrews 5:7, He wept because He knew what people will face if they reject Him as Savior. What more could Jesus do? God is just. Christ satisfied the penalty of sin. But those that will not receive the free gift of His righteousness are destined for torment in hell.

God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes on Christ is not condemned; but he who believes not is

condemned already. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (see John 3:17-20).

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Love That Constrains

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

"Wherefore henceforth know we know man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:14-17).

Be a soul winner. Win people to Christ. Find a time when you can purpose to do it. This is not an easy message, but it is chapter and verse, line upon line, from the Bible—the infallible Word of God.

Some people have said, "I'm a soul winner in my own way." But make sure it is God's way. Your own way without God is not God's way. If you can speak—with your voice, through sign language, or on paper—you can share Christ with those who are eternally doomed and destined for the dungeon of darkness forever. You can bring them the free gift of salvation. You can bring them the message of deliverance. *You* can bring the glorious gospel to the lost.

Many people are soul winners, and many are learning how. Thank God for each one. Yet, some people think they are just too busy. Most assuredly, they will not be too busy when it is time to meet God at the Bema Seat.

Making the Difference

There are people who have gone out as missionaries into various places in the world. Why? A ministry that believes in the Book believes in soul winning. They are people who obeyed the Great Commission to go into all the world and

preach the gospel to every man, woman and child. Missionaries have been raised up to serve in every corner of the world, from highly industrialized countries to Third World nations. When these Christians face God, their record will show that they did not go only when it was comfortable and convenient. They read that Christ has commanded us to go. There was an urgency to the call, and they were obedient from the heart.

An employer requires his people to show up for work. He commands his people to be faithful in the duty of working. How much more should we honor Jesus Christ who made us, loved us, redeemed us, made us part of His family, and paid for our sins with His blood. It is He who commands us to go.

He didn't say, "Go when it is convenient." He said, "I command you to go, and if you love Me, you will go." That is what the Bible says. That is the Word of God. Perhaps you already serve God in some capacity, whether as a teacher, a secretary, a counselor, or even a pastor. Never think that the work you do for God takes the place of investing in lost souls.

This kind of message will come from my pulpit until I go home to be with God or until the Rapture, whichever comes first. Because it is

the truth, people respond. It is why we have Bible colleges and Christian day schools filled with students that are on fire for God. It is why we have a full church on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights.

The Bible says we are to stir up ourselves in the most holy faith. Whoever you are—mothers, fathers, doctors, returned missionaries, teenagers, all people—let the Word of God stir you up to obedience. You have fantastic value, and you have a message that will get people into heaven forever. All you have to do is tell them the truth.

What if the truth is not received? That is not our problem. Our part is to be a testimony. In the end, we will have told the truth, and those who have heard it will have no excuse if they reject it.

Some by Compassion, Some by Fear

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy [Spirit],

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

"And of some have compassion, making a difference:

"And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 20-24).

There are two approaches to bringing the gospel to people. I thank God for every time that I can use a compassionate approach. But it is still compassion that motivates the stronger, more direct approach.

At times, we will be led to let the Word of God go forth like a fire. Some who reject the gospel become very arrogant. So I just say to them, "I charge you this day that you have rejected the gospel of Christ. If you were to die today, based upon your rejection you will go to hell. You will face God, and the opportunities He has given you will be made known at that time." If there is still no response and God has been totally rejected, I do not argue the point. I just say good-bye and leave.

Privileges for Soul Winners

Every Christian reading this booklet believes this message. God has recorded every word in

an eternal ledger, according to Malachi 3:16. Furthermore, He has recorded the names of everyone who has heard this message.

None of us would be saved if someone had not pointed us to Christ through the gospel. Jesus created the entire world, and if He humbled Himself and found the time to seek and to save the lost, then of course we should seek the lost. He has given us the message and the motive; people make a decision with their volition to receive or reject the Savior; and He will do the saving. If you desire to go but you want to learn how to win souls, of course you can contact us. We will make sure you get the material you need to get started. We strongly recommend that you find others who go, and learn with them as you go. There are many "methods" and styles of evangelism. But there is nothing more effective than a life that is changed, a heart that has been touched by God and is on fire with His purpose.

We win some souls when we go on purpose, on a schedule. Others are won because God puts them in our pathway, even when we were not planning it. That is why we live a prepared life—always ready to meet the Lord, never knowing what He has prepared for the day.

In Matthew 28:20, a special manifestation of

God's presence is with those who go out to win the lost. They have special protection from afflictions and diseases (Mark 16:15-18). They receive special promises from God for going out (Luke 24:48-49) and special peace, according to John 20:21, 22. They will have special power for work, for business, for whatever they do (Acts 1:8). This power comes because they have obeyed the purpose for which they were put on earth, which is to go out and share the good news of salvation with the lost.

CONCLUSION

During a recent testimony, Paula, a student in our Bible college, said, "I was thinking about the availability of one person to make such a difference in another person's life. I was so trapped in my misconceptions about God's nature until someone told me about the Finished Work. Now I have such an amazing life. Just knowing really and truly how God thinks about me has made all the difference.

"We have such *good* news to tell people. How can we keep something so great to ourselves? If we don't share it, who is going to tell them? And if we can share that with other people, it's going to revolutionize the world. God so desires that people know His heart toward them. We need to step out, reach out, and open our mouths in faith. I don't even know what comes out of mine half the time, but God is faithful. And as we go, He works in people's lives through us."

This is the testimony of a woman who understands the urgency of God's commission to us. Purpose to seek the lost today. God will use you. He is great, and His ways are far beyond anything we could ask or think.

It is never the right of anyone to invade another believer's privacy. I have given the message that I was told to give from the Word of God. The ball is now in your court. You area a believer priest before God. No one is in a place to judge, evaluate, or question what you do. This is between you and God. No one will check out those who are or who are not going out. As a pastor, however, I have to preach the whole counsel of God, and I have done just that.

Dear God, bless these words to our hearts because of the sacredness of Your heavenly sanctuary and the glory of who You are in the revelation, knowledge, and illumination of Your truth. In sanctification, may this truth be imparted to our memories and souls for the work of obedience.

God, bless us as we go out. May we go forward crucified, resurrected, and energized in the life of this message, which is for this hour. Do not let us go out because of guilt or negative reactions. There is no condemnation. Instead, may we go out in faith, praying for You to help us in Christ's name. Amen.

If you have never asked Jesus Christ to be your Savior, please make that decision today. Speak to Him as One who loves you and knows you intimately and one day gave His life for you. Pray, *"Dear Jesus, thank You for shedding Your blood and dying on the Cross for me. Come into my heart so I can have your new life to share with others. Amen."*

Get to know the Lord Jesus personally by spending time with Him in prayer and reading His Word, the Bible. Ask Him to lead you to a Bible-believing church where you will sense God's presence. There, you will find a pastor-teacher who will teach you the whole counsel of God, and you will discover your value as a child of the King.

The Value of a Broken Vessel

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The people of Israel used vessels made of various materials. Wooden vessels did not have to be broken, neither did the brass vessels. But earthen vessels had to be broken when they became defiled by the juices from offerings of sacrifice. Earthen vessels quickly absorb what touches them, causing a permanent spot, profaning them, and requiring that they be rejected. If a dead animal fell into an earthen vessel it had to be broken. If anyone with an unclean discharge even touched an earthen vessel, the vessel had to be broken (see Leviticus 11:33-34; 15:12).

The reason for many of the problems Christians face is that many don't realize that they have a vessel that needs to be broken. A characteristic of earthen vessels is that they always take on the character of what is inside of them. There are Christians whose typical reactions are no different from the world in stressful situations. They have never been broken, so they

manifest what is on the inside. Idealistic people who always want things to go their way are easily offended. They have never been broken.

Brokenness, as we will see in this booklet, is vital for men and women to experience. When a woman marries a man who isn't broken she may try to change him, but it can't happen. If he won't let God break him, how can she? But by letting God have His way in our lives, resurrection life will pour out, revealing the treasure in our earthen vessels.

Chapter One

BROKEN FOR OTHERS

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

Think of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He said, "I do nothing of myself" in John 8:28. "I am not come of myself," Jesus said in John 7:28. "I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). Jesus, the Perfect Man, refused to do anything apart from God the Father.

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10).

According to Isaiah 53:5, Jesus was "wounded for our transgressions, he was *bruised* for our

iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we were healed." In the Septuagint, the word "bruised" is translated *malakizo,* meaning that He was broken like an earthen vessel, smashed into pieces. Abused by the ones He loved and created, the Son of Man bore tremendous suffering—all by the permission of His Father. He had no place to lay His head, no place He could call "home." Led by the Holy Spirit to fast for forty days in the wilderness, Jesus went face to face with Satan. Through it all, He was broken for our sake.

The Mind of Christ

The Bible tells us to "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). Uppermost in Jesus Christ's mind was brokenness.

The Psalmist wrote, "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Psalm 69:20). He said, "I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel" (Psalm 31:12). *Brokenness*. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

We have to be broken because the earthen vessel will conform to whatever is inside of us—the old sin nature, wounds, damaged emotions, bruises, fear, criticism, pride, or self-effacement. We need to be broken.

People reveal that they are not broken by their reactions in stressful situations, when they "think" that no one sees. They may make a fair show in the flesh when people are around (Galatians 6:12), but what is inside of them is coloring the character of their earthen vessels.

Trials and Persecutions

A great preacher was married to a woman who became extremely jealous of his success as a minister. She hired a maid to lie and say she had an affair with the preacher and became pregnant. This trial went on for a year and people believed it, but the preacher said nothing.

People who loved him, knew his character, and believed he was innocent asked, "Why do you think God is allowing this?"

"To break me. Simply to break me," was his answer.

He would never defend himself or say the story wasn't true. But one year later, the maid came forward and confessed that the preacher's

wife had paid her to lie. This man of God didn't glory in vindication. He didn't say yes or no; he simply said, "God sent this to break me."

Chapter Two

LIGHT SHINES OUT OF DARKNESS

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"But *we have this treasure in earthen vessels*, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

"For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Corinthians 4:6-12).

Picture Gideon's army of just three hundred men going against the Midianites in Judges 7:20. The trumpets were in their right hands. In their left hands they held earthen pitchers with lamps inside. At the appointed time, they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers. They stood still around the camp of the enemies, which far outnumbered them, and watched them run away. Gideon's soldiers just stood still, but the pitchers were broken and the light came through.

God cannot use us if He cannot break us. But when God breaks us (and it is not just sentimentality), He will also revive us. When God revives us, He revives according to the Word of Life. "Plead my cause and deliver me: quicken me according to thy Word" (Psalm 119:154). "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).

A Vessel Prepared for Others

Amy Carmichael, a missionary to India, had an accident that left her bedridden for the rest of her life. Month after month went by with no

change in her condition. She said, "Lord, I was serving you. Just tell me why this happened."

He told her, "It is for others that I am breaking you. You were already a broken vessel, but now I am breaking you for others." Her intense devotion to the Lord and her identification with Calvary's love were expressed in poems, letters, and journal entries that still inspire Christians today.

Ralph Montanas and his wife, Bea, once stayed at my home. He was a great evangelist from Brooklyn, New York, but he was going blind. He did everything he could, seeking help everywhere possible in an attempt to get back his eyesight. As his sight faded, he would just keep looking at his wife and his three beautiful children. Every day, he would gaze at the sunrise as he treasured those last looks.

After his sight was gone, this man began an amazing ministry to blind people around the world. That ministry is still doing a great work today. When I asked him about this trial God had allowed, he said, "I believe it happened because I wasn't broken. I had a great gift from God, but I wasn't broken."

Job complained that God multiplied his wounds without cause (Job 9:17), but that wasn't

the case. In his third trial, Job failed six times. Don't misunderstand what the first two chapters of Job's story say. He had an opportunity to glorify God in the midst of the angelic contest, and ultimately, Job did. But the truth is that Job was proud. God proved to him that something was wrong deep in his heart. Job needed to be broken.

Letting the Living Water Flow

Genesis 7:11 speaks of the "fountains of the great deep broken up." We have to keep digging and digging in order to find the fountain that is just below the surface. Below the fountain is a spring. But the spring cannot well up into a fountain unless the earth above it is broken up. God strengthens the fountains of the deep (Proverbs 8:28), and we are filled with the Word of God as we internalize more and more doctrine. "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9).

To the woman at the well, Jesus said, "The water that I shall give will be a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (see John 4:14). Also, in John 7:38-39, Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But

this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy [Spirit] was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)."

Purpose to honor others. Submit to their portions and let the life of Jesus Christ flow through you and out of you. And if your heart is broken, God heals the brokenhearted (Psalm 147:3). Be a broken vessel. Be broken as a husband, a wife, a friend. Be a broken servant, a broken soul winner, a broken prayer warrior. Let the Cross of Calvary do its effective work in your heart. Nothing works like Calvary.

Chapter Three

LIFE BLOSSOMS OUT OF DEATH

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto to the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod.

"And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers.

"And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.

"And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

"And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a

rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, even twelve rods: and the rod of Aaron was among their rods.

"And Moses laid up the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness.

"And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds" (Numbers 17:1-8).

"And the LORD said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood" (Numbers 18:1).

Aaron's name was on a stick, just as the names from the other tribes of Israel. Twelve dead sticks were placed in the tabernacle of witness, and it was Aaron's rod that budded, blossomed, and yielded fruit. The almond branch, from a tree which is among the first tree to bud, while it is still winter, speaks of a brand-new beginning—of life coming out of death. The small dead stick was a picture of that which has been through death. It lay before God all night long, and in the morning came this new begin-

ning. Aaron's rod had blossomed with Resurrection life.

"The iniquity of the sanctuary" referred to in Numbers 18:1 speaks of serving God without having His life. We can give God our gifts, our talents, our time, even our administrative ability. We can give God all of these things. But we commit the iniquity of the sanctuary when we serve God without His life. Any time we do something for God without going through the Cross, the result is death.

In Aaron's rod, life was brought forth from death. It budded, it blossomed, it brought forth fruit—the fruit of resurrection power. That is what ministry is all about. To minister is to enter God's presence as a dead stick. Whatever ministry you are entering into—as a husband, father, friend, or pastor—enter in as a dead stick. That stick was before God all night, not just for ten minutes. In the morning, the rod with Aaron's name on it bore beautiful buds, blossoms, and almonds.

Resurrection Power Brings Victory

"Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Jeremiah, what do you see? And I said, I see a branch or shoot of an almond tree [the em-

blem of alertness and activity, blossoming in late winter]. Then said the Lord to me, You have seen well, for I am alert and active, watching over My word to perform it" (Jeremiah 1:11-12, Amplified translation).

The almond rod performed its duties through God's eternal life. Representing the power of God, the almond rod quickly defeated Israel's enemies, who never anticipated the strength of her defense.

"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early" (Psalm 46:5). Resurrection power quickly defeats our enemies. It overcomes the bondage of getting offended, and the bondage of sin. It overcomes the competition syndrome and the habits of the old sin nature. Just as the almond tree—the first tree to blossom—reveals a new beginning by budding in late winter, so does resurrection life reveal our new beginnings by swiftly defeating the things that come against us.

When we become dead before God and offer our ministry to Him, we must offer a ministry of life. The time is short (1 Corinthians 7:29). We cannot play games with the old sin nature that rules our flesh. I pray that God would help us to

see that we need to have a ministry of resurrection life.

Precious Trials That Glorify God

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

God brings us into trials to begin the breaking process. Though that isn't always the reason for the trials we go through, it can be. He can allow difficulties into our lives. He may allow sickness to break us. But when the trials come, Jesus Christ is our example. He made Himself of no reputation (Philippians 2:7). He did not do a single thing apart from His utter dependence upon God the Father. Following His example, we can walk in His steps through the power of the Holy Spirit and the living Word of God.

As we are being broken and we begin to see resurrection life flow out of us, we begin to touch life. We begin to touch power. We begin to touch grace, and mercy, and love that is unconditional. We begin to touch forgiveness. We begin to touch meekness, gentleness, faithfulness, and temperance. In John 7:38, resurrection

life flows like a river through our belly, which speaks of having healthy emotions.

When the Holy Spirit's life flows through our emotions, the flow is a most wonderful, precious, sacred manifestation. We who are alive are delivered unto death, causing that life to flow out. Death works in us through circumstances, situations, and details of life. Then, the flow of His life goes toward those who know nothing about life.

We don't need to have the mind of an intellectual to be able to think with God. Though some may be very gifted, the only gift that remains is love that comes with eternal life. We only need to see the Lord Jesus Christ glorified, exalted, and magnified in our bodies, whether by life or by death (Philippians 1:20).

The greatest need for born-again Christians today is brokenness. Not by mere self-effacement, but by the Cross of Jesus Christ. We need to have eyes that are fixed upon Jesus, focused to live by every word of God, using rebound when we fail. We need to let grace and peace be multiplied through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2). By these things we can know the preciousness of our lives—the value of being a broken vessel.

CONCLUSION

When a believer is broken, he reveals a life that knows his Master, knows his Redeemer, and knows his Lord through His loving grace. The apostle Paul wrote, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10). Oh, that I may know Him! There is no other reason to live.

Humble, broken people don't live in sin. They don't split up families or plan to hurt others. Broken people share the life and nature of God. Humble people are not fornicators. They have repented from sin and rebound when they fail. Humble, broken people do not live in stress and fear. They live in the Word of God that is quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.

No one wants to live in an earthen vessel that has taken on the character of Adam and his genetic inheritance. We don't need to live in the

effects of our past as damaged goods. That is why the vessel must be broken, so the Holy Spirit can quicken our mortal bodies with the very same power that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead (Romans 8:11).

Pray that God will break us. But remember, if we pray to be broken, God will do what He pleases so that we will have lives that please Him. When the prophet Jeremiah prayed, "O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing" (Jeremiah 10:24), he was saying, "Lord, break me—but don't hurt me." Later on he said, "Mine heart within me is broken"(Jeremiah 23:9). God broke him within, and a great treasure was released.

Allow God to break you. In quietness, think of Jesus' name and be very sensitive to His presence. As broken vessels, be very kind and tenderhearted toward others, forgiving them as God for Christ's sake forgave us. Let resurrection life blossom in us to bring us forth as tenderhearted servants who have found life out of death.

Father, give us Your life today. Watch over us, and may we respond toward You in faithfulness through positive volition. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Value of a Finished Work Relationship

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WHAT GOD REMEMBERS,
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INTRODUCTION

A great hindrance to the work of Jesus Christ comes when Christians refuse to live under the Finished Work in the midst of trials and in relating to each other. For example, the Finished Work is constantly on trial in Christian marriages, and couples are breaking up in America like never before.

The problem is that there simply are not enough Finished Work marriages in Christian churches that live in Finished Work relationships. Why? Because for some believers the Finished Work is seen as relevant in salvation for eternal security, but *not* in how to treat one another. Judgments are passed and contentions come because of an ignorance of the Finished Work.

Jesus said in John 17:4, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And according to Romans 11:6, everything about our lives is by

grace, and no more by works (the production of our flesh), because Christ finished the work at Calvary (John 19:30).

This booklet will show how vital it is for us to see not just ourselves but each other, as well, in the Finished Work of Christ. God Himself cannot remember our sins, for He dealt with all of them at Calvary. Only when we really recognize this can we be free to live with ourselves and each other.

Chapter One

ONLY THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9)

Paul was very serious about the Finished Work. He prayed that those who preached "any other gospel be accursed." The "perverted" gospel was removing the Galatians from the grace of God. For those who removed them from that grace, Paul prayed that they would be accursed, which means they would be heading for hell.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

"Therefore *if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (2 Corinthians 5:14-17).

The tragedy is that Christians have not understood how to have relationships in the Finished Work. Are old things *passing away* or are they *passed away*? The Word of God tells us that they have passed away—every one of them. Do we have a right to know anyone after the flesh? No, not even with our spouse. When we know someone after the flesh, we are violating the precious, tender Finished Work of Christ.

Always Look for Mercy

"Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin" (Deuteronomy 9:27).

When Moses prayed for Israel in Deuteron-

omy 9, he asked God not to look at the people's stubbornness, wickedness, or sin. If we encounter someone who is stubborn, we are not to look at their stubbornness. If we know of a sin, we are not to "look" at it—we are not to be occupied with it. Why? Because Jude 20-21 tells us to "build ourselves up" in the most holy faith, to keep ourselves in the love of God, and to "look" for the mercy of Jesus Christ.

A Christian who is operating in the Finished Work always looks at mercy—not at people's sins. A Finished Work Christian always sees others as they are in Christ and the potential they have in Christ as they grow. If he sees failure, he ministers grace and love that helps others to grow more.

We are to always look for mercy! Way back in the Old Testament, Abraham did some bad things, as did his son Isaac. And what about Jacob? He was double-minded and crooked. The Lord, however, saw all of them in the Finished Work, used them mightily, and referred to them as heroes of the faith.

Chapter Two

FINISHED WORK OCCUPATION

"And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, *which bringeth their iniquity to remembrance*, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the LORD God" (Ezekiel 29:16).

The Holy Spirit is really grieved when we don't consistently live from the viewpoint that Jesus Christ paid for all of our sins and did so much for each of us. Instead, our viewpoint is often to treat others the way we think they should be treated because of their faults.

Consider Paul's failures, as he related them in Romans 7. He said, "The things I do, I shouldn't do. What I should do, I do not. O wretched man that I am!" (see Romans 7:15,24). Paul was saying, "I'm in a problem here, and it doesn't seem to be getting any better." And there is no record that he changed in Romans 7; but in Romans 8:1, he cried, "No condemnation." Those are the

only two words expressed in the original Greek text of this passage, and they show how Paul got out of his problems.

Paul entered into a "no condemnation" viewpoint and went on to mention the work of the Holy Spirit in him nineteen times in Romans 8, whereas in Romans 7:14-24 it was "I" and "me" thirty-two times. The difference was that he became occupied with the Finished Work *because* of the work of the Holy Spirit. It changed him, although it didn't change him overnight. As Paul was now occupied with the Finished Work, he started to grow in understanding and experience by living in it.

The Author and Finisher of Our Faith

Attacking the Finished Work is one of the greatest transgressions against Jesus Christ we can commit. Satan consistently attacks the Finished Work, which speaks of what Jesus Christ did once and for all, for each and every believer. Demon forces work to make people familiar with the Finished Work. Their focus is on attacking Finished Work relationships. As a result, many Christians attack the Finished Work by not living in it.

In Deuteronomy 9, Jesus said in so many

words, "God doesn't look at our sins, so you shouldn't either." What God is looking for is the opportunity to give us His righteousness. He wants us to receive His grace (Isaiah 30:18).

Israel often brought their iniquities and sins to remembrance (Ezekiel 29:16). They were occupied with failure, while God was waiting to be gracious to them.

We don't get anything out of being occupied with what we have done wrong in the past or what we are doing wrong now. We are to look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and what He has done. Look to who He is, and be occupied with what He says about our position in the Finished Work.

All of our sins were placed upon Him (Isaiah 53:6; 1 Peter 2:24), and they were judged once and for all. There can never be a sin question. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12). As sins are no longer an issue in my life, they surely cannot be an issue for me in anyone else's life. We are to know no one after the flesh. It is impossible to judge in another what has already been judged by Christ. He bore all of our sins in His own body. "It is finished," He said (John 19:30). *It is finished.*

Remember, when we make the Finished Work relative to our salvation but disregard it in our interpersonal relationships (such as marriages and friendships), then we are attacking the grace of God. We are taking the blood of Jesus Christ, wherewith we are sanctified, and putting it under our feet, treading on it, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29). That means if we do not live in the Finished Work with our spouse, then we take the Blood, put it under our feet, and insult the spirit of grace. We tread on the New Covenant, under which old things are passed away and every single thing is new.

Let the Holy Spirit work this into our hearts: We start out in the Finished Work; we pray in the Finished Work; we live in the Finished Work; and if we fail, we rebound and recover because of the Finished Work of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Three

JUDGMENT BELONGS TO THE LORD

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:1-2)

In giving a different outlook on some of these verses, I want to make it clear that we are not to judge, lest we be judged. We have to put the Finished Work into our relationships. In the measure we judge, judgment is going to come back on us.

By refusing to look at anyone after the flesh, we make Finished Work righteousness, grace, and mercy available to the guilty, the ignorant, the fallen, those in pain, and those who are crushed by things in their life. Everyone needs to be seen in the Finished Work and ministered to in the Finished Work.

How can people read Matthew 7:1-2 and still

enter into division, slander, maligning, gossip and other attacks? If we malign, which is to judge a person for what we know to be true, we take the discipline for the sins of the one who is guilty and put them upon ourselves. But that's not all. Judgment in the form of discipline comes back upon us in a double measure, because we will also be disciplined for the act of maligning.

When I argue with another Christian, in principle I am taking Christ's name in vain and doing despite to the Spirit of grace. Now, if I were the only one affected by the chastisement, that would be one thing. But the chastisement can also affect my family and children because of what they may have been exposed to. So you see, this is very serious.

God is the God of all mercy (2 Corinthians 1:3), the God of all comfort, the God of all patience (Romans 15:5), and the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10). He is the God who was Love before He created anyone or anything. He is still love today, and His name, YAHWEH, means mercy, graciousness, lovingkindness, longsuffering, and forgiveness (Exodus 34:6-7).

Satan attacks the Finished Work more than any single thing on the earth. He attacks it because He knows the Finished Work gives every-

one an opportunity to make it. More than that, the Finished Work sees us as having already made it. It sees us as being seated forever with Christ the moment we become Christians.

God Takes Away Iniquity

"And he shewed me Joshua, the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

"And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zechariah 3:1-4)

"I have taken his iniquity away," the Lord said. *That is the Finished Work*. God says David never turned aside, and he served Him perfectly all the days of His life (1 Kings 15:5). Acts 13:22 tells us David fulfilled all of God's will. What is that? The Finished Work. Forget what happened

with Bathsheba. God refuses to view David in any light but that of the Finished Work.

If someone wants to judge someone else, God will not allow it. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4). "*And stand he will*" (Romans 14:5*a*) because of the Finished Work.

Creating Capacities

The Finished Work is more than a salvation message to make me feel good. In my marriage, in my friendships, and in the Body, I am accountable as a steward of grace to live with the understanding that *every* sin has been paid for. The issue now is to create capacities in others to live in the Finished Work. The way to do that is to love them, love them, and love them, through the fruit of the Spirit that never fails.

1 Corinthians 13:8 says that love never fails. We love and give grace. As stewards of mercy, we let mercy rejoice against judgment. And before it's all over, God will help people get right, through me.

"If anyone is going to deal with My children, it will be Me," God says (Romans 12:19; He-

brews 10:30). "I paid for their sins, and I turned My face from their sins. I turned My face away from the sins of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Don't look at their stubbornness. Don't look at their wickedness or their sin. Remember, in Ezekiel 29, God said Israel was foolish for bringing their sins to remembrance, when even He couldn't remember them (Jeremiah 31:34).

God Alone Deals with His Children

Pertaining to Solomon, God told David, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him" (2 Samuel 7:14-15*a*). Who would chasten Solomon? God would. Did he sin? Yes. Was he chastened? Yes, and he was chastened for this reason: He would not receive God's way, God's truth, or God's life. Solomon was chastened because he would not forsake his own way and return to fellowship with God. Fellowshipping with God was the issue, not Solomon's sins, because his sins—as with all of our sins—were placed upon Jesus Christ.

In the book of Acts, Ananias and Sapphira lied about the offering they made, and they did

it before the congregation. As a result, they died instantly. Who did the judging in this case? God did. People were not involved. "Judgment belongs to Me," says God (see John 8:16). No one has a right to become involved in His judgment.

When I make judgments, I am trying to take the place of God. It is as if I'm saying, "Move over, God. I am going to give judgment on this one." There is just one problem with this: Only a person without sin can judge or even cast a stone (John 8:7). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We are liars if we claim to have no sin. And because only a person without sin can pass judgment then everyone has to stop judging.

Consider James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." So, you want to judge someone for violating Law No. 6, while you are breaking Law No. 9, which you think is not nearly as bad. But sooner or later, you will be disciplined for the sin you judged, because if you offend the law in one point, you are guilty of offending it all.

Thank God, we are saved by grace!

Chapter Four

WHAT GOD REMEMBERS, WHAT GOD FORGETS

"In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve" (Jeremiah 50:20)

I want you to see what God remembers and what He doesn't remember. For instance, if someone tries to bring up your past sins, not in love but to accuse you, just smile and walk away. He will be disciplined for the accusation he made toward you. Whether you did wrong or not makes no difference.

The iniquity of Israel "shall be none." The sins of Judah "shall not be found." Why? They were placed upon Jesus Christ who would die at Calvary. Way back then, God declared the Finished Work. Israel and Judah were not under the Law but under the Finished Work. In their own

heads, they might have thought they were under the Law, but it wasn't God who put them there. The greatest thing for our lives is to let the Finished Work really take over.

The Problem Is in the Soul

"Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isaiah 1:5-6)

When a person walks in his soul, in his fallen sin nature, even if he is a seasoned Christian, he has no soundness. He might think he is sound, but he is not. What he does have are wounds. "Wounds" are the result of being stricken once and then again. "Bruises" come when a person has been crushed many times. "Sores" refer to poison that enters the body because of pains. Jeremiah 15:18 reveals that these pains can become perpetual.

So many people suffer because they live in the wounds in their soul. They don't live in the human spirit with the Holy Spirit and the Word

of God motivating them. Therefore, their pain *is* perpetual. And until they take on a Finished Work perspective, the pain will go on.

As Christians, we never lose our wounds and bruises. They remain in the soul and surface when our human spirit is not operating. Yet we can live completely outside of them because of the Cross and the filling of the Spirit. If we choose to step out from under the control of the Holy Spirit, then we fall back into the "incurable" and "grievous" ways of Jeremiah 30:12.

When the human spirit operates properly, the Word is always quick and powerful within the believer, "…sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

If I am not Spirit-taught morning, noon, and night, then I will go back to living in my pains. I might be educated enough so that I don't reveal them, because I hold them in, but those pains are still there. My countenance will eventually reveal them, too. We know each other's countenance enough to see when they testify against us (Isaiah 3:9).

Sovereignty Chooses to Forget Our Sins

In Psalm 79:8, the psalmist asks God not to remember our iniquities. And in Isaiah 43:25, God said, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." Because of His name and what it means, God remembers our sins no more (Exodus 34:6-7; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

Do you want to be found remembering what God has forgotten? He cannot remember your sins. God's omniscience is overtaken by His omnipotence, which limits His omnipresence as far as our sins are concerned because Christ paid for them. Jesus Christ was crucified with all of our sins upon Him, and He died for our sins. God's sovereignty made an agreement to never remember one single sin.

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:5-8)

How can we impute sin to someone when

even God cannot? We can never judge another because we are not omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. God alone is everywhere present (Jeremiah 23:24). He alone has all knowledge (Psalm 139), and only God has all power (Matthew 28:18). If we try to judge someone without all the facts, the evidence we have to make our case can't be entered in the courtroom of heaven. On top of that, God can't remember sins.

What does God remember? His tender mercies and lovingkindnesses. In Psalm 105:42, He remembers His holy promises. Habakkuk 3:2 says He remembers His mercy in the midst of doctrine and truth (Psalm 98:3).

"Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD" (Psalm 25:6-7). David prayed, "According to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD." God took David up on it. It was God's goodness David appealed to, not human goodness, and God did not remember.

Think of it: We serve an all-powerful God who has made it so that there is something He

cannot do. He cannot remember any sin of redeemed Christians because the blood of Christ has blotted out all of our sins. It was *precious* blood that Jesus shed (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Living in God's Tenses

Adam's nature gets wounded, offended, and counseled. Adam doesn't change, but we can be dead to Adam through the Cross.* We can be hurting—legitimately so. But the reason is that we don't see our old man for what it is—crucified and buried. We have to understand the tenses God uses in the Bible. *I have been* crucified! I *am* buried! It's all over—this all happened in the past (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:4, 6). The life that I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God.

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6:14). The verb "forgive" in the Greek text of this verse is a 'gnomic aorist', which represents instant timelessness. This means that the moment I realize that someone has done something against me, I instantly forgive and forget what has been done. It is an eternal act of God.

I am to forgive as Christ forgave me (Ephesians 4:32). There is then no real need for me to

even confront the other person because I am not operating in my soul and letting it bother me. If I do go to the person, the Holy Spirit's power of forgiveness will allow me to edify. Yet, as far as I go, the issue is over, forgiven, and forgotten. The only reason I would go to someone who wronged me would be to help him out so that he wouldn't do it again. All the while, I would treat him in meekness, lovingkindness, patience, and forgiveness.

We treat each other this way because of what Christ has done for us in the Finished Work.

"For I will forgive their iniquity, and *I will remember their sin no more*" (Jeremiah 31:34). In this verse, to remember no more means that God has no past record of our lives. He doesn't remember what we were; He only knows us as who we are in Christ.

**Read* The Finished Work of Christ, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

We need to pray for each other, so that we will enter into the meaning of the Finished Work in our relationships. It is something the Church is missing today. The Finished Work has been so misunderstood by many godly people. They love God and are following after Christ, but their pains keep them from entering into the human spirit's provision through the operation of the Word and the Spirit.

When the Word becomes spirit and life to us, we are set free. The old man is crucified and buried, and we are indeed free, forever. What a joy to live in such freedom, especially in Finished Work relationships with others.

The Value of a Soul

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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Cover Photo: Abby DeVries on hill overlooking Seoul, Korea

INTRODUCTION

Today's society is very much value oriented. The star running back on the professional football team is paid more than the second string player because he is supposedly worth more to his team. Gold is held to be more valuable than silver in the precious metal markets. Clothes produced under the name of a famous fashion designer are valued more than those made by a lesser-known designer.

To God, however, nothing is worth more than the soul of a man. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem souls and open the way for them to spend eternity with Him in Heaven. He would have all men come unto Jesus and be saved.

This is the Good News. When I realize this in my own life, then I should share it with others. It is vital that Christians have this attitude about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have the greatest message of all. It is the news that

Jesus Christ, God incarnate, came from Heaven and died for the sins of the world so that men would be saved from eternal damnation.

This booklet explains God's estimation of a soul and is intended to motivate believers to become involved with seeking and saving the lost.

Chapter One

WORTH MORE THAN ALL THE WORLD

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

"Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37).

In God's estimation, there is nothing more profitable than a believer who is committed to sharing the Gospel with the lost. To such an individual, soul-winning is a constant willingness and readiness to share the Gospel at any place or time under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Even at times when there is not an opportunity to share, the true soul-winner has an attitude of prayer for those around him, recognizing that they are eternal souls who are of great value to God.

God revealed the plan to send His Son in Genesis 3:15:

"And I will put enmity between thee and the

woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The woman's seed speaks of Jesus Christ. The verse foretells of Satan bruising Christ's heel (His humanity) at Calvary. It also reveals that the Messiah shall bruise the devil's head, referring to how the whole of Satan's power and dominion shall be put under Christ's feet (Colossians 2:15). Of this verse in Genesis 3, Matthew Henry commented, "A gracious promise is here made of Christ, as the deliverer of fallen man from the power of Satan. It was said in the hearing of the first parents, who, doubtless saw a door of hope opened to them. Here was the dawning of the gospel day. No sooner was the wound given than the remedy was provided and revealed." God unveiled the promise of the coming Redeemer. He was committed to redeeming men's souls.

If there is one thing that much of Christianity is struggling with today, it is the truth that one soul is worth more than anything. God values the soul of the starving child in Africa more than all that money could buy. The soul of an alcoholic is worth more to the Lord than all of the oil in the Middle East. God esteems the soul

of the teenage runaway more than all the gold and diamonds in South African mines.

Every single soul is precious to the Father. More than ever, Christians need to comprehend the value of one soul. Every moment people are dying and going to hell. One soul is worth more than all the world.

Jesus as a Soul-Winner

What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth? It was not to build a great empire. He came not to establish a religious organization. No, Luke 19:10 says that Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Through the entire chapter of Luke 15, Jesus illustrated the principle of seeking that which is lost. A sheep was lost from among the ninety-nine and the shepherd left the flock to find it. After losing a single coin, the woman dropped everything and searched throughout her house until the coin was found. When the prodigal son left home, the father waited, watched and prayed. At the son's return, the father welcomed him with open arms. Every time something was found, there was rejoicing. Likewise, there is great rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who is found through believing on Christ and receiving His

salvation (Luke 15:10).

This is the most tremendous truth in all of the Bible. Academics are important, and exegesis can be a very useful tool in interpreting the Word. But as necessary as those things are, James 5:20 declares that "he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Some modern theologians have tried to rationalize it away, but the fact is that God sent His Son to earth for one purpose: to win souls.

Chapter Two
JESUS MEETS SINNERS

Jesus met the woman at the well in John 4. This woman had been married five times, and at this point she was living with a man outside of wedlock. Jesus offered her the living water—she received Him and was saved.

In Luke 19, Jesus entered Jericho and noticed Zaccheus up in a sycamore tree. He shouted, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5). Zaccheus was a very wealthy publican—an occupation noted for scandal, and one that was despised in the Roman world. In his Bible Dictionary, William Smith wrote that the publican's job was "the basest of all livelihoods. This was enough to bring the class into ill favor everywhere."

When Jesus made the announcement, many in the crowd with Him murmured. But Jesus did not care about what was being said. Something far more important was about to take place. On

this day, salvation would come to the house of Zaccheus (Luke 19:9).

In John 8, the scribes and Pharisees caught a woman in the very act of adultery. They brought her to Jesus and asked Him what to do with her. He said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). Convicted in their hearts, everyone in the crowd departed, and Jesus was left alone with the adulteress.

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

"She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10-11).

Only a short time earlier, this woman was engaged in sin. However, Jesus reached her with His love. She recognized Him as Lord and received His forgiveness.

Nicodemus, one of the chief Jewish religious leaders of his day, came to Jesus by night, according to John 3. He had studied the Scriptures for years. Perhaps he recognized Jesus as the representative of all his learning. Nicodemus had questions and came to Christ for answers. In response, the Lord explained to him the ne-

cessity of spiritual regeneration to enter the kingdom of God:

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Taking the Word to the Streets

"And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him" (Luke 8:1).

Jesus did not wait for people to come to Him. Keep this in mind—He came to "seek" the lost. Zeteo is the Greek work for "seek," and it means "to pursue in order to find." Christ went after the lost. He did not stand still. This passage records that Jesus "went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." The phrase "preaching and shewing" is kerusson kai euaggelizomenos in the Greek text. This phrase can be defined as "heralding and evangelizing." And, Jesus took the disciples with Him. Why? So that they could learn from His example. In Luke10, Jesus sent out seventy, two-by-two "into every city and place, whither he himself would come"

(Luke 10:1).

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

"Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

"Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way" (Luke 10:2-4).

These three verses clearly illustrate how a believer can stir his heart for souls. First, he must recognize the need. "Harvest" in the Greek text of Luke 10:2 is therismos. This word was used to describe a crop ready to be reaped. There are souls at the point of decision, ready to hear and to receive salvation.

Next, Jesus instructed believers to pray that God would move men to seek the lost. Then, He said, "Go your ways" (Luke 10:3). "Now that you have seen the need, do not stand still. Go out and begin to reach lost souls" is what Jesus was saying here.

Jesus told the members of this group that they would encounter hostility, for they are sent as "lambs among wolves." In effect, He said, "Go as you are, and keep in mind your purpose. Do not become entangled in anything that

would hinder you from reaching the lost. The destinies of souls are in the balance."

D.L. Moody said that the Christian's purpose on earth is to "snatch men from a sinking ship." Jude 23 says, "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." This world is faced with many crises. Daily, men and women struggle in search of solutions to problems in the environment, the economy, and international relations. Like never before, God needs believers who will comprehend the value of a soul and commit their lives to winning the lost and to glorifying God.

This does not mean everyone should quit their jobs and become missionaries, although God certainly will call some to do just that. Some will be called to be lawyers, doctors, waitresses. No matter what your occupation may be, the believer can be a full-time testimony of Jesus Christ. He can be disciplined, honest, and hard-working. Everything a believer does should make an impact for the kingdom of God.

Chapter Three

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SOUL-WINNING

In Acts 2, 120 people gathered to wait upon God. The promise of the Father was about to be fulfilled. Christ had ascended to heaven and soon would send the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower His disciples. Finally, the day of Pentecost came. Like "a rushing mighty wind" the Holy Spirit came and filled the room (Acts 2:2), and the disciples began to speak in other languages (Acts 2:4). People all over Jerusalem heard the noise. They were "confounded because every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6-8). Peter then spoke out to the crowd and 3,000 souls were saved. The first manifestation of Holy Spirit's presence resulted in souls being won.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls"

(Acts 2:41).

The Spirit gave the Apostles boldness. The Pharisees and Sadducees implored them not to "speak in the name of Jesus" in Acts 5:40, but "they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42).

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

The unlearned Apostles simply testified of Jesus and of what they had seen Him do. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the disciples' testimonies turned "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

Putting God First

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Why should Christ be first in the believer's life? Why should he study the Bible? Why should he obey the truth and accept the plan of God for his life? The answer to all of these questions is because of John 3:16. God so loved the

world that He sacrificed His own Son upon the Cross to redeem men from their sins. The believer who does not have a burden to see souls saved has not really considered what this verse means. Think of the love that God had for men when He planned redemption. This should motivate Christians to be evangelistic in all that they do. The lost need someone to communicate to them the plan of God's salvation by grace. Certainly, every believer can remember the time when he was lost and how he was saved by receiving Christ.

Before the foundation of the world, the Father, the Son and the Spirit planned to redeem mankind (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20). Making a way for souls to be saved was a priority in the mind of God. Soul-winning should be a priority in the Christian's life. The late evangelist John R. Rice said that "soul-winning is the biggest job in the world."

Every day there are many who pass from this life and into an eternity in hell. Jesus has commissioned Christians to share His Gospel with the world. Nothing should be allowed to impede the progress of this purpose. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:12, "suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." In the his-

torical context, the Apostle to the Gentiles was deliberately declining his right to receive money for his work in Corinth. Why? So that the Good News would not be hindered. To Paul, money was of no value in comparison to souls. He considered the Gospel to be a sacred trust: "According to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (1 Timothy 1:11).

CONCLUSION

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11).

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

As these two verses affirm, believers only have so much time on this earth. Thus, it is imperative that they do not waste it. Paul told the Christians at Colossi to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time" (Colossians 4:5). Proverbs 11:30b explains that "he that winneth souls is wise." Satan would have believers occupy their precious moments with the cares of this world. God's plan is for His people to make the most of their time by winning souls. Yes, the Christian should pray. He needs to study and hear the Word of God.

However, these things should increase his desire to spread the Gospel.

Missions organizations have released figures in recent years that show an alarming decline in the number of missionaries on the foreign field. The challenge before Christians today is monumental. Millions of lost souls need to be reached. God can touch these souls. But to do so, He needs believers who are determined to keep the Gospel from being hindered. These are Christians who will purpose in their hearts to be doers of the Word and to be witnesses unto Christ in their communities, in their nations, and in their world.

The Value of God's Name

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INTRODUCTION

It is often said in the world of successful businessmen, "It's not *what* you know but *who* you know." Connections make a difference, and a well-known name always brings a response—whether good or bad. People will even use a name they have no connection to because they recognize the authority it conveys. Eventually, however, an impostor will be exposed because he does not possess the nature of authority revealed by the name he professed to know.

One day soon, many, even those who are now outcast and lowly-esteemed people on the earth, will be highly regarded as kings and priests. When they believed in Christ, they were given a new name as they received a new nature. It is the name of the King of kings, Jesus Christ. And because of His name, Christians will reflect their true value as His Bride, binding the enemy and setting people free by the authority of God's name.

Chapter One

KNOWN BY A NEW NAME

"*Ye shall know them by their fruits*. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

"Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

"Wherefore *by their fruits ye shall know them*.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

"Many will say to me in that day, *Lord*, *Lord*, *have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me,

ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:16-23).

Consider the sacredness and value of the name of our Lord. The Hebrew word for "name" is *shem*, a word that implies character and authority. God's name produces an eternal nature. His name reveals the character of Someone who has no beginning and no ending.

In Matthew 7, Jesus preached, "You shall know them by their fruits." What He said should be taken very seriously: A good tree brings forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. It brings forth corrupt fruit. It is impossible for a corrupt tree to bring forth good fruit. In other words, people who have been corrupted by Satan's lies and projections cannot change, except when Jesus Christ comes into a person's life. Then a marriage takes place, He gives His righteousness, and a change happens.

Previously, we were wedded to the old sin nature, and the Law was our counselor (Romans 7:1-3). But now, according to verse 4, we are dead to the Law (precious as it was) "…that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." This marriage is the real thing.

There are those, even Christians, who are married to the wrong thing. For example, some people are "married" to sex in the wrong way, even though sex is very precious in the right context. Others are wrongly married to drugs or to a secret sinful life. This old sin nature is the initiator in these cases. The Law tries to give counsel, but all it does is condemn—for they are condemned already.

When a woman marries, she takes on the name of her husband. In Genesis 5:2, Adam and Eve were called "Adam"—one name. In Isaiah 4:1, women wanted to take on the husband's name and come under his spiritual authority. So when Adam is our husband, we come under *his* spiritual authority, which is bound by the Law. The Law tries to counsel us so we will come to the end of ourselves, but it cannot help us. It is a law of sin and death (Romans 8:2*b*).

Embrace the Lamb

All of that changes when we behold the Lamb. We see the wounds, still fresh, in his hands and feet and side (John 20:27). We see His eyes and hear His tender voice as He is on the cross, saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Our heart

embraces the Lamb, and we accept Him as our Savior.

Then, we take on His name. The disciples at Antioch were the first to be called Christians (Acts 11:26), because they had embraced the Lamb and became married to Another.

A fifteen-year-old girl hated her mother's looks. Behind the mother's back, the girl called her ugly because her face was scarred. As she grew more rebellious, she said to her mother one day, "I don't like your face; I'm ashamed because you're ugly."

Then, the mother told her daughter how the scars came about.

"When you were a baby, the blanket in your cradle somehow caught fire. I ran to pull the blanket off of you and the flames burned my face. There wasn't a scar on you, though."

The girl wept, embraced her mother, and asked for forgiveness, saying, "I love your scars."

And oh, we love His scars!

Living beyond Merely Professing the Name

Not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21-22). In other words, according to Luke 8:18, the Lord

takes away what certain people *seem* to have but do not truly possess. If they have it, it is theirs forever. But He "takes away" what some "seemeth to have." What do they have? They have the name of Jesus Christ, but they don't have His nature.

They will claim to have cast out demons and to have uttered prophesies in Jesus' name. They will say, "We have done many wonderful works—in Your name! We always used Your name; we always called on You, Lord. We professed Your name for salvation, and we preached in Your name. We even had miracle services—always in the name of the Lord Jesus."

But Jesus will say to many, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of spiritual rebellion in your emotions toward the Cross. I *never* knew you, because you never really knew Me, and you never truly accepted Me."

If every truly born-again Christian, in grace and without condemnation, would start to make every issue right with God, then we would see miracle after miracle. This message is for people who love God but need to deal with some issues. If we have failed, we need to name our sin, repent, isolate it, and go on. If a congregation will take seriously the nature of Jesus Christ that

is revealed in His name, amazing things will happen.

His name means graciousness, mercy, long-suffering, lovingkindness, patience, and forgiveness (see Exodus 34:6-7). His name overwhelms me. Every place that God's name is recorded, He will bless (Exodus 20:24). If His name is in a marriage, that marriage will be experienced in His name. It will be a happy marriage, and it will last. If the children are reared up under His nature—not just in His name—those children shall be called blessed.

"I will set him on high, because he hath known my name (Psalm 91:14*b*). That means whoever has a personal knowledge and understanding of God's name (and, so, reveals His nature) will be promoted. He leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake—*because of His name* (Psalm 23:3). He pardons our iniquities *because of His name* (Psalm 25:11). He delivers us time and again *because of His name* (Psalm 79:9). Isaiah 48:9 says that God defers His anger—He keeps it back—*because of His name*. God saves us, not just regarding eternal life; but He saves us out of everything conceivable, *because of His name* (Psalm 106:8).

Chapter Two

THE REAL NAME IS REVEALED BY THE NATURE

In Isaiah 66:5, people hated their brethren and cast them out in the name of the Lord, saying, "The Lord be glorified." *They used His name without having His nature*. But God sees the hearts of men, and His appearance brings joy to the outcast and shame to those who exalt themselves.

Many wrong things are done in relationships strictly because they are done in God's name but outside of His nature. In Jeremiah 23:25-27, certain prophets misrepresented the name of God to Israel, and they didn't reveal His nature. Instead of being faithful to preach the Word of God, they told their dreams and caused the people to forget God's name.

A spouse can cause a partner in marriage not to know the name and nature of God when he stays married to his old sin nature. In this case,

no one will know the Name he is professing because the marriage isn't working. Likewise, if you live in depression, you are not revealing the nature of God because you are not receiving the nature of God for that problem. God's nature is grace, mercy, and love.

Psalm 78:41 says, "they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel." How can we limit the omniscient, omnipotent God? We limit Him by using His name but not living in His nature. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

To glorify God, I have to present my body to Him as a living sacrifice daily. The only body Jesus has on earth today—the only eyes, the only feet, the only hands—is *ours*. If we don't present our bodies to Him daily, but continue to use His name without living in His nature, *we* limit God! We limit His love, grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and redemption. A husband limits God when he refuses to be spiritual. A wife limits God if she will not be reconciled to God to reveal

His nature. Soul-power attachments limit the human spirit from being controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Unto those who fear God, the Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2). There can be glorious healings and miracles if we begin to appreciate the meek Lamb of God and yoke up with Him. Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask *anything* in my name, I will do it " (John 14:13-14). Anything!

A lovely lady who is paralyzed and in a wheelchair was at one of our conferences. When the message was over, I went to her and gave her a hug, and she thanked me. Then she said, "What saddens me most about being in this chair with my paralyzed arms and legs is that I can't use my body for the husband I love so much." She said, "I am so limited; I can do nothing. He is so kind. He does everything for me, and he treats me like a queen."

May God help us not to limit omnipotence in a man. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel by not responding to Him. In Ezekiel 18:4, God says, "All souls are mine: as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine." Our

souls are not our own; they are God's. So let's use our souls to glorify the One who purchased us, redeemed us, and now lives inside of us.

God's Helpmates on Earth

Through the Cross, we are espoused to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). According to custom when this was written, an engagement was just as sacred as being married, apart from the privileges of intimate physical contact. We are engaged to Him *now*—this isn't speaking of the future.

Romans 7:4 says that we are dead to the Law, "that ye should be married to another…." Our husband is Christ, not the old sin nature. We are on earth as His helpmates, serving in His stead with the nature of the Lamb (2 Corinthians 5:19).

A woman went looking for her adult son who was a hopeless alcoholic. She was a widow—her husband had died in a car accident. She worked very hard and was a great Christian. Her son left one day and never said where he was going. When he didn't come home, she went searching for him. A cousin found out where the son was, and the mother went to his door. She knocked and said, "This is your mother. Please let me in, I want to see you."

"Get away old lady!" he yelled in reply. "Get out of here! I don't want to see you." That mother went home, brokenhearted.

There are Christians who refuse to let Jesus get close to them. Oh, how many have said "Go away" to Jesus when He has come knocking at their heart? To the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:14-20, Christ said, "I would come in and sup with you, but you won't let me in." Ashamed or embarrassed by His scars (that should have been ours), they say "Go away!" They won't let Him in because they do not love His scars.

But like that girl who now loves her mother's scars, we desire to be so broken that we can honestly say, "Every time I see those scars, I see how my life was saved by sacrificial love."

Chapter Three

OBJECTIVE WORSHIP BY THE POWER OF HIS NAME

God forgives our sins for His name's sake (1 John 2:12). "They went forth," speaking of missionaries who go throughout the world for His name's sake in 3 John 7. They preached that there is no other name under heaven by which men might by saved (Acts 4:12).

Think of the power we would have in our congregations to pray over the sick if we let Jesus' nature take over. We just need to confess our sins and make a determination—through grace, love, and mercy—to deal with everything that is not right in our lives, no matter how small. We are not perfect, but we deal with our imperfections without condemnation. We start a new trail of forgiveness toward others and begin living a life of power because we are espoused to the One who was raised from the dead.

Our counselor now is the Holy Spirit of grace.

The Spirit uses the Word of God to counsel us, and, through the Cross, we have a wonderful marriage. Now, we can enter in to objective worship because we recognize the value of the Object. "They that worship [God], must worship him in spirit and in truth [(an objective system of thinking)]" (John 4:24). Colossians 2:7 says we are "rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

Objective worship is real worship. We can say, "God, I love you for your patience." Because we have been taught about patience and that teaching is now the basis for our worship, we can enter into a long time of worshipping the characteristic nature of His patience. Then, down on our knees, we can say, "Lord, we worship You for Your forgiveness. We are forgiven! I am forgiven!" We can keep saying it. "We worship You, our personal God of forgiveness."

Worship Him because you have been delivered. This is more than just praising God; it is objective worship. It goes deeper than corporate praise services, which are beautiful. If you come into a service and everyone is singing, it is wonderful, pure, and good. But, objective worship goes beyond this. It means to glorify God be-

cause of His name, which speaks of His character and of His authority over us.

God's Transcendent Love

We need to have a heavenly vision of God delivering many with an absolute grace deliverance. We can be released from something and never go back, because we are married to a new Husband. We have taken on His name, His thoughts, and His attributes, which we use to guide us in the choices we make.

To think of Him moment by moment is to worship Him. Oh, worship the God of all grace! The most beautiful thing in the world is to be so in love with Him that even the flesh cannot come in.

We are married to a new life (Romans 7:4, 6). It is something real that transcends sickness, death, and sorrow. It transcends heartaches, guilt, and fear. By God's transcendence, He is over everything in all of heaven and on the earth. His love goes beyond our transgressions because He died for us. With authority, we bring that love to the world as we go in His name.

CONCLUSION

Worship God in the Spirit of His nature. When a holy God convicts you of something that needs to change, write it down and deal with it through the Cross. It may not be a big thing that we have done, but we are now married to Another, and it is important that the fellowship remains pure.

If you are having difficulties, name your sin and return to the God of all grace, this God of power. Let Him turn your life around and give you a new kind of repentance (Jeremiah 31:19).

Let's thank God for each victory every morning, noon, and night. Confess that you are going forward beautifully with God, and watch as He proves Himself faithful.

When we exalt the name and the Word of the Lord, a genuine Word of God revival will sweep through our churches and our nations. If we fall, on the basis of faith and grace we just take a step toward God and see everything

made right. Then, on the basis of believing the Word and confessing the victory, we can live in continual victory to the glory of God.

Dear Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, whose name You have honored above every other name in heaven and earth, thank You for the victory You have given. Amen.

The Virtue of Love

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Rogers, the retired host of a popular children's television show, went to a restaurant and was served by a very irritated waitress.

"Would you like the special?" she asked with a groan.

"Yes, ma'am," he said.

"Would you like coffee with that?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How about a glass of water?"

"Yes, ma'am."

That's how the whole meal went. The waitress would ask a question, and Mr. Rogers would simply reply, "Yes, ma'am"; however, when he was finished, Mr. Rogers left a huge tip that sent the waitress following him out the door.

"Is this all for me?" the waitress asked.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Why?"

"Because I see that you have a need for God's love."

Mr. Rogers led the woman to Christ. She wound up going to his church and being transformed as she responded to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Before long, she became a great soul winner herself.

That was a demonstration of the greatest kind of love we can show on earth. It revealed a love that looked beyond her fault, to see this woman's need.

As this booklet will show, there is *great* faith, but we can demonstrate the greatest faith. There are great kings, but we serve the greatest King. There is great love, and there is the greatest love—a tremendous difference between the two. This love, which we call virtue love, changes people, but it can never be changed—and it will never be exhausted. This is the love of God.

Chapter One

LOVING AS GOD LOVES

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

"Virtue" is the key in this passage. It is what takes something great and turns it into the greatest. Virtue is the nature of God, which we can express because of His resurrection after Calvary. There is human faith and then there is virtue faith. Human faith is what I think and do in my own mind. Virtue faith is what God thinks and does through me with His mind.

Virtue love never stops loving. Any time we obey God's Word, which says, "Love one another," He pours the Holy Spirit into us and does the loving through us (Romans 5:5). Love is not virtue love unless it gives as God gives. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whosoever would believe

would not perish but have everlasting life (see John 3:16). The world of drugs, murderers, homosexuals, adulterers, liars, and thieves is also the world that Jesus Christ died for.

Never Trying to Control

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17).

Virtue love gives, and it also forgives and forgets. I am burdened for people who claim to be born again who do not have virtue love. Virtue love flows into people's hearts. Virtue love never tries to control people. Virtue love never invades a person's privacy. Instead, it proclaims the truth and leaves the decision to obey up to the individual.

Virtue love does not seek recognition. Some people are happy if they are recognized, yet they do not have godliness with contentment, which brings virtue rest along with peace that passes human understanding.

Repairing Damaged Goods

Many Christians have experienced a change

in their lives, yet they are still damaged goods. They may have been gloriously healed, yet many have never been liberated. They still carry inward pain from things done to them in the past. There is some sense of relief in them, they do love God, but part of them is still damaged. Each one has been sanctified once and for all through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. But only the deliverance that comes from virtue love can deal with and heal those areas once and for all.

A deacon committed adultery with a girl in his church, and she became pregnant. The girl told the deacon's wife, who went to her bedroom in great emotional pain, as one can only imagine. She stayed there and prayed alone all night.

In the morning, the deacon's wife went to her husband and said, "I forgive you." But that's not the end of the story. They cared for the girl during her pregnancy. Then, the wife and the deacon adopted the child, and the girl moved to the West Coast to start a new life.

That was virtue love in action.

Chapter Two

VIRTUE FAITH ACTIVATES VIRTUE LOVE

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13).

"Charity never fails." We may fail to fellowship with God's love, but that love is always there for us because it paid for all of our sins. It never imputes our sins to us. Charity never punishes a Christian for his sins; instead, it disciplines us to bring about peaceable fruits of

righteousness (see Hebrews 12:11).

A man I knew worked in a shipyard. It was very hard work with long hours, and as a single father, he had to hire someone to take care of his four children while he went to work. He was so faithful to all of our church services, and those children were always with him in the nursery or in Sunday school.

One day, his wife, who had left him for a life of drinking and sleeping around, came home with chest pains and sickness. This man forgave her and forgot all of the things she had done to him. She became gloriously saved, and they became one of the great families in our church.

Charity in this man's heart could not stop loving. It could not fail, even in the face of this situation. His compassion and forgiveness was an expression of virtue faith, which many people do not understand. It is a faith that serves by love—virtue love that never quits, no matter what.

Greater Grace is Given

There are people who have gone to hell rejecting the reality of virtue love that God expressed at Calvary. Along the way, they suffered divisions in marriages, families, churches, and

businesses because they rejected something else: virtue grace.

Great grace saves a man, but greater grace is given to the humble while it resists the proud. In the illustrations we have given, these people didn't just have grace—they humbled themselves in receiving greater grace for their situation. They didn't just have the love that saved them, but they revealed the same love for those who failed and became victims of sin.

One woman in our church watched her husband leave her and go to live with another woman for four years. She waited and prayed, never accusing or attacking, never going to anyone to say a negative word. Four years later, after he repented and got right with God, she took the man back and married him again. They have been wonderfully happy ever since. That woman had virtue love, greater grace, and virtue faith.

We are known by our fruit (Matthew 7:16, 20), and spiritual silence is usually evidence of great fruit. These are people who are skilled in conversation, both as listeners and as speakers. They don't talk incessantly and interrupt people in dialogue (Proverbs 18:13). What's more, they don't make careless statements that could hurt

someone.

Virtue love is a message that needs to be heard in churches everywhere. It goes beyond the word "virtue." Virtue love must learned, experienced, and shared. We need to understand how God can help us receive this love.

This love was judged, condemned, executed, buried, resurrected, and ascended. Once a person believes in Jesus Christ, virtue love cannot judge or remember sin. We are accountable to deal with sin, because it breaks up fellowship; but that is as far as it goes, because sin is no longer the issue. He who has the Son has life, and he who does not have the Son does not have life. The Son is God, and God is virtue love (1 John 5:12).

A Faith That Clings to Love

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report" (Hebrews 11:1-2).

Virtue faith believes the truth when it has no encouragement to believe. Abraham believed he would have a son even as he and his wife, Sarah, grew older and older. Virtue faith believes the truth even when it seems to be discouraged by Jesus Christ Himself. In Mark 7:24-30, the Syro-

phenician woman was pleading for her daughter the way a dog begs for crumbs off his master's table. Jesus seemed to dismiss her request. Yet, she persisted and her daughter was healed.

"And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

"And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

"And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him and how she was healed immediately.

"And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" (Luke 8:45-48).

The woman with the issue of blood spent all of her money on physicians, and none of them could heal her. She sneaked into the crowd following Jesus and pushed her way through—just to touch the hem of His garment by virtue faith. Immediately, virtue love healed her. Virtue love goes out when touched by virtue faith.

Trembling and falling down, this woman came to Jesus because her disease had left her

excommunicated from the community, divorced from her husband, and banned from the synagogue. She was not to have contact with anyone. But she had virtue faith that touched the Savior, and that faith released virtue love to heal when no one else could heal her.

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:7-10).

Richard Wurmbrand spent many years imprisoned in communist Romania. He almost went crazy at times living with rats, fleas, and lice in his cells. There were times when he was repeatedly tortured in freezing rooms, his feet beaten, his body hung upside down, and his

food filled with strange drugs.

At times, Richard Wurmbrand admitted that he would question the reality of Christ and cry out in unbelief. But days later, he would realize, "There is a God, and He loves me with all His heart." He is the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, reviving the spirit of the one who is contrite.

The word "contrite" speaks of a person who has been through so many hardships, pain, and suffering that only love could put him back together. It is a far deeper meaning than being humble. It is the picture of a broken vessel. Smashed into pieces, beyond recognition, the contrite person lets God's love put him back together. He is an empty vessel who allows God to fill him up.

"And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed" (2 Kings 4:6).

Chapter Three

GOD'S ADDITIONS SUBTRACT SATAN'S EFFECTS

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

"And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:4-8).

It was amazing to sit in a European missions conference in Hungary recently and to realize that the building erected to honor Lenin, a godless atheist and communist, was now a church

filled with Christians glorifying God! Hundreds of people from formerly communist countries now packed out the hall to hear the Glorious Gospel of Christ. Multitudes and multitudes have recognized that their sins have been forgiven and they have been saved from hell, all because we—along with many godly ministries—are doing our part in the Body of Christ in faith obedience.

The Christian life is all about adding to our faith. We begin by receiving great and precious promises from God's Word. And then, giving all diligence, we add to our faith "virtue." Faith that doesn't have the character of God added to it, is a lonely faith. It is a somewhat impotent faith, and it is a faith that grows discouraged.

"Virtue" is something that is resident, residual, and powerful. It is having God's nature flowing out of us just as it flowed out of Jesus. Remember that the virtue love of Christ took Him to Calvary. And anything in our lives that has not been through the Cross is not virtuous.

When a person receives the love of God and gets saved but does not let that love flow out of him, he does not have virtuous love. When we are filled with virtue love, what comes out of us is coming out of the resurrection side of the Cross.

Imagine what a marriage would be like if virtue love went out from the husband to the wife and vice versa. Imagine what a difference could be made in a family if virtue love were allowed to flow.

Covering Transgressions

"He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Proverbs 17:9).

By virtue love, our sins have already been judged for us. Virtue love operates by making people accountable in divine order, but it never judges people who fail. There is a godly accountability to restore in love the fallen ones to fellowship.

Let's say that I heard about someone's sin tonight. I would go to him alone and never tell anyone about it. Suppose that person did not get right. Then I am to return with someone else and plead with the person to repent. Should he get right, the matter is over, and I must cover the sin for the rest of my life as a manifestation of virtue love.

Operating any other way means I do not have virtue love. It is a beautiful thing to restore someone who has fallen, and then to cover him

for the rest of my life by forgetting everything he has done against me. The children of Israel lost confidence when they remembered their sins. They placed themselves in bondage when they began to dig up the sins they had committed long, long ago. Bondage came upon them because they remembered things that God had forgotten and covered through virtue love (Jeremiah 50:20; Ezekiel 21:24).

Every Mouth Shut

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19).

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

The law was given so that every mouth may be shut because of virtue love. Virtue love must practice virtue forgiveness that forgets and covers perfectly through the Blood of the Lamb (see Psalm 85:2, Psalm 79:8, Jeremiah 31:34, Hebrews 10:17, and Hebrews 8:12).

"That's lying," you may say. Tell God about it. God never looks upon people's sins. He looks

upon His Son's righteousness, which paid for their sins.

When you live by the law, if you break one commandment, God sees it as if you have broken all ten, which makes you a sinner. And really, just by judging someone else, you did break all Ten Commandments in God's eyes.

If you want to judge someone for his sin, then you have to deal with what God says in James 2:10. It says that if you offend one point of God's law, then you have offended it in all points. Maybe you offend a point that you don't consider to be among your big dirty dozen sins. It doesn't matter: Offend one point of the law and you have broken it all.

Virtue love does the most magnificent thing. It deals with every failure biblically—covering, and covering in every situation. Then, if someone else ever tries to check out what happened, virtue love responds by saying, "No, it never happened."

Death and the Devil Can Now Have No Effect

"And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partak-

ers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

"And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:13-15).

Virtue love caused *all* sins to be condemned in Christ, at the Cross. Then, virtue love covered those sins with the Blood of the Lamb. Now virtue love is seated far, far above at the right hand of the Father. Virtue love cannot accept any accusation from the devil. In fact, virtue love has made the devil powerless. It has also made the old sin nature of none effect, and it removed the sting of death (Romans 6:6; 1 Corinthians 15:56).

Because of what virtue love did on the Cross, death has no more effect, sin has no more effect, and Satan has no more effect. The only way they can appear to have any effect is if we accept his lie. But God is great. He has given us greater grace. But most of all, He has given us the greatest love. He has given us Himself—He has given us virtue love.

CONCLUSION

We know that the Son has come, and He has given us understanding. We know the One who is true and we are in Him, even the Son of God, Jesus Christ (see 1 John 5:20). There are three characteristics that identify a believer's basis for operation: faith, hope, and charity. But the greatest of these is charity.

The greatest grace, the greatest faith, the greatest rest, the greatest obedience has the word "virtue" before it. This is why Peter told us to give all diligence and to add to our "faith" virtue before all the other things are mentioned (2 Peter 1:5).

Glory to God, virtue love has triumphed over all things that do not reflect His glory. Virtue love lets the one who was the most guilty reveal the greatest love (Luke 7:47).

Father, we are so grateful that Your concern for us is not that we "just get by." You have given us Your Best, and now You have given us a way to oper -

ate with the best faith and the best love. Thank You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The War Against the Mind

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Our bodies are amazing creations of God. Each of us could be classified as a walking colony of cells. Specialized groups of cells form organs that function as systems—many members in one body, each supplying and receiving from every other part.

God has made man in His image. Throughout His Word, God uses the human body to illustrate specific truth about our relationship to Him and each other. As with everything in creation, there is an established order that must be followed for maximum efficiency in the body's operation. "Command central" is the brain, which controls the central nervous system and is necessary for the function of every other system. For this reason, Christians must be in tune with the mind of Christ so that our responses and reactions are governed by the Holy Spirit.

It should surprise none of us that Satan constantly attacks us in an effort to disrupt the

chemical structure within us. According to Romans 6:12, the sin nature is in the cells of the body. The devil's object is to have Christians establish connections with the old sin nature of Adam and maintain old patterns of thinking and reaction. But these connections need not rule over us.

This booklet examines the connection between our minds and our bodies and how necessary it is for us to agree daily with what the Word of God says about us. When our minds are rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ's Finished Work, we can live in the power of His victory at Calvary.

Chapter One

CONSIDER GOD'S MARVELLOUS WORK

For all of the vast amount of information processed in the human brain each day, we lose so much content from our memory centers. This is true for even the most disciplined thinkers. None of us knows anything as we ought to know it (1 Corinthians 8:2).

Satan hates God, but because of arrogance and the fact that he was created in a higher angelic race, he has little regard for the human race. Still, the devil knows that the best way to attack the Creator is to attack His people, who are the objects of Christ's redemption.

That is why so much of the warfare being waged against individuals is related to the chemical structure of the body. I have studied scientific data, medical books, and dictionaries along with the Word of God, and research indicates that of all the problems and illnesses said

to stem from chemical imbalance, most are not present at birth. There are rare exceptions which must be carefully diagnosed, but most of the problems we face are not primarily genetic: they are neither defects nor inherited traits that we are "stuck" with, rather they are acquired through choices that become attachments to the old sin nature.

God has designed our bodies with a marvelous and intricate system of stimulus and response called the central nervous system, which includes the brain and all the connected nerve tissue throughout the body. The specialized cells in this system are called *neurons*. Every neuron is comprised of a cell body, hair-like strands called *axons*, and conductors to the cell body called *dendrites*. The place where these nerve fibers connect is called a *synapse*, which is primarily a gap where chemicals called *neurotransmitters* send electrical impulses from one cell to another in a chain process.

Making the Right Connections

Thousands of potential connections are made between individual cells and groups of cells through the production and release of chemicals at the synapse. The mind processes

these communications, dictating our responses and reactions physically (motor fibers), mentally and emotionally (sensory fibers).*

Understanding this process, we can see how habits are formed through chemical activity that stimulates the cells, involving experiences and affecting learning, lifestyles, temperaments, dispositions, and moods.

Imbalance and Weariness

In Matthew 13:13, Jesus speaks of those who "hearing, they hear not" and "seeing, they see not." This is the masterpiece of Satan. Why do some people become dull of hearing? Because when there is a chemical imbalance in the body, electric charges are disturbed, causing the cells to become weary, tired, and in a sense, mistreated. The source of the imbalance may be illness that robs vital nutrients, unusual physical stress, or anxiety from external threats that cause an overproduction of some chemicals. The cells of the central nervous system—which initiate and respond to impulses between sensory input (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, plus spiritual senses in the believer) and the cerebral hemisphere—become weary.

We must understand that our bodies are

made up of billions of cells and every cell needs connections. For instance, when a woman's nerve impulses connect with her Adam nature, her body produces a chemical imbalance and she may want to stay locked in her room two to three days at a time. When a man makes this connection to Adam, he may start drinking or taking drugs. His disposition becomes strange.

John 8:31-32 says, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

When attachments are made to your Adam nature, you will live in uncontrolled biblical knowledge and as much as you want to change, you can't. You could complete seven years of Bible college, come to rap sessions once or twice a week, and attend every church service and still not change. You may not do "bad" things, but you are in Adam. Your cells have the wrong connection, producing adamic responses in the chemistry of your body. As a result, you will be moody. Women will have problems with their monthly cycles. Some men will make statements such as, "My moods swings are normal." But the truth is, these problems come from chemical reactions in minds that are not protected.

"For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (Romans 7:5). The fruit is unto death. I could come to the altar, cry a bucket of tears, and plead and scream for forgiveness. Then I could hang around Christians and act as if I'm doing great. But two days later, I haven't changed one iota. I have wrong connections and the wrong chemistry, and even the best message in the world will not change me.

Romans 6:12 says, "Let not sin therefore reign in [the cells of] your mortal body." Remember, billions of neurons are continually receiving and transmitting chemical and electrical stimuli as connections are being made and repeated. Any interference to normal brain cell activity can cause problems—disconnection, blocked connections, or wrong connections—that will ultimately affect the balance of the whole organism. Some cells react independently and others react in organized groups, but there must always be a connection.

If I am not Spirit-filled today, my cells are connected to the old lines in my Adam nature.

My nerve fibers send signals in the power of the old sin nature. The formation and repetition of habits and experiences are all based upon the information I receive and the choices I make.

Breaking Adam's Dominion

In all of this complexity, God has given a great provision. The Word and the Spirit come in to control the chemical connections. Daily, the Cross alleviates the dominion of the old sin nature. The cells are then connected by *zoe* life—the very life of God. With the Spirit's balance and energy controlling my chemical structure, I enter into the right program. Now I have the proper foundation for a brand-new life with new habits and new patterns of response.

Now I don't need to experience extreme mood swings. I don't have to retreat to my room, crying and saying, "I don't know why I feel this way, but I do. It's been this way all my life." I did not inherit that from my mother. As a rule, it does not come through genetics. It comes from wrong choices, wrong influences, and wrong thinking which eventually produce a chemical imbalance. When those problems develop, they are not merely subjective; they are *real*. But so is the life of Jesus Christ! He has the power to con-

trol the colonies of cells and connect them with the Word of Life and the Holy Spirit.

The Chemistry of Stress

Everyone experiences measures of stress. Just as the stress of resistance in weight training builds strong muscles, a certain amount of stress increases strength in our mental and spiritual capacities (James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:9). But when we live under constant stress with little relief, we may feel tired even when there is no apparent reason. Sometimes, we may experience no feelings at all—just a sense of numbness. We may become reactionary, angry, anxious, defensive, or troubled. The body works harder when there is an imbalance in the system. A person may try to rest, but to no avail. He may try to cover up his old sin nature, but he can't. All of this happens because the Word and the Spirit are not controlling his central nervous system nor the cells of his body. The imbalance is revealed in his behavior, which is mostly reactionary and in the flesh.

But when we receive the Word of God with meekness and allow it to be engrafted into our souls (James 1:21), then our cells can develop connections that respond to the mind of Christ

immediately and to the power of the life of Christ consistently. Attachments to the old sin nature are changed as we submit to the Word and to godly initiations. New lines and new habits are established through the energy of God as He controls the network of cells in the body that He created to begin with.

This is why it is so crucial for the Word and the Spirit to control the soil of our hearts. When this happens, a man like Moses who once struggled with anger can go forty years without being angry.

**This process was discussed at length in a message called "My Cross," included in* Hallmarks from the Heart, Volume Two, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Two

PRESENT YOUR BODY

Some Christians attribute their problems to the type of family they were raised in—but that doesn't make any difference in the new creation because we belong to the family of God. Our troubles have nothing to do with the past. We are hid in *this* family, and for us to live is Christ. Instead of the *bios* life of the natural man, we now receive *zoe* life. Resurrection power is sent through the central nervous system into the brain where all the functions of thinking and reasoning occur. As Resurrection life flows in, even on the worst day, we are controlled by godly processes. Even when we are legitimately tired and in need of sleep, we can be quiet about it. We have nothing to cover up.

The cells of our body are so willing to respond to new life! If we cooperate with God and make good decisions, healing comes into the entire network of cells, affecting all the patterns of

initiation and response.

As a result, the circulatory system begins to function more efficiently because the imbalance of stress is relieved. This influences the endocrine system and the glands secrete properly throughout the body. Satanic attacks against women's emotions due to hormonal imbalance can be dramatically relieved as God's power and life takes care of them.

"I wish above everything else that you would prosper and be in good health, even as your soul prospers" (see 3 John 2). There it is! If you can get your soul filled with God's life, your *body* will prosper and be in good health.

Still, many Christian men and women struggle with problems related to their body chemistry. Though they may know how to cover it up, but they can become extremely angry or terribly depressed. When this happens, the chemicals that induce stress increase and the body can't handle it.

Love Established in the Inward Parts

For this reason, Paul wrote in Romans 12:1, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." He addressed the presentation of the body before he mentioned the transformation of the mind. If we

try to receive the Word of God without presenting our bodies, the Word won't have the desired effect because of the natural processes that go on in the body. First, we reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God through Christ (Romans 6:11).

Let God break up the soil of your heart every morning (Hosea 10:12, Lamentations 3:22-23). God desires to give us His love in our inward parts. He wants truth and wisdom to lodge there. He takes care of the human spirit, the soul, and body through new cell connections. Grace, faith, and love enter in through a beautiful process of humility and meekness.

We can't separate ourselves from the chemical processes within us. Some people *know* the truth, but the truth doesn't set them free. They are unable to change because their bodies are not receiving God's redeeming life. His mercies are new every morning; His compassions fail not. This truth makes us disciples of the Word of God and it sets us free. If Christians understood this, they would seldom (if ever) need counseling.

Operating in the Finished Work

"If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:2).

Any time you hear a Christian tell you that he knows something, he's proud. The older a man of God gets, the less he confesses to "know" something. Instead, he confesses that he is just beginning to understand things little by little. But so many people become familiar with the Holy Spirit and familiar with God's omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence.

When you hear a passage of Scripture, even if you've read it over and over through the years, you do not know that verse unless it's operating 100 percent in the cells of your body and in the soul and heart of your being.

As I have traveled throughout the world, I have found that there are only a handful of people who remotely understand how to operate in the Finished Work of Jesus Christ. Even after hearing messages for fifteen years, they cannot walk in a Finished Work life. Why? They don't *know* it.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). Only when a person is humble and broken will the times of refreshing come to him from the presence of God.

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not

consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him" (Lamentations 3:22-24). I cannot comprehend the truth of these verses. I have retained them in my memory center for forty-five years, but I do not know them as I should. Those verses go beyond salvation. They go beyond relationships, thoughts, emotions, details of life, or the worst problem we could have. We need to internalize the words of Scripture deep within our souls through the process of faith.

His Thoughts Are Not Our Thoughts

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all …For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10, 14).

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

God is telling us, "My viewpoint is never like yours, and your viewpoint is never like mine." The only way any of us can be normal is

if our cells are connected to the right source with every cell receiving, responding to, and transmitting the proper initiations. Of the billions of cells that make up each individual, each separate cell makes vital connections with other cells to function in highly specialized groups. By God's incomparable workmanship, He created this extraordinary architecture of cells with masses of tiny fibers and chemicals that connect in a definite order.

Through this process, messages are sent to and from the human brain throughout the entire body. This establishes a proper distribution of categorical initiations and connections, affecting our thinking, responses, feelings, self-consciousness, conscience, motivation, volition, and energy.

It is no wonder that with all that is going on inside our bodies, God said through the apostle Paul, "I want you to present your body (of cells) so that it can be quickened. And do not be conformed to this world, but be renewed by the Holy Spirit. Experience the transformation of your mind through a measure of faith so you can prove what is My good, acceptable and perfect will. I want the chemicals of *your body* to be controlled by Me!"

If the mind and body and their chemical production are not controlled by Jesus Christ, we will be prone to mood swings. Even a pastor or a pastor's wife could feel strange and off-balance at times because the cells are not functioning properly. Generally, this imbalance is not something people are born with, but it develops through the environment and the choices they make.

The repetition of choices and experiences ultimately forms habits. If my thought processes are off, I could come from the best family in the world and still have problems. I could attend the best church and still act strange. I could be a Hollywood success and still go crazy with my millions of dollars.

People use liquor and drugs (which are chemicals), trying to "help" their troubled cells by making connections through sublimation with worldly forces of pleasure in an effort to find emotional tranquillity. When the entire being, which includes the cell structure, is not rightly connected to God, the majority of people will suffer very strange chemical problems and become incompatible with life's problems and

challenges.

Satan attacks the mind by going straight to the place that connects the human soul to the Adam-nature. The devil wants to establish an attachment to *Adam*. When I am connected with Adam, I can live in human good, but I'm going to have problems due to chemical imbalances. Some react worse than others, but everyone experiences measures of these problems through the connections to the old sin nature.

Connection to Victory

When I finally make a connection to Christ's mind, I no longer live independently, discharging unhealthy measures of chemical reactions. My thought processes are renewed through a repetition of categories of love, grace, peace, forgiveness, cleansing and purging (Philippians 4:8). I receive the life of Christ for every situation, then I purpose to meditate on categories of doctrine to be firmly established in the work God has done.*

At that point, the mind of Jesus Christ governs my heart and motives. *All of my cells are connected to Calvary!* Gone are the electrically charged chemical problems that make some people so moody, inconsistent, and reactionary.

These people may love you on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, but don't care to speak to you on Thursday. Their chemicals are going wild and they say things such as, "I don't care because I feel awful." And in reality, they do feel awful. It is not subjective, it is *real*.

"Let not sin therefore reign in [the cells of] your mortal body" (Romans 6:12). Jesus is saying, "Don't you know that your body was crucified with Me? The body of sin should not have dominion because the old man is crucified" (See Romans 6:6).

He tells us to reckon ourselves dead unto the old sin nature, so that we can be renewed in our mind and in the cells of our body. In Romans 6:13, He says, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead." This is speaking of brand-new connections through identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

**Read* Categorical Meditation: The One Answer to All Problems*, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

RECEIVE YOUR PORTION

God's mercies are new every morning, and because of this we are not consumed. In other words, we are not consumed by our body's transactions and transmissions. We have a connection with the mind of Christ. Psalm 16:6 says, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." We establish good habits as our thought processes, decisions, and experiences are established in Him. This controls the volition and brings consistency to our emotions, consciousness, and self-consciousness.

Not only are His mercies new every morning and not only do His compassions fail not, but "the Lord is the portion of my soul: therefore will I hope in him" (Lamentations 3:24).

Hebrews 10:10 and 14 says, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all…By one offer-

ing we are perfected for ever." *Those who are sanctified have been perfected forever by the once-and-for-all offering of Jesus Christ*. In Hebrews 10:10, the word "sanctified" is a perfect middle participle in the Greek text, meaning that our sanctification happened in the past and has continuing results. The middle voice, not the passive, is used, because God caused us to be sanctified as a truth from His own heart. The fourteenth verse refers to an action that happened in the past with the results that go on forever. *Nothing can ever stop your perfection in Christ*.

The Absolutes of the Finished Work

"If ye then be risen with Christ" (Colossians 3:1*a*) is a first-class condition meaning you *are* risen. "Risen" is in the passive voice, which means you have received the action of being raised with Him. "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1*b*-2). "Affection" is *phroneo* in the Greek, which speaks of an exercise of the mind. "Set your [mind] on things above…"—it is an absolute. Verse three says that the Father produced the action of hiding your life with Christ. We are hid with Christ in God—

that is an absolute.

The Finished Work is the *Finished Work*. Only seek those things that are above. Only think on the absolutes of the Finished Work—absolute love, absolute grace, absolute mercy, absolute forgiveness, absolute blood sacrifice, absolute power, absolute kindness, absolute freedom in Christ, absolute liberty, and absolute joy!

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:2-5). "Mortify" means we put to death the things which are connected to the earth. We are to put them to death by believing and reckoning that those connections are dead. *That is an absolute*.

Sanctified Once and For All

"Do you want to know about your life?" God asks.

"I've sanctified you once and for all. You're perfected forever. You're hid with Christ in God. You have mercies that are new every morning. My compassions cannot fail."

"Do you want to know about your life?"

"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:17-18).

A boy in one of our churches in Europe saw his father kill his mother and then commit suicide. The boy had to stand there and watch. Every cell in his being was torn apart by that scene, even after he had been attending a Bible-believing church for five years. Then one night during a seminar, he was totally delivered and he just sobbed and sobbed. What had happened? He received brand-new connections—the cells of his memory center and the five parts of his soul along with his body became connected to Christ. "*Let this mind be in you, which was also was in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 2:5).

Our Debts: Blotted Out, Wiped Away

It is so important that we absolutely understand the difference between the Greek words *exeleiphein* and *chiazein*. From historical accounts, we know that in ancient times when a debt was paid to a creditor, it was common practice to

draw an X across the document that detailed the debt. If Charlie Jones owes me a debt of five hundred dollars, when the debt is paid, an X is marked across the record and it is filed away. Anyone, however, could look up Charlie's file and see that he once had a debt. It's all paid, but the record can be seen by anyone at any time. That is an example of *chiazein*.

Contrast that with what God does in the spiritual realm. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, *that your sins may be blotted out*, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). "Blotted out" is *exeleiphein*. It means that where there once was a mark, now there is none: no name, no sin, no X—*nothing*. You are perfected and sanctified forever. His mercies are new every morning. His compassions fail not. Christ is the portion of your life, therefore you have hope in God.

Now, even if I wanted to look up your sins, I couldn't. You may have committed three million sins, but Jesus paid the debt and blotted out the record. He has wiped away the past forever in the same way that He will wipe away the tears, according to Revelation 21:4 and 7:17. Your sins—past, present and future—have been wiped away.

Exeleiphein means that our sins were judged once and for all when Christ took our judgment on His body on the tree. His soul was poured out as an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:10*b*). His soul was poured out unto death (Isaiah 53:12*b*). Therefore, God cannot remember one single sin anymore (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

God now says, "When I look at your life, I see you hid with Christ in Me."

"That's it?"

"That's it. I see that you are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. By that one offering, I see you as sanctified forever. Those are My thoughts toward you. Now do you want to change My thoughts? Go ahead and try, but you can't do it. My thoughts are My thoughts. And by the way, I wrote on your document that mercy rejoices against judgment (James 2:13). In My handwriting, I wrote that no one could ever bring up your sin or bring a charge against you (Romans 8:33)."

Walled In with Christ

God wants us to know that there is a place for us within His walls (Isaiah 56:5). There, we have an "everlasting" name. "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy

walls are continually before me" (Isaiah 49:16).

"If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar" (Song of Solomon 8:9). If you have a wall of fire (Zechariah 2:5), which speaks of positional truth in categorical thinking (including wisdom, faith, forgiveness, kindness, and patience), then palaces of silver will be built upon you. And if you have a door that will let this truth in, allowing Jesus to be your wall of fire, you will be enclosed with boards of cedar, which was a very extravagant, expensive wood.

Satan also builds walls—walls of pride, of self-exaltation against Calvary and against truth. But God promises "the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down" (Isaiah 25:12) and "salvation will God appoint for walls" (Isaiah 26:1). Every Christian has positional truth with categorical doctrines, grace upon grace (John 1:16), and mercy rejoicing against judgment. The fact is that God says He can't remember our sins. Let's agree with God! For two cannot walk together except they be agreed (Amos 3:3).

CONCLUSION

Let's agree with *exeleiphein*. Thank God He hasn't just put an X across our record of sin. He blotted it out and washed it away forever. Let's agree with God that the sin issue is gone forever. Jesus Christ dealt with it once and for all.

Let's agree that Jesus Christ has perfected forever them that are sanctified positionally. Let's agree that we're hid with Christ in God. Let's agree that we're seated above. God doesn't know us after the flesh; He only knows us after the Blood of the Lamb in the New Covenant.

Everything is new every morning. We have a new mind with new connections and a new supply of grace. Old things are passed away and all things become new, moment by moment. We are kept moment by moment (Isaiah 27:3). We are new creatures living in His New Creation.

Our minds and our bodies no longer have to be rooted in Adam. We don't have to live in the law of sin that is warring within us. Instead, we

can delight in the law of God inwardly (Romans 7:20-25) for we are hid with Christ in God in the Spirit of life.

The Way of God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Ayoung boy stole a watch. He didn't have a very good a vocabulary, but he was magnificent at manipulating the truth. So, when he had to go to court and face the judge, he did such a good job of lying that even though he was a suspicious character, the court could not find him guilty.

The judge called the boy before the bench and explained to him the dangers of a life of lies and thievery, the importance of being honest and getting a good education, and that someday he was sure to be caught if he didn't change his ways. Then the judge looked him in the eye and said sternly, "You are exonerated."

The boy looked up, puzzled, and said, "What?"

"You are exonerated!" the judge repeated.

To which, the boy replied, "Does that mean I have to give the watch back?"

Now that is a funny story, and it was meant

to make you laugh! But the truth is that if we do not choose to study the way of God and to walk in the way of truth, we will walk in the ways of the world, the flesh, and the devil. There is no other choice. And, as the Bible says in Numbers 32:23, be sure, your sin will find you out.

In these days, because the end of time is so near, the devil is taking advantage of every opportunity to wear out the saints and to deceive those who will listen to his lies. He knows that his time is short.

There is a way that seems right to man, but the end of it are the ways of death (Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25). This booklet was written to encourage you in the way of God. Let the Holy Spirit minister the truth to your heart. Stand firm on the old path that leads to eternal life. When Satan tells you to get out of the way, you can resist him by standing your ground.

Chapter One

THE WAY OF GOD'S AMAZING LOVE

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

"And that [Jesus Christ] died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:14-17).

Jeremiah 5:5 says "great men…have known the way of the LORD." Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac. The servant stayed in the

way of God, not knowing where God would take him, and he was led to Rebekah (Genesis 24:27). Joseph was given a special provision after he was sold into bondage and then wrongly imprisoned. Because he stayed in the way of God, he eventually became a ruler in Egypt and was in a position to save many people alive.

God's amazing love found Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. Saul was on his way to commit Christians to prison, where they would eventually be put to death. But the Lord met this Pharisee on the way. He revealed Himself to Saul, forgave him, saved him, gave him a new name, and made him an apostle to the Gentiles. Imagine! A Pharisee of Pharisees became a missionary to the Gentiles.

That is the way of God.

The Way of the Cross

Jesus Christ has a very special way. In fact, in John 14:6, He declared that He *is* "the way, the truth, and the life." And yet, after He told the disciples about the way He would take, they could not understand. He told them, "My love is so deep and so special that I am going to die on the Cross for the sins of the entire world. I will shed My blood from My perfect body in

obedience to God the Father and the Word. I will do this to show mankind the depth of the Father's love.

"I will die for all sinners just as they are—though they may be rebellious and unbelieving, or fearful and unable to trust Me. And though I have never sinned and never will sin, I will become sin for them. The moment any one of them believes on Me, I will save him and teach him how to be godly. In one moment, I will impute my perfect righteousness to each one who receives Me. This righteousness is apart from works and apart from the Law. Never will sin be imputed to him again."

The Way of Ascended Life

Most times when we see the word "way" in the Bible, (regarding God's way), it refers to the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. It speaks of His grace, which we experience through faith in His Finished Work—a work that was completed on the Cross, once and for all (Hebrews 10:10). Our position in Him is secured forever. Not only that, God also gives the believer His Spirit to empower him on the inside and an angel to help along the way (Exodus 23:20). What a beautiful way to go!

The way of God also speaks of rebound. When we fail, we can get right up and go on with God. Rebound brings us back into fellowship with God. It is the way that our conscience is cleansed and purged by the spiritual application of the Blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:14).

In Luke 15, the prodigal son went to a far country. The father never tried to control his son. He gave him his inheritance and let the son go his way. The father, representative of God the Father, didn't strive, argue, or manipulate. Eventually, the son (representing sinners, such as we are) came to the end of himself (Luke 15:17) and headed back home. There, the father was waiting with kisses of forgiveness, ready to throw a party in celebration of his son coming back home.

This is the way of God.

Chapter Two

A NEW AND LIVING WAY

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10).

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.

"(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-8).

A man was the pastor of a very famous church. He lost his son in a drowning accident, and this man of God went through a tremendous time of grief. As he continued to pastor,

God spoke to him. He said, "I know that you are broken, and your spirit is so broken. But," He said, "before this tragedy, your portion was like a very small package. When you are a package wrapped up in yourself, that is as small as you get (Jeremiah 48:11). But now, because you have allowed me to break you, you are free to break out of yourself. Your soul will be enlarged, and your capacity for My life will expand in the measure that you take up your cross and follow Me."

That pastor became tremendously motivated, as never before. He allowed God to come into his life and be manifested through him in a more powerful way. To be present—at home—with the Lord (having manifested His presence to people around you) is a great motivation.

Motives for Godly Living

To get to know Christ in His way is the first motivation for a godly lifestyle. But the day is coming when we will be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Therefore, knowing we will stand before Him is the next motivation to godly living.

To be absent from the body is to be *present* with the Lord. The word "present" is *endemeo*,

and it means to be in your *real* home.

That is why we are called pilgrims, in Hebrews 11:13. Our home on earth is only temporary. Perhaps our loved ones who are now in heaven were happy down here. They loved their families. They loved their friends. They loved their church. But they had to leave because it was God's will for them to be in their real home.

We all operate naturally by the law of self-preservation, and certainly we want to live as long as we can to enjoy this life. Yet we all long for our real home. Our real home is a place where there will be no pain, no sorrow, and no heartache. Our real home is where there is no night. Our real home is where tears will be wiped away. Our real home is where we will be the happiest we have ever been, even though that is difficult to comprehend.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

When we go to heaven, every born-again believer will meet with God privately, face-to-face. This is known as the Bema, or the judgment seat of Christ—an evaluation for Christians

(2 Corinthians 5:10-12). Here, it will be revealed whether our rewards will be wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).* What a motivation to let Christ take over!

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, we read, "...old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." What a reason to be motivated! Anew creation, a new spirit (Romans 7:6), a brand-new heart (Ezekiel 36:26), a brand-new kind of eternal life (John 10:28), a brand-new way, brand-new truth. We are free—liberated by Jesus Christ (John 8:32, 36). What a motivation to glorify Christ through the new creation.

Reconciled to Run the Race

According to 2 Corinthians 5:18, God has reconciled us to Himself. Not only that, but also He has given us the ministry of reconciliation to witness "that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. For we are here in Christ's stead. We beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God, for he who knew no sin became sin; that we might be accepted, reconciled to God in the new creation" (see 2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

There are so many reasons to run the race.

There are so many reasons to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). The truth, the love, the grace, the Holy of Holies, the Bema Seat, the fact that we are seated above—these are the reasons to continue in God's way.

"The love of Christ constraineth us..." (2 Corinthians 5:14). On every side of our being is the love of Christ. All over—inwardly, outwardly, behind, on the sides, on the head, and deep within us—the love of Christ enfolds us. What a motivation to glorify God! The love of Christ constrains us, on every single side.

**Be sure to read* The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Three

ALONG THE WAY, DRAW NEAR

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

"By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

"And having an high priest over the house of God;

"Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

"And let us consider one another to [encourage] unto love and to good works:

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the

day approaching" (see Hebrews 10:19-25).

The Veil as a Hindrance along the Way

The Bible says that when books of the Law of Moses were read to the people of Israel, though there was a reverence for the Word of God, a veil was upon the hearts of those who heard it. But when they turned to Christ, the veil was taken away (see 2 Corinthians 3:15-16). We have a brand-new and living way because Christ has gone through the veil for us, so that our veil could be removed.

In many marriages, two people *try* to stay married, but there is a veil—something of the flesh that prevents them from being set free. Many families are godly, but when there is a veil, they miss the wonders of family life—the joys of just being a family.

If Christianity does anything, it should manifest tremendous love in marriage. It should manifest a tremendous love in the family. As Christians, we should do everything we can to make sure that our relationships are without the veil.

The Bible says we have "boldness to enter in to the holiest," and we enter in to the holiest *"by a new and living way."* In the Old Testament, the

people didn't have this new and living way; a veil obstructed their access into the Holy of Holies. Therefore they could not go straight to God's throne of grace and mercy as sinners saved by grace.

But we have a new and living way. This way has no veil to keep us from getting through. In fact, even in the Old Testament, when they turned to the Lord, the veil of the heart was taken away.

Hebrews 10:20 says that Christ consecrated this new and living way through the veil of His flesh. The perfect Son of God became a man so that we can come boldly to the throne of grace, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. We know that we can hold fast to our profession of faith because He who promised us is faithful.

People in the Old Testament tried to live up to the law as it was given to Moses. They were constantly dealing with their flesh, because the Holy Spirit did not indwell them. He endued them with power, and many had the onresting presence of God, but they lacked the continual indwelling presence of God that changes hearts.

Oh, that we would learn this new and living way! It is new, and it is a living way, beyond the

veil, beyond the flesh. When Jesus Christ died, the veil of our flesh was crucified with Him. We have received a new and living way, and that new and living way enables us to be motivated as we walk by faith and not by sight.

Live unto Christ beyond the Veil

We should "henceforth not live unto ourselves," falsely protected by the veil of our flesh, but we should live unto God who died for us. Furthermore, He that died for us rose again.

We should live unto the One who died for us. We should live for the One who loves us, the One who was constrained to love us. Now He has given us the Holy Spirit of love, and we are constrained to live according to the Finished Work. He did die, and we indeed died with Him. Spiritually we indeed rose again with Him (Romans 6:5,13), and we are alive with new life, born again, not knowing anyone, including Jesus, after the flesh.

Why is it so important that we do not know Jesus after the flesh? Jesus Christ, who never sinned, and who was not even acquainted with personal sin, became sin for us. He didn't have any sin of His own, but when He became sin for us, He took on a veil. Why is that important? In

Matthew 27:46, the Father forsook His only begotten Son for three hours. He would not talk to Him, He would not look at Him. But in that time, He was getting rid of the veil—which was not Christ's veil but ours. He was dying for us, as us—"the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18).

And glory be to God, we do not need to have a veil in marriage. We do not need to have a veil in our family. We don't need a veil in our friendships, in our disposition, or in our temperaments. When we turn to Christ, who was raised from the dead, the veil is taken away. There goes the veil of our flesh, crucified and buried with Christ.

We do not know Christ after the flesh but only after His throne ministry. Isaiah saw Him high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Isaiah saw the risen ascended Christ, and that transformed him. When the Lord said, "Who will go for us?" Isaiah said, "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

What Will Prevent You?

The veil of the flesh, of self-protection, has caused so many problems, yet many people will not turn to the Lord. Though He took care of the veil on the Cross, many will not go after this

new and living way, which He has set apart as holy. We have been given boldness to enter into the holiest place through the veil that was rent from top to bottom when Christ was crucified. When He was crucified, that veil was rent. A completely new life is possible because the veil that separated us from the presence of God has been torn asunder. In Christ, we are free indeed.

Chapter Four

GO FORWARD IN GOD'S WAY

"They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:5-7).

The text of 1 John 4:5-7 could be translated this way: "The cosmic system of the world speaks, and those that are of the cosmic system hear it. On the other hand, those who know God hear Him speak. They love one another, for God is love."

God is love. His love is unique because it has existed from eternity past toward us sinners who were conceived in sin, who have personally chosen to sin, and who have chosen to live in in-

iquity (which is emotional rebellion against God's authority).

Rebellion: The Way of the World

In every realm, rebellion against authority is one of the world's great problems today.* Children rebel against parents. Students rebel against teachers. Employees rebel against the executives in the workplace. And people everywhere rebel against the Word of God.

While rebellion against bona fide authority has become a real problem, we must also understand that honest differences and disagreements should be expected. If they are handled doctrinally, with proper motives, God will honor everyone involved in the matter. Consider that Sarah told Abraham, her husband and the head of their home, that he had to get the bondwoman (Hagar) out of the house. In this case, Sarah was right. God sided with her and told Abraham to "Hearken unto Sarah," and Hagar and Ishmael were sent away, but not without a generous provision (Genesis 21:10-21).

We must not be rebellious against the way of God. We also must not let disagreements with people become stumbling blocks in the way of God.

Rebellion is part of the ongoing war of Satan against the authority of God. Make no mistake: God is a God of war and battles (Exodus 19:4; Psalm 24:8). He teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight (Psalm 144:1). But always remember that the battle is the *Lord's*.

We are not alone in His way. He will fight for us. Israel was backed up against the Red Sea, with the huge army of Egypt bearing down on her. Moses told the people, "The LORD shall fight for you" (Exodus 14:14). In the next verse, however, God told Moses to tell Israel, "Go forward." God does the fighting; our part is to go forward.

For the Sake of the Gospel

All men are sinners. Christians are simply sinners who have chosen to receive Christ and are saved forever by His grace. We must extend this same grace to those who are lost. We must share the good news of the Gospel as we go forward in God's way. The Gospel is what the way of God is all about.

In pivotal times such as these, God is after people who will pray and preach and propagate the Gospel. The Gospel of the love of God must be lifted up, and He will draw men to Himself.

We will win people by the Good News and by caring for them. They will not be won by saying, "I told you so; here is God's judgment." Our response must be to pray, to get out the Gospel, and to go forward with the Word of God. This is the time to teach that God paid the price for all of our sins. Anyone—*anyone*—can be saved, receive the gift of repentance, and have a brand-new life as a brand-new creation of God.

God Leads His People in the Way

God is faithful to those who are His, and He will lead them in the way. Consider the history of Israel. Despite her disobedience, God has kept her through the centuries. Captivity and defeat and wandering marked her history since the time of Jeremiah, when Babylon overthrew the nation. In A.D. 70, the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem. Israel's people became scattered throughout Europe and met persecution at every turn. History records the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust, which resulted in the deaths of millions upon millions of Jewish people. Many more have died by persecution from communist states.

In 1948, God miraculously brought Israel back to the land He first promised to Abraham

and his seed, in Genesis 12:7. There, she has remained, a small but politically powerful country in territory inhabited by many Arab nations. With fighting and terrorist attacks almost a daily part of life in Israel, truly, these are days of sorrow for Israel. Yet, God has promised that she will one day see peace in the land:

"And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one….

"And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

"And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem….

"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:9-16).

The Touch of His Hand

One beautiful thing about Jesus Christ is His ministry of touching us in His way with His constraining love.

More than forty times in the New Testament,

the Scriptures refer to His hands. In Matthew 8:3, Jesus went to the leper. In those days, a person with leprosy was required to holler out, "Unclean! Unclean!" to warn people so that no one would get near him. But there went Jesus Christ, and He touched the leper with His hand.

Jesus went to Peter's mother-in-law and laid His hands upon her and healed her (Matthew 8:15).

Then He went to the twelve-year-old girl, in Matthew 9:25, put His hand upon her, and raised her from the dead with divine resuscitation.

He touched the blind couple with His hand, in Matthew 9:29.

When the disciples were fearful of what they saw on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:7), Jesus Christ put His hand upon them to comfort them.

The Word of God says in Luke 4:40 that there were people who were demon possessed, people who had every kind of problem. But when He put His hand upon them, they were made clean.

Jesus loved to touch people, and in John 13:5, He washed the disciples' feet. In the holiness of His righteousness, in the constraining

love of His expression, in the communication of His compassion, Jesus Christ loves to touch men and women such as you and I.

As He was being crucified, picture those precious hands that held the children while he declared in Mark 10:14, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God…."

Even in the Old Testament, in Psalm 22:16, we see the precious hands of Jesus, pierced. His feet were pierced, and in His side was a gaping hole, where the water and the Blood poured out.

There are so many reasons to be motivated in the way of God. And while the world may offer us many different ways to walk—many seemingly good ways to go—with God there is only one way. His name is Jesus Christ—the way, the truth, and the life. And His way is the way of love.

**Read* Authority Begins at the Cross*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

"[The Lord] made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel" (Psalm 103:7).

It is up to us to know the way of God. But there is no way to know God's way unless we have doctrinal wisdom. Doctrinal wisdom is knowing God's mind through categorical doctrine in every realm of life. Doctrinal wisdom gives manifold faith for manifold trials (1 Peter 1:6-7), manifold grace for the details of life (1 Peter 4:10). Doctrinal wisdom also gives manifold wisdom (Ephesians 3:10) for everything we face, as it provides for every detail of our lives.

In these perilous times, we as believers must recognize our heavenly position. We are seated together with Christ above all that is going on in the cosmic system, which is the way of the world. Christ's Finished Work—His death, burial and resurrection—prepared the way for us. Our faith in Christ has placed us on the right

road. In His time, God will bring us home to heaven. Until then, we walk by faith and not by sight, in the way of God.

We have not found the way of works, nor the way of legalism, nor the way of condemnation. We have found the way of love—a way that creates capacity to honor and obey God, to love His doctrine, and to follow Christ by grace through faith.

When a message seems difficult to understand, then we mix what we hear with faith. God will always show us the way to go. The Lord will give us the manifestation of His divine presence, the peace that passes all human understanding, and the poise that comes when we apply the truth of the Word of God that resides within us.

Heavenly Father, we thank You that we have a new and living way. This new and living way doesn't have to contend with flesh—even though we have the flesh.

In the midst of indescribable confusion and warfare that is promoted in the invisible atmosphere surrounding us, may we show the world Your way of protection in the power of God. It is Your way of grace, of forgiveness, of peace, of joy, and of power. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

The Way of Transformation

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

What a beautiful era to be alive in. We see certain Christians advancing into maturity at very rapid rate. The times we are living in have accelerated the process of maturity for many believers, and they reveal a precocious faith.

With this in mind, it is so crucial for Christians to understand divine virtue as we advance into maturity. As we develop godly virtue, or spiritual excellence, in our lives, we will begin to value people and things the way God does. Few things are more important for a believer to experience than this.

This booklet will examine the transforming power of God's nature as it is expressed through His virtue and values. When we honor what He honors and place value in what He values, God's people reveal great power—not only in our communities and cities, but also throughout the world.

Chapter One

VIRTUE: THE BASIS FOR GOD'S VALUE SYSTEM

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:3-4).

Virtue, in a child of God, is a spiritual mentality based on the integrity of God's Word, which is truth. Therefore, virtue is the basis of God's value system. Rather than "mental excellence" it is *spiritual* excellence, and it reveals the maturity of the believer who applies truth in his experience.

Practically speaking, there is no way to live the Christian life unless we have God's value

system. Only that which has its source in the combination and culmination of all the attributes of Christ is virtuous. It is the implementation of God's omnipotence imparted to you, the believer, for the specific thing that you need at a given moment in your life.

This impartation of virtue comes by a manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power and God's presence in the reality of your experience. As a result, in a situation that would naturally cause you to react in your all-too-human emotions, you allow all of your human faculties to be controlled by divine characteristics. So when people do something against you, instead of giving them a piece of your mind, you give them the peace of God's mind—which is grace and mercy—as you keep on receiving God's power, reaping what you have sown.

Divine virtue involves a child of God making choices based on a value system that reveals God's nature. Whenever we pray, our prayers begin to influence someone's destiny. Our prayers help to protect someone else's call. Whether it is a neighbor, a co-worker, or a family member—whoever we pray for in the name of Jesus Christ, that person's call is being influenced by our prayers. We make a difference in

everything that goes on in his life by continually praying with importunity and tenacity. This is what precocious faith and prayer does.

Power of Prayer

When we were soul winning recently, we knocked on the door of a house where it seemed as if no one was home. Just as we started to leave, a lady came out and she was extremely responsive. "I have visited your church for an Easter play," she said.

"Are you saved?" I asked.

"Not yet," she said.

With tears in her eyes, she listened intensely and received Christ right there.

The point is this: Soul-winning ministries will use whatever "fishhooks" are available to reach people such as this woman. God's value system esteems every soul as worthy of the Blood of His only Son, Jesus Christ. And when His values become ours, we will use whatever we can to bring the Gospel to the lost. In her case, it took our prayers and our availability to get up on a Saturday morning to seek and to save the lost. It also took countless hours of donated time and money to produce an anointed, professional-quality play and a printing press to

print booklets, flyers, and Gospel tracts that were given to all who attended.

We did not know on that Saturday morning all that God had done to prepare her for this moment—though in her case, we were able to see the fruit of it. The principle is that our value system is God's value system. And His value system says that her soul—and the soul of each person we witness to—is worth more than all the world (Mark 8:36). Her value to us is more than all the world! It is overwhelming! It is staggering to consider this!

We have been holding special prayer meetings where we pray for many things. We go to God for businesses, praying out loud for each one by name. One business owner came to me and said, "We had our best week in ages." There is great value in being able to pray for businesses, taking our time and staying with it.

God places a great value on prayer, making it as valuable as the precious sacrificial death of His Son. Why? All of the things of God are connected. Everything that comes from the efficacious death of Christ branches out from the value of the substance of Calvary. When a person begins to tithe and share offerings and gifts with God, he puts an amazing value on giving.

Wealth and riches are already in us, so we should not be ashamed of being financially wealthy. We have to learn how to be abased, but we can also learn how to abound.

Pure Mind, Pure Values

There is great value in being precise and specific with God and His Word. Consider the value of having a pure mind, the value of being able to look at yourself in the mirror and say that you have no memory of the last time that you lusted, because it hasn't been there.

What value there is in having pure motives. What value there is in having peace and not being depressed. Can a price be placed upon the peace that passes understanding?

Think of your value system and the value system of those who do not have Christ. Grace and peace are multiplied through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. He has blessed us with all things pertaining to life and God-likeness. He has given us exceeding great and precious promises. By these things, we become partakers of His divine nature because we have escaped corruption through lust in the world.

Chapter Two

THE ADDITION PROCESS OF DIVINE NATURE

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

"And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

"For if these things be in you, and abound,

they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:2-8).

By receiving His great and precious promises, in comes the divine nature, helping us to grow and to produce fruit. With that divine nature, we have a treasure in our earthen vessels, a divine nature with divine virtue bringing in a value system that comes from above and begins to be locked into our souls. Then, we begin to add to our faith.

Through the process of adding to our faith, we become precocious children of God. That means that as we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, we will advance in wisdom and reveal godly maturity, making right choices and godly decisions. We can do that because we add to our faith virtue. To have virtue means we operate with a value system that sees everything in life just as God does, because of the divine nature within us. If these things are in us and they abound, then we do not fail the grace of God.

As we continue to grow, we add more and more godly attributes: knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, kindness, and charity. Our lives are made new, continually. We get up every morning and have new faith adventures added

to us. We are being transformed by Jesus Christ's value system.

God's Evaluation of a Soul

What an amazing value Jesus Christ has placed upon our lives.

"I will die for them," He declared in eternity past. "The moment they receive me as their Savior, I will give them eternal security, which includes doing sixty-eight things for them before they can say Amen.* I will begin to clean them all up. I will write their names in the Lamb's Book of Life. I will protect each one because they are members of My body, and I will cherish them because, at the Rapture, they will be My bride. ** I will do all of these things so they can reign with Me—now and forever."

All of this speaks of the price God has placed upon us. Thank God that whenever there is death, for the Christian there is also resurrection.

Satan says, "You die and you go into the ground. That's what happens."

God says, "You never taste death."

Satan says, "You are imagining all this."

God says, "You are absent from your body and present with Me the moment you take your last breath. That is the truth!"

There is such value in fellowship with other believers. We meet and assemble, developing relationships and friendships that are very rare on this earth. We have love for one another. Often, intimacy is shared through a prayer or just a smile. We have an intimacy through the mystery of God even when there are not opportunities to be together. One of the greatest means of communion and fellowship is soul winning together.

Oh, the value of coming to God and knowing that He is always available to meet us at the throne of grace. Through faith, we can go to Him and realize the value God places upon us. Without faith, we are left to our own devices and we cannot please God.

Faith Creates Heroes

God looks upon us as we exercise faith and counts us as faith heroes. Samson was recognized as a faith hero in Hebrews 11. So was Rahab, the harlot from the book of Joshua. God makes us heroes of faith just because we believe.

I cannot get over the fact that I am able to talk to God. I feel like a little child about it—just to know that it works. Through all these many, many years, He has drawn me closer and closer in a perfect plan (see Psalm 18:30). I won't even

get into my car without praying for a safe journey. I am serious about this because of all the terrible accidents that happen on the highways. "Lord, keep people from cutting me off, please Lord." To pray like this is not in vain. I believe God will show us how we were protected by simple prayers.

These are prayers that I pray because of the value of being able to take a promise from the Word of God. "Kiss the Son and kiss the promise," Psalm 2:12 instructs us in describing the sense of how we are to embrace the promises of God.

God mystically puts a team of people together with all the right players. Never have I had the team players that I have with me now. A lot of beautiful people have been with me through the years, but God has put together a great team to stand with me. They are people who believe in the value of doctrine. They are not interested in superficial and counterfeit Christianity.

Another thing of such value is true friendship. One of the greatest benefits of Christianity is having true friends. A true friend is one who will not forsake you, who will not talk about you behind your back, who will not gossip or

slander. True friends are closer than physical earthly brothers are. True friendship has tremendous value.

** To find out about the 68 things God gives a person the moment he gets saved, read* What Happened When You Received Christ? *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

*** For a thorough study of what the Bible says about the Rapture, the time when the Church will be called out of the world and into heaven where she will feast at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, read* The Pre-Tribulational Rapture, *by Dr. Daniel E. Lewis, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Three

UNLIMITED POTENTIAL THROUGH VIRTUE

There are no limitations to what virtue in a believer can do. Derived from God in the Holy Spirit, the potential within us has no limits when we have the right values.

There are things that take away my values. Not submitting to godly authority takes away my values. Being negative about a brother or a sister takes away from godly values, so my attitude will not reflect proper values in these areas.

Instead of diminishing our values, we must continually add to our faith. Adding is the divine stimulation of growth. Adding involves getting up in the morning and saying, "I am not going to be negative against myself in any way. I will not confess even one negative thing because I am very thankful and very happy in Christ."

"Adding" also includes adding the Cross of Christ to my life and admitting that "I must de-

crease." Because of demon activity and the confrontations of Satan against Christians today, there is such value in my decreasing, in terms of my natural life. I decrease only as I take up the Cross. When I do, I am operating on God's terms, and I will decrease in certain areas I haven't faced before. I must decrease and He must increase (John 3:30). What a great thing John the Baptist was saying in using the word "must."

Our cities are so corrupted with sin. We have been praying for our city with more intensity than ever, praying that parents, teachers, and all people in positions of leadership will have the right value system. So few even begin to understand virtue. Imagine someone raising a good family on the earth, decent people, but then going to hell. That is what will happen to those who are without a value system that includes the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Begin to have the Spirit of God teach you on values. Values are not what you do; values are simply receiving what He says about you and receiving what He has done for you.

The Value of Obedience

A woman came to me sobbing after a recent

service. For a time, she couldn't speak. I asked her if she wanted me to pray for her.

"No," she said. "I just wanted to tell you that I was seconds away from committing suicide when I heard a message from you on the subject of grace. Honestly, pastor, I was right on the edge. I never listened to Christian radio. I had the pills and was ready to blast the music out when, just like that, God spoke to me. Since then, I have been coming to this church, and it's been several years now."

There it is: the value of answering a call to be on Christian radio.

I could go on and on. The tremendous value of tears shed in compassion, the value of forgiveness that truly forgets, the value of caring. The value of what God can do no matter where I am. I don't have to accept guilt and shame even though I certainly will have godly sorrow if failure comes in. I don't have to accept guilt and shame because of the value of my position in Christ. It is a position I can never improve upon.

God places such tremendous value in missions. We do the work of missions—preaching the Gospel, teaching the whole counsel of God, and making disciples in our Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria—as well as sending missionaries to

the uttermost parts of the earth. God moves in people's lives, and one will rise up and say, "I'll take Africa." "I'll take Europe." "I'll take South America." Going forward with a vision that *God* values, we are transformed.

CONCLUSION

Today, we can give of ourselves freely because of the value we have found in a vision—not a man's vision, but a vision from God.

During our international conventions, I look across the crowd on Missions Night and see all of those who have been sent out on the mission field. Many hear God's voice during that time, and they will say, "God is calling me, and I am going to go." They go because they understand their value in God's vision, and they are being transformed.

Never forget that you are so valuable to the Father. You are just as valuable to the Father as the Son is. I understand that this may be hard to believe, but in John 14:21 and 15:9, the Bible says that the Father loves us as much as He loves His Son, Jesus Christ. And Romans 8:31-39 reveals just how unconditional that love is.

Father, we thank You for how You value us. Pour out Your Spirit of healing upon us. Pour out Your

spirit of grace as we grow in a divine nature that is eternal. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Weeping Savior

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and *wept* over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke 19:41-42).

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had *compassion*, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."(Luke 15:20).

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with *groanings* which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27).

These verses depict so beautifully the heart of the weeping Savior, the compassion of the Father running to meet his wounded child, and the

groaning of the Holy Spirit crying out on behalf of a broken servant.

As you read this booklet, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the essence of God's nature to your heart. Then ask Him to lead you into a union with Him that surpasses your experience so you can pour out His heart to the world.

Chapter One

THE TEARS OF THE SAVIOR

The Word of God says in Luke 19:41 that Jesus "beheld the city, and wept over it." "Beheld" implies that He gazed intently and longingly toward the people in the city.

Here was God Almighty, incarnated in a hypostatic union—the most unique Person in all the universe. Though He was God, He was Man; and though He was Man, He was God. He masked his deity so that He might reveal His humanity as a servant. What went through His mind as He beheld the city?

Remember, all things were created *by* Him, and *for* Him—not one thing was created apart from Him (Colossians 1:16). And here we see the Lord, in Luke 19:41, weeping over his own creation.

Parents, think of the children you have trained because you have been a faithful mom or dad. And when you see them go out and get

involved in iniquity, I'm sure you weep over them with a broken heart. Even after doing the best job you could as a parent, you may feel guilty, but you shouldn't—nobody is perfect.

What would happen if your children screamed at you and said, "I hate you!"? What if they rejected the values that you taught them from the Word of God? Many have done so, and many wonderful young people have not. But these are the kinds of things Jesus saw in His heart as He gazed upon Jerusalem.

As He looked over the city from the Mount of Olives, Jesus saw His chosen people who would not receive Him, and He thought, "I made them. I'm going to die for them. I've been so patient waiting for them, but this present generation will not receive Me." In John 1:10, the world that He made *knew Him not*. So now, He is weeping—weeping because He has so much to give, but it's not going to be received.

From His vantage point looking over the city, Jesus said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" He was saying, "If you only knew My forgiveness, My love, My mercy, My plan for you in this hour. *If you only knew!* But because you have rejected Me, these things are

hidden from your eyes."

When we reject something that comes from God to bless us, it will be hidden from us. We must accept what is ours through grace; we must love ourselves, be forgiving toward ourselves, and receive what is ours from God for this hour.

Tears of Compassion

In John 11, Lazarus, a friend of Jesus, became sick and died. Although Mary and Martha summoned Jesus to come and heal their brother, He seemed to put them off, waiting two days to begin the journey to Bethany where He raised Lazarus from the dead.

In verse 32, when Mary saw Jesus, she rose up quickly and drawing near to Him, fell down at His feet, and said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Distraught, Mary misunderstood what the Lord was about to do.

When Jesus saw Mary weeping (and the Jews with her who were also weeping), verse 33 says He "*groaned* in the spirit, and was troubled."

Then He said unto them, "Where have you laid him?" and they said, "Come and see." And in verse 35, we have a beautiful but totally mis-

understood picture of the One who knows the beginning and the end:

"Jesus wept."

First He groaned with unutterable sighs, then He wept. To groan means to sigh with inexpressible sounds from the heart. Can you picture it? And the Jews that heard it said, "Behold how he loved him!" (verse 36).

Once again, we see the weeping Savior—weeping because Mary did not really know Him; weeping because His own did not know Him the way they should have known Him.

Think of the tears Jesus Christ shed over being rejected and misunderstood. He sighed and groaned *because He had so much to give, and it was not received.*

"…And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me alway: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 11:41-42). Having said that, Jesus cried with a loud voice:

"Lazarus, come forth!"

Tears of Identification

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the

prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37). He was saying, "Oh, I wanted to gather you and protect you and cover you." Imagine what He must have been thinking while He wept—He saw the persecutions that would come upon the Jewish people through the centuries, and of all that Hitler would do to them during World War II.

It's one thing to cry. But it's another thing to cry with such intensity that you sigh out loud with inexpressible groanings. Oh, the love of the weeping Savior!

Isaiah 53:3-5 tells us that Jesus was "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him." Think of it. That's what He was like.

Yet, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we

have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

Tears of Unconditional Love

The compassion of Jesus Christ is revealed in Romans 5:6. He knew He would die for the people who had no strength, who were helpless—and that means us. He would die for us while we were yet sinners, and while we were enemies (Romans 5:10).

Unconditional love goes all the way without any merit on our part. It meets us where we are. Unconditional love doesn't demand a response; it is spontaneous. Unconditional love cannot be stopped by the conditions or reactions of people. God's unconditional love is intense, eternal, immutable. And now He offers to shed that love abroad in our hearts by His Holy Spirit so we can be channels of love (Romans 5:5).

The weeping Savior will always love His own to the end (John 13:1).

Chapter Two

THE COMPASSION OF THE FATHER

In the parable of the prodigal son, we can see another side of God's nature: "the running father." In Luke 15:20, the prodigal arose and came to his father. Picture it. He had done everything wrong, yet, he came home—broken, with a heart of repentance. He came home, and he was *right with God*. We can never overestimate the value of being right with God.

Keep the Temple Clean

"What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit…and ye are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Our bodies are the habitation of the Holy Spirit. We do not belong to ourselves. Verse 20 says we have been "bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Paul said we are to glorify God in our bodies.

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Dear friends, the Word of God makes it clear that people who practice these things shall *not* inherit the kingdom of God.

If I decide today I'm going to leave my wife and get remarried when there is no reason—she hasn't committed adultery—I am told by God that I will not inherit the kingdom. *God* tells me that! (1 Corinthians 6:9, Galatians 5:19-21). The Scriptures tell me that if I practice these sins, I will not inherit the kingdom of God. That means a pastor can preach to his congregation for years and still be a castaway.

You may say, "Pastor, don't you believe in eternal security?"

Yes I do, but I believe that if I can do these things as a practice, then I was never saved; therefore, anything I did for God was done in a pre-salvation state.*

If I live in sin but I *am* saved (and only God could know that, because the indwelling Holy

Spirit would be quenched and unable to witness with my spirit), then I will go through a process of chastisement. The purpose of His chastening is to bring me to repentance. If after several degrees of chastisement I still refuse to respond and never truly repent, then God will take me home early.

The fear of the LORD is to depart from evil, according to Proverbs 8:13. True repentance means a change of mind and a change of will toward the truth. It means to turn around and go God's way (see Matthew 21:28-32). It is vital that we understand this.

As gracious and loving as the Word of God is, God's people need to lift up its standards of righteousness. We need to understand what the Bible means when it says, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off… If thy foot offend thee, cut it off... If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out" (Mark 9:43, 45, 47). It is better to enter into the kingdom of God with one hand, one foot, or one eye than to enter into hell with two hands, two feet, and two eyes. God pronounces judgment and hell on the sins mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:19-21.

"But Pastor, this doesn't sound like eternal security to me."

Yes, it is eternal security because Luke 8:18 says, "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." The key here is that they seem to have eternal life. In other words, they are living in a presalvation state. They have given mental assent to the Gospel; they have had an emotional response, but they have never been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. That's why they are able to live in sin without the conviction that it is wrong.

Let Not Sin Reign

The Word of God says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:12-13). The members of our bodies must be yielded as instruments of righteousness.

Verse 14 goes on to say, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Therefore, do not let sin have dominion over you. "Shall we continue

in sin, that grace may abound?" (Romans 6:1*b*). The apostle Paul's bold declaration was "God forbid!"

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). We serve one of two kingdoms. If we yield our bodies as servants unto sin, we are servants of Satan's kingdom. But if we yield our bodies as servants of righteousness, then our bodies are submitted to God's righteousness.

Finally, Romans 6:17-18 says, "But God be thanked, that ye were servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

I want to address those who are practicing fornication, adultery, and who are effeminate, homosexuals, and lesbians. I must tell you that no matter what you've done with the church, you will not go to heaven when you die, because the Bible says you will not—and the Bible still teaches eternal security.

As a servant of God to the people in my congregation, I must tell the truth. *The fear of the Lord*

is to depart from evil. But it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31).

Kissed by Unconditional Love

When the prodigal son came home, his father saw him afar off, and "had compassion, and ran [and kept running], and fell on his neck, and kissed him [he kept on kissing him]" (Luke 15:20).

God the Father will run after anyone who will come home. I don't care what you've done or how bad it is; if you will just say, "I'm going to my Father, I've sinned against heaven," then the Father will run to you and kiss you with His unconditional love. When the prodigal came to his father, he said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." But the father interrupted his confession and wouldn't let him continue; the debt for his sins was already paid.

Think of it friends. The young man came home as a prodigal—broken and contrite. He came home to be as a hired servant. But the father ran, fell on his neck, and kept kissing him. Can you picture the father kissing his son's neck over and over? Can you imagine how the son felt? Perhaps he thought, "There's no condemnation. No guilt! All I have to do is receive my father's love." The father said, "Get the ring. Get

the robe. Get the fatted calf. We're going to have a party! My son was lost, but now he's found."

Don't ever misunderstand your heavenly Father's heart.

Sammy's Story

Occasionally, I have told the story about Sammy, a man from Africa who came to America to study the Bible in a Methodist college. He had a beautiful relationship with God the Father, but the students at the college made fun of him.

Sammy was a simple man who had a simple prayer life. He would say, "Father, Sammy needs a blessing today. That's all this time." "Father, Sammy wants You to save these two students. That's all this time." "Father, Sammy is sick. Sammy needs to be healed of pneumonia. That's all this time."

Sammy would pray for the people who mocked and ridiculed him. "My Father, I pray for them; please save them," he prayed. "They don't know what they're doing to Sammy, Your child. That's all this time."

Sammy was very young when he died, after coming down with pneumonia. Before he died, two of the students who had mocked him came in tears and received Christ. And just before he

went home to be with his heavenly Father, Sammy prayed, "My Father, thank You for hearing Your servant, Sammy. That's all this time."

When you are misunderstood and treated poorly, don't forget the heart of compassion your Father has toward you.

**Read* Salvation: Profession or Possession *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Three

THE GROANING OF THE SPIRIT

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27).

Sometimes we fail to connect Romans 8:26-27 with Romans 8:28-29, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Not only did He predestinate us, but because of His unconditional love, He justified and glorified us in our heavenly position. And "If God be

for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Why does everything work together for good? Certainly because of the Finished Work, but it's also because the Holy Spirit is groaning for us.

At times when you can't pray, when you don't sense God's presence, and you feel like you just can't get through to God, remember: You are a child of God. The Holy Spirit begins to groan and pray for you that you will know God's will in your life. He reveals the love of Christ. He prays with sighs and groanings that cannot be uttered with words.

The Broken Servant

In Acts 20:31, Paul said to elders of the church of Ephesus, "Watch and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears." The apostle was saying, "For three years, I wept for you. I shed tears in the daytime. I shed tears at night. And for three years, I taught you doctrine and wept when I preached. For three years, I was broken."

Paul had warned them, "People in your own church will arise and cause a conspiracy, and 'grievous wolves' from without will enter in to

harm the flock" (see Acts 20:29-30).

But in verse 32 he said, "I commend you to God [the Lord], and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

Paul was a broken servant. Not just a servant, but a *broken* servant.

Promotion Through Humility

"He giveth [greater] grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6). Verse 7 says, "Submit…to God. And verse 8 says, "Draw nigh to God."

Then verse 10 says, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." The Lord Himself will promote you.

Isaiah 57:15 says that God will dwell with the servant who has a "contrite and humble spirit, to revive [quicken] the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." God always meets a man or woman who is broken by quickening him according to the Word of God. As a result, the servant of God is promoted, and he is able to see miracles.

When we learn to walk in communion with God and submit to Him, we will have the life of

the Holy Spirit, not a critical spirit. Instead of being critical, we edify with creative communication.* We don't exalt ourselves above others. We're just broken servants.

The Way of Sacrifice

I once preached a message called "The Way of Sacrifice." Throughout the Old Testament, we see the constant sacrificing of animals. Whether it was Noah, Abraham, Isaac, or the Levites, God's way was always through sacrifice.

But the consummation of all sacrifices was Jesus on the Cross of Calvary. Even before He went to the Cross, His life was one of sacrifice. He came to serve others. In Romans 9:3, Paul said he wished he could go to hell if it would mean that his Jewish brethren could be saved. *Sacrifice.* Moses told God, "Blot my name out of the book of life if You're not going to forgive the people of Israel" (see Exodus 32:32). This is a life of sacrifice.

A Spirit-filled Christian lives with a love that sacrifices for others. It is never conditional or sentimental love. Christians who love sacrificially don't hurt people by possessing them or by allowing themselves to be possessed by others. That means if somebody tries to possess

you, it is sacrificial love not to let them.

Think of the intimacy of God toward His people. He bottles our tears (Psalm 56:8). That's quite intimate, isn't it? He records every step we take (Job 31:4). He knows our thoughts afar off (Psalm 139:2). He numbers the hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30). *That* is intimacy.

God knows your name; you're not just a number. We can cast all our cares upon Him, because He really cares for us. He wants us to be *that* intimate with Him. And until we go home to be with Him, He will continue to serve us with a sacrificial love that will never change.

**Read* Praise Him in this Place *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

The presence of God is manifested in the power of love through the compassion of the Father, the tears of the Son, and the groaning of the Spirit. Even when the Word of God convicts us of sin, it is always done in love. While reading this booklet, if the Spirit has convicted you of anything, then, before God, repent of any sin that would rob you of your assurance of going to heaven. Don't be condemned; be purified by faith. Accept forgiveness and cleansing. Never react to conviction—cooperate with it, and God will make you as pure as you could ever be (Acts 15:9). Accept victory in every area of your life and become God's broken servant because of the tears of the Son, the compassion of the running Father, and the groaning of the Spirit.

Father, in the love and compassion of the Trinity, may this message motivate us to be broken, obedient servants as we yield every member of our bodies unto God. Thank You and praise You for Your presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Whispers of God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Picture with me a couple in a crowded room, and the husband leans over to his wife to whisper in her ear, "I love you with all my heart." Now, that's something he could easily say out loud. But he wanted it to be just for her, so he whispered into her ear.

God often does the same thing with His people. There are things He wants to communicate quietly to our hearts. He desires to have our attention and focus. No matter what we are going through, God has a word in season for us.

As this booklet will show, the things communicated in stillness and quietness are so precious. God longs to draw us near to Himself so that His whispers can be heard in the midst of the world's roar: "Be still, and know that I am God."

Chapter One

A HEART THAT HEARS

"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

"Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:1-4).

In this passage, the word "doctrine" refers to instruction, learning to think with God categorically and precisely. The Hebrew text of verse one makes it clear that God is saying, "Give ear—pay attention—and I will speak quietly." The key is to hear God whispering. God whispers so we will draw close to Him to listen and hear the

precious thoughts of His heart.

In these verses, God mentions that He uses His whispers to draw our attention to Him. If you whisper to me, I obviously have to come closer to you to hear what you are saying. God whispers, bringing us closer to Him and to the meaning of the thoughts in His heart. In Deuteronomy 32, God is not shouting. He is not raising His voice. He is not even speaking in a normal tone of voice. He is whispering.

To be able to hear the whispers of God means to be so filled with His nature that even His whispers can be understood. Think about it. When was the last time you heard God whispering to you? When did you last hear God's still, small, inaudible voice impressing your spirit with the precious thoughts of His heartbeat?

Filled with His Spirit

I hear the whispers of God when I am filled with God's Spirit, walking in His love and having the mind of Jesus Christ. My old sin nature is, practically speaking, co-crucified with Christ. I can have the most intimate relationship with Him—one in which I hear His whispers.

In this relationship, I can talk to God. There are no distractions. Nothing comes between us.

How many times have you said yourself, "The best that I know, God told me this." I am not speaking of hearing an audible voice. But Jesus did say in John 10: "My sheep hear my voice and follow Me."

There is such a misunderstanding today about hearing God's voice. Again, I am not saying we hear His audible voice. The Holy Spirit does, however, communicate the thoughts of God, Who is invisible. Deity speaks from heaven and communicates in whispers. These thoughts come through His Word and through the inspiration of the Word, into the human spirit. This is the way God whispers.

One Vision, One Voice

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty)" (Acts 1:14-15).

Peter and the disciples all got up, but Peter spoke for the group. They all stood, but Peter did the talking. They were of one mind. This is happening today. We see it in our church as we

share such oneness, bearing fruit throughout our city and around the world. We see with our eyes the substance of the vision God gave to us nearly fifty years ago.

Over the years, God has given us certain visions about the future of our ministry, visions that I have shared with the members of our church. He confirmed these visions by giving them to others. That is why we have had so much oneness among so many co-laborers. As fervent believers who have internalized God's Word as much as I have, those visions became theirs as well. It is all done in the corporate body aspect of oneness.

God has made it possible for believers to become one body—a corporate organism, knit together in love (Colossians 2:2, 19). When we are focused on Christ and governed by His precepts, we will have the same vision because we have heard the same voice.

Chapter Two

PEACE THAT PASSES UNDERSTANDING

God communicates with Christians in whispers, regardless of their level of faith or their stage of growth. He is moved by our faithfulness to obey and to receive from Him by hearing His Word. So, He whispers and reveals His heart to us.

Have you heard from God today? If you went to a Bible class or listened to a message from God's Word, you heard from God. You hear from God through your pastor and through other teachers. You can hear from God through your own vertical relationship with Him. You hear from God through godly friends when you fellowship in the Spirit. And, you can hear from God in the midst of diverse circumstances. You can hear from God when there is peace in your heart—where there once was no peace at all.

A young man in prison is now transformed

because of God's whispers. True and godly sorrow caused him to repent and has renewed this man's mind and his commitment to God. He has been hearing God whisper to him in the midst of the noise of the prisoners, in the midst of the projections from hell. In a terrible situation, he is communing with God and revealing faith rest in spite of the storm.

God's whispers keep us peaceful. They quiet our souls. They supply us with the proper language of communication. Tears are another language God uses. They express more than words could say when they are shed in the compassion of divine love.

Overcoming Bitterness

One day I was driving alone, thinking about a problem, when God spoke to my heart.

"Do you love Me?" He whispered.

"Yes," I said. Instantly, I was broken by His gentleness. He had caused me to look to Him and not the problem. I pulled off the road, and God inspired me to write this song:

I was searching in my heart;
I found Christ, sin had to part.
God gave me a brand-new start!

I praised the Lord, I praise Him now.
His Holy Spirit will teach me how,
And tonight, my knees will humbly bow.

I love You, Jesus,
Yes, I love You, Jesus.
I love You with all my heart.
I will worship, I will sing,
Souls to Christ I will bring
To the altar, where You'll do Your part.

So often, Christians will react with negativity against someone who has offended them. This happened to a good friend of mine. Someone had said some terrible things that caused him to react with anger. He came to me for counsel because he could not get over the bitterness he felt, and it was affecting his walk with God.

Together, we considered how Satan throws so many things at God's people just to rob us of our joy. We cannot change people and we cannot change one thing about the past, but when Christ is the issue, nothing else matters. We have a God who loves us, who never changes, who has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

We can't have fellowship with bitterness. And according to James 1:20, the wrath of man interferes with the righteousness of God being formed in our lives. But when we set the Lord before us, looking unto Him and loving Him with all our hearts, the bitterness will go.

That man wept because he felt so terrible for reacting. The whispers of God brought him out of his bitterness completely. The following week, while running errands, he saw the person who had offended him. Tears came to his eyes, and he smiled and said hello. It didn't matter whether or not the other man responded. The bitterness was gone.

Chapter Three

BE STILL AND KNOW

There have been times when my wife and I have been weeping as she goes through a painful time with her physical weakness. She always comes through and says, "I totally trust God. His quietness and confidence shall be my strength."

In the midst of those times, God whispers to us: "Be still and know that I am God."

Terrible feelings of fear come upon our emotions sometimes, especially when one of our loved ones dies. Sure, we know that they have gone home to be with the Lord. But at first, we feel very frightened. I have experienced this, having lost my first wife, my mom, my dad, and many friends and loved ones. Yet, we come through it and receive His peace. The one thing that always happens is that God comes through and whispers, "Be still, be still. I am God."

Some parents have been going through great

trials with their children. I am really praying for these families. They are faithful families. One of the mothers came to me and said, "All I have been hearing from God is 'Quietness and confidence is your strength' and 'Be still and know that I am God.' I trained my boy up right and I trust that he will come back."

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

It is very unusual to be still when things are difficult. There is pain. Your body is absolutely hurting, and the pain will not go away. God doesn't seem to be there, but He is—and He has a plan. It is a perfect plan. He is inside of you. And for every moment of pain you go through as a believer, He will recompense you with a blessing in eternity (Hebrews 6:10).

Those who are blind and those who are deaf receive grace and provisions for their condition here on earth. God will be just, and ultimately they will be rewarded with a measure of grace throughout all eternity for the way they faced obstacles and were overcomers in this life.

"In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve" (Jeremiah 50:20).

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them" (Numbers 23:21).

God communicates to us so many doctrines from His Word. One precious doctrine is this: Failure is never final with the Lord. There isn't a person alive who has never tasted failure before a holy God. Perhaps it has been a long time for some of you, but at one time you have tasted bitter failure. Sometimes this failure just would not go away. You rebounded, but then the failure would come right back. Yet, as you have kept getting up and going on with God, you have seen the failures begin to decrease.

The only thing that has ever gotten anyone through his failures was hearing God's still, small voice whispering, "I love you just as much as I ever have. I desire your fellowship so deeply."

My failures cannot change the love of God. What I am losing is my fellowship with Him. His love never changes, but when I fail, I am not giving Him the opportunity to express His love for me. Though His love and desire never stop coming toward me, He cannot act in me through divine initiations, because my guilt and self-consciousness are in the way.

The fact that God always loves me just the same is motivation to draw near to Him. His love becomes such an incentive to come out of my failure and to reestablish my fellowship with Him.

One of the hardest things for many Christians to believe is that God really does forgive us. The standard He gave us is found in Matthew 18:22: We are to forgive seventy-times-seven times for the same identical sin committed in the same day. Can you remember a day when you committed the same sin 490 times? Maybe you can, but God will never bring up that memory. He paid for every instance of sin.

Whenever we fail, God is faithful and just to forgive us. Why? Because He wants to keep the lines of communication with Him open. He wants to always be able to whisper to us, "Be still and know that I love you no matter what."

CONCLUSION

God longs to speak to our hearts. He wants to be heard in the midst of all the things that are going on in our lives. He especially wants us to hear Him in our failures. Let us not drown out His whispers.

We cannot reiterate it enough: Our past is gone. No one has a right to bring it up. God—the final Judge—cannot find any evidence against us. This is one of the most releasing things we can think about. Memorize verses that relate to the Finished Work of God's forgiveness. (To begin with, read Psalm 86:5, Jeremiah 31:34, 1 John 1:9, and Micah 7:7-9, 19.)

We can study to be quiet and let the confidence of His love fill us. In this quietness, we can enjoy all that He has given to bless us. So whether it is in our times alone or times of fellowship, times of sowing in tears or times of reaping with great joy—in all of these things, He will give us peace so we can hear the whispers

of God.

Dear Lord, thank You for always giving us a provision to draw near. We pray that You would waken our ears "to hear as the learned," as You said in Your Word. Teach us to draw nearer to You each day, so we can always hear Your still, small voice that tells us which way to go. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Wilderness of

Self-Rejection

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

One of hell's most effective policies in its war against the human race and the plan of God is the policy of rejection. As with all of Satan's policies, rejection is rooted in lies. These lies, however, can be overcome by the power of the Word of God. The syndrome of rejection is nullified by the truth, and through our death, burial, and resurrection in Christ, believers can stop the effect of Satan's lies.

According to Webster's Dictionary, the word "policy" means a course of conduct. In the propagation of demonic strategies and doctrines, the policy of rejection is Satan's chief consideration. We live in a fallen world where the wounds of rejection are many and can often be traced to prenatal impressions. If those wounds are compounded, they become a syndrome of rejection that can be a paralyzing force to a person's spiritual and emotional well-being.

This booklet, with fresh illuminations on the

spiritual analogies of Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and Jordan, looks at the story of Elisha and Elijah in Second Kings 2. It describes how each believer can progress from a having brand-new beginning in Christ to experiencing the reality of Colossians 3:3: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Chapter One

THE SEEDS OF REJECTION

Medical research has revealed that tremendous impressions of rejection are often engraved on the fetus in the womb. For example, if an expectant mother does not want her child and she is fighting with her husband, or has a poor self-image, then the child feels rejected, without knowing the source or the reason for such feelings. Even a one-day-old baby can experience rejection.

If the mother is a perfectionist, the baby can receive imprints of perfectionism in the womb. Or if the mother has a melancholic temperament, the baby may also develop melancholic tendencies. Scientific observation in the secular field also has proven that the reason many of these conditions seem incurable is because they are engraved and imprinted in the womb.

Without proper prenatal and postnatal parenting, a child can easily grow up with feelings

of rejection. Sadly, many children are not brought up in an atmosphere of love with God as the center of the home. They may have parents who scream at them or who arrogantly make demands that are beyond the children's capacity. Some parents expect certain grades in school from children who cannot legitimately achieve such goals. Though they may somehow meet the standards, it takes every ounce of strength, reason, and reality out of their emotions.

Self-Image Vulnerability

During the adolescent and teen-age years, the self-image is understandably vulnerable to attack. Some young people excel in athletics; others do not. Some are very good students; others do not do as well in school. Consequently, to the degree that a poor self-image has infected a young person's emotions, they begin to take on the rejection syndrome.

For a diversity of reasons, this syndrome can continue to affect them into young adulthood. Many will struggle in unhappy marriages because of insecurity and poor communication skills. Even their health may be affected. To some degree, they allow themselves to become

victims of problems through the blame game. And all of this goes back to the rejection of their childhood and, beyond that, to their prenatal rejection in the womb.

Mid-life Crises

The rejection syndrome often plagues people in their middle-age years, causing them to doubt their own worth. "What have I accomplished? What kind of meaning has my life had?" A Christian might ask himself, "Have I really pleased God? Shouldn't I have done more?"

In old age, the rejection syndrome brings in fears of death or of nursing homes. These folks fear the possibility that their health will fail and that they will not have money enough to see them through. They fear the rejection of abandonment, which becomes a reality for so many who are in nursing facilities, forgotten by the family that they raised and cared for.

It is easy to see how Satan's policy is to use rejection to destroy the capacity of God's people to enter into faith rest.

Chapter Two

OVERCOMING LIES THROUGH FAITH

Rejection leads to some of the most drastic human measures imaginable. Recently, a beautiful young model suspected that her husband, a well-known comedian, was interested in another woman. Their marriage was failing, and she ended up shooting him to death, then killing herself. Money, affluence, and popularity did absolutely nothing to sustain her life. Her beauty and status in the modeling world did not stop her from firing the gun. Even though their children were home when the shooting took place, that didn't keep her from committing homicide and suicide in a moment of despair. Drug abuse compounded the lies against her own worth. As much as she felt rejected by her husband and many friends, she also rejected herself.

Children who grow up with feelings of re-

jection eventually enter into degrees of sublimation. They respond to peer pressure in an effort to avoid such feelings. Most of the time, these children have not had a compatible home life where their self-image can be developed in peace and happiness.

How can a person in the Christian community be delivered from the lies of Satan?

Going Through Withdrawal

One of the meanings found in the Greek word "*cosmos*" is to withdraw from human society and to get out of the norm because a person feels rejected. Therefore, one of the primary results of rejection is a withdrawal from God's institutions. For example, a wife stops loving her husband and no longer wants to have sex with him. Children go against their parents and refuse to submit, even to loving authority. Ironically, many times it's because of the old sin nature rebelling in the midst of beautiful, well-ordered homes.

It is the policy of Satan to get people to reject themselves so that they feel rejected in social environments and even in spiritual fellowship. Divorcees can become vulnerable after being single for a long time, and they may enter into this re-

jection syndrome. Yet, we must understand that when we accept rejection, we experience Satan's lies. We can believe something that is not true about people and experience a lie for years when there is no biblical basis for such feelings.

Empirical and Rational Perceptions vs. Faith

Satan is living in a lie (John 8:44). He *is* a liar, and everything he does is a lie. Through the rejection syndrome, he modifies Adam, minimizes Christ, and gets people to experience his lies in their self-image and in their relationships to others.

Satan's lies are based upon perceptions rooted in empiricism and rationalism. *Empiricism* is a system of perception that relies on the senses as its source of knowledge. The natural senses feed the emotions, and in turn the emotions, which were never designed to think but to respond, begin to process impulses which develop into projections in the soul.* *Rationalism* involves human viewpoint based upon natural reasoning, sight, experience, and the natural culture of Adam, without regard to the senses, therefore rendering a sterile process that disregards faith.

Faith, however, is the only system of percep-

tion that God accepts. He never accepts rationalization or empiricism, but only faith that "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). Faith is the substantiation of everything hoped for and the evidence of things that are not yet seen. "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

2 Corinthians 5:7 tells us to walk by faith and not by sight. Distractions from the atmosphere and from human viewpoint will affect my interpretation of life. If for one moment I get anxious, or worried, or live in self-evaluation through rationalization or empiricism, then my entire system of living and perception have alienated me from God.

**Read* Imaginations of the Heart *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

NEW BEGINNINGS, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

"And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal" (2 Kings 2:1).

"Gilgal" is a place of beginnings. It was the first place the people of Israel entered into after crossing the Jordan River. Gilgal represents a place where, by faith, everything is new—*right now*! It represents the place where we fellowship with the power of Christ's resurrection, in the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death. Gilgal speaks of our beginning, as those who have been raised from the dead and who walk in the filling of the Spirit, using rebound when we fail.

In the spiritual analogy found in Second Kings 2, Elisha stands for the believer and Elijah represents Christ. Elisha is the follower; Elijah is

the leader. Elijah will go up to heaven just as Christ did, in Acts 1:9-10. Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). Elisha following Elijah is a picture of us following Christ and doing much more than He did on earth because we live in the power of His resurrection.

Elijah said to Elisha, "Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel." But Elisha responded, "As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (2 Kings 2:2). So they both went down to Bethel.

A Place Called Bethel

"Bethel" points back to Abraham, the father of our faith, who built an altar and worshipped God there (Genesis 12:8). He also returned there when he came back from Egypt (see Genesis 13:1-4).

Situated 2,880 feet above sea level, Bethel holds a unique place in history. It was a place of sacrifice, a place of teaching and hearing the Word of God (2 Kings 17:27-28). It was the place Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar could never conquer because the angel of death was power-

less in Bethel. There Jacob took the stone he had used for a pillow, set it up as a pillar, and anointed it as a memorial unto God (see Genesis 28:17-22). The memorial stone that was anointed with oil is a picture of Jesus Christ, the Chief Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:6; Isaiah 28:16). The pillars represent principles of Bible doctrine.

Bethel also stands for the Cross and resurrection. It represents being quickened by every Word of God and being able to commune with God on the basis of the pillars—the precise categories that come through preaching and through the hearing of the Word of God.

Elisha followed Elijah to Bethel, located between Hebron (which represents fellowship) and Ai (which represents the old sin nature). It was a picture of a place between fellowship with God and the old man, Adam. The Ark was stationed at Bethel, representing the living presence of God upon the Mercy Seat.

Bethel is the place where we overcome rejection; it is the place where the process of being "re-gened" begins.* Regardless of the prenatal imprint that was deeply engraved upon the makeup of our personality, we can follow Christ to Bethel and experience resurrection life from on high. Thank God, we were redeemed and re-

ceived the life of Christ through the new birth the moment we were saved. But because of that, we are *continually* being made new, re-gened and conformed to Christ's image as the process removes the corrupted genes of Adam.

Bringing Down the Walls of Rejection

"And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho" (2 Kings 2:4).

While Jericho was a place of destruction, it also stands for the place of opportunity. Think of Rahab the harlot, who hid the two Israelite spies on her roof and saved herself and her family. She put the scarlet thread (which represented the blood of Christ) in her window (see Joshua 2:1-21; 6:17). In this application, Jericho is a place where the blood of Christ can save us, but if we are not saved, it is a place where the old sin nature takes us into rejection and self-destruction.

Everyone except for Rahab and her family died in Jericho. The priests and the people of Israel walked around the city of Jericho once each day for six days, carrying the Ark. The people were told to be silent as they walked. But on the

seventh day, they were to walk around the city seven times and on the seventh time, they were told to shout at the sound of the priest's trumpets, and the walls would come down (see Joshua 6:1-20).

It is a sad thing when people don't get redeemed at their Jericho. They continue in self-destructive patterns and in satanic rejection. God is not willing that any should perish, but because God cannot look upon sin, those living in such patterns live in an old man, Adam, who has already been condemned, just as Jericho was condemned.

At the same time, Jericho was given to Israel by faith (Joshua 6:2). This means that God, through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, gives us the victory over what has been condemned to the grave. It is not by our works that we overcome! It is a gift of grace.

**Read* Re-Gened *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Four

FOLLOW THROUGH TO THE LAND OF PROMISE

"And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on" (2 Kings 2:6).

The Red Sea speaks of Christ's death for us (Romans 5:8); the Jordan River represents our death with Christ.

Think of Christians who have accepted Christ's death on the Cross for them. Positionally, they have been delivered from Egypt. But they are still in the wilderness, and they have never followed the Ark of God's presence over the Jordan River. In Joshua 3:14-17, the priests remained in the midst of the Jordan River, holding the precious Ark until every single person passed over. In the same way, Jesus Christ—our great High Priest—finished His work so that all

who receive Him as their Savior can pass through from death to life. They receive not only His death *for* them but also their death *with* Him.

All of those verses we claim—"I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20) and "our old man is crucified" (Romans 6:6)—are past tense references to the Jordan River. When the believer has passed clean over the Jordan River, he is finally at a place where he can say every morning, noon, and night, "I am crucified with Christ, and I am buried with Christ."

Strength for the Journey

What a journey this is! We start at Gilgal to receive the power of a risen life to fellowship through the Word of God and through Jesus. Then it's on to Bethel, where we are made brand new. At Jericho, we were redeemed from self-destruction. No longer do we live in the lies of Satan. Finally, over the Jordan River we go to the place where we finally enter into positional truth in our experience.

When we receive the lies of rejection, which are lies from Satan, we become a revelation of a lie from the father of lies himself; we withdraw into the cosmos, the world system which Satan holds together. He accomplishes what he does

by causing people to feel rejected, and then by degrees he draws them into his kingdom.

Here is how it works. A husband may think, "I haven't brought up my family properly, and now they reject me." That is a lie. That man must resist this kind of projection because rejection is a lie from the father of lies.

"I'm getting older and I'm not married yet," another might say as Satan tries to get him or her to experience a lie regarding the self-image. Meanwhile, others who are wondering why they ever *got* married are revealing another form of rejection.

Christ Is in Charge

In Joshua 5:13-15, Joshua met "the captain of the host of the LORD" as he went up to take Jericho. The captain said in so many words, "Take your shoes off for this place is holy. *I* will be in charge of your Jericho, not *you*." When we get to our Jericho, it is Christ who delivers us; we cannot deliver ourselves.

Then, when we finally get to the Jordan, we simply walk through it on "dry ground." Israel reached the Jordan during the flood season and the waters "rose up upon a heap very far from the city Adam" (Joshua 3:15-16). It would have

been impossible to cross over it but for the miracle of God that took place. As the priests carrying the Ark dipped their feet in the brim of the river, the waters were cut off.

"Far from Adam" reveals how experiencing our death with Christ is different from experiencing His death for us. The city of Adam refers to our beginning. We have come far from Adam, through many experiences, to how old we are now. We came to Gilgal for a new beginning and now we are clean over the Jordan, leaving behind all of the lies of rejection.

CONCLUSION

Once we have crossed over into the land of God's promises, we face many enemies. There certainly will be challenges, but we have the guarantee of victory. We have the promise that Christ will never leave us nor forsake us. Feelings of rejection cannot hinder us any more.

Each place the soles of our feet touch is ours. We have gone through the Red Sea, through the wilderness of carnality, over the Jordan River, and now we are walking in the land of promises. Let's accept those promises, put our feet down, and refuse to return to the wilderness of rejection and lies.

The Winter Is Over

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INTRODUCTION

Often you have heard Psalm 118:24 in the Word of God: "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." But, have you ever considered that there are some folks who live as though it's, "This is the day that Satan has made; let's be miserable in it"? Really! Some people plan on Tuesday to be sick all week. They plan to be defeated, but in a very comfortable way. I believe a Christian has to plan to be spiritual, plan to be an overcomer, and plan to walk in the Lord.

God wants His people to understand what it means to plan to be an overcomer, to purpose to be victorious. Plan to show up for services. God wants His people to plan to be happy, plan to be peaceful, plan to be pure. Plan to be a person who has a smile on your face! That can happen, when you plan on it. The long cold winter is over. Let's plan to enjoy the springtime and all that God has for us.

Chapter One

IT IS TIME FOR THE LORD TO WORK

"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

"The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

"The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away" (Song of Solomon 2:11-13).

"It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law" (Psalm 119:126).

"My times are in thy hand" (Psalm 31:15*a*).

Picture the Son—the Lord Jesus Christ—along with the Father and the Holy Spirit billions of years ago in the eternal convention in heaven (Acts 2:23), going over the names of everyone who would be born upon the earth. What if the Trinity had made distinctions? What

if God decided to be a "respecter of persons," regarding whom He would love? Would you or I be included? Imagine if they were sitting around discussing individuals as names came up? In His omniscience, the Father might have said, "Shirley's sins are a lot worse than Stew's sins, so we can't love her as much as we love him. And Sherry's sins are much worse than Shirley's sins, so we can't love her nearly as much!"

Wouldn't that be terrible? Yet, isn't that exactly the way many of us look at each other? Most people who call themselves Christians have never carefully studied the essence of God's nature, and they don't know God's character of love.

The Truth

Billions and billions of years ago, God decided to bless all of us.

He made a plan to pay for all of your sins.

His plan was for the Son to die on the Cross in your place.

Billions and billions of years ago, the Father determined that His love for each one of us would be equal. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). He determined that no matter how much a person would sin, He would still pay for

each one. Again and again, the Bible says that God is no respecter of persons. To see that kind of love in action among believers today would overwhelm us! A Christian needs to plan to receive that love and to purpose in his heart to live each day as God has made it—to rejoice in this day and be glad!

In heaven, there will be some amazed and astounded people when they stand face to face with Jesus Christ and realize that His love was the same for everyone, in terms of grace. Thank God, the Bible teaches that clearly.

Psalm 119:126 says, "It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law." I want to encourage you today so you will be strengthened with God. It is time for God to work! Many people have made doctrine void; it has no effect in their lives.

But the people who know how to think with God do not make doctrine void. That is why categorical doctrine is so crucial. It is living by God's Word—God's own thoughts—expressed and revealed in His own way, through the Holy Spirit, for every situation: precept upon precept, line upon line (Isaiah 28:9-10).

"It is time for thee, LORD, to work" means that it is time for God to do something He has

never done before in my life so that I will stop making His Word of no effect. I don't have to make doctrine ineffectual! Let's get with it! We don't have to frustrate love, healing, forgiveness, or patience. We don't need to make peace or edification void in our expression.

One well-known Bible college has a rule that students in Homiletics classes may not critique any preacher who speaks in their church or at their Bible college. Furthermore, students may not write down how a speaker might have done something better. The reason for this rule is that the Bible says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29). The president of that school has said, "Critiquing preachers is not edifying, and it does not minister grace to the hearers. Let the world do the critiquing. We will produce the biggest church in America without it!" That's what he said. And he is right. I am not to say one single word that does not minister grace to the listeners or edify the hearer, according to the Word of God. If I do, I am grieving the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).

"This is the day that the LORD hath made…." "It is time for thee, LORD, to work…." Consider

those words, meditate on them, and realize this: If I do not make void the Word of God, if I do not nullify how God thinks, then He will work in my life as He has never worked before. How do I make void God's thoughts? By not mixing faith with what I hear (Hebrews 4:2), by not being meek as I listen (James 1:21), and by not responding with physical action to the presence of God and His promises (John 5:6-8; John 9:1-5). It is time for God to work!

My Times Are in God's Hands

When the Bible says that my times are in God's hand (Psalm 31:15), it also says I can bless the Lord at all times (Psalm 34:1), and I can trust in Him at all times (Psalm 62:8). "A wise man discerneth time and judgment" (Ecclesiastes 8:5). It is possible for God's people to experience Him working in their lives in a dynamic way.

But, according to Ecclesiastes 9:12, men do not know their time. This means that I may have a tremendous need; but if I do not know that *this* is the day God has made, then I don't know that this is my time. In Ecclesiastes 9:12*c*, the Word of God says that in an evil time, men become snared by infectious forces. Time takes advantage of a man who does not know that his time

is in God's hands. That man becomes ensnared when an evil time falls suddenly upon him, trapping him as if in a net.

To have wisdom is to apply specific Bible doctrine in circumstances and to see the Lord at work in our midst. We will discern both the time and judgment, seeing that this is the day the Lord made; and we will hear Him call us to arise and come away with Him.

Chapter Two

RESPOND TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD

In Song of Solomon 2:11, the Bible says that the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. Some of you may remember some devastating winters, when it seemed like you would rather go home to be with God than live. It would be so cold, and then it would grow colder. Then it would become warm, then snow again, and then it would snow some more. I remember one year, I didn't see the sun for over thirty minutes in three months. I would quote verses and claim verses, but still I wanted to see the sunshine! It was so cold—and the cold was penetrating. Psychologically, it does something to a person to go three months without seeing the sun, except for a short measure of time.

When the winter ended, I thought of that great verse: "The winter is over." Then it started raining—rain every day—the whole month of

March. I thought March would show us some sunshine, but it was just rain, rain, rain. Finally the rain stopped sometime in May. "The rain is over and gone"—and there came a beautiful week in New England. At that time, it seemed like August, but it was May. Everyone said we had such a terrible winter that year. But now, we would have such a beautiful summer.

A Time to be Healed

Leaving the weather conditions for just a moment, think of it like this. You have been through a tremendous trial in your life. Your heart has been broken. You have been wounded, and you have been in pain, emotionally. Then you begin to have fellowship with Jesus Christ. God gives you a promise. That promise quickens you immeasurably, and the promise is this: The winter is over! The winter is past, and the rain is over and gone—and you know that it's true.

Everyone has been through periods in their life when, finally, the winter is over. Some of you are going to experience that today. Others have experienced it during this past year. The winter is over.

A woman had been sick for four and a half

years, and everybody prayed for her. Time went by, and still she wasn't healed—until she came on a Sunday night to our little church in South Berwick where she was gloriously healed. She called me the next day and read these verses: "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth…." The birds are singing, and the turtle's sound is heard in the land (that means a sound of joy). The fig tree is putting forth its fruit, and the vines are putting forth grapes with a good fragrance. The Lord revealed five different things—all beautiful—that mean springtime is coming. After years of being confined to bed, practically speaking, that woman did not make God's doctrine void; rather, she responded to the presence of God.

In another case, I received a call from a dear friend who is a pastor in New York. He had been through a tremendous trial; and, after listening several times to a particular message that ministered to his need, the winter in his soul was over. He did not frustrate the Word of Grace.

It is a beautiful thing when the winter times are over. One of the great things we must realize is that when something like the winter is over, it's over. I wish I could help you to see that

there are times in your life when the winter is over. Your times are in God's hands. This is the day that God made. The winter is over; the rain is over and gone. This is a brand-new era.

Standing on the Promises

If you are looking unto Jesus Christ, there are so many times in life when you will see that the winter is past. Perhaps you have tremendous problems in your marriage. May I encourage you and comfort you? Nobody knows how it will turn out, but I'll tell you this: It is time for God to work for you.

When you ask God to work, be ready for God to work in whatever way He knows is best. Don't tell Him how to work, just accept what He does. It is time for God to work because our times are in God's hands. This is the day that God has made; be glad, rejoice, and relax in it.

There are many beautiful families who thank God for their children. Some of you have had tremendous heartaches because of your children. Some children have crushed their mothers' hearts—mothers who are following Jesus Christ with all their hearts, still believing God for their children. I want to encourage those moms today by saying that I believe *God* brought this mes-

sage. The winter is past. Have you been lonely, with no purpose in your life? The winter is past! Let the flowers come, let the birds sound forth in the land. Let the fruit come from the fig tree and the fragrance of the grape come from the vines. Let God move again. He has a beautiful and precious provision.

First, Put On the Lord

A fellow who was on drugs kept coming to this church; still, he would go back on drugs two weeks out of every month. One day I asked him, "Do you want to know what your problem is? You don't understand how to "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ. You are trying to make no provision for the flesh before you put on Jesus Christ. But you must *first* put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *then* make no provision for the flesh."

The Bible says that if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). But the key is to plan and purpose to walk in the Spirit. God's purpose and God's plan is that we would first put on the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. People who struggle with drugs and liquor and all of these problems try to make no provision for the flesh. They try not to fulfill the

lusts of the flesh, and they end up being defeated.

Anytime I walk in love, I'll not walk in defeat. Anytime I walk in faith, I will not walk in the need of the flesh. Anytime I put on Jesus Christ, I will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Any time I walk in the Spirit, I'll not be in bondage to my flesh. God says to purpose and plan to be spiritual. Plan to trust, plan to honor, plan to love.

Plan on Faith Obedience

God's people need to plan their obedience. "This is the day that the Lord has made." If I believe this is true, and if I will rejoice and be glad in it, then I can plan to have a good time this day. Each day we live is a very special day.

There is something else we need to plan. We need to plan to obey God, rather than the instincts of the flesh. Obedience to God is the key to mastering every single thing in our life. You tell me a problem, and I'm apt to tell you, "Obey God, and you will be released." Obedience is the way God releases our mind and emotions. *Obedience*—just plain obedience!

Romans 1:5*b* refers to faith obedience. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is the substance of things

hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." When I have faith in my heart, and I confess the things not yet seen, I become accountable to Someone else. I have chosen faith obedience in my heart. Faith obedience will straighten out so many problems in my life—my bondage, my fears, my insecurity. Faith obedience can heal my body and heal me from things that go on in my life. Faith obedience!

Faith has substance, dwelling richly in my heart. The evidence is when I confess what is in my heart publicly, to become accountable to the hearer. When this takes place, I strengthen and reinforce the springtime of my life. The winter is past, the rain is over and gone. Spring is here! Now come the flowers and the birds and the turtle and the figs and the grapes. Now comes the beautiful spring. The winter is gone. Now the beauty and the life of the trees show forth. God wants to teach us how faith obedience can bring the springtime into our lives.

What does it mean to enter into faith obedience? Trust God's Word, trust God's character—confess it, get up, and walk! Put on the Lord Jesus Christ so you will not fulfill the lust of your flesh. Walk in the Spirit, and you will not be in bondage to the old sin nature. Don't live in

your personality, but live with a renewed heart that controls your personality.

Chapter Three

THE IMPORTANCE OF A GODLY BALANCE

There is a beautiful verse in Proverbs 11:1: "A false balance is an abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight." What is a false balance? Here is somebody who wrote a letter and said, "I don't like the youth ministry." The person who wrote that letter doesn't have a ministry. We have over one hundred outreaches in our church, but that person is not involved in any of them. That is a false balance.

Another person may say to the pastor, "I don't like your preaching." Don't critique the preaching. If you do absolutely nothing with your life with God but stay home and criticize, don't critique the preaching! I have always said that if you can do it better, try it for forty years! Go ahead! You can only critique a preacher if you prove you can do a better job. You can only critique the youth pastor if you will prove to me

that you are better than he is—and you can't do that. That is a false balance.

A false balance is a husband who doesn't love his wife with Calvary's love, yet he expects his wife to obey him. He starts giving her that verse: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands" (Ephesians 5:22*a*). Yet so should he love her and lay down his life for her (Ephesians 5:25). A false balance is reading all the verses on healing but not doing a single thing to make a provision to be healed! You read all the verses on how to get victory over liquor, and you don't do one single thing to get victory—that is a false balance.

The Bible says, "Give and it shall be given unto you." So you don't give, but you want God to give it to you. That is a false balance. If I say I want a church that goes soul winning, a church that goes into all the world and peaches the gospel, but I never go on outreach—not once—don't you agree that it's a false balance?

A false balance is an abomination to the Lord. The Hebrew word for *abomination* is *to'ebah*, a word that implies disgust and loathing. Homosexuality is an abomination. Dishonest business practices are an abomination. Engaging in the occult, worshipping idols, offering an impure

sacrifice are all abominations. Not stepping out in faith but staying in your sick bed when God wants to heal you—that is an abomination. Abominations include those activities, characteristics, behaviors that are destructive to your personal health, the family, and society (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Don't live in a false balance. A balance that isn't godly, that doesn't come from God's thinking, is an abomination. The Word of God instructs us to love one another unconditionally. As far as I am concerned, however, I can't love you that way. I try to tip the scales in my favor by rationalizing to justify my behavior toward you. According to the Bible, if I have God's love, I would love everybody and lay down my life for them. If I don't have God's love, and I love some people while I don't love others, I am living in a false balance. The fellow who secretly lives in immorality but believes his church ought to be pure and godly—can you see it? A false balance is an abomination to the Lord.

A Just Weight: God's Delight

The Bible says a just weight is God's delight. Something that has gone through Calvary and comes out through Jesus Christ has the weight

of love, grace, mercy, holiness, purity, and righteousness. A just weight is a delight in God's sight (Proverbs 11:1*b*).

See that the winter is past; let springtime come. Amen? My winter is past. Your winter has been cold and miserable, filled with terrible finances, heartaches, and, in some cases, an incompatible marriage. You have been through so much, but you have drawn near to God. You have done your best to follow Jesus. You keep right on believing, confessing, and praying. Well, it is time for God to work, and it is time for your winter to be over! Just believe it.

This is the day that *God* made. The devil did not make this day—God did! Evil hasn't framed this day—God has! Relax! God made this day, so be glad in it. This is a brand-new hour for you. Do you see the flowers that have blossomed? Can you hear the birds singing? The sound of the turtle in the land? That means happiness. There is fruit on the fig tree and grapes on the vine.

Only Believe

It is a beautiful thing to know that your winter is past. Early in my ministry, I tried to counsel a man who had a problem in his marriage,

and I brought up that verse. He really had a terrible marriage; it seemed as if nothing was working for him. He was despondent, so I sent him to a psychiatrist, one of the top counselors in the state of Maine, because my counseling didn't seem to help.

Before long, he was back in my office saying that not a single thing was helping. I sat there thinking, "How can I build this guy up? I don't even think he would believe in God's promises at this point!" Nevertheless, I spoke the promises in Isaiah 30:18, Matthew 7:7, and Matthew 21:21 to him. "God is waiting to be gracious to you. Ask, and you will receive. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Say unto this mountain, 'Be removed, be cast into the sea,' do not doubt, and God will do it for you. Whatever you desire, God will do it!"

That fellow said to me, "Did God give you those verses?" I said, "I think so! I didn't make them up. They are all in the Bible." He said, "If God gave you those verses and if I can believe that God gave them to you, then I believe my whole life will change." I took a step of faith and said, "It's all right there in the Bible, and I think God told me to read them to you." He said, "Then I believe!"

After awhile, this man asked, "Would you go out to dinner with my wife and me? Don't be surprised if we fight during the meal because she would just as soon fight in front of you as she would before God Almighty—and you're just a sinner!"

So, I went out to dinner with them. (This case ends well, honestly!) We were sitting there eating away. She would growl about something, then he would ignore her, then she would snap; and I thought, Lord, how do you handle this couple? A decade and a half of being miserable—and they both know God, but they just don't want to quit their fighting.

Finally I said, "I don't know why, but I think Jesus is coming back someday…soon!" No date setting, but all I could say was, "I can't wait for Jesus to come back!" Then, that woman, who was saved but who never went to church, said, "Do you think He's coming back *real* soon?" I said, "Well, according to the Bible, His coming is imminent." She said, "Boy, would that solve this problem!" I asked if we could pray. I said, "Father, just maybe the Rapture would settle this problem, but like the apostle John of old said, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus,' and quickly! Amen."

We talked and laughed, and we became good friends. We went bowling together the following week, and then we went out the week after that. Finally, around the third or fourth week, I was preaching a message called "An Interview with Death." In it, I described a scene where three people are facing death. One person protests that he is not ready, only to hear, "It's too late. You are going to die." I described a person who is unsaved, a carnal Christian, and then a spiritual Christian.

Welcome the Springtime

That couple listened to every word. When I was finished, the woman stood up and came forward—she didn't even wait for her husband. She knelt at the altar, then he came up behind her. It was one of the sweetest, most beautiful reconciliations—and after fifteen years of strife. This is the message that God gave for their marriage: "The winter is past; the rain is over and gone. You are going to enjoy the flowers of spring in your marriage." That marriage became one of the most precious, sacred marriages ever. They have stood with me through thick and thin. Springtime came into their marriage. Their winter is over.

CONCLUSION

The winter is over! This is the truth—for your family, your health, your finances, your business, your little child's problems. God is waiting to be gracious (Isaiah 30:18). Please remember that! It is time for God to work. I believe it with all my heart. Let the Holy Spirit minister truth to you. Be very personal with God in a positive way.

Some of the greatest times in my life have come after a long winter, spiritually speaking. These are God's words, and they are for you. This is the time for God to work. This is the day that God has made—for *you*. Your times are in God's hands. Believe His Word: The winter is over! Springtime has come.

The Word of Deliverance

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36).

Can you imagine the fear that comes with isolation? In Mark 5, Jesus dealt with three situations that caused people to be isolated: a man with an unclean spirit, a ruler in the synagogue whose daughter was dying, and a woman with an issue of blood. He had healed the demoniac and was on His way to Jairus' home, when the woman touched Him.

She had been ostracized by her community, excommunicated by her church, and divorced by her husband because of her disease. Then, as Jesus walked through the crowd, she touched the hem of His garment. Virtue went out of Him, and the woman was healed.

"And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague" (Mark 5:34).

Right after that scene, the news came that Jairus' daughter, a young girl twelve years of age,

had died. People in the crowd mocked Jesus when he said she was only sleeping, but He had said to her father, "Be not afraid, only believe."

If we were really honest about it, many things in our lives bring fear, or at least certain kinds of fear. Whether it's the fevered brow of a little baby, or the news that somebody has cancer, or word that somebody was just in a serious accident—whatever it is, there are many reasons in this world to be afraid. Yet, as we find over and over in the Scriptures, and as we will see it in this booklet, the One who is love casts out fear, and He has a word for us:

"Be not afraid, only believe."

Chapter One
BE NOT AFRAID, ONLY BELIEVE

There is a bona fide fear that is not sinful because of our human frailty. Then there is a fear that comes because we do not believe. The fear that comes upon us when we hear something is not a sinful type of fear. It is very normal, and by God's grace it will not last long if we look at Jesus Christ. That is when the words from the lips of Jesus Christ are so beautiful: "Be not afraid, only believe."

The potential of God's people to have Him work in their lives is indescribable. We are down here on this earth, and we see everything under the sun, terrible things, going on consistently, day and night. Some of us do not like to turn on the news anymore because of what we see—the latest fire that killed somebody, the latest crime or murder, or whatever is going on. But here are the words of Jesus Christ: "Be not afraid, only believe."

I want you to see this today. I want you to think of it and let the Spirit of God minister to you. If God Almighty spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, "how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). That's what Paul said: Will He not with Him freely, freely give us all things?

The Beauty of Holiness

In Song of Solomon is a very beautiful verse. The bride is now married to the bridegroom, and in chapter 2 verse 10, he called her "my fair one." Again, in verse 13, he called her "my fair one." He talks about her teeth ("like flocks"), in chapter 4 verse 2, because that speaks of being able to masticate and assimilate the Word of God. The flocks are selective about what they eat. They are being fed on Mount Gilead (Jeremiah 50:19 and Micah 7:14), and this speaks so beautifully of being fed by the Word of God. He talks about her hair, in chapter 4 verse 1, which stands for separation (Numbers 6) and a covering for the woman (1 Corinthians 11:15). Because her soul is right before God, she is under a divine covering through obedience in the soul.

In Song of Solomon 4:8, the Word of God talks about the view from the top of Mount Hermon,

Shenir, and Amana. This is an analogy of Satan's defeat and God's victory over him through the manifestation of resurrection. Amana speaks of integrity in doctrine. Shenir speaks of the whole armor of God. So, with integrity of doctrine and the whole armor of God, we are looking down from our position in the Finished Work, hid with Christ in God, seated at the right hand of the Father (Colossians 3:3, Ephesians 2:6). There were lions' dens in that mountain, and there will always be Satan's lions, as Psalm 91:13 teaches, wherever we are in Christ.

So this is a picture of the bride actually being seated with Christ, hid with Christ, but still living below on this earth where the roaring lion seeketh whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

You Are Perfect

But in the midst of Song of Solomon 4:7, the Bridegroom, who we know is Jesus, said something very beautiful. He said, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." What did He mean?

I want you to learn this Finished Work in every degree you possibly can. Not just our sins were imputed onto Jesus, but everything about our old sin nature was placed upon Him on the Cross. This is what Jesus says about you. According to 1 Cor-

inthians 1:27, God has chosen "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise…the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." God has chosen it to be that way.

He goes on to say that the base things and things that are despised, God has chosen—the things that are not to bring to nothing, or to render powerless, the things that are: "That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:29).

Then He said, "But of him are ye [chosen] in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

"That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

Chapter Two

HE HAS MADE US WHOLE

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Think about this! Consider it as you meditate on God's personal words to you in your soul.

Number one: You are the righteousness of God.

Number two: You have been made the righteousness of God.

Number three: There is no spot in you.

Number four: The King's daughter is all glorious within, she has clothing that has been made with gold (Psalm 45:13).

Read what the Bible says in Jeremiah 23:6b and 33:16b, and really consider it: "and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

I know I have an old sin nature, and I know that there are times of struggling. But thank God

today, we have been made the righteousness of God.

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom,"—the application of the Finished Work—"and righteousness,"—imputed to us through Calvary when we believed—"and sanctification,"—set apart forever, once and for all (Hebrews 10:14)—"and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). There it is: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

By the grace of Almighty God, you get in your car in the morning and go to work and go home at night, and you are the righteousness of God. I don't care how wicked you feel. I don't care how many mistakes you might make going through a process of growing. You are the righteousness of God! This is the most beautiful thing, because in Romans 7:17, "Now then it is no more I that do [the thing that I hate], but sin that dwells in me." And again in Romans 7:20, "…it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

One of the most fascinating, illuminating verses that God could give His children is that when I sin—and God forbid that I do—yet "it is no more I." Why? Because I am in Lebanon with Christ, which means, as we read in Song of Solomon 4:8, I am seated above in heavenly places,

hid with Christ in God. It is because I'm seated on Amana, the integrity of truth in the Finished Work. It is because God has given me Shenir, the whole armor of God. And though there are lions and serpents in that region, God has protected me with the whole armor of Almighty God.

The Now Principle

As you think of this, realize that because you are the righteousness of God and the wisdom of God; and because you are here in that state of being, just think of what happens now. This is why God says in Proverbs 5:7, "Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth."

And we say, "I'm going to talk to you, Jesus, and I want You to hear me now. Lord, I want You to know that I'll pay my vows in the presence of Your people, and I'll do that now," (Psalm 116:14,18). That means I'll be present at church time. I will worship with the worshippers, and I'll sing with the singers. I'll pray with those that pray. I'll be there to edify.

And then we begin to see what Jesus is saying. He says, "I want you to realize that when you die, that I am the resurrection and the life right now, and he who believes in Me, though he were

dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never, ever, ever, die" (John 11:26).

He said, "I want you to know that I take the soul out of your body and take you right up to heaven in the 'now' principle. I do it now. I don't wait for the resurrection of your body. I do it now."

Then He said, "I want you to know that because you are saved, "there is therefore now no condemnation" (Romans 8:1). "I want you to know that now there is no condemnation!"

Then we think of this verse in 2 Corinthians 6:1-2, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain….behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Now is the day of deliverance.

Jesus is saying, "I want you to know that I love you now. I want you to know that I want to help you now. I want you to know you don't need to fear now. I want you to know that you can simply believe in Me now. I want you to know that I am present to deliver you now (Jeremiah 1:8). I want you to know that I'm filled with love and compassion for you now. I want you to know that today is My day, and I want to deliver you."

And the Psalmist said, "I wish that You would

give me prosperity now." That's what he said! "Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity" (Psalm 118:25).

A Prayer

People are asking God for something right now, and we say to the Lord, "I want You to reverse some things providentially, just as You have done for others in this place, Lord. I am Your child. I am Your daughter. I am Your son, and I want something to happen now. I don't mean to be offensive, but I love You. So would You deliver me now? You said, 'Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation.' So would You please, Father, do it now?"

When God says, "There is no spot in you," that is because not only were your sins imputed to Jesus Christ, but He became sin for you, though He knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in Him, (2 Corinthians 5:21).

So now I understand it! That is why when I sin now, it is no longer "I" because the sin was imputed to Jesus. Now when I sin—and God forbid, God forbid!—but now when I sin it is no longer I but sin that dwells in me (Romans 7:20), because it is not I but Christ!

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live;

yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Chapter Three

IN DARKNESS, WALK IN THE LIGHT

The Christian must realize that he is walking in the light of divine power, of divine resurrection, of divine love, and of divine expectation. Jesus said to those parents in Mark 5, "I know your daughter is dead, but don't you be afraid." He said, "Only believe. Will you just believe? Be not afraid. Only believe."

Psalm 62:5 says "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." Then in verse 11 we read that power belongs to God. I've gone to God many times feeling not well and yet other times feeling wonderful. But I always come and say, "God, You are going to do it again. You are going to do it now. You are going to be the blessing right now. I'm going to let You do it. Now is my day of deliverance. Now is my day of healing. Now is my day to be touched of God—Right now.

One of the great things that we see in the Bible over and over again is that when Jesus was on earth, He wanted to help people right then and right there. He wants us to relate to Him that way right now, as I believe that you do, as He enlarges those steps (Psalm 18:36) so that your feet do not slip. And remember, don't be afraid of the pain. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of the projections that come. Don't be afraid of the times when the enemy attacks you. Be not afraid. Be not afraid! Jesus Christ is inside of you to love you. Only believe.

"But," you say, "He hasn't done it in the past."

Be not afraid. Get to know the Christ of resurrection now—the One that Satan despises, the One that Satan hates. Satan fears Him desperately because Satan is now defeated.

On the Resurrection Side

In Song of Solomon 6, the bride is on the resurrection side, seated in heavenly places. She is hid with Christ in God. And with that being true, she had such an amazing privilege and opportunity.

Consider what Romans 6:22 says: "But now being made free from sin…." we have become servants of God. We have been delivered, and we

bring forth fruit unto holiness, unto our righteous God. The Bible says in Romans 3:21 that now we have the righteousness of God, and we have been delivered from the law—right now.

The Bible says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy [Spirit]" (Romans 15:13). Paul was saying, "I want Him to give you the joy, the love, and the happiness now."

The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians 2:12, we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God. Do you know when we received it? We have it right now. The Bible says we have the mind of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) right now. The Word isn't up in heaven or down below that we have to go down and get it, but it is near, even in our mouths, and in our hearts. It is the word of faith, and we can confess it right now (Romans 10:6-9).

CONCLUSION

Oh, God loves your confession. God loves it when you confess His favor and His love, when you confess your trust in Him publicly before the demons, and the unseen atmosphere. There is an invisible war raging in our midst, but we are protected and covered by the love of God.

And God loves it when you begin to make that divine confession of His nature and character now. Don't accept exhaustion and tiredness all the time. Build yourself up in the energy and power of divine expectation. Be quickened in your mortal body. Put those shoulders back. Begin to inhale, believe God in faith, and express that faith right now.

Be not afraid—only believe! Now is the day of our deliverance.

There Is No Limit

to God's Forgiveness

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

What makes a Christian "great"? David was a man who committed some great sins, and yet he recognized that only one thing made him great. In Psalm 18, he spoke about a very unusual subject: God's gentleness and power working in our lives. If we understand this, then we will do away with our grudges and sins of the tongue.

All of us are sinners. We all come short of the glory of God. God forbid that we would ever promote lasciviousness by teaching a message that turns the grace of God into a license for willful sin. Those who do, profess to know God but in their works deny Him (see Jude 4 and Titus 1:16). They live as though continuing in sin causes grace to abound, and that is wrong.

The marvelous and glorious truth is that God's gentleness is what makes us great. This booklet will show that heaven measures greatness by our ability to reveal God's unlimited

grace and mercy even to those who continually hurt us. That greatness reveals in us God's forgiveness that forgets. Furthermore, it reveals how God lifts up those who fail.

Chapter One

A READINESS TO FORGIVE

"Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psalm 18:35).

David knew it was God's gentleness that made him great. He practiced this principle in relating to others. He would not reach out his hand to touch God's anointed king, the guilty Saul. He refused to take up greatness on his own. Only God would make him great.

Think of God coming up to you and saying, "You are great. My gentleness has made you great." How does God do it? He works in us through the Holy Spirit who produces God's fruit in us, which is love. Out of God's perfect love comes joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, faithfulness, and temperance: the eight results of God's love toward us. God works in us because of His royal law of love and

forgiveness toward us.

God deals with His children based on love and forgiveness because of what Christ did on the Cross. As believers, we are part of His family now. That does not mean, however, that God will ignore sin in our lives. In perfect love, He will discipline us to produce peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11).

Keeping It in the Family

"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

"But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

"For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

"And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Hebrews 12:7-13).

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matthew 18:15).

"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

"Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22).

There are many reasons for which God could discipline the believer, but He only disciplines with one thing in mind. His entire purpose is to gain someone back into a right relationship with God and His Word. Likewise, when we extend forgiveness to a brother, we gain him back.

Peter really thought he was something. "I am doing pretty well, Lord," he said in so many words. "I gave up my fishing business to follow you. Now, let's talk about something. I think it will bless you, Jesus. Are you ready? I can for-

give someone seven times—for the same thing, and in the same day!"

Jesus was not impressed. The beautiful thing He declared, with an idiom of speech, is that we should forgive seventy times seven. This idiom is an expression for unlimited forgiveness. Peter, like many Christians, placed a limit on forgiveness. Jesus erased that terrible misunderstanding of His Word and said, "There is no limit to forgiveness."

Divine Discipline

Yes, there is discipline. There is an order and procedure to follow in gaining back a brother. First we have to learn the meaning of the Hebrew word *calach*, which is "to forgive." The word appears in 1 Kings 8:30: "And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive." *Calach* speaks of God being ready to forgive at all times.

The verb tense indicates the timelessness of the character of forgiveness. If I hear that someone has sinned against me, I must be ready to forgive him instantly, the moment something happens. Beyond having an attitude of readi-

ness, I ought to be ready to bear the burden for that one, ready to go and build him up.

The first mention of the word "forgive" occurs in Genesis 50:17. Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers, became a burden bearer for his brothers. Only Jesus can *remove* the burden of our sins, but Joseph, rather than pursuing vengeance and punishment, *carried* the burden of his brothers' failing. God had put him in a place to save Jacob and his family. In fact, the nation of Israel would spring from Joseph's family.

God desires that we would be so filled with His nature that compassion would erase all anger instantly. Compassion should be running out of us, to the point where we are willing to bear the burden of those who hurt us. A person who lives in the viewpoint of divine forgiveness will pray, "God, please go easy on this one. I hold nothing against him. Lord, forgive him."

Chapter Two

FORGIVE AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU

"…Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:7-8).

When I walk in forgiveness, I am ready to forgive you even before you sin against me. When I do this, I am walking in something that makes my spiritual life great with God.

Gentleness, greatness, and forgiveness all go together. If we live in the gentleness of the Holy Spirit, we are great, and with this greatness, we forgive. Think of it. The Father has given all power to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). With that power, He bore our sins and did away with sin's power.

The great purpose of the Father's plan of Redemption was to bear our sins and to do away with them. By shedding His blood, Jesus Christ,

who knew no sin, became sin for us. We have been forgiven, and sin is no longer the issue. All that remains is for us to receive, and extend, this most precious gift.

As Far as the East Is from the West

The Greek text of Romans 4:7-8 indicates that when you confess your sin, you are completely restored to experience your position, just as you did before you sinned. More than that, the original text reveals that there can be no charge against you because Jesus removes the guilt. If there is anything wrong, He will not condemn you; rather, He will bear the burden with you.

If I happen to know about something wrong that someone did, I am to be a burden bearer for him.

"I remember what that person did to me eight years ago," you may say. But Jesus does not remember.

Perhaps you have heard someone say, "I really could tell you some things about him."

But Jesus could not. He removed every sin from us, as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

Now, this is an amazing lesson in divine

geography. East and west never meet. On this planet, you can go north to the North Pole and then you have to start going south. North does meet south. However, east never meets west. If you start walking eastward, you will just keep going east, forever.

Dealing with Debts: Ours and Others'

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

"And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

"But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

"The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

"Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

"But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and

took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

"And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

"And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

"So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

"Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

"Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

"And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matthew 18:23-35).

The first servant in this parable owed his master an amount that by today's standards equaled approximately twenty-five million dollars. To settle the debt, his master was about to

sell him into slavery, along with his wife and children. Yet, when he fell down and asked for mercy, the king had compassion and forgave the debt.

"Your debt—all of it—is canceled forever," the king said to him.

"Really? It's gone?"

"Yes, it's gone. You owe nothing."

In this parable, Jesus was teaching us that though we commit a multitude of sins, He comes to us and says, "Every penalty is dismissed, because I died for it all."

Looking at the rest of this story, the same servant who had been forgiven such a large debt grabbed the neck of a fellowservant who owed him a few dollars and demanded payment. The fellowservant asked for time and patience, but he refused and had him put in jail.

Word got back to the king, and he was extremely angry when he found out what had happened. The servant who had been forgiven twenty-five million dollars was turned over to the "tormentors"—a debtors' workhouse that included tortures.

Some of us do the same thing. Christ has forgiven us so much, but often we will not forgive even the little things that have been done to us.

This only opens us to torment in our emotional and spiritual lives. Yes, it is true that all of our sins were forgiven at Calvary. Still, we are commanded to forgive others as Christ forgave us (Ephesians 4:32). If we choose not to allow Him to show forgiveness through us, then He must discipline us.

If God were to mark iniquity, not one of us could stand. So wrote David in Psalm 130. Not a person in the universe could stand before the Lord. But blessed are those whose sins are forgiven and who have no iniquity, because the Lord cannot impute sin. He placed every one of our sins upon the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world.

Chapter Three

GRACE IN ACTION EXALTS MERCY

"And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isaiah 30:18).

"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

"They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

"Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

"This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is

without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

"And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

"And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

"She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:3-11).

God is so gracious. He waits to give us mercy. He is ever ready to forgive so that His mercy may be exalted. Consider the amazing story, in John 8, of the woman taken in adultery. This is not a parable or a clever illustration; it is a real event. In full view of the Pharisees and all the others who were there, Jesus was putting what He taught into action.

The Lord Jesus, in effect, said to this woman, "I know the guilt that you are going through. I have already forgiven your sins. I have canceled

every debt that you owe. Now go, and sin no more."

God does not want us to continue to practice sin. But if we do sin and then turn to Him for forgiveness, He is faithful and just to forgive us *and* to make us clean (1 John 1:9).

Some will continue in sin, and their behavior does have consequences. Fellowship with Him and with the Body of Christ is hindered. God will discipline and chastise individuals, but He does it all in love. His purpose is to draw us back into a right relationship with Him and with His Word.

Like the woman in John 8, when we have sinned, we need to take hold of the grace that motivates us and gives us power. If we repent, God forgives us and looks at us as though we had never sinned. Instead of taking two steps back, we are fully restored to our position as it was before we sinned. We go forward just as if we had never committed a single sin.

Extending the Provisions of Our Position

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:24-25).

As Christians, we stand in the positional truth that we are saved forever, and we have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb. This needs to be our frame of reference in our thinking. Our confession, our language, and our relationships should all relate to our position. If a brother fails, we must be ready to forgive and to pray that he will repent so he can be set free too. We must let grace be the teacher and not guilt.

Aphiemi is a Greek word that means "forgiving." It appears 174 times in the New Testament, and it speaks of removing the guilt from us. Christ removes guilt from us so that we don't have to live in secret projections, and He sets us free indeed. More than that, He bears our burdens and ever lives to make intercession for us. He takes us out of the depths of sin and sets our feet upon the Rock (Psalm 40:2). The great picture here is that once He forgives, He really forgives and forgets, and He never places us on probation.

Satan despises that. The devil absolutely hates Matthew 20, where the Lord declared that the servant who worked one hour got the same reward as the one who worked the entire day. Satan hates this because he works hard to produce guilt and condemnation. He does every-

thing he can to interfere with Christians continuing in the holiness and righteousness of Christ and the Finished Work.

"And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

"And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zechariah 3:2-4).

In Zechariah 3, the devil approached the throne of God to accuse Joshua, the high priest, who stood before the Lord. "I would like to go over the record of the high priest. It seems to me that there are some particular sins that should be of interest. Just look at this record!"

Christ rebuked Satan on the spot. "Be quiet and get out of here! This is a family matter."

Right there, God removed Joshua's sins from him and clothed him with eternal righteousness. He was placed into an eternal position of being forgiven and free forever.

This is how God looks at everyone who has received forgiveness through His Son, Jesus. Therefore, this ought to be our viewpoint toward others, as well as ourselves: Forgiven and free, forever.

CONCLUSION

What is it that makes us great? God's gentleness. And what does gentleness produce? Forgiveness.

Jesus said, "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven" (see Luke 6:37). That is a command. He commands us to forgive and swears to us that we are forgiven through His great grace.

Let me ask you a question. If God has cast our sins into the deepest sea (Micah 7:19), can we dredge them up again? No! He puts up a great, big eternal sign that declares, "No trespassing." We cannot enter the place where our sins are buried. He dismissed them. They are forgiven, forgotten, and gone—forever!

Jeremiah 50:20 says that some will seek the iniquity of Jacob and it shall not be found. The sins of Judah shall never be located, because God has put them away. He has removed them far from us, as far as east is from west.

That is God's amazing plan. This is His gen-

tleness making us great, producing forgiveness in us that covers, edifies, and restores—and never destroys. God's gentleness brings greatness to everyone who forgives and forgets as He forgives and forgets.

The Blood of Jesus Christ has taken away our iniquities. He paid for them Himself, and now He stands ready to open the windows of heaven (Malachi 3:10) and to pour down answers to prayer and blessings forever.

Thinking with God

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INTRODUCTION

Proverbs 23:7 says that as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. So many of the problems we struggle with are intensified because we simply do not know how to think with God.

In one European nation, people are showing an increasing tendency toward depression and alcoholism. This is a country where, though people pay high taxes, they are afforded almost total social security in return. The unemployed are well taken care of, so they do not feel the brunt of any economic slumps. The cities as well as the countryside are extremely clean. Still, with all of their natural and financial resources, sociologists and psychologists are spending hours studying this trend of unhappiness among the people there.

The problem is wrong thinking. Their views of success are not framed according to truth from the Word of God.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the

Word of God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8). Real success only comes when one learns how to think with God.

This booklet examines the believer's need to guard his heart and mind by consistently receiving the Word of God into the perceptive area of his mind. From there, it can be transferred by the power of the Holy Spirit through the human spirit and into the soul, bringing the mind of Christ into every detail. In these pages, we will look at the power of reception and perception in combating the attacks of the enemy as we learn to think with God.

Chapter One

READINESS OF MIND

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

"But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

"And having in a readiness to revenge all

disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Corinthians 10:1-6).

"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

"Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

"For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

"Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

"But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which

were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:10-19).

That's Your Problem

Many people have a problem with their thinking. First of all, many of us just don't know how to think right, having thoughts based in the Word of God (see Philippians 4:8). Secondly, after the problem of wrong thinking, many have trouble in the processes of thinking.

In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul draws an illustration from the great fortresses that were constructed in his day. Almost every one of these structures featured a tremendous tower, a gate, or a bridge. When it was convenient, the enemy would attempt to get across the bridge and go through to the inside. At other times, they would charge up a hill and try to assault the tower. The enemy would do everything they could to overcome the physical challenges of the fortress. Their warfare was physical.

The apostle Paul describes how Satan, our accuser and enemy, does all he can to attack our thought life with weapons that are not physical.

Paul says, "There is one thing I want to make clear. One of the greatest problems that you will ever have on earth is with your thoughts." His contention is that we must fortress our thoughts the way the countries in ancient times fortressed their cities.

Satan does everything in his power to eliminate right thinking. As we go into the study of thinking, we will come to the realization that every single thought is recorded in eternity. Every single thought you will have today is recorded in eternity.

Concentration for Victory

Then Paul declared, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

As we take up these mighty weapons, we are able to cast down every imagination and high thing that exalts itself against categorical doctrine. Then, we bring into captivity each thought to the obedience of Jesus Christ; being ready to revenge all disobedience until our obedience is fulfilled.

Christians today seem to have trouble with having their thoughts controlled by God through

what we call the proper channels of thinking.* Believers must learn to concentrate and to have their thoughts transferred from channel Aof the mind (the area of perception and awareness) to channel B (the human spirit) and down into channel C (the soul). From there, the products of these thoughts can be released through the body.

One of the most important things in the world is to have a thought-premise, a thought-process, and a thought-provision based in the truth of God's Word. A healthy thought life is consistently maintained by the human volition, which is the gift of God given to every person.

Casting Down Imaginations

What is an imagination?

An imagination (2 Corinthians 10:5) is like the photographic negative that has yet to be developed in the darkroom. It remains a "negative" or a shadow of what it is to become until it goes through the process of becoming a picture. Our imaginations are thoughts that are in their beginning stages, things that have not yet been fully developed and processed through our minds.

What Christ wants to do is to bring our minds to the place where we are equipped to

think with Him in every situation. More than just images or shadows of truth, He desires that our souls have the content of truth. With this content, we see Him as beautiful for every situation. We never accept defeat, and we learn to war with spiritual weaponry.

**Read* The Hearing Heart *by Pastor Stevens (Grace Publications, 1996).*

Chapter Two

FAITH AND PERCEPTION: THE POWER CONNECTION

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus Christ does not leave anything unfinished. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He always finishes His task, and right now Jesus Christ is in heaven making sure that we are becoming finished products on earth. He will stay with us until we have become the finished product.

I would never want to face Jesus Christ without straightening out my strongholds. There is no reason for God's people to have anything but the most godly, qualified, tremendous, powerful, enriched strongholds in their souls.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:1-3).

"That he might sanctify and cleanse [the church] with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26).

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:13-14).

In John 15, Jesus said, "I am the true vine, my Father is the husbandman." God the Father personally takes care of His garden. Everything in me that doesn't bear fruit, God purges. The areas that do bear fruit, the Lord arranges with His process of thinking so they will produce

more fruit.

Then, the Lord Jesus Christ says, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." We are made clean through the washing of the water of the Word—through a mental catharsis. This means that He has thoroughly purged our conscience until we are absolutely cleansed by the purging power of the Word and the Blood of Christ operating in our minds.

God's Strongholds

"So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130).

The first thing that God wants us to have is a tremendous understanding of God in our *perception* (our capacity for comprehension or discernment that begins in the receptive part of the mind, referred to as "channel A"). If there is anything that we need today, it is to have the strongholds of God in our perception. Once we have God's strongholds, through His promises and through fellowshipping with His Spirit, the next thing we need is to respond by faith to what we

perceive.

My faith will always equal my perception. If I am thinking with God, and I believe that God is love, God is forgiveness, and God is powerful, then my perception will grow and my faith will be elevated until my faith reflects and responds to my perception. I will see that He is the Lord and He is my Healer, and I will operate from that position.

Chapter Three

SPIRITUAL FRUIT: THE CULTIVATION OF GOD

"In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.

"I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isaiah 27:2-3).

God says He will water His vineyard every moment. He did not say it is kept by the minute nor that it is kept by the second, but He keeps it every moment. Before you have a second, you have moments. God goes to work and begins to take care of us from His viewpoint with His love and mercy in the moments, before those moments even become a second.

Now the beautiful thing is that each of our lives is like a symphony that God is composing. God finishes His symphony, and our prayers are answered. God is in the business of perfecting everything He touches. That is where we stand

in positional truth.

In positional truth, the moment we are saved we *are* seated above. We *are* in union with Jesus Christ. The basis for our process of thinking is changed as we begin to think with the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). In that process, the Lord Jesus says, "If you are faithful to understand a premise for thinking, I will train you and teach you. I will teach you how to have a godly premise and a godly process. And I will teach you what you will become as the product of your own thinking."

Our actions will always reveal our thinking.

There is not a single thing today that I can do to improve myself. Perhaps I think I could become more spiritual, but I cannot improve upon what God has done. He that has begun a good work in you will perform it (see Philippians 1:6). God has a perfect plan for every believer, and that is revealed as He finishes the product.

The thing that I love about the promises of Scripture is that there is never a time when Jesus Christ would ever leave us or forsake us. There is never a time when He will not love us. There is never a time when He will love you or me less than He loves us today.

A person could be failing right now—God

forbid—but God's love would be just exactly as great as it is when he is succeeding. (Please, don't go out test Him on this one!)

Satan as an opposing force wants to gain control of our thinking. Part of the deception today in education and in various parts of our lives stems from a permissive society filled with self-centered thinking. The devil starts with the mind. First he attacks the goodness of God, and then he attacks the truthfulness of God. That is what he did in the garden with Eve. And the first thing he mentioned to Eve was "If God is so good, why is He withholding that tree from you?" She was dumbfounded.

He made sure that he did not say, "If God is so good, why is He withholding the nine trees?" He said, "There is one tree God will not let you have, because He is not a good God."

Today the devil says, "If you would really get honest with yourself, you could see this. It is very simple. God withholds things that you deserve to have. He lets you see, but He withholds them."

Do not believe that lie for one moment. Satan is the biggest liar ever. He is the father of all lies. But when God comes into the picture, we see the principle of the vineyard. Imagine grow-

ing up in a place where they grow tons and tons of grapes. The grape growers would arrange the vines so they would grow separately, supporting the vines so they could get maximum exposure to the sun. Within a year, these vines would produce a tremendous amount of grapes—more than you could even believe. They were all sweet and you could eat them right off the vines. In fact, those are the best kind of grapes.

The Lord Jesus Christ is ready for every single one of us to enter in and cause us to become very productive, just like those vines. He is ready to bring great fruit out of our lives.

How will He do it? By teaching us how to think with Him.

CONCLUSION

Grapevines exist simply to produce fruit. They have no value except to produce grapes. And the Holy Spirit of the living God has said to us in this message, "You have great value in producing God's thoughts in your mind, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the grapes. Don't trample the tender shoots. Just receive God's life and begin to produce those grapes."

The Lord Jesus Christ will help us to do this, for He has said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." God the Father will be the caretaker of our lives. He will cultivate in us a great capacity to serve Him and to think with Him.

Let's be tremendous bearers of grapes during these days. The Lord has given us His Word so that we might think His thoughts. Let us be more ready to hear and more ready to receive His truth as we walk with Him.

This Book

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

This Book I would rather own
than all the golden gems
From off the monarch's coffers shown
and all his diadems.
Yea, if the sea were of crystal light
and the earth a golden ball,
And diamonds for stars each night,
This Book is worth them all.

Think of it carefully, study it prayerfully,
Deep in thine heart let its oracles dwell.
Ponder its mysteries, slight not its histories;
None can e'er love it too fondly or well.

by Dr. Logston

The Word of God! Based on its premise, this is one of the most serious messages I have ever prepared. We are living in a time when it is crucial that we study to show ourselves approved

unto God, able to use the Scriptures skillfully: to know God's mind and apply it in every situation (2 Timothy 2:15). Of course, that includes having His heart and being filled with His Spirit.

Intellectual stimulation by just acquiring knowledge can make a person passive or puffed up, but it doesn't make anyone spiritual. When a believer receives knowledge, he may be stimulated; but when he is filled with the Holy Spirit, the inspired truth becomes personal. He realizes that he doesn't know a single thing as he ought, but he is available to learn (1 Corinthians 8:1-2).

Several qualities characterize the Spirit-filled workman, including meekness (which is God-consciousness), and humility (which makes us able to concentrate with academic discipline). "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Psalm 25:9). Concentrating on the Word of God is the highest form of worship. Therefore, because God is a Spirit, we are to worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Our attitude is to be one not of striving, but of thankfulness and praise (Psalm 100:4), along with an awesome reverence for who He is (Hebrews 4:1).

This is how revival will be ushered in throughout the Body of Christ to prepare us for

what will happen in the coming years. It is so important that what is written in this booklet is taken to heart. These are not the words of a man; these verses are words that were already spoken by God.

Chapter One

THE WORD THAT DOES NOT FAIL

"Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant" (1 Kings 8:56).

"The law and the prophets were until John [the Baptist]: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

"And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one *tittle* of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17).

"Tittle" is *keraia* in the Greek, referring to one stroke of a pen. In English grammar, it refers to the line that is made to form the letter "t." What God is saying is that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one pen stroke of the Scriptures to fail. Think of that! Not one syllable, not one letter of the Word of God shall fail.

That verse in Luke was written fifteen hun-

dred years after Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. How many promises do you know? How many promises do you claim? Let me ask you this: In all those years, can you name one promise that failed?

It Shall Not Depart

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

"This book" shall not depart. It didn't say that songs, as precious as some of them are, shall not depart. It says, "this book." This book! That means we are to keep reading it, keep studying it, keep going to church and receiving it. Heaven and earth will be gone, but this Book will remain in us, ever growing. I am in church three times a week because I go to hear from this Book. This Book shall not depart.

Do Not Add to It

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add

unto him the plagues that are written in this book.

"And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).

Does anyone have a right to add to this book? No. This warning is not only in the book of Revelation but throughout the Bible. You can look up Deuteronomy 4:2, 11:18-22, 12:32; Proverbs 30:5; Matthew 4:4; and 2 Timothy 3:16. If this Book is added unto, do you think God will just stand by? He will not. If you think immorality and promiscuity is all right and that God won't do a thing about it, you are wrong. What will God do? You can read it in the Scriptures. God will add unto them "the plagues that are written in this book."

Don't be naive: There are plagues in the world today. Tornadoes are plagues. Hurricanes are plagues. Diseases are plagues. Now I don't mean that everyone who has a disease is plagued. Some of the best Christians in the world are suffering simply because of what we have sown as a nation.

"If any man shall take away from the words

of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life." *God* will take away his part in the book of life. Who said that? Did a man say it? No, it is God who said this.

Sure Words of Prophecy

The Bible has always been in existence. It was given to men at certain times over the course of history, but before man ever received it, the Bible always was (Psalm 119:89).

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:19-20).

We cannot privately interpret what the Bible teaches. This is not a personal opinion. In our Bible college classes, we delve into the original languages and the historical frame of reference (isagogics) for every passage we teach. And throughout this message, you will be given specific chapters and verses, line upon line and precept upon precept (Isaiah 28:10).

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by

every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Every church should be a church of the Book. People ought to bring their Bibles, open their Bibles, take notes, and check out what is said when the pastor teaches the Scriptures. As a pastor, all I want is for us to be prepared with the Word of God to meet God. We might as well get ready. Very soon, the only thing that will matter is the Word of God.

This is no time to be discouraged, depressed, or 'partially' obedient. It is time to be men and women of the Book. Let's make decisions for the Book, to live in the purpose of the Book, to go all the way with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. God will add the other things to us. He promised that He would, and He will do it (Matthew 6:33).

God Exalts His Word above His Name

"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Psalm 138:2).

This is a most interesting verse. "Thy name" speaks of the nature of God, who God is. He is lovingkindness, mercy, longsuffering, patience, and truth, which refers to doctrine. What does

God put above who He is? His Word. His Word is above His reputation.

"Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psalm 119:133).

Iniquity is emotional rebellion against bona fide spiritual authority. The father's authority in the home, if it is bona fide, is correct. The head of a business has authority in that business and over its employees.

"…It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4; see also Deuteronomy 8:3). Remember, we don't know a single thing as we ought to know it. If we did, we would have been translated to heaven by now!

Consider how, as a good worker, you try to do your job honestly and uprightly. Good businessmen do their best to be honest and thorough. They do not lie on the job. Godly parents do their very best to be honest and upright, and they do not lie to their children. They purpose to be good examples.

Now, picture the responsibility that a pastor has. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 3 explain his accountability before God. He will receive double discipline if he does not preach the whole truth

(James 3:1). While members of the church may be disciplined by God for disobedience, pastors get disciplined more. So don't get angry toward a man of God for preaching this Book. He is doing his job, and he is being faithful to his call.

Be Careful to Hear

It is quite an experience to minister from the Bible and to read all that the Lord Jesus says about this Book. Not one tittle shall ever pass away (Luke 16:17; Matthew 24:35). Not a word, not a syllable, not a letter—not a bit of it.

We cannot pick the days that we listen to it. We must receive doctrine every day. Luke 8:18 and Mark 4:24 tell us to be careful how we hear and to be very careful with what we hear, because we will have to give an answer to God for how we received it (see 1 Peter 3:15; John 12:47-48). If we don't hear it, we will be required to give an answer for why we didn't go and hear it.

Christians will be judged not for their circumstances, but for the opportunities they had to receive the Word of God while they were in those circumstances. Nations will be judged for ignoring opportunities to hear doctrine coming from pulpits that preach the whole counsel of

God. Many people live in communities where there are churches that preach God's Word with conviction; yet, they may go through terrible problems but never be released because they do not take advantage of God's provision (2 Chronicles 30:8; Matthew 23:37).

Chapter Two

"AND GOD SAID…."

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3) I like that. How did light come into being? God just spoke the Word.

"And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters" (Genesis 1:6). God decided He wanted a firmament (the atmosphere), so He divided the waters and established a firmament. He spoke the firmament into being.

"And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so" (Genesis 1:9). God wanted the waters to be separated and the earth to be dry so He separated the waters into seas and oceans. The Bible says that God said it, and it happened.

"And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also" (Genesis 1:16).

Friend, do you know how that happened? God said it.

"And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

"And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:20-21).

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26).

How did everything happen? God said it. God spoke it all into existence.

The Bible says that God took the dust of the earth, formed man, breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul (see Genesis 2:7). The breath was the human spirit; then came the living soul, and the physical body made out of the dust.

These sixteen elements form the dust of the earth: hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen,

sodium, magnesium, fluorine, chlorine, silicon, phosphorous, sulfur, potassium, calcium, iron, manganese, and iodine. And do you know that all sixteen are found in our bodies? How did this happen? Genesis 2:7 tells us how it happened. I am not to change the Word of God, but I am to give proof of the truth of it.

We need to hear the Word of God and do what God says. He loves us, He died for us, and He paid for our sins. If you are a backslidden Christian, get right and go all the way with God. Sign up for Jesus for the rest of your life. Make the most of the handful of years you have left, and mean business with God.

Awake, for His Time is Now

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Romans 13:11-12).

God could have said, "I want the Adirondack Mountains, so I will make them by speaking. I want the Amazon River and the ten thousand lakes of Minnesota. I want to lower

the land and make valleys. I want great forests with the redwood trees, the oak trees, the pine trees. I want all of those trees in the forest and I want all of the streams to flow down the mountains, through the valleys and the plains, and to the oceans."

Then God might have said, "I have decided to paint the peacock with brilliant colors, and I have decided to take My divine brush and paint roses and daffodils and all the flowers in their various hues. I want the seasons to change (Genesis 8:22). I will create all different animals—and I want to make all of this for man. Then, I want this beautiful chandelier of stars to shine down upon him."

God said it, and we have it all. Every single thing that happened, every thing that was created, was executed by the Word of God.

For ever, His Word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). Before the Bible was written in ink or on stone, Jesus was the Living Word (see John 1:1). Understand that the Word of God has always been, long before men wrote it down through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Every single word in it is precious and pure.

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou

knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1).

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

A man boarded his private airplane along with his wife and their thirteen-year-old daughter. Their plan was to fly home after a brief vacation. Besides having twenty-five years of experience as a pilot, he also taught classes in flight safety. But, a mechanical problem caused the plane to crash, and their lives were over in an instant. Do you think that he ever dreamed that at fifty years old he and his family would face eternity?

Our days are numbered, but it is the Word of God that will remain forever. It shall not perish. The apostle John loved to see his "children" walk in the truth of doctrine, and so does every godly pastor (3 John 4).

The Word Remains

"And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision" (1 Samuel 3:1*b*).

The Roman Empire tried many times to remove the Bible from the face of the earth. Today,

that empire is gone, but the Bible lives on. In the first century A.D., Nero said that he would destroy Christianity and the Scriptures within two decades. Today, Nero is dead, but the Bible lives.

At one time, there were only twenty-eight copies of the Word of God in Rome. The Empire thought they had gotten rid of all of them. But twenty-eight copies were hidden away, and through the centuries, many have died trying to preserve and publish those pages we call the Holy Bible.

Thomas Paine said that his printing press would work full-time to undermine the truth of the Word of God. Paine died, and the press he used to try to destroy the Bible was used to publish Bibles.

Voltaire, a French philosopher, declared that the Bible would no longer exist because he would tell the "truth" about it worldwide. Now he doesn't exist, but Christians are still preaching the Bible throughout the world.

Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, and others like them tried to destroy the faith of godly men and women who were willing to die for the sake of this Book. Those wicked leaders never showed signs of repentance, and they are probably in hell right now.

Many colleges in New England were founded upon the Word of God, and today they crucify it. Some instructors in those institutions run down the name of Jesus Christ—the Creator by whom all things consist (Colossians 1:16-17), the One who holds all things together "by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:2-3).

To ignore these facts is to lack character and integrity. There are good Christian colleges that will train people to be doctors or engineers, and they believe the Bible is the Book from heaven.

Chapter Three

JESUS: THE WORD MADE FLESH

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

"The same was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1-2).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

"That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

"For I am the LORD: I will speak and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass" (Ezekiel 12:25*a*).

"And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe" (John 14:29).

All of Scripture is inspired. It has the seal of divine authenticity, supernatural infallibility, and virtuous and noble integrity. Therefore,

every single word can be trusted.

This Book makes it clear that we have a "more sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19). A recent magazine article declared that there are three hundred prophecies of Christ's coming in the Old Testament, which were all fulfilled. The chances of just fifty of those prophecies being fulfilled are less than 1 in 1 trillion. But in fact, three hundred prophecies were fulfilled, as declared in this wonderful Book, the supernaturally written Bible.

In this precious Book, we find that our Savior would be the seed of a woman, not the seed of a man (Genesis 3:15). Jesus is never called the son of Joseph, He is called the Son of Mary (Luke 2). The fulfillment is declared in Galatians 4:4.

It was written that He would be of the seed of Abraham (Genesis 18:18), and that fulfillment was declared in Acts 3:25. It was written that He would be of the seed of Isaac (Genesis 17:19). That is fulfilled in Matthew 1:2. The Word of God said He would be of the seed of Jacob (Numbers 24:17). This was beautifully declared in Luke 3:34.

Genesis 49:10 said He would be born from the tribe of Judah and it was fulfilled according to Luke 3:33. What a Book this is!

Isaiah 9:7 said He would be of the throne of David—fulfilled, according to Matthew 1:1. The place of His birth, the little town called Bethlehem Ephratah, was forecast in Micah 5:2 and beautifully fulfilled in Matthew 2:1.

Daniel 9:24-25 predicted the time of His birth, and it was fulfilled in Luke 2:1-2. Isaiah 7:14 said He would be born of a virgin. That was fulfilled in Matthew 1:18. This Book predicted Herod's massacre of the first-born in Bethlehem (Jeremiah 31:15). It is fulfilled in Matthew 2:16-18. Isaiah 9:1-2 declared that He would have a tremendous ministry in Galilee, and He did (Matthew 4:12-16).

The Word of God said that Jesus would be a "priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). This is fulfilled in Hebrews 6:20. The Word said that He would be betrayed by Judas Iscariot, "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9). In Mark 14:10, Judas went to the high priest and betrayed his friend, the Lord Jesus. Zechariah 11:12 said that the price on Jesus' head would be thirty pieces of silver; in Matthew 26:15, thirty pieces of silver were paid to Judas.

That same silver, according to Zechariah

11:13, would be used to buy a potter's field. In Matthew 27:6-7, they took the money to buy the potter's field.

Unmatched Accuracy

Oh, the Word of God is so accurate. It is the heavenly revelation of why we are here, where we are going, how to be saved, how we can live, how we can grow, how we can edify, and how we can go into all the world to preach the gospel.

In Isaiah 53:3, the Word of God said that Christ would be a man despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, a man acquainted with grief, a Man who would come into the world He created and the world would not know Him (John 1:10). It said He would come to His own, and His own would reject Him. His own disciples forsook Him (Matthew 26:56), and Peter cursed and denied Him.

This Book said that He would give His back to the smiters and His cheeks to those who would pluck off the hairs of His beard, and they would spit upon Him (Isaiah 50:6). That was fulfilled in Mark 14:65. Isaiah 53:7 foretold that Jesus would "open not his mouth" when brought before His accusers, "as a lamb to the

slaughter." In Matthew 26:62-63, He answered them not a word.

This very specific Book said He would be buried in a rich man's grave (Isaiah 53:9), and He was (Matthew 27:57-60). Psalm 16:10 said He would be resurrected, and oh, He was (Matthew 28:9). Psalm 68:18 said He would ascend, and He did, in Luke 24:50-51 and Acts 1:11. This same Bible says He is coming back in the Rapture to gather up those who are saved and to take them up into the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Not a single sign was left unfulfilled. The Rapture could happen at any moment. It is imminent.

And one day, Jesus will come back to the earth (2 Thessalonians 2:1; Revelation 19:14-17; Acts 1:9).

It is this Book that we must live by. Not a single promise in it has ever fallen to the ground. It is this Book that will give us faith, hope, and an abundant life. This Book means so much when it is lived through the Holy Spirit.

The prophecies about our Lord and verses that reveal their fulfillment could go on and on. Every detail was accurately prophesied—not a single syllable out of place. The Bible also says that to be saved and go to heaven, every individual must be born again by the Spirit of God (John 3:5-8). The same Bible says that our sins are forgiven when we receive Christ as our Savior (Ephesians 1:7). This Bible says that God does not impute sin or iniquity to our account (Romans 4:6-8). This same Bible says, "For by grace are you saved through faith and not of yourself, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8)

"It Is Written"

In Matthew 4, Jesus dealt with the devil. Satan said, "If You are God, make these stones become bread." And Jesus said, "It is written. Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

The devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the

temple and said, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Matthew 4:5). Satan wanted Jesus to enter into presumption, so he misquoted Psalm 91:11.

God will not presume anything. Every word must be rightly divided in specific categories of doctrine. And in Matthew 4:7, "Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." He would not be tempted with presumption.

Then Satan said, "If you will fall down and worship me, I will give you all the kingdoms of the world." Satan wanted to be worshiped. That is what he has always wanted. When we go our own way, apart from God, and live in immorality, the Word tells us we are worshipping the devil. Living in fornication is idolatry. I can prove it by the Book. Idolatry is to love anything more than God. When faced with that temptation, Jesus said: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

What did Jesus do three times during His confrontation with Satan in the wilderness? He

responded with "It is written…. It is written…. It is written…." What should we say when we are tempted? "It is written." If God in His humanity said, "It is written," we too had better say, "It is written"! Jesus didn't have an old sin nature as we do, and if *He* needed to say it, we surely need to declare "It is written…."

We must purpose in our hearts to observe and obey all that God said so this Book will not depart out of our mouths. We need to meditate and reflect upon it day and night so that we may "be strong and very courageous, that [we] mayest observe to do according to all the law"—according to all that is written in this Book (see Joshua 1:7-8).

When Satan sends a projection to us and we receive it and mentally reflect it, then we fulfill it, and we sin. When God gives us the Word and we meditate upon it, we mentally reflect it, and then we reveal Christ. We have been given a choice, according to Deuteronomy 30:14-20. Choose life!

Chapter Four

THE WORD PROVES ITSELF TRUE

We have the Book that has always proven itself to be true.

Zechariah 14:12 spoke of eyes being consumed away in their sockets and the tongue being consumed in their mouths. When the nuclear bomb was dropped at Hiroshima, reports describe that this is exactly what happened. The Book had said it would happen.

Henry Ford invented the first car, but the Book already said it would happen (Nahum 2:4). The first airplane that went up was predicted by the Bible (Isaiah 60:8; 40:31). The first submarine that went down was predicted in the Bible (Amos 9:3).

Concerning the weather, ice, condensation, evaporation, the seven stars that control the stability of our solar system, and the stars without number, the Bible spoke of it hundreds and hundreds of years ago (Job 38).

This same Bible says that women would have pain during childbirth because of Eve's sin (Genesis 3:16), and men would have to work by the sweat of their brow because of the Fall (Genesis 3:17).

No library, no other book, can give the reason that these things happen. Not one. I examined the research of an entire table of scholars before I was saved. There isn't another book that explains these things. No other book explains why we die, but the Bible says, "The wages of sin is death."

No other book can explain why the earth has such intense heat at its core. The Bible says, "Hell from beneath…" (Isaiah 14:9). We know it is red-hot because there is a fire burning down there—hellfire.

Thank God, the scientists can't explain how the world hangs upon nothing (Job 26:7). This huge earth goes round and round as fast as it does, and it spins on nothing. How can it do this? It can, because Jesus holds it up with His Word (Hebrews 1:3).

Jesus Christ is the expressed brightness of His Father's glory. He is the express image of the Father. He upholds all things by the word of His power. When He purged our sins by shedding

His blood for us on the Cross, He sat down at the right hand of God on high, in a Finished Work, as the glorified Man.

You can't get this information at any ungodly college. That is why the psalmist could say, "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation" (Psalm 119:99); he knew these things from the Word.

The Word Was Sent to Heal

By His Word, the blind were made to see—two of them in Matthew 9:29. In Matthew 17:18, demons went out of a child through the Word. Through the Word of God, the centurion's servant was healed (Matthew 8:13).

It is through the Word of God that we were made. We know that the world was framed by the Word of God, and we see the things that we see because of the things that aren't seen (see Hebrews 11:3).

Did you know that the Bible says in Psalm 33:6 that the heavens were made by the Word of God? He made the host of the sky by the breath of His mouth. The breath is His Spirit and the mouth is His Word. That happened! "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and

all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."

Get excited about this Book!

The power of this Book postponed a funeral. Jesus used the Word of God and postponed a funeral (see Luke 7:13-15). In another case, after there had been a funeral, Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead by saying, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

The Gospel of Salvation

How did we get saved? By works? No. We were saved by hearing the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). By hearing the Word and receiving the Savior, we were saved by the grace of God through faith, not of works (Ephesians 2:5-8).

The moment you honestly believe and let Jesus come in and change your life, you are saved forever. It doesn't matter what He needs to take away—and what He takes away is really nothing compared to all that you will have in Him. Salvation because of His Word: the most powerful truth in the universe.

Chapter Five

THE LORD'S ULTIMATE WEAPON

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which as sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints, and marrow, and is a discerner [critic] of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him" (Proverbs 30:5).

A nuclear bomb is *not* going to end the world. My Bible tells me that Jesus' Word will do the job.

The Lord will return on a white horse, and we will be with Him on white horses. Neither Roy Rogers nor the Lone Ranger will be able to touch what we are going to have. We will have

the most beautiful, glorified white horses. If you have never ridden a horse, don't worry! You will be fine. We will all fly in the air, and we will have the time of our lives. This will all happen at Christ's Second Advent, seven years after the Rapture (Revelation 19:12-14).

In Revelation 19:15, the weapons that Jesus will use in the battle of Armageddon will be what comes out of His mouth. The Word will be a sword proceeding out from His mouth, and it will smite the nations that have gathered at the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where the last World War will take place. Jesus is not going to use a bomb. He won't degrade Himself to use what man has made.

Jesus Christ will say: "It's over." No man-made weapons will be involved. He will destroy the enemies of Israel and the enemies of His Church. He will do it by the Word of God.

Spirit-Filled Obedience

Psalm 119:133 says we are to order our steps by the Word. We cannot do that unless we know it properly. Do you think that if God made the universe and holds it together with the Word, He could also straighten out your marriage?

Jesus Christ is the God of love, and compas-

sion, and mercy. His Word established the institution of marriage. When the Holy Spirit fills you and the Word of God dwells richly in your heart (Colossians 3:16), and when you do all things in the name of Jesus to glorify God, then your marriage can be instantly changed by God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's grace. But for that to happen, you have to have the integrity to go after the Word of God and obey the Book.

"As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me" (Psalm 18:44).

God has said that He wants a Church that will do His work in Jerusalem. Our church is doing that with 138 different outreaches locally. God said we are to go into all the world. We are doing it. Why? Because we are obeying the Book. If we fail, we name it, forsake it, and go on.

Think of it: When Jesus Christ returns, His name is "The Word."

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spo-

ken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:47-48).

What is going to judge me at the Bema Seat? The Word. What is going to bless me? The Word. What cleanses me? The Word of God. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9). What will keep me from sinning? The Word. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). The Word! The answer is always the Word.

What will help me to know what to do? "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). What will keep me from getting offended? "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165).

How do I know I've been forgiven? The Word of God says so. What gives me a forgiving heart? The Word.

Let's be people of the Book. Let's have marriages based on the precepts of the Book. We need to have families that live by the Book, businesses and churches of the Book.

The most beautiful thing in all the world for us to know is found in 2 Corinthians 3:2-6:

"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.

"And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

"Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

Thank God! Praise God for every word in His Book.

CONCLUSION

The reason we have a Christian day school, the reason we encourage men and women everywhere to attend Bible college (even if they are planning a career in another field), is to keep people in the Book, to give them a true Christian education.

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). In places where people have forsaken the Bible as their foundation, what can the righteous do? We can choose not to go there. We won't go to those places, for the Bible says that there is no other foundation that is laid other than Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Hebrews 10:25 says we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, "as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Those are not the words of a man. They are

from the Book. We need to be in the place to hear the Book more than ever because His day is fast approaching. Forsake not the assembly; do it much more, so we can be living epistles known and read of all men, knowing precisely what is in the Book. By God's mercy, make a new commitment to the Word of God.

By God's Word and the living proof of prophecy, we have shown that the Bible is the foundation of every truth in the universe (1 Timothy 3:15). The Word of God is so descriptive. This is the Book that we preach, that we study, and that we believe. We want to manifest its power, its healing, its grace, and its supernatural life.

This Book—the Bible—gives us a supernatural foundation. It is the supernatural Word of God. It reveals supernatural love and forgiveness that results in supernatural reconciliation and restoration to God, with a supernatural manifestation of Christ, the Living Word, as He became God with us (Matthew 1:21-23).

This Book is worth going all the way. It is worth living, loving, obeying, and honoring. Let's choose to live in the light of His Word so we can be a light to the world.

This Grace Is Also for Me

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet asks the question "Why me, Lord?" with a sense of marvel and awe. "Why, Lord, have you bestowed such favor upon us?" We, unlovely as we are, were saved while we were yet sinners. In all of our sinfulness, God so loved us that He died to save us.

And yet, as Christians we sometimes ask the question "Why me, Lord?" in a spirit of frustration when we wonder why God has allowed certain things to happen to us. We forget that each breath we take is purely a gift of grace.

This grace is a great mystery, and our fellowship in this mystery will continue throughout our lives and throughout the ages of eternity. I pray that you will see the unsearchable, inexhaustible, unfathomable grace that is ours. It is grace that has gone out to the chief sinners, to those who are less than the least. It is a grace that prompted me, many years ago, to write these words in a song:

The pain of my sin, the grief of my trials,
Heartaches and sorrows and guilt all the while;
Then came the glory of God's loving grace—
I felt so unworthy, in human disgrace.

Oh, Forgiving Savior! Master of Peace,
You stilled my tempest, and my guilt has ceased.
I found Your favor; by faith I can see
That Calvary's Blood is also for me.

Chapter One

SO RICH, SO FREE, AND ALL FOR ME

"Whereof I was *made* a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

"Unto *me*, who am less than the least of all saints, is *this* grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:7-8).

"Unto me" in verse 8 is a very important phrase. Paul really emphasized the "me" here. "Of all people, this grace was given to *me*. Even while I was killing Christians, putting them away and trying to do damage to the Kingdom of God, the Savior met me and saved me on the road to Damascus" (see Acts 9). That is the point the apostle was making to the Ephesians. He had received *great* grace.

The beautiful thing about this grace is that it is unsearchable, unfathomable, and inexhaust-

ible. Man cannot comprehend it, because God's ways are past finding out (Romans 11:33).

"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause:

"Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number:

"Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields" (Job 5:8-10).

God grants the riches of His grace to each one who calls upon His name. He is so rich in kindness (Romans 2:4; 9:23), and He wants His Word to dwell richly in our hearts (Colossians 3:16). The more the Word of God dwells in our hearts, the more we see how unsearchable, unfathomable, and inexhaustible God's grace is. We enter into the revelation of it, the motivation of it, the explanation of it, and the expression of it, and then we experience it. We go forward knowing that with all things that are said about God's grace, we are only beginning to comprehend it.

Less Than the Least

What the apostle Paul understood is something that every pastor must always understand: We are less than the least of all saints. You can't get any lower than being less than the least.

Another word Paul emphasized is "this" as it appears before the word "grace." The reference is to a special kind of grace—the manifold grace that takes care of manifold trials (1 Peter 1:6, 7, 4:10). The grace given is a multifaceted grace that covers every single side of us. Saul was a roaring lion—tracking, killing, and persecuting the disciples of Christ (Acts 22:4). He had no affection for Christ whatsoever. Yet, God reached down in His Shekinah glory and gave him "this grace."

This grace reaches out to us and calls us just as we are. This grace never leaves us nor forsakes us (Hebrews 13:5*b*). This grace helps us to become what we are going to be forever. After nearly five decades as a preacher of the Gospel, I have seen what goes on in Christian churches—mostly good, certainly some bad. And through it all, I have seen that this grace is unfathomable, unsearchable, and inexhaustible. I am repeating this deliberately. These words have so much meaning to me because I have received this grace.

Equipped for the Call

The apostle Paul said, "I want you to know, church at Ephesus, why this grace was given to

me." It was given so that he might preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. This grace *made* him a minister to the Gentiles, who were not at all respected by the Pharisees. Paul became less than the least by grace. He was given this grace that even he could not search out; it was a grace that he could not fathom.

I have wondered what it would have been like to serve under Paul. I am sure I would have heard a lot about the unsearchable riches of grace and how it teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly pleasures. I am sure I would have heard about this grace that helps us, in doctrine, to be quiet in the present evil world (see Titus 2:12).

"I need to have this grace," Paul told the Ephesians, "because I am less than the least" (Ephesians 3:8). He also declared, "I am the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), and I am least of all the apostles—but I am what I am by this grace! (1 Corinthians 15:9, 10). So, every time you think of me, always remember that I am what I am because of the grace given to me. It was given to me to preach to the Gentiles."

Oh, we are so privileged to have *this* grace.

Chapter Two

FELLOWSHIP IN THE MYSTERY

"And to make all men see what is the *fellowship of the mystery*, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9).

The purpose of "this grace" was to make men see "the fellowship of the mystery." This speaks of a oneness that exists between people who have experienced the unsearchable riches of God's grace. They fellowship around the mystery being revealed in their lives: the mystery of who God is and of what God has done.

I have a tape of testimonies from several of our ministry's pastors in India; I listen to it again and again. Every one of them reveals such oneness. Their words are so tender. We have a fellowship in the mystery that was, from the beginning of time, concealed—hid with Christ in God. But we have the privilege of knowing it today.

Don't misunderstand what is being said: Grace was always there for us. We are saved *only* by grace through faith. But we also know that there is a deeper revelation of grace that comes as we go on with God. As for those people who walk by sight and not by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), God wants us all to fellowship in the mystery of what Christ has done for us so we can see Him in one another.

The longer I walk with God, and the nearer I draw to Him, the more I know I need His great grace. This is part of the mystery of grace. It allows a sinner to stand in the light of God, which exposes every dark thing that is in us, and at the same time it purifies us and makes us feel so clean. When Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord high and lifted up, he cried "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:1-5). Many great preachers—Spurgeon, Moody, and Wesley, for example—have expressed similar sentiments. As they grew older, they came to see themselves both as the offscouring of the earth in their old sin nature and as spiritual millionaires in their new creation in Christ. God did not hold back His light in revealing what these men were really like, but He also helped them to see the unsearchable riches

of grace in Christ to take care of those things that need to be dealt with.

That is why this grace remains a mystery. Knowing everything about who we are and what we think, God still loves us! This great grace is still given to us.

Motivated to Reconciliation

"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

The grace of God is "unsearchable," according to Ephesians 3:8. It means that the depth of God's grace cannot be figured out. When people attack others, trying to bring their failures to light, we cannot even fathom the seriousness of what they are doing. This is illustrated in John 8, with the self-righteous Pharisees and the woman who was taken in adultery.

Many commentators agree that the woman was saved, because she referred to Jesus as "Lord." But though she was saved, she had committed adultery and had been caught in the act. The Pharisees sought to stone her—a just punishment according to the law of Moses. Yet, when they asked Jesus what *He* thought they should do (trying to catch Him in the act of going

against the Scriptures), Jesus said that the one who was without sin could cast the first stone at her. Not one of them qualified, and from the oldest to the youngest they filed out and left her there with her Savior.

So many Christians in the world cast stones at others, yet there is a log in their own eye and only a splinter in the guilty person's eye. It is not our job to expose someone's failure. It is our job to guard the one who has fallen and to restore him to God by extending this unsearchable grace.

Unless we are without sin, we cannot cast a stone—even when we know that a person is guilty. As Christians, we are called to extend this unsearchable grace to others and to exercise a ministry of reconciliation. Those who fail must be made accountable, but privately. We kindly restore them in the spirit of meekness (Galatians 6:1).

God's grace is unsearchable, inexhaustible, and unfathomable. We give it to those who fall, and it teaches them how to stop sinning and how to live without the type of sin that they are in. When they do come through, we will not remember what they did anymore—even if it was something done against us. They are just as

wonderful in our eyes as they ever were before—because of this grace.

Chapter Three

PREPARED TO SHARE IN AN ETERNAL PURPOSE

This grace is what motivates me to win souls. A precious grace message is in my heart, and it cannot wait to come out when I go soul winning. Getting people saved and making them disciples is why we are on earth. The progression goes like this: I get saved, I get discipled, I win someone else to the Lord, and I disciple him. He goes out, he wins another person to God, and he disciples that one. That one then goes and gets someone else saved. He grows into a disciple and wins someone to Christ. That is how things in heaven multiply.

Many people have come to know God because of the testimony of our lives (2 Corinthians 3:2). Some people are living epistles on the job. Their testimonies are magnificent, and the Holy Spirit begins His tender work of conviction in others through their lives. What a beautiful

work it is.

A woman in our church works in the office of a major company in downtown Baltimore. "Would you come to church with me just one time?" she asked the company president. He and his wife came one Sunday morning, then they came back for that evening's service.

"Thanks for coming out," I said to him while shaking his hand.

"No—thank *you*," he replied. "I couldn't wait to come back tonight."

These folks have been coming to church ever since. That woman did not take advantage by talking about the Lord on company time. She is a great worker who puts in her hours. But she was led by God to ask the president out to church. He saw the fellowship she has in the mystery of grace by her poise and composure at work, and he was drawn by her life, which is hid in God.

This fellowship in the nature of God cannot be comprehended in the natural mind. I am in awe. I marvel that Jesus Christ—my Savior, my Lord, my God, my Healer, my Support, my faithful Friend—loves us, though we are not lovable by nature.

Consider His overwhelming holiness. We

are living before Someone who never sinned. God described Israel as having a head that was sick, a heart that was faint, and a body covered with wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. He declared the entire nation as desolate and wretched (Isaiah 1:2-8). I was in the same condition. But God's answer was *this grace*, for me.

Magnificent Testimonies

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

Every time I drive onto our church property, I marvel, just like a little child, at what God has done for us. We had nothing—no money and no way to acquire anything. But God has provided a wonderful place.

Wherever God calls us, He always has a provision for us. There is always a solution for our problems. No matter what we have done, God has a solution. No matter what mistakes we have made, no matter what sicknesses we might have, there is a solution as far as grace goes.

Fulfilling an Eternal Intention

"To the intent that now unto the principali-

ties and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:10-11).

The Greek text of verse 10 contains an infinitive clause expressing a goal and a purpose. Simply, our fellowship in the mystery of this grace has always had an eternal intention. The intention is to reveal the greatness of God's grace in the angelic conflict (1 Corinthians 4:9).

The angels must have rejoiced the day that Mary, without having known a man, conceived Jesus in her womb. Yet, they cannot comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height of God's love revealed by this grace because they do not have an old sin nature. The angels cannot fully appreciate the transforming power of grace, yet they desire to look into the fruit of it (1 Peter 1:12). That is why they rejoice at every salvation (Luke 15:7) and whenever a sinner is delivered, as when a drug addict comes clean by the power of the Holy Spirit who is within him.

Of course, Satan's army of demons is watching, too. They saw a grace that could not be exhausted, grace that is unsearchable, as it was

expressed to Paul. They watched him fellowship in the mystery of it, and they have had to watch the power of Christ, the power of love, and the power of transformation that has worked in people's lives throughout the age of the Church. This grace makes the demons realize that they are totally defeated.

The Church is the theater that plays out the glory of God and His eternal work. It is such an object of interest to the angels. God uses us—sinners saved by grace—to define for the angels what it means to have grace on every side. Through the Church, they see the vastness of God's nature, the indescribable principle of God's program of salvation. And because of the manifold grace expressed in manifold wisdom, both men and angels can see how great this grace is.

Manifold grace enables us to stay on the King's highway. The stumbling blocks have been removed out of our way. Our fellowship in the mystery of this grace keeps us on the right way. It is a testimony to people and to the principalities and powers watching us. It is the ultimate manifestation of what God has done.

CONCLUSION

"Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders" (Numbers 20:17).

"The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul" (Proverbs 16:17).

"And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people" (Isaiah 57:14).

See the value of keeping on with God. Just keep on! Don't worry about your circumstances. Get up in the morning and keep going on. Stay on the King's highway. Don't go on the broad road of the world, which leads to death and destruction. Just keep on going forward with God. Do not become weary in well doing (Galatians

6:9). Endure hardness as a good soldier, and do not allow yourself to become entangled again in this world (2 Timothy 2:3, 4).

Just keep on. Pray and don't faint (Luke 18:1). Let us run the race with patience, always considering Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. He endured the Cross, despising its shame, for the joy that was set before Him.

Now He is seated at the right hand of God: the Lord Jesus Christ, the One with whom we fellowship. This grace has made it possible for us to relate to Him every moment of every day. Keep on witnessing, keep on praying, keep on loving God. Build yourself up in these sacred truths. Just keep going on with Christ, manifesting the mystery of this great grace.

Throne Words

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INTRODUCTION

"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

We are living in a day when communications technology has made it possible to access millions of words in moments—facts, opinions, information, misinformation. There is power in words, and, depending on the source, that power can be very helpful or very harmful.

The subject of this message is the most powerful thing in all the Bible—Throne Words.

Chapter One

WORDS WELL-PLACED AND WELL-DIRECTED

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that shall dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation

12:9-12).

"…the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil..." (Revelation 12:9*a*). God called Satan old, and He called him a serpent. God doesn't mind calling the devil and his crowd names. A lot of people get so shocked when God's people get a little rough with the devil. They are scared of a few words that the Bible speaks so clearly, as in Hebrews 12:8 and Matthew 23. But God isn't. He has the words that best fit the situation. He calls them right words, as long as they are honest and well-placed and well-directed. And so it was.

"Therefore rejoice…." *Therefore* is a beautiful word in this context.

This is one of the most practical and important messages that I could preach to you. It is God's message. There are several key points about it that are extremely important. The first is this: Satan deceives the whole world. The inhabitants of the earth and the sea are the people he is deceiving. But he is *not* deceiving those who know the throne words and who receive life from above.

Living Below or Seated Above?

There are two classes of Christians. There is

the class of Christians who really do inhabit the earth. (Woe unto them!) Then there are those who are seated above and have strength through salvation and the kingdom of their God and the power of Christ. They overcome the devil, first, by the blood of the Lamb; secondly, by the word of their testimony; and, thirdly, because they love not their own lives unto death.

The Scriptures teach that thousands of people who live and inhabit the earth are being overcome by deception, by accusations against themselves and others. Because many love their own lives, they love to preserve their identity or their heritage. They compete and compare, and they love to be satisfied in the lust of their flesh. They resist authority through an independent walk, arguing their rights to go on unto God with their own declaration and definition of independence, and they are being overcome.

How do people overcome the devil, the one who goes out deceiving the whole world and accusing the brethren? Have you met anybody this week who was accusing the brethren? They did not accuse themselves, but they accuse the brethren. From morning to night, Satan is looking for anyone he can use to join his work against Jesus Christ. With all the deception, all

the accusations, and all the demons of hell inhabiting this planet, Satan has his kingdom (see Matthew 12:24). He is called the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2) and the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Yet, in all of this, there are people living on the earth *right now* who have salvation permanently and strength continually. They are in the kingdom of God constantly, and they have the power of Christ. They *always* overcome the devil. They do not fight the devil. They overcome him. They are not battling the devil. They overcome him! They overcome him by the blood of the Lamb—and not only by that, but also by the word of their testimony (not God's testimony but their own) about the blood of the Lamb.

Cleansed by the Blood, Washed by the Word

The Blood is applied to their hearts and minds by faith, through the washing of the water of the Word. They confess with their mouths by their will through their minds and emotions. This particular group of people cannot be overcome. First John 6:18*b* calls them untouchable; the wicked one can't touch them because they have something very unique.

But it is neither the ability to be better, nor a system of good works. They have no more strength in their Adam nature than anybody else in the world. They have a confession. That confession is throne words. The blood of the Lamb is adequate. The salvation of God is good enough. The kingdom of God has won the victory over the devil, and that kingdom is dwelling within them in Luke 17:21. Furthermore, they have the strength right now, and they live by the power of our Christ.

Powerful Words

Think this over with me—the power in words. Some people do not realize the power in words. How would we ever learn a single thing in an academic education if it were not for words? Words are so important. And throne words are so amazing! The Lord Jesus Christ revealing Himself through words—think of it! What does He say in John 1:12*a*? "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Throne words. "I give unto them eternal life…and neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). Throne words. "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down (Psalm 37:24*a*). Throne words.

Promises from God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). He will never, no never, no *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee (Hebrews 13:5). Throne words.

"I love you, Israel, with an everlasting love, and with lovingkindness I am going to draw you." Throne words, in Jeremiah 31:3. "I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10). "If you sin, I'll be your advocate. You have a mercy seat to approach, and I will not impute sin!" (1 John 2:1-2; Romans 4:7-8). Throne words. Words—that's all—but *throne* words.

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:26). Throne words. Words from the throne. "I will uphold you with my everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27). "I have seated you together in heavenly places" (Ephesians 2:6). You are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10). "I hold all things together by the word of my power" (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3)—throne words .

Chapter Two

WORDS FROM ABOVE

Throne words. Words from the throne. Far above the earth, far above the flesh! Far above demons, far above lies! Far above Satan trying to murder us (John 8:44). Far above his accusations! Far above the devil's doctrines (1 Timothy 4:1). Throne words. Ask and it shall be given to you; and if you ask for bread God will not give you a stone (Luke 11:9-11). Throne words. A promise that cannot lie!

Be filled with the Holy Spirit, in Ephesians 5:18. If you speak to yourself in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and make a melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks *always* unto God through Jesus Christ and submitting to one another in the fear of the Lord, *then* you will glorify Me and walk with Me and be protected, experientially. Throne words. Jesus Christ never was discouraged (Isaiah 42:4). Never was He dismayed. He understood throne words.

As you listen to throne words, what do they mean to you? Words that cannot fail. Words that say it is impossible for God to lie, in Hebrews 6:18, "and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass" (Ezekiel 12:25). All of God's promises are yea, none of them are nay (2 Corinthians 1:18-20). They are all yea! Do you understand it? They are all yea; not one of them is nay.

Throne words—where God says He will never leave you. He forgets your sins (Hebrews 8:12), passes by your transgression, and casts them into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18-19), removing them as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). God says all of that, and He says again, in Hebrews 10:17, "*No!* I will never remember them anymore." He cast *all* our sins behind His back (Isaiah 38:17)—those are words from the throne!

Signed, Sealed, and Delivered

Do you see it? We are saved by grace, not of works (2 Timothy 1:9). We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30 and Romans 8:23). The Lord said, "I'll go with you to the ends of the earth and until the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). Throne words. Saved by grace. Kept by the

power of God (1 Peter 1:5). Cleansed by the eternal Blood (1 John 1:7). Throne words, one after the other, giving encouragement, assurance, comfort, strength, power, life, optimism, reality, truth, to make me a person who follows after the throne through *words*.

Satan—the father of all lies, a murderer from the beginning, the accuser of the brethren—tries to make you occupied with what he is doing, rather than with throne words that are God's thoughts toward you no matter what you have done. Luke 19:13 instructs us to be occupied with Christ until He comes. If we are, we will not give a place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27). Don't make a provision for the flesh, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14). Throne words—teaching me how to experience what is mine from the throne of God.

Living by Every Word

Is it any wonder that Jesus Christ said, in Matthew 4:4, that men must live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God? In Proverbs 30:5, He says that every word of God is pure. Is it any wonder that the Lord admonishes us to hide the Word in our heart, that we might not sin against God, in Psalm 119:11? Can

you see why He said in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly"? Is it any wonder that the psalmist said, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name," in Psalm 138:2? Is it any wonder that Job said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12)? That's more than some can say. They esteem the place where they sleep above what they have been taught from this pulpit because they haven't fallen in love with throne words.

I am so thrilled that God is teaching people here, and in so many other fine ministries, to be living epistles, manifesting throne words (2 Corinthians 3:2). Can you imagine it? A man who walks with God because his heart is one with God's heart—that man is filled with the Holy Spirit, and his mind is a recorder of heaven, enabling him to repeat literally what God thinks about a situation because he is abiding in the Word.

Did you ever see a man who knows throne words become mentally ill? Did you ever see a woman's emotions go bad when her affections were set above (Colossians 3:2)? Affections that are pure do not inhabit the earth with its curses—with flesh, lies, deceit, envy, jealousy,

pride, anxiety, frustration, despair, soul-power, or self-knowledge. Instead of all that, the Christian just says, "In a very practical and personal way, I am seated above, my affections are above, and my life below is only to reveal what I know and who I am in Jesus Christ. I am going to confess throne words!"

Powerful Confessions

"Well, Abraham," said God in Genesis 13:9-10, "Lot has no right to choose, but you do. What do you want?" Abraham was ready to make a testimony now. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony," and Abraham made a testimony with his mouth: "Lot, which side do you want?" Answering his uncle Abraham, Lot said, "I kind of like the best part!" Abraham said, "Take it. It's all yours."

How did Abraham overcome the devil's temptation to lust with his eyes? By confessing a testimony with throne words that produced faith in Christ, against the devil. Abraham said, "I don't have a problem with the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Lot, have anything you want. I've got God, and I am not going to live here forever; but, as long as I live, I will testify

with throne words!"

In Genesis 22:5, Abraham was ready to offer up Isaac. The two young men who went with them to Moriah asked, "What are you going to do?" to which he replied, "My son and I are going just over there for something very special." He never backed down for one minute. He put his shoulders back and overcame the devil, even when it meant offering his precious son. There was no depression. Abraham would not allow his soul to be occupied with what he wanted. *He was occupied with the plan of God and what Jesus Christ was willing to do in his life.* This is vital! Abraham refused to be occupied with what his soul wanted and what it needed; instead, he was occupied with the obvious plan of God where the Holy Spirit would reveal Christ to him. It was the will of God instead of the need of the soul. And he confessed throne words.

There is not one sentence in Genesis 22 indicating that Abraham questioned or doubted God. He overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb. There was a sacrifice in the thicket, prepared by God, pointing to the blood of God's Lamb—so he didn't have to offer Isaac. Abraham overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb and throne words. Instead of cursing, in-

stead of acting ugly and grumpy because his soul was not getting its way; instead of reacting because of having to do something that he couldn't figure out, Abraham willingly gave. He confessed throne words to back what he believed about God's promise, and he had a spirit to match his confession. His was a throne testimony.

Language from the Sky

In Numbers 13:30-31, Caleb, Joshua, and the other spies came back from spying out the situation in Canaan. Ten gave a negative report of giants in the land. But Caleb said, "Those giants are a simple thing to us. We are more than able to take them. Let's go in and possess Canaan, right now!" What was Caleb doing? He was testifying throne words.

"We are more than able." Throne words! Language from the sky, in the good old bye and bye, that ought to be now—right now—all the time! Caleb wasn't inhabiting the consequences of giants in the land. He didn't live by the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Caleb lived in heavenly places, as more than a conqueror—practical, personal, experiential—confessing throne words. And his

testimony was, "We are more than able! Where are those giants?"

Blasting the Atmosphere

Do you understand what's in your heart? There is power enough to blast every fallen angel and every bit of negative stimuli until you get to eternity. Don't look inward tonight and doubt it. Don't look within and question it. Look unto Jesus, thank God for the provision, and go on.

In Joshua 1:11, Israel was going through the Jordan river and their captain, Joshua, has a message. He said, "Listen. Get ready! It's going to take us three days. Get your victuals ready—we are going through that Jordan without a problem!" He made a prediction by throne words.

Then there was Deborah with Barak, in Judges 5:2. When they went against the enemy, she said, "Everybody, rejoice in God. Praise Him and sing!" Throne words from a throne heart. Good ol' Deborah didn't have time to think in a minor key. Instead, she sang a melody of life with throne words.

In Romans 7:16-24, when Paul was going through that human dilemma, the things he wanted to do he couldn't; the things he did do, he shouldn't; and he called himself a "wretched man." How did he get out of it? By keeping the law? By joining some new denomination? By avoiding responsibility or by giving up and going home? How was he going to get out of it? By eating more, by smoking, by taking a few drinks, by going out on lust trips, by having an affair? No! He got out of it with throne words!

He hadn't experienced any change, and he had no evidence of victory, but Paul confessed throne words. *"I thank God through Jesus Christ!"* (Romans 7:25). *"No condemnation!"* (Romans 8:1). If God be for me, who can be against me (Romans 8:31)? God freely gives us all things (Romans 8:32). God will not let anybody judge me (Romans 8:34). Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature can separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39).

What was Paul doing? Confessing throne

words to the devil, to the demons, to his flesh, to his enemies, and to his feelings! The devil had to hear it, the demons had to hear it, the kingdom of darkness had to hear it, his flesh had to hear it, and his feelings had to hear it. Everything that tried to rise up against him he was trampling under his feet with throne words, and he knew he was a conqueror. He knew it.

Thank God that the three Hebrew boys—before they went in, before they saw that the furnace was hot—confessed throne words. "If God wants to deliver us, all right; and if he doesn't, all right" (Daniel 3:17-18). They scared the king! Goliath couldn't threaten David, even though he intimated everybody else, because David understood the throne of mercy (Acts 13:34). He understood throne words.

Chapter Three

SOLEMN WORDS

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. I hope you hear this message. I hope you never let the devil get an upper hand in your life again. Homosexuality takes people to hell. Lesbianism takes people to hell. Make no mistake about it. There is no grace that will save a lesbian if she doesn't repent from being a lesbian. There is no grace that saves a homosexual unless he repents from being a homosexual. Anybody who commits fornication does not enter into the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5-6; Revelation 21:8)—those are throne words.

No one who continues in whispering, backbiting, and gossiping (Romans 1:29-30; Romans 2:1-2) as a practice, over a period of years, can ever go to heaven because God gives them up to what they do. They are never truly sealed or born again, because they never were regener-

ated. Those are throne words. The fearful and unbelieving, the abominable and murderers, the whoremongers and sorcerers, the idolaters and liars shall have their part in the lake of fire, which burns forever. This is the second death, according to Revelation 21:8.

Those who live in adultery or fornication or drunkenness or lying or stealing or envy shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Those are throne words. One sign of the last days, in Luke 21:34, is gluttony, or surfeiting. You need to recondition your whole way of thinking about eating, and you can with throne words.

A Two-Edged Sword

The Word of God at this point is quick and powerful and sharp, and it's cutting—but it's true. The soul is being separated from the spirit; "the joint and marrow" and it's going right into your bones. We are living in the last days, and these things have to be dealt with in love. They are throne words.

Doing dishes in the kitchen is just as important as preaching the gospel in Finland. And if the dishes are done in a spirit of love, that servant receives just as much honor in eternity as the one who is witnessing in France or London.

"…If anyone gives a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, that deed shall be remembered" (Matthew 10:42). Likewise, not doing the dishes is just as big a sin as anything else in the world. It violates the grace that was given through the Cross so that we could experience fellowship with Christ as disciples.

Personal sin is a repudiation of discipleship in the most practical form; thus it repudiates the opportunity to be humble, to be the last, and to lay your life down for the brethren. It reveals what is really in the heart: the slothfulness of an undisciplined attitude that selects what it wants to do. A person with that behavior lives in the flesh—against the throne—instead of having his flesh crucified, with a throne-life reigning in unconditional love.

How did they overcome him? With the blood of the Lamb. No condemnation. Just apply the Blood. They *did* apply it. How can you get out of any situation you are in? Apply the blood of the Lamb and testify of your victory in Jesus Christ by grace through faith. Then can the devil accuse us? No. Can he deceive us? No. Why? Satan can only get to those inhabitants of the earth who are living from below, but he cannot touch those who are seated above.

If there is one thing that God's people had better learn how to do, it is to rest in throne words without murmuring reactions to what goes on in the earth. Thank God that whosoever will confess with his mouth the Lord Jesus and believes in his heart that God raised Jesus from the dead will be saved. Not only did God raise Jesus from the dead, but God has raised us from the dead (Romans 6:8-9). He has seated us together in Christ (Ephesians 2:6), we are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3), and the Holy Spirit has cleansed our conscience (Hebrews 9:14). Not only that, but Jesus Christ will never leave us nor forsake us. When we sin, we must allow the nature of God to take over, and that nature motivates us with throne words—faith, hope, charity, and power in Jesus Christ.

Be occupied with loving each other, edifying each other, and soul-winning. Renounce sin, old habits, evil, slothfulness—all of these things that cripple, paralyze, hurt, and make us little men in a little world rather than becoming great inside of the kingdom of grace. Jesus Christ wants us to be a people who open our mouths, and He fills them (Psalm 81:10). He gives us what to say (Luke 12:12). Confess it (Romans 10:9) and overcome the devil with throne words.

CONCLUSION

Psalm 34:1 says, "I will bless the LORD at all times." Interesting. *At all times.* You say, "I can't do it." That's because you refuse either to confess throne words or to stand in the grace of faith when you do. Throne words get the job done. In Psalm 62:8 we read, "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." What is the Lord saying? "Let us come boldly to the throne of mercy to find help in the time of need" (Hebrews 4:16), for He was at all points tempted, just as we are.

Where does a thorough message like this one leave you—introspective or on a throne? Walking by faith, or walking by sight? Are you thanking God, forgetting the past, and going on because of blessing the Lord for the truth you have heard and the fact that you received it? Or do you live hoping that God will wink and let you get by, even when you don't live from

above by throne words?

Thank God today! Throne words cannot be handled by someone who came from the pit. According to John 3:27, our life is from above; it is a gift. Our affections are from above, our love is from above, grace is from above. Power, forgiveness, the Blood—it is all from above and living inside. We are epistles of throne words. Let's go forward with grace, serving God acceptably with throne ministries, building each other up, and confessing throne words.

Transformed by Truth

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

When a pastor is speaking from the pulpit, bringing a message from the Bible, it is with his voice and his personality. Still, he should always trust that the Holy Spirit will take over the message, control it, and breathe life into the words through the inspiration the Word of God. Speaker and listeners alike are here for one reason: That is, to have God transform us into new dimensions of His image.

God intends to help every believer to enter into three crucial areas of self-awareness based on the Finished Work: a divine self-image, an eternal purpose, and an absolute destiny. These are extremely important issues to settle, and yet many Christians do not grasp them.

We will go after so many different goals, but as believers the first thing we need is a New Covenant self-image, which does not focus upon sin, guilt, failure, fear, or insecurity. A New Covenant self-image is solely derived from the

filling of the Holy Spirit and the Finished Work.

Once a believer begins to recognize his divine self-image, he will realize that he has an eternal purpose as the motivating divine force behind his thinking, responding, initiating, and living, and he is continually discovering new areas of transformation.

When we have a New Covenant self-image, we will become aware of our everlasting destiny. We will seek to know God more intimately. And, more than knowing what God has done, we will desire to know His character—to know who He is. As this booklet shows, knowing the character of God is the result of knowing His Word. This is how Truth will transform us from the inside out.

Chapter One

THE TRUTH ABOUT A PERFECT PLAN

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

"That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

When the Bible says "all scripture is given "by inspiration of God," the word "inspiration" speaks of divine authority. Did God write the Bible through men's individuality? No man could ever have written the Bible except for di-

vine inspiration.

With God breathing truth into men, there is tremendous divine authority. We begin to understand how to execute that authority when we are grounded in grace, mercy, and love. As a result, we have a "more sure word of prophecy," according to 2 Peter 1:19. Every word of God is sure—absolutely trustworthy—and this is why: The Word is perfect, it is transcendent, it is didactic, and it is permanent.

A More Sure Word of Prophecy

Structurally, the Word of God is perfect. The Old Testament was preparation for the Messiah. The New Testament Gospels reveal the manifestation of truth: Jesus Christ, Immanuel—"God with us." The Book of Acts speaks of propagation of the Gospel which proclaims the truth. The Epistles are the explanation of the truth. The Book of Revelation is the consummation, the ultimate fulfillment of the truth. That is the structural beauty of the Word of God.

The Bible is also perfect with regard to its practicality. It is the only resource in the world that provides a solution for every single problem with mankind. For every situation or problem in the world, this Book can bring a personal solu-

tion. When properly understood, loved, and responded to, it is one amazing Book.

Furthermore, the Word of God is transcendent. It goes beyond all human excellence ever known. It comes from above (John 3:27). We are to set our minds on things above because the Word of God transcends everything in the natural and supernatural realm. Whatever we face on this planet, we have access to the thoughts of the very Person who is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent through it all.

Next, the Word of God is didactic; it is instructional because its foundation is truth, therefore it is in itself ethical, moral, honest, and trustworthy. God is not a man that he can lie. The apostle Paul said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (see Philippians 3:7-8). Everything about God's Word is didactic. And when a man is faced with truth in its purest form, when he is convicted in his heart of its value—beyond diamonds and gold—the result is nothing less than transformation.

Finally, the Word of God is permanent. "For thy word, O LORD, is for ever settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). God does not change. The truth remains long after the opinions and judgments

of men have come and gone.

God Is Speaking; Who Will Hear Him?

God said in Jeremiah 6:10, "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it."

It is God's desire to speak to us. That is shocking! It overwhelms me that God would desire to speak to us—and that, in fact, He *does* speak. He *has* spoken and He always will speak. Still He says, "To whom shall I speak? To whom shall I give warning?" Even if I am convicted of sin in some area of my life, I can respond to that conviction because it is a godly warning. I don't have to hide with fear behind a mask of shame, for I am dealing with perfect love.

Is it any wonder that God approaches every facet of every life with His Word? God approaches the world, and He says, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD" (Jeremiah 22:29). It is the only time a triple salutation is written in the Bible, revealing the urgency of the message.

He said, "O heavens, O earth, hear Me! I, God, have brought up my children. I have nour-

ished them, and they have rebelled against me; therefore, they have grieved me" (see Isaiah 1:2).

Careful study of Scripture shows the intensity of divine illumination. It is a marvelous revelation of God's urgency, compassion, sincerity, and purity in approaching individuals in the human race.

The Cry from Heaven

"Verily, verily; this is *very* important. This is extremely important. If any man hears My words and believes on Him that sent Me, that man shall never come into condemnation, but is already passed from death unto life" (see John 5:24).

Every Bible scholar (and, beyond scholars, the Holy Spirit Himself) will tell you that this is the cry of heaven. It is the cry of heaven when God speaks with that measure of urgency.

In Jeremiah 9:21-22 and Deuteronomy 6:4, for example, God addressed families. He said, "I want you to train your children. When they wake up, give them the Word. When you go on the highway, give them the Word. When you lie down, give them the Word. When you sit up with them, give them the Word. Give them the Word on purpose, several times a day." But they

disobeyed God and did not teach their children—and oh, the repercussions of such a thing.

Beginning in Jeremiah 22:1, God addressed royalty through His prophet, Jeremiah. He said to the king of Judah, "You have to hear the word of the LORD," but the king reacted by putting Jeremiah in the dungeon.

Later, in Jeremiah 37:1-8, Jeremiah was in the dungeon, and King Zedekiah, who was experiencing raging strife and conflict in his life, said, "Bring Jeremiah to me!"

And the king said, "Will you give me a word from God?"

Jeremiah said, "Yes, I will. My people will go back into Egypt, and the Chaldeans will come in and take you into captivity." In other words, Jeremiah said to the king, "It is too late."

Think of the multitudes in hell. They boasted of tomorrow, but their tomorrow never came forth (Proverbs 27:1). They refused to enter into the perfect plan of God because they would not reckon on Truth. And now, it is too late.*

Even in the Christian church, people hear the Word of God again and again, but too often they never go beyond hearing. They know that they need to love and be loved, but they never receive a capacity for God's love. They try to op-

erate through human love in their own natural capacity, because they do not have a spiritual capacity to receive the power of God's Word in the fullness of its application. Therefore, they are not transformed by the truth.

In Jeremiah 2:12, 14, 22, God addressed the nation of Israel. It was a national salutation, and He said, "Return, O Israel. Return, you backslidden people." In Jeremiah 6:16, God cried out, "Return, and walk in the old pathway, and I will give you peace…." But the end of that verse is both chilling and telling of the condition of their hearts as a nation: *"…and they would not."*

Israel would not hearken, and their children died in the streets. Their young men died, their women were violated, and their houses, livestock, and all their possessions were taken—all because they would not hear the truth.

Oh, if only we would realize that when we go to church, we go to hear words of life that were designed to establish us in God's perfect plan. By hearing the truth of God's Word, we begin to be transformed to His likeness.

**Be sure to read* Don't Wait until It's Too Late, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

THE TRUTH ABOUT PERFECT KNOWLEDGE

"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;

"So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;

"Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding,

"If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

"Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:1-5).

The Word of God says, "If you will receive the Word of the Lord (not just go to church but *receive* it), if you will treasure the commandments of God in your heart, if you will incline your ear unto wisdom and your heart to understanding, if you will cry out for discernment and lift up your voice for understanding, and if you

will search for Bible doctrine as for silver and gold and hidden treasure by going in and under until the light breaks through on every doctrine, *then*…."

There comes the beautiful word "*then*." "Then you will know the fear of the LORD…"—the presence and consciousness of all that God is for that moment, wherever you are in time—"…and you will understand the knowledge of God," which leads to righteousness, justice, equity, and a good path (Proverbs 2:9).

Doctrine is the highway of life on the throughway of time. Oh, to know the presence of God and to understand it, day in and day out. God's commandments are to be treasured, not treated as the words of a hard taskmaster. Each one was given to reveal the heart of God in us and through us, not just toward us.

When God Pleads

Therefore, we can say that all Scripture is given with all the authority of heaven, by the inspiration of God, and God speaks. He desires to speak, and He speaks to whoever will hear Him. He said, "Hear the word of the LORD."

Sadly, the Bible says in Jeremiah 5:31 that they loved their backslidden condition, and they

would not be turned.

One of the most intense topics I have studied is about those times when God pleads. Judgment was coming from everywhere because Israel would not hear the Word of the Lord (see Jeremiah 31:29). In Ezekiel 20:36, He pleaded. In Isaiah 51:22, He pleaded the cause of His people. Again and again, God pleads with His creation.

Everywhere in churches today we can see passivity, indifference toward God and toward the preaching of His Word. Men and women come into the church and come to the services, but oh, what indifference. And here is God Almighty pleading with pastors, with leaders, with men and women who profess to know Christ. "I plead with you. One soul is worth more than all the world." That is why, as a pastor, I plead with you to get right and go all the way with God. Study the Book, for *all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

If we are attentive listeners, all the resources of the Word of God go into our soul. The very thoughts of God on any subject will go into our souls if we will indeed receive the Word of God with faith and meekness and if we are attentive.

But if we are inattentive, we will bypass Deity and we will play with destiny. We will

think in the jungle of human reason with disastrous results. An inattentive listener who reacts to anything he doesn't want to hear is left to reason in the jungle of the world. He is left to be religious and evangelical but with his own opinions and without doctrine (Proverbs 19:2).

It is so important that we be attentive to every single word spoken in the name of the Lord, because we have learned the fear of the Lord. We must learn how to listen in the presence of God, how to think in the presence of God, how to have victory over sin in the presence of God, how to leap into the light of God from the kingdom of darkness, all for this magnificent victory of God.

Godly Authority

Second Timothy 3:16 says that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. So, the authority of doctrine will give a warning if we start to get off. Next, it corrects us and tells us the way to go. So when a spirit of confusion comes to distract us, there will be no question as to the right way.

Then, the Word of God gives us "instruction in righteousness." Instruction implies that there

must be a teacher, a student, and a textbook. Doctrine we receive from the Word of God provides us with instructions in righteousness, so that every individual may be thoroughly equipped and thoroughly furnished unto divine good (2 Timothy 3:17).

Truth on Trial

I will never understand why Jesus Christ had to say as He did in John 16:7, "I tell you the truth." Why did Almighty God ever have to say that? Because the people did not believe Him.

Many times, God spoke "comfortably," as in Isaiah 51:12. At other times, He spoke with a still, small voice (1 Kings 19:12). But at times, as in John 7:37-38, He stood up and spoke with a loud voice. And, in Revelation 1:15, He spoke as the voice of many waters.

But He said, "To whom can I speak, and give warning that they may hear?" The people of God hearkened not, because the Word of God was a reproach unto them. They had no delight in the truth whatsoever.

The writer of Psalm 26:11 said clearly, "As for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and have mercy unto me."

He would walk in the integrity of Redemp-

tion. Then he asked for mercy, and he said, "My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD" (Psalm 26:12). In other words, he said, "I will go to church."

Unless you are working, or sick, or on vacation, plan to be in church every time the door is open. The hour is late. Therefore, every Christian should find a way to obey God's Great Commission and God's Great Commandment to love. We obey the Word and go soul winning because the Word of God says, "Go!"

God's Word is clear, and His Word is pure. If it were not for the instructions of the Word of God in the didactical approach, we would not know about heaven. We would not know about hell, and we would not know about soul winning. That is why, if we desire wisdom, we must lend ourselves to be instructed in the Word.

The only way that we will ever understand truth is by the Holy Spirit. Not only is He our teacher, but He gives us the capacity to hear the Word through a pastor-teacher (Ephesians 4:11-12). Then He gives us understanding, and He gives us experiential power so we can be testimonies of Him, transformed by Truth.

Chapter Three

THE TRUTH ABOUT PERFECT LOVE

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (I Corinthians 2:9, 11).

Oh, the Word of God makes it all crystal clear. The natural man does not listen with attention of divine reverence because he has never known how to fear the Lord. And because the natural man does not receive the entire counsel of God's Word, he has many unresolved conflicts in his subconscious mind. The wounds of the flesh cause him to react, and in his rebellion he resists the truth of the whole counsel of God. Eventually he enters into passivity and

Laodicean reaction. But 1 Corinthians 10:11 with Romans 15:4, says that these things were written aforetime—before the problem got out of hand—for our example and for our learning.

This is no time to speak words of vanity and words of idleness. This is no time to play with destiny. This is no time to forsake Deity. This is no time to enter into the process of precipitating disasters. This is the time to hear the Word of God.

Calvary: An Even Place

God says that we stand in an even place (Psalm 26:12). That means that regardless of who you are, we are all even before the Lord—no one has a greater advantage. Every time we gather together in an assembly and we are confessed up-to-date, we are totally even. One of the most beautiful things about the Body of Christ is that everyone is in an even place, in terms of our position and in terms of forgiveness.

Your past is irreparable, so just give it to Jesus, because He won't remember it. But do you want to know something else? Your future in Jesus Christ is irresistible, because He is going to make you perfect. And even if you have had

negative thoughts regarding things that have happened in the past, even lost opportunities—they may be turned into constructive thoughts filled with grace and mercy and love. We will redeem the time because we have been transformed by the truth that comes through the Holy Spirit.

Divine Mandates

"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:14-16).

We are living in a time when churches are being persecuted. Christians are mocked and despised. Families are being demoralized by homosexuality, lesbianism, and governmental regulation. We are living in a time of immorality, of drug addiction, and of passivity and lethargy in the Church. Unless new believers are properly discipled by the whole counsel of God, they will never be transformed by the truth. We must learn to discern the voice of the Lord from the voice that is good but not precise. We have

been called to understand the will of God for our lives (Ephesians 5:17). It is time to stand in the presence of God, as one man, not forsaking the assembly of believers.

When God says in Ephesians 5:18, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit," He means it. It is a mandate. And in verses 19-20, we are to speak to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing to the Lord with a melody in our hearts; giving thanks always unto God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, we are to submit one to another in the *reverence* of God, without debating, arguing, or resisting (Acts 7:23), and without quenching or grieving the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19, Ephesians 4:30). To "grieve" the Spirit means to limit God because of carelessness. God loves us with all of His heart. But when we "limit the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 78:4), we limit His nature of love and righteousness and holiness. Still, according to Ephesians 1:4, He has chosen us in His Son, giving us special significance and a special purpose in His eyes.

Chosen and Blameless

God chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be separated unto Him, "without blame"—without emotional problems, without defect, without injuries, without reaction, without partiality, without hypocrisy, without blaming people. "Without blame" means that our subconscious and conscious mind are delivered from the effects of the Fall, so we can live in the presence of God, having a deep reverence, *"…without blame and before him in love."* Our position is love, and our location is in Him. He instructs us in righteousness by His Word, and here we are, able to stand before the Lord, against the wiles of the devil (Romans 14:4; Ephesians 6:11).

God the Father, knowing that we would accept Jesus Christ as Savior, has placed us under the Blood of the New Covenant, having cleansed and purged us by the Blood of the Lamb. He said, "I will make you stand *even when you think you can't.* You will stand because you are inside, hid with Christ in God" (see Colossians 3:3). If we could only comprehend what it means to be "hid"—hid with Christ in God. What a marvelous, beautiful, precious verse.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

The breadth of God's love has given us eternity without restriction and beyond measure. The length of God's love is from eternity past, consuming everything in time and perfecting us forever in the future. The depth of His love speaks of the absolute finality of our redemption at Calvary: that moment in time at Calvary when Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Then and there, He paid it all—and that is the depth of God's love. Lastly, the height of God's love is far above all principalities, powers, thrones, and dominions in this life and the one to come. The height reveals Christ in His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, taking every Christian with Him, so that positionally we are seated above (Ephesians 2:6). It means that we

are far above jealousy, lust, and evil; far above reaction, fear, and guilt.

We behold the purity of His Word and the Holy Spirit, and then the Father sends His angels to minister to us. And because of our position, because God dwells in us with this kind of love, we live far above everything that is not of God.

Oh to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, and to be filled with all the fullness of God! Remember that in the times when God is silent, it does not mean that He is indifferent. Rather, it means that He wants us to draw near to Him with a fervent faith—to honor Him for who He is and for what He has done. The silence of God doesn't mean that He cares less about you. He loves you beyond measure. It only means that it is a time to walk by faith and draw near (Hebrews 10:22 and James 4:8).

The Word of God is always in the business of restoring people, of redeeming situations, and of buying back things that were lost to sin. It teaches us that we are going to face steep inclines, sharp curves, and rugged precipices, but God will make them all plain. And as we stand fast on the Word of God, we will be transformed into His likeness—transformed by truth.

CONCLUSION

According to Psalm 103:7, God revealed His ways unto Moses but His acts or deeds unto the sons of Israel. Beyond just seeing His acts and knowing about Him, God wants to show us His ways, His character. We can understand and accept things as they are when we have learned of His character and His method of doing things. Moses went through forty years of silence when he did not hear from God, then finally the burning bush. The silence did not mean rejection. It meant that his capacity for truth was being formed.

God said to Moses, "Son, I'm going to do everything I ever said I would do. You couldn't stop Me with your unbelief. When you killed the Egyptian, I know why you did it. You loved your people, but you tried to avenge and protect them in your own strength. Now you are going to deliver your people—*My* people—and you will be the meekest man on the earth. My si-

lence, then, is preparing you to be a great deliverer."

It is in the trials and the desert places of life that we have imparted to us the character of God. Moses did not learn to serve God in the valley; rather, he learned to serve God in the desert. Do not kick against the pricks of the trials. That is where the impartation of God's character comes in. We do not tend to learn of God and learn to behave properly when things are going well, when we have our reputation and we are popular with the world. Instead, we learn to meet God as Moses did, on the backside of the desert.

Father, we thank You, we love You, and we praise You. We ask You to bless us with Your Word and its inspiration and authority. Take us into the steep inclines, the sharp curves, the dangerous precipices. The pruning knife goes in sharply but it always bears fruit if we let it (John 15). And the only reason You use it is that we might bear fruit.

Father, grant that we may see You—"Him who is invisible"—and have that self-image, that purpose, and that destiny you desire for us. We desire to be conformed to Your image, transformed by truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Travailing in Prayer

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

As a believer with an earnest desire to please God, you may have observed people whom you consider to be "dynamic" Christians. You note their vibrancy, adventures of faith, and continual fruit bearing. Instead of striving and tension, which marks the "movers and shakers" in the world scene, these Christians exhibit amazing peace, joy, and meekness in every circumstance—and you want that kind of life.

Like many godly, well-intentioned Christians, you may have come to a place where you feel as though something is missing in your walk with God. Besides being faithful in church attendance and daily devotions, you give your tithe and your time. When it comes to prayer, you give thanks before every meal. Each morning and evening, you pray for guidance and protection. Your prayers are sincere, and you believe that God hears them—and He does. So, why the discomfort?

God never intended for our lives to become static. From the start of His public ministry in a face-off with Satan himself, until He breathed His last breath on the Cross, Jesus Christ's life never became easier. Every moment of His life was dynamic. Beginning with those forty days of fasting in the wilderness to the last hours of his life on earth, God the Son showed us what it means to travail in prayer.

This booklet confirms the fact that once you are born again, the whole reason for your existence is to bring glory to God. As you grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, your prayer life will also grow in intensity. You are being transformed into the image of the Son of God, who created you, redeemed you, sustains you, and lives through you.

Chapter One

ALONE WITH GOD: HAVING CHRIST FORMED IN YOU

"We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, as of a woman in travail" (Jeremiah 6:24).

"As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (Isaiah 66:8*b*).

To travail means to be in a process of bringing forth, to deliver a new life, through anguish and sometimes through agony.

The apostle Paul said in Galatians 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." Here, "travail" means, "I feel the pains of childbirth. I feel the pain of having Christ formed in you." It speaks of identification, development through discipleship, and the application of Bible doctrine in real life situations. Paul continued to pour out love and to invest Christ's life in others, and that became a very heavy responsibility.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:8-9 and 2 Thessalonians 3:8, Paul encouraged the Thessalonian Christians to continue in the same pure Gospel they had received from him: "Remember our labor and travail as we preached unto you the Gospel of God."

Guard Your Time with God

Do not let anything keep you from having your time alone with God. God is very concerned about our intentions (see Proverbs 4:23); however, He is even more concerned about our actions (Philippians 4:9). The seeds we plant today and this week we will harvest in the future. We can be alone and be quiet without really taking advantage of that time to be alone with God. Therefore, we must do everything in our power to protect our private times with God.

We should desire to treat others as though they are more valuable than we are, (Philippians 2:3). But how do we reach that place, practically speaking? The only way a believer can honestly change from a self-serving existence to a laid-down life is through travailing. Travailing is a process whereby God promises miraculous results to the person who travails. Unless the Holy Spirit leads, it is very difficult to travail.

The flesh finds it very hard.

"As soon as they travailed, they brought forth children." There is such satisfaction when a child is born into the Kingdom of God. And once a person is saved, we need to guide them and pray as the apostle Paul did, that Christ would be formed in his converts.

A lady was having a terrible time with her children. She met with her pastor and said, "I have a girl six, a boy twelve, and another boy fifteen. My husband and I go to church. He is a deacon. We don't live in secret sins, we have worship in our home, and we cannot figure out why our children are so rebellious.

"Pastor, say anything you can to me. I don't care! If there is anything you can say, please say it. It will not trouble me. I want help."

The pastor said, "I would ask you a question only because you've given me the liberty to ask this question. How many nights has your pillow been wet with tears?"

She looked the pastor in the eye, and she said, "I have to tell you, never."

Now, this is a very good Christian lady, to be complimented. But she said, "Never." She had never travailed.

That night, with her husband, she began on

her own to understand what it means to travail in prayer. Without telling anyone, praying all night long in a private place in her home, she asked the Lord to teach her. She wept and wept, and she begged God. She said, "I'm going to fight for my children."

And after several nights, she came downstairs, and her oldest boy said, "Mom, how does anyone really get saved?"

She didn't bring it up. On his own he said, "How does a person really get saved?"

While this was going on, the twelve-year-old boy took off and ran upstairs. It seemed as though he didn't want to hear it.

The older boy said, "Mom, would you kneel with me so I can have the real thing?" and she did.

Then next day, her second son said to her, "I took off, but not because I didn't want you to talk about God. I ran because I have such a need for Him." He accepted Christ, and her little six-year-old girl prayed as well. It happened because of a mother's travail—travailing in prayer.

I would say with you, with all of my heart, "God, please teach me how to travail."

As soon as they travailed, they brought forth children. We are called to trust God and to travail

in prayer, separated from the world and all of its clutches and the diverse powers that wish to attack us, hurt us, and destroy us. While we acknowledge God's sovereign will, let's learn to travail in our intercession—separated from the world, the flesh, and the devil—not letting go of God until He does something.

God loves to build and to bring new life to the desolate places and the waste places when people travail (Job 38:27, Psalm 34:22, and Isaiah 54:3). In Ezekiel 38:12 we read, "The desolate places are now inhabited"—and all because someone stood in the gap and travailed.

Surrender Comes before Power

With God, surrender comes before power. And when people in a church begin to travail in prayer, God promises a tremendous victory. It is so easy to be touched by a message but not changed by it. Yes, there are people who faithfully get together to have prayer, and that's good. But beyond including prayer in our schedules, we need to be taught how to travail through the Spirit of God, in prayer.

I don't know how many Christians have experienced the faintest resemblance to what God sees as seriously travailing in prayer. In some

cases, as with Jesus in the garden, it means "anguish of the soul." It means emotional pain. It means the intensity of exercising your desire.

With all the gambling, drugs, homosexuality, adultery, with all the murders and oceans of iniquity, I have often thought about the many professing Christians in our country. How many, in God's eyes and His omniscience, will be travailing in prayer tonight? Maybe one elderly lady will respond, or a man, or perhaps a young pastor, on fire for God, who believes what I am saying. But whether they are few or many, God has always used the remnant—whosoever will yield himself to His purpose, for His glory.

No one will ever know what travail will bring forth until they experience it. The experience is not automatic. It is not a system of works, but it is a lifestyle. Therefore, travailing in prayer has to be developed, because it means to be separated from the world and the flesh—separated to intercede for others.

Chapter Two

LABOR AND DELIVERY: BRINGING FORTH NEW LIFE

"A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world" (John 16:21).

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

To travail does not mean just to get together for prayer. Travail implies intensity, labor, and anguish.

If we could picture Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, we would begin to understand what it means to travail in prayer. In Matthew 26:38-44, He asked three of the disciples to come with Him as He prayed, but He found them sleeping. He prayed again, and again they fell asleep. Then He prayed again,

falling on His face as blood came through His pores. He travailed in prayer as He said to the Father, "Thy will be done." "Remove this cup; nevertheless, thy will be done."

It is questionable that many people are going to understand what it means to travail with God in prayer. You will want to do it, but it requires first being taught and then withstanding the enemy—and that is why we need to pray for one another.

A woman has sorrow, in terms of physical suffering, when she is giving birth to a child. But, when the child is delivered, her anguish goes away because a new life is born into this world (John 16:21). As soon as she travails, a child is brought forth.

Worry, fear, insecurity, subjectivity, passivity, and carnality, questions and more questions: everything comes against those who desire to bring forth life. But God says, "Watch with me. Enter into travail, and don't give up." No wonder He said, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

In Acts 1:14, the believers continued in prayer. In Acts 12:12, many gathered to pray. But in Acts 21:5, many gathered to pray because they had been taught how to travail.

Praying is asking—asking in faith. There are many opportunities to travail as you are doing what you have to do. Maybe it is during your bus ride on the way to work, or in your office during your lunch hour—but you will sense that it is a time set apart by God, when your heart can go back to travail over a subject that God has placed there.

Believe and Receive

A group of Christians prayed, and their prayer was very simple—that the local tavern would close. Two weeks later, on a Sunday morning at eleven o'clock, lightning struck the building and it burned down. The owner knew they had prayed, and he sued them. They hired an attorney and said they were not guilty. Now, that is interesting. The tavern owner believed in prayer, and they didn't!

John Knox was a fervent preacher and Bible teacher during the time of the Reformation. Arrested and tortured for treason, he was delivered from being burned at the stake, though many at that time were martyred for their faith. He continued to serve God and to pray with fervency until he died, and many souls were brought into the Kingdom of God through the power of his

prayer. Mary, Queen of Scots said of him, "I'd rather face all my enemies than have John Knox pray." She, by the way, lost her head when England took a stand for God.

Travailing As We Go

Recently, during Saturday morning outreach, on the last visit that we made, blood was on the sidewalk where the night before a forty-eight-year-old man had been kicked, knifed, and killed. Many people were involved in the slaying, which turned out to be a case of mistaken identity. Imagine it. Blood all over the sidewalk. It happened Friday night, and we were there on Saturday. We had gone just as we always have. But this time we went with a new sense of the presence of God, because we were responding to His call to travail in prayer for our city.

Oh, how God honors outreach, and how He honors and delights in the prayers of His children. As soon as we travailed, souls were saved. As soon as we interceded, God delivered and answered prayer with healing, and we were separated from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

For Our Example

One of the great preachers of all times was

Dwight L. Moody. In his early ministry, he was not fluent in his speech. Yet, he was rich in his understanding of the Gospel and his knowledge of the Word of God. So when two ladies heard him speak in England, they began to pray for him. They prayed day and night when they could. Then, during an evangelical crusade in New York, the power of God came upon him, and Dwight L. Moody became the great preacher that he was. As soon as they travailed, they brought forth children.

"But we're too busy to *travail*. It's hard enough just to get to a prayer meeting once a week." Many good Christians, who are sincere, have no idea what it means to travail in prayer.

In Numbers 12, Miriam and Aaron interfered with Moses' marriage and accused him. Their judgment kindled God's wrath, and Miriam became leprous. But Moses travailed for his sister (verse 13), praying that God would release her of leprosy and let her go free. He travailed and God answered his prayer.

God was angry with Aaron for not rebuking Israel when they rebelled in the wilderness—angry enough to have destroyed him. But in Deuteronomy 9:20, Moses travailed in prayer for Aaron, and he was spared. In Deuteronomy

9:24-26, Moses said that the Lord was ready to destroy the nation of Israel too, and Moses prayed for forty days and forty nights that the nation would be spared. He travailed in prayer, and God heard him.

During Israel's captivity in Babylon, a law was signed, declaring that anyone who prayed to God would be cast to the lions. The plan was to destroy the Israelites who refused to worship the idols of Babylon. Still, in Daniel 6:10, after hearing of the decree, Daniel prayed faithfully, morning, noon, and night, "and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime*." Daniel was already a faithful man of prayer, and the God of Israel proved faithful to Him once again, saving him out of the mouths of hungry lions (Daniel 6:22). In Daniel 9, he prayed for the children of Israel to be delivered from captivity.

In the fullness of time, God answers the prayers of men and women who pray and believe consistently. Don't believe a lie. Believe God, trust Him to provide you with a plan and a purpose, and receive the fruit of travailing with Him in prayer.

Chapter Three

MIRACLES HAPPEN WHEN WE PUT GOD'S PURPOSE FIRST

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16*b*).

Unless we band together and purpose to give ourselves to God's heartbeat for the lost, we will not affect places of sin. Without fervent prayer, I have no great faith that we are going to see people come under conviction as they walk down the street. A person has to be taught how to travail in prayer. It achieves unbelievable miracles, indescribable things that you cannot comprehend. That is the fruit of travailing.

There will be anguish and labor and sorrow of heart in the one who is patient, waiting upon God. But when the answer comes, the anguish is gone. Travailing.

In our little town of West Sumner, Maine, there hadn't been a fundamentalist church for fifty consecutive years. The Baptist church had been closed, and no gospel was preached in that little town where I was reared up. No gospel—for *fifty* years. But finally, the doors opened. And as the doors opened, everyone in that little town, with their disbelieving attitudes, mocked.

A man from Bob Jones University came to preach for two weeks. Back then, we called it a revival. But after ten days, very few had responded, and he said, "We're absolutely getting nowhere." Then he said, "If you feel led, meet me. I'm going to stay here all night and pray." And so we did, on a Tuesday night.

That pastor said, "Let us pray." He said, "There are many walls in this little town that have to be broken. The church hasn't been open for fifty years. The Gospel hasn't been proclaimed, and it seems as though people just don't need Christ—or so they think."

This was new to me but I joined in, and we prayed all night. The most shocking thing happened in that town. Twenty-eight people came to the next service and were born again—people

who had never stepped foot in a church as far as I know.

On a Wednesday night, after fifty years of no results, no Gospel message, no church doors opening, twenty-eight people came forward. Among them was my precious mother. She was such a great woman. The only thing I had said to her before was, "If you want to go to these crusades, even for just one night, I'd be proud to take you." She didn't answer me. But she came in and stood way up back (that was just like her), and I didn't even know she was there.

Tuesday night, we travailed. Wednesday night, for the first time in fifty years, twenty-eight people were saved.

The Fruit of Abiding

Throughout the years, people in our ministry have grown through the trials of their faith, both personally and as a body, by learning to go before the throne of grace and seek God's help for one another.

One person had a very serious heart condition, and another person had a tumor on the brain. One hundred people got together and agreed to pray three times a day for those two specific requests for healing. Within forty days,

both people were totally healed. Travail brought forth life for the person with the tumor, and travail moved heaven to bring healing to the person with the serious heart condition. As soon as they travailed, they were healed.

A wife left her husband, a faithful Christian, for another man. Though he was understandably distraught, instead of reacting in his emotions he contacted a pastor in his church to travail in prayer with him. They met together morning and night, and they prayed on the phone at noon. They wept as they prayed, and they believed God's promise to be faithful. Several weeks later, he received a call from her from a Billy Graham Crusade in Tampa Bay, Florida. She had accepted Christ and said, "Is it possible that you would accept me back?"

He didn't plead with her, he didn't argue, and when she came back, he didn't judge her. He travailed in prayer, believing God, and received her completely because of unconditional love.

Travailing in prayer. In the natural, I don't think you or I would do it. But I have a hunch that you will follow through. Pray for each other, that we will all learn to pray with travailing. It does not come naturally. We need to learn

how, and God is more than willing to teach us. We don't have to look far for situations to pray about.

Often, people will take time to relax, to just get away from it all, but they forget the rest that comes with travailing (Hebrews 4:9-11). It doesn't make sense, yet God has said that travailing in prayer is the one thing that brings forth *life*—and the life of Christ always brings rest (Matthew 11:28-29).

CONCLUSION

Messages, people may not come to hear. Arguments, they may oppose and win. But prayers, they cannot resist, because God answers our prayers.

The disciples in the upper room were revived and in one accord, having one heart and one soul. When their enemies came against them (Acts 4:31-33), they went back and prayed more and with reverence. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, and their faith, though on trial, was red hot.

Heavenly Father, bless these words in the depth of truth. The seed has been planted. Teach us how to travail in prayer. Examine our hearts and purify our motives so we can develop those godly habits because of our relationship with You, as our fellowship grows. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Triumphant in Christ

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

In this booklet, we will show you that it is by truth that we triumph. When we are led by the Spirit, taught by Spirit-led men, and involved with Spirit-filled people, we can overcome anything that comes against us.

Victorious Christian living is lacking today, primarily because many people who call themselves Christians do not understand truth. Many are filled with knowledge, but very few allow doctrine to have a continuous "conception" of truth in their souls.

A brand-new believer can understand deep passages of Scripture when he begins by being Spirit-taught (see Psalm 25:9, Psalm 34:2, 1 Corinthians 2:9-16). If he tries in his natural capacity to fathom Spirit-filled preaching by a man of God, he is bound to admit that the message is "too deep." But if he allows the Holy Spirit to teach him, he will come away from the message saying, "My, that was good!"—even if he is only

a week old in Christ.

Let us all continue to have new and enlarged capacities by letting the Holy Spirit instruct us as we go. That is God's provision for us to always be triumphant in Christ.

Chapter One
STAYING ON BALANCE

"Let me be weighed in an even balance, that [the Lord] may know mine integrity" (Job 31:6).

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Psalm 51:6).

"A just weight and balance are the LORD's: all the weights of the bag are his work" (Proverbs 16:11).

The "bag" in Proverbs 16:11 represents what we carry with us when we travel—the thing that holds all of our supplies for a journey. At the airport, at a train station, on bus lines, passengers always have their bags with them.

In Psalm 51:6, God desires for us to have *emeth* in the inward parts. The Hebrew word *emeth* means truth that comes from thinking with God, which equals doctrine. This doctrine must be presented precisely and learned in the balance of God's nature. Absolute truth should

continually reside in our souls as we appropriate it by our personal faith.

Malachi 2:6 tells us that this type of truth (emeth) is the law of God's mouth. "Thy law is the truth" (Psalm 119:142b).

The Greek word for truth is aletheia (2 Timothy 2:15)—precise categorical thinking with God according to His nature, appropriated in personal faith through the Spirit of the living Word. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth [(aletheia)]" (John 17:17).

Our Accountability to Truth

Why is our accountability to truth important? We need to accept God's call on our lives. We all need to be faithful to a local assembly and with a pastor-teacher who is faithful to God's call. Guaranteed, we will all be accountable when we face God at the Bema Seat—whether or not we lived by emeth or aletheia, because every one of us has been given a provision to receive the truth.

The Bema Seat evaluation of a believer's works will be based on what Jesus said in John 12:48b: "the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." God's words are the categorical precise truth in balance. These words will be the basis for God's evaluation of

every believer when we face Him at the Bema Seat, which will be based on the grace and love of God.

Equity: God's Perfect Justice

"Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from [the kingdom of] evil maketh himself a prey. And the Lord saw it and it displeased him that there was no judgment" (Isaiah 59:14-15).

Webster's Dictionary defines "equity" as "…a body of legal doctrines and rules developed to enlarge, supplement, or override a narrow rigid system of law." Here, "equity" refers to the Finished Work of God, judging Christ on the Cross for our sins so that we, who were condemned in our old sin nature by the law, could freely receive eternal life.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [(judgment)]; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

There is now no judgment for sins; there is now no condemnation (see Romans 8:1). Because

of the Finished Work, "judgment stands afar off" from anyone who receives Christ as his Savior. Yet, experiencing the Finished Work stands afar off from the person who refuses to abide in truth. The equity of "it is finished" cannot enter into his soul. When a person is saved and departs from Satan's kingdom of evil, he needs to be sanctified in aletheia—truth found in precise categories from God's Word—so he can understand and experience what God is saying.

Second Peter 1:12 instructs us to be established in truth (aletheia). Second Corinthians 13:8 says that we cannot do anything against aletheia. We are set apart with God's viewpoint through the Holy Spirit of love when we rightly divide the precise Word of God in a balanced way, to represent God's nature through our personal faith.

Chapter Two
THE WORD ALIVE IN US

While we live in this crooked and perverse world (Philippians 2:15-16), the Word of God comes alive in us. This is why Jesus said to Satan, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Matthew 4:4). This is why He said in Matthew 4:7, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." In Matthew 7:10, He said, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only."

"It is written…It is written…It is written." What was Jesus doing by answering every temptation from the devil with those words? He was living by emeth and aletheia. And what did He tell us to do? We are to live by every single word of God (Matthew 4:4).

A believer should attend a church that teaches every single word of God. When we don't hear the whole truth, it falls in the street and causes a traffic block. The Finished Work

judgment stands afar off, as does justice that precedes love. Judgment is turned backward. It cannot function.

The Finished Work declares that we are free in Christ, that He is in us, and that we are His children when we have received Him by faith. It says that He is our Savior and Lord. The Finished Work, however, cannot be the equity of our lives if we are not receiving precise truth communicated in the power and the nature of God's love. We need to have a personal faith established in what Paul calls the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

All Scripture is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16). Each verse is profitable for reproof, for correction, and for doctrine (which is instruction in righteousness), that we may be thoroughly furnished with emeth and aletheia.

Vows Are Made to Be Kept

When two people who are married do not have aletheia in their hearts, then they will not relate precisely and in balance with the Word. Balance simply means that no matter what happens on any side of life, God has the answer and the power to give what is needed to obey Him.

That couple may be Christians who go to

church three times a week, yet they are off balance without Finished Work truth. "Faithful is he who calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). The Lord will perform what He asks us to do (Job 23:14).

A doctor is obliged to live according to the Hippocratic oath, which is a vow to do no harm and to do everything in his power to heal those who come to him, whether or not they can afford to pay for his services. A person who enters the military makes a vow to defend and protect his nation: to be honest, to serve with discipline, and to fight—at any cost, even if it means to give his or her life. A lawyer takes an oath to make no false accusations and to perform his duties with integrity and personal responsibility, putting the truth ahead of everything.

What does that have to do with born-again Christians? "LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth [(emeth)] in his heart" (Psalm 15:1-2). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16). The Spirit-filled believer does not backbite his neighbor. He does not do wrong deeds to bring reproach to his neighbor. According to Psalm 15:4b, he swears

to his own hurt, and he changes not.

Where were you when God saved you? On the way to hell, of course. Did He die for you when you were in that state? Yes, He did (Romans 5:6, 8; Isaiah 53). He laid down His life for you. I do not know any other way to interpret Ephesians 5:25 and 26: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might be sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

If Christ had not died for us while we were sinners, how could we honor His authority without knowing His love? God's love must come through the husband, as the initiator in the union, before his wife has something to respond to. But it cannot come through his own efforts or because she is meeting his standards of a good wife. It must be the Holy Spirit shedding the love of God abroad in the heart.

Chapter Three
THE SAVOR OF TRUTH

Matthew 5:13 says we are the salt of the earth. In Luke 14:34, if salt has lost its savor, it is good for nothing. Henceforth, men tread it under their feet. Salt is the resurrection life of knowledge in the power of the whole counsel of God through personal faith. This means God causes us to triumph in every place.

God said to a man, "I want you to go to this country and minister to the lepers." Angry with God because his brother had died from a terrible illness at a young age, the man said, "My brother served You faithfully, and You took him home! You would not answer our prayer, and he was only in his forties."

After arguing with God for one year, this man finally went to the mission field. Every day he ministered to the lepers in their colony, and for a long time, he began each sermon by saying. "My dear brethren…." But one morning, hot

water spilled on his feet. Unable to feel the pain, he knew that he had leprosy. That day, he began his message by saying, "My fellow lepers…." He considered it a privilege to be one with them; not that he wanted to be, but inasmuch as God allowed it, he used his affliction in his ministry.

You see, he picked up truth and accepted that his judgment was upon Christ: Finished Work equity. Justice could precede love, and love could be shed abroad in him as an essence of God through the channel of grace. It is a very beautiful picture.

When people go to the altar and say, "I take you to be mine for better or worse, through sickness or health, in prosperity or adversity," how can they think they have any option but to keep that vow? The principle is in 1 Peter 2:13, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake…." Yet, some years later, one party claims that they never got along. One of them leaves, and the vows are broken. Truth has fallen in the street.

We have vows in the military and oaths for doctors and lawyers. When those vows are broken, the law recommends serious penalties. The Bible says that a righteous man swears an oath to his own hurt and never changes (Psalm 15:4b).

Why? Because God commands it. Furthermore, God said, “I am the Lord, I change not” (Malachi 3:6). Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Mercy in Action

On our radio program recently, a wife called in and said, "My husband just told me a while ago that he was going out with prostitutes and has been involved with pornography since he was twelve years old."

"Oh, I feel sorry for you," I said.

"Oh no, don’t feel bad for me," she said. "He has truly repented. He didn’t have to tell me. He came weeping. He has truly repented. He is a brand-new man. He means it."

It was good to hear that for a change! This woman does not hold a thing against him and never knew it all her life. When she married him, she put Psalm 15:4b into practice. She swore a vow to her own hurt, and she would not change when he revealed his sin. Motivated by the love of God, she is giving him the grace of God, letting mercy rejoice against judgment, and she is literally giving him the life of God.

Many Christians never truly are delivered. They are saved, and they do not do anything

directly to support Satan's government of evil. Yet, they are prey for the devil, because they do not have truth stored in their minds, in the memory center. They do not have the Cross as a point of reference, from moment to moment, and they do not have categories of doctrine forming their frame of reference.

A Sweet Fragrance from the Inside

Each of us needs a personal faith to reveal Christ in the inward parts. Then, everywhere we go, we triumph through the savor of His knowledge.

The savor of His knowledge is related in the recipe of the perfume, in Exodus 30:34. Moses was told to take four spices: stacte (representing grace), onycha (the fruit of divine good), galbanum (conviction), and frankincense (love through truth). The spices were mixed together in equal amounts: Grace equal with the fruit of divine good; divine good equal with new convictions; new convictions equal with loving knowledge. The mixture had to be perfectly balanced, placed where God would meet with Moses, and regarded as most holy. It was forbidden to be used or copied for any other purpose.

When these things are present and balanced

in our lives, God's presence brings out the beautiful aroma of grace and the fruit of the Holy Spirit and conviction. The love of God through knowledge is exhibited, demonstrated, and manifested to destroy the works of the devil. God always causes us to triumph so that He can use the savor of His knowledge through us in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Chapter Four

ENDURING BY THE POWER OF LIFE

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12).

I was told that this verse is only about the martyrs who are also spoken of in Revelation 2:10. Now, having studied it carefully, I strongly disagree. In this specific case, to "endure" means to stay under something that never goes away.

We have a woman with multiple sclerosis who works at the church. She answers the phones and always has a smile on her face. Each day when I see her, she says things like, "Boy, is it good to be in this ministry. It is the most amazing thing, Pastor. God has blessed me so much." This is her testimony day in and day out. She endures affliction, and she will enjoy a crown of life.

I heard a true story from a friend of mine. A woman in New England was saved in our ministry. Her husband professed Christ, but then he left her for another woman who became pregnant with his child.

When his wife heard that they planned to abort the baby, she said, "Please let me raise the child. Please!" They agreed. Then it happened again, and again she said, "I will pay for it all. Let me have that baby, too."

Do you know where these children are now? One is a missionary, and one is an engineer who leads a choir in his spare time. This woman did not get her husband back, but she certainly has glorified God. She did not let truth fall in the street. Instead, she gave her husband unconditional love and grace. She raised those two children. That precious woman has glorified God as most of us could never imagine possible.

Abide in the Truth

It takes more than just knowledge to live triumphantly. It is not about quoting chapter and verse. Jesus said, "the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). He was talking about aletheia—the precise, accurate power of God's

thinking and God's mind; the fullness of the Holy Spirit in a person who understands the Finished Work. This person understands that he can endure anything and that he will end up with the crown of life. He abides in the tabernacle; he dwells in the holy presence of God.

Isaiah 33:6a tells us that wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of our times. That is true, because wisdom is the proper application of knowledge.

According to Psalm 111:10, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom goes beyond knowledge into the way God thinks, releasing the Holy Spirit of resurrection in a person who is obedient to the word he has received. Proverbs 9:10 says that a man who fears God has not only wisdom but also understanding, which is knowledge of the holy. The original Hebrew text says, "knowledge of the holy place"—that is where we are seated. So, the fear of God is wisdom, and knowledge of the holy place is understanding, which includes what we experience.

Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, you will be My learner, My disciplined one, My disciple. And, you will know the aletheia—the truth." The definite article specifies a system of how to think in every area—and it will set us free. We

will not have to get a divorce. We will not have to be alienated or become angry with the pastor. Truth will set us free from moment to moment.

Then we get to know in a more personal way the Son, who says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh to the Father but by me." The Son makes us free because the work was finished on Calvary.

Jeremiah 9:3 reveals how important it is to be valiant in truth. That is good: Be valiant in truth. In 3 John 4, the Lord declares, "I love to hear that My people walk in aletheia, the truth. It is a great joy for Me when I hear My people are walking in aletheia."

Every leader, every pastor I know becomes overwhelmingly excited for the Christian who makes it through hard times. It makes them feel like singing, "I'll Fly Away, Oh Glory!" because both the pastor and the Christian are walking in the light as Jesus is in the light, and they can have fellowship with each other.

The blood of Christ cleanses us from our sins of ignorance (1 John 1:7). In Leviticus 4, there was an offering for sins of ignorance. But when we walk in the light, the Blood cleanses, even when we do not know it.

Soul Conceptions

God begets us through the Word of truth (James 1:18). That truth has to have a conception. Let me ask you this: Are you having new conceptions in truth every day? A woman who has conceived has a baby inside. A life is growing in her. Picture the woman carrying a baby, and then there is a birth.

This is what doctrine is all about. Somebody tells me something fresh. It conceives light in me. As soon as I hear, I want to obey (Psalm 18:44), but there is now life growing in me. I carry it. Sometimes it causes convictions, which will always lead to conversions, if I am honest.

The life of a triumphant Christian should be one of continually having new births. We are only born again once. But new births in categories of doctrine should happen regularly. We should have a birth in a new category and say, "I have a little baby of truth in my hand. Now I can experience truth in one area, and next week in another area."

Truth reveals sacrificial love that is supreme and begets self-sacrifice through love and grace. This is the truth that sets us free, and Jesus Christ makes us free indeed.

CONCLUSION

Every one of us faces temptations and afflictions. Sometimes it is because of our own old sin nature. Sometimes the afflictions come through no fault of our own. But whatever the case, whatever the cause, truth revealed to the inward man makes the difference. Equity prevails, and we who would have been losers triumph.

The only way to overcome a lie is with truth. The only way to overcome a single sin (John 15:7) is by abiding in truth. Not a thing can come against truth.

This is why I continue to go soul winning weekly, on purpose, after almost fifty years. Truth told me to go, and I got the message—though I am just a sinner saved by grace, but a saint in the royal family.

Father, we thank You. We praise You, we love You, and we ask You now to take this message to the hearts of individuals who are ready to hear. Please give everyone a new hunger to rightly divide truth in

the power of God through the Cross, by grace through faith in love. Amen.

Trophies of Grace

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INTRODUCTION

A trophy represents victory, and as recipients of God's grace we stand as monuments of all that He has done. There are none righteous, not one. But God, who is rich in mercy, has chosen to use us, His people, to make a statement to Satan about who He is.

Satan despises the grace of God, so it should come as no surprise that grace is exactly what God uses to bring about His most glorious victories. Through grace, the Father, Son, and Spirit give us all that we do not deserve. We have His righteousness and an eternal position, seated above principalities and powers.

The day will come when we will be in heaven in our glorified bodies, and we shall be as He is. His mercy endures forever and He will not forsake the work of His hands (Psalm 138:8). He Who began a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6). Jesus Christ has given us the free gift of grace

and the abundance of His righteousness.

This booklet will show that in the ages to come we who glorify Christ by receiving His grace will be on display for the angels—elect and fallen—to see. We will be viewed as trophies, masterpieces of God's perfect Finished Work.

Chapter One

OUR HOME: THE HOLY OF HOLIES

Every believer has a brand-new home, according to Hebrews 10:19: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." That home is the Holy of Holies.

In the Jewish temples, the veil in front of the Holy of Holies was sixty feet tall, thirty feet wide, and extremely heavy. Only the priests were allowed to touch it and to hang it in place. Furthermore, only the high priest could enter in beyond the veil. He went there just twice a year with blood sacrifices as an offering for himself and for the people (see Leviticus 16:1-19).

As we understand the chronology of Luke 23:44-45, the sun was eclipsed at noon as Jesus hung on the cross at Calvary. Three hours later, after the last sin had been transferred upon His body, Jesus Christ proclaimed, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Then He committed His spirit into

the hands of the Father and died. At that moment, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. What a shock that must have been to the Jews in the temple. They did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. Yet, at His death, the veil that no man could touch was torn apart, and they could look directly into the Holy of Holies. But to enter in, they had to believe.

A New and Living Way

"By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:20-22).

The amazing thing about the Holy of Holies is that it is the new home for God's royal family. Through the death of Jesus Christ, freshly slain, the Greek text says, "we have a way through the veil." The Greek word *hodos*, "way," is also used of the ways of God. Through His resurrection and ascension, we have a way into the Holy of Holies. Out of death came resurrection. Now, because we have been made members of God's royal family, the Holy of Holies is open moment-

by-moment as our home.

There is a High Priest over the House of God. This is a brand-new thing. Imagine that for 1,500 years, only the high priest was allowed into the Holy of Holies, and he could only go in twice a year. But then it finally happened: The veil was rent. And now, as Christians in the Church Age, we are the only group of people in history who have the Holy of Holies as our new home.

Instead of being fearful, we can come boldly before Christ, who is seated in the Holy of Holies. There we have confidence and stability instead of gossip and slander. Instead of becoming offended or offending others because of a negative attitude, we have a new home in the Holy of Holies. We are accepted and we are seated there, in a brand-new place where no one has been before.

Chapter Two

UNCHANGEABLE GIFTS AND CALLINGS

"The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands" (Psalm 138:8).

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus…For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:7, 10).

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the

ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider... Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it: but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isaiah 1:2-3, 5-6).

The Reality of Heaven and Hell

The Law was given so that every single mouth might be shut, because none are righteous. All have gone astray (see Romans 3:9-20). For this reason, the precious justice of God has established a literal hell as well as a literal heaven. Hell is a real place; heaven is a real place. For heaven, God has a special plan so that every believer has the opportunity and privilege to become one of the greatest displays of His grace throughout eternity. It is difficult to even remotely imagine, let alone speak about it.

People in hell will be there not because of their sins, even though they died in their sins (John 8:21). They will be there because they rejected and rebelled against the mercy and grace of God. That is the reason I believe hell will have

intensified degrees of punishment. People will be in hell for just one reason: They rejected the mercy and grace of God, motivated by God's nature of love toward them.

Jesus went to the Cross to bear our sins and to pay for every single sin of the entire world (1 John 2:2), thereby reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). In doing this, God was in effect saying, "I will not accept human merit; I will not accept a system of works; I will not accept your performance. I will only accept you believing Me." This is why the Word of God says in Mark 5:36, "Only believe."

Abraham, in Genesis 15:4-6, took God up on that promise and was justified while he was yet ungodly. Certainly, it took time for him to grow as a believer, but the Word of God had begun a work in his life. The plan is simply this: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Eternal salvation, based on and followed by mercy and grace: These are gifts God offers each of us.

According to Romans 11:29, "the gifts and calling of God are *without repentance*," without

us doing something in our flesh to change our minds. The psalmist prayed, "Turn us, O God…" (Psalm 85:4). In Jeremiah 31:18-19, the prophet declared, "…turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented [changed my mind]; and after that I was instructed...."

Keeping Precepts in Order

Some preachers never consider the fact that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. With no idea about God's nature, they promote certain precepts out of order. A precept is an authoritative rule of action concerning a spiritual subject. Whenever we are relating truth from the Word of God, we must start with the first precept. We cannot promote precepts number six and ten in a given category without going back to precept number one.

For example, some will preach Acts 2:38, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," without going back to Genesis 3:21. There, Adam and Eve simply accepted God's grace when God killed animals and covered their nakedness. "Repentance, repentance, repentance," they shout, stirring everyone up. Yet

these same people then enter a works system and start judging other Christians and exalting their own achievements. They are deluded and deceived by pride while sincerely trying to live the Christian life. It is among the saddest things to observe.

The Lord says, "I will turn you because of My gift. *I* will do it."

As He turns me, my direction is now toward Him and not toward myself and my past. My mind is changed because God is changing it by mercy and grace through love. Now I can be instructed.

Chapter Three

QUICKENED TOGETHER IN CHRIST

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

"But God, who is rich in *mercy*, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

"*Even* when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by *grace* ye are saved;)" (Ephesians 2:1-5).

"Dead in trespasses and sins"—that's where we were. Our heads were sick. From the soles of

our feet unto our head, there was no soundness in us, only wounds, and bruises, and sores, and scar tissue—all of which we tried to cover up with pride, vindictiveness, and negativity.

"But God, who is rich in *mercy*, for his great *love* wherewith he loved us, *even* when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." The first thing is mercy, motivated by love. Then comes the work of grace. God, in mercy, does not give us what we deserve, which is judgment for our trespasses and sins. Then, notice how the Holy Spirit uses the word "even." *Even* when we were dead in sins, God quickened us together in Christ, and by grace we are saved. If we will allow the Holy Spirit to teach us this, the truth will overwhelm us every moment of our lives.

While mercy withholds what we do deserve, in terms of punishment, grace is God giving us all things that we don't deserve. He quickened us together with Christ. Raised us up together with Him. Seated us in heavenly places with Him. *He* quickened us, *He* raised us, *He* seated us. He performed ninety-five things in us the moment we were saved.

This is what we must understand: Everything about our lives now is about what *He* did.

Why? So that "in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7). He did all of these things so that for all eternity He might have you and I as trophies —a reflection of Himself forever.

The Nature of God on Display in Us

We will be in heaven forever in our glorified bodies, for God will perfect that which concerns Him. His mercy endures forever, and He will not forsake the work of His hands (Psalm 138:8). He who began a good work in us will perform it until Jesus Christ comes back (Philippians 1:6).

Jesus Christ gives us the free gift of grace and the abundance of His righteousness (Romans 5:15-17). Picture how that, in the ages to come, we who use our knowledge to glorify Christ will be on display. God created us to glorify Him (Isaiah 43:7). For *His* pleasure we were and are created (see Revelation 4:11).

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

God comes on the scene and says, "Watch Me as I work in you." We become saved. Mercy quickens us, and grace gives us ninety-five things that we don't deserve at the moment of salvation. It is not of works at all. We are getting to know God, not how well we can perform. We are not getting to know how well we can walk the Christian life. We simply reflect what we know about God.

If, God forbid, you fall flat on your face, as soon as you name your failure, God is glorified because you are rebounding. A righteous man who falls seven times in a day keeps getting up; but the wicked fall and stay down (Proverbs 24:16). God is glorified when I trust in His Blood and His provision for rebound, knowing that He will not impute my sins to me because He paid for them once and for all. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:7-8).

When a man is saved, he comes to God spiritually sick. From the soles of his feet unto his head, he has wounds and bruises and putrifying sores (Isaiah 1:6). He is filled with negativity, reaction, and rebellion. But God goes to work. The God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10), the God of love

(1 John 4:8), the Father of mercies (2 Corinthians 1:3), the God of patience (Romans 15:5) goes to work. He says, "Watch Me. Study My life and My nature. Study what I have to say in My New Covenant, in the disposition of the Church Age."

In Ephesians 2:10 we read, "For we are his *workmanship*"—*poiema* in the Greek. This word paints a great picture of a believer who walks in the way of grace, the way of mercy, the way of love, the way of forgiveness, the way of kindness, the way of patience through the Holy Spirit. As His workmanship, we reflect His glory and His nature (2 Corinthians 3:18) as we go from glory to glory. Just as a mirror shows who we are, our lives can show who Christ is in us. We simply reflect Him through the Holy Spirit who liberates us to do so (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Chapter Four

MASTERPIECES OF THE MASTER

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1-3).

Throughout eternity, believers will be on display as God's precious, sacred masterpieces, valued higher than all the perfect angels in heaven who never sinned. We accept what He has done, we accept who He is, and in so doing, we purify ourselves simply on the basis of His work on Calvary, His work in us, His work for us, and His work through us. He will never be anything but *for* us. And if God is for us, who can be

against us (Romans 8:31)?

Pillars in God's Temple

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name" (Revelation 3:12).

This verse contains the Greek word *stulos*, meaning "pillar"—a permanent part of a structure, often inscribed with historical details about the building and its builders. The Lord manifests His victory in us by writing chapters about our lives to be included in His precious temple. It will be written about how we were saved by His grace and how His grace made each one of us His masterpiece. We will stand as God's trophies throughout all the ages.

We are made kings and priests unto God the Father through Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:10). Christ is the royal King and the royal Priest and He must have a royal family, though He won't have that until the Church Age is over at the Rapture. Then, the Father will present to the Son His Bride, made up of every believer who came

to Him in the dispensation of His grace (Revelation 19:7-11). We become members of His royal family, and He will then set up His Kingdom in the new Jerusalem as He marries His Bride. The Church becomes royalty as she is married to Christ. The royal King shall receive His royal Queen.

Promoted into Purity

Speaking of brides and grooms, this is what the grace of God can do. Twenty-four of the past twenty-five couples that I have married said to me that they had never kissed before reaching the altar. Was that because righteousness was legislated from the pulpit? No, it was because God's grace taught them how to deny worldliness and ungodly lusts and to live quietly in this present evil world (Titus 2:12). Grace was their teacher. Temptations came, but the knowledge that God loves them and that He did it all in paying for their sins promoted them in purity.

God isn't interested in our works. He does not want human merit. He wants us to *believe*! "Only believe." The just shall live by faith, and the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). We go from faith to faith, not from works to works. If we were to mix the

grace message with works, there would be so many problems. But we serve the God of *all* grace.

Perfected by Grace

It is grace without works that produces the fruit of the Spirit in divine good. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *agathos*, or divine good. Divine good is mercy, grace, love, forgiveness, patience, meekness, gentleness, and kindness. We are created in Christ Jesus unto divine good, and because we are, we let Him do the work through us.

When we get to heaven, Jesus Christ will not present an account of what we did by keeping track of how many times we went soul-winning or how many times we went to church. Instead, this is the kind of thing He will say about us: "I remember that you knew how to receive grace. You let grace be your teacher. You knew how to use rebound. You decreased and I increased. You could never become perfect on your own, so I perfected you in your position the moment I saved you."

"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded," the Word of God says in Philippians 3:15. We are complete in Him who is the

head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:10). And if we were to neglect so great a salvation as this, we could never make it (Hebrews 2:3).

Chapter Five

BY GRACE AND GRACE ALONE

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another;

"But there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

"As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9).

These verses trouble me. The sad part is that there are pastors who are in serious trouble with God for preaching another gospel, apart from the gospel of grace. Paul wrote that if they don't preach the gospel of grace, let them go to hell, which is what "accursed" literally means.

Jesus Christ is *the* way, *the* truth, and *the* life, and no man can come to the Father but strictly by Him. There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is death (Proverbs 14:12). I am not going risk it by the fact that I live a morally upright life. The Bible doesn't say I will be accursed by what I do; it just says that if I don't preach grace, let me go to hell.

There are people who just want to be scolded all the time so they can reinforce their guilt. A preacher may get up and tell them all the things that they shouldn't do and the things that they should do. These folks go out saying, "Boy, the preacher was really on fire tonight." The problem is that if they could live up to his message, they would be proud and self-righteous. If they can not live up to it, their guilt is reinforced. And when that happens, they have to live as hypocrites and pretend things are a lot better than they really are.

Paul declared, "By the grace of God, I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17). "Fulness" is *pleroma*, meaning that all of God's grace is available to me because I am in Christ. In Christ,

I can receive nothing but what Christ does. It is all grace.

It may seem that some people abuse grace and use it as a license to sin, but they are in the minority. Believers have to go through processes through the grace of God. That means that we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)—and growth is a necessary part of life. As we grow we sin less, because we become more like Him. Not that we ever become sinless, or perfect, in ourselves. That is impossible.

The Riches of His Kindness

In heaven, God will show us the exceeding riches of His kindness toward us throughout all eternity—all because we met mercy on our road to hell. He does not give us what we deserve. "It is not of works but of grace," God says (2 Timothy 1:9). "If you accept My way, I will make you My trophy and My masterpiece. I will display you as My Bride."

One day God will restore the earth to the Paradise it once was (Revelation 21). The children of Israel will be perfected in their land. People will come from all over to visit God's trophies, who live in the New Jerusalem, which

will be suspended above Mount Zion (Isaiah 2:2). They will come to see the royal family, Jesus Christ's masterpieces, whom He created and saved and through whom He performed divine good. *He* did it. Everything about it is Him. We believe it, we receive it, and we confess it—believe, receive, and confess. That's it! Grace upon grace upon grace.

Grace cannot be argued with. Satan tries to pollute the gospel message by using some abstract interpretations of verses taken out of context. But God gets into this world system through us representing Him as ambassadors of heaven and believer-priests in the world. What we are becoming has already been given forever. By His provision, we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ *once and for all*!

In Zechariah 4:6-7, Israel was told to shout "Grace, grace" to the mountains. That is what we are to do with the mountains in our lives. We say to the mountains, "Don't you know who I am? Don't you know what I have? Don't you know my position in Christ? Don't you know that I am seated above the angels? And I will keep on confessing these things until you flee away."

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that

not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that, according as it is written, *He that glorieth*, *let him glory in the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

Often, the intellectual and the wealthy won't let Him choose them because they are proud of all that they have achieved. But God chooses the weak, the foolish, those that are despised so that He gets all the glory.

Chapter Six

MONUMENTS OF SATAN'S DEFEAT

"Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all" (Jeremiah 31:12).

"Trophy," according to Webster's Dictionary, comes from the Greek *tropaion*, speaking of a token of the amazing defeat of an enemy. It represents a supreme conquest for the victor, a monument to an enemy's defeat. In the ages to come, God will show us off as trophies of the victory of His grace over Satan.

If you have loved ones who are in the world, don't stop believing in what God will do. Just believe that they are going to be God's trophies. Just believe that He will make them His master-

pieces to display His victory forever and ever.

He created us for His glory (Isaiah 43:7), for His eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:11), and for His pleasure (Revelation 4:11). He takes sinners and gives them grace and forgiveness. Christ suffered for us as the just; He died for the unjust that He might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18). Being put to death in the flesh, He was quickened by the Holy Spirit.

This is the principle of *epieikes*—mercy that goes beyond justice. *Epieikes* is found in 2 Corinthians 10:1 and Philippians 4:5, referring to the gentleness of Christ's nature, the moderation He uses to execute perfect righteousness. This simply means that a perfectly just and holy God has made a way not to judge us with justice. The sins of the world were transferred to Jesus at the Cross (1 Peter 2:24) so that the Father could say, "All who believe that Jesus died in their place as the substitute in His death, burial, and resurrection are no longer subject to justice. I will not give them what they deserve; I will give them what they don't deserve. My mercy shall rejoice against justice" (see James 2:13).

Jesus, in agreement with the Father's plan, pronounced, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that

sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

Justice Satisfied, Penalty Paid

Imagine committing a major judicial crime and being brought before a judge. Capital punishment or life imprisonment awaits you. But then the judge comes out to say, "I cannot judge you with justice. You are free—someone else paid for what you did." That is *epieikes*—one of the sweetest words in all of the Bible.

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Him (Romans 3:24). God set forth Christ as the propitiation for sin, satisfying the Father's justice, so that He could declare us righteous through faith in His blood (Romans 3:25).

God has a process and program to teach us how to live pure and clean the proper way—through grace (see Titus 2:11-12). "Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17). Every one of us should go to bed each night praying,

"God, I thank You God that You will never judge me with justice."

For Our Sake

God's justice demands perfection, and His Son gave what was required on our behalf when we believed upon Him. He cannot compromise His holiness. He cannot compromise His righteousness. He cannot compromise His veracity. He cannot compromise His absolute sinlessness. But when the Son was made sin for us, He became the first trophy of grace. His life didn't need grace, but He became sin for us though He was sinless. His work at the Cross is the ultimate trophy in the defeat of Satan, for it was accepted on behalf of all who believe on Him.

Spoiling Principalities and Powers

I would have liked to have seen the faces of Satan and the demons of hell when the Lord Jesus came out of that grave. When He ascended, every single fallen angel tried to stop him from going up to heaven. The Lord Jesus rose past them, but, of course, they couldn't touch Him. He spoiled the principalities and powers and a made a show of them openly. The elect angels witnessed Christ's victory and Satan's de-

feat (Colossians 2:15).

Recently, we knocked on a door and led a woman to Christ. In an instant, she was saved forever, baptized into a union with Him. She was sealed with the Spirit and regenerated by grace through faith in Christ and not of herself. Instantly, she was seated in heavenly places and made a member of the royal family of God.

None of us, especially when we know how guilty we are, can readily understand this. But before God, that woman never has to face judgment from God—no matter what she has done in her life. How is that possible? That is because perfect justice was satisfied by the Blood. Try committing a violation and see if some judge will come and say, "I will judge by grace."

A former president was asked by a great evangelist, "If Christians began to be arrested on the basis of their testimonies, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

He thought silently for a moment before answering, "No, there would not."

"Wouldn't you like to accept Christ and have that evidence in your life?" he was asked. "Would you like to be a testimony for the Lord? Would you like to be born again?"

"Yes," the former president said. "I want to

do it the right way, because I realize I have never been saved. I have only been religious."

He was saved that day, and he will be a trophy of God's grace forever and ever—and a monument to Satan's defeat.

God's Program for Perfection: Grace

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4).

God's program of grace started before the world was formed. To Jeremiah, God said, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee" (Jeremiah 1:5). To Paul, He said, "I called thee from thy mother's womb" (see Galatians 1:15).

To us, He says, "I saw your substance in the lower part of the earth, and I curiously wrought you. I knew everything about you—even the color of your hair—millions of years ago. When you were still imperfect, not yet complete, I wrote down everything about you in My book" (see Psalm 139:15-16).

Millions of years ago we were known by God. Imagine it! We were saved by grace because

we *chose* to be, not because we were elected to be saved. We became the elect because God foreknew our decision. Free volition was the first institution given to man by God, and it was the first to be tested in the Garden of Eden: Choose life or death. It is a volitional decision because God has a perfect will that He desires for us to experience; however, He will give us His permissive will if we do not wish to be in His perfect will. Still, we were chosen *in Him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy before Him in love.

Through a process, the Christian begins to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). He has a mind that comes from heaven (Colossians 3:2)—he is not high-minded, but he does have high mind, a tremendous spiritual IQ. He also has high conversation, for his conversation is from heaven (Philippians 3:20). He has a high position, for he is seated together with Christ far above principalities and powers (Ephesians 1:21; 2:6). Therefore, the devil is under his feet as he walks in the Spirit (Ephesians 1:22; Galatians 5:16).

Chapter Seven

TROPHIES OF GRACE IN ACTION

A second lieutenant in the Vietnamese army was told to take eight prisoners and execute them. His superior told him to take them three miles from the base and shoot them. The officer took them to a place not far from Saigon, and he began speaking.

"I am going to tell you the greatest story of your lives," he said. "Jesus Christ loves you. He died and shed His blood for you. He was buried and rose again. He has paid for every one of your sins. Now, will you receive Him and be saved?"

They all got saved—some of them I am sure were thinking that they had better get saved before they are shot.

Then, he said, "See that road to Saigon? Get going. Live for God, get on your knees every day, and read the Bible. God had for you this day a Christian who wouldn't shoot you any

more than he would shoot himself. Now get out of here!"

Once a year, those eight people got together for an old-fashioned prayer and praise meeting. They were truly saved, and they will be God's trophies of grace for all eternity. They are His masterpieces. Thank God for that.

An unmarried couple who were living together in immorality attended our Easter play entitled *Heaven or Hell: From Here to Eternity*. They watched the staging of the Great White Throne Judgment and saw the unsaved sent to hell. Afterward, the young woman said to her boyfriend, "I am not going home with you tonight. I am getting saved, and I don't really want to be near you right now."

"Well, I am getting saved, too," he said. "God loves me as much as He loves you."

She went to her mother's house; he went to their apartment alone. They have been coming to church and haven't touched each other since that night. They plan to be married very soon.

Do you see what God's grace does? In one night, this couple became trophies of God's grace. They will be His workmanship, masterpieces created by God, forever and ever. They will go on display as monuments to that one

night when Satan, fornication, and immorality were defeated in their lives. Love came in, forgiveness came in, grace came in, power came in, joy came in, purity came in; and each of them became a new creation—in Christ.

Walking His High Road

"…Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people" (Isaiah 57:14).

In this verse, the Hebrew word *calal* is translated as the verb "to cast." It means to stop the stumblingblock by opposing it. We are to get on God's highway that is above Satan's road. On God's highway, Satan cannot touch us; he has to flee.

There is a high road to walk. God gives greater grace to the humble and takes us to the even place at the Cross (Psalm 26:12; James 4:6). God's Spirit, God's mercy (*epieikes*), God's grace, and our fellowship with His resurrection power keep us on that higher road.

A widowed mother came to me years ago saying that her sons were becoming involved in a gang. She asked me to invest in them. The youth leader of our church was planning a trip to New York City with fifty kids so I took her

sons with me in my car. We went down to a slum area and saw the alcoholics and addicts, some of whom were once doctors, professional people who now existed only to find the next drink of cheap wine.

I turned to the boys and said, "Do you want to end up like this? Your father is dead, and your mom loves you so much. Would you really want to end like this?"

A week later, I went out to dinner with those boys and drove them to a hill that overlooked a nearby city. There, several of the teens from our church gathered to pray for the people in that city. Afterwards, we went down into the streets to pass out tracts and witness. Back at the church for a prayer meeting, those young people prayed over every seat in the chapel and over the pulpit.

I was with those two boys up in the choir loft as the teenagers prayed below, and said, "I am not going to force you to do anything, but stay here and watch those kids. Do you think they are happy?"

The next Sunday morning these boys, who were reasonably tough, were the first ones to come forward at the salvation invitation. One of them became a leader in our church and now

serves on the foreign mission field with another organization.

The love of God, the mercy of God, and the grace of God brought those boys into a relationship that was personal with Jesus Christ. Glory be to God. Thank Him that the Word of God says that grace and peace are multiplied through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:2). Thank God that He provides all things according to His mercy. Every single thing we need comes according to His grace for His glory (2 Peter 1:3).

The Father of Our Faith

Abraham failed so many times. He lied to Pharaoh. He had a child with Hagar, the bondwoman. But thank God, Romans 4:16 says that he is the father of our faith. Why? Because justice didn't knock him down and judge him. Grace came in and Abraham got right.

Jacob failed and failed, but Numbers 23:21 tell us that God "hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them."

Thanks be to God, *epieikes* says to us, "I don't want you to judge Jacob. I am going to make

him a trophy. I am going to make him a masterpiece in the Old Testament faith. Don't touch Jacob."

"But he deserves judgment," you may be thinking.

"That's right. He has been chastised, but you cannot do it, because mercy rejoices against judgment."

From Beggar to Chosen

Picture the beggar of Luke 16. He died and the Bible says that the angels carried him to Abraham's bosom. He had been eating crumbs from the rich man's table, the dogs came and licked his sores, and then he died and was taken directly to heaven. I want to see that glorified beggar in heaven. He is a beggar no more. Meanwhile, the rich man (who never acknowledged that poor mans plight) is in hell—not because he was rich, but because he wouldn't receive Christ. The beggar is in a brand-new body that will stay brand-new forever. Jesus will say of him, "He is a trophy of My grace. He is My masterpiece through My love and what I did for him."

Mary Magdalene had eight demons. Jesus healed her and delivered her, and she became a

soul winner and a tremendous woman of God. She loved him so deeply. This woman had been a prostitute who came to Him in Simon the Pharisee's house. He said, "Thy sins are forgiven ….your faith has made you whole" (see Luke 7:48-50). Forever and ever, Mary Magdalene will be a trophy of the grace of God, of the mercy of God, of the forgiveness of God, of the love of God. Matthew 26:13 says that a memorial will be told of her wherever the gospel is preached, because she anointed Jesus with oil before his death and burial.

Peter cursed and denied Jesus when Jesus needed him most. But then Jesus restored Peter without putting him on probation. In John 21:15-19, when Peter had gone back fishing, Jesus confronted him and asked, "Do you love me more than these [fish]?"

"I do," Peter said.

"Feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

"Do you love more than these?" Jesus asked again.

"I do," Peter said.

"Feed My sheep."

"Do you really love me more than these?" Jesus asked him again.

This time Peter was grieved in his heart and

said, "You know that I don't love you with the right kind of love, but I do love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (John 21:18).

When Peter grew older, he would gladly die for Christ. Now he is a trophy of God's grace, the result of what grace had done in him and for him. Peter never earned it—and neither have we. Peter was a product of God's grace.

Putting Away the Past

Saul of Tarsus witnessed the murders of so many Christians that you would think that he would have had some lingering guilt. But it was Paul who wrote this: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Paul didn't have a past. He couldn't remem-

ber all those that he had murdered and he didn't mention his past in these phrases. Throughout eternity, God will get the glory for Paul's transformation. He is a trophy of God's grace, a monument to the love of God.

CONCLUSION

The mercy of God is so good. The grace of God is good. God is a good God. He will give us power over bad habits, power over wrong dispositions and negative attitudes. He is such a good God.

"Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand" (Psalm 149:6). The "high praises" speak of our knowledge of the Finished Work and the two-edged sword refers to Bible doctrine. These high praises are in our mouths because we know that we are members of the royal family of Jesus Christ, members of His body, flesh, and bones. We know that we are seated above. Christ is in us, deep in our hearts. We sing high praises because of His *epieikes*—mercy that rejoices against judgment.

True worshipers have no consciousness of sin. They recognize that they are cleansed,

purged and made clean by the precious blood of the Lamb of God. No one has a right to bring up any negative report. If he does, he is on the devil's side. If you accuse a brother for something he did in the past, you are on the devil's side. Those who refuse to relate to the past are on God's side.

Thank You Lord God that we have the Holy Spirit in us. Jesus Christ is in us, and we are seated above as members of His royal family. What a joy it is to know we are forgiven, our sins are forgotten, and we have power in our prayers.

Father, we thank you that we can see ourselves as properly positioned and seated above. Bless us and give us peace, joy, and divine protection, for we are Your trophies of grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

True Intimacy

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus told His disciples in John 14:12 that if they would believe that the Father was in Him and that He was in the Father, they would do "greater works" than He would do. The relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit represents true intimacy, a unity of purpose and power that works through Spirit-filled Christians today.

In this booklet, we will show that this Finished Work intimacy is what heals and develops relationships and enables the Glorious Gospel to be known in all the world.

Chapter One

THE INTIMACY OF THE TRINITY

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

"Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

"If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide

with you for ever.

"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:10-17).

The Model Relationship

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have a tremendous relationship. It is the model relationship for all eternity. This relationship has never varied, never changed. It has always functioned in delegated authority and it has always been unique. Sin has never entered into this relationship.

The three are One (1 John 5:7). The Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3); Jesus Christ is God; and the Father is God (Hebrews 1:8, Romans 1:7). In Revelation 5:6-7, two persons of the Godhead are present before the multitude—the Father is on the Throne as the Son is given the title deed to the earth. Their relationship is perfect.

The Father said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Then, at Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit descended. There the three are present again.

It is crucial to recognize that true intimacy can only be understood through the relationship

of the Trinity.

Authority for Relationships

"And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out my Father's hand.

"I and my Father are one" (John 10:28-30).

When we begin to understand what it means to have a relationship with God the Father, we will realize that it is a relationship with the Planner (The Father). Then, we receive a relationship with the Son, the Executor of the Planner's Plan. We develop a relationship with the Revealer of the Plan, the Holy Spirit, by receiving the Word of God and being filled with the Spirit.

The relationship of the believer and God is established in perfect order. In 1 Corinthians 14:40, God does all things decently and in order. But, when believers live in sin, they are out of God's authority, and they live in confusion.

When a believer lives in sin, he breaks fellowship with God and does not experience his position in Christ. Based upon Jeremiah 50:20, does the Father see our sins? No. Does Jesus

Christ see our sins, according to Hebrews 10:17? No, because He paid for them, and we are members of His body, flesh, and bones—one spirit with Him (see Ephesians 5:30; 1 Corinthians 6:17).

The Holy Spirit is the one who is affected by our personal sins. He becomes grieved and quenched when we live in sin (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19). When this happens, the Spirit cannot glorify the Son in us. The whole purpose of our lives is to glorify the Lord (Isaiah 43:8). So, if we are not glorifying the Lord our whole purpose on earth as Christians is diminished from an eternal purpose to a temporal reason for living.

According to 1 John 1:7-9, when we sin, we should confess it to God immediately so that we can be restored to fellowship in Him and cleansed by the Blood. The cleansing that comes from the blood of Jesus Christ gives believers the authority of forgiveness forever and ever. The authority of a relationship, then, is given through the power of His blood. It is the authority for a believer to live under supernatural guidance through the authority of eternal life. This power is able to keep us from falling and will present us "faultless before the presence of

his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

The Word Abides in Us

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:7-8).

The key to our relationship with God is abiding in Christ and having His words abide in us. If that takes place, then we have a blessing in our relationships derived from our relationship with the Lord.

Also, we need the authority of God's righteousness at work in us. God's righteousness means that God is right. He does not justify sin, evil, or wickedness; instead, they are condemned under the law of sin and death. Still, His higher law—the royal law of love—declared that if Someone perfect would die and pay for all sins, then those who would believe in that Person would be justified by grace through faith by the blood of that perfect Person. Jesus Christ was that perfect Savior who died for us.

Now through His blood and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit, we have the authority

to live forever in a relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (*megathos*). Under this authority comes the ability and scope of divine power (*dunamis*), the manifestation of this power (*kratos*), the divine impartation of this power to the memory center (*ischus*), and the supernatural characteristics of this power in us (Ephesians 1:19).

The Trinity's Divine Agreement

In my marriage, I must accept my death with Christ retroactively, two thousand years ago, to have authority in my relationship with my wife. I must be buried with Christ, retroactively, two thousand years ago. That is long before I ever did anything. I must be raised by the Holy Spirit in a spiritual resurrection with Christ (Romans 6:13). I must ascend with Christ (Ephesians 2:6). Beyond this, I must be filled with the Holy Spirit, the One sent by Jesus Christ, who brings all things into my remembrance (John 14:26). He is my Comforter and the Spirit of truth (John 14:17).

Even if I deny the Father, He cannot deny me because of what His Son did. The Father cannot see my sin because He sees me as being hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). I am a

member of Jesus Christ's body, flesh, and bones; therefore, I cannot ever be severed from Him. No man can pluck me from God's hand—I can't even pluck myself out of God's hand.

My unbelief cannot change anything; it cannot make the faith of God have no effect. "Let God be true and every man a liar" (Romans 3:3-4). This is true because of the divine agreement of the Trinity in the eternal plan.

"You were willing to die for them?" the Father asked the Son.

"Yes," Jesus said. "I volunteered" (John 10:17).

"You paid for their sins—the Just died for the unjust?"

"Yes, I did," Jesus said.

"All right, then whosoever believes can now come to Me through You."

Chapter Two

ONLY BELIEVE: THE WORK OF THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

What is the work of God for us? It is to believe (John 6:29). That's it!

Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Abraham didn't work, he believed. It was all grace (Romans 4:5), and God justified the ungodly.

Now the Father has the authority to have a relationship with me. The Son has authority because He has redeemed me. And now when I fail, the Holy Spirit has the task of interceding for me with groanings that cannot be uttered so that He can glorify the Son in me (see Romans 8:26; John 16:13-14).

There are sixty-eight things that happen to the believer at the moment of salvation.* Jesus Christ was not just crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. He also ascended to heaven, after which the Holy Spirit was sent to seal and re-

generate every believer.

"There are so many things that I cannot tell you right now because you are not able to understand," Jesus said to His disciples. "But I will tell you later. Greater works will you do than I do because I go to the Father" (see John 14:12).

Here Jesus is talking about what faith obtains for us through the Glorious Gospel. Back in those days, the disciples did not always understand what Jesus was telling them. They did not understand what it meant to be seated above. They did not fully understand what it meant to be justified and sanctified. They didn't understand it because the Holy Spirit had not yet been sent.

Jesus breathed upon them all, in John 20:22, but He was *with* them, not *in* them (John 14:17). At Pentecost, He came into them with the filling of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit inspired and moved the writers of the epistles so that we would understand that we can have an amazing Spirit-filled relationship with God. What is this relationship? It goes beyond being spiritually raised from the dead. All of a sudden, the Holy Spirit can show us things, teach us, and guide us through the Word of God. Now we are able to have a true

relationship of intimacy with God.

Washed, Sanctified, and Justified

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

"Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

"Ye are washed" is an aorist middle indicative in the Greek text, meaning that at a point in time you became saved and were washed. The indicative refers to a divine reality that is asserted forever. "Ye are sanctified" (which should be read "you are made holy") and "ye are justified" are both aorist passive indicative verbs. The passive voice of the verb means that you received the action of being made holy and justified at the same point of being saved.

Jesus couldn't explain that to people. They couldn't understand it without the Holy Spirit.

Now these things can be understood—these are the greater works that Jesus talked about.

Once we were all thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners, but we are not so anymore. We are washed. We have received the action of being made absolutely holy and absolutely justified forever.

Oh, we can grieve the Holy Spirit and quench Him (1 Thessalonians 5:19), but we have been called into the true intimacy of the fellowship of His dear Son and into fellowship with His life (1 Corinthians 1:9).

* *Read* What Happened When You Received Christ? *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

Chapter Three

INTIMATE IN LIKE PRECIOUS FAITH

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:20-22).

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

"It is like the precious ointment upon the

head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm 133).

Jesus always wanted us to understand this great truth. His prayer has always been that we would have true intimacy. He has always wanted us to have a relationship such as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have always had.

"I want them to have a relationship like We have, and now they can have it," Jesus said. "They can actually have it."

There is a way for God's people to have a supernatural authority, supernatural grace, and supernatural faith with supernatural wisdom, no matter what others do to them. The way is to be one with the Father.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:12-14).

We have redemption through the Blood. It has already happened.

Our old man was crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed. From now on, we do not serve sin (see Romans 6:6).

We must begin to understand that the Father's love remains perfect forever, and so does the Son's love. The Holy Spirit's love is shed abroad in our hearts, and it, too, remains perfect. We may grieve the Holy Spirit so that our lives do not glorify Christ; therefore, we come under principles of God's discipline. Yet, we will remain positionally complete in Him who is the head of all principalities and powers (Colossians 2:10).

The "greater works" Jesus spoke of do not refer to more healings. The greater works include a supernatural resurrection, a supernatural forgiveness, a supernatural wisdom, a supernatural guidance, a supernatural encouragement, and a supernatural power that prevails through everything because of a supernatural way of life. This is what Jesus was talking about. And God still heals supernaturally because He loves us.

These are the greater works. They are works of faith done by the Author and Finisher of our faith—Jesus. This is the operation of Finished Work faith.

Abound in 'These Things'

Five times in 2 Peter 1, Peter writes of "these things" (verses 8, 9, 10, 12, 15), to those who "have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord" (2 Peter 1:1-2).

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge,

"And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness;

"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

"For if *these things* be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-8).

What are "these things" he is talking about in 2 Peter 1:3? They are the greater works that God's divine power—*dunamis*—has given us pertaining to life and godliness. These come

through "the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). We receive "exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

From Virtue to Patience to Charity

"Virtue" is the Finished Work that the Father accepts in Christ. We simply accept what the Father has accepted in Christ and the Spirit who has accepted it. To our faith, we add virtue.

To this is added knowledge—the understanding of how to relate based on the Word, in a precious faith where grace and peace are multiplied. After knowledge is added, then comes "temperance." This speaks of a divine capacity to restrain our reactions when we are innocent but accused, when we become the victims even though we didn't do anything. We can love the person hurting us, as God loves him. This is supernatural temperance.

Next "patience" is added. In the Greek, two words—*hupomone* and *makrothumia*—are used for patience. The first deals with circumstances, the second involves relationships. But the patience added to us includes both relationships

and circumstances. It is a divine, precious spirit of patience. It is supernatural, given only by the Holy Spirit. This is why we have to be filled by Him.

To patience is added "godliness"—the like precious faith coming from God enabling us to be like God in everything we do. We are not God, but when we are filled with the Spirit, we act just as He acts. We reflect Him.

"Godliness" leads to "brotherly kindness." Brotherly kindness is not just *phileo* love. It is a supernatural kindness that you especially give to your brethren.

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

This is treating our brethren in true intimacy, relating to them as the Holy Spirit relates to them. We love as Christ loves, and we look for ways to bless the brethren. In other words, if I am renting from someone, then I pay my rent on time and in full. There is kindness about my debt. To kindness charity is added, which is 1 Corinthians 13 love.

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord

Jesus Christ.

"But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins…

"Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" (2 Peter 1: 8-9, 15).

These are the things that were not revealed to the apostles during the time of the Gospels. These are the greater things—not greater in quantity, greater in quality.

"Greater things will you do than those that I do," Jesus told the disciples. He had to hold back so much because they couldn't understand Him. He wanted to get this across to them and now to us. The disciples could not comprehend how great a deliverance He would give them, how great a power of Resurrection, how great a power of Ascension. Then came Pentecost and the filling of the Spirit.

The Word of God says in Acts 4:31 that when they were persecuted, the disciples went back to the Upper Room and were filled with boldness. They were bold now because they felt secure to testify about Jesus as they were being rejected. They could now testify of the power of the Resurrection, and great grace was upon them all.

They had true intimacy because they felt secure in their relationship with the Trinity.

CONCLUSION

When the publican was in the temple praying, he cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Mercy here speaks of a specific sacrifice for a specific sinner. The publican was saying, "Lord, be merciful to me. Oh, I am a sinner, just a sinner. Be merciful to me specifically. I can't look up to You. Be merciful to me. Give a specific sacrifice for this specific sinner."

A number of times in the Old Testament, mercy speaks of a specific sacrifice for a specific sinner. The publican was basing his forgiveness upon the sacrifice to come. The Pharisee in Luke 18 didn't go home justified because he based his salvation on the good things he had done.

What a thrill it is to go into our Jerusalem and Judea, our cities, our counties, and our states, exalting so great a salvation. It is overwhelming to know that God's treasures of intimacy are ours just by believing.

We can be truly intimate, having the same oneness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In Luke 8:46, the woman with the issue of blood came and touched the hem of Jesus' garment. He said, "Virtue is gone out of me." But virtue didn't go out to Peter or any of the other disciples who were there, just to that woman who expressed Finished Work faith that Jesus would heal her. She experienced the intimacy of God's healing power.

Christ's virtue always finds its place in the worst person if that person will simply receive it. The power of the Finished Work makes each believer one with God. Being one with Him, we are made whole by faith at the same time.

Truth Speaks in the Streets

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

The reality of traffic jams hits home for far too many of us. Often, in my own travels, I have found myself caught at a standstill on Interstate 95 during the morning rush hour. And what do we see in these tie-ups? Generally, we see people frustrated because they aren't going anywhere. The real problem is that some of those folks immediately start seeking out detours. This gets them out of the way but very often creates even more traffic troubles.

How does this relate to Christianity? According to Isaiah 59, truth is fallen in the street. The Lord Jesus Christ is not being lifted up where He can be seen clearly and draw men to Him. As a result, people live deeply in sin because they don't have the truth to guide them.

Too few of us are carrying the truth to the streets and letting wisdom cry out to the lost and the dying. My hope is that this booklet would encourage you to pick up the truth and

lift up the banner of Jesus Christ's love so that the world can see Him. Too many streets are jammed with the traffic of wrong thinking and wrong motivation. Let's get the road clear, so that truth can flow freely.

Chapter One

THE TEARS OF TENDER HEARTS

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41).

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37).

"Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

Jesus approached Jerusalem and began to weep over the city. I think of all the pictures of our Lord that are described in the Scriptures, this is among the greatest. Imagine the God of the universe, the God who made the stars, the moon, and the sun, the God of all things in our creation—God almighty walking in the form of a man and weeping over a city as He looks down at it. He wept and groaned over Jerusalem.

This is the reality of divine weeping. One young pastor who was touched by a recent message told me, "The longer I am in the ministry, the more I want God to break me and make me tenderhearted. It is the only way to release the true nature of God."

Bob Colby, one of my dearest friends and a great pastor in Maine, is almost always brought to tears in the pulpit. Some may call that emotionalism. I don't call it that at all. I call it an appreciation for all that Jesus Christ has done. Sometimes you so appreciate the Lord that your emotions respond in this way.

Paul, in Acts 20, said that he wept day and night for three years. Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet. This kind of weeping is much different from weeping because you feel sorry for yourself or your circumstances. I am not suggesting that a person has to be weeping in order to be spiritual. I am simply speaking of brokenness and humility that revives a heart and makes it very tender toward what the Lord wants to do (James 4:10).

Humility takes the low place. It is willing to take the last seat. It is willing to have the least position. An attitude of brokenness and humility gets God's attention, and He says, "I will re-

vive that kind of heart." This type of heart is only established when we look to Jesus, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Revival speaks of beginning to understand who God is and what He has done. We get to know who He is as His Word indwells our hearts, our frames of reference.

The Spirit, Not the Letter

"Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word" (Psalm 119:154).

The quickening power of God is found in His Word. A godly preacher gets up in the pulpit, opens the Bible, and shares from his heart. As a result, his soul and the souls of his congregation are quickened. The Holy Spirit ushers in the presentation. That is what a revival is at the simplest level of truth.

And very often when this happens, there are tears.

Some can talk the letter, but that is simply the flesh at work, and the flesh profits nothing (John 6:63). A person can memorize the whole New Testament, graduate from Bible college, and have all kinds of truth contained in him. Yet, if that truth is communicated in the flesh and the presentation is simply the presentation of the

letter, then that letter kills.

The words Jesus spoke are Spirit and they are life. His words bring revival. His words quicken us.

Some moves of God have been marked by miracles and gifts. Real revival, however, cannot be discovered this way. Real revival is revealed in transformed hearts and transformed lives. Where the Spirit of the Lord, there is liberty.

We are changed from glory to glory. How? By the Holy Spirit taking the Word of God and quickening us. In this process, God develops in us a capacity that is categorically ascribed to a specific purpose for His plan in any situation.

God establishes truth in me so that my capacity is equal to my circumstance. An unbelievable thing may happen to me, something I am not really prepared to face. Yet, the Word, quickened by the Holy Spirit in my humble soul, enlarges me to experience God's life and fulfill His will in that circumstance, that relationship, or that trial, in the plan of God.

Chapter Two

DEVELOP ULTIMATE CONVICTIONS

I must never digress from the purpose of the specific plan that God initiates providentially in my life. I must never deviate from growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ's lordship in any aspect of His plan. If I do, I will live in a self-destructive carnality in the terrible sequence of defeat and death.

As we hear words from God, those words produce in us an ultimate response. The Bible causes a response. I cannot hear the Word without experiencing some ultimate response. My response may be positive. Or, my response may be negative. I may respond in passivity. But I will respond somehow, some way.

The ultimate response should bring me to an ultimate conclusion. The ultimate conclusions that come from my ultimate responses should produce ultimate convictions that are personal.

If my ultimate conclusions do not lead to ultimate convictions that become personal, then the ultimate conclusions can affect my soul in dangerous responses.

Take the passage in Luke 19, for example. Jesus was weeping over Jerusalem saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke 19:42).

If I carefully consider those words, allowing the Holy Spirit to quicken them in my heart, then something happens. When I am confessed up to date and reckoning on God's holy presence, then the Lord brings in a personal conviction. It is that every soul needs love, that every soul needs salvation, and that every soul needs to hear the Gospel.

This scene from the Word should produce a conviction in me, and it will do so if the Holy Spirit quickens my soul and quickens the Word that is in my heart.

Wisdom Is Needed on the Streets

"Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets" (Proverbs 1:20).

"Should thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets?" (Proverbs

5:16).

"…Go your ways out into the streets…" (Luke 10:10).

"And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night" (Genesis 19:2).

"And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

"Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment" (Isaiah 59:14-15).

The Word says so much about going to the streets with the truth. This conviction is so lacking in the churches of Jesus Christ today. The eye loses its singularity. The heart becomes a bit divided. The mind becomes a little clouded. All of a sudden, we are not being quickened by the Spirit. The Word of God is not producing convictions that are personal. Truth is not being appropriated.

Isaiah 59:14 describes this condition. Judgment—God's justice—is standing afar off. In

other words, doctrine is no longer a standard for decision making. Doctrine has fallen in the streets, and justice must stand back.

Wisdom cries in the streets. Men and women who need truth are in the streets. Jerusalem was full of people who needed the truth. But apart from Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God, that truth fell in the streets. Very few will pick it up.

Any ministry in the world can preach the Gospel and still not see it produce an ultimate response. Doctrine can be taught and not produce transformation. The soul has no power to quicken the mortal body. Knowledge does not produce love that transcends human love. The mercy that rejoices against judgment is not there. The grace that goes beyond the law is missing. There is no faith-rest that goes beyond stress and tension.

The streets are full of relative righteousness, human righteousness, and self righteousness. Where is Truth? Where are believers who are so humble and so contrite that the Word produces supernatural life in them?

What's the problem? Justice stands afar off in so many hearts. Doctrine is not governing the thoughts and intents of many believers. These Christians have not allowed ultimate responses

to produce ultimate conclusions that establish ultimate convictions. The Word is what changes souls and brings God's presence into situations.

Chapter Three

JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST STAND

God's justice must be understood in its several forms.

There is God's relative justice, which has to do with His essence, His nature, His omniscience, and His knowledge. Then, we have God's absolute justice under which He upholds Himself against the violations of His holiness. Next, there is God's rectorial justice, which is a form that few understand. Simply, this form of justice concerns the institution of His righteousness and righteous laws that establish rewards and penalties.

The distributive justice of God involves the meting out of just rewards. The remunerative justice is the justice by which He constantly expresses His love because of the price Jesus paid at Calvary. God's retributive justice regards His expression of wrath.

Because of what happened at Calvary, God's relative justice now is satisfied. At the Cross, mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other, according to Psalm 85:10. The death of the Innocent One in our place and the blood that He shed now cover the sins of the entire world. Truth has sprung from the earth.

God the Father could now say, "Receive the harlots who believe. Receive the murderers who believe. Receive the drug addicts who believe. Receive the self-righteous who come unto Me and believe, not in their own works but in My Finished Work."

Justice has been accomplished. A way was made for us to be accepted into the Kingdom as we call upon the Son of God, receive His free gift of salvation, and turn from our wicked ways through grace. We are received just as if we had never sinned.

This truth, however, is not taken to the streets. This truth is really not practiced as it should be in the church. A Christian fails and repents, but some do not honor the doctrine of recovery. Justice, which has been satisfied, stands afar off in this situation and truth falls into the street. Equity cannot enter. The integrity of the

Finished Work is equity.

It goes like this. You sin against God. You repent. You sin again, and then repent. God forbid, you sin again and you repent. Then, a great act of mercy takes over your life and you receive power. God begins to work something into you, and you don't do the things you used to do.

Still, there are Christians who judge according to relative justice instead of God's absolute justice. In doing so, these believers allow Truth to fall in the street. According to His absolute justice, God cannot impute sin to you. You are seated in heavenly places. You stand or fall before Him, and Him alone.

Appropriate the Word

Wisdom cries out to us: "Appropriate truth! Appropriate mercy. Appropriate forgiveness. Appropriate love." But judgment—the justice of God—gets turned away backward. The integrity of grace, the integrity of mercy, the integrity of forgiveness, the integrity of peace, and the integrity of God's healing power remain fallen in the streets.

The truth falls in the street and there is a traffic jam. Truth blocks the streets, but people keep detouring around it. Instead of facing the facts

God gives them, so many detour into self-righteousness, comparative righteousness, human righteousness, and religious righteousness. These dead-end roads carry people away from the truth that is crying out. Truth is allowed to fall and block out the equity of God's Finished Work.

The difference between forcing a detour and leading someone to a decision is very often the content of the message being preached. The application of life is the issue. Ministries may preach very nearly the same thing, but only God's Spirit quickening man's humble soul through the Word of God can reveal a vicarious atonement, a ministry of reconciliation, and the reality of wholehearted redemption.

What we need in America and in the world are more believers who will pick up the truth and clear the traffic jam. There are many doing this very thing throughout the world, in our ministry and in many others.

Let's pray and pick up the truth. Let's clear the street of envy, frustration, comparison, competition, and sublimation—all of that. Let's lift up the truth so people can see Jesus Christ clearly. May our lives reflect Him. May we elevate Him so distinctly. Let's us honor Him thor-

oughly and completely. Let's exalt the Lord so fervently that the people in the street can walk in truth.

CONCLUSION

Revival is the Holy Spirit taking the Word of God in the humble soul and quickening God's life so that wisdom is heard in the streets. Circumstances may change, or they may not, but transformation is already underway. We are all right with God so, even when tragedy comes in, we reveal His nature.

Revealing God's nature when everything leaves us, that's revival. Revival isn't material prosperity. Revival is soul prosperity. The plan of God takes cares of everything. Let's continue to labor together in this area and wherever we are. Let's set the Lord before our faces every morning, every noon, and every night.

We cannot afford to focus on situations and people. We must focus on the Lord. Our thankfulness and gratitude should be great because we are alive and we are well and the Lord is watching over us and guiding us.

Let's thank Him for everything and praise

His holy name, lifting Him up as we walk through the highways and byways where Christ leads us to seek the lost. Let's lift up the truth of forgiveness, the truth of mercy, the truth of patience. Let's lift up the truth of the Finished Work.

Turn It Around

Through Faith

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

As Christians, we are often tempted to shrink back from the difficulties, trials, and troubles that come into our lives. No doubt, these can seem like giants coming against us with heavy swords meant to take us down. But though pain, apparent defeat, and discouragement may come, God's will is perfect. He always causes us to triumph.

The swords directed at our lives can be turned around. By faith in Christ's resurrection power, life can come forth from death. Defeat can be reversed and become the springboard to great success. Failure is never final with God the Father.

As you read this booklet, allow the Holy Spirit to bring in the reality of the Resurrection as you receive something eternal in a moment of time. Redeem the time with God's eternal value system. See that what Satan meant for evil can become the very thing we use to reveal our vic-

tory in Christ.

Chapter One

FACING THE GIANTS

"And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

"And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

"And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

"And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

"Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

"David said moreover, The LORD that deliv-

ered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee" (1 Samuel 17:32-37).

"And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

"Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

"This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

"And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD 'S, and he will give you into our hands.

"And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to

meet the Philistine.

"And David put his hand in the bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

"So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

"Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled" (1 Samuel 17:44-51).

A giant named Goliath—nine-feet-six-inches tall, representing the Philistines, and wearing heavy armor—challenged Israel to a fight. Whichever nation won would be served by the other.

Saul, the king of Israel at this time, was tall, strong, and handsome. Yet he and all of his fellow soldiers and citizens were very afraid. As the soldiers were going into battle, Jesse's youngest son, David, was bringing food to his older brothers who were in Israel's army. But

when the lad (about eighteen years old), saw the soldiers running scared at Goliath's threats, David asked, "Why are you filled with fear?"

They said, "Because the Philistine is strong."

"I would love to take him on!" David said.

"But you are just a child," Saul told him "and he has been a fighter from his youth."

David answered, "When I was keeping my father's sheep, a lion and a bear came, and they took a lamb from the flock. But I went after them, grabbed hold of their beards, and I slew both of them.

"If God can deliver me from the paw of the lion and the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. Just as God gave me victory over them, God will give me victory over this Philistine."

So Saul, trembling, said to David, "Go for it."

Be Bold in the Name of the Lord

David charged at the giant, saying, "I do not come to you with a spear or a sword, but in the name of the LORD: for the battle is the LORD'S" (see 1 Samuel 17:47).

Some people always worry about what they should do and they leave the Lord out of their consideration. Are you faced with a spear or a

sword? Those can represent many natural weapons. What we must realize is that the battle is the Lord's.

David took a little slingshot and five smooth stones. The slingshot speaks of faith; the number five speaks of grace; and the smooth stone he used represents the Chief Cornerstone, Jesus Christ. He used the slingshot, and the stone ended up in the forehead of the giant. David ran toward the giant, who was now on the ground, jumped on him, took his sword, and used it to cut off his head. And the Philistines? They ran.

Overcoming the Sword

Later, in 1 Samuel 21:8, when David was fleeing from Saul, David came to Ahimelech, the priest, and asked, "Do you have a spear or a sword?"

"Underneath the ephod is the sword of Goliath that you took," Ahimelech told him.

David said, "Give it to me, for there is none like it" (1 Samuel 21:9).

In a lifetime, many swords come against us. There is a sword of terminal cancer; the sword of a broken home; the sword of knowing your child was molested, the sword of heartache, of losing someone very close to you. There is the

sword of being in a wheelchair all your life, the sword of blindness, and the sword of not being able to hear. Also, there is a sword of failure because of sin overwhelming us at a certain time in our lives.

Then we read in 2 Corinthians 4:15, "All things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

The Lord is saying, "Take the sword that comes against you—whatever it is—and use it for My glory."

Paul was called to suffer for the sake of the Gentiles (see Acts 9:15-16). It was a terrible sword. He was stoned; he was driven out of cities; he was hated by many. Yet, he took the sword of suffering that was against him and said, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, and be made conformable unto His death" (see Philippians 3:10).

Paul's attitude was "I am destined to suffer for the sake of the lost people in the world, and I am going to take this sword of suffering and use it." When Paul was bound, when he was going to Jerusalem, and when he was in prison, Jesus Christ was manifested in every place.

Chapter Two

USE THE SWORD FOR GOD'S GLORY

God wants the sword that comes against you, to be used for His glory. A pastor came down with diabetes. He then started a ministry to diabetics. Now he and his wife minister to over eighty diabetic people. You see, he took the sword of diabetes and said, "I am going to use this sword as a ministry for Jesus Christ."

Micah failed, and his enemies were rejoicing over him (Micah 7:8). But he said, "When I fall, I shall arise." Don't rejoice over my failure and my sin. "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." I will get up with the Lord."

Micah took the sword of falling into sin and used it as a sword to show God's grace, God's love, and God's mercy, helping others to know that the Lord is a Lord of forgiveness, a Lord of mercy, a Lord of grace, and a Lord of compassion.

A wonderful lady in our church has been in a wheelchair for many years. She was standing on a corner one day when a careless driver lost control of his car, hit this lady, and caused her to be paralyzed. She recently wrote me a letter, thanking me for preaching about being called to suffer. She believes that her calling is to show us Christ from a wheelchair. She went on to be valedictorian of her college class of two thousand students, and she is still continuing her education.

The most beautiful thing about her life is the way she learned to use the sword.

Triumph over Pain and Heartache

Don't misunderstand. The sword hurts. The sword is painful. But once you deal with it, you take that sword, just as David did, and you use it against the enemies in your life.

A couple in New England was very careless about having godly convictions in their home. The father would scarcely come to church. All of this affected his daughter. By age sixteen, she had developed a serious drug habit. Shame, heartache, and trouble made it so that not a single thing could satisfy her. Eventually, she took her life by taking an overdose of pills.

This tragedy turned her father around. In tears he said, "I compromised convictions when the issue of church came up. We would always disagree about something concerning the church. Then I had to see my daughter—a suicide victim—in that coffin."

This couple dedicated themselves to the church and made a tremendous decision for Christ. The man said that was probably when he was truly saved, even though he had known God nominally for many years.

Being wealthy, they bought a ranch, added a large home, and started a ministry to young people. They would bring in troubled teenagers and minister to them with delicious meals and beautiful horses to ride and enjoy. The daughter's death was a terrible sword, but they took it and let God turn it into helping hundreds of children, paying their way to Bible camps and Christian schools. They took that sword that was so painful and used it for the rest of their lives. That ministry is still at work today.

God Uses It for Good

You have all heard of Joni Eareckson Tada, who was paralyzed from the neck down in a swimming accident. Yet, she has learned to paint

pictures by holding a brush between her teeth. She has written books and speaks to groups around the world, especially ministering Christ to people affected by disabilities and their families. She took her terrible sword and is helping to win thousands to Jesus Christ with her ministry to the disabled.

If you should call our church, a precious woman with multiple sclerosis will answer cheerfully. There is not a day that goes by that I don't hear her thanking God. She took the sword of MS, and she uses it every day to glorify Jesus Christ.

What I am saying is this: Don't let the sword get you. You take the sword. Take it up and glorify Him.

Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers. They were terribly unkind and nearly killed him. But when he finally saw them again years later, he said, "Do not be angry. Do not be grieved with yourselves because you sold me, for the LORD sent me before you that He might save many people alive" (see Genesis 45:5).

Joseph said to his brothers, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good so that it would come to pass that many lives would be saved out of the famine" (see Genesis 50:20). He took

his sword and used it for God's glory.

Chapter Three

LIFE THAT CONQUERS OUT OF DEATH

A man recently died of cancer. His wife and his friend were so amazingly faithful to God through it all, ministering to him and caring for him far beyond the call of duty. The doctors involved said that they would never forget them for as long as they live.

After he died, his wife's old "friends" came along and tried to get her to go out and party with them. She made a declaration that she was following Jesus Christ just as she had all along. She wasn't going to forget her beautiful marriage, and she determined that she would use the sword of her husband's death to glorify God.

Another man had cancer in his right eye and needed to have it removed. He started wearing a patch and began writing songs for kids. He became Patch the Pirate, and through his ministry hundreds of young people were saved and ded-

icated their lives to Christ. With his humor, his singing, and his convictions, everywhere he went, large crowds came to see him.

A woman had a fifteen-month old child who was in tremendous pain. She thought it was an ear problem and took the child to the doctor. The child died right there in the doctor's office, and the woman was heartbroken. Eventually, she was healed, but it did take time. It always takes time. The pain of losing a child hurts greatly. But she looked to Jesus and started a ministry to those who had lost young children. She has traveled great distances to comfort people suffering this kind of loss. Through it all, she has led many to Jesus Christ and blessed them greatly. This mom took the sword of the death of her fifteen-month-old child and used it for God's glory.

Avoid Self-Pity

When an unexpected tragedy hits, it is important that a person does not withdraw into his emotions and start pitying himself. After David's victory, King Saul lamented, "Where is everyone? They all want David, and no one feels sorry for me."

Do you sometimes feel as if no one feels

sorry for you? Well, many Christians do identify with your needs and pains. I believe that any good friend will feel sorry and desire to comfort and give love. But people who live with only an attitude of self-pity live in the effects of their troubles. Why not take up that sword and just use it? Take the sword that was aimed to destroy you and use it against the enemy. That is exactly what David did.

The apostle Peter failed and denied Jesus Christ three times. Even after the resurrection of Christ, he could not seem to come back to Him. Finally, after the hurt and the guilt was over, he received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and was used with the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Samaritans. He took the very sword of his failure and used it to declare the power, the love, the mercy, and the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

Always take the sword and use it to turn things around for God's glory.

Seeing God's Plan

A famous evangelist was losing his sight. When he stayed at my home, he shared with me just how much it hurt when he was told, "You are going blind." After receiving this bad news,

he would get with his wife and three children every morning to see the sunrise. Every evening, he wanted to see the sunset. Every day he would gaze at his family, trying to memorize their faces. He went to faith healers and to doctors, but his eyes never improved. He prayed and believed God, but the healing didn't happen. He became blind.

In a faith reversal, however, this man took up the sword of blindness. After the pain and the hurt left, he understood his calling, and he established an amazing ministry that is still active today. He became a leader in developing ministries to the blind so that millions of the blind could read the Bible in braille text. He used the sword of blindness to break down the walls of many who did not know Christ and could not see.

Whatever the sword that comes against you, remember that as believers, we have a cause (1 Samuel 17:29). The battle is the Lord's, and we are to go forward in the face of the enemy, proclaiming our victory in the name of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

This booklet includes many testimonies of people who have faced giants in their lives. In order to turn their situations around for God's glory, each one needed to set his heart on God, in the face of heartaches and trials (1 Samuel 16:7).

Maybe you have a sword of affliction coming against you today. Consider how to make something good out of it. Use it for God's glory. Make a ministry out of it. Do it for God's glory. Sickness, emotions, financial trouble—whatever it is, take it up and use it for God's glory.

You can overcome anything that is standing against you in your life. Please let yourself be filled with the Holy Spirit, filled with love, and filled with faith, no matter what you are facing.

Let God strengthen you and enable you to obey the truth without reservation, without equivocation, and without hesitation. Let these

words set you free in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Unbroken Fellowship

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INTRODUCTION

Those who desire to serve God may be very active; yet, that activity may be nothing more than busy-ness—wheels spinning without any lasting fruit. In Luke 10:38-42, Martha was busy with much serving, and all she reaped was aggravation. Her sister Mary, on the other hand, simply sat and received at the feet of Jesus. Mary chose the good part.

Even a Christian who understands the Finished Work may have such a full schedule that when he hears that he ought to simply abide, his first thought is to cut back the schedule and to become less active. The truth is that when a Christian learns to abide in perfect fellowship with Christ, he is finally able to produce fruit.

So much time and energy can be spent trying to accomplish a work when Christ is not in it. This booklet addresses the importance of abiding in Christ in intimate, unbroken fellowship, to reap a harvest of fruit that remains.

Chapter One

ABIDE IN THE GENUINE VINE

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

"Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:1-4).

In John 15, Jesus was heading toward Calvary. In the thirteenth chapter, after eating the Passover supper, He kneeled down and washed His disciples' feet. In the fourteenth chapter, He sat at the table and gathered them close to tell them about things that would soon take place. But then Jesus stood up, signaling that some-

thing very important was about to be revealed. This is what He said:

"I am the *true* vine."

The Greek word for "true" means "genuine." So in John 15:1-17, the Lord was saying, "I am the *genuine* Vine." Also, He spoke of fruit that comes from abiding in the vine. Eight times this passage mentions "fruit" and eight times a form of the word "abide." Abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ produces much fruit.

The Power of Unbroken Fellowship

To abide in the genuine Vine is to have unbroken fellowship, intimate communion, and an inseparable relationship with God. Think of that! Jesus Christ—the Creator, Savior, and Lord of the Universe—wants to have unbroken fellowship with us. But the moment we stop abiding, the intimacy of that relationship stops and our fellowship is broken.

It is difficult for many Christians to realize the power we derive from having unbroken fellowship. Not a single sin can prevail in our lives when we abide. We abide in Him, He abides in us, His words abide in us, and according to John 15:3, we are made clean by those words.

Of this relationship that is becoming unbro-

ken fellowship with Him, Jesus said, "Abide in me. Continue to trust Me. You are in Me. Now abide in Me and I will abide in you. There is no way a branch can bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine. No more can you bear fruit, except you abide in Me" (see John 15:4).

"I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). The only way abiding works is in the resurrection life of the genuine Vine. Jesus is, indeed, a *living* vine, and in Him we have a living union, and a living fellowship.

Strange Vines

"Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" (Jeremiah 2:21).

Practically speaking, what does this mean? People do so many strange things today. They hear the Word of God. Then, a woman leaves her husband. Just leaves. Why? Because she is a strange vine. We are God's planting, His choice vine produced from the right seed. But when the planting becomes degenerate, it sends off wild shoots and becomes a "strange vine." When we

are not abiding, we become a strange vine.

"My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill…." Isaiah 5:1-10 describes the Lord's vineyard and the care He has taken to properly cultivate it: He fenced it in, dug around it, took out the stones, put in a winepress, and built a tower in the midst of it, where he watched until the grapes were ripe.

Then he said, "I planted it with the choicest vine, but when I went to gather, it brought forth wild grapes."

Characteristics of a Strange Vine

The Lord does everything to prevent us from producing a strange vine that bears wild fruit like Ishmael the wild man. God does not want us to enter into the 'strange vine' attitude, void of the nature of God. First, the strange vine walks by sight and is paranoid. Second, the strange vine judges according to appearances. Third, the strange vine reproves by what he hears and judges by what he sees, which negatively affects his emotional structure and system.

Ultimately, a strange vine denies people forgiveness, mercy, love, and grace. He denies the fruit of God in people's lives because he is self-centered, negative, and reactionary in emotional

revolt.

When we abide in Jesus Christ, we plan our thoughts. We plan our responses. We plan our initiations. We plan our confession. We do everything through the plan of God.

Chapter Two

TAKE A STAND AND DON'T CHANGE

The Word of God says in Ephesians 6:12-18, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood." Yet, it *does* say that we wrestle, and a wrestling match involves an opponent. We are opposed by the kingdom of darkness. That is why verse 11 says we are to put on the whole armor of God, that we "may be able to *stand* against the wiles of the devil." Then verse 13 says, "that ye may be able to *withstand* in the evil day."

To stand against the wiles, or strategies, of the devil means that we do not change the armor of God. Our loins are girded about with truth, which is the Word of God; don't change what you believe about the Word of God. And having the breastplate of righteousness, don't change your standards of grace and love or your convictions of truth.

"Stand" simply means stand—don't change.

Do not change. Our feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace for soul winning. Don't change that desire to be a soul winner.

To stand also means that we don't waver (Hebrews 10:23). Instead, we continue to take up the shield of faith that quenches the fiery darts of the wicked.

Then the Word of God says we are to put on the helmet of salvation (verse 17). Don't change the helmet of the Finished Work that protects the mind. Instead, be ready with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

Christians who know how to stand choose to live by the Word of God—*every* word. They do not change. They believed in soul winning when they started out, and they still do. They believed in the Blood atonement, and they still do. They believed in a literal hell and a glorious heaven, and they still do. They believed they should make a commitment to the Cross, to take it up daily, and they do that with great conviction. They believed Christians should assemble more than ever as the last day approaches, and they gather more than before (Hebrews 10:25).

In these last days, as the demon armies assemble their forces to attack, the only way a Christian will end up staying true to God is if he

learns to abide. How do you overcome emotional hell in your system? By abiding. Abide and obey. That is enough for the Christian.

The Cultivated Christian

We have a husbandman, God the Father, who takes care of His vineyard. As the Body of Christ, we are the vineyard. Jesus said, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6). This verse has nothing to do with a Christian losing his salvation. It is dealing with fruit-bearing in the life of a believer.

In John 13:10, Jesus had already said to Peter, "You don't need to be washed all over; only your feet need cleansing because you walk in the world." Christ already settled the issue of eternal security; it is a *finished* work (John 10:28). So when He speaks of casting men as branches into the fire, God is not speaking of hell's fire, but of the fiery trials of our faith that are more precious than gold (1 Peter 1:7). It has everything to do with our testimony bringing forth much fruit and revealing the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"If ye abide in me, and my *words* abide in you…"(notice how He mentions His "words" again)"…ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:7-8).

Why is it that some Christians can't seem to learn how to abide? One reason is that many are not equipped for battle. Satan has appointed specific armies of demons whose entire duty is to make sure the Christian does not abide in Christ and does not let the words of God abide in his heart.

The key to a fruitful Christian life is in abiding. People do not get their marriages right because they don't abide in the doctrine of marriage. People lose their purity because they don't abide in the doctrine of purity. They become negative because they don't abide in the doctrine of edifying. They are not Spirit-taught because they don't abide in the spirit of meekness. Everything is in abiding.

Once I recognize that I am in Christ, then I must abide, trusting in the Lord continually in an unbroken fellowship. Yet, not only must I

abide in Him; His words—*His* words—must abide in me. That is what the Word of God says. Let His words abide in you.

The Way We Abide

When the Word of God abides in me, it is completely resting in my memory, in my soul, in my frame of reference, and in my conscience. There are many ways God uses this word "abide":

Epimeno is a strengthening form of the term "to abide." It means that we keep getting strengthened as we abide (Acts 15:34).

Katameno refers to the Word of God constantly being resident in our soul, an always abiding presence (Acts 1:13).

Parameno means that we continue to draw near by hearing and abiding (1 Corinthians 16:6; Philippians 1:25).

Then we have *hupomeno*—to abide and remain where we are planted. That means to abide right where we are. We rest where we are. We fulfill the will of God in the place He has called us. We fulfill the will of God now, where we are. We do what we can as we abide and bloom where we are planted (2 Timothy 2:12).

Prosmeno means to abide still longer, such as

in Matthew 15:32. It means we abide longer, and we don't stop abiding, in spite of circumstances.

If you have been doing well in recent days, then keep abiding! Purpose to abide more than you did before in your unbroken fellowship with Jesus Christ, in the unbroken relationship you have with the Lord. According to 2 Corinthians 13:4, our fellowship is with Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 1:9). It is a fellowship of faith (Ephesians 3:9) in the work of the gospel (Philippians 1:5).

Chapter Three

ASK WHAT YOU WILL

Consider the fellowship we have, the personal communion, as we cultivate God's presence. Abiding helps us not to fail. Do you know how to guarantee you will bring forth fruit? Abide. Do you know how you can be assured that you will have peace and joy in the anointing of the Holy Spirit in your life? Abide in the genuine vine, Jesus Christ.

Satan sends in armies of demons as he does everything to stop the abiding process of the cultivated Christian. But when we cultivate God's presence, the devil's presence cannot touch us (1 John 4:4; 5:18).

Jesus was saying, "If I abide in you, and My words abide in you, and you abide in Me, that is when your prayer life becomes totally revolutionized." John 15:7 doesn't say, "Ask what *God* wills." It says, "Ask what *you* will."

Notice what the Word of God is saying. We

are to ask what *we* will. Some would say that if a man is abiding, of course he is in *God's* will. But, there is only one passage in all the Bible that mentions praying for God's will; that is 1 John 5:14. God wants to have unbroken fellowship with His children. He wants us to prove Him to see whether or not our heavenly Father will give us the things we desire.

He says, "Ask what YOU will."

John 14:13-14 says, "And *whatsoever* ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask *anything* in my name, I will do it." Why did He say "anything"? What does "anything" mean?

In Mark 11:24, Jesus said, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Not only that, in the previous verse He said "*whosoever*…shall have whatsoever he saith."

When we say, "If it is God's will" after we have prayed, it takes away from the love of God the Father for His children. God wants us to have His Word abiding in us. Then, He wants us to step out as we are abiding, to prove our Father—and see what He wants to do for us (Malachi 3:10). That is why He said, "It *shall* be done unto you"—no if's, and's, or but's about it.

How to Glorify God

"Herein is my Father glorified…." The Father is glorified when we bear much fruit. He is glorified in missions. Our ministry desires to send missionaries into 220 countries by the year 2000. We *want* that. That is fruit. And it glorifies God. We want to see Bible studies and new ministries starting up. The Father is glorified in that. Hundreds of people accepted Christ during recent outreaches in our city—and God is glorified in the fruit that has come forth.

We have believed the whole counsel of God, and we still do. We have believed that we ought to be faithful stewards, and we still do. We have believed in the grace of God, and we still do. That is the difference.

Satan's fiery darts cannot quench a Christian who holds the shield of faith, who allows the Word of God through the Holy Spirit to reign. The key is in this principle of abiding. As we abide more, and abide longer, and as we continue to trust and to obey, we bear more fruit and the Father is glorified.

The Father's Heart

Parents love to do things for their children. A dad or a mom would do anything for their

child, providing it would not hurt them. And just as a child freely asks his parents for what he wants, we need to go to Jesus in the same way. Then, we ought to tell Him things that we know will please Him, such as, "Jesus, You are the greatest!" And of course, He is, and He deserves it. Certainly, all of what we could possibly say to please Him is true and He deserves it, whether He were to answer our prayer or not.

It glorifies the Father to bless us. We are His creation, His children, members in particular of His royal family (1 Peter 2:9). We are kings and priests. Therefore, ask from the position of abiding and not out of self-centeredness. If we are walking with God, agreeing with Him, He loves to have us say, "Father, this is what I desire." He just loves to bless us.

If Christians are abiding in the Word of God, they will be faithful to the thing God has called them to. Whether it is being part of the choir, teaching children, knocking on doors, visitation, or intercessory prayer, recognize the value of abiding faithfully. Whatever we do is a ministry that is needful—for ourselves and for the congregation. When His will is accomplished in us, we will continue to bear much fruit as we rest in unbroken fellowship with Christ.

CONCLUSION

It is so vital that we take God at His Word. He said, "If you abide in me, and My words abide in you, *ask what you will*. It shall be done unto you, so the Father may be glorified." (See John 15:7-8.) He desires to give His children the things they are asking for by grace through faith.

Always remember that the Father's heart is to bless His children, that we would know Him and trust Him. Then, when the storms come, and the heat comes, we shall not be moved because we have learned to abide in the genuine Vine.

Precious Father, we love You. We thank You for the opportunity to abide with You in unbroken fellowship. We want to know You more. Please give us what we ask in a miracle of love and grace. We come to you with a full measure of faith that You have given to fill us. And now we ask for a miracle, in the precious name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Under God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

We live in a time when very few people understand what it means to live "under" someone. The slogan "Question authority" has become a rallying cry for many. Of course, we are not to be robotic in our submission, following blindly in whatever we do; however, bona fide leadership is something we should enjoy and not challenge.

Today, even among Christians, many have started to follow after that which is right in their own eyes. This practice promotes spiritual "lone rangers"—people who are guided by natural preference and subjective experiences. "I go to church where and when I feel like going," they say.

As believers, each one of us is called to assemble ourselves together, and more so as we see the day of Christ's return approaching. That is the instruction of Hebrews 10:25, and it means that each believer belongs in a place where he

can serve under God.

As this booklet will show, living under God is something that brings great security to our lives. When we as spouses, children, employees, and church members purpose to submit to godly leadership, the result is life, and life more abundant.

Chapter One

AUTHORITY AND THE TABLE OF ORGANIZATION

"And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

"And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

"And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship" (Acts 8:25-27).

Philip encountered a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This particular eunuch, who had the charge of all the queen's treasure, was headed to Jerusalem to worship.

Where was the eunuch, in terms of his position of authority? He was *under* Candace the queen. He served under her authority in Ethiopia's table of organization.

In order for the Lord to do something, somebody has to be under somebody else. In the Ethiopian government, the eunuch was under Candace. As believers, we are under Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was under the authority of God the Father. What's more, the Holy Spirit came under the authority of the Son, and the believer is under the authority of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. He is *under*.

It is an amazing thing, that little word "under." If I am under someone and I am in the right place, I am being charged with the simplicity of a table of *content*. Certainly, I submit in a table of organization, and in that I find great content in specifics for my life. Indeed, one of the most important things in all the world is to understand that little word "under."

The Husband and the Home

What would have happened if the Holy Spirit had not placed that little word "under" in the plan for our lives? Let me illustrate it.

Two people get married, and the husband

wants his marriage to be scriptural. Therefore, it is very important for us to recognize that as a godly husband, there are certain things he has to be to this woman.

Consider it: This woman has probably been used to living with her father, so her husband has to give this woman the same love that her father gave her. She has a mother, and he needs to give her the same identical love that her mother gave her, which she had all those years.

There is more. Suppose the woman this man is marrying has a brother. He takes her away from the brother, so he needs to supply her with the same love that she would have gotten from her brother. She also has a sister, and he has to give this woman the same love the sister had for her.

You say, "But he didn't marry her sister!"

No, but he is obligated to give her the love that her sister gave her. That is the cost of becoming married to her.

This man's wife has special friends, so this husband, in his loving meekness, in his graciousness, gives her the same love that her friends gave her.

You say, "That doesn't make sense to me."

It doesn't matter whether you think it makes

sense or not. We all need to know the Bible, and we have to study some deep things, such as the scenario we have here.

This is the great responsibility of a husband toward his wife. It is a beautiful thing, because the love between a husband and wife is magnified. That love keeps growing more and more mature, but this only happens if it happens under the right kind of authority, as defined in the Bible.

Chapter Two

GODLY SUBMISSION BREEDS SECURITY

"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

"To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:4-5).

Most likely, you have seen a picture of yourself when you were a little kid, and you would say, "Boy, I was so cute back then! I don't even recognize me. Oh, man, I was so cute."

Have you ever said that about yourself? Of course, you have. Maybe you wouldn't say it publicly. And, if you haven't said it, somebody else probably has said it. But you know what I mean: "Come and see. Here is a picture of when he was only three." And you look at that picture and say, "Hmm, not bad."

I want you to see something that is very im-

portant. We need to look at each other with God's viewpoint. Awife will be just as beautiful as her husband makes her. The key is in having the proper initiation toward her.

Initiation and Response

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:21-25).

There is not one verse in the Bible that says the wife has to love her husband. The husband, on the other hand, is commanded to love his wife. And as a husband is loving his wife, the wife begins to respond to his love and freely gives him back the same love he has for her. Now, in the measure that she builds up her husband by submitting to him, the more and more

security she will have in her husband.

What happens in this situation? The wife responds in a glorious way, releasing both herself and her husband. This strengthens the husband because she is submitting to the plan of God. She strengthens him, and he in turn gives her the security that she is the best thing in the world. The home becomes a wonderful and exciting place. The wife can't wait for her husband to get home, and he can't wait to get home to his wife. There is a godly passion between them. That is a beautiful thing.

Edification at Work

Consider an employee who is under an employer. One day he goes to work and he says to his employer, "Can I see you just a minute?"

The employer says, "Yes."

The employee says, "I've worked for a lot of guys in my life but you are one of the nicest, most fun bosses that I've ever worked for, and I just want to thank you. That's all, sir."

What has that employee done? He has built up and edified his employer. And what has that done for the employer? It has given the employer security with his employee. Because of that security, when an important job comes up,

the employer will feel confident with this employee. He will feel secure in giving him a very risky job. That is a tremendous thing.

Even the person at the top is under authority, and if he is wise he operates with that in mind. That was true for the centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant, in Matthew 8:5-10. So, whether we are talking about a marriage, or work, or any situation where there are two or more people, God has ordained a plan that will benefit every person who is willing to submit to godly authority.

Chapter Three

THE FAMILY AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

Imagine what can happen in a home with children who hear a message like this. Together, they say to each other, "Let's make something for daddy and mommy, and let's do something just to make them happy. Let's obey them all week long and build them up and make them feel like a hundred dollars with every move we make."

As time goes on, the father and mother notice that the children are so happy. They are absolutely happy, and as they get closer together, the father and mother feel like a king and a queen. The children wait until everybody at the table is finished, then they excuse themselves. Without being told, they take the dishes into the kitchen and wash them. Then they say, "Mom and Dad, is there anything we can do for you?"

And the parents say, "You've been awfully

good children. No, there is nothing."

"Are you sure now?"

"Well, seeing that you're in that mode, yes."

The children keep on doing that. They continually build up mom and dad, and that gives mom and dad security. But that is not all, because now the children also enter into a new type of security, and it is tremendous security. The mother and father have this tremendous security in their children because the children have honored them so much, even when they were not asked.

The Privilege of Security

Security makes us stronger. When a child submits to his parents, just for the love of it and for the Holy Spirit and for God's grace, it gives the parents security in relationship to him. And as the parents have security in relationship to the children, the result is stronger parents and secure children.

Now, that is the way to bring up a family.

By the way, the Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church." And to the wives, it says, "Submit to your own husbands" (Ephesians 5:21-30).

But beyond a command, it is a privilege to

have a marriage that is under God, under grace, and under love. It is a privilege to have a marriage that is under mercy, that is under God's order. And when you do, the people who are in authority receive tremendous strength, and the people that are honoring them receive tremendous security.

Order in the Assembly

An anointed pastor and a responsive congregation make another place where security can be found. When there is obedience from the heart that is motivated by love, there is *life*—spiritual life that goes beyond anything we could ask or think.

It is no wonder that Paul declared that a husband should love his wife as Christ loved the Church (Ephesians 5:25). A healthy marital relationship includes the physical dimension of a sexual relationship. Besides bringing great enjoyment to the couple, every one of these encounters carries the potential for babies to be born.

My point is that as sure as life can spring from a healthy marriage, so does life spring from the midst of a healthy congregation that lives under the guidance of its pastor. A godly pastor hears from God and is led by the Holy

Spirit. He speaks the truth in love. He is a gracious and longsuffering leader, but also one who refuses to compromise. He communicates a vision for the lost and for reaching the world.

The members of his church can count on this pastor going by the Book because he also lives under authority. What does that do? It promotes great security, and the congregation thrives and grows as it responds to the order that is established under God.

CONCLUSION

"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165).

Living life under God brings great peace. Striving is done away with. Jealousy and envy do not affect us. God's Word is exalted and the Holy Spirit has free course to move in our homes, our businesses, and our churches.

Christians who live under God allow the life that He has imparted to them to be drawn out. This makes an eternal difference. As His life is drawn out of His people, that life is manifested with love. God said that the world will know that we are Christians by our love—not just for the lost but for one another: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

This great love promotes vision in the local assembly. The Holy Spirit leads people to reach out to their neighborhoods, to their cities, and to their states. Some are led to go to the uttermost

parts of the earth, to places such as Africa where millions suffer from the AIDS disease, or to places such as Afghanistan where war and religious extremism has throttled hopes and dreams, or to places where communism and ungodly authoritarian government has crushed the spirits of generations of men and women.

Living under God is the only secure and safe way to move through our days on this earth. It is the only way to experience spiritual prosperity and abundant life.

Dear Father, thank You for placing us in a plan that reveals the power of perfect love as we submit to You. Prison bars can't stop that love and the security it brings. Even ungodly authority must come under Your supreme authority. Thank You that You were willing to become as the least among men to reveal to the strongest and weakest of us the power that comes with being under God. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Under the Policy of Grace

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Policies are instituted every day by government institutions, by schools, and by communities. Those policies are considered as guidelines for action in certain situations. Heaven, too, has a policy under which it operates. That policy is grace, and grace alone.

The policy of grace is in force today because of the Finished Work: God's plan for Redemption, accomplished at the Cross where Jesus Christ paid for every sin that would be committed—past, present, and future. Now, because of what Jesus has done for us, God can use anyone who has been born again. The only qualification is to receive Him, by grace through faith.

As this booklet will show, God is just waiting to be gracious to us. He longs for us to experience His great blessings. When we allow His Word, which is spirit and life, to be manifested within us, the possibilities for blessings in our lives are endless.

Chapter One

GRACE: THE ONLY QUALIFICATION

"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

"And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:11-13).

"But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

"And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?

"They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and

saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

"For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

"The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

"But wisdom is justified of all her children" (Luke 7:30-35).

In any evangelical ministry, there are many, many beautiful people. Yet, there are also Pharisees—people who have an outward religion and really want you to know it, but who have no internal working of love, grace, and humility through the Holy Spirit.

A Pharisee never calls himself a Pharisee, of course. Pharisees and scribes—those addicted to the letter of legalistic thinking—consider certain kinds of people unqualified to serve God. "But," Jesus said, "wisdom is justified of all her children." He does what He does through those "unqualified" people to show the wisdom and fruit of His love.

What is the qualification for ministry? What is the requirement or standard for a servant? It

is that we recognize ourselves as sinners saved by grace through faith. We were once so desperately lost that we came to Jesus Christ, confessed our sins and accepted Christ as our Savior. Then, Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit, established us in His purpose, and gave us a destiny. Through grace, He gave us sixty-eight things at the point of salvation—none of them we deserved.*

The Lord Jesus has never operated outside the policy of grace. Go back to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve experienced the Fall, but by grace, God killed animals to give the coverings they needed for their nakedness. Did they deserve that? No. But that is how God reveals His character of love to us—through the policy of grace.

God Chooses Whom He Uses

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"

(Galatians 3:26-29).

Consider some of the things Abraham did. He had sex outside of marriage with the maid, Hagar, and the result was Ishmael, a wild man and a mocker. When Abimelech showed an interest in Sarah, Abraham lied and denied that she was his wife in an effort to avoid being killed (Genesis 20:1, 2, 11).

Let's be honest. Some of us would consider the things that Abraham did as grounds for disqualification in the service of God. But what did the Lord call Abraham? He called him a friend (James 2:23) and the father of our faith (Romans 4:11-16).

Jacob cheated his brother Esau out of his birthright and obtained his father's blessing through deceit (Genesis 25:29-34; 27:1-46). Then, he spent twenty years as a backslider, working for his uncle Laban and taking his cousins, Leah and Rachel, as his wives. Yet, God made him the head of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Numbers 23:21 says that God "hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him." Why? Because Jesus Christ paid for all of his iniquity at the Cross. Was Jacob qualified to become Israel, a prince with God? Only under

the policy of grace.

**For a complete summary of those sixty-eight things and more, read* What Happened When You Received Christ? *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

Chapter Two

MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

Moses murdered an Egyptian and spent forty years wandering in the wilderness. But he was the one the Lord raised up to lead Israel out of bondage. Imagine a Pharisee trying to discuss Moses' qualifications with God.

"He's a murderer, You know."

No response.

"Why are You having him lead Your people out?"

Still no response.

"I don't agree with this at all."

Of course, God isn't listening to any of it. Moses came under the policy of grace, which taught him how to grow in grace and knowledge, to deny ungodliness through rebound and through rehabilitation, and to live godly in this present evil world (Titus 2:12).

David will be the prince in the Millennial

Reign, in spite of his failures. God declares that David never turned aside (see 1 Kings 15:5). God can say that David fulfilled all of God's will (see Acts 13:22), because God saw David in Christ and brought him through—under the policy of grace.

Wealth in Weakness

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

"And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

"That no flesh should glory in his presence.

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

"That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

The late Bob Jones Sr. said, "God will even

use *me*!" We all have to admit that at some time, we have wondered why God would bother to use us, considering our weaknesses and failures. The beautiful thing about it is that God doesn't wait until we are completely changed to use us. He takes us in our weaknesses and gets all the glory as He makes us strong (Hebrews 11:34).

God gets the glory when He makes something out of nothings.* That's why He chooses the weak, the failures, the ones who seem to have nothing to offer. Really, could any of us stand up and say, "God, I have done a good job for You"? Perhaps, but only because of the policy of grace.

Joy in Body Life

"So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7).

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

In Jesus Christ, we are saved, justified, sanctified, glorified, Spirit-filled, cleansed, purged, and forgiven. We are hid with Christ in God, and we are new creatures, on our way to heaven.

Old things are passed away because Jesus did it all. He paid for all of our sins. We accept all that He has for us by faith and consider that each day is a gift from Him.

Recently, some young athletes died on football fields. They were fit, healthy, and had promising futures. Their last days came suddenly, and now, many of their teammates realize that tomorrow is not promised to them. No matter how old we are, we should live each day to the fullest, to the glory of God, under His policy of grace.

"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1).

**Read* Making "Nothing" Count, through the Power of God*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

Chapter Three

GOD IS IN THE BLESSING BUSINESS

Something good is going to happen to you,
Happen to you—this very day.
Something good is going to happen to you!
Jesus of Nazareth is passing your way.

I love that chorus. It says to me that God is always waiting to be gracious to us.

A woman spent thirty years in a wheelchair, but one prayer changed her life. She came up to me at a recent meeting and said, "I was in a wheel chair for thirty continuous years, and I could not take a step. You prayed for me, and I got out of that wheelchair that night. I have been great ever since."

Once during a radio broadcast, God led me to pray for someone who was blind in his right eye. It turned out to be a priest who was listening at that very moment. Jesus passed by and

the priest was healed in an instant.

These are some of the beautiful things that happen under God's policy of grace.

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profitith nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63).

There are so many verses in the Bible that speak of healing the whole man—mentally, physically, emotionally—whatever the need. Whether you have marital, financial, social, or business problems, God has a provision for you. But those words need to be heard.

The Word Becoming Spirit and Life

When you first hear and believe certain promises from the Bible, you may not get healed right away. As you hear the words about healing, those promises are becoming spirit and they are becoming life (John 6:63). The more you hear them, the more you receive them. The more you receive them, the more you are healed. The more you are healed, the more faith you have to be healed further.

This is what God is saying: "At first, My words may be just words to you. But sooner or later, as you keep mixing faith with them, My words will become spirit and life to you. Then,

whatever is wrong with you will be corrected—sometimes right away."

Former President Ronald Reagan once said that the White House was a miserable place at times. The eye of the camera was always on him. The pen of the journalist was ready to write something negative. The politicians scrutinized him, and the public judged his decisions.

"I felt so empty in that big Oval Office," he said. "I was so empty, until I prayed. I would study to be quiet and just say, 'Thank you, Jesus.' Then the Spirit filled that emptiness."

Weathering the Storms

Whatever state you are in, think under the policy of grace. Something good is going to happen to you! God is ready to give you serenity, calmness, quietness, joy, faith, and fervency.

According to the Bible, Job had it all: wealth, health, land, livestock buildings, and a large family. But the winds of adversity came and destroyed everything.

Yes, the storms with their high winds may come. For some, the storms bring the death of a loved one. Others may lose everything they have worked so hard for. These are difficult things to overcome. But God will make some-

thing good happen. His policy of grace remains in effect. He will see you through to the finish line.

Rest in God in Times of Need

Some churches today have large congregations and beautiful buildings. By sight, all appears wonderful. If, however, they have no consistent outreach to people who are empty and without hope, then they do not understand the policy of grace.

George Mueller was one man who did understand the policy of grace. He spent twenty days in fasting and prayer for his orphanage. He was running out of money when he prayed, "God, You are in heaven. You know what I am doing for these children. I need the money for them. I have no desire for myself. You have to do this. I will rest, I will abide. You know our need. You will supply."

Perhaps you know the rest of the story. Someone gave the money the very next week. Mueller never found out who gave it. It all came in supernaturally. No letters were sent out. No one was asked to give. Yet, God provided—under the policy of grace.

Mueller's stand was this: "My ministry will

be just as successful as the faithfulness of God in His promises."

CONCLUSION

Something good is going to happen to you. Believe in the law of faith. Continually be filled with the Holy Spirit. Refuse to let anything cause you to doubt.

God wants to bless you. You can be blessed in your health. You can be blessed financially. God wants to prosper you. Think beyond where you are now, even if you are in a "good" place. Think beyond your present circumstances. You know what you want to do in God, and you can do what God wants you to do.

The apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Paul had lived a victorious life in Christ through the policy of grace, and he was ready for the next step.

Know with all your heart that God is for you. None can be against you. You are under the policy of grace where God takes frail believers and uses them to glorify His name. Let Him

teach you how to walk by grace through faith as you grow in His nature.

God is waiting to bless you. Just reach out to Him and say, “Thank you, God! I accept Your blessing, and I am going on by faith.”

Understanding

Delegated Authority

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most crucial things expressed in the Bible is the principle of delegated authority. It is not manipulation to control people's individuality, leading by personality, or taking advantage of people because of a higher position. According to the Word of God, delegated authority is simply leadership that follows God's order.

In His humanity, Jesus Christ was under the authority of God the Father, though He was equal in the Trinity as God the Son. Jesus' submission to God the Father was precise. He would not entertain a single thought that was not derived from God the Father. Every thought was from God the Father!

This booklet will examine delegated authority for what it is—a gift of God that enables Christians, churches, and organizations to operate decently and in order.

Chapter One

THE INDIVIDUALITY OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE SPIRIT

"For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me" (Romans 15:3).

"Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19).

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, [Show] us the Father?

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:9-10).

During His time on earth, Jesus Christ chose to "seek not" His own will but the Father's. Was His doctrine different from the Father's? No. Was His character different from the Father's character? No. Did He have any teacher but the Father? No.

Did Jesus Christ have individuality? Yes. How could He have individuality and still only have thoughts that He derived from the One who sent Him? He *chose* to submit to the plan of the Father. He was not a puppet. Would He go any place that the Father didn't give Him permission to go? No, because, as a servant, He diligently sought to do His Father's will.

The Spirit Glorifies the Son

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will [show] you things to come.

"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of

mine, and shall [show] it unto you" (John 16:13-14).

Based on what these verses communicate, would you agree that the Holy Spirit has always submitted to Jesus Christ? The Holy Spirit, in the order of the Trinity's delegated authority, never glorifies Himself. Instead, He glorifies the Son.

The Bible says that the Spirit glorifies Jesus Christ, and that He will not speak of Himself. Other than to teach doctrine about Him and to honor Him as an equal member of the Trinity (see Acts 5:3), the focus is to be on Christ. Therefore, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we exalt Jesus Christ .

Chapter Two

BEING SENT AS JESUS WAS SENT

"…Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

As the Father sent Him, Jesus sends us. In other words, Jesus submitted to the will of God the Father; therefore, a Christian who refuses to submit to God's authority is not operating in the proper order of being sent.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto to the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

What is it that we are supposed to teach? We are to teach what we have been commanded by

God to teach. We are to teach exactly what Jesus Christ teaches us. Will we have diversity in our presentation? Yes. We can be used according to the individuality of our gifts, but we must teach what we have been commanded to teach. This is what it means to operate under God's authority.

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." From whom did Jesus receive His power? While He was on earth, He received power from His Father in heaven.

Guided to Speak Truth

Here is what Jesus is saying to us: "I have been sent, and the same way that I have been sent, I send you. I have been taught (Isaiah 11:2-3), and the same way I have been taught, I will teach you. The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. And, the Spirit who guides you into all truth will always glorify Me—He will not speak of Himself."

When I live under God's authority, I have the power of the One who sent me, the blessings of the One who is over me, and the fruit of the One who is living in me.

Do I have individuality? Yes, I certainly do. Do I have personality? That depends on what you know about personality. If personality

means, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20), if it is "[my] life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3), if it is "for me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21), then I have a derived life from the Person Jesus Christ.

Not I, But Christ

Every marriage should operate under delegated authority, not under one partner's personality. Marriage partners are to submit to the delegated authority of a union derived from the Lord Jesus Christ. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). This is the Word of God.

Is the husband the head of the home? The Word says that he is, provided he is operating under the proper authority of Christ. Remember, we are not puppets for someone to impose authority over us in Adam. Anytime we operate in our natural ability to manipulate God's plan, our name is Adam. Any time we operate in Jesus Christ, it is "not I but Christ who lives in me."

We must understand that in our decisions, God has veto rights, Jesus Christ has veto rights, the Holy Spirit has veto rights, and the Word of God has veto rights. But they will never veto

anyone living in Christ. They only veto those who are in Adam.

This doesn't mean that we don't have any flexibility. It doesn't mean that we can't prove all things. It doesn't mean that He doesn't let us make mistakes. But it does mean that we are people under God's authority. If we are out of God's order of being sent, we won't have God's power. If we are sent by Him then we are under proper authority.

If you are a Christian, you are under authority (Luke 7:8). Being under authority, Matthew 4:4 says we are to live by every single word of God. We are to be sanctified in the Word (John 17:17). Will God ever take free volition away from us? No. Choices are ours; the consequences are up to Him.

Chapter Three

THE PURPOSE OF FOLLOWING GOD'S ORDER

An older Christian in authority has tried many things, and he probably knows some of the things that will not work for your life. He knows where not to go, and he may warn you about it. If he does that, he is not usurping authority but simply sharing his experience.

Being sent by God is a marvelous, wonderful, precious, and sacred experience. One of our pastors on the foreign field told me, "If you need me at home base, I will be there tomorrow." I told him to honor his call to the field. He was honoring his pastor, and I honored God and His call for this pastor's life. Because of his gifts, it would have been very easy to say, "Sure, come on home." But we must honor Him who sends us in the right operation under delegated authority.

Separated by the Spirit

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy [Spirit] said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

"And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2-3).

The most beautiful thing represented in this passage is that before Barnabas and Paul were sent by delegated authority, "they" (the prophets and teachers, in Acts 13:1) fasted and prayed. *They* fasted, *they* prayed, and then the Holy Spirit told *them* that Paul and Barnabas should go.

These two didn't come and say, "We feel led to go somewhere." The first thing noted is that they were ministering to the Lord. We minister to the Lord when we allow Him to send us where we are called to go, taking heed to the checks and balances of godly leadership. That is ministering to the Lord. It is making Jesus Lord.

Then they fasted, and the Holy Spirit said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." The leaders laid hands on them and then sent them out. They were sent under submission to the ones who laid hands on them.

Rule and Submission

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you" (1 Thessalonians 5:12).

What do you think God wants you to do with these verses? "Obey." "Rule." "Submit." Do these words go against your Adam nature? We need to understand that each of us has someone over us. And, the one who is over us has someone over him. "Obey them that have the rule over you." This is a very important principle for the church today.

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Galatians 6:6).

A pastor communicates the Word of God

through preaching and teaching every part of it. Believers are to live by every word of God, according to Matthew 4:4. Therefore, listeners are responsible to make their own decisions based on the Word. A pastor cannot legislate obedience. Obedience to the Word is a choice from the heart of the hearer.

Parents must train their children at a very young age to submit to authority and to respect their elders. Parents also must avoid sentimentality and keep from "provoking" their children (Ephesians 6:1-4). In other words, parents are not to be unkind, making unreasonable demands. At the same time, mothers and fathers must be fervent in honoring the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God. They must be very careful to honor delegated authority such as the police, the pastor, school administrators, and teachers.

Galatians 6:6 means that in the table of organization of a church there ought to be clear communication, for the purpose of checks and balances, with the one who is your pastor-teacher. Communicate with him so that he has an opportunity before God, through Christ, to help you in making decisions. The key is communication.

Some Christians have never learned to honor delegated authority. They accuse godly leaders with statements that are not relevant, accurate, or true.

When we are sent, we represent God. Furthermore, we are in the table of a divine government from the kingdom of heaven: the Father, the Son, the Spirit, the Word, the husband, the wife, the children, the pastor, the employer, the employees, the coach, the players, the policemen, the teacher, the students. Every single person is under the authority of a government. As we are in a government, we are called to honor the principles of being governed. A government always has a certain order that has to be followed, since government without order is anarchy.

As free volitional agents, we have the privilege of making choices. But when we choose to honor the principle of being governed, we agree with delegated authority as it is given through the Lord Jesus Christ. We receive a badge of divine approval from God as He promotes our individual lives.

Chapter Four

FROM HUMILITY TO PROMOTION

We are sent by God. And as sent ones, we represent God. We reveal God and His character, and we are here in Christ's stead. Because we have a personal relationship with Christ, we have access to God in every area of our lives, without exception.

As we humble ourselves before God, He guarantees that He will lift us up.

"Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

"But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they have none.

"And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

"And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

"But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

"But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:27-33).

Marital Authority

In those verses just quoted, the apostle Paul is saying that there will be challenges if you get married. Those challenges and wrong priorities could take some people away from their call, having been sent by God. But Paul is also saying that it is not wrong to get married. Furthermore, as you get married in God's authority, stay in God's delegated authority. You can be blessed in your marriage. Remember, God can honor you because He always provides for everyone who is under the proper delegated authority. But, He doesn't provide for Adam, though He does forgive and allow believers to

use rebound.

When the Word says "the time is short" and "they that have wives be as though they have none," it doesn't mean to neglect your family through subjectivity and hyper spirituality. It means that more than ever, you need to hear the Word of the King, and He must remain King in your life. If you are considering marriage, make sure that it is God's will for *your* life before you have to submit to someone whose will is different from your desire to follow God.

Dealing with Leaders

The pastor must make sure that he doesn't lord himself over God's heritage (1 Peter 5:3-4). He needs to have a heart that is understanding, compassionate, and entreatable (Jeremiah 3:15). A godly leader leads by example. He is to serve and wash other's feet (John 13:5-10). A godly leader needs to have a servant's heart (Matthew 20:26-28).

If the pastor is wrong and someone lovingly approaches him, the office must be protected and the friendship covered. Go to the pastor alone, and the pastor ought to submit (Ephesians 5:21). This is called balance.

Do not circulate what happened—that is

maligning and gossip. Go to him alone and check out the facts. If the pastor is a humble man of God and the person going to him is correct, the pastor will submit and thank the person for coming to him.

As God is, so are we in this world. We are to redeem the time because the days are evil. The time is short, so I would say to you that there is no greater protection in the world than being sent by God. You are sent just as much as your pastor is sent. He has his position in God's table of government and you have yours. His value to the Kingdom of God is not greater than yours.

We are all equal in value before God, and each one is precious in His eyes. When you go to work and you are under a supervisor, he has no more value than you do. You are just as precious as he is. But while you are at work, you are under his authority which is given by God.

CONCLUSION

God's authority is love. His authority is forgiveness. His authority is power in prayer. His authority gives guidance. When a person steps out from honoring delegated authority, he begins to usurp authority. He is no longer under the provision or protection of that authority. Coming out from under the authority of the Plan is usurping the authority of the Planner. It represents a rejection of God the Father, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the precise guidance of the Holy Spirit.

If a person in authority comes to you and is unkind, he is revealing the nature of Adam, even though his office is of God. God will have to deal with him because you represent God, you reveal God, and you are here in Christ's stead. Anyone who uses his office in Adam will not have the blessing of the Plan, though God will give the grace to get back into it the moment he repents and rebounds.

Father, give us the wisdom to discern and respond to Your delegated authority. Thank You for the grace to function as Your representatives on earth and to always reveal your authority of love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Undeserved Suffering

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Psalm 23).

On the run for his life, exiled from his kingdom, David had lost everything except for his mule, his sword, and his garments. After crossing the Kidron River, he made three stops. At one stop, he wrote Psalm 23, Psalm 27 at an-

other, and Psalm 63 at the last stop, which was after David's soldiers came together for battle and a miraculous victory from God over Absalom. David did not want that victory because he loved his son so much. But his soldiers did not want David to lose.

When he wrote Psalm 23, there seemed to be no possibility for David to return to the palace. As far as he could see, this was it. Yet, in his situation, he was kept—absolutely and miraculously—through his commitment to God and through the filling of God's Word. The Word of God was in David, and he wrote so many psalms, all by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In this Psalm 23, David wrote, "I shall not want," meaning "I shall not lose or lack anything." "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures" reads like this in the original Hebrew text: "Choice pastures He caused me to rest in, with choice food." The green pastures speak of the doctrines of mercy, the doctrines of grace—the doctrines of life that we are to rest in. God also guides us beside still waters, speaking of divine quietness, faith rest, peace, inner joy. These are invisible assets that we possess when all that we can see outside of us seems so wrong.

These are great thoughts that we need to

have residing in our souls when we face difficulties or trials that seem so unfair. This booklet looks at Psalm 23 and how David was able to enjoy a deep capacity to know God in the midst of his suffering.

Chapter One

STREAMS THAT MAKE US GLAD

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psalm 23:3).

Here, David speaks of having his soul refreshed as he is guided in the path of God's imputed and imparted righteousness. The Lord's imputed righteousness came before David's great blessings through imparted righteousness. He simply received the promises of God and thereby escaped the contamination and fleshly things of the world (2 Peter 1:4).

In the Bible, a person's name often reflects his character. God did all this for His character's sake, which is outlined in Exodus 34:6, "The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

David was in the midst of an awful time. That is why this is such an amazing psalm. He wrote it when his heart was broken because his

own son, a handsome man, just like him, was taking the kingdom away. Absalom stood by the gate and stole the hearts of the people to himself. Isagogic commentaries indicate that 75 percent of the nation was now with Absalom.

David, a brilliant and remarkable military leader, would not fight against his son. He may have felt a great measure of guilt because he had kept Absalom out of the palace for two years, after Absalom had arranged the murder of Amnon in retaliation for the rape of Absalom's sister Tamar. Honestly, I think Absalom would not have rebeled if David had not shut him out of his life. So, there were some regrets involved in David's thinking. He knew that he made some mistakes, and that it was now too late to correct them.

Despite all of this, David forgave himself and refused to condemn himself. Instead, he communed with the river of life, the streams that make glad the city of God. In Psalm 46:4-5, we read about this river and the streams. In application, every stream represents a category of precise truth and life in the Holy Spirit. Every stream channels doctrine through our grace conscience, bringing God-consciousness through the Word of life.

Doctrine was going from the heart of David's human spirit into his mind, giving him an amazing mental attitude. He had healthy emotions because so much of the Word of God was living and operating inside of him. David's will was positive toward God. Even when confronted with the circumstances involving Absalom, he was ready to trust God utterly and completely.

Facing Death with Doctrine

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

Here is a beautiful picture for us. Everyone has to die. Yet, when a person dies and goes to be with Jesus Christ forever, the people who are left must realize that they are left here to live. They have not yet fulfilled God's purpose.

There are many situations where the physical body is wracked with pain, yet the soul receives a grace blessing, and there is a beautiful, indescribable death. Consider Stephen, in Acts 7. As he was being stoned, he saw Jesus standing up to receive him into glory (Acts 7:55). This is why Paul said, "To die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). We put off this tabernacle of pain and

toil and weariness, and we receive a new, glorified body (2 Corinthians 5:1-8). Death becomes a beautiful thing because Jesus comes and says to the one who is dying, "I will be with you. I *am* with you."

Time to Move On

"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

"Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

"From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

"Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them" (Joshua 1:1-6).

Oh, if people would only realize that Jesus Christ is inside every believer because of the promise made to Joshua: "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

The Lord spoke to Joshua, in effect saying, "I know that you are sad about Moses' death. But move ahead. Get over this Jordan River." Moses had died, and the angels took care of the memorial service and the burial. Joshua's place was with the living. As with Joshua, we can move forward with the Finished Work of Christ and advance in the grace, love, peace, joy, and power of God.

Many valleys are overshadowed by death. Cancer, heart disease—you name it—these things overshadow our valleys. But we do not have to fear.

Chapter Two

A TABLE SET IN THE MIDST OF OUR DARKNESS

David was in a great valley. His son was leading a revolution against him, and the rebellion had driven David from the throne of Israel. Yet, David did not fear.

There are two great thieves in our lives: fear and procrastination. So many times, Jesus said "Fear not." Don't worry about anything (Philippians 4:6). When you actually face some situation, if you think with God now, you will be built up in faith.

Then we have procrastination, a thief of time, caused by a lack of managing our thoughts, our time, and our schedules. This often results in low productivity, causing a fear of failure. We reach our goals through faith, by looking to the substance of the things we hope for (Hebrews 11:1).

With regard to failure, nobody can have suc-

cess unless they fail. We don't make a provision to fail, but only a provision for God. David failed again and again, but he knew how to turn to God, get up, and go on.

Seventy-five percent of the people went against David. Yet, he had no fear of the satanic evil that had infected folks who, he thought, loved him. They had taken the side against him, but God was on David's side, and it wasn't time for him to go home to be with the Lord.

"Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me" was David's confession. The practical meaning here points to the rod as representing the power of God in his life, and the staff, which speaks of the protection of the Lord that was upon him.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5).

This is where we get into the subject of undeserved suffering. Aperson gets great blessings and even prosperity from the genuine imputation of God's righteousness toward him. His righteousness is in us, so He must bless us. There are times when we may experience something unpleasant for the sake of a future ministry toward someone else. Yet, because of those

times, the greatest rewards of reigning with Christ come when we stay quiet, Spirit-filled, and calm in the midst of undeserved suffering. We let God take over in those times, and we glorify Him within.

Great believers have endured undeserved suffering. Fanny Crosby lost her eyesight, but she became an awesome writer of hymns and spiritual songs. Amy Carmichael, a missionary to India, was confined to bed and yet managed to minister and love people through her writings and poetry. Helen Keller ministered tremendously in spite of being blind and deaf.

Throughout the Bible, we have the great stories of Joseph and Paul and John and many others who were persecuted and martyred. But when that happened, God prepared a table for each one, right in the midst of their trials.

A Banquet of Rest and Love

Shuelechah is the Hebrew word for "table," and it refers to a very interesting table—a banqueting table. Everything upon this table has been precisely prepared and placed in order, fit for a king.

The type of banquet was only prepared for kings. The good news is that we are all kings

and priests (see Revelation 1:5-6). Everything is prepared for us, and it is prepared in precise order, according to the mind of God. For David, this banquet was the Word of God, served up in green pastures of mercy, rest, grace, and love. Two months before Absalom was defeated, every single ingredient had to be on the table.

Here is the beautiful thing: God's righteousness and justice produces a judgment of no condemnation. Even in our failures, God's integrity is backed up with immutability, so His will never changes. No matter what happens to us—God does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8).

"I will never change My relationship with you," God says. "You are My son. You are My daughter. You couldn't change Me even if you denied Me after you received Me. You cannot change Me, because I change not. What My Son did on your behalf, I must honor. I can do nothing but honor My Son. He did everything He was supposed to do."

In the midst of suffering, these truths remain. When I received Him, I was made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). It is the Lord who supplies all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so

that no flesh can glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

Chapter Three

GOD NEVER CHANGES

We need to get straight the reality that God cannot change His mind. As long as we have an old sin nature—and we will have that until we go home to be with Christ—we are capable of anything, just as those in the world are. Never be surprised when you find that some Christian is living in sin. An old sin nature is at work in each of us. We can do anything an unsaved person can do because we have an old sin nature. God forbid that we would continue in sin (see Romans 6:2; Romans 6:15). When we fail, we rebound, and we are restored to fellowship with Him, though there may be a measure of consequential suffering.

But in the midst of undeserved suffering, always keep in mind that God cannot change. His sovereignty, His righteousness, His omnipotence, His integrity, His justice, His immutability, His omniscience, and His omnipresence all

relate to the agreement He designed and implemented through His only begotten Son.

God Is With Us

In the presence of his enemies, David enjoyed the amazing presence of God. The enemies ached to kill David, but they could not find him. He was isolated in the presence of God, who was providing for every need through genuine blessings, because righteousness has to bless righteousness.

If we don't experience the blessing right away, unless there is a need for discipline, the situation is for our promotion. Many times in David's life when he was being disciplined by God, someone would talk against him. Then, God would remove the discipline from David and bless him instead. The discipline went off David and onto the person talking about him. Not many people understand that principle today, and they wonder why they are having such troubles.

Renewed Capacity

Even in the darkness of that time, David was in the midst of a banquet, and his face was before God's face. What did God do? He anointed

David's mind and expanded his capacity for the suffering he was experiencing.

Our capacity is vital for our blessing, our honor, and our growth. When a plant stops growing, it dies. We should be growing day in and day out. We should be more meek today than we were yesterday. We should be able to forgive more readily today than we were able to forgive yesterday. We need to keep growing in our capacity for God.

In the midst of his trial, David was so filled with the Word of God that he just walked in the desert, worshipping and praising God. He sang psalms and would not accept defeat. He would not accept being sad or sorry at that moment.

"Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

"Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

"For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God" (2 Corinthians 9:10-12).

God provides everything for our capacity,

from the seed to the harvest. He is going to keep adding to you as you give Him your capacity in the midst of suffering. No matter what happens to you, no matter where the trial is, if you establish your capacity, God will add to it and provide what you need in the inner man. You will enjoy an amazingly beautiful soul, flooded with the presence of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

It is so important that we learn how to develop our capacity no matter what our circumstances. Whatever my circumstances, I have to learn how to enjoy God. The joy of the Lord is my strength (Nehemiah 8:10). No matter what God may be allowing you to experience, live in the inner joy, the inner river, the inner streams of doctrine in your life. Not only will that bless you, but it will make others glad.

I have started a new practice. Every morning, I am going to say something good to everyone I meet, and I am going to mean it. I do this with my wife. Every single morning, I start it off by saying something edifying. It may be just one sentence, but it is never contrived. Through a heart filled with the Holy Spirit, I can use words to bless people.

One of the things Christians need to learn how to do is develop the activity of visualization. The Word is powerful. The Holy Spirit is

powerful. Let's allow God to take that energy and help us to visualize miracles, goals, purposes, and successes. Be prepared with a divine provision to consider the reality of success in God's purposes. Though His plan may include undeserved suffering, rest assured that His ways are perfect. Partake of the banquet He has prepared.

Unity That

Commands a Blessing

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Try to picture the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit before they created the angels and human race. There was such unity among the Trinity. In fact, throughout all time and eternity, they have had perfect unity because of their nature, their essence, and their characteristics.

The three Persons of the Trinity are coexistent, coequal, and coeternal (Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14). The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, yet each one is true Deity. This triune God —who is *one* God—is the foundation of the Christian faith and life. In John 8:58, Jesus declared to the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was, I am," echoing God's declaration to Moses in Exodus 3:14. And today through His still, small voice, the Holy Spirit bears witness of this truth to each person who will receive Jesus as his Savior.

Satan and his demons have consistently

attacked the character of God as they seek to destroy unity among Christians. Lucifer was kicked out of heaven for violating the unity of the Trinity, and a third of the angels fell with him. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit had agreed and proceeded to create the human race. Their purpose was to reveal a perfect plan of unity and oneness and to show God's character in the angelic contest.

Never has one member of the Godhead exalted Himself above another. They think right because they *are* right. Their plan is perfect because they are perfect. The Son sacrificed Himself of His own volition (John 10:17). With an attitude of love, He gave Himself for others by laying down His life. With that same attitude, the Father gave us His only Son, and the Holy Spirit leads and encourages us to have the same mind: to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren so we can reveal the unity of the Trinity to lost souls (1 John 3:16). This booklet will show that when we have this kind of unity, God cannot help but command a blessing.

Chapter One

THE GLORY OF ONENESS

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee*, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, *that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know that thou hast sent me*, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou

hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

"O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:17-26).

Unity is such a precious quality among believers. I am not referring to a superficial unity, but the unity of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:3 tells us to endeavor to keep the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

As Christians, we have the potential to have the same kind of unity that God has in the Trinity. Jesus prayed for this in John 17. He prayed not only for the disciples at that time, but also for all those who would come to believe the Word of God. He wanted them to be one as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are One. "As I am in thee, and You in Me, that they may be one as we are one that the world may know that You sent Me." This is unity.

Some argue that Jesus was simply a 'yes' man on earth, who did not think for Himself, be-

cause He only did the will of His Father (John 5:19, 30). But we know He is the Creator of the universe, and He holds all things together by the Word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). Others have implied that the Holy Spirit is merely a servant to the Father and the Son with no real identity. In fact, the three are One, but they are also very different individually. The Father sent the Son because He so loved the world. The Son came to earth because He had the same love as the Father. The Holy Spirit reveals the plan of salvation to the hearts of men because He has the same love as the Father and the Son: That is the unity of love.

Unity Never Divides

Can Christ be divided? The question is asked in 1 Corinthians 1:13. No, He cannot. Unity never divides, and it never criticizes. If someone must be addressed in the table of organization, it is done privately, alone, decently and in order. Godly unity is so unique. Yet, as members in particular in God's Church, we can be as one as God is one.

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Philippians 2:2). This means that we

have the same Word of God for the content of our thinking with the same love, in one accord.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Unity Eliminates Competition

A great picture of unity is found in the fact that the Son only did what the Father told Him to do. Never has the Holy Spirit done anything to glorify Himself. The Spirit glorifies the Son (John 16:14); the Son glorifies the Father. That is how unity works. No competition, just absolute oneness in unity.

What goes wrong when a Christian marriage falls apart? Christ is in the husband; Christ is in the wife; and Christ is in the children. But, the problem comes when they don't keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Few people really understand godly unity. We can never experience more happiness than when we have God's unity. For example, I initiate to my wife in the unity of the Spirit and she responds in the unity of the Spirit. We pray in

the unity of the Spirit. We build each other up in this amazing unity that can neither be divided nor cause division.

Chapter Two

BLESSINGS THAT TRIUMPH OVER DISCORD

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

"It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm 133).

When a church has God's unity, He commands it to be blessed. Just as He commanded creation, and just as He commanded the stars and the moon and the sun to shine, God has commanded the Body of Christ to be blessed according to oneness. If the unity of the Spirit is in a marriage, God will command that couple to be blessed with life, "even life for evermore." He

commands it.

In Acts 1:14, the disciples with Mary and the brethren were with one accord, praying in one place. In Acts 2:1, when Pentecost was fully come, they were with one accord in one place. It is always that way when a blessing comes. In Acts 4:32, those who believed had one heart and one soul. "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33).

They had great power with great grace because they had amazing unity and oneness. Satan despises for us to be one as Christ, the Father, and the Spirit are one. If there is anything that is not right between you and someone else, get it right and keep it right, so that God can command your relationship to be blessed.

Things That God Hates

The following passage describes the characteristics of a wicked man and names seven things he does that are an abomination to God:

"Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.

"These six things doth the LORD hate: yea,

seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:14-19).

These verses begin and end with a common characteristic of wickedness: sowing discord. People who are living in an internal conspiracy can't wait to sow discord. They love to sow discord. They love to separate people by saying something negative to another party. They have an internal conspiracy that promotes competition in the flesh.

When an internal conspiracy is produced in an individual, the emotions control the volition, because the mind is not thinking with God. As a result, the conscience is not a grace conscience; the self-consciousness is not occupied with Christ; and inside are emotional problems as well as problems of identity. This is an internal conspiracy.

People who are in such a conspiracy may seem to be getting along well with certain people. But, they do not have the same love, they are not like-minded, and they are not of one accord.

They lack the unity that can only come through the Cross of Calvary, where Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father" (Galatians 1:4).

Made Mature by Preaching

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The pastor-teacher is given so we can all become mature, so we can do the work of the ministry, so we will be perfectly one as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one. By that, we can all come in the unity of the faith and enter into Christ's fullness.

When we pray for one another, we have the unity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, along with grace, mercy, and love. We have unity in our prayers for those who are in need: for those who are sick, who need reconcil-

iation, who need deliverance. We have unity in our faith because of the Word; therefore, we pray with amazing unity.

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby [demons] lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:14-16). We help to increase the Body of Christ through evangelism and by edifying one another in love.

How Satan Gets In

When there is no unity, Satan has access to come in and cause division (Ephesians 4:27). Disunity gives him a place of influence. The first thing he does is accuse (Revelation 12:10). The second thing he does is keep on accusing. The third thing he does is sow discord. He does that by sending careless words through the demons of the air (Ecclesiastes 10:20).

As demons transfer messages through each other to us, Satan and his armies actually have unity. In his ministry of accusation, he fashions a form of unity as they attack, separate, sow discord, and divide. That is what Satan is about, according to John 10:10. And in Job 41:16, he allows no air—meaning no separation—to come between him and his demons. He enters into this unusual unity in his kingdom of darkness.

Having Joy by Being Likeminded

When Pentecost came, there was perfect unity among the disciples. Even in persecution, they went back to the upper room and had perfect unity. For us to experience the blessing of the bond of unity in the Body of Christ, all we have to do is fulfill the joy of the Lord by having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind (Philippians 2:2), and being comforted as we are knit together by the Spirit in love (Colossians 2:2).

Oh, how Satan hates this! He hates unity.

In Judges 20:11, when they went up against Gibeah, all of Israel operated as one man. In Joshua 23:10, as one man, Israel chased a thousand. And when we operate in that kind of unity, God commands a blessing. He will supply

what we need. He will command a blessing to give us our hearts' desire. He will command a blessing as we reach out to 220 countries. God will command a blessing as He heals the sick. God will command a blessing in our finances. God will command a blessing. All we have to do is keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Chapter Three

UNITY REVEALS THE LOVE OF GOD

Picture the Son of God praying this beautiful prayer in John 17 just before He was led to the Cross:

"Father, we have to talk about something," He said. "You know how You are in Me, and how I am in You? I pray that those who will believe through the Word would be one, perfectly one, in us. Let's give them the glory you gave Me so that they may be one as we are one" (verse 22).

Then Jesus prayed, "If they are one as We are one, the world will know that You have sent Me. They will know the difference because by nature, people are not like this. Then, the world will know that just as You, Father, have loved Me, You also love them. They will have the unity of faith and the unity of love."

One Baptism

All of us who are born again have been baptized by one Spirit into the union of the Body of Jesus Christ. You are seated above with Jesus (Ephesians 2:6), and so am I. You are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus Christ, and so am I (1 Corinthians 6:11). You have the Holy Spirit and the love of God in you, and so do I. You have received mercy and grace, and so have I. You have been forgiven of all your sins, and so have I. Satan cannot bring up a single thing against any of us, and neither can anyone else.

We have the unity of being forgiven, of having His Blood cleanse us from all sin, and of having our consciences purged. We have the unity of power in prayer, unity in supplication, unity in intercession, and unity in worship. We already have amazing unity; all we have to do is to *keep* it. So, we walk in the Light as He is in the Light.

The Power of Pentecost

Every Christian can have so much peace in his life—peace that flows like a river. He whose mind is stayed upon God shall have perfect peace. Whenever anything arises in our hearts,

God's people can bring those thoughts into obedience to the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit can love through us. He can take over so that there is full and mature unity. What took place at Pentecost can keep on happening as we learn to live in the "acts" of the Holy Spirit.

In Matthew 18:20, Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." But He also said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Matthew 12:30).

He goes on in Matthew 12 to talk about blasphemy of the Son and of the Spirit. Blasphemy against the Spirit means to reject Jesus Christ as Savior, because His is the only name by which men might be saved. Such rejection is unforgivable in this life and in the one to come (Matthew 12:31). Blasphemy against the Son, however, is when Christians claim to represent Christ but are divided against other believers. You and I represent Christ as ambassadors. If we are divided, it is blasphemy against the Son. Can we have different gifts? Yes. Is there diversity in the Body? Absolutely. Diversity is not division nor indifference. Diversity means we use what God has given us to edify other's portions.

"Whosoever therefore shall *confess* me before men, him will I also confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Revelation 3:5).

These verses are so beautiful! In the original Greek text, "confess" in Matthew 10:32 is *homologeo*. Jesus was saying that if we show others the precise nature of God, then, in our time of need, He will show us God's nature precisely. With that, we can reveal God's nature to each other, and we will reveal it to the world. We are not filled with confusion; we are filled with oneness. We confess the nature of God with the life of God because of the blessing of God through the grace of God and the love of God, to edify one another through God.

Now, in Revelation 3:5, the Son comes to the Father and says, "Father, I want to confess this

believer before You. He confessed Me before men, so I am going to dress him in white raiment, and he will reign with Me over nations" (see Revelation 2:26).

The white raiment is special illuminating brightness that will cover our glorified bodies, and all because we "confessed" or revealed His nature, His Word, and His heart before men.

Standing Fast in Oneness

I don't want even a little thing to come between me and another Christian. I want to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If someone doesn't like me, that's all right. If he disagrees with me, that is fine. The Word tells us God will command a blessing, even life for evermore, when we stand fast in one Spirit, serving one another in the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:27).

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). In the Greek text, "you" is plural, but "wholly" is singular. This is where unity in marriage comes in. Our spirits are set apart. Our souls and our bodies become one. Jesus Christ

controls us, loves us, speaks through us, and we become one as the Trinity is one. If our spirits, souls, and bodies are sanctified by the Word of God, then we are one as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one.

Do you have perfect oneness in your home? Every Christian who loves the Lord Jesus Christ loves oneness. I am not talking about compromise; I am talking about oneness that comes through the Cross.

The Cross Is the Bond of Peace

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

"(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself"

(Philippians 3:17-21).

Paul's instruction was to mark those who did not follow his way of living. He called them "enemies of the Cross." The only way a Christian who hears the Word of God will not be one with others is if he is an enemy of the Cross. When I take up my cross, I am dead and buried with Him, and Christ is alive in me.*

The secret is in taking up our cross (Luke 9:23). When we take up our cross, we keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But for those who do not take up their cross, their flesh remains alive. We love them, but we cannot have godly unity with them because they are of Adam.

Think of the amazing revival that could take place if Christians were one as the Trinity is one. Don't make little sarcastic remarks on the side. Stop getting in your little digs about people. Don't do it! Purpose, instead, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**For more about the subject of taking up your cross, read* I Will Glory in the Cross, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

CONCLUSION

Where there is godly unity, the only thing you will want to say is that which will edify the hearer and give him grace. You want to build up, edify, and give grace to people. The Holy Spirit can glorify Jesus Christ in that relationship (Ephesians 4:29).

Some Christians have become so familiar with oneness. If only they understood what a pastor goes through and how it grieves the heart of God when there is division or a spirit of disunity between Christians.

If we purpose to have the oneness of Christ in our hearts each day, we will see the most wonderful blessings we can ever experience. We will do everything we can do to be one with people without compromising the Word of God. We love each other and pray for each other, and as a result, we will have many years of the most amazing unity we can imagine.

We don't "do" anything to get this unity. We

simply keep it—by abiding in Christ and letting His Word abide in us.

Father, we love You, we praise You, and we give You all the honor. It is so healthy to be one in spirit, soul, and body—to love each other as Christ loves the Church and to love You by fulfilling Your eternal purpose. We are so grateful to You, and we know that we will expand our coasts and receive even greater blessings because of the life that descends from heaven. We thank You and praise You in Christ's name. Amen.

Unknown,

But Well-Known

in Heaven

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

"As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

"O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged" (2 Corinthians 6:8-11).

"As unknown, and yet well known…." This is a beautiful statement of truth from God's mind. Here the Word of God is saying that many people are unknown—people who work quietly for God—and yet they are well known in heaven.

Have you ever noticed in the Bible how Jesus Christ takes unknown people—people who were never popular, never well known upon the earth—and makes them well known by His Word? Well known to us, their names or their stories were written in the Word and have

remained known throughout history. These people may have been unknown in their day, but now, after many years, they have become very well known.

Even in our midst today, many people are making the headlines in heaven whose names will never hit the papers on the earth—unknown men and women in the corporate Body of Jesus Christ making headlines in the eternal records of heaven. We thank God for every one of them, as the Scriptures teach us the value of what they are doing for God behind the scenes.

I have written this booklet for you to consider such people. I know quite a few people who are unknown by the world's standards yet well known in the mind of God. In the following pages, I want to introduce you to some of those folks. Let their testimonies encourage you in every godly endeavor, and do not despise the day of small things (Zechariah 4:10).

Chapter One

NO SMALL JOBS IN GOD'S MIND

"And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

"And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy" (2 Kings 5:2-3).

God took a little maid and used her in the ministry of Elisha. She served the mistress of Naaman, the king of Syria who had leprosy and was destined to die. A little maid, completely unknown, and she was doing work for the mistress of Naaman.

One day this little unknown maid said to her mistress, "There is a prophet in Israel. His name is Elisha. This prophet would heal your king."

Now imagine the part that she played in that chain of circumstances—a little, unknown maid.

No one knew anything about her. She was hid away somewhere, but she was a little witness for Jesus Christ.

There is no small work in the Kingdom of God. Anyone who gives a cup of cold water in Jesus' name is just as important as the one who is preaching to fifty thousand people. A pastor faithfully serving God with eight people and doing his best to sow the seed through the Holy Spirit is just as big in God's eyes as someone who has the biggest church in the United States.

There is no such thing as a "greater" work if you are Spirit-filled, you love God, and you are growing in grace and knowledge, serving Jesus for the glory of God and walking in the Spirit the best you understand. When you fail, you rebound. The best you know how, you do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). With all your heart, you live a holy life unto Him (Colossians 3:23).

Quality, Not Quantity

Quantity is not an issue with God. The thing that really counts is quality. God wants to know this: Are you doing what you are doing in the power and nature of Jesus Christ?

This little maid had a major role to play. In

her community she was just a little, unknown maid, but in heaven she was well known. The saints in Paradise, who had gone on before, knew her. That little maid was known among the angels of God. She was unknown yet she is well known. And what a thrill it will be to meet her when we get to heaven!

In God's economy, in God's time, many unknown people continually make eternal headlines of heaven. They are unknown people who, the Word of God says, are well known.

Consider Andrew

"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

"He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (John 1:40-41).

A good example is Andrew. He was with John and another disciple. Then he heard that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was coming, so Andrew went to visit Him. But first, he found his brother Simon, and immediately, "he brought him to Jesus." Andrew went after and won his brother Simon. Andrew was unknown, in terms

of being a powerful personality, but in heaven he was well known, and he won his brother, whom Jesus called Peter.

Most of us realize that Andrew never was known to be the preacher that Peter was. He never got into the situations that Peter did. He was not as impulsive, and he was the silent type of servant of God. Still, though Andrew was unknown, he was very well known in heaven.

The Samaritan

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

"And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and what-

soever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

"And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:30-37).

Oh, they knew this Samaritan in heaven. Here the priest came down, and that man went from Jericho to Jerusalem, and he was going from Jerusalem right into Jericho. He was left half-dead and wounded by thieves. The priest went by, the Levite went by (verse 32), and then the good Samaritan, half-Jew and half-Gentile, came along.

The Word of God says that he stopped and helped the man and took him to an inn. While he was rejected by all, he showed much love for this individual. The Samaritan was unknown, "despised" by both Jew and Gentile, but he was well known in heaven.

Chapter Two

ORDINARY PEOPLE DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS

How many in churches today are unknown to the world but are very well known in heaven?

I was thinking of an old story about a medical doctor in Jack Hyles church in Hammond, Indiana. This doctor was planning to build a new home that would cost forty-five thousand dollars—a big price for a home in those days. He was living in a home valued at ten thousand dollars, according to Jack Hyles.

The man had been through his training and was now an established physician, so he decided to build a home for his wife and family after many years of study and hard work while he also served God diligently. Then one night, the young doctor was praying and God told him that he did not need to have a new home.

So that doctor took the money (around twenty-thousand dollars that he had saved for

the new home) and he spent fifteen thousand to help build a Christian school. He put the other five thousand into an education fund to help children come to the school. After eleven years of practice, he and his wife still lived in the ten-thousand-dollar home. Jack Hyles said that the doctor came up quietly in a prayer meeting and told him of his decision.

Dr. Hyles wept and said, "I realized then that what makes a church like ours is people like that. I've got people all over this congregation just like them. They give sacrificially and serve diligently without a single question. They will go without, again and again, to promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

This doctor's name never reached the daily newspaper and certainly he did not want it to. He is unknown on earth, but he is very well known in heaven. He is well known where it counts.

Giving Nobodies a Home

I remember a home in Portland, Maine, where a woman had seventeen foster children. These children were physically and mentally handicapped—children with all manner of medical and emotional difficulties.

I used to think to myself, "Seventeen children? How in the Lord's name does she ever take care of seventeen children with all those challenges? How does she do it? And what would motivate a woman to take care of seventeen children like that?"

Beyond that, she gives every month and always sends me beautiful letters. After talking with her for five minutes, I found out what motivated her to do it.

She said, "I can't offer much to this world, but there is one thing I can do. I can help kids that will never have a chance. I just take on those who have the needs, the kids that nobody in the world wants.

"I take them in. Because of physical exhaustion, day-in and day-out, I pray to get strength one moment at a time in order to live."

She wept as she talked with us and said, "It is such a rewarding experience to be able to give them a home."

What a beautiful thing it is. She is an unknown person. No one knows her in Portland, except for a very few people. No one knows her, but as a born-again believer she is well-known in heaven. Why? Because she has a ministry to people that no one else wants—a real first-class,

godly ministry to children that otherwise would have been rejected.

Seventeen of them. There is no higher calling. She is a fantastic woman who is unknown yet well known in heaven.

How many unknown people are like that?

Choosing with God

I will never forget the story of a couple in Putnam, Connecticut where we had a week of meetings. They went down to adopt a child and they had a choice. First, they went to see a beautiful baby, and they were going to choose that baby. But then, the Holy Spirit stopped this man and his wife and said, "No." They went over to another baby that was blind and had a birthmark completely over his chin and down the left side of his face. God said, "That's the baby I want you to take."

The husband looked at his wife, and the wife looked at her husband and they knew. They knew God's choice. They made arrangements and took the baby home, a blind baby with a large birthmark on the lower chin and the left cheek.

That was an unknown act. Few will ever hear about that. That story will never make the

daily paper, but it is so well known in heaven. That act of love made the angels shout. It made Jesus Christ rejoice. They were not selfish. They were not greedy. They were not living in their old natures. They were not thinking of themselves. They were able to go to the Cross and respond to the leading of God to adopt and to love this child as their very own.

Unknown people, unknown to the earth—completely unknown and yet so very well known in heaven.

Special People Meet Special Needs

I was thinking of some of the people in our own ministry. I know of one family that gave seventy-five dollars in the offering, and I know that they could not afford it. They had received a check in the mail for one hundred and ten dollars that they didn't know was coming. They heard that there was a special need. I know they do not own things that you have in your home. Honestly, they could have used the money for bills. Yet, they did this lovingly for Jesus Christ. They are unknown to you.

They will never be known to you. Their names will never be given. But I believe that when they wrote out that check, angels rejoiced

along with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Peter, John, James, and Paul and all the saints that have been made perfect (Hebrews 12:22-23). I know they rejoiced and praised God, because this was an unknown event, yet it was well known in heaven. What these folks did, they did unto the Lord, and they did it unto all of those who are in heaven. It was unknown to many of us, and it will be kept that way, but it is well known in heaven.

Chapter Three

SEEING THE NEEDS

"And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

"And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

"And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

"And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

"And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the

way" (Mark 10:47-52).

Blind Bartimaeus was unknown to that multitude. That multitude following Jesus Christ through Jericho did not have any use for this blind beggar. They did not care for him. He was an unknown man, but with Jesus Christ he was well known. Jesus Christ stood still because the blind man had a need and stopped the crowd and stopped the people that were following Him that day.

"What is your need?" the Lord asked.

"That I might have my sight," the blind man said.

"Okay, then you have received it. Your faith has made you whole."

He was unknown, but oh, he was well known with Jesus Christ. One day there was a woman caught in adultery (John 8), and a crowd gathered to stone her after the pharisaical law of the Old Testament. But immediately Jesus Christ intervened because they tried to trap Him. And He said, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone."

And from the eldest to the youngest the crowd disappeared. Finally, it was just the woman and Jesus. He looked into her eyes and said, "Who is he that condemns you?"

And she said, "No man, Lord."

"Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."

Jesus forgave her. She was an unknown wicked sinner, but she was well known by the Savior. She had a witness. She had a problem. She had something that was troubling her. Perhaps it was her heredity. Perhaps it was her environment, but basically it was because of her sin nature that she gave in to temptation.

She was unknown with regard to her need, but she was well known with Jesus Christ. She was forgiven. She was no longer embarrassed, no longer ashamed of her past. Forgiveness came in, along with a new heart, a new life, a new love, a new purpose, and a new grace.

Giving All That You Have

A little boy had five loaves and two fishes (John 6:9). He was an unknown little boy, and the multitude was hungry. The five thousand with children were very hungry, and at Philip's request, he took the five loaves and two fishes and brought them to Jesus. He was an unknown little fellow, but Jesus took the five loaves and two fishes and prayed, and the boy's lunch multiplied into enough to feed the five thousand

plus. This little lad was unknown, but he was well known to Jesus, well known in heaven, just for giving up his lunch.

Little children, I want you to know that Jesus was a child once, and everything you do is well known to Him. He loves you personally. He does care. You may be overlooked by adults but Jesus cares, and He loves you very deeply.

You are unknown as you pray. You are unknown as you come and make your requests in childlike fashion. But with Jesus Christ you are well known. He says, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for such is the Kingdom of God." You are well known, and God loves you deeply.

Teenagers, many people avoid you because of some of your habits, because of some of the things that you have done, and because of their own preoccupation with details. God's people may not love you the way they ought to and the way you think they should. Perhaps, many times, you are unknown in fellowships, and you feel isolated and parched.

But I want you to know that Jesus Christ was a teenager, and He knows you well. You are well known to the Creator, and He loves you. He was tested in every point just as you are. He

was tempted with the same temptations you face. It may be hard for you to believe that He was tempted at every point, but Hebrews 4:15-16 says He was, yet Jesus lived without sin.

Perhaps, you feel unknown, but you are well known with Him. He loves and calls you by name. He has bottled your tears (Psalm 56:4). He calls out to you and says, "Cast all your cares on Me because I care for you" (see 1 Peter 5:7).

Maybe you have rebelled and reacted and done wrong things and entered into sin, and you feel detached from the Body of Christ—detached in your prayers, detached from reality. You feel that you just don't count, and you feel like you are one of God's unknown, but you are well known. Everything about you is well known.

Whether you are young or old, Jesus has been through every single thing that you and I have been through. You, too, are well known tonight. Your need is well known. Your desire is well known. Every heartache is well known by Jesus Christ, who is also your Provider, your help, your answer in every situation.

Chapter Four

THE POOR MAKE MANY RICH

The Word of God goes on to say in 2 Corinthians 6:9, "…As dying, and, behold, we live." Every time we enter into Christ's death and crucifixion and burial, we enter into His resurrection life and ascension. "As dying, yet behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

I went up to a certain woman and said, "Why is it that you always cry in church services? Are you sad?"

She said, "Yes, but I'm rejoicing."

I said, "Why do tears always come?"

She said, "I feel very sad yet very happy."

I said, "Even when souls get saved you cry."

She said, "I'm sad because of God's love but I'm so happy."

I said, "When somebody goes home to be with the Lord you cry."

She said, "I'm sad, but I'm so happy."

I understand what she means. Many times when the power of God comes, our hearts are burdened for people. We have a tremendous constraint of love to help them, to minister to them, yet inside there is always a deep rejoicing. We wait for any moment to praise God, to sing, just to be happy in Him. We are sorrowful, yet we are always rejoicing. We are as poor yet making many rich, seeking first the Kingdom of God—it is a paradox with God's people.

So many counted as poor in this world share a message that sends people to heaven. They are poor by the world's estimation, and yet they are making many rich, sharing Jesus Christ. It is a beautiful thing because it is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ teaches about every one of His disciples.

Many are unknown who are poor, and yet they make many rich. They have nothing yet they possess all things. They have died to their own rights, and behold, they are living. There are many in our congregation who do hidden things. If we started mentioning names and telling you some of the things that some of them have done, we would leave out so many that it would not be fair.

I know that I could call upon at least a cou-

ple of hundred people tonight. And I know if I said, "We have this need, and Jesus has this need," that in an "unknown" manner, they would do everything they could, because they are unknown and they simply do as Jesus Christ asks them to do.

That is the reason our services are always full. That is the reason we have more than one hundred ministries that are in the highways and byways—outreaches to every segment of society. That is why we are going out across America and throughout the world. That is why we are going on with Christian day school and our Bible college programs. That is why we are able to do it. We have some unknown people in our church that are just plain unknown, yet they are well known with God.

God can trust people who are unknown as they accept His grace. He can trust them to minister. He can trust them to love. He can trust them to pray. He can trust them to lay down their lives. Every time I look at them, it makes me fill up with tears and with great rejoicing. There are many unknowns. Many are never up on the platform.

Some of them will never sing a solo. Some of them never do a single thing to bring attention

to themselves. Some of them never testify the way that others do. And yet, they are well known. They are unknown, dedicated people, and they want to live as unto Jesus Christ. They are poor but they make many rich. They have nothing, but they possess all things. The beautiful thing is that the people who have the least seem to always be willing to do the most, without any question.

Enlarged Hearts

How precious it is that Paul said, "Our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged" (2 Corinthians 6:11). He said, "Listen, we are disciples. We are the offscouring and the filth of the earth. We are hated and rejected and persecuted by men. We have been lied about and robbed and cheated and maligned and criticized and judged. And yet, though having nothing, we possess all things."

As God continues to move in our revival, as the sensitivity of the Holy Spirit enlarges our hearts, as the love of God grows with intensity, as the power of the Holy Spirit continues, we will need to have a crowd of unknown people who are hid with Christ in God. Few people ever put soul-winning, prayer, loving the breth-

ren, and Jesus Christ ahead of life itself.

I have been meeting with people frequently about plans for the future, and I know what God wants. I know there are still hundreds and thousands that we ought to reach through this ministry, complementing the other great ministries of God in America. And I know the only kind of people that God can use are the unknown people.

When that couple saw the blind baby with a birthmark on the chin and both of them looked in each other's eyes, weeping, the husband said, "Honey, he's the one." And she said, "I know." And they picked up the baby and they loved that baby as their own.

Oh listen. God needs the unknown people that are well known in heaven.

Prayer Will Make a Difference

I believe that prayer will turn hearts upside down. And I believe as we pray together and humble ourselves in the sight of God and repent of any known sin through the grace of God, as we pray and believe God, we can receive from God what we need and what other people need.

Jesus Christ gave up His life in glory to live as an unknown. He was judged and condemned as a winebibber, as one under the authority of

Beelzebub. He was judged as a liar. He was judged as an illegitimate son. And on the Cross, there He was an unknown. Yet, as He committed His spirit to the Father, darkness came over the sky, and the rocks trembled because of an earthquake. There was a response from heaven to Jesus' death. The judgment of sin was passed upon God's Son. Jesus Christ, who was God Almighty, in His human body was an unknown in the eyes of men. Jesus Christ who was Deity was an unknown. Jesus Christ was unknown on earth but well known in heaven.

Oh, God knows the unknown. He knows the unknown who would get up in the morning, seek His face, and serve Him faithfully. There are unknown people who give the Kingdom of God priority, who consider their efforts as nothing because it is a privilege. Unknown people, hundreds of them, many among you, bowing their hearts before God and pleading for souls, praying for pastors, loving them in their hearts as they pray, praying for missionaries who are serving God faithfully, praying for one another. In the love of God, they pray with fervent hearts and motivated lives, motivated by the precepts of God through the Holy Spirit and the Word.

We must be as unknown people who will

pray—praying together, praying for one another, and praying with meaning and purpose and love and power. Pray so that we can move mountains by the love of God through the faith of Jesus Christ. As a church, we need people who will pray, and we need people who are just plain willing to share Jesus Christ and share His love—unknown people who are very well known in heaven.

CONCLUSION

God rejoices over the unknown people who will go where they seem to be rejected, but who keep on plugging and keep on sharing Christ. The unknown. They are the people who will knock at door after door.

The people in those places we visit did not ask us to come. Some don't want us to be there, but we are unknown, and we don't mind. We know they have a need. We love them, and we will continue to go in the power of faith and the power of grace. So we keep on knocking, and one by one they open the doors. We go as unknown people. It does not matter what the personal persecution is all about, because we are unknown.

I believe God is raising up this kind of a people. Pray with me as you have never prayed before that God will help us to be willing to be the unknown crowd on the earth yet well known in heaven. Every time we move as a Body, Jesus

Christ and the angels say, "There they go again. Watch them."

If God could take away our lust for the world and other things, God could also take our naturalistic tendencies and put the power of compassion in our hearts today. He could bring us to the Cross to make us as unknown individuals in the eyes of the world so that we can be well known in His eyes.

I know what God wants for us. If people, through the power of God, really begin to humble themselves to get a hold of God at the altar in their homes, think of what could happen! Let's seek Him together and give our hearts to prayer. I know what great things God will do. Please ask God to make you willing to be unknown and faithful to the calling on your life, according to His will.

Vessels for Victory

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Details of life dominate the thinking of so many people. God has commanded that we be content in whatsoever state we find ourselves, speaking of how we respond to the situations we face.

Having to drive on a cold, snowy morning is simply a detail. You put the car in low gear, move slowly, try to avoid sudden braking, and you get where you are going. That was a simple thought process, wasn't it?

We can activate the same simple thought process in every situation that we encounter. Being overwhelmed with the heat on a summer day is a detail. Business success is a matter of bringing together the details. Fighting through a disease is a detail. Marriage involves many details, but most of them are very simple, and the answers from the Word of God are very clear and very precise.

The details are the not problem; our re-

sponses to the details are the issue. How do we face down failure? How do we get back up and confess God after we fall? These are questions that we all want answered.

You will find those answers in this booklet. Herein, you will find great truths on how to combat the human tendency to let details drive us. When we discover how to live for truth and by truth in the power of the Holy Spirit, we will become vessels for victory. The Lord will be exalted in our lives. His name will be lifted up and men will draw near to Him as He draws people to Himself.

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF PROFANITY

"As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

"For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?

"It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

"He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places.

"He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

"Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psalm 18:30-35).

"And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 18:21).

I really want you to understand the deep meaning of the word "profane." In these pages, I intend to give a careful definition about it. We know that it means to defile, pollute, or bring dishonor to the things of God. At any moment, we could be profaning God's Word or God's presence through our mental attitudes. We could bring profanity against God's provision. For this reason, we need to be very attentive to God's presence.

"Profane" also speaks of forms of familiarity, or taking for granted something that is sacred. Those who are profane are filled with an attitude of dishonesty. Fervency, earnestness, consistency, and steadfastness are out of the picture when we are profane, and opposition toward God's plan takes root. When we know it, we must use God's provision intensely.

For instance, when we clearly reflect on a promise in the Word of God, we must then confess faith in the Promiser. It is profane when we do not relate the details we face to the precise Word of God.

Profanity is human love that falls short of divine love.

Profanity is human good that falls short of divine good.

Profanity is human forgiveness that falls short of forgetting the action that caused some offense.

Tempers and Tantrums

Anger often brings out what we call profanity. Angry people say things that shouldn't be said. It is an emotional response to a detail of life—usually a detail that cannot be changed. When we know the truth about who we are in Christ, we realize that a detail is something God permitted. We also know that because we belong to Him, it will work together for good, for all things are for our sake.

One great problem comes when anger is allowed to profane a marriage. There are two precious vessels of God, two people who have been brought together to share in the work of Christ. But details get the best of them. A marriage is a great place for two people to learn how to be vessels for victory. It is an opportunity to be conformed to Christ's image until He works in His patience and grace into both parties. Love and prayer make all the difference.

God is in all of our details. Suppose you want to be married. Don't be profane and miss out on God's absolute best for you. If someone

seemingly rejects you, and it is someone you really like, then perhaps that relationship is not for you at this point. By the last count, there were more than 5 billion people on the planet. The right one is out there for you. God knows.

Be a vessel for victory, and leave the rest up to Him.

Chapter Two
SPIRIT-FILLED TRAINING

"And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

"And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths.

"And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves.

"And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days.

"And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, saith the

Lord GOD" (Ezekiel 44:23-27).

A Spirit-filled Christian learns by grace to be kept by the power of God and to glorify Jesus in the details of life. You may get a telephone call tonight, and that conversation might include some bad news. That is when Satan gets busy and communicates suggestions and projections. Perhaps your business is going through a valley. Remember, that's just a detail. You can remain a vessel for victory until you reach the mountaintop again.

Circumstances can overwhelm me, frustrating my emotions and draining my capacity to allow God into the middle of the situation. In times like these, I need to let God teach me. He can show me the sacredness of such moments. That is when I need to avoid becoming profane. Instead, I learn to confess truth. I might say, "God, I know you are the God of love and forgiveness. I know you are Lord of reconciliation and patience. I know you are the God of power, mercy, and kindness." This type of confession will help me honor the characteristics of God in the details, and I will come to understand something precious and beautiful about Him.

"Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane not my holy name in those things which they hallow unto me: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 22:2).

What we commit unto God is holy. Church meetings are holy times, and the Bible tells us that they should not be missed (Hebrews 10:25). Of course, we need vacations and family times, but for the most part we should be at church whenever there is a meeting going on. When the Body of Christ draws together, those times are sacred. Don't profane them with worldly thinking.

Teachers in the college setting or in the day school are filling holy positions. God has set these apart for Himself. When a teacher says something lovingly, that is holy. When he responds to a student's challenges in the will of God, that is holy. These are sanctified details of life. A student who gets amazing grades and is exalted in someway, that exaltation is from God. It is hallowed.

In preparing music for the church services, the musicians are setting aside something as sa-

cred. They could choose to profane their gifts and do any number of things with them. But they have chosen to glorify God. Instructions that come from the music leadership are holy as well. The rehearsal times are necessary and they are sacred. They are holy, holy, holy!

We listen. We hear. We love. We follow orders in the will and purpose of God. We are vessels. God pours His life into us, and we reveal His victory to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Chapter Three

STAND FOR YOUR CONVICTIONS

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

"Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings, which they will offer unto the LORD for a burnt offering;

"Ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish, of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats.

"But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you.

"And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD to accomplish his vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein.

"Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a

wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto the LORD, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the LORD.

"Either a bullock or a lamb that hath any thing superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted.

"Ye shall not offer unto the LORD that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall ye make any offering thereof in your land.

"Neither from a stranger's hand shall ye offer the bread of your God of any of these; because their corruption is in them, and blemishes be in them: they shall not be accepted for you" (Leviticus 22:17-25).

"Therefore shall ye keep my commandments, and do them: I am the LORD.

"Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the LORD which hallow you" (Leviticus 22:31-32).

We are human, and as humans we can become so familiar with things. Taking things for granted is such a dangerous practice. I cannot afford to take my wife for granted. I cannot afford to take my children for granted. Children should not take parents for granted. That should

never, ever happen to a believer.

Many thoughts come to us after we go to a funeral. Often, we think, "I wish I had spent more time with that person. I could have expressed my love in a better way."

It is so easy for us to walk through life and take every day for granted. We miss opportunities to reveal God and exalt Him among the heathen.

God desires that we would be vessels of victory and exalt His name among the heathen. When we are with unsaved loved ones and coworkers, we want to stand up for God. We hallow the One who lives within us. In the midst of these people, we stick with the convictions God gives us.

Convictions are great things. The middle part of that word forms the old word "victuals," which refers to provisions for living. People who have convictions and carry them carefully are people who have substance to think right, to act right, and to speak right.

A person of conviction isn't drawn to barrooms. He isn't one who uses funny language at the workplace just to fit in with the guys. A person of conviction hallows God's name. He is a vessel for victory. He knows the price God paid

to win the greatest battle ever fought—the battle for the souls of men that was won at Calvary by the death of the Savior.

The Perfect Law of Liberty

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

"For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

"For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:19-25).

We have been saved by grace through faith.

Our salvation is a gift, and we have much freedom because of what we have received. We are not under a program of performance. Still, we have been called to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

It is important for me, therefore, to live without familiarity. Foolish and loose talking should not be a part of my life. I become a doer of the Word as I fellowship in and around the truth in the power of the Holy Spirit. Something happens in my heart, and I become energized by the Lord of all Creation.

Don't settle into a routine. Good, godly habits are awesome for our lives. We should have a commitment to practice prayer. Bible study and Bible reading should be a regular part of our schedule. These habits grow as the fruit of something happening in our hearts. Don't settle on your lees. Learn to understand the necessity of being always prepared for war, not looking for the way of ease.

"Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.

"Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he

gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.

"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles" (Jeremiah 48:10-12).

Familiar spirits are wandering spirits. People who are seduced by them will travel here and there and everywhere, looking for things that appeal to their emotions and make them feel good. These people stray from things that are sacred. They don't recognize the precious provisions God has given them.

As vessels for victory, God develops in us a capacity to reveal supreme grace and supreme love. Our exchanges are filled with supreme edification and supreme kindness. We are confident, joyful people who rest at throne of grace. We are people who pray and live and love and win.

CONCLUSION

God holds all things together by the word of His power. We are people of such potential because of what God is doing in us. For many, this great potential remains unrealized. It is stagnant and dormant within them because of how they see themselves.

Look to the Word of God. See there in the pages what is said about you. God lives in you. Let His Word be the quick and powerful force it is meant to be in your life. Learn to make right choices and then operate in the grace of Jesus Christ's presence and the resurrection power of His Holy Spirit. The provision of God is yours. Let God guide you.

It would be so wrong for me to live in the sentimentality that comes with cliques and exclusive "party" spirits that would separate me from the people I need to live with and learn to love. I need to be very prayerful and humble. I want God to be my Lord. I want to believe that

God can lead me forward and use me to make a difference.

I have been made a vessel unto honor, according to 2 Timothy 2:21. I am made for victory and I will have it if I allow Christ to make me ready for anything. I will have total victory and, as a result, God will empty out of me grace, forgiveness, love, and joy. I will reveal a growing relationship with a living Savior, who now sits as my ascended Lord.

Victory Is Ours

through the Blood

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

We have so much to learn about the blood of Christ. First of all, the Word of God calls it "precious" (1 Peter 1:19). Secondly, according to Leviticus 17:11, the life of a man is in the blood, and atonement for his soul is by the blood. If a man loses blood, he loses his life too. Because it is so sacred, God commanded the children of Israel neither to drink blood nor to eat meat unless it was properly prepared so that no blood remained.

The Blood that was poured out at Calvary is the basis for the transfer of eternal life. Jesus' blood satisfied the justice of God and made it possible for sins to be removed once and for all. As you will see in this booklet, this is the substance of our victory. It stands for all time as a reminder that Satan can no longer overcome us. Our victory comes through the Blood.

Chapter One

THE SCAPEGOAT PRINCIPLE

Since the beginning of human history when Adam and Eve fell, men and women have needed a way to deal with the guilt of sin. God's remedy for sin has always been the same: a blood sacrifice. In the Bible, the Books of Moses, specifically Exodus and Leviticus, provided detailed instructions to Israel, regarding how and where offerings should be made.

First, the high priest offered a bullock for himself and for his family on the altar of sacrifice, located in the outer court of the tabernacle. Then he would take incense and coals from the altar into the holy of holies. There he sprinkled the blood of the bullock on the mercy seat.

Every time the high priest went in to the holy of holies and put blood on the mercy seat, the blood from the past years would be there, too. He would take his finger and sprinkle the fresh blood on the mercy seat eastward and be-

fore the mercy seat seven times (Leviticus 16:14-15)—that stands for resurrection, and it stands for life. The blood always reveals resurrection life to the believer.

The people of Israel could not go within the veil where the mercy seat was, so the high priest would go in once a year to give them a fresh start. In Leviticus 16:7, two goats were presented before the Lord on the day of atonement. The first goat represented God; the second goat, called the scapegoat, represented Satan (Leviticus 16:8, 21).

When the high priest came out from behind the veil, the people knew they had a representative who had offered blood on their behalf. That representative was for them, and his offering had been accepted.

The Substitute's Identification with Us

When offering the goats, the high priest would kill the first one. Then he would put his hands upon the head of the second goat (the one that would live), leaning into it—representing the integration of the sinner with the substitute. This goat, the scapegoat, would go to a place that the Word of God says is "uninhabited." In other words, the scapegoat would have to go to

a place that had been abandoned by God.

Before the second goat went out alive, the high priest would lean into it with his hands upon its head and name all the sins of the people—their personal sins and iniquities, emotional rebellions, the times when they knew better and still transgressed (Leviticus 16:21). Then the goat would take off with a "fit man" who would take it to a place lower down, over a ledge and into a valley. There he cut the rope, and the goat ran away into the uninhabited place.

A Message to Hell

The second goat was called the scapegoat, which refers to the devil. Why were the sins placed on that goat? Simply, it was to send a message to the demons that all of our sins have been taken away to a place uninhabited. The sin of lying, the sin of adultery, the sin of cheating—every sin had been placed on the scapegoat. And that goat was sent away to a place so remote that it could not be found.

The first goat's death and its blood, which was carried by basins into the holy of holies by the high priest once a year, was for God. The blood was for God. It was shed for God in expiation to satisfy God's holiness, righteousness,

and justice. We can overcome Satan and his accusations by following God's way, through the blood of Christ that was shed for us on Calvary. Because that Blood is for God, Satan now can never accuse a believer for any sin the believer is committing. That Blood satisfied God's justice, which demanded a payment.

The blood of animals satisfied God's justice temporarily through the death of a substitute, pointing to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). All the sins that were paid for by the first goat's death would be mentioned and placed upon the second goat, which was to be led away by a "fit man." The "fit man" is a type of the only truly fit man who lived—Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two

OVERCOMERS, HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD

In Zechariah 3:1-5, the devil attacked Joshua, the high priest, saying he was guilty of many, many sins. But Jesus stood up and refused to listen to a single word Satan had to say against Joshua. Instead, He clothed Joshua in clean new garments. Is that what you do when someone brings up another person's failures? If you listen to anyone bringing up someone else's sin, then it means that you are putting yourself above Jesus. Jesus would not listen to a single sentence about the high priest's sins.

That second goat sent a message to all of the demons that the sins had been abandoned by God. Those sins can no longer be used to accuse the brethren. This is why Revelation 12:10-11 says this: "…Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our

brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

How did they overcome? By works? By striving? No, they overcame by the blood of Jesus. God will not let Satan attack you, because when you were saved you were placed inside of Jesus Christ. You were hid inside of God with Christ (Colossians 3:3). When we were placed inside of Christ, we became new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). What happened to the old things? They passed away. What happens to everything else? They become new.

Wrestle Not with the Past

This means we are not to discuss someone's past and say, "What happened to you when you were five? Let's go through everything that has happened in your life." Old things are what? They are passed away. Therefore, we don't counsel people about what they "did." We counsel with divine counsel (Psalm 33:11). We counsel with the Word of Life through the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, it is not our place to present the Blood to the devil. God does this. We do not

have to do any more about it. The Blood has already been shed. The moment we believed upon Jesus Christ and received Him as our Savior, the Blood became precious to us.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:11-17).

"Wrestle not" in this passage refers to standing our ground in the battle, knowing we have

the victory—standing as those who have been justified by faith.* We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have access to the Father by this grace wherein we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God (see Romans 5:1-2). This is what we are supposed to do. We are to learn how to stand in the grace of God.

Imagine going into the boxing ring and beating up your opponent. When the referee declares you the winner, the fight is over. If you continue to wrestle, you are just fighting a fight that has already been won.

We have already won. We are overcomers by the blood of the Lamb and the testimony of how grace works in our lives.

**Read* Stand Your Ground, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

Chapter Three

STAND IN HIS VICTORY, LIVE IN HIS AUTHORITY

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Romans 3:24-25).

According to the Mosaic Law, the high priest had to be from the tribe of the Levites. A man was not required to be "good" in order to be a high priest —he just had to be a member of the Levites. Therefore, they would first offer blood for themselves and their families, and then for the nation.

Now, as believers, we can stand in the grace of God every single day because of what was done by the Man from the tribe of Judah. Jesus

did not become our High Priest because of His family. He is our High Priest because of His sinless life. He didn't come from the Levites; He came from Judah. Jesus was a perfect Man from Judah.

Jesus then came out of the grave, resurrected by the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:4). In 1 Peter 3:19, the Greek word for "preach" (*kerusso*) means "to proclaim." After His crucifixion, Jesus walked into hell where the spirits were and said, "Here I am, just as I told you. I said it would be this way. Now I'm taking back the keys to death and hell. And, by the way, it is finished!"

Jesus didn't preach the Good News to the spirits in hell. He just announced His victory.

Don't Disobey Truth

Sin separates us from fellowship with God. He has to discipline us in love if we continue to sin, and He surely will. But sin is not the issue. Disobedience to the Way, the Truth, and the Life is the issue. Disobedience to a victory that has been won is the only issue now.

Your sin is not the real issue. The issue is that you did not stand in the victory that was won for you. Jesus Christ won the victory, He ascended and we ascended with Him (Ephesians 2:6). Since

we are seated above with Him and are hid with Him, don't you think we are inside of His victory, too? Yes, we are—forever.

According to 1 John 5:18*b*, the wicked one cannot touch us. What would he touch us with? Sin? He can't mention our sins. Our sins were placed on the second goat so that Satan could see them carried to a place uninhabited.

This was God's message to Satan: "The first goat died to pay for sins. With the second goat, we sent a message into your demon world, just so you will know that those sins were paid for, and you *cannot* have that child of God."

God loves to exalt the victory of the Blood over Satan.

Authority Brings Power

In John 20:22, Jesus breathed upon the disciples. His meaning was this: "I now give you My life as an authority." Acts 1 brought them power, but the authority came in John 20. The authority had to come before the power could come.

"You now have authority because My blood satisfied God the Father," Jesus was saying. "The devil has been defeated. Now as you are hid with Me—Christ—in God, you are a brand-new creature. You have authority over sin and the

devil."

The believer now has authority over sin, and he has authority in the will of God through the grace of God to remove mountains (Zechariah 4:7). This authority doesn't come by saying, "The blood of Jesus be against thee!" and Satan knows it. The Blood has nothing to do with him—it was presented to God for the atonement of our sins.

Romans 8:37 says that we are more than conquerors. God always causes us to triumph in Christ and make manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). To those who are saved, we have a savor of life; to those perishing, it is a savor of death. The blood is the reason we are free. Right now, we are seated above with Christ, able to experience God's condition. The Kingdom of God and His Word is in us. We have the victory because of the Blood.

CONCLUSION

God always causes us to triumph. We are winners; He keeps us from falling. The battle is over, and the victory was won by His Blood. Satan is defeated (Isaiah 14:19). Oh, how the devil hates this kind of message!

Every time the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, he probably said to himself, "I will keep doing this until Someone finishes this. The Messiah will come. But, one of us will keep coming in here until He comes." "He" was Jesus Christ.

The blood brought by the high priest was placed in a basin (Exodus 12:22; Exodus 24:6), and later, it was buried. Why wasn't Christ's blood just cast on the ground and scattered all over? Because His blood was sacred. That is why Israel was commanded not to drink blood. This is why it is so sad that many Christians do not believe the Blood is necessary for salvation. But it is, and it had to be carried in a basin into

the Holy of Holies.

Jesus Christ took His blood into the Holy of Holies of heaven when He ascended, before He came back to visit His disciples (see John 20:17). Now the work is finished, once and for all time. "It is finished" means that sin is paid for, the devil is defeated, and we now have authority. Let's use the authority we have, because He completed the work for us and as us. We have the victory.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)* .

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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Walking in Faith

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Our time on earth is very precious to God because it is the only opportunity we have to exercise faith. It is *faith* that pleases Him. In heaven, we will have no need for faith—everything will become sight.

But on the earth, God requires us to walk by faith so He can test our capacity to trust in Him. Jesus Christ isn't here physically for us to see and touch. That wouldn't require faith on our part. Yet by faith, He desires to bring us into intimacy with Himself and to enable us to experience every aspect of His essence and nature.

When the children of Israel went into Canaan, there were enemies to battle and territory to claim by faith. There were strongholds to overcome. It is the same way in every Christian's life.

The enemies are driven out as we learn to believe on His Word, receive from His cup of salvation and walk by faith in His Resurrection victory.

Jesus Christ doesn't want details and struggles to steal our fellowship with Him. Allow this booklet to motivate you as you consider the possibilities and potential you have to walk by faith with Christ.

Chapter One

BROUGHT OUT TO BE BROUGHT IN

"And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:7-8*a*).

"[The LORD] *brought us out* from [Egypt], that he might *bring us in*, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers" (Deuteronomy 6:23).

"And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee" (Deuteronomy 7:22).

The Lord has brought us out of the bondage of the world so that He might bring us into His

victories. Still, there is a tremendous problem that many people face. Sorrows can become so deeply entrenched that we find it difficult at times to really understand the intimacy of God. Some people feel almost lost—not lost to God, but lost in their problems and trials. They seem to have lost the intimacy they once had with God.

If you feel like you're in this place, God is saying to you, "I have seen your sorrows and I am very aware of them. I know them and I know *you*, and I am coming down personally to bring you out of these sorrows into a new intimacy with Me."

Throughout the Scriptures, God has given so many promises to the believer that are relevant and consistent with this principle, as in Philippians 4:19: "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Above everything else, God desires intimacy with His people. Our sorrows, trials, and needs should bring us into intimacy with Christ instead of taking away from our fellowship with Him and causing that relationship to become impersonal. For some, the problems may be physical. But God wants our problems, whatever their nature, to bring us into a greater expe-

rience of intimacy with Jesus Christ.

Driving Out the Enemies

Don't rule out the possibilities and potential we can have with God through that intimacy. God didn't "bring us out" just to leave us in the wilderness! Unfortunately, the majority in the nation of Israel didn't see it this way. Out of all the children twenty years old and younger, only Joshua and Caleb escaped the wilderness experience alive. They were able because they believed that God would bring them into Canaan, the Promised Land.

What does God bring the believer into? Certainly the verses in Deuteronomy 6:23 and 7:22 are not speaking of heaven. The earth—even from the standpoint of Finished Work victory—can never be compared to heaven. There are no enemies in heaven, but there were enemies in Canaan. According to Joshua 3:10, there were seven strong nations—with strongholds—in the land God gave to Israel!

Paul's letter to the Ephesians doesn't speak of life in heaven, but of life in the *heavenlies*. There are all kinds of battles in the heavenlies; demons attack in the heavenlies. But we wage those battles from the standpoint of our risen

Lord's victories—and that is the difference. Unlike the carnal Christian or the unbeliever, we don't have to struggle with the powers of the darkness to suffer defeat again and again. Instead, the Spirit-filled believer battles in the power of the risen Lord.

Faith in Precise Promises

God told Israel, "I'm going to bring you into Canaan. The enemies will be driven out little by little, and I will bring you in; but first, I am going to take you through the *Red Sea*. Then, I'm going to take you through the *wilderness*. After the wilderness, I'll take you through the *Jordan River*—if you will let Me. And then you will have to face the seven strong nations that dwell in *Canaan*. But I have given you a *precise* promise!"

The Red Sea speaks of Christ's death for us, while the Jordan River speaks of our death and resurrection with Christ. The wilderness in between represents times in a believer's life when he doesn't sense the presence of God, because of either rebellion or tests of faith ordained by God. We enter into our death with Christ so we can be delivered into Canaan, the land of God's promises for the believer right now.

The Lord gave His people a clear picture of

what they would face: "Canaan is a place of warfare. You have an enemy to contend with in your earthly experiences. Therefore, I want you to realize that while I promise to bring you into Canaan, you *must* walk by faith!"

The only reason Jesus Christ is no longer here physically, to be seen and touched, is that believing in Him would not require faith on our part. He does not do everything we want (and *when* we want Him to do it) because that wouldn't require us to exercise faith in all the characteristics of Christ. As we grow in intimacy with Him, God wants to reveal every aspect of His essence and every characteristic of His nature to us.

Faith is the *only* thing that pleases God (Hebrews 11:6), and our time on earth is the only time we are able to live by faith. There will be no need for faith in heaven—everything will become sight. But today, faith is required to test our capacity to trust in Him.

The Victory Side of Calvary

"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, *Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise*, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this peo-

ple, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel" (Joshua 1:1-2).

Moses was dead, and it was time for Joshua to move on in God's plan for him as a leader and for the nation of Israel. To some, God has said "Your loved one is dead. Now, go over this Jordan and except for the fragrance of memories, don't dwell on it any more." Perhaps certain relationships in your life are dead. Because they are, don't think about them. Walk by faith, right now. Go over this Jordan; it's your Jordan. Don't dwell on what has died, because it won't do one measure of good.

God said, "*Arise*, and go over *this* Jordan." Hours of foolishness and emotional energy go into things that people can do nothing about. This is irresponsible to faith, irresponsible to God's promises, and irresponsible to God's provision.

Claiming the Territory

"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses" (Joshua 1:3). God has given us the whole land; yet, He will not give us a single thing that we don't claim *now*. In other words, we have been given a title deed; but unless we make a claim, we will not be blessed with our

inheritance. We have been given promises, but unless we claim them as our own, we will not be blessed with their provisions. A*ny promise we do not claim from the Word will not be ours*, even though God has already given us the whole land.

Scores of people just don't understand this principle. They struggle with the power of darkness instead of working from the victory side of the Cross. The tomb is *empty*. We stand on an empty tomb! Do you realize what that means? There is no dead body in it. Only Christians can make this claim. And standing on an empty tomb, God commands us to go over this Jordan.

Today, there are strongholds beyond our Jordan. Canaan is a place of conflict and confrontation. But God says, "Go over this Jordan—I will not give you personal victory or fulfillment until you, individually, put your foot down and claim what's in this Book!" (Joshua 1:3).

Canaan is a land of maturity and stability, a land of *greater* grace. As we become little enough to let a big God use us and small enough to allow a big God's provision to become ours, then we will experience His strength being made perfect in our weakness.

Chapter Two

FAITHFULNESS TO A DISTINCT CALL

The first thing the Israelites had to understand about personal victory when they entered into Canaan was that they had to be faithful. God had given them precise promises, but they were to respond by obeying Him in faith. God didn't just wipe out all the enemies in Canaan, neither will He do that for the Christian.

God has given every believer eternal security, establishing us in positional truth at the point of salvation. He sealed us with His Spirit and gave us more than seven thousand promises as our provision—a guarantee that He would never leave us nor forsake us. But with all He has done, He will not deal with us as "puppets" concerning the victory of the Finished Work. We start out from an empty tomb; we begin in the Resurrection of our risen Lord.

The first requirement for experiencing victory is faithfulness. The ancient historian Josephus recorded that Joshua spent forty years in Egypt and then forty years in the wilderness—eighty years of experience; eighty years of being faithful.

The second thing about victory is to *know* that God has called us individually. Joshua 1:5-7 describes God's *distinct call* upon Joshua:

"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. *Be strong and of a good courage*: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the [doctrine], which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."

As Christians, we have a distinct call. When we know it, we put our foot down on a promise. Nothing can take us away from faith in that promise. A plan is only as good as the character

of the planner. God the Father, the Planner, is perfect; therefore, His plan is perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 18:30).

God said to Joshua, "Put your foot down and start walking. Cross over this Jordan and keep right on walking. Your enemies will be driven out, but not all at once, lest you become proud."

God won't allow our enemies to be driven out all at once. Of course, that's what we would all like Him to do, just as we would all like for God to remove our old sin nature, right now! But even though He hasn't, we don't have to *live* in our old sin nature (though unfortunately it comes up from time to time).

But God has promised that our enemies will be driven out, little by little, as we choose to walk by faith and honor His promises. It's a precious word from Jesus Christ—the Captain of the host (Joshua 5:14)—a distinct call to walk by faith.

The Power of the Indwelling Word

According to Joshua 1:8, "This book of the law [(doctrine)] shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according

to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

In order to really understand what God has promised, the Word of God must dwell in us. We need to meditate on it day and night, and then we will prosper. Then we will have good success. Then we will be conformed to Jesus Christ's image. Through meditation upon the Word of God, a faithful man with a distinct call enters into his potential and comes in to the place God promised to bring him in life.

Because the people were fearful, the Lord reiterated to Joshua, "Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9).

Chapter Three

WALKING IN VICTORY

"Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, *Pass through the host,* and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it" (Joshua 1:10).

Joshua commanded his men to pass through and possess the land: *God had given them a promise from His Word!* Remember: Canaan is not heaven. The Finished Work is not heaven. These are places of warfare.

Because we are standing on an empty tomb, we stand in the victory of a risen Lord. We face this warfare with the risen Lord who has already defeated Satan. The devil's grounds to hinder us are lies and circumstances he arranges (which are permitted by God). We must stand against our feelings, Satan's cosmic system, his projections, and our subconscious thoughts in the

flesh: *These* are our enemies.

But we have a *risen* Lord! We are not "working *toward*" Calvary; we are walking *from* Calvary. The Cross is the place were Satan was defeated, and the Cross is the place where our battle in the flesh ends. We walk from Calvary in the victory of the risen Lord.

Many do not understand this. They don't understand what Jesus meant when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take *my yoke* upon you, and learn of me" (Matthew 11:28-29*a*). *His* yoke means that God Almighty has defeated Satan. Therefore, in the battles that we *will* go through and in the phenomenal strongholds we face in our Canaan, *it is not God who drives the enemies out*! We drive them out through the victory of the risen Lord.

We realize that our enemies are driven out *through* Christ, from the standpoint of Satan's defeat and Jesus Christ's victory. But He doesn't just give the victory to me. Victory comes with *my* choices, *my* faith, *my* meditation on the Word of God, and *my* understanding that I have a distinct call. We are in union with His victory, but we have to walk by faith in what He says about it! This is the key.

Every Christian has a superstructure of sanctification in positional truth. First, God predestinated us. Then, He called us, justified us, and finally glorified us (Romans 8:30). When Satan comes against us like a flood—using strongholds that have been in and around us for years—we must make choices to walk by pure faith-rest in what God says. But we need to operate in precise promises, precise words, and precise objectivity. Otherwise, we will not experience the Resurrection side of the Cross.

So many Christians seem to be walking toward the Cross when the Cross is a Finished Work. They are always wanting to "die to self," always wanting to be buried, and always trying to change. But that's not how it works! We are walking *from* the Cross, out of an empty tomb, in the newness of the Spirit of life, not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 6:4; 7:6).

Just keep walking. Just keep believing. The greatest believer in the world is the one who just keeps receiving. Don't let anything stop your walk, because every step is ordained (Psalm 37:23) and under the direction of the Word of God (Psalm 119:133).

If something comes up and you fail, rebound immediately and get back to believing precisely on something God has said. Just keep receiving, believing, and walking. The strongest Christians in the world are those who are the greatest receivers of something they don't deserve. The greatest Christian is the one who keeps receiving, believing, and walking in what he believes.

Take the Cup of Salvation

"What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of LORD" (Psalm 116:12-13). What do I render the Lord for all He has done for me? *I will take*. The key is in *taking* something. I take purity. I take love. I take wisdom. I take grace. I take patience. I take kindness.

A person who gets angry all the time doesn't need to learn how to control his temper; he needs to take meekness from the life of Jesus Christ through the Spirit. He doesn't have to change; he has to *take* something to replace the anger.

A man doesn't have to "overcome" lust; he just has to *take purity*. Purity doesn't lust. It is received from the cup of salvation. Having a disciplined schedule is something we *take* from God's order of respect and responsibility of love.

What does a man render to God for all of His benefits? The Psalmist didn't say, "I will *do*…." He said, "I will *take* His life from the cup of salvation."

The cup represents your capacity for God. This means when you don't have something you need and you're feeling spiritually bankrupt (and we all feel this way at times), just drink what you need from the cup. Now you are no longer bankrupt because what was in the cup is now inside of you! The cup contains what you need for your situation today.

If there is a misunderstanding between me and someone else, I can quietly say, "It's only a detail of life!" And it's over. That's it! It's not a matter of whose fault it is. Who cares? The misunderstanding wasn't intentional. The important thing is that I take the meekness of Christ for that situation and drink it. Then I know that regardless of what caused the situation, it worked together for good to make me more like Jesus. All I had to do was take something from the cup quickly and drink His life.

In John 6:53, Jesus said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." His flesh is the bread from heaven—doctrine—and His blood is the blood

of the New Covenant that cleanses and purges us from Adam. Our part is to simply keep right on drinking from His life that is in the cup.

If you stop partaking of the cup, then all you have left is *yourself*. And no matter how many counseling sessions you have or how many messages you hear, no matter how much the pastor loves you, you *cannot* change yourself. But, you can be transformed at any moment by eating the Word of God and drinking the Blood of the New Covenant, as you continue to walk in faith.

CONCLUSION

Our capacity to walk by faith is in God's cup of salvation. It's not in anything that we can do; it is something that we take from Him because we stand upon an empty tomb in the power of Christ's Resurrection life.

Victory over our enemies has been accomplished in the Finished Work. There is nothing for us to wait for. We need only to believe, receive, and walk in faith.

Dear heavenly Father, we come to You as children who desire to know You more. As we face the enemies that assault our bodies, our minds, and our souls, we want to always take from the cup that overflows with all the provisions of heaven. Keep us in Your everlasting arms, trusting You when we cannot see Your face. Thank You for the gift of Your faith, that while we walk in faith, we can know that You have ordained our steps. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

We Are Going

to See the King!

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

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DEDICATION

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

"…Mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD *of hosts" (Isaiah 6:1, 5*b*).*

This booklet is dedicated to the memory of Karin Herrnegger, a member of Greater Grace Church in Vienna, Austria. Her deep love for Jesus and her sudden death at age 27—just hours after she had heard this amazing message—should serve as a daily reminder to us all that soon, and very soon, we really are going to see the King.

Along with everyone who attended the service in Budapest that night, the last song Karin sang before she died was the simple and joyful chorus, "We Are Going to See the King." Many who knew Karin remember her radiant counte-

nance that evening and her expressions of gratitude for the message. Within a few hours, she beheld the King in His beauty, the Lord of glory.

Special love is sent to Karin's parents, Toni and Agnes, her brother Matthew, and sister Doris. Their love for others inspired Karin to seek the Savior.

Pastor Robert Prokop
Christliche Internationale Gemeinde
Vienna, Austria

We Are Going to See the King

Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King!
Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King!
Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We're going to see the King.

No more crying there; we are going to see the King!...
No more sickness there; we are going to see the King!...
No more dying there; we are going to see the King!...
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We're going to see the King.

—Author Unknown

Chapter One

GRACE SUFFICIENCY IN SUFFERING

"Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Psalm 10:1).

"For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end….

"But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works" (Psalm 73:14-17, 28).

The first word in the tenth psalm is "why." Many dear people ask God, "Why?" Every pastor I know has tried to share with his people reasons why there is so much suffering. A teacher in our Bible college in Baltimore has suffered so

much from complications in surgery when all was expected to go smoothly. In another situation, I see pain and tears in the eyes of a wife for her husband's fight with cancer.

We see so much suffering. I don't know why, but I do know God; and through His Word we discover many reasons. Hebrews 5:8 tells us that Jesus learned obedience by the things that He suffered. The sinless Son of God learned obedience by suffering. I am a sinner—we are all sinners—but I can say that I have learned more about obedience through suffering than through anything else.

A man may suffer because of chastisement, which is what God uses to discipline the Christian who keeps on living in sin. Yet, there is something we discover about God, about obedience, and about grace when we are allowed to suffer in His plan. The measure a man has suffered contributes greatly to the measure he is anointed. And the measure he is anointed will be the measure he is able to reveal Christ and impart His attitude to others.

His Strength Made Perfect

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul said he prayed three times for his "thorn" to be removed, but

God told him, "No, I am not going to remove it. My grace is sufficient for you. My strength shall be made perfect in your weakness."

God said, "Paul, I am going to teach you something about My grace in your weakness."

"Therefore," Paul could say, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

First we learn obedience by suffering, and then we learn the strength and favor of God's grace. God's strength through grace then becomes our source for living.

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

"Settle you" speaks of being rooted and built up in Him (Colossians 2:7), letting Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, and being rooted in love (Ephesians 3:17).

Refined by Fire

"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (Psalm 119:67). The psalmist was not living consistently by every

word of God; but after he was afflicted, he kept the Word. Every Spirit-filled believer has experienced the loving hand of God in his life. First come the sufferings of Christ, followed by His glory (1 Peter 1:11).

Malachi 3:2-3 pictures the refiner as he purifies the silver, keeping it in the fire and removing the dross as it comes to the surface, until the finished product reflects his image with no obstructions. Often, God may have to say to a Christian, "I love you; you are doing great, growing in grace. But I have to put you back into the fire. You are learning, but I am going to refine you some more. I want to see My own image reflected as a result of the fiery trial you are going through. Don't worry—you will become mature, strengthened, established, and settled. Everything will be all right."

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

Praise—*epainos* in the Greek—refers to the applause of the angels as they "look into" the lives of the redeemed (1 Peter 1:12) when we go through trials and we choose to trust God, mak-

ing grace adjustments if we fail. Honor speaks of receiving great self-esteem in the plan of God. Even in our suffering, when we choose to exercise positive volition toward God and His plan, we receive greater degrees in our uniform of glory for all eternity.

Through the suffering that comes because of being part of the angelic contest between God's Kingdom and Satan's, we receive more of the nature of Christ. He can see His image reflected in our hearts, and that reflection is what the angels see in us (1 Peter 1:11-12). Degrees of glory that are being added to our soul bodies now will be revealed in our glorified bodies later in eternity.

Chapter Two

THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY

"Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty" (Isaiah 33:17*a*).

When King Hezekiah became seriously ill, Isaiah was sent to him with a message: "Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live" (Isaiah 38:1). Hezekiah had been a great king (see 2 Chronicles 29). He broke down all the idols, removed all the other gods from the land, and brought in the proper sacrifices for the Lord. Now he was ill, and the nation was filled with the fog of fear, the haze of helplessness, and the war of despair.

After Hezekiah pleaded with God, Isaiah was sent to him again with a message (Isaiah 38:5-7). The Lord comforted Hezekiah and the nation of Israel by telling them they would see the king raised up in his beauty: "The splendor of his countenance will come back. His hand once again will feel the scepter. He will once

again put on the kingly robe and wear the jeweled crown; he will sit on the royal throne again. I, the Lord, will give Hezekiah fifteen more years. Thine eyes shall see your king in his beauty."

In the midst of strife and fear and struggle, the Lord spoke through Isaiah: "Israel is in serious trouble. Yet although she has had wrong foreign alliances, the king isn't going to die. He is going to live. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty."

Among the most beautiful things we can know is this: In the trials of our life—when we face the fog of fear, the storm of doubt, the haze of helplessness, the war of despair, inevitable pain, the coming sorrow—we know we will see our King, Jesus Christ, in His beauty.

What Others Saw in Jesus

Jesus has been seen in many different ways by different people. Mary and Joseph saw Him as a miracle child. To Mary, He was her child, conceived by the Holy Spirit. To Joseph, He was a carpenter's son. To wise men, He was the young child who would be King. To Mary Magdalene, He was the compassionate healer. To Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, He was the dearest

of friends.

Pilate saw Him as a defendant. The Pharisees saw Him as a blasphemer and an impostor. The blind saw Him as the one who could make them see. The deaf saw Him as the one who could give them their hearing.

Nicodemus saw Him as a great teacher. The crowd at Calvary saw Him as a criminal. One of the thieves next to Him on the cross saw Jesus as the one who in tenderness forgave him at the last possible moment.

Everyone saw Him differently.

The hungry said, "He will feed us."

The demon-possessed said, "He will deliver us."

The city of Nazareth said, "He is only a carpenter's son" (Matthew 13:54-57). Even His half-brothers and half-sisters didn't believe upon Him until after His resurrection (see John 7:5).

The scribes and the Pharisees said, "He drinks wine, He's a womanizer, and He gets money from publicans. He is a friend of publicans and sinners."

This is how they saw Jesus Christ, who came as the Lamb of God to die for our sins, paying for them all.

Be encouraged! Because one day, no matter what you are going through now, your eyes will see the King in His beauty—the One who was crushed for our sins, the One who wore a crown of thorns. Yes, we will behold the King in His beauty. And glory be to God, we will have a crown of glory!

The One who was judged for our sins will return to judge the world in His righteousness (Psalm 9:8). The One who rode upon the donkey into Jerusalem shall come back on a beautiful glorified white horse. This One who was rejected and cursed by the world with its immorality, homosexuality, and addictions shall come back as the King of kings and Lord of lords, exposing the folly of the pleasures of this world.

The One misrepresented by the self-righteousness of religion and the carelessness of Laodicean Christianity shall return in glory. We will behold the King in His glory. We will see Him with our eyes. Never again will He have to go through what He went through for us. Our King is coming back, and our eyes will behold His beauty.

The precious person in a wheelchair will behold the King in His glory. The children born mentally handicapped will know and understand the King in His glory.

Mary Magdalene, you were crying at the tomb—and you will see the King in His glory. Peter, you cursed and denied Him, but He forgave and restored you—you will behold the King in His glory.

Every Christian will look upon Him, His hair as wool, white as snow. We will all see His eyes as flaming fire and the Word of God proceeding out of His mouth as a sharp two-edged sword (Revelation 1:12-16). He will come back with power, ruling with righteous judgment from His royal throne in the New Jerusalem. He will rule with truth and righteousness while Satan is chained for one thousand years.

We will behold the King in His glory.

Chapter Three

JESUS WILL COME FOR HIS OWN

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The day is coming when we will meet the Lord in the air, and He will take up His Church, made up of every born-again believer, to be with Him in Heaven for all eternity. This event is called the Rapture. The term comes from *rapere*, the Latin translation of the Greek word *harpazo*, which means to be "caught up" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). We are going to see the King!

The wrath of God is not appointed to born-again believers (1 Thessalonians 5:9), and we will not be objects of God's wrath, depicted in Revelation 6:16-17. Our condemnation went upon Jesus Christ at the Cross; and we have already passed from death unto life, from darkness to light (John 5:24, 1 Peter 2:9). A careful

study of Revelation 3:10 and the Greek preposition *ek* (translated by the King James as "from" but meaning "out of") clearly reveals that God is going to take us *out of* this world *before* "the hour of temptation," which is the Great Tribulation.*

The tribulation we face in this life (John 16:33) is not to be confused with the wrath of God that will be poured out upon the earth during the Great Tribulation. It is so important to understand this. In John 1:11, Jesus Christ came *to* His own, and His own received Him not. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, the King comes *for* His own. Then seven years later, in Revelation 19:13-18, the King comes *with* His own "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thessalonians 1:10*a*).

The Great Tribulation is the wrath of God revealed to men who loved evil and rejected perfect love. But our tribulation comes because we stand with God in this world (John 16:33). If we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12), and the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.

We are going to see the King in His beauty.

We have the Lord in our hearts. There is a quiet joy, a beautiful peace within. We are filled with the Spirit, and we know that one day soon we will meet Him. Let's comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

When Jesus said in John 14:2, "I go to prepare a place for you," He was not only referring to Heaven but to the Cross. "I have a place called Calvary," Jesus was saying. "I am going there as the Lamb. I will be mocked, laughed at, and found guilty of death. They will cry, 'Give us Barabbas.' The Cross is the place I am preparing for you. I am going to the Cross to become your substitutionary sacrifice. And because you believe in that place called Calvary, I will come again to receive you to Myself, where you will be with Me always."

Face to Face with the King

Picture what it will be like for our eyes to see the King in His beauty. I have preached nearly fifty-thousand messages, and I will finally see Him. We have sung thousands of songs about Him, and at last we will see Him. We have testified of His forgiveness, of His comfort, of His unconditional love, and of His faithfulness. And

on that day, our eyes will behold Him—the King in His beauty.

Thanks be to God that in His perfect justice, even those who have rejected Him will be made to bow. *Every* knee shall bow, and everyone shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father. Every rock-music star will face the Rock of Ages. All those who have rejected Christ because of intellectual pride will see Him at the White Throne Judgment. They will see the King, but their eyes will behold Him in His wrath because of His perfect justice.

At the Bema Seat of Jesus Christ, where every believer's life will be evaluated and rewarded, we will face Him all alone (Romans 14:10, 12). There, in the Supreme Court of Heaven, we will see the King in His glory and receive rewards according to how we witnessed with His great Gospel, served Him daily, prayed to Him diligently, and walked with Him as a member of His Church, revealing who He is to the world.

Here He calls us by name and leads us personally, one by one. There we will be all alone with Him, one on one, as His children. We will behold His eyes of love and hear His words of compassion for us personally. In Scripture, He calls us His beloved, His "darlings."** We will

be there with Him, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, beholding Him in His glory.

As we grow together, according to Amos 4:12, we must prepare to meet God. And when the trump is sounded, we will meet Him in the air. Imagine it! Just thinking about it, that old song comes to my mind:

"It will be worth it all when we see Jesus;
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ.
One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrows will erase;
So bravely run the race 'til we see Christ."

Just around the corner, we will see the King in His beauty. The blind will be blind no more. The deaf will be deaf no more. The widow who misses her husband will see him again. Broken families, broken hearts, all will be healed at that moment when God comes back, because they will see the King in His beauty. The secret pain and all that goes on in the lives of those who have been afflicted will be gone. For the many who have struggled through the years—thanks be to God, Jesus Christ is coming back. We will see Him in His beauty.

People have questioned why God never healed certain Christians. But in Heaven, they will see Him and never be sick again.

Jesus Christ is filled with love and kindness.

He has recorded every cup of cold water ever given in His name. Every diaper a mom changed because she loved her baby is noted. Every day a dad went out to work hard for his family is recorded. "I record everything in My book of remembrance," Jesus Christ says (Malachi 3:16). The practical things, the things that were exercised spiritually to glorify God. He sees them all, and He will reveal the eternal purpose of each detail when we see Him on that day. We will behold the King in His beauty, and we will be His Bride forever. Soon—yes, *very* soon—we are going to see the King!

**Read* The Pre-Tribulational Rapture, *by Dr. Daniel E. Lewis, Grace Publications, 1997, for a thorough study of this foundational doctrine.*

***Read* God Calls You His Beloved, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

CONCLUSION

Every time I consider our future, death doesn't seem so fearful to me. "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). Jesus conquered death, and we will see Him in His beauty.

I believe He is coming soon. He is the only One worth living for, and He is the only reason we are on earth. His values and virtues are the greatest in history. The King is coming! We can bring Him pleasure and glory through our obedience.

The King is coming, and we shall behold His beauty with our eyes.

Maybe you are going through the storm of struggle, the haze of helplessness, the darkness of doubt, the warfare of despair. Remember, King Jesus is holding you in the palm of His hand. Your sufferings and trials carry an eternal weight of glory because you are His. You will be rewarded forever and ever. Your King is coming

back. You will be with Him forever.

The measure we believe these words is the measure we are Spirit-taught. Please don't receive them in familiarity as mere knowledge. Be Spirit-taught, and let the message motivate, energize, and quicken you. Be charged with the love of Heaven, and let Him prepare you to live as if He is coming today.

Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King!
Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King!
Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We're going to see the King.

No more crying there; we are going to see the King!...
No more sickness there; we are going to see the King!...
No more dying there; we are going to see the King!...
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We're going to see the King.

We Belong to God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Think with me about the things that belong to God.

Psalm 62:11 says that power belongs to God. In verse 12 of Psalm 62, mercy belongs to God. In Psalm 3:8, we read that salvation belongs to God. In Daniel 9:7, righteousness belongs to God. Furthermore, according to Hebrews 10:30, vengeance belongs to God.

When it comes right down to it, *everything* belongs to God. The earth and all the fullness of it are His. He owns the cattle upon all the hills. The sad thing is that so few Christians recognize their value to God. So few recognize that they belong to Him. A great need of this age is for people to belong to something, and the Lord says that we belong to Him. We are His, and He is ours.

At salvation, you belong to God, and God belongs to you. Why? Because He purchased you with His own precious blood (Acts 20:28).

You have been bought with a ransom (Mark 10:45). Please pay attention to this: You belong to God!

As this booklet shows, this great relationship exists because God wants to use His children to reveal His glory in this world. We are in the midst of a world filled with souls who need to hear God's Good News, and we are the ones who have the privilege to share it.

Chapter One

THE HARVEST IS WAITING

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

"And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

"And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

"I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours" (John 4:34-38).

Follow this with me. The Word of God says that Jesus Christ had great compassion upon the multitudes because He saw that they fainted. He saw them as sheep having no shepherd. "The harvest truly is plenteous…" is what Jesus said

in Matthew 9:37. Then He followed that statement with this conclusion (which I think is very sad), "…but the [reapers] are few."

This is what He was saying: "These people won't accept Christ. Look at them. But, the reason why they are not accepting Me is that the laborers are few." Have you ever thought of that? It is so simple, but I hadn't thought of it. Now watch this carefully.

The woman at the well, a Samaritan, accepted Christ as her Savior when Jesus approached her with divine wisdom to draw out of her what she was doing in her life. Then, as she left to bring back more Samaritans to meet Jesus, the disciples brought Him some food.

This woman had been living with five husbands, and the man that she was living with at the moment was not her husband. And now she was bringing souls to be saved—bringing them to Jesus Christ. Immediately, she simply went and told them how she got saved. That's all.

The disciples, occupied with earthly needs, said, "Jesus, You have not eaten. Would You like some food?"

And He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). Then He made this very unique statement:

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?...Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

Lift Up Your Eyes

So, the problem was not that people were rejecting Jesus Christ. The main problem was that He couldn't get people to go into the fields.

May I say, that is the problem in every single age. Lift up your eyes. Don't say, "Maybe in four months." Lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white and ready to harvest.

Now, the last thing that the Lord Jesus Christ communicated to His disciples was this: "I want you to go into all the world and disciple people and preach the gospel to every creature" (see Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21, 31; and Acts 1:8).

What was on the mind of Christ? It was this: People have tremendous needs. People are suffering. Don't accept their surface attitudes of pride and arrogance, because underneath their pride they have real, serious problems. And because they have these very real problems, if they are presented the Gospel in love and in the power of the Holy Spirit, many of them will indeed get saved.

These people just need someone to tell them that they can belong to God by simple faith in Christ.

The Word Delivers

Once, a woman told me how she had been liberated after living for twenty years in bondage, as a slave to guilt. She had been molested as a child and could not even look at herself in a mirror because she felt so unclean.

"I heard the Word of grace" she said. "I heard words of love and words of compassion from the Holy Spirit. God did something that had never happened to me in all those years, and I was liberated. I was set free."

The Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, revealed to her that she belonged to Him. Though she was a Christian, this woman of God could not step out of this devastating bondage, and she could never look into a mirror. She was set free when she finally realized that she truly belonged to the Master.

Chapter Two

"I AM MY BELOVED'S"

"For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward" (Mark 9:41).

Because we belong to Christ, people who help us shall not lose their reward. Why is that true—that they will not lose their reward? They are giving help to somebody who belongs to the Master.

In Song of Solomon 2:16, the Shunamite woman said, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies." Then, in Song of Solomon 6:3, she said, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies." At last, in Song of Solomon 7:10, she said, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." She progressively understood that she truly belonged to God.

It is important to understand to whom we

belong, because in 1 Samuel 21:7 it is said of Doeg, an Edomite, that he belonged to Saul. Doeg belonged to the wrong kingdom. In 1 Kings 1:8, however, it is written that Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet were among "the mighty men which belonged to David." These men met in the cave of Adullum, and they belonged to David. They were in debt, they were distressed, they were depressed, and they were in the cave. David was in trouble, running from Saul and hiding out. These mighty men met and talked together, and they loved each other in a united need. From that day forward, they belonged to David, and David belonged to God.

Where Shall We Go From His Presence?

The Psalmist said in Psalm 139:7-8, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there." Then he made this great statement: "If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." How could he say that? David was a believer, and God has said that He will never, no never, no never leave a believer, nor forsake him, nor fail him (Hebrews 13:5).

In Psalm 139:9-10, David said, "If I take the

wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." When I forsake the presence of God, His right hand upholds me. That stands for the Finished Work. After His ascension, Jesus was seated at the right hand of the Father, which speaks of the work being all finished. The finished work of God's grace holds onto us even if we go to the uttermost parts of the earth in failure.

A beautiful thing is revealed in the text of Psalm 139:11-12. It says, that the darkness of sin shall not cover me from God. Darkness shall not hide me from Him, because even in my darkness, God's light is all around me, or with me—and the darkness and the light are both alike to God.

In verse 13-16, David said of God, "You have possessed my emotions and have covered me in my mother's womb. You knew all about me, and billions of years ago You wrote about me in a book. You knew what all my members—what my eyes and my hair and everything about me—would be like. We are that intimate. You knew in Your foreknowledge that I would accept You as my Savior in time. Millions of years ago, You said I belong to You. I belong to Your

grace, and I belong to Your mercy, and I belong to Your love."

God's Patience and Your Call

Because he was a murderer and backslidden in the desert for forty years, Moses did not feel qualified to lead the nation of Israel. God waited forty years for Moses to serve Him in his original call. How long will He have to wait for you?

God is waiting for some of you to come to church three times a week. God is waiting, and I'm waiting to see your faces. I appreciate certain families who have children with serious physical problems, but still they come to church Sunday nights. I really am proud of them.

When God said to Moses, "I'm going to send you to Pharaoh, and I will use you to deliver the children of Israel" (see Exodus 3:10-11), Moses said, "Who am I? I'm sure You know what I did. I killed an Egyptian, and You know I've been away forty years because I didn't want to be around You. Who am I that You would send *me* to deliver them?"

But later, in verse 13, Moses advanced his strategy of language and said, "By the way, if I'm going to go, who do I say You are? I don't know who I am, and I don't even know who You

are, really. This whole thing seems kind of ridiculous."

God was very patient, He had waited forty years because He is the God of all patience. He waited for me. He has waited for all of us to do certain things.

God then said to Moses, "Tell them that I AM has sent you unto them. I AM—that is all you need to say."

God and Moses were having an argument. The Lord had waited forty years for this character who did not want to be around Israel. The Egyptians knew what he did. Israel knew what he did. God knew what he did. Moses knew what he did, and he was scared to come out of hiding. But forty years is quite a long time to hide. Ultimately, he needed the burning bush to get the idea that God was serious.

In Exodus 4:1, Moses continued to present his weakness, his frailty, and his failure to God. "Nobody will believe me," Moses said. "Nobody's going to believe me, and nobody's going to believe that You spoke to me."

It finally got to the point where God had to say, in essence, "Shut up and obey Me." (By the way, that is just my paraphrase.)

It is a beautiful thing that God made Moses

the meekest man of the earth. God used him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, and he realized a great truth. It is truly the weakness of man that gives place to the strength of God's grace. It takes a revelation of God's love to demonstrate God's mercy in the power of God's presence. Moses belonged to God, and God knew how to use him.

Despise Not Small Things

In Judges 6:11, God came to Gideon. Commentators will tell you that Gideon was a little man from a little tribe. He had no self-image, and his family was not preferred. But God came to Gideon and said, "I want you to lead the Israelites against the Midianites that are camped down below, in the valley."

Do you know what Gideon said? He said, "Who am I?" In so many words, he said, "I'm a little man from a little tribe that is not liked by anybody. So why would You get someone like me and make me a leader? I'm going to put out a fleece. Then I'll put out another fleece, because I don't really believe that You could use me."

Bob Jones Sr. used to say, "God is hard up. He'll even use you." Why? Lift up your eyes! The fields are white and already to harvest.

Truly, the harvest is plenteous but the laborers are few.

David was just a teen-ager when, through the grace of God, he defeated Goliath. He said, “I killed a bear and I killed a lion. I took a lamb out of the lion’s mouth with my own little hands. That Philistine will be just exactly like that bear and that lion.” But his elder brother Eliab despised him and told him, “Go back and take care of the few sheep you've got” (1 Samuel 17:28). “You only have a few sheep,” (and he used the word “few”). He said, “What are you doing here? You are arrogant and puffed up.”

Sounds as if David was a little cocky, but really he was just confident in the God he served. He said, “I'm going in the name of the Lord, and the battle is the Lord's.” You know what happened. The slingshot, the stone, and it just happened to zero right in on Goliath, smacked the nine-foot-six giant right in the head. He dropped dead, and Israel was delivered from being in bondage to the Philistines. David ran down, took a sword, cut Goliath’s head off, and jumped on top of him.

Before going after Goliath, David picked five smooth stones out of the brook. The four stones, I believe, speak of the Corporate Body, and the

fifth stone speaks of grace. In the spiritual analogy of proper application, the stone that destroyed Goliath is the Chief Cornerstone, of 1 Peter 2:6.

David knew he belonged to God, so he went to battle with confidence and strength.

Chapter Three

DYING TO REVEAL THE TREASURE WITHIN US

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

Paul said, "Listen, I know I'm the least of all the apostles. I am the least. I understand that. I understand that I'm not even worthy to be an apostle."

There is not a pastor who is worth anything if he thinks he is worthy of his position. I don't know why God always chooses those of us who are so weak. I am speaking of myself, fellows. Paul said, "I'm least of all the apostles." And why does God choose somebody that is weak?

He does it so that no flesh can get the credit and so that Jesus Christ will get all the glory for operating in mercy and grace in a very weak sinner who dares to do it anyway.

"Who am I? I'm less than least of all the saints, but this grace was given to me that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (see Ephesians 3:8).

"I'm the chief of all sinners" (see 1 Timothy 1:15), Paul said. "But I'll tell you this. I am what I am by the grace of God."

That is a beautiful answer.

"Who are the people in that church anyway?" Well, they are what they are by the grace of God.

"Who is that woman?" She is what she is by the grace of God.

If we can understand the grace of God, we can be, and we already are, a part of that army of Jesus Christ that goes out into the harvest field because it is ripe and ready to harvest.

Why is the harvest field so ripe today? First, it is because so many are in bondage to sin with all its devastating effects. Second, it is because pain, shame, violence, and crime have brought so much guilt and stain on the hearts of men.

The fields are ripe, and they are ready to har-

vest. We don't have to say “wait four months.” All we have to do is go and win people to Christ and bring them into the Body of fellowship.

The Casket and Resurrection Life

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:3-7).

This treasure is in earthen vessels. One synonym for an earthen vessel speaks of a cinerary or burial urn. We have a body of death (Romans 7:24), but inside of us is this treasure chest that holds the deposit of God’s wealth. That is ex-

actly what the Greek translation indicates. Caskets are for dead people, and inside of our earthen vessel lies this treasure. Every single thing in our lives has to go down into death for the treasure to shine out. That is how God gets the glory.

There is a difference between retroactive positional truth (where we are crucified with Christ once and for all and forever in our position, according to Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20), and that of taking up our cross daily, which does not involve retroactive truth. It involves one thing—our present life, which is still alive, accepts the death of the Cross on a continual basis so that it may emerge in resurrection life.

In the isagogic understanding, the casket may have been full of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. That means that inside of our bodies of death—which we reckoned as "in Christ"—is the deity of Christ, the love of God, and the spices of the fruit of the Spirit. These things are inside the casket—God's treasure chest inside of our earthen vessels, which reveals our death and the life of Christ in us.

Christ's Life Made Manifest

"Always bearing about in the body the

dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

"For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

"So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Corinthians 4:10-12).

We are always delivered unto death. Now this isn't talking about positional truth this time. This means that in my marriage or in my personal habits, in my personal life, in my personal needs, my natural life will go into death so that out of the earthen vessel, God's treasure can emerge—the deity of God's love and the incarnation of God's mercy and grace through my mortal body. We are delivered to recognize the treasure chest, to recognize the gold, frankincense, and myrrh that is inside our soul, so that "the excellency of the [surpassing] power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Corinthians 4:7*b*).

Moses, it's all right. You can serve Him, because you are no longer considered to be a murderer. David, you can still be the prince of the Millennial Reign, despite your years of weakness, even until your last week upon earth (1 Kings 1:1-4). You will still be the prince in the Millennial Reign.

And Solomon, you will still write two books, even after you have ruined your life, because you are what you are by the grace of God, and God isn't through with you, Solomon. You belong to God and He is going to use you.

Saul of Tarsus, as you went out killing Christians, if you only knew what God had in store for you. You became the greatest apostle for Christ who ever lived.

Inside of your earthen vessel is a treasure. Just as God was to every one of those men who loved him, He will be to us (Hebrews 13:8). The treasure in these bodies of death will be revealed, because we belong to God.

CONCLUSION

This is one of the most precious truths, rarely preached, because many of us fail to understand that we are crucified, buried, and risen with Him. I have a human life in my body, and in my experience this human life gets tempted, tested, weary, broken, painful, and hurt. Yet, positionally speaking, I am perfected.

It is my human life that has to go down into the grave, concerning every detail of life, as I grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and use rebound when I fail. I must receive what is in the treasure chest in my experience so that Christ can manifest, through this mortal body, the power of grace, the power of love, the power of patience, and the power of God's joy.

How many Christians today instead of saying, “Who am I?” will say, “Here am I!” (Isaiah 6:8). We belong to Him. He desires that we see the ripe field and that we go out to reap the great harvest He has prepared.

My conviction is that messages such as this ought to move me to trust God and to experience victory, rather than to live in sin, because I have grace. When people know that God loves us this much, that we belong to Him, it will stabilize their relationships. They grow in a true process of godliness, of death that brings forth life, because of the Life Giver, Jesus Christ.

Welcome the Thorn

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INTRODUCTION

Several times, the apostle Paul uses the analogy of a race to describe our lives as Christians. In 2 Timothy 4:7, he says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." But in 1 Corinthians 9:24, he said that though many run, only one wins the prize.

In Hebrews 12:1, the author spoke of running the race with *patience*. With hope? Yes. Perseverance? Yes. But patience? That is an unlikely attitude for a competitor. But if we look past the runner, we will see that the race he is speaking about is not just an outlet for physical exercise. According to 2 Corinthians 12:7, the runner is prodded on by a thorn, and he is in this race for his life.

This booklet will show us that God wants to take His people beyond the "grit your teeth and bear it" mentality. When we face hardships, deserved or undeserved, God wants to bring us to the place where we welcome the thorn that buf-

fets our flesh. Only one wins the prize, and His name is Jesus Christ. Therefore, as His Body, we have the privilege of participating in His victory, having been made one with Him in His suffering and conformed to His image—because of the thorn.

Chapter One

WHY GOD ALLOWS THE THORN

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2 Corinthians 12:7).

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:8-9).

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

"I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the

very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing" (2 Corinthians 12:10-11).

When a servant of God, placed in the Body of Christ, has been given a gift, there are things that God always does, must do, and will do.

Knowing his own temperament, the apostle Paul knew that he could become proud and arrogant because of the abundance of revelations he received from God while writing the epistles. At one point, having been brutally tortured and left for dead, he was taken up into the third heaven where God revealed unspeakable things about heaven. Paul could have been in serious trouble because of pride, but I love how he took on God's activity by receiving God's authority in his humanity.

Where the Thorn Works

Consider the five areas where a thorn was working in Paul's life. He declared openly that he suffered infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses—but he also understood why. Everything Paul went through was for *Christ's* sake.

"Infirmities" refer to Paul's limitations, the weakness of his flesh as well as the weakness of his soul. "Reproaches" indicate the strong dis-

approval he suffered for Christ's sake and the sake of the gospel. "Necessities" imply that often he did not have food or proper shelter. "Persecutions" reveal that he was hated and that he was the subject of attacks because of his stand for Christ. Finally, Paul faced "distresses," revealing that he was often placed in tight spots (such as prison) and not allowed to come out.

Paul went through each of these trials several times, and ultimately he took pleasure in them. It is not natural for any of us to suffer demonic attacks from five different directions. But to take pleasure in that kind of suffering, as Paul did, can only be because of a gift of grace.

The thorn is a demon designed to go after specific traits of an individual. Paul's suffering was not due to natural causes. Behind each infirmity, reproach, necessity, persecution, and distress was a demon with a specific target. God allowed the thorn to come against his flesh with one thing in mind: that Paul would allow God's grace—and God's grace alone—to become sufficient, and that he would allow God's strength to be made perfect in perfect weakness.

To Glorify God

"Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him

not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:16).

There is a process that believers must go through just to understand this principle, yet the average believer does not discern what is happening. God allows five progressive attacks to be worked against believers He is going to use—men and women—and the demons are allowed to come against us. This teaches us to take pleasure in the thorn as God has made us victorious through grace and in His strength.

Every believer is naturally occupied with those five areas of vulnerability to some degree. The demon army classified for infirmities has one job—to bring pain and sorrow into our lives. God allows these demons to bring on infirmities until humility brings us a capacity for grace and human weakness brings in a capacity for God's strength.

Another army of demons has a goal to bring reproach upon any who would call himself a Christian (1 Peter 4:14). As an army, these demons operate by counterfeiting godliness as an angel of light toward a sincere believer. Then they come in and slap him in the face with reproaches if he fails or cannot live up to his own standard of holiness. If you were to ask that per-

son who is being attacked by reproach-bearing demons, "How are you doing?" his response would probably be, "Pray for me." Why? As that process is being worked into his life, he may go about his usual business, being faithful to God and sincere, but the attack goes far beyond what others can see.

To Learn How to Fight the Good Fight

Ephesians 6:12 says that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual [infections] in high places." Unfortunately, the average Christian does not deal with the thorn as a demon piercing the flesh. The point that we need to understand is this: This process, though God allows it, is being worked into us by demons. The issue, therefore, is not what happened with your boss at work, or your latest problem with your husband, or the latest situation with the teenagers. No, a messenger of Satan, a thorn in the flesh, is working in the level of grace that God wants to see in our lives.

In Paul's case, five demon armies were allowed to produce a thorn. But why, if there were five demon armies, does Paul mention just one

thorn? It is because of the supernatural unity among demons. According to Job 41:16, there is no air between them. They are so single-eyed in their purpose to destroy us, they come right in and pierce the flesh, and that includes attacks against the physical body. If you read 2 Corinthians 11:23 to 33, you will notice the physical suffering that Paul endured.

When Paul said, "I take pleasure" in the things he suffered (2 Corinthians 12:10), it means that he experienced contentment in the suffering, that he was more than ready and willing to go through it. In fact, it means that he preferred what was happening to him.

Set Apart for God's Purpose

Now, imagine getting to the place where you prefer infirmities. That is not normal. What kind of a guy was he?

Aperson who is afflicted with infirmities for Christ's sake is not suffering correction because of sins. The Greek word for infirmities is *asthen - eia.* Other words that define it are incapacity, inner poverty, inability, and deficiency. These are synonyms for infirmities, and that is what the demons tried to do. But they are allowed to cause affliction so that God's grace can become

sufficient and God's strength can be made perfect in the one whom God has set apart for His purpose.

God's strength made perfect in a Christian speaks of someone going through the most terrible situation we can imagine, yet the strength of God keeps him. God's strength is so perfect that there is no occupation with weakness, and the grace of God is so enabling that there is absolutely no occupation with the flesh or with what the flesh is feeling in its pain and suffering, including heartaches, rejection, and resistance.

Then he says, "in reproaches." Insults, injuries, arrogance, mockery, and hostility are among the characteristics that the Greek word for reproaches brings out.

Then, in "necessities," Paul speaks of the lack of things that most people consider as the basics for living. As those who have experienced hunger and suffered exposure due to a lack of proper food, clothing, and shelter know, the lack of necessities can compress the strongest individual with the compelling force of a supernatural affliction.

"Persecutions" comes from a word that means to harass because of a belief, with the goal to drive away, to pursue, and to force one

to leave where God has placed him.

Many beautiful Christians have suffered persecution, and they were victorious in it. They took great pleasure in it.

"Distresses" speaks of being confined in a narrow place and experiencing extreme affliction and anguish. This army of demons has one job, which is to put you in a corner and not let you out. It could mean to be oppressed with a tremendous anxiety attack. Just imagine what that is like.

People who have experienced anxiety attacks know what this means. The attack goes on and on, while they do everything in their power to resist. In the middle of the night, unable to sleep, they might walk the floor and praise God, yet they feel the attack come in stronger and stronger. As they resist, and as the attacks keep coming, they wear out their natural capacity. God, on the other hand, is working in a greater capacity to know Him.

These armies of demons operate in unity. When a believer receives a supernatural affliction, that affliction is not going to stop until he recognizes that God's grace is sufficient, that God's strength is being made perfect in his weakness, and until he takes great pleasure in

knowing that this is for Christ's sake.

The average believer might say, "Why is God doing this to me?" Then at the end of a long conversation they say, "Well, maybe it's the devil." Maybe? That is not too scriptural. It *is* the devil!

Every person who really knows God will not escape having these attacks. And everyone who really knows God will remember His character of love and receive His provision of faith-rest while they wait for God's purpose to be served.

Chapter Two

THESE THINGS ARE FOR OUR SAKE

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

"And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us.

"For when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:1-6).

To live in faith-rest doesn't mean you live in this nice little mountaintop experience all the time. Remember that! You may be going through

hell, and the best you know how you resist the devil. Though you do not know the specifics, you know why it is happening, and you resist. To live in faith-rest means that you put the cause and the origin of the problem where it belongs and you trust God for the consequences while you remain in the situation. That is the definition of faith-rest. It is what blesses you in the midst of the trial.

While we go through the trial, we are gaining experience. According to Romans 5, because we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith, we have access to God and to His grace through the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it is by His grace that we stand. But what happens next? Tribulation worketh patience.

A Chance to Grow

I must go through tribulation or I will never have patience. Without tribulation, I can never have the patience of God. For all these years, He has held back judgment as the world mocks Him and as members of the Church have been divided amongst themselves. But patience works experience in a willing heart.

You see, the whole purpose of our having to

go through supernatural warfare is that we might personally experience fulfilling the sufferings of Christ from Calvary that haven't yet been fulfilled (Colossians 1:24).

A man or woman of God is subject to demonic setups, attacks against his character, and misunderstanding. Yet, while all of that is going on, there is the experience of grace and God's strength. It is definitely a paradox, a seeming contradiction, but as this experience works in us, and when that painful experience is over, we begin to experience the substance of the Word of God and we experience the provision. It is not just faith for the provision that causes us to grow, but God will often let us experience the substance of His provision. And when we begin to experience what we need to counteract a specific problem, as long as we walk with God, we will have a special sensitivity in that area. Furthermore, we will always identify with brethren who go through similar situations.

Aman we know went through a horrible demonic attack that would not let up. But through it, he experienced grace. Grace was the only thing that kept him going. As he developed godly patience, he experienced God's strength. Though in his weakness he was totally impotent,

he let God in, and he kept right on resisting.

At times, we may go through terrible rejection, being lied about, and being misrepresented. But when we have gone through tribulation, we gain the experience of seeing God come through for us again and again, with grace and strength. We begin to be anointed for the situation because the spiritual victory we have experienced will be with us the rest of our lives. It all came out of tribulations we go through in this life because of infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecution, and distresses.

Wisdom Risks the Thorn

The average Christian who has a lukewarm life never risks anything that might result in having difficulties. Because he does not operate by a living faith, he isn't apt to make any great choices that might disturb his contentment, happiness, and peace. That person will never do anything that might put his reputation at risk. Therefore he will never experience a personal provision from God, and he will remain in his weakness, without an anointing in certain areas of his life.

Welcome the trial. Welcome the thorn that

comes against your flesh. Welcome them, because out of the situation, you are being conformed to Christ's very image.

In Proverbs 8:34, Wisdom is crying out to the people of God: "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." That reminds me of our church, because it describes people who can't wait to go inside the doors of the church to hear the Word of God. They are so hungry for the Word and the riches of wisdom, they are often found "waiting at the posts" of the doors, just to go in early and get a good seat.

"For whoso findeth [Wisdom] findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD" (Proverbs 8:35).

Chapter Three

KEPT BY GOD

In the Bible, *phulasso* is the Greek word and *shamar* is the Hebrew word most often translated as "to keep." It means to guard someone or something with a sense of duty, to protect and preserve from harm, with safekeeping. It also means to watch over, as a watchman.

In Jude 24, God is our watchman. In Psalm 121:5, He is our keeper. In 1 Samuel 2:9, He keeps the feet of His saints. In Proverbs 2:8, He keeps our way. God is watching.

When you are going through a trial, when the thorn seems almost unbearable, if only you would realize that you are being kept by such a precious Watchman. Imagine if we could pull back the curtain of time and look into eternity—think of some of the things that have happened in our lives. Then we could see His fantastic, providential plan, and that God watched us and kept us.

Jeremiah, you haven't been conceived in your mother's womb yet, but God has a plan for you, and He is watching you (Jeremiah 1:5).

Saul, in your self-righteousness you have plagued and even murdered believers. But God is going to change your name to Paul and use you mightily. God is watching you. Christians, I'm watching you. I have chosen you in My Son, Jesus, therefore I am watching to protect you, to guard you (Ephesians 1:4-5). I see what the devil is doing, and I want to be your watchman.

Keeping a Watch

Jesus told the disciples, in Matthew 26:41*a*, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

A watchman guards against enemy invasion. All Satan wants is a place (Ephesians 4:27). If a husband allows pornography to get into his house, he has given Satan a way in to his home. He is in, and you were the one to let him in, through X-rated movies, pornographic magazines and Internet sites—all foolishness that has no meaning to the mind of Christ.

And once we give him a place, Satan says, "Fine, I'm in! Now I'm going to infect your marriage, and I'm going to infect your family. I am

going to infect your mind and your emotions. You gave me a place, so now it's fair. You gave me a place, and I have simply taken it. And as long as you continue to give me a place, there is not a single thing you can do to keep me from taking it" (see 2 Timothy 1:12).

Deal with the Truth

What is causing problems in your marriage, in your family, in your home? Whatever it is, it *can* be dealt with! When we deal with the issue in the light of the Word and by the Blood of the Lamb, we take away Satan's place to stay.

Good or bad, whatever comes from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, we must deal with those things. We *must* deal with them and not back off in sentimentality. We must deal with them because we are to be God's watchmen.

Do not let the enemies come in (Ephesians 4:27). God holds us in close custody, the Bible says (Jude 24). He guards us from danger by setting up an impenetrable blockade and keeping us in a secret place (Psalm 91:1). Then, He sends us a special angel to guard us (Psalm 91:11).

We are weak. We are frail. We have demons on our trail. And God says, "I'm going to give you an opportunity. I'm going to protect those

secret places that the enemy wants to invade. I'm going to protect it. Just let Me do it! That is all I ask. Confess that My grace is sufficient for you and that My strength is made perfect in your weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Called to Be a Watchman

"Son of man, I had made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezekiel 3:17).

Have you ever pondered on how miraculously God has kept us? Although we know that some beautiful believers have lost their lives because of their stand for Christ, with all the situations we face, in some mystical way, God has protected so many of us from harm. It is a miracle.

That is why Psalm 91 is my favorite psalm of provision and protection. He protects us, and I believe that we experience amazing protection because of the watchmen in our midst.

In every ministry, God calls mature men and women to keep a watch. In the Bible, there are four kinds of watches, each covering a specific division of time. In addition to the day watch, the night was divided into three watches:

Lamentations 2:19 refers to the beginning of the night watch; Judges 7:19, the middle watch; and Exodus 14:24, the early morning watch. If a watchman does not heed his watch, he is accountable before God. Let me illustrate it.

If we do not warn people that hell is real and make sure that they understand that they will go to hell if they do not receive the Savior, then we are accountable for not being faithful watchmen. Ezekiel 3:18 says that God puts their blood on the hands of those who would not warn them.

You say, "But, people won't listen!" Welcome the thorn of rejection.

We are to pray. We are to be available. We are to do *what* we can, *when* we can. We are to do everything that would make it possible for God to come in and take His place with that person. And for that reason, we are to become godly watchmen.

How do we become godly watchmen for each other but through the Spirit of love? It is a compelling love, a love that may not be loved back (2 Corinthians 12:15). Perhaps there is somebody you notice who is troubled. You are not going to judge them because you don't believe in that. And you are not going to invade their privacy because you don't want to do that. But

you do care, and you care because you love them.

So, privately, without telling people, you begin to pray, "Oh Lord, that person is suffering. I'm not sure why, because I am not You, but they are suffering. Please help them to welcome the thorn."

A watchman in God's army is one who watches because of love. He watches without invading, he watches without judging, but he watches to be a tremendous blessing—to put a wall around that person's place in the assembly.

People who have experienced the painful piercing of a thorn and have allowed God to work in patience, experience, and hope—these are the ones God can use as watchmen. They know how to be sensitive and to stand for others who may be going through a trial. They have learned what every mature Christian desires, which is to welcome the thorn and to rest and rejoice in God's plan.

CONCLUSION

A seven-year-old girl wrote me this letter recently:

"Dear Pastor and Auntie Barbara, I just wanted to give this card to you because I love you and because I want you to feel better. Thank you for everything that you have done for us. We want to know how you are feeling. We are feeling fine.

"We are praying for you and your family. You always preach great messages every time you preach. I love taking notes. I always take great notes. You would really love them. My parents love them too. I like sitting up front row during church and watching you preach, taking notes, singing, praying, and praising God. I always take a lot of notes.

"Love in God's love and grace, Melanie"

It's quite a thing when a girl that age takes beautiful notes and observes the way this young lady observes. At her age, she has not experi-

enced the wounds that can be inflicted by a thorn. Yet, she has parents who have persevered through infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecution, and distresses. They have taught her to be sensitive to God and to others, and to make her little portion available for His use (2 Timothy 3:15).

Let us recognize the comfort and joy we can have in spite of, and sometimes because of, the thorn. As we welcome the thorn in our own lives, we will become sensitive to the needs of others. Instead of being choked by thorns and the cares of this world, we can offer to others the same hope that has set us free.

We’ve Got A Message

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

Recently, I did a study of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). As I read these three chapters over and over again, the Holy Spirit revealed something—in the progressive spiritual context—that I personally have never understood until now. Jesus Christ preached an entire sermon describing precisely what He meant by His statement in Matthew 5:20, revealing something very deep about His righteousness.

"Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." The righteousness of the Pharisees was superficial and relative—it was based on a program of comparison, not upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Their righteousness was not righteousness at all;

it was dead religion.

This message is for every Christian. Some may dismiss it by saying, "I'm saved; I believe in grace. That settles it." That's what *you* think. Jesus was addressing *disciples* in the Sermon on the Mount.

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus says His disciples are "the salt of the earth," meaning, Christianity should make people thirsty for God's brokenness, grace, and righteousness. "Ye are the light of the world," He says in Matthew 5:14. No one puts his light under a basket. Our lives should shine forth the light of His righteousness so that those who are lost will be drawn to Him.

Chapter One

RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT EXCEEDS THE PHARISEES'

There are four predominating spirits in the Church of Jesus Christ today. One spirit is described in a reference to the church of Sardis (Revelation 3:1), which had an evangelical "name" but was otherwise "dead." Next, the church of Laodicea had a spirit of lukewarmness, being "neither cold nor hot" (Revelation 3:16). In their estimation, they had "need of nothing." Then, there is the spirit of the scribes and the Pharisees, who "sit in Moses seat … but all their works they do for to be seen of men" (Matthew 23:2, 5*a*).

Finally, there is the spirit of the church at Philadelphia: "For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come

and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:8-10).

The key to the spirit of the church of Philadelphia is found in verse 8—"Thou hast not denied my name." The word *name* refers to all of the attributes of God's nature revealed through Jesus Christ's Finished Work—everything that He *is* and everything that He has *done*. The members of that church did not deny any of God's attributes. As a result, those of Satan's synagogue will be forced to bow down before them.

These four spirits are in every church, but they are only revealed through *momentum tests*—a progressive series of tests that reveal our 'way.' A person can be saved for years before a momemtum test reveals his way. Though he may be very effective, the intensification of the tests will expose the spirit that predominates in his life, and reveal whether he walks in the narrow way that leads to life or the broad way that leads to destruction.

Superficial Obedience

The religion of the scribes and Pharisees was superficial. According to the letter of the Law, they brought gifts to the altar, but God would not receive their gifts because they did not have a ministry of reconciliation toward their brothers (Matthew 5:24). Jesus told them to leave their gifts at the altar and first be reconciled to their brother before bringing their gifts to God. In other words, the Lord wanted inward transformation to precede their external obedience.

The scribes and Pharisees knew the Ten Commandments. They believed in overt obedience to them, but that's as far as their righteousness went. Jesus said, "You have heard that murder is wrong, but I say if you are angry with a brother without cause, you have committed murder. You agree that no man should commit adultery, yet, you are not right in your thoughts toward women."

The scribes and Pharisees made oaths before God (Matthew 5:33-37), but Jesus Christ taught that instead of giving oaths, our communication should be "Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:37).

Christians have a righteousness that exceeds

the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. As long as we keep the word of His patience, we will not deny Christ's characteristics *in* us.

Loving Your Enemies

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;…Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:44, 48).

Even in regard to the law of retaliation, Jesus said our righteousness is to exceed that of the Pharisees. The law of retaliation was given to protect the innocent party and to keep the guilty from being punished beyond their crime. The Pharisees were well acquainted with that law. But Jesus said to them, "It is no longer an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth. When you receive My righteousness and My new life, I say that you will *love* your enemies."

Going Beyond the Superficial

In Matthew 6, Jesus repudiated the Pharisees' outward practice of fasting, praying, and alms-giving. Then, He exhorted the disciples for their worrying and their fear, telling them, "Seek

ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

In Matthew 7, Jesus continued to teach His disciples along these lines, so that they would never allow the spirit of pharisaism to take them over. "I want to take you out of the realm of *your* thinking," Jesus was saying to them. "I want to remove you from *your* frame of reference. You're My disciples. You have walked with Me. You have seen Me preach, work, and serve My Father, but you still have a spirit of pharisaism in you. You still operate on the basis of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. You still don't operate in My righteousness, nor do you even understand it."

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:1-2). The Pharisees' judgment was based on relative righteousness. Ignorant of God's righteousness, they established their own righteousness by comparing themselves among themselves and measuring others by their standard (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Unless I have Jesus Christ's righteousness reigning in every fiber of my being, I will not be

able to pass the momentum tests that are coming. Only God's righteousness in me can overcome the synagogue of Satan and take me beyond a superficially sound evangelical lifestyle.

Chapter Two

RESPONSES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

"In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:6).

After the prodigal son, in Luke 15, had squandered all that his father had given him, he came to himself saying, "I have sinned and I am not worthy to be called my father's son" (Luke 15:18-19). Then, he began his journey home. In Luke 15:20, the father saw his son coming. Remember, he was a son. Jesus wasn't speaking of an unsaved person. He was illustrating how someone who is desperately backslidden can be restored.

Picture it. The prodigal son is coming home without one speck of experiential righteousness in himself. The father sees him afar off and runs to meet him. God's eye is always on the backslider, no matter how far off he is, because he

still has God's gift of imputed righteousness. As the father reaches his son, he begins to kiss him on the neck repeatedly.

The son tries to confess to his father saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15:21), but his father—too busy rejoicing—pays no attention to the confession. Instead, he calls to his servants, "Give me a ring that I can place upon my son's finger. Bring me shoes for his feet. And let's kill the fatted calf and have a party. My son was lost, but now he's found. He was dead, but now he lives."

Once again, Jesus is teaching a parable that addresses a certain group of people—Pharisees. He reveals that spirit through the elder brother, who reacted to the father's treatment of the prodigal. "I have served you all this time," the elder brother said to his father, "and you have never done anything like this for me! I've worked hard, but you never killed a fatted calf for me. You never threw a party for me."

"I have served you." Sometimes a pastor hears similar words from people in his own church. They remember what they have done and are secretly disturbed when they see prodigals being blessed. Years down the road they

complain, "I worked so hard at that church. I gave my life." All the while, the pastor thought they were serving because of their love for God!

The elder brother was in his home as a son, but he had never understood the righteousness that comes from God (Psalm 22:31), the righteousness of the God of our salvation (Psalm 4:1). He failed to understand, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:6). He did not understand it, appreciate it, or honor it. God's righteousness did not bless him, because he was familiar with it. All he could think of was being recognized for the great things he had done.

The elder brother didn't mourn; he wasn't poor in spirit; he wasn't meek; and he didn't hunger and thirst after righteousness. There wasn't a thing about him that was merciful. He wasn't pure in heart, and he wasn't a peacemaker.

The Publican and the Pharisee

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus within himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of

all that I possess.

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

In this parable in Luke 18, the publican—standing off by himself—was so ashamed that he couldn't even look up to heaven. He prayed, "God, be merciful to me." The word *merciful* means *propitiation*. He knew there had to be a sacrifice for his sins. In the brilliance of God's righteousness, in the mercy of His grace, in the love of His compassion, in the power of God's brokenness, this man went home justified.

The Pharisee was living in a superficial religion. He wasn't an extortionist. He wasn't unjust. He never committed adultery. Yet, this Pharisee went home guilty and unforgiven. His religion never went beyond outward evangelical works, with fairly good theology about fasting, giving, going to church, and being moral.

The spirit of the Pharisee is hidden in Christians today; we're just smart enough not to ex-

press it outwardly. In the secret places of our hearts, we often compare ourselves among ourselves. But when a momentum test comes, some will say, "All those hours I put in. All the time I worked. Where did it get me?"

In Romans 1-3, the immoral man, the moral man, and the religious man are all condemned by God. God doesn't consider the immoral man to be any worse than the moral man or the religious man—none of them have God's righteousness.

"There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). In his best estate, man is but vanity (Psalm 39:5b). I must remember this. In my goodness, I am not one inch better than the filthiest sinner in the world. I cannot be pious and think that I am better than anyone else. I'm not, and you're not either. The only righteousness we can claim is the righteousness that has been imputed to us by Jesus Christ.

Chapter Three

GRACE MOTIVATION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:4-8).

"For he hath made [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be *made* the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Thank God that when we believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, His robe of righteousness was placed upon us (Isaiah 61:10). Through the blood of Christ, we have been declared right-

eous (Romans 3:24-25). Sin can not be imputed to us. The Lord doesn't deal with us according to our sins, or reward us according to our iniquities (Psalm 103:10). Our sins have been removed from us, as far as the east is from the west. Jesus Christ crucified the 'old man', destroying the body of sin, and He has imputed *His* righteousness to us without works.

The Key to Real Happiness

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted…." When Jesus was speaking in Matthew 5:1-12, He was addressing those who have God's righteousness, while He challenged the pharisees.

As we receive promises such as these from the Word of grace, we are edified (Acts 20:32). By these "exceeding great and precious promises," we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust, and we add to our faith virtue—spiritual excellence (2 Peter 1:4-5). God begins to *impart* His righteousness to us, which causes us to think and grow in the righteousness He *imputed* when we were saved. Then we recognize that we have a "poor spirit"—bankruptcy in the natural realm. If we fail, we mourn in sorrow

before the Lord, because we have grieved the Holy Spirit in us. And He comforts us. He makes us meek, and we begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

So, whether we are persecuted, reviled, or lied against for righteousness' sake, we can honestly rejoice and be *very* glad! The way has been paved before us, and *great* is our reward!

The scribes and Pharisees' attitude was, "Love those who love you." But Jesus said, "That's not the way it is. Through my righteousness, you love those who don't love you." This is the reason that we have missionaries in many countries throughout the world—we love those who do not love us. It must begin in the Church of Jesus Christ.

We love just as we are loved by God. We forgive as we have been forgiven. We condemn not, because we are not condemned. This is the evidence of being filled with the fruits of His righteousness (Philippians 1:11) and the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

The Strait Gate

Our righteousness must exceed relative righteousness or we have not even reached first base yet. In Matthew 7:14, Jesus said, "Strait is

the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The gate is strait (narrow) because only those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness can pass through (Romans 5:17).

Christ *is* our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). The gift of His righteousness sustains us (Isaiah 59:16*b*). Is it any wonder that Psalm 89:16 says, "In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted"? His righteousness exalts, gives grace, and makes us humble, broken, and contrite.

When a believer is filled with the fruit of Christ's righteousness, he never becomes familiar with the things of God. Many Christians, however, are familiar with what they have received. They may not commit overt sins. They attend church and they tithe. But they have grown weary of soul winning, of compassion, of sacrificial love. No matter how the pastor presents his message, it makes them weary. They don't have God's righteousness within them.

All of us in God's royal family, as never before, must be precise in our definition. We cannot afford to sow among thorns (Jeremiah 4:3). Let's sow in righteousness, reap in mercy, and

break up the fallow ground. It is time to seek the Lord until His righteousness rains upon us (Hosea 10:12).

Without precise definition, we will not be able to endure the perilous times (2 Timothy 3:1) or the beginning of sorrows (Matthew 24:8), as the love of many begins to wax cold. When Jesus returns, there will hardly be such a thing as faith found on the earth (Luke 18:8). We will not be able to survive with some of God's righteousness in our theology and some of *our* righteousness in our experience. All of it must be *His* righteousness.

Isaiah was not proud when he saw the Lord high and lifted up on His throne. He could only confess, "I am undone. I'm a man of unclean lips in the midst of a people with unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). There was no pride, no arrogance, no self-righteousness in Isaiah. He was very patriotic in his loyalty to King Uzziah, but he realized that he was unclean. In that moment, an angel came to Isaiah with a coal from the altar and touched his lips, purging him from his uncleanness. Now, he was available to serve God with God's righteousness.

Because of God's righteousness, I am motivated to serve God the way Isaiah did. I can't wait to go out and knock on doors Saturday mornings—not because of works, but because the work is so sacred and so thrilling to my heart.

One Saturday, after more than two hours of going from door to door, only *one* person said he *wasn't* interested in hearing the Gospel. A woman shared Christ with a twelve-year-old boy and gave him a Bible. Two hours later, he was still hanging around. "They told me Jesus loves me, and then Jesus saved me. And here's my Bible!" he said. That boy was so happy to be saved. This is the fruit of sharing grace and the gift of righteousness. It's worth more than anything in all the world.

This is the kind of soul-winning ministry Jesus called the fishermen into, in Matthew 4:19: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." James, John, Andrew, and Peter left their nets, gave up the family business, and followed Jesus.

"Follow me! I've got something the world needs," Jesus said. "Follow me! I have the gift of

eternal life that reveals eternal love, eternal grace, eternal mercy, eternal kindness, and eternal forgiveness."

Our ministry is sending people out month after month. These missionaries are telling people that salvation is by grace, that God will make them righteous the moment they believe, that their sins have been forgiven and that they can be cleansed from all guilt. Everyday in the streets of Calcutta, Moscow, Guayaquil and Baku—from tiny villages in East Africa, to ancient cities in Uzbekistan, to the vast Siberian borders—the message of the Cross is being proclaimed.

Except for remnants here and there, this old-fashioned brand of Christianity is pretty much gone from the scene. This glorious gospel teaches me that I cannot deal with people after their sins, or reward them according to their iniquities. Jesus heals the wounds that sin has caused, whether they're self-inflicted or caused by someone else. The message of abundant grace and the gift of righteousness will reach the hearts of those who have no hope and transform them through the power of the risen Lord.

CONCLUSION

"Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" (Job 40:8).

As a sinner saved by grace, I plead with you: Don't be familiar with the Word of God, or the work of God. Don't be familiar with the men and women He has raised up to be His servants. Allow the Word of His righteousness to become a fire burning in your bones.

Every morning I take my wife's hand and we begin our day by praising God. We confess His blessings and promises. We pray for people because we live as if every day could be our last. This is the most magnificent time of my life.

Oh, that God would teach our tongues to speak of His righteousness all the day long (Psalm 71:24). By His righteousness we are exalted and we grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. The Word makes it clear that His righteousness is our shield. We are so blessed.

By the grace of God, let's not be familiar with our churches and our preachers.

Every day when I meet with people, I'm going to say these words: Be positive today. If anyone talks about you, talk about them down on your knees. Deal with every situation and face every responsibility according to the Finished Work abundance of His grace.

God will *always* cause us to triumph. My expectation is from God, not from the devil. I expect love, not hate. I expect forgiveness, not indictment. I expect victory, not intimidation.

Why? Because we have the message that will transform the homosexual, the drug addict, the alcoholic, the fornicator, the gossip, the slanderer, and the maligner. It will even transform someone who lives in relative righteousness. We have the message that brings people to heaven on the trail of grace and builds them up in the trials of their faith. We have *the* message:

"THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

What Do You Know?

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, I read a great book on the unlimited power of the Christian soul. The author's premise was that man, in his original condition before Adam's fall, possessed amazing power from God. But after the Fall, man developed a capacity to abuse this power—and abuse it, he has.

Soul-power is one of the most destructive things that can be let loose in a believer's life. I am sure you have heard people say, "God told me such and such." Now that certainly can happen. The Holy Spirit really does move in our lives, and He gives gifts to believers according to the purpose and will of the Lord. Many times, however, this statement is simply made in the context of human validation.

Every now and then I hear that a man will approach a woman in the church and say, "God told me that we should start a relationship." The problem comes when the woman isn't getting the same message! My counsel is this: If God didn't

communicate to both parties involved then the message isn't from God.

Obviously, soul-power can cause some trouble. For this reason, it is so important that we ask God to develop discernment and discretion in our hearts and minds. These pages will discuss how important it is for every Christian to go beyond human knowledge to spiritual instruction and insight.

Chapter One

FORMS OF GODLINESS

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

"Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

"Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

"For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

"Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

"But they shall proceed no further: for their

folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

"Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Timothy 3:1-14).

I personally believe that each one of us possesses a tremendous capacity for power with God and with men. Certainly, I want to focus on how this power can be cultivated to produce fruit for the Kingdom of God. At the same time, we cannot ignore the negative potential that exists when this power is misused.

Satan, of course, moves to stir up the negative and soulish exercise of this power that God gave to man before the Fall (Genesis 2 and 3). As the serpent did in the Garden of Eden by deceiving Adam and Eve to partake of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil, so the devil works today. Hell wants men to fellowship at the Tree of Knowledge and to keep them from abiding at the Tree of Life, where Christ provides wisdom. Keeping believers under a pattern of fallen, soulish behavior is the aim of our enemy and accuser. His efforts promote a system that doesn't necessarily deny the Bible but that does deny the power of the Word of God in a believer's life.

It is possible to live in a form of godliness that lacks the power of God. *Gnosis* is a Greek word that is often translated "knowledge" in English versions of the Scriptures. It speaks of a general understanding and general knowledge. The word is derived from *ginosko,* the Greek word for perception and acquaintance. In our relationships, we have acquaintances—people we know. We see them and recognize them. We may even know their names. But it would be a real stretch to call these people "friends." So it is with certain things that we "know." We have a general perception. We can identify and maybe even offer a definition of a promise from the Bible. It is another thing to possess the power of that promise.

When we lack the power of the Word, it is very easy for us to confuse the meanings of the promises of God. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word has authority. It is quick and powerful. It

does a wonderful job in our souls. Yet, unless I have the power of God energizing the truth I have received, it is very easy to frustrate the grace of God.

Spiritual Light for the Mind

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:20-21).

A man of God who is really studying the Bible has to be very spiritual in his approach to the Scriptures. It is very easy to come to "know" something and then to despise it—to disrespect or disregard its value. Little verses such as "Jesus wept" (John 11:35) carry such power, and a measure of meditation can bring out the depth of any passage, making it so much more than plain language.

I can be taken captive by my own study, therefore I have to be aware and watch that in my life. Submission to the Holy Spirit and to His initiations breaks this yoke that I sometimes put upon myself. The anointing of God sets me free from just preaching in human sincerity with a form of godliness. What's missing if I preach without the power of God? My words will lack the power to communicate knowledge of the truth in a manner that it becomes understanding. Many people are ever learning but never coming to the *epignosis* of the truth. *Epignosis* speaks of truth as it becomes understanding—precise and correct knowledge that enables a believer to live according to spiritual ethics. A Christian who has *epignosis* and who lives by spiritual ethics has more than definitions from hearing the truth. He has power in truth. There is purity in his thinking process, and he can act upon what he knows. His convictions have become conversions, and those conversions are evident and very real as this believer walks with the Lord.

Chapter Two

THE POWER OF UNDERSTANDING

"And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.

"And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

"In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

"And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

"And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and

I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.

"And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

"And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

"And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

"Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

"And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

"And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy

days.

"And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants" (1 Kings 3:3-15).

As a teacher, I seldom have given formal homework assignments. Of course, I recognize the place of homework in the education process. It prompts a student to get digging and moves him past the superficial to the undercurrent of the teaching he has received. Yet, in our Bible college, we have always had a large number of students who are working full time, going to school, and raising a family—all at once. So my gift to them is not to give so many formal assignments.

Instead, I like to have students pray and meditate over their notes and the Scripture references. This, I believe, accomplishes something deeper than simply giving a quiz or writing assignment. Still, I want to be very clear that those tasks must also be part of the process in a classroom. I am trying to be very careful so as not to discourage other teachers from doing what they see fit to do before God and their students. I am very supportive of our teachers and the leading of God in their lives.

My own makeup is such that I need to read something over and over for it to really sink in. That's the system I use. I keep myself in the Scriptures and allow my thoughts to rest on passages moment after moment and, at times, hour after hour. I know personally that I could become so proud if I just focused on systematic research. Study, study, research, research—I could collect so many facts. But would there be any power for living behind all that sincere labor?

Bringing Our Thoughts under God's Order

The way I approach Bible study is to let God lead me. I read, and I am quiet. I come to a couple chapters or maybe just a single verse, and then the Holy Spirit instructs me. At times, that still small voice will whisper, "Just park here for a while." Something happens inside. The Word goes to work, driving home the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ into my frame of reference. The Psalms, the Gospels, the Epistles, the Proverbs—all of it comes alive to me at different times. Wisdom grows in my heart as I give myself to God's Word and God's work.

Through prayer and meditation, something real happens in the heart. Understanding begins to develop, going beyond the ever-learning form of godliness that presents itself so often. A person who has understanding brings every

thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). We have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). Therefore, with every feeling and thought, we can recognize God's stand on any issue and line up our thoughts under His stand.

Try as we might, we cannot escape the processes of feeling and thought. We were created with the ability to sense. Things do touch us and stir thoughts. Our emotions are very quick to respond or react to the things that touch us. At this point, volition, with which God has equipped every human being, is very important. When something touches us, we can initiate to our capacity to react and respond so that understanding takes over. Through meditation and prayer, we train our brains to categorize and organize. We recognize God's stand on a matter, and we live in that reality rather than live in a reality that is not from Him.

The choices are ours. When we feed our minds right thoughts, that produces right thinking and right responses. This is the way of a man of understanding.

If I am tempted in an area, my mind can initiate a right response to a feeling I may be having. I may be the target of projections from the atmosphere, and a strange thought may come to me about shoplifting (for an example). I may be

tempted to justify my need. God's stand, however, is "Thou shalt not steal." My reaction to that strange thought is one of understanding. I can choose to cast down such a vain imagination and move forward with the Lord—and possibly avoid prison in the process. If I have a real need, I learn to bring that request to Him specifically and get to know Him as my Provider (Philippians 4:6, 7). He will never leave me *nor* forsake me (Hebrews 13:5).

Chapter Three

PROVIDENTIAL REVERSALS

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans

7:18-25).

Throughout the Bible, we find examples of men and women who changed. Their lives captured a thought from God, the Holy Spirit energized that thought, and everything was different from that point on.

For thirteen years following his encounter with Hagar, Abraham lived outside of any communion with God. Sarah and he were desperate for children, and together they set in motion a humanly devised solution to their childlessness. Abraham had an affair with Sarah's maid, and Ishmael was born. As a result of natural thinking, familiarity, frustration, and problem after problem has plagued Israel to this day. But God wasn't finished with Abraham.

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

"And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

"And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

"As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

"Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

"And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

"And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:1-8).

In Genesis 17, God turned Abraham around. Providence put him into the place where the power of truth took over his life. He was now living in understanding and not just knowledge. From then on, he became a great example of obedient faith.

Repent and Watch God Reverse Your Course

Moses was wandering on the backside of the desert when he saw the burning bush (Exodus 3). He turned, and God spoke to him. Moses heard the voice of God and became the deliverer of Israel. The bush burned but was not consumed. The power of truth gained control over Moses' life. The providence of God reversed his course.

David sinned with Bathsheba, and then he arranged for her husband, Uriah, to die in battle on the front lines (2 Samuel 11). The king spent a

rough year of chastisement outside of fellowship with God. He was under tremendous conviction, especially after Nathan the prophet confronted him about the matter. David received divine conviction, entered into understanding, and repented. We see this beautiful process written out in Psalm 51. The king appealed to God's tender mercies and prayed for a reversal that would restore the joy of salvation to his life. What a turnaround that was!

Other examples include Joseph. In Genesis 37, his brothers sold him into slavery, yet he kept the Lord before his face and he thought with God. Then came a time of promotion in Egypt when a providential reversal put Joseph in command. In adversity, Joseph thought with God and he had understanding. And now, in his prosperity, he continued to think with God. He did not move to take revenge upon his brothers. Instead, he had understanding. He lived before God and saved many people alive.

At the beginning of this chapter, we read of Paul's troubles with his thinking. He was wrapped up in himself and his own efforts to live for God. Finally, he came to the right understanding that only by grace through faith can anyone live for Christ. From that point on, everything was different for this apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul really came to know how to think with the Lord, and we now have thirteen beautiful epistles to show this to us. Everything came into order under the thoughts of God.

CONCLUSION

I want to finish with a very personal story. At one point, when my first wife was alive, my home was not in order. It was for one very simple reason: I was not loving my wife the way that I should be loving her. Inwardly, my thoughts were not thoughts of understanding. I secretly resented the fact that I had been married so young. I covered it up until God showed me that I needed a reversal in my thinking.

God got my attention and I went from knowing the verse, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church," to putting that principle into practice. I went to my wife, and I confessed to her and began to encourage her and build her up. I came to an understanding. I finally began to know what this portion of the Word of God really meant.

Let's be right up front. We need divine reversals in our lives. We need God to show us the things that we really don't know, things that we are in the dark about. Perhaps it is sin. Perhaps it's slothfulness. The devil means these things

for evil, but God can turn it all around for good.

Bring your heart before the throne of God and let Him make you brand-new. Let Him teach you. He has all knowledge. Our success is about what we know, and the Lord wants to make sure that we really know all things as we ought to know them—in spirit and in truth and in power.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God *(Romans 3:23; 6:23)*. Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith, trusting His character and love for you and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" *(Acts 2:21)*.

Simply pray, *"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen."*

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you *(Hebrews 13:5)*. Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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What Happened

When You Received Christ?

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

The moment you were saved by receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, sixty-eight things happened in your life. These are called "positional" truths, because regardless of your experience, they remain in you and toward you as a completed work, irrevocable from the viewpoint of eternity.

In addition, there are at least twenty-seven "experiential" truths that are available for Christians to appropriate in their lives because of the goodness and grace of God toward His children who walk in the light of His Word (Colossians 2:6).

Paul said, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all the saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." To find out and then meditate upon the things God has done for us is to "mine" or to dig out these unsearchable riches.

Some of these verses you may know well.

But put them together, and you will begin to see how great God is. The Finished Work is not just a possibility, but a reality. And that is why Christ pleaded, "Come unto me….Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me…" (Matthew 11:28*a*-29*a*).

This booklet is not so much devotional as it is to instruct us in the things that God, through the Holy Spirit, has accomplished in us and toward us. We have taken the first few dynamic truths and have shown how any believer can meditate on the Word of God. By masticating, digesting, and assimilating each word, we prepare a way to understand and experience our inheritance, line upon line, precept upon precept (Isaiah 28:9-10).

Chapter One

THINK ON THESE THINGS

"Consider the work of God..." (Ecclesiastes 7:13*a*).

Number one: *He foreknew us*. That means He foreknew that we would accept Him. Before the foundation of the world, He knew you as someone who would be perfected in positional truth (Romans 8:29 and 1 Peter 1:2).

Number two: *He elected us* (Romans 8:33, Colossians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Titus 1:1, 1 Peter 1:2). Our election came *after* foreknowledge. So first, God foreknew who would accept Christ with their free volition. Therefore, He elected us on the basis of knowing we would make a decision to receive Christ.

Some believe in a limited atonement, where only the elect whom God respects will be accepted, while others have been predestinated to go to hell. But God is not willing that any should perish. He died for the sins of every man—not

just those in the Church but everyone in the whole world (1 John 2:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:19; John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:6; and Matthew 20:28). Therefore, because of His love and the fact that He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), God desires that *all* men would come to a saving knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Based on Scripture, it is an *unlimited* atonement. The sins of the world have been paid. The only way anyone will go to hell is because they flatly reject the Savior.

The third thing is this: *We are predestinated* in Christ (Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 1:5,11).

Then, *we are chosen* (Matthew 22:14, 1 Peter 2:4).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:24, *we are called*.

We are reconciled by God (2 Corinthians 5:18,19, Colossians 1:20).

Not only that, *we are reconciled to God* (Romans 5:10, 2 Corinthians 5:20).

We are redeemed by God (Romans 3:24, Colossians 1:14, 1 Peter 1:18), and *we are born again spiritually* forever (John 3:7, 1 Peter 1:23).

So, because we have been born-again, *we are regenerated* (John 13:10, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Titus 3:5).

And then, *we are made righteous* (Romans 3:22,

1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:9).

Stop there, and consider what that means: "to be made righteous." That phrase is thrown around carelessly by so many Christians. We are righteous, positionally, in the eyes of God the Father. If, however, we are positionally righteous, we are righteous, period. It is not something beyond us; it is something we are.

Furthermore, we see that *the righteousness of God is unto us and upon us who believe* (Galatians 3:22).

In Acts 13:39 and Romans 3:26, 5:1, 8:30, 1 Corinthians 6:11, and Titus 3:7, *we are justified*. Oh, how beautiful and how sweet it is! It is a very precious thing to be justified. We can go to bed at night knowing that we have been justified in the courtroom of heaven and that there is sufficient legal cause to secure a favorable verdict, to acquit the guilty, to declare us righteous, and to grant us a full pardon.

Alone, meditating and reflecting while reading those words, we could say, "God, You foreknew me. Lord, I know who I am in Adam. I know the things that went on in my childhood, the problems with my upbringing. You foreknew me even then. And back then, You elected

me. I am a new creation because You regenerated me. Now, I stand before You righteous and justified. Thank You, Lord!"

Considering this before God, each one of us would say, "Lord, You were willing to glorify *me*?" Out of this kind of meditation come appreciation, praise to God, thanksgiving, great hope, and an amazing boost to our self-image. Each born-again believer can say, "He did all of that for me, knowing every sin I would ever commit."

Do you see the difference in this approach? These things are so sacred. Surely, we can know them and memorize them as mere items on a list. But they are so sacred, and God desires each point to be engrafted in our hearts.

Glorified from the Foundations of the World

Then, according to Romans 8:30, *we are glorified*. Think of what that means. If we could see through the eyes of the Holy Spirit, we would see ourselves as totally pure and seated above, reflecting the brightness of God's glory. Billions of years ago, the Lord foreknew us and elected us, and He placed us in Christ in the eternal plan that was waiting to be revealed to us in time. And way back then, in the foreknowledge of God, we started out as being glorified. As we

keep on beholding Him through the mirror of the Word and staying focused as we reveal His purpose for us, that glory will grow in intensity.

Jeremiah knew he was chosen before he was in his mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5). And you were known by God in the "lowest parts of the earth," speaking of the raw elements that would form your body (Psalm 139:14-16).

We must not let our knowledge of these things be only academic. Even though we need to study hard, we also need to keep our communication with God personal and devotional.

We Have a New Identity

In Romans 8:15-16, 23 and Galatians 4:4-6, *we are adopted*—adopted into His precious family, legally adopted as one of His own.

We are complete in Him forever (Colossians 2:10). Of course, if we continue to sin, we will be chastised. If, over a long period of time, we refuse to get right and ignore repeated warnings by the Holy Spirit, we could even be taken home early. But as we go, we will still be complete, though we will suffer the loss of rewards.

In 1 Corinthians 1:30-31, 6:11, *we are sanctified*—separated from the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13), perfectly cleansed and set

apart unto God.

Then, *we are forgiven* forever. This is such a foundational truth, found in Psalm 103:12, Micah 7:19, and Ephesians 4:32, among many other verses. Do we realize what it means to be forgiven? Don't even try to weigh it on the scales of grace. It is God! It is all Christ.

This is why He should be all and in all in our lives—not self-occupation or self-preservation. These are like trees with roots that go deep into the ground but have no fruit, because everything they get is for self.

We will see that *we are quickened,* raised up, and *we are seated in heavenly places* (Ephesians 2:5-6), where *we are perfected forever*, saved by the Blood of the Lamb. And thanks be to God, in Ephesians 1:6, *we are accepted*. When loved ones reject you, when your spouse leaves you, when you fail and you can't accept yourself, you are accepted by God.

Because those things happened in our lives the moment we were saved, *we are made meet*—made adequate and precisely adapted to meet the Master (Colossians 1:12), to be in the presence of the King of kings, poised and confident, knowing we are where we belong.

Chapter Two

SIXTY-EIGHT POSITIONAL PROVISIONS

These are the things God provides for every believer at the point of salvation. They are on our account, irrevocable, regardless of how we feel or what we are going through. Therefore, we need to purpose to hide them in our hearts, line upon line, so we will have confidence when the enemy comes in like a flood.

1. He foreknew us (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2).
2. He elected us (Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:2).
3. He predestinated us (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:5, 11).
4. We are chosen (Matthew 22:14; 1 Peter 2:4).
5. We are called (1 Thessalonians 5:24).
6. We are reconciled *by* God (2 Corinthians

5:18-19; Colossians 1:20).

7. We are reconciled *to* God (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:20).
8. We are redeemed by God (Romans 3:24; Colossians 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18).
9. We are born again spiritually (John 3:7; 1 Peter 1:23).
10. We are regenerated (John 13:10; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5).
11. We are made righteous, and the righteousness of God is *unto* us and *upon* us who believe (Romans 3:22; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:22, Philippians 3:9).
12. We are justified (Acts 13:39; Romans 3:26, 5:1, 8:30; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:7).
13. We are glorified (Romans 8:30).
14. We receive the Spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15-16, 23; Galatians 4:4-6), and God is our Father (1 Corinthians 1:3; 8:6; Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 1:2; 4:6).
15. We are complete in Him (Colossians 2:10).
16. We are sanctified (1 Corinthians 1:30, 6:11).
17. We are forgiven (Acts 10:43; Romans 4:25; Colossians 1:14, 2:13, 3:13; Eph-

esians 1:7, 4:32; 1 Peter 2:24).

18. We are quickened (Romans 4:17, Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13).
19. We are perfected forever (Hebrews 10:14).
20. We are accepted (Ephesians 1:6; 1 Peter 2:5).
21. We are made meet (Colossians 1:12).
22. We are crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6, 6:8; Galatians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:24).
23. We are buried with Christ (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).
24. We are raised with Christ (Romans 6:4; Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 3:1).
25. We are seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:4-6).
26. We are born of the Spirit (John 3:6).
27. We are baptized with the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; 10:17).
28. We have the earnest, or deposit, of the Holy Spirit, securing our place in heaven (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14).
29. We are indwelt by the Spirit (John 7:39; Romans 5:5, 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Galatians 4:6).
30. We are sealed by the Spirit (John 7:39; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13, 4:30).

31. We are in God (1 Thessalonians 1:1).
32. We are in Christ (John 14:20).
33. We are in the Spirit (Romans 8:9).
34. We are dead to the law (Romans 7:4).
35. We are delivered from the law (Romans 6:14, 7:6; 2 Corinthians 3:11; Galatians 3:25).
36. We are circumcised in Christ (Romans 2:29; Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:11).
37. We are made near to God by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13; James 4:8; Hebrews 10:22).
38. We are delivered from the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13, 2:13-15).
39. We are translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13).
40. We are given as a gift to Christ by the Father (John 17:6, 11, 12, 20; 10:29).
41. He gives us life in His name (John 20:31) and eternal life in His Son (John 3:15-16, 36; 5:24; 6:47; 11:25; 1 John 5:11-12).
42. We will never die (John 11:26).

What He Is to The Believer:

43. Jesus Christ is our propitiation (Romans 3:25-26; 1 John 2:2).
44. Jesus Christ is our foundation (Eph-

esians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:11; 2 Corinthians 1:21).

45. Jesus Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4).
46. He is our Head (Colossians 2:10).
47. He is our husband (Ephesians 5:25-27; 2 Corinthians 11:2).
48. He is our advocate (1 John 2:1).
49. He is our brother (Hebrews 2:11).
50. He is our friend (John 15:15).
51. He is our Shepherd (John 10:11; 1 Peter 2:25).
52. He is our high priest (Hebrews 3:1, 4:14, 6:20).

What He Makes Us:

53. We are sons of God (2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 3:26; 1 John 3:2) and children of the living God (Romans 9:26).
54. We are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15).
55. We are members of His Body (1 Corinthians 12:13).
56. We are His Bride (Ephesians 5:25-27).
57. We are saints (1 Corinthians 1:2).
58. We are His holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5, 9) and his royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6).

59. We are a chosen generation, a peculiar people (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9).
60. We are His inheritance (Ephesians 1:18).
61. We are God's building (1 Corinthians 3:9), and our body is His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19).
62. We are heavenly citizens (Luke 10:20; Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 12:22).
63. We are laborers together with Him (1 Corinthians 3:9, 2 Corinthians 6:1).
64. We are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).
65. We are ministers of God (2 Corinthians 3:3, 6, 6:4).
66. We are His household (Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:19, 3:15).
67. We are His people (2 Corinthians 6:16).
68. We are His beloved (Romans 9:25).

Chapter Three

TWENTY-SEVEN EXPERIENTIAL PROVISIONS

After we begin to walk with the Lord, He gives us many opportunities to experience His nature and to reveal His characteristics, as children of God. Every believer has had times of failure or testing when he will not sense the reality of these things. Yet, if we choose to walk in the light as He is in the light, in time we will experience the fullness of these provisions:

69. There is no condemnation for the believer (Romans 8:1; John 3:18, 5:24; 1 Corinthians 11:32).
70. We reign in life as more than conquerors (Romans 5:17; 8:37).
71. We are quickened (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13).
72. We have access to God (Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 4:14-16; He-

brews 10:19-20).

73. He loves us (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4, 5:2).
74. He gives us His grace (Ephesians 2:8).
75. He gives us His power (Ephesians 1:19; Philippians 2:13).
76. He is faithful to us (Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 13:5).
77. He gives us His peace (Colossians 3:15).
78. He gives us hope (Ephesians 1:18).
79. He gives us every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3).
80. He gives us rest (Hebrews 4:3).
81. He gives us joy (Romans 15:13; 1 Peter 1:8).
82. He consoles us (2 Thessalonians 2:16).
83. He intercedes for us (Hebrews 7:25, 9:24; Romans 8:34).
84. He keeps us (Romans 5:2).
85. He instructs us (Titus 2:12-13).
86. He saves us in the details and circumstances of life (Romans 1:16).
87. He gives us an inheritance (Ephesians 1:14; Colossians 3:24; Hebrews 9:15; 1 Peter 1:4).
88. We have fellowship with Him (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:9).

89. He is faithful to us in suffering (Romans 8:18; Philippians 1:29; Colossians 1:24; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:12; 1 Peter 2:20, 4:12-13).
90. The Word of God works in us (1 Thessalonians 2:13).
91. We are not ashamed (Romans 9:33, 10:11).
92. We will never thirst again (John 6:35).
93. We will not be confounded (1 Peter 2:6).
94. We overcome the world (1 John 5:5).
95. His great power is *toward* us who believe (Ephesians 1:19).

CONCLUSION

When we speak about the things Christ has done in us and for us, we can understand that if God be for us, nothing and no one can be against us (Romans 8:31-39).

Imagine if you were to take each point, one at a time, and say, "Holy Spirit, minister this to me." Before you know it, you would begin ministering to Him by responding to the promises! But also, you would wonder, "Why? Why has He done all these things for *me*?" You would never want to miss an opportunity to be in His presence.

Hide these truths in your heart and ponder them. This is how you will come to know the One who, through the Spirit, did it all.

What Is Man?

Pastor Thomas Schaller graduated from Northeast School of the Bible in South Berwick, Maine, under the tutelage of Dr. Carl H. Stevens. From 1975 to 1981, he led a team to Helsinki, Finland, establishing a church and the Scandinavian School of the Bible. That ministry, which grew to 9 churches, has sent out over 80 missionaries to more than nineteen countries. In 1981, he returned to the United States where he served as Missions Director for The Bible Speaks in Massachusetts and Greater Grace World Outreach in Maryland. Then in 1990, Pastor Schaller led a team to Budapest, Hungary, again establishing a church and Bible college. The Budapest church has established 7 new churches.

In 2003, Pastor Schaller came to Baltimore to serve with Greater Grace and teach at Maryland Bible College and Seminary. He is now the Presiding Elder and Pastor of the Greater Grace Church in Baltimore, working with Dr. Carl H. Stevens, the Founder and Senior Pastor of GGWO.

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INTRODUCTION

What is our purpose? Why are we here? Who am I? What is man? These questions are asked in our minds and hearts at various times in our lives. Was the great eternal purpose for which we were created simply to live, to work and then to die?

Hebrews 2:6 says: "But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man?" Does that sound familiar? It is a good question. What is man? Then a little later in Hebrews 2:9, the Bible says: "But we see Jesus." These two verses go together. What is man; but we see Jesus.

This booklet is a very personal reflection on how I considered these things throughout my life. My hope is these words will speak to your heart in some way. Really, no matter what we do, we are trying to discover what we are. But when we see Jesus, that searching process should stop for us as we embrace the Cross and allow His Holy Spirit to lead us in His new and

living way.

Chapter One
WHO AM I?

In 1970, I was 17 years old and living in Rome, New York. I was unsaved and not from a Bible-believing, Christian home. I loved my brothers and sisters and my mom and dad. We were "good people," but something was missing in me. I would go out late at night into the cornfields behind our house and ask, "What is man? Who am I? What is my purpose?"

In school, I learned that the purpose of an education is to get a job. Then, I saw people with jobs, and I asked them what they were doing. They replied, "Well, we have a job. We pay our bills. We have our houses and our families and then we die."

I was 17 years old—not too smart and not too old—but smart enough and old enough to know that something was missing. And so my search began.

At 19, I attended the university in upstate

New York. One day, a very strange young man came to our campus wearing a blanket. It had an opening for his head to go through, and there was a rope tied around his waist. He was telling a group of us that we must be born again.

Just the year before, this same young man had been a friend of mine and just like me. But now, he was different—he was a Jesus freak! I loved to hear him speak because he told us about Jesus Christ. In all my life, I had never been to a Bible-believing church, never met a Christian, never heard anyone teach the Bible. I had never met anyone like this man, and he said that Jesus Christ was real.

That was all I needed to hear. I asked, "What do I do? Here I am." He took out a piece of paper from his pocket and said, "Say this prayer." So, I knelt down with him and I prayed.

The next morning, I woke up and I was so full of love and freedom and joy. I walked for two days off the ground. I had not known that I was guilty until the guilt was gone. When the guilt was gone, then I knew that I had been guilty. Now I had Jesus Christ. After two days, the feeling was gone, and I went looking for this strange man with the blanket. I was searching and asking questions.

This was the essential element of my search, “What is man?” Who am I? Who can tell me? What psychologist or what teacher can tell me about myself?

I began to read the Bible, and I met a pastor who taught me a little bit—a little was enough and I survived. I started to pray and think about God more and more and about the will of God and about giving everything—everything—to God. The Lord faithfully led me.

A Big Decision

It's a long story from then until now, and not necessary to repeat in detail, but that very summer, I went to Maine and attended a church like this one. I saw the people and I met them and they were different. There I heard Pastor Carl Stevens. I listened to the messages, and I believed them. I had asked the question—what is man—and now I was starting to see what man is. I had never seen it before. I saw Jesus as it is written in Hebrews 2:9: “But we see Jesus.”

Then, Bible school started and I said, “No, I cannot go to Bible School, I must go back to the university. My father will be angry with me if I go to Bible school.” I hitchhiked home and went to my dad and said, “Dad, I'm going to Bible

school." He said, "No, you are not. You're going back to the university. You cannot stop your studies now. You have to finish and then after that, you can do what you want."

He drove me to college. For three days, I went to all of my classes. I thought about it and made a decision, "I must go to Bible school." It was the most painful thing I had ever done in my life. As I was leaving the campus, someone said to me, "You will regret it. You are throwing away your education and why?"

I didn't even know how to respond, but I knew the reason why I was leaving. What is man? I had to find the answer to that question. Who I am could not be answered there at that school. No one there could tell me who I was. And nobody can tell me who I really am—only God could reveal that to me.

Chapter Two
GOD IS IN US

I went to Bible school, with only 33 people, in the basement of an old church building in Bath, Maine. We sat in kindergarten chairs with little desks perched on our knees. Pastor Stevens was our teacher, and when I listened to him, I was hearing what the Bible says about who man is.

After class, I would go outside and look up into the sky and think about what was happening in my life. I would say, "Thank you, God; for You are the only One in the whole universe who can tell me who I am, and You are doing it. I believe You and You are telling me who I am, and I don't know what it is, but I taste it."

It is more than me—it is more than us—it is a mystery revealed. It is God in us. It is Emanuel. God is with us. So quietly, like many of the students in those days, I started to study, to memorize the Bible, to think and meditate on

the Word. With others, we would have prayer meetings late at night and early in the morning.

Secret Manna

I got a job at a tannery in Berwick, Maine, working at a drying machine. I had a little Bible and I put it behind an electrical outlet. As I worked, I began memorizing the book of Ephesians. I would do my work a little bit quickly and read one verse. Then I would do a few more hides and then read another verse. I would pull the hides out and put them on these workhorses and then go back to the Bible. Work and memorize; work and memorize. Within a year and a half, I had memorized all of Ephesians, Hebrews, 2 Timothy, as well as many Psalms and parts of 2 Corinthians, Thessalonians, and Romans.

When I came out of my working place, I had something! I had a hidden motivation—secret manna from the Lord. When I would go home from the factory at midnight, I could hardly sleep. I was so energized and so motivated by the Bible. I had a secret. Pastor Stevens had been preaching about it and he had told us about it—he said it was true. He told us to concentrate on it and to rejoice always and be thankful in all things. He told us to hide the Word of God in

our hearts. And we did.

Simple Faith

Here I was, 22 years old with the Bible in my heart. Life was so simple. There were no problems. I didn't care about anything other than the fact that "who I am" was now being realized by the grace of God because I was seeing Jesus Christ.

We see Him in the Bible, by the Holy Spirit, and in the Body of Christ. This is amazing. I could work in the factory the rest of my life and memorize the Bible. I could be a soul-winner wherever I go. I don't need to be recognized. I don't need to be honored because God is honoring me as He promised He would. We have bread to eat—hidden manna—that others do not have.

We have something!

Jesus said to the disciples, after His encounter with the woman at the well, "I have meat to eat that you know not of." Then came my second year of Bible school. I am sitting in the congregation and I am so satisfied. I can't even see the leaf wither. I see no desert ground. I have no personal problems. I'm not perfect, but

it seems like I leap over walls and run through troops. Enemies disappear in front of our faces. Why? Because we have found what it is to be a man, as God tells us who we are. Is that ideological, hypothetical, or purely theological? No, it is powerful! No, it is the reality of our lives.

Chapter Three
WHY ARE WE HERE?

In my third year of Bible school, I decided to go to Finland. We had a team of 10 people. I was 23 years old and we didn't know exactly what we were doing, but we went over there. We had no manual and no methodology planned out, but we had a revelation, an understanding of who we were. So, we started soul-winning and teaching the Bible in Finland.

Sometimes after teaching the Bible, I would feel so bad. I would feel like going into my room and hiding in a closet. I would feel so intimidated, shy, unable or unworthy. Yet even in my worse state, I always knew I had a secret. Even when I felt beaten down and lacked confidence and security in the presence of people, there was something I knew I had in the presence of God. I would build up myself, say "shucks" and go home. Or, I would go out and get a hamburger and rejoice, remembering that a righteous man

who stumbles is like a fountain. It is not that the fountain ceases to function; it is just that it is troubled. Sometimes, with the troubled fountain, the water still comes out around the rocks and mud. The fountain is still there—it is just not a geyser—but it is still there. I knew who I was.

Continuing in Faith

After my first year in Finland, I said, "Okay. I'll go back to the tannery. That's fine. I am more than a conqueror, and I know who I am."

We had 20 people when we finished that first year. We had something and we knew it. In that time, we would go to the Cross and say, "Thank you Jesus. Here I am in a secret place." We know who we are. Thank you, Jesus.

Then, I married Lisa Hughes—the treasure of treasures—unbelievable. Just eleven days after we got married, we went back to Finland. That year, in just one year, our church grew from 20 people to 200 people.

We grew so fast the newspapers started writing about us. There was a controversy in the country about who we were. Some students from the university left their studies to go to our newly founded Scandinavian School of the

Bible. Some parents reacted and wrote opinions in the paper. I was told that we even came up as an issue of discussion in the parliament.

One Lutheran priest wrote in a newspaper that the church could learn something about church planting from us. He wrote, "These people have a vibrant and fervent congregation of young people."

We know why that happened. It certainly wasn't us. It was the Lord. But isn't this what it is to be a man or a woman? Isn't this our calling? Isn't this the mystery of God's work? Shouldn't this be the normal Christian life?

If I submit to what I hear, and what I hear leads me to the Cross, then give it to me because that is the place where I meet God; and that is the place where I really discover who I am. If I make excuses for myself and apologize, I may never find that great, powerful secret that God wants us to have.

No matter what our personality, no matter what our limitations, no matter what our background, no matter who we are, we have something. It is something so high and so far above and beyond the flesh of men. It is so powerful. Just put it in me, God—put it in me always. Refresh me in it. Teach it to me always. Speak it

again to me. Hit me with it again and again and edify me with it. God, Your rod will be comforting to me and You will exalt and promote Your Son. Surely it is because of Your Son that this happens.

Chapter Four

THE STEADFAST WORK OF THE CROSS

It is easy to put up a banner and stage a big hulla-ballou. We could easily create a circus with a lot of people. But it is another thing to know and live something when you are hurting and when you are down.

It is amazing to believe, and to continue, and to embrace, and to stir up, and to pray, and to stay just as we are, to live as the Scriptures say to live and to be just what He promised to make us.

There was heavy persecution in Finland. For weeks, we were in the newspapers—headlines, front-page stories, big photos. Some said that I was the leader of a Nazi movement and others said that we were part of the CIA. There was betrayal and lies. Someone falsely prophesied that my wife would die in childbirth with my daughter Amy. I remember being in the hospital when

she was born, and the phone rang in the delivery room. It was my secretary, telling me that a reporter was there at the office waiting to talk to me. And I said, "This is easy. This is fun. This is not a problem." As the apostle Paul said, it does not matter what is happening around us or to us —we have a treasure. We overcome in everything.

Eventually, we moved back to the United States. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to come back though Finland was, and still is, a treasure in our hearts and mind. We still have seven churches there that are faithfully continuing the work we began.

Coming back here, however, there again is the Cross in our lives. Never knowing why I have been apprehended, but pressing on and pressing on and pressing on. That means a walk at night, a prayer, a Bible study, a meditation. I don't know exactly how to explain how it happens, but you know what I mean.

We hear something when the Cross is preached to us. We believe that there is a Bible school student or a person on the street or from the city or somewhere in the world that is searching. The question in many minds is the same question we had—what is man? And we

can tell you what man is. It is an ongoing revelation. It continues. It goes on throughout our lives. We never settle back fully because we don't know what God will do today or tomorrow or next week. I can't settle back fully. It is a mystery.

New Opportunities, New Challenges

Then we had this opportunity a few years ago. My family and I were very happy and quite content in Baltimore. One night, I was sick and up late at night and began to pray around 2 to 3 o'clock in the morning. I searched the Scriptures and thought, Lord, tell me there is something that I am not doing, or something that is not right, or something that I should be doing—show me.

God gave me this verse in Matthew 10: "If you love your wife, or your daughter, or your son more than you love me, then you are not worthy of me." I said, "Lord, I cannot. That is too hard. I love my wife and my daughters and my son very, very much. This is impossible. How could I give them up or lose them or leave them? I don't think I could do that."

But at the same time, I was thinking about the mission field and going to Hungary, and I

spoke with Pastor about it. He is my example, a man who has not stopped, quit or put limitations around his life, even as he has grown older.

So the question comes back. What is man? Tell me, God. My ear is not turned to the voice of the world but to the voice of God. What is man, God? Who am I, God? The world will try to tell me who I am, but I am not interested in its opinion.

No one can limit me as to who I am. That belongs to God. It is up to Him. I am saying that everything is possible, but all of it has to go through the Cross, doesn't it?

If you are shy and you are sitting in the back row and you are saying you could never be a pastor or a missionary, then you are limiting who you are by what you know about yourself; and you have no right to do it. For only God will tell you who you really are.

I was in Bible school with a couple of these types of folks back in Maine, and one said to me, "You know, I could never be a pastor." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I'm just not that kind of person." I was quiet. I knew I would also say that if I thought that I had the right to say to God who I am. Instead, I let God tell me who I am no matter what I feel.

In my first year in Finland, the insecurity and loneliness and the feelings of failure were so intense. One day a team member said to me, "You aren't a pastor, are you?" I answered, "No, I don't think I am." But that thought did not last. I want to say to Pastor, thank you for the mystery that is revealed here because we don't care to know who we are as just mere people. You go out the door and find that anywhere.

But here, in the church, you find out who you are in God. It is satisfying and it feeds me and it builds me up and the church is what it is supposed to be.

So one day I said to Lisa, my wife—"Hungary"—and she is so godly and so wise, so quiet and discerning and loving and she hardly said a word. I don't think she said a word, but she just started to pack—by faith. We just started to do it. Why? To kick the devil in the teeth and because we knew that there must be some people in that country like the people who responded in Finland—people like Jorma Immonen, Matti Himanka, Juha Haatanen, Paivi Taskinen or Riitta Hakulinen.

And once I got there in Hungary, there were people like that. I met Kende—a soldier in the Hungarian army. We spent time together, and

often I drove him to the train. He is there, right now, the pastor of our ministry in Budapest.

Who are we? What do we see? And if we have seen Him, then Lord, here we are. I will not limit my life by the natural. Why? We are too victorious! We are too great! We have too much!

When we got off the plane in Budapest, I felt like the whole world was ours. Honestly, we walked with Holy Spirit power. We would talk to someone and—wow! We'd preach and wow!

The church grew fast, people got saved, and they came in from the countryside and got discipled and went to Bible college. They were basically just like us—nobodies who were asking the questions "What is man? Who am I? Can you tell me?" And we would say, "Yes, we can tell you. Let's sit down and talk from the Scriptures. God will show you."

Then these people become like us because we become what we hear. We are more than conquerors. There is no boundary for us; there is no limitation, no perimeter to faith. Everything is possible. We have a great commission; a great God who uses people, who are in themselves nothing, but in Him everything! Praise God!

CONCLUSION

I want to thank Pastor Stevens for preaching the Cross. The words we hear are drawing us to it. The messages are putting it right to us. We hear it all about the Cross. We learn the sourness of it and the sweetness of it, the pain and the comfort of it, the wound and the healing of it. We come to the Cross so we can confess that we are sinners.

In myself, I am unable to answer the important question concerning my life. I don't know what I am or who I am. I cannot do anything. But I can say this: "Heal me, God, and I will be healed, so deeply and so greatly. I will be a complement wherever I am.

Even if I remain unrecognized and unknown in this world, even if I have failed many times in the same area— I have a secret from God. I have something living and eternal. We see it, and we know it, and we share it!

What is the Mystery

of Marriage?

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever thought, "What was God's purpose in creating the human race?" Certainly it was to bring Him glory (Isaiah 43:7). Yes, it was to bring Him pleasure (Revelation 4:11). And yes, it was to show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us for all eternity (Ephesians 2:7).

But there is a greater reason behind God's creation of the human race. When Lucifer rebelled against God with his five "I wills" (Isaiah 14:12-15) and iniquity was found in his emotions (Ezekiel 28:15), he sowed *rachal* (the Hebrew word for discord) among a third of the angels. They joined Lucifer's side, accusing God who is love that He is not a God of love. Lucifer said, "You are not a loving God. You're a phony God, and I've got to replace you. If You were a God of love, you would never send anyone to hell—and you wouldn't send angels to hell!"

In response to Satan's accusation, God cre-

ated the human race. He has used the human race as His theater for the divine operation of grace upon the earth. God Almighty would use men to show the fallen angels as well as the elect angels the diversity of His characteristics in action toward a fallen race.

Now we are here as sinners saved by grace, spectacles to angels, to men, and to the world system with its demonic host (1 Corinthians 4:9). In 1 Peter 1:12, the elect angels desire to look into our salvation to study the character of God toward those who have fallen. Remember, the elect angels have never fallen. Created perfect, they never required the application of mercy and grace, so they study men to comprehend the depth of the character of God.

In order for the Lord to manifest His character in this theater on the earth, He chose to use the Church—redeemed sinners—in local assemblies throughout the world. God uses the individual's volition to display His provision of grace and to teach men how to grow into Christ's image through grace. But the main spectacle in this great drama upon the earth today for the elect and the fallen angels to witness is *marriage*.

Chapter One

GROWING UP INTO CHRIST

Now, in Ephesians 4:11-12, the Word of God says, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

There are many pastors who are missionary evangelists. They do the work of a pastor-teacher, but their first call is to be missionaries, and that's where evangelism comes in. They have the *gift* of evangelism. Every pastor does the *work* of evangelism, but these men have a gift of evangelism. Do you see this? My gift is to be a pastor-teacher who does the work of an evangelist.

The pastor-teacher and the evangelist are given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

Notice verse 13: "Till we all come in the *unity* of the faith...." Oh, I like that! That means when I hear a message, I accept it. My wife accepts it, you accept it, the family accepts it, and we've heard from God. At that point, God produces faith in us (Romans 10:17). Faith produces a unity of obedience through our oneness with God's heart, His purpose, His call, and His provision. The Word of God motivates the river of the Holy Spirit as it goes into the various facets of our consciousness. The Word controls our self-consciousness, now motivated by God-consciousness, and makes us conscious of grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, and patience.

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the *knowledge* of the Son of God...." In this phrase, "knowledge" is *epignosis*. If the noun were *gnosis,* it would mean that the action of the Word stops with perception, never leading to experience. But here the word is *epignosis*. It's a simple term that means I experience the Word through my human spirit in the five parts of my soul. When I listen to the Word of God, it produces *gnosis*. But when I say, "I believe it," then the Holy Spirit transfers the Word that I've heard to my human spirit. There it becomes *epignosis,* and I operate in the experience of a

love that passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:19).

Ephesians 4:13 continues, "...unto a perfect [mature] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The Greek word for "fulness" is *pleroma,* meaning "abundance." I have the abundance of His grace, the abundance of His love, the abundance of His kindness, the abundance of His thinking.

Speaking the Whole Truth

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:14-15).

"Speaking *the* truth" (note the definite article) means that the pastor-teacher must preach the whole counsel of God—*everything*. If it's in season, he preaches the truth and builds his people up. If it's out of season and they don't want to hear it, he still preaches the truth, but he has to preach it in love. And why? So that "we may grow up into [Christ] in *all* things." The whole purpose for preaching and teaching is to help us to grow up into Christ in every area of our lives.

Then, verse 16 describes the purpose of evangelism: "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." That is evangelism.

The work of an evangelist increases the Body by winning people to the local assembly. Then we edify one another in love, quietly, through grace.

On Trial in Satan's Appeal Case

After Satan fell, God sentenced him to hell. When he petitioned God, his request for an appeal was granted. Today, Satan is called the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Though he has been sentenced, he is out on bail, pending final judgment. The devil has permission from God to test the human race. Though he tests single men and women and teenagers, his primary focus is to test marriages because of what they represent. He will try to prove that the character of Christ is not working in the lives of those who profess Christ.

That's what he did with Job (Job 1:7-12). That's what he did with Joshua the high priest

(Zechariah 3:1-4) and with Paul through the thorn in Paul's flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7). Satan gets permission to do things to us, to test what we know about Christ's character.

For example, if I teach five weeks on grace, Satan says to God, "Will you allow my demons to come into the city and test your people on the subject of grace? Let's see if they will give that grace to each other when I rub them the wrong way, or life rubs them the wrong way, or a spouse rubs them the wrong way. I'll prove to you that your grace doesn't work!"

So, the invisible, inaudible demons of Ephesians 6:12—the principalities and powers, the rulers of darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places, the confederated host of cosmic enemies to the soul—get permission from the supreme court of heaven to test your private life at home, at work, in your car. If you glorify God, you defeat the demons and they flee. But if you do not glorify God, Satan boasts that you are a phony. He accuses you, and then he accuses God. This is happening every day you live. There is a myriad of demons, and some that are designated to cause disease (though not all diseases are from them).

When Ephesians 4:15 says, "speaking the truth in *love*, [that we] may grow up...," it is talking about *virtue love*. We have virtue love when the Word of God dwells "richly [in our hearts] in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another [building each other up] in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:16-17).

It's interesting that the next passage reads, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands" (Colossians 3:18). The first thing God requires is from the wife, *not* the husband. God requires wives to submit to their *own* husbands "as it is fit in the Lord." Then verse 19 says, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." And in verse 20, "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord."

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" reflects *epignosis*: the application of His character through His Spirit. When the Word dwells richly in us and we are continually

filled with the fullness of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), rebounding the moment we fail—*that*, friends, is virtue love.

Virtue love is the supernatural, divine impartation of God's character. It is God's character operating in my humanity. As frail as I am, God borrows my humanity. He borrows my mind, my emotions, my volition, my conscience, and my self-consciousness (the five parts of the soul). Then my soul becomes His habitation (Ephesians 2:22).

The next thing He does through *epignosis* is to manifest Himself. He will manifest Himself in you during a terrible situation. Clouds and thick darkness may be all around you. Everything bad may be happening to you, but now you manifest Christ.

Chapter Two

ESPOUSED TO JESUS CHRIST

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

When Paul wrote 2 Corinthians 11, marriage customs were quite different from today. The parents of both children would get together and one would say, "I like your daughter." The other parent would say, "I like your son. Let's get together on the third day of the week and sign a contract."

Arranged marriage was common practice. The daughter may have been only eight years old and the son eleven. They were to have nothing to do with each other. Yet once the parents signed the contract, the children were legally married. They couldn't touch, they couldn't hold hands, they couldn't be together until the wedding ceremony, yet they were legally mar-

ried. This was the case with Joseph and Mary. (By the way, when Mary conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit, she and Joseph had never even kissed.)

It's very interesting that according to history, there was a law that said a betrothed couple couldn't kiss each other. And that was in the *secular* world. (I'm not so old-fashioned as I thought!) If they kissed before the wedding day, they were guilty of violating that law.

On the day of the wedding, the parents would come to the ceremony together, but the bridegroom came alone. As he arrived, his men were waiting for him. After greeting them, he had to go in to be with the father and mother of his bride.

When the ceremony began, the bridegroom would walk out first; he hasn't yet seen his bride adorned. Next came the bride's mother and father. The father would bring the bride to the bridegroom. There were no vows exchanged. The bridegroom simply stood in front of the father and he said, "I am her husband." Then he would look at his bride and say, "She is my wife." That was it! The ceremony was over.

After the ceremony, they would walk out into the streets and go to one of the parents'

homes where joyous parties lasted three weeks. Only virgins were allowed to be the bridesmaids, and they weren't even at the wedding—they had to wait at the house for the bride and groom to return. And to think that the *world* required that. Now, don't get upset or start condemning yourself. We're living in the dispensation of grace. At the moment of salvation, you became a brand-new creature, regardless of your past. Satan's accusations are lies, and you can be bold to confess that you are absolutely pure before God, washed in the blood of the Lamb.

A Pastor's Godly Devotion

Addressing the members of his church, Paul said: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy" (2 Corinthians 11:2). The word "jealous" is a terrible translation. The Greek word is *zeloo*, a verb that means, "I am committed to you with a *tremendous devotion*." What a difference that is from the word "jealous." Paul was saying, "I am committed to you with a devotion to study, to prepare my message, and to give you the truth." He was saying, "I am committed to you and motivated by a devotion of God's *virtue* love."

Paul went on to say, "I have espoused you." In this present middle indicative, the subject

produces the action on the verb, and the indicative mood means that this is an assertion of reality. "Espousal" means "betrothal." He said, "You are legally married to Jesus Christ now." I love that! This is the first stage.

When David was in the first stage of marriage with Saul's daughter, he said, "I want the second stage to come!" He was sick of no-touch love, of never being with her. He said, "When is the second stage coming?" And that was pretty good for David—to *wait* for the second stage.

Paul was saying to the Corinthians, "I am devoted to you with the motivation of love and a commitment to give you the Word so that you can have virtue love, so you can grow up into Christ in all things. My desire is that you will honor *God's* order in your marriage to Christ."

This verse in 2 Corinthians 11:2 continues, "that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" The verb tense used in this phrase is the aorist active infinitive. The infinitive implies a divine purpose. Paul was saying, "That I, at a point of time (*aorist tense*), may produce the action (*active voice*) of presenting you to Jesus Christ in the air, as a chaste virgin." This doesn't mean we achieve sinless perfection here on earth. It means we are always going after God,

always taking the provision of God's pure love as our motivation for living.

Beware of the Serpent

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him" (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

Paul said that as Satan beguiled Eve through his subtilty (his underhanded, veiled deceit), he would like to corrupt your minds in the same way. Paul warned them to "beware of anybody who preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached. Don't receive another spirit that you have not received from us, or another gospel that we have not preached."

That's what happens. Satan sends false teachers who will pervert and distort the Gospel. They will come and preach Jesus, but it will not be the Christ of the Bible. They'll talk about a holy spirit, but it will not be the Holy Spirit that glorifies God and gives every believer

one or more gifts when he's saved (1 Corinthians 12:4, 11). They will add works to the Gospel so it will not be pure grace. But Paul said, "My desire is to one day present you to Christ. I want you to know that you are legally married to Jesus Christ, and I don't want you 'going out' on Him. Don't get involved in an adulterous relationship with a spirit from another kingdom."

Our Ceremony

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Paul, along with every pastor, will introduce his church to Christ when we meet in the air at the Rapture. This will be our ceremony, where the legal contract becomes a living marriage in the air, before we ever get to heaven! That's what the Greek teaches. The pastor will introduce everybody in his assembly by name to Christ.*

You are probably thinking, "Won't that take a long time?" I have no idea. But remember, we will have glorified bodies in eternity, and we will not be limited by time.

Virtue Love Produces Eternal Values

God wants us to have virtue love. He wants us to grow into virtue love in everything we think, say, and do, because with virtue love come values—eternal values.

You see, when a person starts drinking alcohol, he has lost a value. When a person starts thinking with pornography, he's lost a value, and he begins to add sin to sin. And when a person starts criticizing, he loses the value of edifying. When a person refuses to minister grace, he loses the value of Christ's character. When a person doesn't love unconditionally as Christ loves him, he has lost a vital spiritual value.

I receive so many letters and telephone calls each week. Recently, a lady wrote to my wife and said, "I had such a beautiful week when I was visiting with you and the church. It was so heavenly! Now Satan is tempting me to go back to my bulimia, and I've failed twice." She's a dear person, and she *will* win the victory because she's honest. But can you see this? Satan

wants us to lose God's values.

Christ wants us to build with a spiritual value system. As the Word and the Spirit dwell in us richly in all wisdom, our value system will become our very life. Inside, our hearts will be singing with grace unto the Lord. We will be relaxed and happy.

There was another situation with a gentleman who said, "My wife was constantly nagging and trying to control me. Then something happened during the convention in Baltimore. After listening to several pastors speak, she said, 'God is performing surgery on me.' Ever since we got home, she only wants to love me and wash my feet! Our marriage is brand new." It wasn't an emotional experience; it was spiritual. Yet, it is affecting her emotions in a healthy way.

**Read* The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief? *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications 1996.*

Chapter Three

THE MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE

"Holding the *mystery* of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Timothy 3:9).

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this *mystery* among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

"And without controversy great is the *mystery* of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, *seen of angels* [Remember, there is angelic involvement in this mystery], preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16).

"This is a great *mystery*: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:32-33).

Ephesians 5:32-33 is talking about marriage. It's talking about wives submitting. It's talking

about husbands loving and nourishing and cherishing their wives. As the months go by and I learn more and more about this great subject of marriage, I am overwhelmed. Repeatedly we see the word "mystery"—something that has never been known, something that has been kept secret. What is the great mystery? *Marriage*.

If I were to go to the average home in America today, I would discover the reason so many marriages fail, the reason so many are just sustained, and the reason single people get into deep emotional problems: *They do not understand the "mystery."*

Ephesians 3:5-6 says that this mystery was never made "known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit"—and this is why—"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."

Paul went on to say in verse 7, "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power." (The Greek says, "...that works in me.")

Jesus Christ had God the Father and God the Spirit for His royal family in heaven. But He came to earth, incarnate in a hypostatic union, unique in every area like no other man. Though He was God, yet He was man; and though He was man, yet He was God.

Though He was God when He walked this earth, Jesus emptied Himself of the right to exercise His deity. He lived each day in His humanity in total dependence upon God the Father for His resources. In His deity, Jesus' title was "the Son of God." In Matthew's account of the genealogy of Jesus' humanity, He is called "the Son of David." This genealogy traces Jesus back to the line of Solomon through Joseph (Matthew 1:1-17). (Luke 3:23-38 traces the line to Nathan, the younger son of David. Most scholars agree this was probably a reference to Mary's lineage, recognizing her husband, Joseph, as a son and heir of her family.) On both sides it takes us back to the royal line, showing that Jesus was a member of royalty in His humanity (legally entitled to be called King of the Jews) as He already is in His Deity.

After His crucifixion, when Jesus ascended

into heaven, the Father said, "I'm going to give you a royal family made up of all of those you died for, who believed on you. Among this royal family will be the Church, your Bride forever."

God the Father—who planned everything, according to Ephesians 1:1-7—*planned* that Adam and Eve would have a perfect marriage in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden. But God gave them *free volition*, the freedom and ability to choose to obey Him. Their entire destiny would be determined by volition and values—choices *for* God or choices against themselves. Eternal values set the stage, and free volition changed the scene in this eternal drama in the courtroom of heaven.

The stage has been set. The institution of marriage is now the theater for an angelic conflict. Satan, out on bail in his appeal case, has a purpose in the conflict: to get marriages to fail and ultimately be destroyed, adversely affecting the future of Jesus Christ's bride. But Revelation 19:7 tells us that Satan will not succeed. Jesus Christ will marry a spotless bride in heaven, and the multitudes around the throne in heaven will cry out, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

Ephesians 5:23-31 speaks plainly about marriage. "...For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." Then in Ephesians 5:32, "This is a great mystery: *but I speak concerning Christ and the church*." It is a mystery.

In Romans 16:25 Paul said, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the *mystery*, which was kept secret since the world began."

This is what God is saying: "There's something I never told the Old Testament prophets. There's something that the disciples didn't understand until later." The Apostle Paul, however, understood it well: God designed the institution of marriage to reveal the character of Christ.

This was the plan: As a husband and wife reproduced themselves, they would raise their children, nurture them, and train them in the Lord. Then, as the children would grow, godly families would become a godly local assembly. The local assembly in turn would send people out into all the world to reveal a most wonder-

ful, indescribable plan, never known until the Church Age: the mystery of people becoming saved and revealing the character and nature of Jesus Christ, glorifying God individually and in marriage. This is the mystery of a fallen race glorifying God in the family, in the Church, and ultimately in Satan's world system.

Remember, Satan is out on bail. He appealed to God so he could go to court against God's people, to test our minds, our emotions, and our volition, invisibly and inaudibly. He wants to rob us of our eternal values, cause divorces, and promote immorality, promiscuity, and sensuality. Satan wants men and women to live without responsibility to people and without personal accountability to God.

Paul's Strategy

"For [Paul's] letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10).

The Corinthians accused Paul of writing letters that were "weighty." They labeled him as sarcastic, mean, heavy, and rude. They said, "Your speech is contemptible, unbearable." They told him he didn't know how to communicate

and that when he did, his manner was negative, nasty, and sarcastic. Aware of their complaint Paul said, "But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been throughly made manifest among you in all things" (2 Corinthians 11:6).

There was a strategy in Paul's use of the language. He was an extremely straightforward speaker, powerful in his communication of truth. He rebuked both the Corinthian women who would not submit to their husbands and also the men who would not take headship. Because they were magnifying the gifts above the Giver, Paul approached them with figures of speech to convey a full thought through words that were not only carefully chosen but also precisely placed.*

The Greeks were masters in rhetoric, skillful in the use of language. Paul, well trained in the Scriptures and discourse, pointed to the mystery that many would never understand or receive—Christ *in* you, Christ *for* you, Christ *through* you, the Word of God in you, the Holy Spirit in you. He rebuked them because they ignored his emphasis used in a strategy known as *paraleipsis* (making brief mention of a topic to emphasize by suggestion what is omitted).

Strategies would change depending on the purpose of his communication and the audience who would hear it. Methods known as *epanadiplosis* and *epiphoza* (2 Corinthians 12:11) used purposeful repetition to make a point. Furthermore, by use of a rhetorical question in 2 Corinthians 11:10-11, there was no doubt that Paul loved the Corinthians. He was saying in essence, "I have said what I've said, and I don't apologize—but I said it because I love you!"

Consider the mystery that God has revealed to us. Only during this dispensation of grace—the Church Age—is the Lord Jesus Christ calling out people to be members of His body, His flesh, and His bones (Ephesians 5:30). As we become totally one with Him in spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17), we look to the day when we become His glorious, redeemed Bride in heaven. On earth we are one new man (Ephesians 2:15), an organism in which every member is a cell compacted and fitly framed, each in his proper place, supplying the whole.

**Bullinger, Ethelbert W.* Figures of Speech Used in the Bible *(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House/Revell, 1979)*

Chapter Four

OBJECTIVE LOVE AND SUBJECTIVE LOVE

Consider the qualifications for marriage: I must have *objective love* toward God, which means that God is the object of my love. He is also the source—the One who makes it all happen. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Then, as the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in my heart, I enter into *subjective love* toward people. This means that I am the subject loving, no matter what the object is like. "Love your enemies." "Love one another." That's subjective love.

When a man, as the subject, is so fulfilled with the Holy Spirit, he is able to love with subjective love, regardless of how the object responds. The only objective love, then, has to be of God who motivates subjective love in us.

Once I have understood objective love—

how it motivates me into subjective love with the Holy Spirit shedding God's love abroad in my heart (Romans 5:5)—then the mystery of godliness, the mystery of faith, the mystery of mercy, the mystery of forgiveness, the mystery of patience, and the mystery of kindness all begin to come out of me. The mystery of faith produces and promotes the mystery of unconditional love (meaning others can't see the Source of my love, but that Source is inside me). So, the people in the world just see *me*, loving them, yet I am revealing a *mystery* of godliness.

Marriage Won't Change Me

Someone who is lonely or unhappy, will only double it by getting married. If a man cannot live a mature life by himself, why would he be able to do so by getting married?

When a person tries to be successful without virtue love, he ends up trying to be successful without the ability to succeed. When a person gets married apart from virtue love, he ends up living in need all the time, because marriage does not change people. People are people, and they bring who they are into marriage. Without virtue love, sex becomes promiscuous, licentious, lascivious, and folly.

When we try to settle problems by operating in our emotions, we become irrational. Without doctrine, it is distortion. Without grace, it is perjury. Without wisdom, it is superficial reality. All of these things produce problems.

Many people enter into marriage with pseudo love—false love instead of virtue love. A man may take on *machismo*, a Spanish word that describes an exaggerated masculinity. He takes on a pride complex, while a woman may live in an emotional complex. So you have Mr. Pride Complex with Mrs. Emotional Complex, bringing "who they are" into their marriage. (And they thought *marriage* was going to make everything all right.)

I have discovered that moody people who get married are moody *after* they get married, or even worse. In my forty-five years as a pastor, I have found that when people who are irresponsible in certain areas of their lives get married, they are just as irresponsible after they get married. I've discovered that some men will try to change their wives instead of being changed themselves. Some women try to change their husbands instead of releasing the miracle of a mystery—planned as a secret in eternity past, revealed in this dispensation of grace.

The Counseling Checklist

I think I'll put up a beautiful golden plaque in my office for people to read before I counsel them. The first line will read, *Did you talk to God first?*

The second line will say, *Did you get filled with the Spirit before you came to this appointment?*

The third point will be, *Are you living by every Word of God? or* any *of it?*

The fourth line will ask, *Whose fault is it?* (On second thought, don't tell me.)

Fifth, *Will you accept the provision God gives?*

Sixth, *Will you mix faith with everything that we read from the Word?*

And finally (seventh, for the Finished Work!), *Do you love as Christ loves?*

Not a bad session! The average person will go through the list say, "You know what? Just give me a couple of Scriptures. I think everything is going to be all right."

Outward and Inward Provision

"We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Corinthians 4:9*b*). The angels also desire to look in unto our salvation (1 Peter 1:12). We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers

and rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12).

What I'm trying to do, without being redundant, is to bring Scriptures into the focus of marriage, because marriage was instituted to reveal the mystery of the dispensation of grace.

Satan and his demons have a strategy with a tactical approach to make you fail. God, on the other hand, has given every believer a ministering angel—at least one, according to Hebrews 1:14. These angels are on the outside; they hear every conversation. But Jesus Christ is on the inside, witnessing everything that's going on, along with the Holy Spirit and the Father (John 14:23; 1 Corinthians 6:19). They are witnesses to everything that is happening—in my circumstances and in my heart—at all times.

The problem with our lives has never been our failure; it's what we do about the failure. We are not "failures" just because we have failed. It's what we do about it. If we confess our sins (1 John 1:9), we're doing something about it. And, "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Why should I bring "me" into the marriage? Why should I bring my past into the marriage? Why should I bring my emotional frustrations or my anger into the marriage? Why should I bring Adam into the marriage? My wife didn't marry Adam, or at least she didn't think so.

It's no longer Mr. and Mrs. Adam. It should be Mr. and Mrs. Christ, because of 1 John 4:17*b*, "as he is, so are we in this world." "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). It is "not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). It should be Christ revealing Christ, and God revealing God, through the treasure in our earthen vessels, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

If this is true (and it is), then we have objective love toward God. When the Object of our love died for us on a tree, He sent the Holy Spirit to shed His own love abroad in our hearts as His subjects; and now, we love our neighbors as ourselves. How is this possible? It is only because the Source of our love is now in us, no matter what the object may be like.

The same is true for marriages when one partner has a bad day. The person who is Spirit-

controlled and Spirit-filled has subjective love. That means he's like Christ for *that* day. He doesn't get stirred up. He's not irrational, trying to reason in his emotions. He doesn't rationalize, he doesn't compare himself with others, and he doesn't ask for the other person to change. Rather, he is changed from glory to glory by letting the Spirit and the Word control him (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

He goes from faith to faith (Romans 1:17), and from strength to strength (Psalm 84:7) into new levels of maturity. *That* day, through his co-crucifixion, co-burial, co-resurrection, and co-ascension in Christ, he decreases as God increases, preparing him for the next trial of his faith.

The trial of your faith is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth..." (1 Peter 1:7). That means that your faith is on trial. God gives Satan permission to test your faith. If your faith is *not* on trial, then you're probably not a candidate for eternal rewards. You're no candidate for virtue love—and you're certainly not a candidate to be a witness in heaven's courtroom against Satan in his appeal case.

Jesus wants to use you in His court case. He wants to use you against Satan's defense. Instead of Satan accusing you in his defense, God

wants to accuse him. God wants to show him that he can't touch you—even in his domain—because you have the mystery of godliness and the fruit of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, flowing out of you.

CONCLUSION

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy [Spirit], be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

This benediction in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth is telling us that the Trinity wants to take turns being our provision. The Father wants to take care of anything you need for the plan of your life. Jesus Christ wants to take care of any need you have for a revelation of Himself. The Holy Spirit wants to reveal anything you need to know about the Bible and to guide you into all truth. They all want to participate in covering everything concerning you. They all want to bless you.

The Father wants to bless your plans and purposes. The Son wants to bless your life, give you joy and good health, take care of your needs, and bless your provisions. The Holy Spirit wants to lead you in faith rest as you enjoy being led into all truth.

Aren't you glad that of all the generations in history, *you,* and Christians like you throughout the world, have been chosen to be Jesus Christ's Bride? And aren't you glad you were chosen to become a member of His royal family forever?

When we speak the truth in love, God's people begin to grow up into Christ who is the Head. If God has spoken to you through this booklet, then let the Holy Spirit resolve some issues in your life. Let Him bless you and increase your capacity to live for God's glory.

Father, bless us this week. Help husbands to know that a godly leader is always concerned about those he is leading; that his volition determines his leadership when it's based upon proper values. Help every wife to honor you, Lord. So many people seek honor without virtue love. Others seek wealth without honor or virtue love.

Teach us whatever you want to teach us about these truths. Cover us with your precious Blood. Protect us and guide us this week. Establish intimacy while you still give us autonomy. Establish compatibility in relationships while you still give us a right to live unto you in the light we have received. Balance these truths in our hearts. Protect us, guide us, give us health, and meet all our needs through Calvary; in Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

What Is Your Source?

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

One of most interesting characters in all of the Old Testament is King Solomon. Sometimes spiritual and sometimes worldly, he represents so much about how to function in this world. His life and his writings reveal both the right way and the wrong way to follow after God.

The book of Ecclesiastes is a testimony of the things Solomon went through as he pursued various lifestyles. His wealth was so great that he had everything and did just about everything. Whatever he set his heart to do, he did. This led Solomon down some wrong roads that left him feeling lonely and defeated at the close of his life.

Still, God inspired him to write Ecclesiastes as a warning to those who would lose sight of Jesus Christ, the Source of all blessings. The emptiness and meaninglessness Solomon endured need not be our experience.

This could be one of the most practical book-

lets you may ever read. Take its content to heart, and scores of spiritual possibilities could explode within you as you consider your one true Source of blessing. These thoughts will become spiritual gold for your soul—treasure that goes way beyond earthly gold—if you will choose to receive it.

Chapter One

THE TEST OF PROSPERITY

When Solomon first inherited his kingdom, he prayed for wisdom and he received wisdom from God. He had been taught all kinds of Bible doctrine. The breadth of his kingdom went from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea. The kings and rulers of surrounding nations esteemed him as one of the greatest leaders known to men. Brilliant in business, he taught the Phoenicians how to use their shipping fleets, and those fleets carried on for six hundred years after Solomon was gone.

Every three years during his reign, shipments of gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks arrived in Israel. The peacocks and apes particularly revealed Solomon's boredom at this point in his life. He brought in those creatures for their beauty and for amusement, and here is a great principle: Solomon had grown bored with the beauty and power of doctrine and communing

with the Lord. He made his kingdom so wealthy that silver carried little value in those days. Everything was made out of gold and ivory, including the very throne the king sat on and the shields his soldiers carried. All of the articles and utensils in Solomon's household were crafted out of gold as well.

Distractions and Depression

Solomon reached the spiritual pinnacle of maturity and then failed the impetus test of materialism. How? He forgot the Source of his blessings—Jesus Christ.

This can happen to any Christian anywhere. In marriage, a husband may become insensitive and does not realize the spiritual design of his wife. Then, the wife may become occupied with her husband's neglect. Both parties have forgotten their Source of blessing.

Someone can get very busy with work and become overwhelmed with a heavy schedule. When he begins to feel depressed, he has forgotten his Source.

Others are overwhelmed by the accusations the world promotes against them. Instead of turning to the Source of all blessings for edification, they submit to the enemy's accusations,

and paranoia slowly creeps into their lives.

Foundering in Flattery

Solomon was flattered by everyone. The governors lavished him with gold. Kings and queens came with more gold. He and Hiram—ruler of Tyre—started up their shipping and trade business.

It was said of Solomon, "There is nothing he cannot do." God gave him wisdom. His father, King David, beautifully taught him Bible doctrine. His wonderful mother, Bathsheba, was a godly, intelligent, humble influence on his life, in spite of how she came to be David's wife.

Solomon had everything going for him. Everything, that is, but the joy that comes from the Source of all blessings.

Chapter Two

EMPTY PURSUITS

"The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:1-2).

Solomon's spiritual downfalls did not begin with going after foreign women and their gods. Neither did He turn to wine and pleasure, at first. No, the first thing he went after was an education that did not bring him closer to God—an accumulation of knowledge for the sheer pleasure of the pursuit. That stands as the first and biggest mistake he made in his life.

When Solomon wrote this book, he started it out—oddly enough—with the premise of his conclusion: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

To paraphrase it, the Preacher—or Messenger—sees life as meaningless and empty of purpose. Solomon saw his life as meaningless, as having no purpose, and as a result, he was

empty. What other conclusion could he come to after leaving the Word of God and forgetting his Source, Jesus Christ? He failed the impetus test of success in his life.

At first, the flattery did not trouble him. When Solomon lived according to Bible doctrine, the flattering words of the Queen of Sheba and all the others did not matter to him. Flattery did not touch him as long as he was filled with the Word of God. Flattery, however, began to affect him when he stopped living by the Word.

The Cycle of Hopelessness

First, Solomon started to neglect the Word of God. He neglected the Bible doctrine that his parents so faithfully taught in his youth. Next, neglect developed into resistance toward the Word of God. His volition became negative regarding the instructions from the Word of God. Finally, in the educational and academic sense, he entered into the classroom of Satan, and demonized ideas began to control his life (1 Timothy 4:1). He was a believer so he was not possessed, but demons now exercised great influence over Solomon's decisions because he entered into pursuits that did not involve his Source.

Every young person, every educator, every businessperson should study the book of Ecclesiastes. So much turmoil could be averted by learning the lessons of Solomon's life.

Purposeless Achievements

"What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" (Ecclesiastes 1:3).

Yes, Solomon was a great achiever. And it was certainly all right for him to accomplish his goals and to achieve success. But, after being blessed by God and blessed by his heritage, Solomon began to feel good about his achievements.

The problem was that he did not relate his achievements to prayer and Bible doctrine. He did not glorify God with his achievements. He entered into pride, and from pride he entered into arrogance. His pursuits became empty and without purpose. Having everything, Solomon still attempted to fulfill himself.

Where did this cycle take him? It took him into hopelessness, with no happiness. Life had become useless to him.

Chapter Three

WASTED WISDOM

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.

"The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.

"The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits

"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again" (Ecclesiastes 1:4-7).

Solomon's motto had become something like this: "Life comes, life goes." One thing happens and then another thing happens. You are born, then you die. Another person is born, then he dies. None of it, absolutely none of it, held any meaning for Solomon at this point.

Here was a man rejecting what he knows is true because he is demonized. He had forsaken God's heart. He started out with the magnificent assignment to build the temple, the house of God. But he ended up playing games with his life, going after anything that might have given him temporal happiness, security, or pleasure.

Accumulation of Knowledge

In Ecclesiastes 1:5-7, we see the kind of knowledge Solomon had begun to accumulate. He knew more about meteorology than anyone during this time. Based on his description of the wind patterns, Solomon even recognized that the earth was round: "The wind goes toward the south, and turns about unto the north; it whirls about continually, and the wind returns again according to the circuits." This passage also defines how the high-pressure system flows one way and then the low pressure counteracts it. Then he outlined the principles of evaporation and precipitation and how storms are formed in the atmosphere.

Yet, Solomon compared all of his knowledge to the emptiness he was now feeling. He viewed life as one cycle after another. Apart from the Lord as his Source, he could see no purpose in

any of it. He had the gold, but he could not keep that forever. He had the beautiful palace in Lebanon, but that would not stand forever. He reached one achievement after another, but those achievements ultimately meant nothing to him.

Miserable Works

Life no longer presented a challenge for Solomon. He was becoming frustrated and miserable. Everything to him was just part of a vain, empty cycle. This was one of the wisest, richest men ever to walk the earth. He had it all. As the queen of Sheba confessed when she saw for herself the magnitude of his wealth and wisdom, "The half has not been told" (see 1 Kings 10:4-7).

Oh, how brilliant the wisdom of Solomon, extending in all directions! He had wisdom, wealth, and health. Yet, he neglected his Source and subsequently found himself miserable. He had no desire for God, no hunger and no thirst. He did not even want to talk about the Lord.

God, in the meantime, never forgot His covenant toward Solomon (2 Chronicles 13:5).

Chapter Four

CHOOSE THE WAY OF ETERNAL PURPOSE

"All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

"Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

"There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

"I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

"And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given

to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.

"I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

"That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

"I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

"And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

"For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Ecclesiastes 1:8-18).

Here we see the beginning of Solomon's self-centered adventure. He admitted his disrespect for the great godly men of the past. Their conclusions meant nothing to him. Everything was as emptiness.

As Spirit-filled Christians, we *do* care about great men. We care about what they did and what they have given us to live by. We do care about the great men in our midst and the great

things they will do in the future.

Solomon did not seem to care because he saw everything from the viewpoint of his old sin nature. The old sin nature always frustrates a person's capacity for life. Caught in a web of self-centered academic presumption, speculation, and experiments, he embarked on a cycle of searching, discovery, experience, and frustration—all because he had forsaken the Lord as his Source of blessing.

All this left Solomon without an eternal purpose for living. He ignored having fellowship with God and with God's people. He left behind a great wealth of Bible doctrine he had received from David and Bathsheba, his father and mother.

The Holy Spirit endowed Solomon with amazing wisdom. Sadly, the test of being the greatest man in the world was a test that he could not pass.

Right Responses, Right Results

What does this mean for us practically? Really, the message of Ecclesiastes vibrates with vigor and sensitivity from God. It reveals how lost to our purpose we can become without the Source of blessing, Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we are products of our volitional decisions toward God.

We are not products of our past.

We are not products of our culture.

We are not products of our family situation.

We are not products of any relationship.

We are not products of our circumstances.

I may have been the victim of molestation or rape, but that does not have to control who I am today, because I have the Source of all blessing. I may have been given up for adoption, never to know my real father or mother; but that does not have to affect my purpose. Furthermore, it won't, as long as I remember that Jesus Christ is my Source. If my husband is having an affair, or if my wife leaves the house in a mess all the time, my mindset still must be Jesus Christ. By recognizing Him as my Source at all times, I am established in the grace of God.

Living in Love's Motivation

By seeing Christ as my Source, I can be motivated with the love of the Holy Spirit. I can have Christ's precise life in the power of God's grace, love, and mercy. I can enter into the eternal purpose of glorifying God in everything and in all I do. He *is* all and He is *in* all.

Whatever circumstance I am in, whatever situation I am in, whatever is happening in my life, I do all things through Christ and thus I glorify Him. Some things could cause me to withdraw into my emotions. But the Holy Spirit has taught us that at this moment, because of our Source, Jesus Christ, we glorify God by grace through faith, simply by resting in His love.

Always remember this:

God is in control.

God is on the Throne.

God is within us.

God is our final authority.

God is our Source of blessing.

CONCLUSION

A wife does not have to be right with God for a husband to be happy. A husband does not have to be right with God for a wife to be happy. Why? Our Source is beyond us and our situation.

Success in business cannot fulfill me, though I thank God that I can use my business success to glorify Him. Relationships cannot bring happiness. I do not need them. I do not need children in order to be happy. I will thank God if He gives me children, but I do not need them.

We have the Source of all blessings, and He is waiting to bless us, waiting to give us everything we need and many of the things we want. If we receive God's promises in faith and respond to Him in prayer, our desire will be to be like Him. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15*a*). Believe and receive from the Source of all blessings. You will never regret it.

What Spirit Are You Of?

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

To take on a spirit means to take on another personality. When Peter said that if he had anything to do with it, Jesus would not go to the Cross, it wasn't Peter speaking. Jesus answered him, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:23). Scores of words that people say are not God's words. They are Satan's words about situations.

Thank God that He freely gives us His Holy Spirit. With that Spirit comes discernment, wisdom, and all the fruit spoken of in Galatians 5:22-23.

This booklet shows how people can so easily be influenced by spirits that are not of God. It also reveals the truth about the Comforter—the Holy Spirit of God. He is always there to guide, to convict of truth, and to reveal the Father's heart to everyone who receives Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Chapter One

EVERYONE TAKES ON SOMEBODY'S SPIRIT

"And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us.

"And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us" (Luke 9:49-50).

"And when his disciples James and John saw [how the people rejected Jesus], they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

"But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

"For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. *And they went to another village*" (Luke 9:54-56).

In Job 26:4, Job reproved the uncharitable spirit of his "friend" Bildad. "To whom hast thou uttered words? and *whose spirit came from*

thee?" In 1 Samuel 2:2, Hannah went to the temple where the ark of God was. There she prayed for a child and said, "There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God." Hannah took on the spirit of God, and He answered her prayer by giving her a son.

But according to 1 Samuel 2:12, "the sons of Eli [(Hophni and Phineas)] were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD." It is just that plain: Eli's family did not know God, and they were rebellious against Him.

God challenged Eli in I Samuel 2:29*a*, saying, "Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me…?" In the end, the ark of God's presence was taken by the Philistines, both of Eli's sons were slain, and Eli—stiff-necked and overweight—fell over and died of a broken neck (1 Samuel 4:18).

Everybody takes on somebody's spirit. And even though he was a spiritual leader for Israel, Eli took on the spirit of his sons.

God's Spirit Is Light

First Corinthians 2:12 says, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit

which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

"(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all [divine] goodness and righteousness and [categorical] truth;)

"Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

"For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in [darkness].

"But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Ephesians 5:8-13).

What does God use to reveal truth? The answer isn't what we think. It is *light*. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130). That light is the Word of God and the spirit of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the apostle Paul said, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as [unwise], but as wise,

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:14-16). This is so true: The

days are infected with evil, with Satan as the god of this world and as the prince of the air.

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17). In other words, do not be a person who does not think in the light of God, but be one who understands experientially what the will of God is.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the [Holy] Spirit;

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the [reverence] of God" (Ephesians 5:18-21).

Eternal Darkness: The Absence of God's Light

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

There are people in hell this minute, crying because they never accepted the Light of God, the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:9).

Every moment of our lives, we are living in

some kind of a spirit—either God's or Satan's. Each moment we breathe, the issue is not flesh, and it is not blood. The issue is that we take on a spirit. And whether it is because of our training from the past, ignorance regarding the present, or lack of obedience to what we know, if we do not operate in the Holy Spirit, we take on another spirit.

What manner of spirit are you of? Is it materialism? carnality? fulfilling lust patterns? Or have you taken on the spirit of God, Jesus Christ, heaven, understanding, wisdom, and counsel (Isaiah 11:2)?

Eli took on the spirit of his two sons because, he thought, "Those little darlings wouldn't lie!" But the Bible says they were sons of Belial (see Deuteronomy 13:13), and they knew not God (1 Samuel 2:12).

Imagine the scene on the mount of transfiguration: Moses and Elijah with Jesus, in glorified bodies, looking down at what was going on upon the earth. In Matthew 17:3, Peter, John, and James were there as witnesses.

Our loved ones who are already in heaven see everything they wish to look at (that God permits) through the crystal sea (Revelation 4:6; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Hebrews 12:1). They are more

alive than we are, because we are in bodies of death. They are more alive because they don't ever have to face physical death again. Just think of it! Our loved ones, who are finally in heaven never have to face death and never have to deal with sin ever again.

Contrast that with the people who are alive in hell, who will never have another chance. They pray, they plead, and they ask God to send someone to evangelize their family, but they know it is too late for them (Luke 16:27). Can you comprehend that?

Perfected Because of a Perfect Plan

We did not earn it, and we did not deserve it, but we are going to heaven. This is the plan of God. We rejoice in *all* things, knowing that the perfect plan of God allows many sad things to happen. It is a perfect plan because we end up perfected. What's more, once we are saved we become positionally perfect all during our lives.

That is why God's plan is perfect. It is not perfect because of what happens. It is perfect because of what God has done for us and because God works all things together for our eternal good. Pleasure is not the issue. Materialism is not the issue. The fact that we are Blood-bought

children of God and members of Jesus Christ's eternal family is the issue, along with the fact that nobody can take away from us what we have been given by God.

Chapter Two

CHOOSE WHICH SPIRIT YOU WILL SERVE

These are the most serious days for a pastor. More compromise goes on today than at any time in the history of the Christian church.

Some teach that there will be a great revival in the Last Days, but the Word of God teaches that there will be perilous times (2 Timothy 3). The Bible says in Matthew 24:12 that the love of many will wax cold. According to Luke 18, there will hardly be such a thing as faith when Christ comes back.

When Joel 2 speaks of the abundance that will come in the last days, it is speaking of the Holy Spirit who would be sent as recorded in the Book of Acts. At the end of the book of Revelation, when Jesus Christ comes to the Mount of Olivet, the Hebrew nation will see the nail scars in His hands, and then they will believe. They will mourn until the spirit spoken of in Joel

comes upon them like a flood in their mourning.

The Word of God says "walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16). We are to walk in the Holy Spirit, and that is so crucial.

The Spirit of God

The Holy Spirit is God's spirit, revealed in the love of God and the grace of God. Zechariah 12:10 calls Him "the spirit of grace." Galatians 4:6 speaks of the Spirit of the Son. Philippians 1:19 speaks of the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Romans 8:15 says we have received the Spirit of adoption. Romans 5:5 says that God's love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:32 reveals the spirit of forgiveness, while Isaiah 11:2 and 3 refers to Him as the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, and of knowledge and reverence toward God. In Romans 1:4-5, when we received Christ, we received the spirit of holiness for obedience, and we have the same spirit of faith (2 Corinthians 4:13).

When we walk in the Holy Spirit, we are walking in God's life. We have amazing protection, indescribable provision, unfathomable wisdom, perfect peace, and divine guidance, in Romans 8:14. Romans 8:2 tells us about the law

of the Spirit of life that overcomes the law of sin and death. John 10:10*b* calls it an abundant life.

That is why I plead with you as a friend, ministering for the sake of edification and not for your destruction (2 Corinthians 10:8)—I plead with you to be confessed up-to-date and walk in the Spirit.

In Acts 2:4, all the Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit. Colossians 4:5 speaks of the spirit of wisdom. To have the spirit of holiness (Romans 1:4) means to be separated completely unto God through the Cross. In 1 John 3:16, it is the spirit of sacrificial love for one another to the extent that we would literally lay down our lives for one another.

In Matthew 14:14 and 15:32, there was a spirit of compassion. In 1 Timothy 5:22, God imparts the spirit of purity, "for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ephesians 5:9).

Paul said, "I have not only preached the Word unto you, but I have affectionately imparted my own life" (see 1 Thessalonians 2:8).

Satan's Spirit

Satan, on the other hand, also uses his spirits to influence mankind.

Satan tries to bring a spirit of heaviness into our lives (Isaiah 61:3*b*) so that the love of the Father is not abounding in our hearts.

According to Luke 13:11, Satan tries to bring a spirit of sickness to people. For eighteen years that woman was bent over with a terrible illness. She was a good woman; her life was clean. But she took on a spirit of sickness—and it wasn't from God. For eighteen years she lived with a physical sickness that did not come from God.

Satan gives some people the spirit of the world, which is revealed in the way they dress, the way they spend their money, and the pleasures that make them happy. It is the spirit of the world (1 Corinthians 2:12).

Second Chronicles 18:21-22 says that Satan brings in a spirit of lying. He entices people into a "group" spirit, so that they always stay in their own little social circle and show respect to some more than others.

Proverbs 13:20 says, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools [—people who don't think—] will be destroyed." That is true with so many young people.

In Job 13:9, regarding his relatives and his friends, Job said, "You hang around mockers, so

you have a mocking spirit toward me." But in Job 26:4, he said, "You don't know where that spirit is coming from." Numbers 5:14 mentions a spirit of jealousy.

Identify Personality Traits

These spirits are personalities. Their method equals one person taking over another person. These spirits are demons (Matthew 17), and they take on people from the day they are born. Often, nobody detects it, and therefore it is never dealt with.

In 1 Kings 21:25, Ahab took on the spirit of Jezebel. He took on the spirit of his influential, powerful, wicked wife—and he was a king!

In Genesis 12:10-13, Abraham told Sarah to lie to King Abimelech, and she lied. First he lied, and then she took on the spirit of her husband. Genesis 20:2 says the same thing about Abraham lying again. But in Genesis 26:7, Isaac took on the spirit of his father, Abraham. He lied to King Abimelech's men and said that his wife was his sister.

As in the illustration of Eli the priest, parents often take on the spirit of their rebellious children. As with King Ahab and Jezebel, a husband may take on the spirit of an influential wife. As

with Abraham and Sarah or Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10), a wife may take on the spirit of her husband when he is wrong. As with David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2-4), a woman will take on the spirit of a man she is attracted to and sin with him. She takes on an unclean spirit. That spirit is Satan.

I swear to you in tears, I plead with you to pay attention to what God is saying: That spirit is of Satan. And how did Jesus deal with that spirit when it was presented to Him through one of His disciples? He rebuked it, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:23).

Members of a family may begin to take on spirits that destroy the family unit in their relationship to God.

Do Not Compromise Godly Convictions

A church will take on the spirit of their pastor when he doesn't preach the whole counsel of God, when he is legalistic, when he doesn't give invitations at the end of the service—just so he can draw large crowds.

Instead of taking on the spirit of listening to the Word and living by every Word of God through Christ, emotional people take on the spirit of emotionalism.

Hosea chapter 4 shows how some people take on the spirit of whoredoms.

As a pastor, I must tell the truth. I learned a long time ago that the fear of a man is a snare (Proverbs 29:25). Therefore, I cannot compromise the truth to avoid offending some people in the church.

Then there are people that take on the spirit of God's love (John 15:12) and the spirit of God's righteousness through the Word of God (2 Peter 1:4). They take on the spirit of integrity (Psalm 26:11), the spirit of joy (John 15:11), the spirit of honor (1 Timothy 5:17; Romans 12:10), and a spirit of power with God and with men (Acts 1:8).

Chapter Three

CAST DOWN PROJECTIONS, STAND FAST IN FAITH

Satan's full-time work is to send projections. He projects according to people's wants and needs. He projects according to people's training. He projects according to people's failure and tries to convince them that they can't be delivered.

Satan is always trying to make people take on his projections. Women will swear before God that they are right in their subjectivity. Men will become guilty and unnecessarily be ashamed of projections that they don't have to be ashamed of—unless they start entertaining them and fulfilling them.

A domineering husband will be used to send projections to the wife. When their parents give them standards, children will send projections that they are being mistreated and that they do not have the liberty to live a normal life.

We must not take on the spirits that Satan projects. Thank God that we do not need to receive projections. I will not be defeated today, because I refuse to accept the spirit of defeat.

There was a beautiful lady named Abigail, in 1 Samuel 25. David wanted to kill her husband, Nabal, who denied David and his men provisions and was terribly ungracious. But Abigail said, "Let God deal with him." (See 1 Samuel 25:25-26.) In the end, David was deeply blessed because he took Abigail's advice, and he took on her spirit of wisdom.

In Numbers 14:24, Caleb had "another spirit with him"—a spirit which was of God, which two and a half million of the nation of Israel did not have. They received projections of defeat.

In Deuteronomy 34:9, Joshua was "full of the spirit of wisdom," and like Caleb, he stood firm on the promises of God (Joshua 1:3-6).

In Acts 6:5, Stephen was full of faith and wisdom and power because he made a decision to live in God's Spirit.

The Spirit of the Age

There is a spirit of the age that works in children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2). It starts in very slowly. It begins by just giving in a little,

and then giving in a little more, until finally you justify your behavior. Reaction is followed by stubbornness, and then rebellion. Ephesians 4:27 says, "Neither give place to the devil." When Satan has a place in the life of a person who refuses to get right, then God may take him home early, even though he is born again (1 John 5:16).

The disciples had already seen Jesus Christ twice in His post-Resurrection revelation, so they knew that everything they believed about Him was true.

But Peter had taken on the spirit of shame. He took on the spirit of guilt because he denied knowing the Lord, and he couldn't accept the spirit of forgiveness. So at the Sea of Tiberias, along with several other disciples, Peter said, "I'm going fishing" (see John 21:3).

In Luke 5:5-10, Peter was told never to go fishing again, except to go fishing for men. Still, he said, "I'm going fishing," and every man that was with him took on Peter's spirit. They all got into the boat, and they all disobeyed God, including John, who referred to himself several times as the one whom Jesus loved.

Earlier, John had said to Jesus about some other people who were preaching, "Those people are not with us, and I forbade them to use

Jesus' name in casting out demons" (Luke 9:49).

But Jesus said, "They are not against us, so leave them alone."

Redemption's Story

In Luke 9:54, John made another impulsive statement when he and James wanted to call fire down from heaven. They had taken on the spirit of Satan to destroy lives, but Jesus said, "I didn't come to destroy lives, but to save lives."

The most beautiful thing about that story is found in Luke 9:56: *"And they went to another village."* Those disciples went soul winning again! Instead of destroying lives as John and James wanted to do, they went to the next village to proclaim the Good News.

The fruit of the Spirit is revealed in faith obedience. It is in becoming a living manifestation of the Word of God through our lives (2 Corinthians 3:2, 3).

The fruit of the Spirit is manifested when we can say, "Here I am, God. I may not be able to give You a lot, but I'm giving You everything I can, and I love You with all of my heart. If I fail, I love You just as much, and I know that Your love never changes. I hate everything about my sin when I do fail."

You see, in Acts 4:31, 32 and Acts 2:1 the disciples were in one place, with one accord, one soul, one heart, one spirit. They had no division, no mocking spirit, no criticism. God's Spirit was moving among them.

And in Acts 17:6, they turned the world upside down—the wicked, careless, slothful, evil world. These men that were called ignorant and unlearned (Acts 4:13) along with a few godly women turned the world upside down *while* they were being persecuted, placed in jail, hated, and lied about. They turned the world upside down.

Peter would die for the faith. The apostle Paul would die for the faith. James and Thomas would die for the faith. They lived for God and died for God, and each of them went to heaven with the martyr's crown.

They had a single eye and their whole body became filled with the light (Matthew 6:22). They hated worldliness. They hated the things that were in the world (1 John 2:15). The love of God the Father was inside their hearts, moving, motivating, ministering, leading, guiding, and living through them. And that is exactly what God wants from His children.

CONCLUSION

The apostle Paul said, "Some preach a Jesus that we have not preached. They have received a spirit that we haven't received. They accept a gospel that we have not accepted" (see 2 Corinthians 11:4). Another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel.

Some people are so preoccupied with who they are on earth, they don't know what it is like to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We need to live knowing that any one of us could be called to meet God at any moment—and no one is excluded from that possibility.

Romans 8:15 talks about the spirit of bondage, but Galatians 5:1 talks about the spirit of liberty. And when the Wicked—the antichrist—is revealed, the Lord will consume him with the spirit of His mouth (see 2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Psalm 107:20 and Jeremiah 17:14 speak about the spirit of healing. Romans 12:1-2 speaks of the spirit of renewal and the importance of

being conformed to Christ and not to this world.

In 1 Peter 4:14, we are given the spirit of glory so we can live completely in the Finished Work, practically speaking, using rebound when we fail. And in 1 Corinthians 4:21, Galatians 6:1, He has given us the spirit of meekness.

In Psalm 22:3, God inhabits the praises of His people, and He has given us the garment of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3).

That is what God desires for all of us, not just for pastors and leaders. Not one of us is any better than another, and God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34).

Heavenly Father, have Your way in our lives. Let us know what spirit we really are of. We come as sinners, growing, who desire to grow with You and to watch You do great things in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

What's Going Into

Your Heart?

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about the spiritual meaning of the heart. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible directly speaks of the heart in eight hundred seventy-six verses; therefore, it must be an important subject to God. Most explanations concerning the heart, however, are limited and tend to deal with the affections of the emotions attached to the heart. This reveals a great misunderstanding of what God established the heart to be.

Simply put, the heart is the premise for all motivational thinking, the basis for all human operation, and the supreme center for all communication, feelings, and decisions. The content of our hearts drives our responses and reactions. That is why it is vital that we fill our hearts with the Word of God. If we do, we will have godly, Spirit-filled substance for our lives. Then, the Holy Spirit is enabled to govern our decisions because we have allowed truth to be hidden in

our inner parts.

This booklet, which examines the first ten verses of Colossians 1, is designed to motivate us to think with the Word of God, for it is by thinking upon and receiving the Word of Truth that our hearts gain substance. Our prayer is that this message will help us to develop habits of thinking God's thoughts *into* our hearts where they can be applied and become the bread of life for us.

Chapter One

GROUNDED IN GRACE BY THINKING WITH GOD

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you" (Colossians 1:1-3).

The apostle Paul was appointed by God to preach the Gospel, build churches, and teach men how to think with God. He addressed this letter to all "the saints" at Colosse. Every born-again believer is a saint, holy and set apart unto the Lord. In God's eyes, we were made saints the moment we received Christ as our Savior.

Next, the apostle Paul writes, "Grace be unto you, and peace…." Paul understood that every-

one could use grace and peace, so he included these in his greeting. Then, he gave thanks to "God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" for those who had come to believe in Christ. It is a beautiful thing to give thanks for *every* member of the congregation, including those who are struggling. Why? I have never walked in their shoes. I don't have their genetic dispositions. I do not necessarily understand their pain or the heartaches they have encountered in life. I do know that we have been called into one body and we stand in an even place at the Cross. Not one of us deserves the gift of grace, and every one of us depends on the mercy of God to stand.

In his greeting, Paul spoke of God as "the Father" because he wanted to emphasize the important reality of our spiritual family. I love to talk with young people and hear them say something nice about their fathers and mothers. I remember a great service when I preached a special sermon about the importance of honoring our parents. Afterwards, hundreds of people went straight home and called their parents, to love them and thank them. God understood His own authority as a father and the sacrifice of love that was required. Therefore, He made the family structure on earth a sacred institution to

be honored and protected with our lives (Exodus 20:12).

Then, Paul wrote that he was "praying always" for them. What a great statement! Paul was letting the Colossians know that his prayers were with them. We have instituted morning prayer meetings. Six days a week, a group of us gathers in our chapel to pray for all the activities in our ministry and for other ministries. Every pew and every seat is prayed over. We ask God to move by His Spirit and to heal individuals. We pray for the leadership in our city, our state, and our nation, and we pray for other countries. Great things are happening. We need to give thanks instead of criticizing, and then trust God to answer our prayers.

The Power of a Vision

"Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

"Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth" (Colossians 1:4-6).

I am often overwhelmed at what God has done. There is no way a man or a group of men can take the good news of the Gospel into all the world on their own. This type of work requires the involvement of the whole Church. It takes affiliated churches, and it takes Christians everywhere.

We sent our first overseas team to Finland more than twenty-five years ago. God spoke to our hearts and led us there. That ministry has reproduced itself again and again. When the communist bloc fell in Eastern Europe, the Finnish Christians were already in places that other people could never go. Suddenly, they were free to share the Gospel openly; and ever since, God has continued to move there freely.

God put this vision in our hearts, and obedience put the vision into motion. God leads our hearts to expand our love for our Jerusalem, just as we extend our love to our Judaea, to Samaria, even to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Chapter Two

THE HEART OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER

"As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; (Colossians 1:7).

What a thing it must have been for Epaphras to see his name here, in the letter Paul was writing to the whole church at Colosse. Paul called him a "fellowservant." What a reputation to have in the heart of an apostle. "Fellowservant" meant that Epaphras served the Lord Jesus within the church and submitted to its table of organization. He labored to knit together the members of the Body of Christ.

Epaphras is also called a "faithful minister"—a very strong commendation from the apostle Paul. More than a minister, he was known as a *faithful* minister. In the Greek text, the phrasing indicates that Epaphras was always present and active to serve—one who was always there to

lead, to pray, to witness, to study, and to preach. He was faithful to care for individuals and to weep with those who were weeping. His heart was filled with God's love.

Seeing the Needs

"Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit" (Colossians 1:8).

"Your love" speaks of the love of God operating through the influence of the Holy Spirit. "Declared" in the Greek grammatical structure is an aorist active participle of the verb *deloo*. It refers to an action that started in the past and is continuing in the present. Simply, Paul was saying that the love of the Colossians was being manifested continually and had been evident to him for some time, based on what Epaphras communicated to him.

The love of God is not an impulse springing from the emotions. This love operates under the Holy Spirit's influence. It is a spiritual condition of the heart. This love spends itself not only by loving the lovely or deserving; it spends itself by loving everyone. This love is truly interested in people and seeks the welfare of all.

Recently, a precious woman went home to heaven, and we spent some time with the family.

One relative came to the house, and God moved my heart for him. I had an opportunity to talk with this man and we both were left weeping.

"That's the first time anyone ever wept with me," he said.

God brought him into the room to pour his heart out to me. What a precious opportunity God gave me, to share what He had put into my heart.

Chapter Three

THINK TRUTH INTO YOUR HEART

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:9-10).

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not

with thee" (Proverbs 23:7).

"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:30).

Most of the time, the heart is labeled as the seat of our affections. That is a shallow definition that exposes a lack of thinking.

The heart is the premise for all motivational thinking with Christ. It reflects the precise light of the impartation of the divine nature through the exceeding precious promises of God. The heart is the basis for all human operation in the application of God's precise thoughts. The decisions of the will are made in the heart, and it is the place where methods are established to produce control of the mind.

The mind directs the attitude of the soul as it receives divine information from God's Word. Then, the conscience begins to control and direct the will. To be Spirit-filled, a person must receive doctrine by *thinking* it into his heart. This means that through proper training and the Holy Spirit's control, you can receive truth into your

heart as a foundation from which to live.

The Heart Process

Here is how the heart works. We hear the Word of God. Then, we begin to think upon it and focus on specific areas of it. We meditate on the truth, churning it over and over in the mind until the milk (1 Peter 2:2) becomes butter (Proverbs 30:33). Then we masticate the words of truth, thoroughly chewing and breaking down the Word we have received so it can be assimilated and it becomes nourishment to our soul. Next, the truth we have received is circulated and taken into our hearts. We keep thinking and thinking, churning and churning, until the truth is established in the place where it can be used in my life.

Consider prayer. I think upon what the Bible says about it. I recall messages I have heard about prayer. I remember books written about it. I reflect some more. I consider the privilege, the provision, and the power that prayer brings to my life.

Recently, I began to think about prayer more specifically. When I recognize that certain thoughts on God's heart have not yet entered into my heart, I keep thinking, meditating, mas-

ticating, and assimilating. Finally, this process of thinking brings the truth into my heart, as it makes the truth a reality.

I do the same with love for my wife. I think about her. I think about what our love has produced. Then, I think about it some more. I think about what this love means to me. This is a spiritual understanding of the will of God. The love I have for my wife has gone from my mind into my heart, and I express it in my actions.

Children who have no respect for their parents are children who have never *thought* the value of their parents' lives into their hearts. Their love isn't right. There is love in their minds and in their emotions. But, this love must be thought into the heart.

People plagued by depression are those who, generally speaking, have not thought victory, grace, and peace into their hearts. Sure, these are ideas in their minds, but that is where the thoughts have stopped. Anxiety comes in because thoughts of victory and healing have never progressed beyond the mind. Even healing, which may or may not be God's will, must be thought through into the heart.

Take forgiveness, for example. If I need to forgive someone, I must keep thinking God's

thoughts about forgiveness. I consider His thoughts and reconsider them some more. Eventually, because of consistent thinking, I think forgiveness into my heart. After that, forgiveness is what comes out of me toward others.

Truth Warms the Heart

"…Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

Notice that the disciples spoke of their hearts burning within them. It wasn't their heads or their minds that were affected. Their hearts burned because of what they had thought into them.

The world has adjusted itself and refuses to think things through *into* the heart. Satan uses busy lives and strange schedules to stop Christians from thinking with God. The devil does everything in his power to hinder the process of thinking things into our hearts. Hell's goal is to have bitterness seep into minds and stay there, where it can seep out into the emotions and poison exchanges between people.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

The issues of life belong to the heart. Consis-

tently thinking God's thoughts will establish truth in our hearts. Consequently, our healthy hearts will feed our minds and control our emotions, taking care of the conscience and overruling any self-consciousness, while directing our volition to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19).

CONCLUSION

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).

The things of God have to be thought into our hearts. We have to keep thinking about serving until service gets into our hearts. We have to think about worshipping God until worship has settled into our hearts.

Oh, how God wants His thoughts to be thought into our hearts. Let's focus on the pure, lovely, and honest things God has communicated to us. Once these things have made it into our hearts, then they will be reflected and circulated through our entire being as we manifest who God is, in this evil world.

Whatsoever You Do—

Glorify God

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, in a place called Littleton, Colorado, another American community was terrorized as two teenagers opened fire on their classmates, murdering and wounding several people before killing themselves. Among those killed was Cassie Bernall, who was shot when she confessed that she was a Christian. Students with whom she had shared the gospel knew about her convictions and saw the price she was willing to pay. Because of her testimony, many received Christ in the days that followed. In her life, as in her death, God was glorified. We also need to glorify God in our daily walk, as Cassie did.

As Christians, the solution to the problems of our nation begins with us. Jesus Christ said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32), speaking of how His death on the cross would glorify God and fulfill the Trinity's eternal purpose.

We have an eternal purpose also. God has called us by His grace to reveal His Son in us (Galatians 1:15-16). When the Cross of Christ is lifted up in our lives, we acknowledge who He is, and we manifest His life. This brings Him glory and ultimately wins the lost.

In this booklet, we will see how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit interact in a manner that reflects the perfect nature of God. Each member of the Trinity shares absolute unity and authority that leads by example: loving, giving, honoring, and serving one another. When we receive the nature of the Trinity and allow the Lord to manifest His life in us, God is glorified.

God desires to speak to us heart-to-heart. Each of us has a solemn and sacred responsibility to communicate what is inspired from heaven. Only God, however, can illuminate what He has inspired. He must reveal in us a living faith that recognizes His authority. By the living Word, which is the quick and powerful two-edged sword of the Spirit, we are changed from living in soulish self-consciousness to living in God-consciousness in our human spirit. Let these thoughts permeate and penetrate as we hunger and thirst after God.

Chapter One

THE SON GLORIFIES THE FATHER

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you..... A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father" (John 16:13-16).

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine

own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:31-33).

The Son Did Nothing of Himself

Among the most precious things revealed in the Word of God is this:

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the Creator of the universe. By Him, all things consist. He holds all things together by the Word of His power (see Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:3). And yet, considering the dilemma of sinful men, He became a man. Jesus, in His hypostatic union, was both God and man. But this fact is so sacred and precious: *As a man, Jesus never did a thing unless He heard from the Father.* We cannot take this lightly. This is more than knowledge; it is a revelation of the very character of God.

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

In John 5:30, Jesus was saying, "I do not speak unless I listen and hear first from My Father. I do not say a word that the Father does not tell me to say."

This makes me want to get down on my knees this moment and pray, "Oh, Lord, please

help me to do this also."

The Father Doeth the Works

The One who created the universe became a ransom for many. That glorified the Father. And that is how Jesus was thinking every moment He was on earth.

Jesus said that "the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10*b*). I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29*b*).

Romans 15:3 says that "even Christ pleased not Himself."

Picture Jesus Christ as He grew up to do the Father's business (see Luke 2:49). He did not have an old sin nature, but He did have a free volition. He chose to say, "I am not going to think outside of You, Father. I will be with You in prayer always. I will be in the midst of sinners, but I will not say anything, think anything, or feel anything apart from what You speak to Me." Thus, Jesus Christ could say in John 17:4, "Father, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do, and I have *glorified* thee."

"Glorified" is *doxazo* in the Greek text, meaning to acknowledge and manifest and bring to

light the dignity, value, and nature of a person. Because Jesus glorified the Father, He could say to His disciple Philip, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father" (see John 14:8-9). When Jesus wept in Luke 19:41—that was the Father's heart revealed; He wept because the Father was weeping. When He groaned at Lazarus' tomb, that was the Father groaning and weeping (John 11:34-38). Everything Jesus did was to glorify God the Father.

To the woman taken in adultery, Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). But, it was the Father who first said to Him, "Tell her that I don't condemn her." When Jesus spoke angrily to the Pharisees, it was the Father telling Him what to say at that moment. He gave Jesus the exact words to speak.

The Father sent His Son who voluntarily came, glorifying the Father, becoming a ransom for the lost (John 10:17-18).

Chapter Two

THE SPIRIT GLORIFIES THE SON

At His tomb, Jesus told Mary Magdalene to tell the disciples, "I ascend to My Father and your Father" (John 20:17). The Holy Spirit, who is God, with the Father, resurrected the body of Jesus Christ. Jesus' humanity depended on the Father *and* the Spirit (Romans 1:4; 6:4).

As I think of the Trinity in the solemn and sacred throne room of my heart, the realization unfolds to me as to why our words on earth should be few—for we are on earth and God is in heaven (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

The Holy Spirit does not wish to speak of Himself. In John 16:13-15, Jesus reveals the nature of the Holy Spirit: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all [doctrine]: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.... He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine,

and shall shew it unto you. All things the Father hath are mine."

I can picture the Holy Spirit saying, "I don't want to talk about Me—I want to glorify the Son, Jesus Christ. It was Jesus who died. He bled; He suffered; He bore the sins of the world upon His human body. It was Jesus who became a man. I don't want to talk about Myself. Furthermore, I will not speak unless I hear Him tell Me what to say."

This is how the divine table of organization operates. We could learn so much from the Trinity if we wanted to be real.

Led into Servanthood

In John 16, the Son said, "I only do what I see the Father do. As I hear, I judge," and the Holy Spirit said, "As I hear, I speak."

Again and again, the Word of God instructs us to hear properly: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the LORD" (Jeremiah 22:29); "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken" (Isaiah 1:2*a*). Psalm 44 speaks of the doctrine of hearing.*

Here, we have a great picture of how the Son glorifies the Father: Jesus exalts His Father's character; He manifests His nature. Christ ac-

knowledges the dignity and value of the Father's position as the first Person in the Trinity. Then, the Holy Spirit comes and manifests the dignity and value of the Son, the second Person in the Trinity. The Spirit magnifies and exalts the Son above Himself.

The Spirit now wants us to glorify God in our bodies, for our bodies belong to Him. As temples of the Holy Spirit, we are not our own; we have been bought and paid for with a great price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Now the Word of God comes into our lives to direct our thinking, speaking, and living.

Jesus provides such a beautiful lesson in Matthew 20:26-28. He said, "Let him that is chief among you be your servant." The greatest among us will always be willing to serve. "For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many."

The Lord Jesus said to us, "I have glorified the Father. The Holy Spirit glorified Me. Now, I want you to glorify Me through the Holy Spirit's power. I want you to be changed into the same image of My character from glory to glory through the mirror of God's Word, even as by the Spirit" (see 2 Corinthians 3:18)

Therefore, we must be filled with the Spirit continually. We must walk in the Spirit. The foundation of our entire life must be the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God dwelling richly in us. My purpose on earth is this: "Whatsoever I do, whether I eat or drink, I do all to glorify God" (see 1 Corinthians 10:31). This is a great and holy privilege.

So many are doing this as they minister overseas. And many here in their home areas, as they work so hard, minister diligently. Let me encourage you to pray for each other, and always remember that "whosoever offereth praise glorifies God" (Psalm 50:23).

Glorify God for the mercy He has given (Romans 15:9). God, help us to exalt You, magnify You, honor You, and reveal You for the mercy You have given. Glorify God with one mind and one mouth (Romans 15:6).

Glorify God in the fire (Isaiah 24:15). When you are in the fire of sickness, the fire of need, or the fire of pain and rejection, glorify Him. When you have prayed, yet you go through the fire of not experiencing your heart's desire, glorify Him. When you are suffering because you are a Christian—like Cassie Bernall and others who have given their lives for Christ—glorify God

(1 Peter 4:16).

By the power of the Spirit, we can magnify Him in our souls, whether by life or death (Philippians 1:20). Pray for each other, that we will magnify Him in these last days. This is our hour. We are living in a very late season of human history. No one knows how much time we have left on this earth. We do know this: Let him that is chief among you be a servant (Mark 10:43-44). We also know that the last shall be first (Mark 10:31).

Don't compete in your marriage. Don't continue to argue, living by the sword but not by the Spirit.** As a husband, a wife, a single person, a teenager—whoever you are, glorify God. I plead with you to glorify God. This is why we are here. As Paul wrote, "I am here to reveal Christ in me" (see Galatians 1:15-16).

**For more about the doctrine of hearing, we suggest the following booklets by Pastor Carl H. Stevens:* God Speaking to Us—What a Miracle *and* Comforted by the Voice of God, *Grace Publications, 1997.*

***Read The Inseparable Power: The Sword and the Spirit, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Three

MAGNIFY GOD BY THE WORD THAT DWELLS RICHLY

The Father gives all judgment back to the Son (John 5:22). Then, the Father gives the Son the Church, which will be His Bride for all eternity in the New Jerusalem (see Revelation 19:7-11). Every member of the Trinity is continually giving—to each other and to us. The Father gives us the Son; the Son glorifies the Father; the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son. Now, God wants us to have the Word dwelling richly in us by the power of the Spirit and to share His life with others.

A woman in a wheelchair was won to Christ when she was twenty-six years old. She died at twenty-eight, but oh how she glorified God in those years. She had only two fingers that worked well enough so that she could write and use the phone. She was faithful to write letters and make phone calls to build up others in the

Lord. Visiting her was a joy. Everything was always love, grace, and thanksgiving as she would tell about the folks she had written to or spoken to on the phone. She did it all to glorify Jesus Christ.

So many have battled cancer and all manner of disease and suffering, and they have kept on glorifying God through it all. They may not realize it, but there is nothing so precious as believers who can say to God, "I am not in the best condition, but I am going to glorify You just as I am." They magnify His promises and His name. They magnify His redemption.

We deserve nothing. So, even when we suffer, we can magnify Him for all He has done for us. We don't deserve forgiveness. We don't deserve the guarantee of an eternity in heaven. We don't deserve salvation. Jesus Christ did it all for us. He honored the Father. The Spirit honored the Son and didn't even speak of Himself. Now, the Word teaches us, "whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31*b*).

Epistles of the Heart

In Leviticus 10:3, the Lord said, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me." Paul wrote, "They glorified God in me" (Galatians

1:24). I don't take it lightly when I speak before the congregation, delivering the Word of God in a sermon or teaching a class. I don't take it lightly when I am counseling on the phone. I have a privilege and a responsibility to reveal Jesus Christ and to glorify Him. It is the greatest privilege in the world, and everyone can participate in that privilege.

"We are epistles written on the heart, known and read of all men" (see 2 Corinthians 3:2). Oh, to be an epistle—not just to be filled with knowledge, but to be an epistle that reflects the glory of God. As salt of the earth and a light to the world, Christians glorifying God let people touch the nature of God. This God, Whom we haven't seen in person, becomes very visible in our expressions as members of the corporate Body of Christ.

Is it any wonder that Romans 15:6 says we are to glorify God with one mind and one mouth? Glorify God in prayer by saying, "I believe it will be as You said it will be" (see Acts 27:25). Let us glorify God by knocking on doors in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. Tell the lost that Someone created them, Someone loves them, and that same Someone wants to redeem them. They

were on His mind before they were even created. He wants them to believe on Him and what He did for them on the cross so they can join Him forever in heaven.

What a privilege it is to pray for those who need the Comforter to pick them up and to understand that Jesus is the glory of God.

Chapter Four

MANIFESTING HIS GLORY

In Leviticus 9, they brought the burnt offering, and everything was placed in order. Then, the glory of God came down in fire and they were stricken with awe. Today, the greatest example and demonstration of God's glory is someone who loves with His love. It is someone who obeys by faith, forgiving with His forgiveness, demonstrating His patience and His mercy, and giving grace for grace. The power of God's glory is evident in the convictions from God's Word that enable people to live clean. Their heart and mind are pure and free to glorify God. They reveal the power of God's glory; and with a pure heart and mind, they manifest the dignity of Christ, exalting Him as King of kings in their lives.

Never be familiar with God's glory. Never let yourself become distracted or fall into self-destructive patterns of thinking. Never be care-

less. The Holy Spirit of the living God wants to glorify Christ in our mind, emotions, and body. He wants our confessions to glorify and magnify Him. We don't have to be indifferent to the spiritual laws of grace. We don't have to fall short of the glory of God. We can have *pleroma*, the fullness of God who fills all in all.

As we live before God and consider His Word, we can have faith to remove mountains. When the Word becomes the Sword of the Spirit to us, sicknesses and wounds can be healed, and God is glorified. When we are filled with the fullness of God, we have no wants. The Lord is our Shepherd, and our God supplies all our needs.

The Greatest Place to Be

This Christian life really is the greatest thing on earth. Jesus came that we might have life and have it "more abundantly" (John 10:10). We don't have to rely on the flesh. We don't have to look at circumstances, people, or anything else when we are focused on glorifying God. The Father glorified the Son, the Son glorified the Father, the Spirit glorified the Son. Now in whatsoever we do, we are to glorify God.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or what-

soever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:31-33).

Practice this passage. As you pray, consider that you are going to the throne room of heaven where God hears and desires to answer. Forget ceremonial words. We can have personal communion with God and with His Resurrection. He talks to us through the Word, and we respond. This is the most beautiful relationship we could ever experience.

CONCLUSION

"But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us" (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

Thank God for the hearts that are committed and dedicated to serving the Body of Christ. I pray we will be inspired to go forward in maturity, fervently praying for one another and advancing into a new era of Christianity in these last days. This can happen when we simply grow in grace and knowledge.

I am amazed at how God has accepted us into His Beloved. We are His treasures as His sons and daughters. He will never leave us. Thinking on these things will make us want to glorify Him more.

Father, glorify Yourself in each of us. We love You and praise You. We can do nothing of ourselves, but

whatsoever we do, we desire to do heartily, glorifying You—overcoming passivity, negativity, carelessness, and competition through Your victory. We are so thankful. In Jesus' name, Amen.

When Testings Come

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2).

These are unusual times we are living in. God both refines and purifies His people—two processes that require heat. The heat comes in the form of tests that target the hearts and emotions of believers. Angels and demons are watching to see the reactions and responses these testings bring about.

This booklet discusses God's process of testing and describes the victories Christians will celebrate as they enjoy the privilege and reward for standing. The prize will go to the overcomers—those who do not faint when the heat comes (Jeremiah 17:8).

Chapter One

REVELATIONS OF THE HEART

"And such as violate the covenant he shall pervert and seduce with flatteries, but the people who know their God shall prove themselves strong and shall stand firm and do exploits [for God].

"And they who are wise and understanding among the people shall instruct many and make them understand, though some [of them and their followers] shall fall by the sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for many days.

"Now when they fall, they shall receive a little help. Many shall join themselves to them with flatteries and hypocrisies.

"And some of those who are wise, prudent, and understanding shall be weakened and fall, [thus, then, the insincere among the people will lose courage and become deserters. It will be a test] to refine, to purify, and to make those among [God's people] white, even to the time of

the end, because it is yet for the time [God] appointed" (Daniel 11:32-35, from The Amplified Bible translation).

Tests That God Ordains for Our Lives

God has appointed many different tests, or trials, for His people. Among them are momentum tests, sanctificational tests, and tests of prosperity, poverty, health, satanic warfare, and relationships. Believers will be wounded by the trials, or they will be humbled before God in the trials and tests.

Momentum tests measure how we have grown with God, while giving us the opportunity to implement what we have learned from the Word of God.

Sanctificational tests come to help believers grow as they learn to apply God's Word in the daily experience of their lives. The Word of God will become reality to believers when they learn to apply it and depend on it in difficult situations.

In the prosperity test, God may try the believer with success, economic blessings, material blessings, and substantial financial gain in order to reveal the believer's heart. That person will either keep following God and share his

blessings as God leads, or his heart will become passive and disinterested to God and His Word.

God may also test a believer with a time of poverty. In that test, the believer may become bitter and withdraw from God, or he may remain faithful and draw even closer to God as his supply.

The health or sickness test determines what that person will do with the blessing of good health, or how he will deal with sickness in relationship to God.

In another test, God can expose a believer to satanic warfare to reveal how much he has grown into Christ's image (consider Job).

God can also test a person's spirituality through a relationship: Will the believer stay true to the Word, or will he be sentimental and not make a stand if the other person in the relationship goes against the Word of God?

Facing a Spiritual Showdown

From time to time, God has to clean house because familiarity and secret sins have crept in. Therefore, Spirit-taught Christians understand what is happening during times of testing.

Facing a test is not fun. God allows people to become weak in testings. He does the same

with ministries, the prudent, and the wise. God knows that some have heard a message from their pastor about testing, but they have no idea what it means or how to implement it. Some people are wise intellectually and have an understanding through their perceptions of life and observations of facts. But God determines that it is time for a cycle of testing that will shake up the church and separate those who refuse to be one with God and with the vision of that church.

God will test the pastor. He will test the church leadership, and He knows that most will come through. Ninety-nine out of one hundred will come through as victorious. Yet, God allows the tests to reveal who will react, who will leave a ministry, and who will wilt under the pressure of any major attack.

Weakening and Exposition

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (1 John 2:19-20).

The first group of people who fail the tests is made up of those whose flesh has been built up by flatteries and hypocrisies. These people have never come to an understanding of categorical doctrine. They have not received precise truth to build up their spiritual capacities.

The next group fails because God Himself allows Satan to weaken them (Isaiah 14:12)]. God uses weakness to humble us when we need it (1 Corinthians 11:30), to help us identify with others (1 Corinthians 9:22), and to magnify His strength in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

John the apostle didn't speak ambiguously in his first letter. He wasn't afraid of what people would say. He told them, "Those who leave are not really of us. That is why they go. They do not leave because of the reasons they tell us. They go because they are not of us."

The test of any Christian ministry, as to whether it is of God, is in its message and its fruit. First, we can test the doctrine that they teach and preach by comparing it with what the Bible says (Acts 17:11). Then, we can test their fruit (Matthew 7:15-20).* Furthermore, one should consider the blessings that come by association. Many people who may not have produced much fruit outwardly will be rewarded

with a crown of life for their faithfulness (Revelation 2:8-10).

Wilderness Experiences

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Deuteronomy 8:2).

God brings in tests just as He did with Israel in the wilderness. For forty years, God brought tests to humble and prove the nation of Israel, and to see if she would obey Him.

Picture the crowd in that wilderness after the spies came back with their evil reports of the Promised Land. After forty years of testing, preparation, and many opportunities to get right, except for Joshua and Caleb, only the men and women under twenty years of age survived. They were tested and they responded by murmuring against Moses, gossiping against him, and committing fornication and idolatry. And even when they arrived and they saw the land with their own eyes, they doubted God's ability to bring them in safely.

Think of it: An entire generation were led—

and kept—by God as they wandered through the wilderness. Yet they could not enter the Promised Land.

God is always looking for opportunities to redeem His people. His greatest desire is to draw us, one by one, into the Promised Land where we will live and reign with Him forever. Our failure, therefore, is never final unless we refuse the grace and mercy of God that will lift us up and cause us to stand in the face of our enemy.

**Read* Staying Focused to Bear Fruit, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2002, for a full account of the fruit of the Spirit that a godly man (and therefore a godly church) should bear.*

Chapter Two

THE TESTING PROCESS

"This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

"Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chronicles 32:30-31).

It is interesting that so many Christians do not understand testing. Hezekiah was tested so that God might expose what was in the king's heart. God wants to reveal our hearts. We will be tested, and we cannot escape what our hearts will do when we are tested. Sooner or later, if God allows us to be tested, our hearts will reveal what we are like. Tests reveal self-centeredness and self-preservation. Tests expose the selfish

adventures we pursue without God and the Bible.

The Word of God must guard our hearts. The heart is not protected unless the Holy Spirit protects it. Your heart cannot experience a victory unless the victory comes by faith. Your heart cannot hold itself together unless it is held by grace.

God uses all kinds of situations to test our hearts. He uses marriages, families, and finances. He uses death, diseases, and even accidents. Though He is not the author of evil, he will allow evil to happen in order to bring us to Himself (Amos 3:6-7). Still, the average person does not know why tests come; he does not relate to them in truth the way he ought. Nevertheless, the Lord Himself will continue to pursue all men with a heart to win them.

Weighing on the Mind

"But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter" (Jeremiah 12:3).

"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3).

The first testing God brings in involves men-

tal attitudes. He does not test us simply for overt responses, but to reveal what the mind will do. If my mind does not respond according to the Word of God, then my heart is not right. Either my faith will work in the patience of God (which is a mystery), or I will become strange, reactionary, or indifferent.

A Christian may come down with a disease. It's a test for him. It didn't just happen. What will this Christian do with this test? With what mental attitude will he respond? What overt physical reaction will be made evident? Three types of faith can be revealed in the midst of testing: faith to survive, faith to maintain, and faith to deliver. Will he use faith to resist this attack? How much faith will he utilize to fight it?

Some Christians respond to tests in sentimentality. They believe in God, and they love Him with all their hearts, but they take on the identity of the tests they are going through rather than the purpose. They may take on the name of "pain" or "sickness" instead of "peace" or "long suffering." And when they put a name to their pain, that is how the demons perceive the Christian. Other names people take on include "reactionary," "moody," "fearful," "insecure," "proud," and "lustful"—people take on

all kinds of names in tests.

People who are in bondage to pornography must realize that pornography is the name they carry in the demonic world. When God tests these folks, the devil puts it before their minds, allowing pictures to coordinate with what is going on in their unconscious minds. The result is subjective reflections and objective experiences.

Targeting the Heart

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

"Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous trieth the hearts and reins (Psalm 7:9).

The first thing God tests are the emotions, because they are so revealing. Every test we go through involves our emotions, since they are a prime indicator when something is not right on a deeper level. Then, God tests the heart—the motivator and communications center for our thinking. It is the automatic starter with its substance of thought, definition of words, and com-

munication of philosophy.

More people become spiritually stagnant when they are under tests than at any other time. They often turn inward and become self-conscious instead of God-conscious. When that happens, a wall of protection goes up, isolating and restricting the flow of the river of Life to the conscious and subconscious mind. Some become stagnant when they face the momentum test of prosperity, while others cannot face the momentum test of poverty.

Then there is the test where God allows us to become weak. We pray and then we grow weak. We pray again and we grow even weaker. God wants the angels to see what we are like when we go through these tests, and the greatest example of that is the life of Job. But more than that, He wants to reveal what we are like so we will understand how He plans to use us as He builds the Church through evangelism with discipleship.

When Job finally got the picture that he was not the issue, he stopped mentally defending his flesh and began to pray for his friends that accused him (Job 42:10). That is when everything turned around, and he experienced a divine reversal.

Chapter Three

RAIMENTS OF BRIGHT WHITE

Tests are designed to reveal how our hearts will respond. The question is this: Will we be preoccupied with the test and ourselves, or will we be occupied with Christ? We can be absolutely victorious and triumphant in conquering the situation when we are occupied with Christ.

Throughout my ministry, I have faced many tests. Then God brought in tests for the entire assembly. Thank God for those times of testing! As a church, we have seen so many victories when our faith was challenged. God has to test anyone that is self-occupied, and strengthen them to be occupied with Christ.

My years in Baltimore have been so much fun because of the wonderful Christ-occupied assembly we have. Every one of us is frail; every one of us has weaknesses. But together our strengths have made for such fun times. We have grown into a diligent assembly, a vigorous

assembly, and a visionary assembly.

Prayer is one area where we need to be strengthened. We are now setting aside several hours during the week so that we can pray together as a body—the corporate Body of Christ. I am talking about the kind of prayer that will change everything. We want to establish a fervent approach to prayer—the kind of prayer that touches God's heart.

With prayer, I believe that people who have refused to get right with God will come under the strongest testing ever. And, some will leave. It is not that we are praying for this to happen; but we are praying, and God is moving, taking care of His Church.

Power of Positive Decisions

"And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed" (Daniel 11:35).

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will con-

fess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Revelation 3:4-5).

In Daniel 11, we read that those who stay through tests shall be "made white"—literally, clothed in white raiment (Revelation 3:5). That is what happens when we become positive toward God in the tests that come to our mind, emotions, and body. When we make positive choices in difficult tests, a degree of glory is added to the raiment that will cover our glorified bodies in eternity for every single detail we encounter.

Here is how it works: If I make three positive decisions in the midst of a temptation or test, then three degrees of glory would be added to my soul body. These degrees are stored up for the white raiment we will wear.

In Matthew 17, Jesus wore glorified garments over His glorified body on the Mount of Transfiguration. His raiment was described as a brilliant white light. Everyone in heaven will have glorified bodies. However, those who make fantastic decisions in the midst of trials will have something special over their bodies. These degrees of brightness will astound and astonish those with normal raiment.*

Trying the Reins

"Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (Psalm 26:2).

David was saying, "God, I want You to test me to see how I feel in my emotions and my heart." He prayed that God would examine and prove him. He wanted God to test him to see if could remain satisfied in the place where God had him. He wanted the Lord to see if he could be approved.

Nothing in the Bible just happened. David wrote, "Try my reins (meaning "emotions") and my heart." Again, the Holy Spirit put the emotions before the heart, because the emotions are so revealing and the heart is more psychological, and therefore less obvious. David wanted God to check his emotions first so that his emotions would reveal what was going on inside of him.

"I can't always tell what is going on with my heart because it is so deceitful," David was thinking.

David knew that these tests would determine something about his destiny.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through

manifold temptations" (1 Peter 1:6).

If you are going through a time of testing, trust God, remember His promises, and let Him accomplish His work in you. It is all for our sake, and to bring glory to His name.

**For more about being clothed with white raiment in degrees of glory, read* The Morning Star Order, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

The godly choices we make as individuals all work together to determine the degrees of glory for those who will be in heaven. Experiences, circumstances, and details are all used in the process and program of testing. There is not a Christian who has ever been promoted who has not also been tested hundreds of times.

This message was given to assure us that testing will come. We will be evaluated in the midst of every test. Then, God may wait awhile, having provided several messages and circumstances to instruct us, and then bring things into our lives to see how we will respond in the next test.

The issue is not what we say when we are tested. Rather, God watches six areas of our lives: what I think in the test; how I feel in the test; what I do while the test is going on; how I respond to God in the test; how I react to people; and how I treat people when I am being

tested.

Dear Father, we are so thankful that You do not keep us guessing when we go through tests. You have spoken clearly to us in the Word and from the pulpit, in a confident yet quiet voice. We desire to see Your purpose accomplished through those tests. Keep our hearts soft before You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Where Christ Lives

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

I met a man who was smoking a cigarette outside of the church, and he said to me, "I don't want to smoke inside the sanctuary."

And I said, "What does the sanctuary mean to you? I agree with you, but what does the sanctuary mean?"

He said, "That's where God lives."

I said, "Have you been saved?"

And he said, "Yes."

"I'm not even going to deal with your smoking" I said. "That is not the issue. That is between you and God. But, you need to know that the Holy Spirit is living inside of your body, not the church building. The Bible says that *you* are the sanctuary of God. *You* are the temple" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

If we would consider the One who is living inside of us, I'll guarantee that we would be very careful about the things we expose ourselves to. We would take care of our physical

bodies. We would get proper rest, eat properly, and have our bodies in the best possible condition, because of Who is living in us.

As this booklet reveals, God is in the bodies of believers to stay. He wants to make us happy. He wants to make us well. He wants to mobilize each individual member of His body to make us prosper and be in good health (3 John 2). When that is the case, His whole body—the corporate Body of Jesus Christ—can operate at its maximum potential, revealing the Savior to a lost and dying world.

Chapter One

HABITATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:18-22).

I want you to be very careful that you understand what the Word of God is teaching here; and with the pleasure of accountability, listen to those words. Verse 18 says, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." This reveals the working of the Trinity.

The passage goes on to say that we are members of the household of God, the family of God, a building fitly framed, "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

The average Christian does not have a revelation of the Body of Jesus Christ and, therefore, cannot comprehend it. Sadly, for the average congregation, this teaching is far from their experience.

Jesus Christ saves people to build them together and to fitly frame them together in spiritual unity. Christ is not interested in developing independent spirits to cohabit in superficial social relationships. Rather, He wants a Body of believers who are fitly framed together by the Trinity, who are growing together as a holy temple in the Lord.

We Are His Temples

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own?

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Each individual believer is a "habitation of

God through the Spirit." We are temples of the living God. We are the spiritual sanctuary of the living God on this planet.

If we were asked the question, "Where is Christ living?" most of us would give the answer that He is omnipresent, that He is everywhere, and of course He is. Or, we might conclude that He is on His throne in heaven. But what I want you to see is that Jesus Christ is building a spiritual temple, a holy habitation for Himself, and that He dwells within everyone who is born again.

Now that we have been saved, we have access to the Father through Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit. We draw nigh to God. We don't have to go through a man to get to God. We don't have to go through a pastor. We do not have to go through a priest, or a rabbi, or anyone else. We have access to God the Father through Jesus Christ by means of the Holy Spirit. And, thank God, we can confess our sins directly to God (1 John 1:8-10).

"Nothing Between"

Charles A. Tindley, born in Maryland in 1851, was one of the greatest men of God who ever lived. The son of a slave, he became an or-

phan at a very young age. Raised by his sister and having no formal education, he taught himself how to read and write. As a young man, he moved to Philadelphia, where he took correspondence courses and earned a Divinity degree while working as a janitor at the Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church. When the pastor left, it was suggested that Tindley—the janitor—be allowed to speak to the congregation, which at that time had fewer than 150 people. After his message, he was called to be the church's pastor. A most faithful servant, Tindley built a church of 10,000.

This man of God was very compassionate. Known as "the people's pastor," he moved the audience with his fervency and his love, while he accurately preached the Scriptures. At one point, during a conspiracy in the church, he came under heavy persecution and became deathly ill. During this difficult time, this precious man of God wrote a song that many of you know, called "Nothing Between":

Nothing between my soul and my Savior,
Naught of this world's delusive dream;
I have renounced all sinful pleasure;
Jesus is mine, there's nothing between.

Nothing between, like worldly pleasure;
Habits of life, though harmless they seem;
Must not my heart from Him ever sever;
He is my all, there's nothing between.

Nothing between, like pride or station;
Self or friends shall not intervene;
Though it may cost me much tribulation,
I am resolved, there's nothing between.

Nothing between, e'en many hard trials,
Though the whole world against me convene;
Watching with prayer and much self denial,
I'll triumph at last, there's nothing between.

After writing that song under tremendous stress, God gave him a release through another song, called "Leave It There":

Leave it there, leave it there,
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.
If you trust and never doubt,
He will surely bring you out.
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.

Mr. Tindley came out of his affliction as the song was completed. This man of God wrote

that song and prayed five or six hours in the night, and then the Spirit of God raised up his weak body that was so extremely ill. Within two days, the guilty people in the conspiracy were revealed, and the church went on to brand-new heights.

He had access to God the Father through Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. His access to God not only gave him an answer to his prayer for healing when he was close to death, but it also released him from the persecution. His church, once again, had precious unity.

Chapter Two

RELATE TO CHRIST WHO LIVES IN YOU

God is building one of the most wonderful things in the universe. He is building a spiritual sanctuary, a spiritual temple, a place where the Holy Spirit of the living God indwells. Jesus Christ is living within every believer, even as He was living in the holy of holies. This was the most sacred place in the temple where only the High Priest could go in, just once a year. Think of it! Jesus Christ—the Creator of the universe, the Redeemer—is living in every single person who is saved.

Have you ever considered how to relate to Christ in people?

At one time when I was trying to figure out how to deal with a certain situation, God showed me at my prayer altar that because they were saved, Jesus Christ was living in the people in that situation.

Every Christian is a member of the Church, which is the Body of Jesus Christ, and every individual Christian has the Holy Spirit in him. I believe that we often treat this as an abstract fact. I believe we treat it very unrealistically. I don't think it is real to the average person, even though we believe it.

That day at the altar, I did something very different. I was miles and miles away from a certain person in that situation, and the Holy Spirit said, "Pray to Jesus Christ who is living in that person right now." So I addressed Jesus Christ, who is in the person I was praying for. I wasn't praying to the person; I was praying to Jesus Christ who indwells that person. And because it was someone that I love very much, the tears began to come down from my eyes, and I said, "Lord Jesus, starting now, move in that person's human body and work in their life as You have never worked before."

By the grace of Almighty God, exactly thirty-six hours later, I received a telephone call, which revealed that the problem, the tremendous bondage, had been released in her, and she said she wanted me to be the first one to know.

Another girl went into deep sin. Nobody could seem to touch her with the Word of God. I

couldn't; no one could. The Spirit of God led me to have her come in to the office. When she came in, we knelt in prayer, and I addressed Jesus Christ inside of her. I said, "Father, I come to Jesus Christ who is living inside of this girl's body. You are living inside her body, so please move her to repentance. Please move her by God's grace. Please move her into getting right with You and give her victory."

Two days later, this girl was changed, and she has been fantastic for over a year now.

Address Christ and Him Alone

Jesus Christ is in every single Christian. We don't need to address the sinner for him to have victory over his sin. But we can, and we do, address Jesus Christ in the believer.

We have seen hundreds of people healed here in the past twelve months. Silently, I have addressed Jesus Christ in people's bodies for their healing. I have come to God the Father through the Holy Spirit and addressed Jesus Christ in the human body of someone who is sick in order to release His precious healing life and heal the body, or heal the nerves, or heal from habits of sin.

Colossians 1:27 says, "Christ in you, the

hope of glory."

Christ is your hope. What does that mean? Certainly it means He is your hope of final sanctification and glorification of your body. But that particular verse is addressing the Church. It means that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, and we are all changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." It means that Jesus Christ, because He is in us, is the hope of our human soul reflecting God's nature, reflecting God's character, reflecting God's complete and total distinct Person. When we reflect the glory of God through the Spirit, we reflect the very nature of God.

Do you know why David said, "I have set the Lord always before me" (Psalm 16:8)? The Lord was between Jonathan and David (1 Samuel 20:42). The Lord was between David and King Saul (1 Samuel 24:10-15). Why? David knew that the Lord was in his body and the Lord was in the other person's body.

One of the greatest ways to solve a problem in a marriage is to begin to be tender, kind, meek, compassionate, and broken. The way that can happen is to know that no matter the state of the individual, Jesus Christ lives in the other person's body. Maybe that person is not ex-

pressing Him. Maybe they are not revealing Him. But if they are saved, He is still there. The Holy Spirit may be grieved or He may be quenched, but He lives in the other body just as He lives in your body.

It is an awesome sight to have 1,200 people gathered and to realize that every single Christian in those seats has God Almighty living inside. Oh, the faith potential! Oh, the possibility of love, of power, of revival. Oh, the possibility of the Word of God becoming real. Oh, the possibility of rejecting familiarity and profanity! Imagine the possibility of abundant living, with happiness, health, and wholesomeness. Imagine the realization of peace and joy, of forgiveness and cleansing—of experiencing life with God.

He is living inside of us right now.

My Body Belongs to Him

Often, when I drive to church alone in my car, I quietly begin to talk to the Lord. It is not I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. Even though I am very much alive, still Christ lives in me. It is not something that is abstract. It is something that is very sacred because the Bible says, "our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit."

That is why immorality is so desperately wicked.

God possesses my body, and God possesses your body. When people commit immorality and are filthy in their minds, the Bible decrees that as being evil, because God is in their bodies. An act of sexual immorality means that you have, in one sense, become married to that person. You may never become legally married, but you have become one body.

Here is someone who has had five affairs. He has become one flesh with five women. He has broken the seal of the dignity of Redemption. He has broken the seal of the dignity of the New Creation. He has broken the seal of the body that is inhabited by Jesus Christ. He has been one flesh with five women, and he still takes it so casually. He is indifferent to the sacredness of purity and holiness—of God living inside of him.

That is why teenagers should lovingly and graciously be taught that their bodies are definitely temples of the Holy Spirit. When we are all gathered together in a local assembly, God is taking us, spiritually speaking, and building us up into a holy sanctuary that grows as a holy temple in God. We are a habitation of God

through the precious Spirit.

Do you realize that when you shout at one another, Jesus Christ has to listen to that on the inside of that person? Do you understand, some of you cheap men, who are as cheap as you can be, that when you have playboy-like thinking in your mind, you are an incredibly evil person? You are a Christian, and inside of you lives the Holy Spirit. But you never have sacred moments. You never have moments when you are broken and contrite in your heart. You never have the times when you stop and think, "My God, Jesus is not only the Creator of the universe; He is living inside my body, and my mind is polluted. My mind has been corrupted by sin. I've been absolutely grieving His Spirit and quenching His life."

What do you do then? You address Christ who is in you. That is why the Word of God says, in Romans chapter 10, that you don't go way up to heaven to get faith, or way down below, or way out there. The Holy Spirit is nigh, even in your heart.

When you want to get right with God, close your eyes and isolate yourself from people, and say, "Father, I'm coming to Jesus Christ who is in me. I know that my vessel desires to be a ves-

sel of honor, not a vessel of dishonor. I want my body to reflect the glory and the nature of God. I want to have liberty to be free, to think clearly, to choose properly, to live accurately in God's life."

As you do this, there is an ever-growing intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Chapter Three

OFFERING OURSELVES TO HIM

As long as I live, I will never forget a couple I married many years ago. The woman, who was gloriously saved in our ministry, was happy and victorious for six years. Then she became involved in an affair and left her husband. She continued to listen to us occasionally on the radio, and one day she heard a message preached to our teenagers in our school. In that message, we said that the reason Jesus Christ does not want you to practice fornication or to have any evil exchange is that He is living inside your precious body.

He wants your eyes to be His eyes, your tongue to be His tongue, your hands to be His hands, and your feet to be His feet. This is why, in the Old Testament times, once every year when the people brought a sacrifice, the priest would put the sacrifice on the altar, and he would cut it into pieces (see Leviticus 1:4-9).

I can just picture the priest and the person with the offering. He would cut off the paw and the priest would say to the one that was offering the sacrifice, "Reach out your hand. Are you telling me that you want your hands to serve the Lord?" And the offerer would say "yes."

They would cut the tongue out of the animal, and they would say, "Are you saying that your tongue is going to glorify God?" And the offerer would say "yes."

And then they would cut the legs off and say the same thing. "Are you saying that you're presenting your body by the mercies of God to be a living sacrifice?" That was the application we would use today. And the offerer would say "yes."

And then they would take the ears. They said, "Are you saying that your ears are going to listen to the things of God?" and they would say "yes."

How much more today, because of the Lord Jesus Christ living inside us, should our precious bodies be presented to God as a living sacrifice? Not as an offering of dead works. Not as one who is indifferent, arrogant, or proud, living in the materialistic world and desiring materialism and gain without the Cross, but as a

body that is surrendered to the Holy Spirit of the living God.

I am asking you right now to give your body to Jesus Christ—your eyes, your ears, your tongue, your hands, your feet. He is in you. Address the Jesus Christ who is in you.

Our Need for the Body of Christ

The Bible clearly teaches that we are not to be independent. My hand can not be independent of my arm. My fingers can not be independent of my hand. My throat can not be independent of my head. And my eyes can not be independent of my head.

Individual body members must also have a revelation of the Corporate Body life. We must understand through the Holy Spirit that the Body is Jesus Christ's body. He is the Head. We are His body, the fullness of Him on the earth, that filleth all in all. The Father gave Him to be the Head over us, His body. We are His Corporate Body. And individually, we are His human body.

We would have so few problems if we were to understand the revelation of Body life. My hand is conscious of the life in my body. Every part of my body is conscious of my body life.

Everything about me is conscious of the life of my head. Thank God it is, because if it were not, if a person experienced a shock, some member of the body would not get the life of the blood into that area of the body.

When you have a genuine, realistic revelation of Body life, you will sense the life of the Body. You will sense God's life in each other. We will sense God's life as it flows from vessel to vessel. We will sense what it is like to have God's life in the entire Body. We will realize that we are members in particular, placed there as it pleases Him. We will find our place in the Body, a place where we have been set by God. We will love the Christ that is in every member. We will minister to those that are weak and frail and small in soul. We will begin to realize that we are dealing with this mighty Christ inside of a human body that lives in the Corporate Body.

Stay Connected

If the Church were to really catch hold of this revelation, there would not be any members who live in individual independence. You might as well cut off your arm tonight as to live outside of the Body of Jesus Christ.

Christians are to marry people who have

Jesus Christ in them. "Be ye not unequally yoked," says 2 Corinthians 6:14. "For what fellowship hath light with darkness? What concord has Christ with Belial? What agreement has the Spirit of God with idols?" When you marry a man who isn't God's man, or a woman who isn't God's woman, spiritually speaking (in this analogy), you might as well marry a corpse, because those people don't have God's life in their bodies. So you might just as well marry a corpse and have it over with.

If you were Mary, or Lazarus, or Martha, and Jesus said to you, "I'm going to come to your home this weekend," what would you think? You have seen Him raise the dead. You have seen Him heal the sick. You believe He is the Messiah, and He is going to come into your home for the entire weekend. What would you do to your home?

Jesus said, "It is necessary that I go away, but I'm going to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit who is God, and we will come to live in you."

That is so real for us. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will come to live in you to control your eyes, your ears, your tongue, your mind, your emotions, your reflexes, your responses, your initiations, your decisions, your plans, your

purposes, your ideas, and your entire life.

I'm so grateful that a man who knows this Christ is not insecure. A man who knows this Christ isn't easily intimidated. A man who knows this Christ doesn't have to live in abstract feelings. He's praying to the Christ that is in him.

Today, I can talk to the Christ who is in me, and the Holy Spirit is glorifying the Christ who is in you as I speak. One of the most personal reasons that we do not want to offend another Body member is that we would risk offending Christ, who is in that person. If the person is backslidden, we must treat them as somebody whom Christ indwells, because this is the principle of Galatians 6:1.

Live in the awareness of where God lives—He lives in you. Let Jesus Christ heal you and deliver you as you've never been delivered in your life. The Word of God says you will never be alone. You will never have to be alone ever again, because He is with you, and never will He forsake you. You will never again have to be alone—even when you think you are. You will never be alone because Christ lives in you.

CONCLUSION

There is a reason that God says, "Meet together more than you've ever met, have more assembly meetings than you've ever had, because the day is getting late" (see Hebrews 10:25). He wants all of us to come together—all who have Christ dwelling within them. If there are 1,200 people in a congregation, that crowd represents 1,200 inhabitations for the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In one building, there is power to minister His energy, to manifest His love, to reveal the potential of faith, to communicate the possibility of mercy, and to express what it means to be mobilized by categorical doctrine.

We can live by the Word of God in the Throne Room of heaven, which is God's Throne Room in the heart of anyone who has confessed up-to-date. It is a room filled with the Holy Spirit. I can go to God directly in the Throne Room of my heart. That is what Hebrews 4:16

teaches.

"I am in you to teach you," Jesus says. "I walk in you. My Word is in you. My principles are in you. And I am in you. I am not some impersonal influence that you might dwell on for a few times a week for a message. I live in you. You are Mine. Please give Me the right to reflect My glory in you and through you."

May God do that in marriages. Let Him do it in individual lives. Let Him do it in some of you who are guilty of being filthy-minded. Let God do it, and He will do it immediately.

Where Does God Rest?

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

God loves to rest. As Christians, we often get overwhelmed with duties—doing what may indeed need to be done. But when we try to live our lives outside of a Finished-Work, seated-above vantage point, we can easily miss the provisions God would give us to make the burden light.

God lives inside every believer, and He is completely at rest. Jesus Christ finished the work of Redemption at Calvary, and now His glory is revealed through us. Our failures and infirmities do not disturb the Lord. "Peace, be still," He commands the storms in our lives (Mark 4:39). He is resting in His love (Zephaniah 3:17).

Chapter One

BEING SPIRIT-TAUGHT IN THE VALLEYS

As God's people, we are only able to know and to grow in relationship to what we hear and receive. Every time we hear the Word of God in a church service, that message is prepared by God to teach us another step in the mystery of godliness. Every time we meet, any time we have fellowship around the Word, God provides an opportunity for us to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church at that moment.

Problems with hearing have consistently troubled, hindered, and interrupted the Church of Jesus Christ. Sadly, many Christians assemble regularly and hear the Word, but if they are not being Spirit-taught, they may miss the message God has for them. Therefore, once we have heard properly and have received God's message by faith (instead of reacting to it), then we need to be Spirit-taught (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).

Being Spirit-taught is one of the great privileges of learning and growing as we magnify Christ. Along with having a deep understanding of wisdom from above, being Spirit-taught includes receiving the Word with meekness. This means that we are totally occupied with Christ. And because we are not occupied with self, there is no preoccupation with Adam and his impulsive reactions to Satanic stimuli from the air (1 Corinthians 2:14).

In Deuteronomy 4:10, God said He would teach His people how to learn and how to hear. In the original language, the Hebrew text indicates that this hearing would inspire a great reverence for God, that they might know Him and teach their children about Him.

Dealing with Our Humanity

In Matthew 4, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. There, Jesus fasted and prayed for forty days. Knowing that He would be very weak in his human condition, Satan then came to tempt Him. "If thou be the son of God…." Here, the word "if" was of the first-class condition, which means, "if, and you are." This temptation tested Christ's humanity, but it revealed the strength of His relationship with the Holy

Spirit who led him there. Jesus' humanity was weak. His body was frail, and He was being attacked with demons and everything that hell could throw against Him. Jesus' fasting was the fasting of a perfect man who had no old sin nature. He let the Holy Spirit lead His humanity. He did not quench Him (1 Thessalonians 5:19). He did not grieve Him (Ephesians 4:30). He did not resist Him (Acts 7:51).

That wilderness was a valley for the man Jesus Christ. But first and foremost, He was led there by the Holy Spirit. In that valley, He found rest, and He made for Himself a glorious name. The Holy Spirit always gives glory to the Son, and that is where God rests. God's rest has little to do with a place, but it always regards a condition. That is why He could sleep soundly in the back of a boat during a raging storm.

Jesus said to His disciples, "I have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now." They could not apply it personally because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given (John 16:12-14). Now we can bear these things because the Holy Spirit is in us, glorifying Jesus Christ.

Valleys Build Character

"As a beast goeth down into the valley, the

Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name" (Isaiah 63:14).

"And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes" (Isaiah 7:19).

"The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him, and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him" (Job 21:33).

The Spirit leads us into valleys, but there He will give us rest. Heaven rejoices in seeing the strength that we find in the valleys. We will find fruit in the valleys (Song of Solomon 6:11). And in Luke 3:5, we read that in due season, every valley shall be filled and every hill and mountain shall be brought low—and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. That is the ultimate glory.

I am very broken when I see certain pastors step up to the pulpit. I know things they have gone through. I know the valleys they have visited. I know of pains, heartaches, and battles they have encountered and overcome. Now there is joy and beauty for them to rejoice in. They were led into valleys and there they found rest.

Chapter Two

THE GLORY GIVEN FROM ABOVE

"LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions:

"How he sware unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob;

"Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;

"I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids,

"Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

"Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood.

"We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.

"Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength" (Psalm 132:1-8).

It is important that we operate with God's imputed righteousness, always ready for action.

The only place God can rest on this earth is in His glory as it is revealed to us by His grace. As Christians, we are God's representatives operating in Satan's world system. Because Satan is the god of this world, God cannot rest even in His own people except in the glory of His grace.

Face to Face, Moses Spoke with God

"And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

"And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

"For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

"And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

"And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy

on whom I will shew mercy.

"And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

"And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

"And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by" (Exodus 33:14-22).

We understand that no man can see God's face and live. And yet, the Lord did reveal that His relationship with Moses was face to face and mouth to mouth (see Numbers 12:8, Deuteronomy 5:4).

Jesus Christ is in heaven. He is the head of the Church and we are His body on earth. In this present dispensation of grace, we represent the front part of God and He is our backbone. As God is in heaven, so are we in this present world (1 John 4:17). We are crucified with Christ, nevertheless we live. "It is no longer *I,* but Christ who lives in me," as Paul said in Galatians 2:20. The life we live in the flesh, we live by the Son of God, who gave Himself for us, and it is Christ who lives through us.

Through our faith, Christ has redeemed us. He is the backbone of every manifestation of the

Body of Christ, here in His stead. We are His ambassadors, presenting the face of God to the world. Jesus Christ revealed his hind parts, and He indeed is the backbone for everything we do.

The Glory of the Throne of Mercy

David said he would not sleep until God had a habitation to rest in. But the Lord told David that He would not rest in a place built by man. God rested in the glory of the cloud that filled the tabernacle (Exodus 16:10). He rested in the glory present in the ark and in the tabernacle (1 Samuel 4:22; Exodus 29:43). God rests in the glory of the heavens, which declared His glory (Psalm 19:1). He rests in the glory upon the earth (Numbers 14:21). Finally, He rests in the glory of His throne (Matthew 19:28).

The glory over the Mercy Seat represents God's manifestation of His character to all who go there. The incense represents our approach to God with a sweet-smelling savor (Ephesians 5:2).

The only place God can rest is in His glory. Referring to the disciples, Jesus said to the Father, "The glory that You gave Me, I have given them" (John 17:22). Long before Pentecost and the upper room (Acts 1), Jesus had already given them His glory. And once a disciple receives

God's glory, all he needs is a revelation of it.

Living in God's Rest

"It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory" (Proverbs 25:27).

When a man refuses to live in God's glory, there is no resting place for God in him. That man manifests negative emotions, so he cannot be transformed from glory to glory.

We must learn to rest in the manifestation of mercy. Otherwise, we will be restless, oppressed, fearful, insecure, passive, and inactive. Grace is always available to us, and when God's righteousness is at work on the inside, He reveals His glory on the outside.

Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan understood his need to rest in God's glory. Before a gathering of three thousand pastors, he said of his position, "This is such a lonely place. The eye of the camera, the pen of the journalist, the criticism of the politician make it such a lonely place. I need the glory and wisdom of God. Please, will you pray together with me?"

AChristian sculptor was being shown an ancient statue of a human figure without arms, and he began to weep. When someone asked what it

was that moved him so, he replied, "It is very beautiful. The one who made this piece was truly a master. I can see it in the beauty of its form, the softness of its features. But it has no hands, therefore it represents something beautiful that is powerless." He went on to say that he wept because he thought of the many churches and ministries that possess a measure of beauty but have no hands, no power to reach the world for Christ. There is no glory of God resting in them.

Ezekiel 27 describes how the city of Tyrus was a major center for trade in the world, having tremendous wealth. But then an east wind sank its ships filled with gold, and all of her riches went to the bottom of the sea. This is what happens when we seek our own glory and attempt to manifest our own idea of glory.

Jamaican sprinter Don Quarry had a great rivalry with Haisley Crawford of Trinidad. They took turns beating each other in 200-meter dashes throughout the 1970s. In 1974, Quarry won in the fastest time for the 200-meter event. In 1976, Crawford won in a photo finish. Then Quarry, a Christian, became consumed with the next opportunity to face his rival. That meeting came in 1978. Crawford was confident, telling

Quarry, "I am going to beat you again." But Quarry surged ahead as the race began. Just before the finish, Quarry pulled a hamstring muscle and collapsed to the ground and lost.

The moment marked a transformation in Don Quarry's life. "Winning that race meant more to me than winning Christ," he explained. "I got to know Christ better after that hamstring injury than I had ever known Him before."

Moses understood the glory of God. He was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies any time he desired. This is revealed in the Hebrew text of Numbers 7:89. The imperfect tense used there indicates that Moses went to the Holy Place often. But God told Moses to tell Aaron that in the future, the high priests would only be allowed in the Holy of Holies once a year, to put the blood on the Mercy Seat. Even when the high priest would enter, a cloud would descend. And the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of God was above the Mercy Seat (1 Kings 8:11), and it filled the room.

Moses was taught face-to-face by God because Moses had found grace in the sight of God (Exodus 33:17-18). God proclaimed His name, manifested His nature, and revealed His glory

to Moses.

Chapter Three

MEDITATION: AUDITING THE SOUL'S RECEPTION

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:1-3).

Our brains are made up of eight psychological zones—memory, mind, conscience, self-consciousness, frame of reference, viewpoint, emotions, and volition. These zones must be motivated and activated continually by meditation on the Word of God, or they will become inactive in relationship to the life of God.

Categorical meditation is the key to my ability to recall and remember the Word of God.*

My frame of reference, my mind, my volition, my emotions—all of the psychological zones in my brain—stay spiritually healthy because of meditation on the truth of God. Meditation keeps activating and utilizing the godly potential of these zones. I can't afford to let them become inactive. Grace is always active while God rests in His glory and manifests His mercy and love to me.

Through meditation, a Christian "audits" his soul. He regulates everything that goes in and out of it. He captures sensations of inspiration. These sensations of inspiration go in through the network, or grid, of God's Word and take over our capacity with God's frame of reference, God's viewpoint, God's mentality, and God's emotions.

It is a beautiful thing for us to be auditors of what goes in and out of our souls through the grid of God's Word. When we do not allow our thoughts and perceptions to go through this grid, pressures will build up. Many, many seemingly quiet Christians do not know how to deal with pressures. The pressures grow and grow until their emotions reach the boiling point. The "lids" on their lives blow off eventually because they are not resting in God's glory.

"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.

"Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:15-18).

"Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin" (Deuteronomy 9:27).

God has found a place to rest in us. In the midst of all the hell and corruption and sin and iniquity and immorality on earth, God has found a place where He can rest and manifest His mercy in fellowship with you and me (Philippians 2:15).

God does not look upon a person's sin. When a person receives Christ as his Savior, He takes His Holy Spirit, the manifestation of His nature, the grid of His Word, and comes right into our hearts. There, He rests in His love.

We get into trouble when we allow ourselves to remember any iniquity that we (or others) have done. That is one thing that God does not remember. We cannot have the confidence of God when we look at our iniquities. If we do look, we put ourselves in bondage to our transgressions. Instead, we must look to Him (Numbers 21:9; Hebrews 12:2).

The glory of God was revealed at Calvary. There, sins were paid for. He rests in His love toward us, and now *we* are to rest in His love toward us. The glory and manifestation of His mercy is in us. Refuse to recognize the iniquity that God has dealt with once and for all. This is the only way for us to have confidence in God and to stay out of bondage.

He who repeats a matter separates friends (Proverbs 17:9). God's glory, however, conceals a matter and covers the multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). The Christian who seeks love does not behold iniquity. Instead, he covers, just as God has covered it with the Blood of Christ shed at Calvary. This is the glory God rests in forever.

**Be sure to read* Categorical Meditation: The One Answer to All Problems*, as well as* Seeing the Glory of God*, both by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

Why do people want to remember someone's sins? It does not manifest the Cross; it is not living in the zones of faith. It drives away our confidence and brings us into bondage.

"It is My glory, the manifestation of My mercy, to conceal matters," God declares. "I will be merciful to those in unrighteousness. I will not remember their unrighteousness."

Oh, it is so precious and sacred to see the freedom we have in God's glory. If we fail—and we will—we name our failure and claim the truth that God does not look upon our iniquities. Then, we go forward.

I thank God that I have seen His glory in people. I love to live in the midst of the manifestation of God's love, grace, kindness, and mercy. I love to live in the midst of those who hunger

and thirst for God's righteousness. These people are real, and they have a love that is genuine, because they know how to rest where God rests—in His glory.

Who Is in Control?

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INTRODUCTION

Often, we face problems when the doctrine we perceive in our intellect does not become resident in our frame of reference. Because truth is not circulated through the five parts of the soul by mixing faith with the Word we hear, we lack the authority necessary to deal with what the enemy has planned to use against us.

God has given so many admonitions in His Word to treat each other in the spiritual light of God's nature in us. This reveals who is really in control of our soul (Philippians 2:15). In spiritual light, we know how to use the Cross in our lives. This booklet shows that the battle for control is between the Spirit of God and the flesh, which is our old sin nature energized by the satanic atmosphere. Since the Lord already won the victory on the Cross and condemned sin in His own body, the key for us is to stop thinking in the human realm and to begin thinking in God's realm. Once we do that, our "cup"—which

equals capacity—will be filled with the fullness of God, till it runs over.

Chapter One

PUT CHRIST AT THE CENTER

"For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

"For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

"For I delight in the law of the God after the inward man:

"But I see another law in my members, war-

ring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:15-25).

Romans chapter seven deals with the problems experienced by one human heart after another, inside and outside of the Church of Jesus Christ. It speaks of our attempts to control truth, obedience, and transformation, and the battles that ensue.

One Man's Struggle

A man told me about a tremendous internal battle he was fighting.

"First of all, I tried to control God by performing, thinking that my performance would please Him," he said. "The result was sheer frustration, and it was not at all enjoyable.

"Then, I tried to control my wife. Looking back, the way I tried to control and manipulate her was amazing. I had no idea what I was doing to her."

He continued, saying, "I was in a restaurant where I knew that other people from church were present, so I raised my voice as I built up my daughter, bragging about all of her accomplishments. I just wanted to control their impressions of me. All my life I have done things to control what people think of me. I actually lie sometimes to try to make people have a good image of me."

Satanic Influences

The Bible says, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

"Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

"Neither give [a marked off] place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:25-27).

When we give a place to the devil, he uses many strategies to start controlling us, and we are left feeling powerless and helpless. Each one of us has felt the pains of helplessness in trying to be the best we can be for God. But if we give a place to the devil today, guaranteed, he will approach us tomorrow. Even if we have gone months without giving him that place, he will intensify his approach because we gave him that

place in the past. "*Neither give place to the devil.*"

Now that man said to me, "As I tried to control my marriage, my wife fought back and controlled me by defrauding me. I started it all, and she got even. I don't think she even realized that she was controlling me. I surely deserved it.

"I even wrote a check to a missionary, and I did it to control his response, so that I would be liked—I didn't do it because of God. My motives were not pure.

"As I continue to try and control people, in comes failure and sin. And as I fail and fall deeper into sin, I try to control my guilt, my shame, and my heartache. It's terrible—I can't do it!" He went on to say, "The shame that I have experienced is so great, and I have tried so many things to get some relief. I can't continue to play these terrible games."

I just let the man talk because he was still trying to control the outcome of our conversation. Then he said, "I tried to increase my prayer life, trying to convince myself that I am spiritual. But in everything I do, I see that I am trying to control my spiritual life and people's impressions of me. If they get close to my defense mechanisms, I push them away. I don't want people to know the real me, I don't want them

near my protective 'fortress,' even though I know it's not right."

Sadly, all the time this man talked, he never mentioned a single thing about the Word of God.

Issues of Control

The apostle Paul said, in so many words, "When I do something that I shouldn't do, I hate it." In Romans 7, Paul was trying to control himself through self-righteousness. After being taught about the grace of God for three years in Arabia, by Jesus Christ Himself, Paul was still trying to exercise pharisaical principles. He tried to follow the letter of the law, but he could not put grace into practice—and he was an apostle. "For to will is present with me, but how to perform it, I just don't know," Paul admitted.

Imagine that! Paul met Christ on the road to Damascus and was saved. Soon after, he spent three years in Arabia being taught by Jesus Christ, and was given amazing revelations about spiritual victory through the Finished Work. Still, the first time Paul tried to apply it, he could not make it.

"When I try to do good, I do evil instead. When I don't want to do evil, I do it anyway, and I am in trouble. My head hurts, my soul

hurts, and my body hurts because I do have God, and I really want to have fellowship with Him again." This was the experience of the apostle Paul: "When I honestly try to do good, evil—satanic infection—is with me."

Finally, all he could do was cry out: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24).

Chapter Two

POWERLESS, HOPELESS: A GOOD PLACE TO BE

Paul was powerless and hopeless—and he was an apostle! These were not the words of a new believer. Yet, twice he said something that was foreign to Adam's natural way of thinking:

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:17).

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:20).

God was trying to get through to him. Paul needed to know that when he sinned, it was no longer Paul who sinned, but sin that dwelled in him. Paul understood academically that Jesus Christ, who paid for every single sin on Calvary, can never again punish a person's sin, ever.

Of course, He can deal with us if we grieve the Spirit, if we quench the Spirit, or if we start sowing negativity to ourselves. He will deal

with us individually, and we will be chastised—not because of our sin, but to make us like Him. Even unbelievers who are not forgiven will never have to pay for their sins. They will, however, have to face the fact that they rejected Christ. Even though He died for them, too, they will go to hell, because they didn't receive Him into their hearts.

The apostle Paul made a wonderful discovery, and he confessed, "With my mind, I serve the doctrine of God; but with my flesh, I serve my old sin nature" (see Romans 7:25). At last, the apostle was getting these two laws straight! He was desperately trying to overcome by himself, and he was very sincere. But he was trying to make it through carnal morality, the dark side of morality, without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.*

"With my mind, I serve the doctrine of God; but with my flesh, I serve the law of sin." This is why he said in Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." He was no longer helpless, hopeless, or powerless. Paul recognized that he was hid with Christ in God and that God was in control.

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

"But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Galatians 5:17-18).

The battle between the flesh and the Spirit happens within many precious Christians. It doesn't matter what your situation is, there is a way to be completely victorious in it. We have a magnificent provision with God.

That man we were referring to earlier said, "I can't eat; I can't sleep. Even my edification is not from the heart; it is just my way of trying to control people. Oh, how I wrestle with my emotions; I fail all the time."

Proverbs 25:28 says, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

And in Proverbs 16:32, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

How do we rule our human spirit? We have to realize what Paul discovered. The way out is to begin to grasp the truth of Romans 8:1*a*: "There

is therefore now no condemnation." The Word of God makes it crystal clear that this doesn't mean we should continue in sin that grace may abound. God forbid! (See Romans 6:1, 6:15.) But while we don't continue to sin willfully, we must see that there is no condemnation if we do sin. Happy is the man who condemns not himself (Romans 14:22).

The fact is, no man has power over his human spirit, neither has he power over death (Ecclesiastes 8:8). God does. Therefore, the answer is to be God-conscious. Satan, the world, and the flesh want you to try to control your spirituality. They want to see you try to control your victories. They want you to strive, and try, and fail, and become frustrated. They want you to frustrate the grace of God (Galatians 2:21). What we need is to see things in the light of God: We already have the mind of Christ, so now we need to think with God.

Back to the man who was so frustrated. He said, "I go to God and say, 'I am so weak, Lord. I am so absolutely paralyzed.' But even with that, I realize I am trying to impress God, hoping He will say, 'You are so humble!' I am at a crossroads. I try to control how I serve God. My wife doesn't say anything anymore. My son seems to

be very passive, but inside I know that he knows what's going on. He knows exactly what I am doing. He reacts in passivity, but I believe that inside he is still angry."

People often use jealousy to control their loved ones. No matter how accommodating and trustworthy the other party is, when a person is troubled in his own soul, he will try to find a scapegoat so he doesn't have to face his own weakness.

What everyone needs is to come to the end of his natural strength. When we finally arrive at the place of powerlessness and hopelessness as broken vessels, our own natural ability smashed beyond recognition, we are ready for a promotion. When God is in control in us, then we are finally in control.

**Be sure to read* The Dark Side of Morality, *by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

Chapter Three

LET THE SPIRIT POUR OUT HIS POWER

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:3-4).

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

Thank God that the precious Holy Spirit of the living God came down upon Paul to say, "Paul, the righteousness of Almighty God is in you. Now be led by the Spirit of God, and do not go back into the spirit of bondage again to fear. Don't go back into self-righteousness. I want you to talk to *Me*. Call Me 'Father.' And I want you to know, Paul, that there is nothing that can separate you from My love. Nothing

can condemn you. Now just relax. Let Me become the center of your life. Let Me take control, so you can have divine control in every situation you will face."

Paul had tried to be at the center and take control through his religious background. Others use their failure to take control and to be at the center. They don't mean to do it, but the frustration is absolutely overwhelming and exhausting. For example, a person becomes depressed because he can't control his circumstances. Someone didn't say the right thing, so he becomes depressed because he cannot control the people around him. He can't control a relationship, so he gets moody and negative. It is a very sad position to be in.

Jesus poured power into His disciples (Mark 6:7*b*; Acts 1:8); He just poured it into them. Their morality had nothing to do with what He gave them. He sent them out and gave them power. That is how it happens. It all comes from God.

Recently, a man from another state who had a serious problem with nervous twitching in his face came into my office. I found out that he also was seriously ill in many other areas. Though he had always been a good worker, he had not worked for a year and a half and was totally

frustrated and ashamed. When I saw him again that night at church, I said to him, "After the service, we are going to pray, and that the problem will be gone immediately." In tears, I looked him in the eye when we prayed and said, "I don't understand how it will happen, but it is done."

On his way home, the power of God came upon him, and he knew he was healed. He called our radio program to give his testimony, and he is like a brand-new person. He is so happy! He says that he feels like a million dollars. With several applications in for work, he has no more twitching, no more disease—none of it remains.

Our faith pleases God (Hebrews 11:6); however, that is not how we are healed, and it is not how we gain victory over sin. Make Christ the center, no matter what the odds are against you, no matter what the problems may be. That man was *trying* to please God with his faith. But he was healed by making Jesus Christ the center of his soul through the human spirit.

Christ's Pleasure Is to Work in Us

A woman was getting ready to take her life. She had her pills and a glass of water ready, yet she waited to hear our daily radio program. She

managed to call during the program, and she poured out her heart. We talked with her then, and another pastor counseled her that night and again each day, encouraging her with the Word spoken in love and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When she called again the following week, she sounded just like a little girl. She said, "It's over! Now I am rooted and grounded in love, and I am completely free." She admitted that the enemy had tried to come in one day. "But," she said, "I just stood in the love of God. The enemy left. I didn't give in, and now it is over. I am healed!"

God's Spirit was poured into her vessel. Zechariah 4:6 says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" and, dear friends, that is the truth.

Working Out What God Has Worked In

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling:

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13).

The beautiful part of this verse is revealed in their exegesis. To "work out" your own salvation sounds like a works program, until you study the meaning of the original language. "Work out" is *katergazomai*. Paul was not advocating a works program. This verb speaks of working out the result of something that happened in us. That something is God working in us, *energeo*, in verse 13. *Energeo* refers to the operation of the Holy Spirit taking the Word and transferring it into the memory center by way of the human spirit (Ephesians 1:19). The Word is transferred into the five parts of the soul, including the conscience. This is strictly the work of God, not of us. We let the Holy Spirit work in the transfer, and we receive the power to implement it.

He is here! Christianity is real—it works. Faithful is our God who calls us who also will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24). He will do what He asks us to do. *He* will perform it. God is in control.

When we understand this, we can work out whatever is wrong by a transfer. "For it is God that worketh in us." This means that God has a precise plan and purpose at this moment, working something out of your life forever to work something else in. God has designed an amaz-

ing provision of grace for you and me.

In Philippians 2:13, "to will and to do" means that God is so willing to do His work in us right now! It pleases Him to give us victory from something that is tearing us apart and from the various controls that we may not have noticed. The Word of God says that it is His "good pleasure." God is saying, "That's fun for me! It's wonderful. I enjoy when you let Me take control of your life." That is when we have *real* authority in every situation. We have divine ability derived from the One who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

After all we have said and done, having gone so far astray, we can still please God. What an awesome salvation! What an awesome God.

CONCLUSION

Think of how the Lord Jesus Christ alone can work out the wrong things in our lives just by coming in as our center. When self is at the center, we frustrate the grace of God. Deep down, we hate what we are doing, just as Paul did in his Romans 7 dilemma.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord, be my center. I don't care what the need is. You are working in me. I am going to trust you and let You do it." God will answer, "I will do it, for it is what I have asked you to experience."

We cannot judge the sins of another Christian. We cannot even bring up a sin. We can address a need and go to people alone to restore them. We restore them because their sins have already been judged. Our sins have been blotted out absolutely. Jesus took everything about our sins upon Himself, and now He wants the privilege of doing everything for us.

We were saved when we entered into a personal faith in the Person of Christ. Now the way we are healed is through our personal faith in a promise, by believing it with all of our heart. In Mark 5:36, Jesus said, "Only believe." By His exceeding great and precious promises, we are made partakers of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

Don't strive. Don't worry. Just rest and believe God, and you will be amazed. Personal faith in a personal promise brings in God's character, acting on your behalf. Just as He did by grace at salvation, He does it now with the gift of healing for whatever the need is.

Who Is Master of Your Soul?

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

People are quick to acknowledge the Ten Commandments as good rules to live by. Still, many of us from predominantly Christian nations have turned aside from the living God only to become servants of "other gods." Christians are not immune to the seductions of the gods of this world. We may not bow down to images, yet born-again believers can be strongly influenced by seductive spirits in the atmosphere—"gods" in the kingdom of darkness that plague individuals and bring down nations.

Drug addicts relentlessly pursue the next high; the sensual person keeps trying to fulfill his lust; and workaholics ruin their lives and their families in a consuming thirst for money and security. Driven by dissatisfaction, people repeatedly go back for more of what brought only momentary pleasure. Because of the day-

to-day onslaught of the entertainment industry, a lack of godly convictions, and improper priorities, many people worship at least one of the three gods we will discuss in this booklet: Bacchus, Venus, and Mammon.

All of us must ask ourselves, "Who is my master?" Christians need to settle on all the promises of God revealed through categories of doctrine. We must learn to pray as never before for discernment, protection, and complete freedom from the enemy who is only out to rob, maim, and destroy God's creation.

Chapter One

DEFINE YOUR POSITION

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, *supplications*, *prayers*, *intercessions*, and *giving of thanks* be made for all men" (1 Timothy 2:1).

"Supplications" are fervent prayers on critical subjects. "Prayers" (plural) simply means we are to turn every need or desire into an attitude of prayer. "Intercessions" are intense seasons of prayer concerning a particular overwhelming burden. It means to continue to pray without quitting and as often as possible in a person's schedule. Intercessions are prayers of tenacity and of importunity.*

Regarding what goes on in their respective countries, mature believers are the pivoting forces within each nation as they pray according to 1 Timothy 2:1. First of all, we are to pray for leaders—for *all* men and women in authority. Together with prayer, we give thanks for *all* men: "For kings, and for all that are in author-

ity; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:2).

In other words, the key to the well-being of a society is within the realm of the Church. It does not depend on the wickedness or goodness of leaders. The key to the strength of nations is in the condition, attitudes, and practices of local assemblies.

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). It was not just that men would be saved, but that we would have knowledge gained by experience through the truth. "The truth" is a system of learning, through the teaching of Bible doctrine. God desires that the truth would govern the five parts of our soul and lead us to magnify Christ.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,"—our great Intercessor of Hebrews 7:25 and 26—"Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Definition Comes by Doctrine

Someone commented to me rather casually, "We don't go for this doctrine stuff." Their igno-

rance revealed that they did not understand God's system of categories in Scripture. Categorical doctrine equals God's system of right thinking in the believer through a body of doctrine from the Word. It is how we can live by every Word of God.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus Christ mentions the importance of Bible doctrine: Matthew 7:28, Matthew 22:33, Mark 1:27, Mark 11:18, Mark 12:38, Luke 4:32, John 7:16, John 7:17, John 18:19. He kept reiterating the principle of doctrine. Religious leaders were astonished at His doctrine (Matthew 22:33). Doctrine is how to think spiritually.

Remove Stumbling Blocks that Offend

For example, Paul said to let no man despise your youth, "…but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). If a Christian offends a new believer or someone who wants to be saved, it is better that a millstone were placed around the Christian's neck and he were cast into the sea, according to Luke 17:1-2.

When I realize that I have offended anyone, I need to go to God on my knees and ask for for-

giveness. This is why: We can easily offend people who have a need for God, and who are seeking God, but who are still careless because they do not know how to think with God. They may be looking for help but do not know how to verbalize their need. But, the Christian who becomes a stumbling block to such a one would be better off if he were drowned in the depths of the sea than to face God with that offense.

In other words, take the stumbling block out of the way (Isaiah 57:14). Never again put a stumbling block before another person (Romans 14:13*b*).

Do Not Despise Doctrine

In 1 Timothy 4:13 he said, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." *Do not despise doctrine*. Jesus spoke through the inspired writer of Hebrews, "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart, and they have not known my ways" (Hebrews 3:10). A careful study of this verse in the original language speaks of people who never learned doctrine in categories, so they could never, ever find God's ways.

"They have not known my ways"—They

have not known My categorical doctrine; they have not known how to live by My Word; they do not have experiential knowledge of the Word.

"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto *the doctrine*…"—the definite article indicates a system of categories—"…continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:15).

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who *labour* in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17). As a leader of a church, I am to labor in the word and doctrine—not just deliver nice messages.

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome *words*; even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness [speaking of the Finished Work]; he is proud, knowing nothing.…from such withdraw thyself" (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith

content." (1 Timothy 6:6-8). According to 1 Timothy 6:12, with the *words* of God—with categorical doctrine—we fight the good fight of *faith*, not sight.

Become a Prayer Warrior through Doctrine

In 2 Timothy, we find the key to 1 Timothy 2:1-6, regarding our need to develop a strategic prayer life. Prayer is developed out of knowing doctrine. The principle is this: We are to pray prayers through doctrine and in the preciseness of the Spirit.

"And *the things* that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses…."—the Word of God in categorical doctrine—"…the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with *the affairs of this life*—speaking of the three gods we will be discussing—"…that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

"And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive *lawfully*…," which means according to Scripture (2 Timothy 2:2-5).

Then in verse 15: "Study to shew thyself ap-

proved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, [precisely and accurately] dividing the word of *truth*." Truth is the doctrine of Christ in life.

In 2 Timothy 3:7, many continue to learn but never come to a knowledge that is gained by experience in the system of doctrine. They are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of *the* truth."

The Profitability of Doctrine

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine…" (2 Timothy 3:16*a*).

Regarding doctrine, Jesus said in John 6:63, "The flesh profits nothing; but the words I speak, they are spirit, and they are life."

Every Word of God is profitable "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16*b*). We must never forget that both reproof *and* correction are involved with instruction of doctrine.

"…That the man of God may be *perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," or in other words, *mature* (2 Timothy 3:17).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-

suffering *and doctrine*. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine…." People who live in sentimentality don't want you to have convictions and to speak the truth as it is, because the truth is offensive in this twentieth century post-Christian culture—"…but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:2-3).

"And they shall turn away their ears from the [system of] truth [and categories], and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist..."—*Go out and win souls!* Do the work of an evangelist—"...make full proof of your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:4-5). The Word of God keeps bringing up the importance of sound doctrine, whether it was by Jesus Christ or the apostle Paul.

"He made known his *ways* unto Moses, his *acts* unto the children of Israel" (Psalm 103:7). Why didn't the Lord let Israel know His ways? Because, according to Hebrews 3:10, they refused to accept sound doctrine, and therefore, thousands of God's people died the sin unto physical death (verses 11-19). The difference between believers is this: Everyone who is born-

again knows something about the God of salvation. Yet, only those who have received the Word with the filling of the Holy Spirit as the governing authority in their souls can know His ways.

**We suggest reading Pastor Stevens' booklets on prayer,* Do I Really Know How to Pray?, *Grace Publications, 1997, and* Intimacy in Prayer, *Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two
"I THIRST"

We need to pray for all men, because every person in this universe—with no exceptions—lives with a thirst.

The Bible says in Proverbs 27:20, "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied." This is the problem we face today. Men are never satisfied. They are continuously thirsty.

The psalmist said in 18:5*a*, "The sorrows of hell compassed me about." The sorrows of hell have a hold of me. Why? Because *hell is never satisfied* (Isaiah 5:14).

In Psalm 116:3, the Word of God says, "…the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow."

Many make their bed in hell, according to Psalm 139:8. In Isaiah 28:15, people made an agreement with hell. Drug addicts and alcoholics make an agreement with hell, believing

that grace will cover their sin—and it will *not*!

Adulterers make an agreement with hell that it is okay to sin. Fornicators have to make an agreement with hell to have unlawful sex. They are never satisfied, and they will never be full; the sorrows of hell compass them about.

In Luke 12:18-20, the rich man's barns were full, so he decided to build more barns. Then he said, "After this, I will eat, drink, and be merry." And God said, "Thou fool, this night your soul will be required of thee, and you can never enjoy your new barns."

Bacchus, the God of Addictions

There are three gods among Christians in any ministry if Christ is not Lord of their lives. The first god is Bacchus, the god of drugs and alcohol. Bacchus—the god of the chain smoker. Exodus 20:3 says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." So here comes Bacchus saying, "Smoke a little marijuana tonight. Go ahead! Of course, you'll want it again tomorrow night. Take heroin tonight! It's okay—just this once." In a few days, you need to have it again. You are never satisfied, and you have got to have more.

We all want freedom, but what we choose to make us free often leads us to bondage. We want

liberation, but it leads us to hell. The hell comes on the inside, and the drug addict shakes. He experiences living hell.

"Give me more!" His god is Bacchus—the god of millions of people in churches who profess that Christ is their God, yet they go back to Bacchus. Hell encompasses them. It's on the inside—a living torment of hell, until they get their fulfillment with drugs. A twenty-year old begins to look old and worn out. Satan steals, robs, destroys, and finally kills them (John 10:10*a*).

But there is another god.

Venus, the God of Sensual Lust

Venus is the god of sensual lust: the god of masturbation, fornication, promiscuity, and immodest dress, causing women to expose their bodies. People bow down to Venus, who is also the god of homosexuality, lesbianism, and premarital sex. They believe they will never be complete unless this god satisfies their desire. Then, once they do, it does not satisfy. Hell and destruction are never full. The eyes of a lustful man are never satisfied.

But there is another side of the god of sensual lust. Gluttony! People who are ruled by this

god will eat and eat again—in the middle of the night or any time in the day. Venus is the same god of gluttony referred to in Luke 21:34, regarding surfeiting in the Last Days. Those who serve this god have no discipline.

Venus is the same god that makes some people force themselves to vomit to get rid of the food they gorged (bulimia), or that makes others starve themselves to death (anorexia). And whether it is that or just eating uncontrollably to try to be fulfilled, it is sin, caused by the god of sensual lust.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). The Lord is a jealous God.

Mammon, the God of Material Lust

Then there is another god called "Mammon," which means money.

Covetousness is idolatry controlled by Mammon and accompanied by demons (Colossians 3:5; Psalm 119:36-37). It causes a man to say, "I'm going to build barns. After I do that, I'm going to build bigger barns. I'm going to have security." Of course, he will die rich and wealthy—*filthy rich*. He knows he doesn't need it, but he is driven to get more, because he is never satisfied with what he has now. He wants *more*.

Mammon is the god of a lust for things or money. They can be wonderful when used properly, but terrible when they become god: *Mammon*. And Jesus Christ said it so beautifully in Matthew 6:24: "You cannot serve God and mammon."

Little Gods Controlling Great Nations

These gods take over until the psyche gets mad. In Deuteronomy 28:28, the Israelites were stricken by God with madness, *shigga`on*. Their psyche was mad with these gods. They hated the wilderness because they never knew the one God. As a result, they came under the control of all three of these gods.

These three gods control America. The entertainment industry is a primary tool used to gain strongholds in individual lives. Movies and television glamorize premarital sex, adultery, fornication, immodest dress, drinking. Suggestive cartoons are available for very young children to watch. This industry is cursed to hell with their three gods. Bacchus, Venus, Mammon—they are out to take their prey by whatever means they can find.

"Supplications, prayers, and intercessions." No wonder the Holy Spirit said we need these

weapons of spiritual warfare. No wonder He said them in just that order.

Men are thirsting. "Do you know where I can get some marijuana? I'm thirsting for it."

"Let's go to the bar tonight. We have only been married a year or two, but we have already left our wives. Could we go and have a few drinks tonight? There's nothing wrong with it. Let's sublimate unto our god Bacchus."

"Let's go down and see a prostitute while we are under the control of our god Bacchus. He is my god—has been for years. But I'm saved. Well, I think I am," say the people under the power of Bacchus.

"Well, I should have never married her (or him), and I have thought it all over. I've given it the old college try, but I'm leaving. I'm going home." And then the divorce, then another marriage. This time the attack is from the realm of Venus, the god of hell!

"Just a few more years of this rat race and we will finally have the lifestyle we always dreamed about! God understands that work is important. So what if we miss a few church services. Besides, we'll be able to give a much bigger tithe!" The god of Mammon drives people to distraction from the things of God. Temptations

come, as they do to everyone, but there is not enough doctrine received to instruct the soul. Then, when least expected, the chest pains come. All the planning and calculating in the world can't prepare an unprepared soul for his appointment with God.

The Reality of Hell

Someday, if they don't get saved, they will go to hell. But for now, hell is on the inside. The rich man in Luke 16:24 said, "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." The rich man was thirsting in the flames of hell.

Adultery is like the flames of hell. First the act, then the guilt flames up. The guilt follows until your conscience is seared. And these three gods deaden the conscience until the conscience can no longer function with any kind of reality. We become indifferent to the fact that we are in the trail of dying early, and that we are in the trail of total destruction. These gods with their power lead us with the flames of hell into this inevitable end.

We should never even have to be occupied with these sins, but we are because these gods

are out there. Jesus Christ is still the homeless One in this sense: when He was on earth, He had no place to lay His head (Matthew 8:20). Though He now reigns on His eternal throne in heaven, He is still longing for a home on earth in the hearts of men who are called by His name.

People everywhere are thirsting, yet the drink of these three gods never satisfies them. Do you understand why Acts 17:30 says, "I wish men every where would *repent*"—change their mind and make a radical decision? As the prophet Jeremiah said, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God" (Jeremiah 31:18*b*).

A Righteous Thirst

Jesus Christ was on the cross. He had forty different fevers, according to the exegetical historical records we have available to study. Blood was coming out of His pores. His head, brows, tongue, cheeks, back, legs, toes, bones, muscles—His entire body, from His feet to His precious head, was racked with fevers.

In John 19:28, Jesus said, "I thirst!" It was, of course, a legitimate, physical thirst.

The soldiers took the anodyne meant to ease the pain and offered the sour vinegar to quench

His thirst. They attempted to put it on His lips, but He refused it. He was saying, "No! I'm an example! I am here in your stead. I don't want it! I must experience the full punishment for sin." The crown of thorns, His head bleeding, His back blistered and bleeding, the nails in His feet and hands. And on the inside, He was saying, "I thirst! *I thirst for my Father!* I thirst for His glory! Look at me! Father, I thirst."

"I have a godly thirst to reach the people who are thirsting—for those who never get filled. They destroy their bodies, their souls, their families, their marriages, their future, their potential. I thirst because they are never filled!"

Jesus Christ on the cross was thirsting for people who think they are filled, yet they go back again and again to the same things. Influenced by Mammon, there are people who are still never satisfied with money. They want more, and they don't want to walk by faith. They want the security of money, the security of buildings and real estate, while souls go to hell.

Then, there is the drug addict who is never satisfied. The sensual person keeps going out with one partner after another, and lust is robbing him of God! And it is robbing him of heaven, because they will *never* go there. Ac-

cording to Galatians 5:19-21, they will not enter heaven.

It is lust, not love. It is need, not God. It is flesh, not Spirit. It is rebellion, not humility. And Satan keeps inventing more and more distractions.

Chapter Three

GET BACK YOUR LIFE BY GIVING UP YOUR RIGHTS

It was the eighth day of the feast of the tabernacles. The priest went down to the pool, took some water, and brought it up before the people. He poured out the water, a symbol of God pouring out His Spirit, and at that moment, the Lord Jesus Christ stood up and began to speak.

"*If any man thirst…*"—and you do. You who follow Bacchus, and Venus, and Mammon, you are thirsting but you will never be full. "If any man thirst, *let him come unto me, and drink*. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his [emotions] shall flow rivers of living water" (see John 7:37-39). Christ was speaking of the Holy Spirit who, after He was glorified, would be given to us who believe.

Jesus went to the woman at the well (John 4:4-30). He said, "If I drink the water you are of-

fering Me, I will thirst again. But," He said, "I have water to give you. And if you drink the water that I give you, you will never thirst again. Just keep drinking it. You will never thirst again."

Satan, through seduction and enticement, puts desires into the hearts of his people and into the hearts of Christians who become his representatives. He promises to make them feel better and more secure than ever. But God says, "If you rely on hell's provision or any natural provision, you will thirst again. You will never be full."

Hell and destruction are never full. The eyes of men are never satisfied (Proverbs 27:20). The sorrows of hell go with you wherever you go (Psalm 18:5). As your heart gets harder, and you take the broad road of Matthew 7:13, your conscience becomes weaker and weaker, until finally, it is seared. Then as you get older, the fear of God is gone, and you are still thirsty.

Esau cried out in anguish (Hebrews 12:16-17). He cried and cried, and he tried to find a place for repentance, but he found none. He had a thirst that was not satisfied, and His conscience toward Jesus Christ was dead. With all of the privileges at his disposal, he still did not

call upon the Lord, and Esau went to hell. This is why: He cried with a worldly sorrow, but it wasn't a *godly* sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

Judas cried, and he said, "I betrayed innocent blood," but he never accepted Christ. Acts 1:25 says that he thirsted for something he would never have. Under the control of Mammon, Judas Iscariot was thirsting, but he was not satisfied—*and he went to his place*.

Don't Quit

When you receive a call from God, but you see no way to fulfill it, determine that you will not be a quitter. Stay with God and be filled with the Living Water of Christ at the fountains of grace. Do not be a coward who backs off with excuses and becomes a spiritual wimp with a Laodicean attitude. Some people leave their call and think they are going for something bigger and better. They will never find it!

What does the Lord desire for us? Salvation? Yes. But Jesus Christ wants all men to learn doctrine—to be able to think with God's thoughts and God's ways, from a divine viewpoint. He would have all men to come to a knowledge of doctrine by experience through learning, believing, receiving, and living it out. As a result, we

will have *sanctity*.

What is sanctity? Sanctity is Christ in you. Sanctity is Christ governing you with heavenly thoughts, so that you have your conversation from heaven (Philippians 3:20). When the sanctity of a living God controls your thirst, then you share it with others. The river flows from the heart, in the mind, to the emotions, and then it goes out. Not down, but out! And the spring goes up, because you are always satisfied.

Is it any wonder that in Psalm 42:2, the psalmist said, "I thirst for the living God"? Is it any wonder that in Matthew 5:6, they that hunger and thirst, and continue to thirst, after righteousness shall be filled continuously?

Hell Is on the Inside

With the god of Mammon, there is a concept of infinity, an economic immortality that says, "I've got to have more!"

There is a kind of infinity related to Bacchus, the god of drugs, that says, "I need to have more."

Then there is a sensual infinity regarding Venus, the god of lust. "I wonder what she would be like?" or, "I've had five husbands, but I want to do it again." Hell is on the inside.

Can you see this? Hell is on the inside, and because of that, a hell is produced on the outside. Murders! Rapes! Molestation! Robbery! Wars! Stealing! The hell goes from the inside to the outside. Our cities are not safe. There are drug addicts, dealers, and perverse people whose consciences have been seared and who are ruled by their lusts. Some people are so careless, they think nothing bad will ever happen to them, but it only takes once. There is a hell out there!

There is a hell experienced by those children with divorced parents but who desire to have a mom and dad at home every night—a living hell.

There are teenagers who dress immodestly. A pretty young girl may lead two lives. A year goes by, then two years, three years, and she advances into that hell out there where there are diseases like AIDS and herpes. It is a world of immorality, where there's no real love, just sensual pleasure under the god of Venus. They bow down to a filthy, lying god.

The young man is kind, and he fools his parents. All of a sudden, he starts for the first time. First it's pot. Then, on a Friday night with a certain crowd, he tries heroin. It takes him away

from worry and stress into another world—but it's a living hell. It was sent to kill him (John 10:10*a*). In just a matter of time—maybe five years, maybe ten years—Satan will kill him! It is a hell!

How to Have Heaven on the Inside

When Jesus said, "I thirst," He said, "I love them *all*. I will die for them all." He said, "I will pay a ransom, and that ransom is My life. I will pay for their sins, and I will take their sins upon My body. I will die in their place."

Jesus is saying, "I thirst for your freedom. I thirst so you will never thirst again. I thirst to win you to Myself. I *thirst* to have you in My family. I love you, and I will die for you personally. I thirst because I want you. I want to take you out of the inside hell and the outside hell into a heavenly conversation of grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness. I will do that in a moment. I will come to live inside, and I will never, never, *never* leave you nor forsake you."

Jesus wants us to put Him first. In Matthew 6:33, He said we should seek His kingdom and His righteousness before any other thing. Of course He wants us to honor our pastor-teacher, but we are to serve God first, honoring the pas-

tor-teacher and the Body of Christ through the will of God (2 Corinthians 8:5). He knows that through faith obedience we will have a living heaven on the inside.

When we allow the Lord of heaven and earth to be the master of our soul, He will give us the love of the Holy Spirit, the comfort, the cleansing, the peace, the freedom, the joy, the wisdom of Almighty God inside. He will make us His tabernacle. In John 14:17-20, Jesus said, "I will make them my habitation. I will control every thought while I let them use their individuality to enjoy fellowship in the light. I will sup with them, and they can sup with Me. And when pressures come, we will be living together as one."

CONCLUSION

Suffering is not a tragedy when it is for God. The tragedy is what we miss when we are not filled with God's promises and His power. It is what we miss in the Word, what we miss by not having supper with Him. The Lord Jesus Christ wants to have supper with us! And the tragedy is what we miss, not what we suffer.

Do you know how many tears were shed before a message like this could be delivered? This is from the heart of God. He doesn't want Bacchus or Venus or Mammon to be our gods. Neither are we to give place to these gods of Satan.

Jesus Christ is your God, and His desire is that we would have a single eye on Him. He offers us mercy, grace, and love. He forgives. He has paid for every sin, and He will help us if we fail in the process. He only asks that we get up, isolate the sin, and go on. Always choose to be around the right company (Proverbs 2:20). Don't

be a companion of fools who don't think with God (Proverbs 13:20) just because they have leadership qualities and you like them.

Fellowship with Spirit-filled men. Be around the men and women who have one God—the Father instead of Bacchus, the Son instead of Venus, the Holy Spirit instead of Mammon, and the Word of God instead of conversations that can only be fulfilled in the lusts of the flesh, which will leave you thirsting again.

Dear heavenly Father, we are amazed at Your faithfulness to us. God forbid that we would become familiar with Your instruction in precise thinking through Your Word. Continue to convict us of Your perfect holiness, and draw us into Your ways, away from the gods of this world. In Jesus name, Amen.

Who Is on the Lord's Side?

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Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

It is so important to have proper priorities. I know men and women who have good priorities, but they do not have *divine* priorities. Though the things we esteem as important may not be bad, they still may not be God's priorities. Unless we take a definite stand on the issues that concern the Lord, we will be "middle-of-the-road" Christians who love God and do not live in any overt sin, but who have not made a choice to stand with the Lord.

Much shame and reproach has been brought on Christ because of leaders who entertain soul-power attachments mentally, emotionally, and, sometimes, physically. They enter into areas of sin because they have never chosen to be on the Lord's side in their thinking. Years of service, teaching, and ministering can go down the drain simply because people have not made it a priority to stay on the Lord's side.

This booklet is taken from a doctrine class

covering the book of Ephesians, taught at Maryland Bible College and Seminary. Our prayer is that this message will motivate you to make a commitment to discern and choose the Lord's side in all things.

Chapter One

HAVE A PRECISE WALK

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1).

In the first two chapters of Ephesians, Paul writes of our extraordinary position, how we have been raised up and seated together *with* Jesus Christ *in* heavenly places. Chapter three defines life in the Body of Christ. And in chapter four, God begins to deal with our walk.

Peripateo is the Greek word translated as "walk," in Ephesians 4:1. Formed from the root words, *peri* (which defines a location around an outer edge) and *pateo* (to tread or trample a path), the best definition I have found for this walk, where we were called, is "to step deliberately through to the perimeter, on every side in all areas of life." Ephesians 4:2 *tells* us how to walk, "with all lowliness, and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

Grace *teaches* us how to walk. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12). The Greek word for "teaching" doesn't mean merely to give instructions, but it speaks of imparting an entire education in the Word of God. In other words, we must be taught the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). It was thrilling to discover two scholars who gave this definition for the word "teach." These men really understood doctrine. And we must understand that grace is the great teacher. Grace teaches us to deny ungodliness, worldly lusts, and to live quietly, filled with doctrine in this present, evil world.

Then, Ephesians 5 tells us to walk in *virtue love:* the unconditional love of God that never demands a response from its object.* Herein lies the key to our walk. We have been separated unto virtue love by the Holy Spirit. It is love derived from communion with the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14) and produced in the new heart of our human spirit. Remember, the heart is the premise for all motivation, the basis for operational behavior, and the supreme center for

all communication of our thoughts, feelings, and decisions.

Awake Thou That Sleepest

"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light…." (Ephesians 5:14-21).

Notice carefully what is being said in this passage. Paul writes "Awake thou that sleepest" to the church of Ephesus. "Arise from spiritual death and Christ will give you *light*," or, categorical illumination from the Word. To "walk circumspectly" speaks of walking precisely through the grace of God on the narrow road, as of someone walking on a tightrope with broken glass below, where a fall would be disastrous.

"Redeeming the time, because the days are *evil* [full of infection]," and be understanding through our experience as to the will of God for our lives. When verse 18 says, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess," it is contrasting what wine does to the flesh with what the Holy Spirit does to the soul. We are to have an excess of the filling of the Spirit which produces an abundant life. When we are filled with the Spirit, we begin speaking to ourselves "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" that produce

melodies in our heart to the Lord at all times.

Now our inner man is right. The Spirit is filling us. The will of God is established in us through the Word. The evidence is that we give thanks for all things and in everything. We redeem the time, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us (1 Thessalonians 5:18). And now, with everything in place, we submit to one another. This is true Body life.

The Struggle to Maintain Order

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Ephesians 5:21-23).

In isolated cases, people with certain personalities control and manipulate others and prevent them from making decisions in their believer-priesthood. That is *not* God's thought on headship and submission. But more commonly, Christians today have an unwillingness to submit—in marriage, on the job, or in the Body of Christ.

The Greek phrase for "submitting to one to another" means to submit to one of the same

kind, rather than inferior to superior. How do we do it? By giving thanks, with a soul filled with singing, by constantly being filled with the Spirit, and by operating in the will of God, redeeming the time while we walk circumspectly in precise truth. We no longer live in spiritual death. Instead, we submit to one another in the light that always exposes darkness, because now we are children of light (Ephesians 5:8, 13).

"For the husband is the head of the wife." In the majority of marriages, the husband never establishes that headship, because he doesn't have virtue love, maturity, or capacity to love. He lives in impressions and concepts in a human viewpoint. Often his heart is darkened by words without knowledge (Job 38:2).

"A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself" (Proverbs 18:2). In the original Hebrew, this says that a person who cannot think only expresses opinions about himself. When he tries to defend something, he can't think with God, so he expresses an "opinion" from himself—a concept, an impression, or a viewpoint that is totally locked up in the depravity of his flesh. Paul said, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18*a*). To that end, he

cried out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Paul saw a law in his body—the law of the old sin nature—warring against the law of his mind.

So many people in good, Bible-believing ministries, are overloaded with information on how to live. They sit in the pews and hear a variety of fresh messages that constantly come forth from the pastor, leaders, and teachers. Yet, many stand still. Their scent is unchanged as they continue to express opinions about themselves and how they "feel." What they need is to stop living in denial of what they are, who God is, and what He has called them to be.

The Secret of Submission

The hour is late. Christians need to honor God's table of organization. In Exodus 40:33-34, everything had to be in order before the glory of God would fill the tabernacle. When it happened, even Moses couldn't enter in. Likewise, a man shouldn't be able to enter into the debate of his marriage. A husband needs to honor 1 Corinthians 11:3: "The head of every woman is the man; and the head of man is Christ; and the head of Christ is God the Father."

It is the husband's job to promote a capacity in his wife to be a responder, because he is her head in God's divine order. Just as God the Father was the head over the humanity of Christ, and just as the Holy Spirit submits to Christ, now the husband submits to Christ through the Spirit and the Word. Then, the wife with a strong will must allow God to break her and start submitting to her husband in love, as unto the Lord.

When believers submit to one another, and to those in authority, as unto the Lord, then we are operating from the Lord's side. Children submit to their parents, a wife submits to her husband, and a husband submits to Jesus Christ and to the pulpit. If a man will not submit to God's order of bona fide authority, then his wife has the privilege of sanctifying him through her life (1 Corinthians 7:11-14), while she trusts God to be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent in protecting her. If her husband is not right with God, the inner beauty of her declarations of doctrine will win him (1 Peter 3:1-2). *That* is what it means to be on the Lord's side.

**Read* A Victorious Self-Image in Virtue Love, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

THE PRICE OF REBELLION

God's order is designed to reveal His glory on earth. When that order is tested, it also reveals who is on the Lord's side. For example, God called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. When God called him up to receive the tables of stone, Moses delegated his authority to Aaron and Hur (Exodus 24:14). But when he came down from Mt. Sinai, the people were worshipping a golden calf. Moses' anger "waxed hot," and Aaron started uttering excuses till he finally said, "The people made me do it!" (see Exodus 32:22-24).

Obviously, Aaron was not a strong leader. He was okay if Moses was around, but left alone, he was easily controlled and manipulated by the people. Isn't that the way it usually goes? Many are good leaders *under* a leader. Others simply lead. Moses led men by following the Word of God and trusting Him for the conse-

quences.

So, in Exodus 32:26, God separated out the people who had a heart unto Him. Moses stood at the gate of the camp and asked, "Who is on the LORD's side? Let him come unto me." He established a clear-cut line, and only the Levites moved to his side. Three thousand men were slain that day and many more were plagued by the Lord—and all because they refused to honor God's order by coming over to His side.

Do Not Judge God's Servant

Later on, in Numbers 16:1-3, Korah and his crowd accused Moses and Aaron of taking on too much authority. "…Seeing all the congregation are holy,…wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?" When Moses heard it, he fell on his face.

This is so important: Moses' first response was not anger; he fell on his face knowing the fear of the Lord. In his natural disposition, Moses' weakness was his temper. But after many tests and forty years in the back of the desert, God declared that he was the meekest man on the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3).

God did, however, impart His righteous anger through Moses, and after pleading with

the people to come over to the Lord's side, Moses declared, "Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works…" (Numbers 16:28). If the people died of natural and common causes, Moses was simply acting on his own. But if they died supernatural deaths, it proved that Moses was indeed God's bona fide representative authority to Israel.

"And the earth opened up her mouth and swallowed them up…" (Numbers 16:32).

Still, it wasn't enough that the people witnessed their leaders and neighbors actually swallowed alive into a supernatural pit of death. The very next day, Israel again began to murmur against Moses and Aaron! So God, who had spared them, came down in glory and sent a plague against the nation—a plague that was stopped only by the prayers and the offering of incense by Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16:41-50). Thousands were killed for murmuring against God's sovereign plan. They were presumed to be God's people, but they were not on the Lord's side.

People who crusade against a ministry that is a work of God will eventually reveal their heart. They are not on the Lord's side. To be on the Lord's side is to be on the side of Christ's

death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. It is to be on the side of positional truth and virtue love.

Laying Down Your Life in Honor

In order for God to be revealed, someone has to lay down his or her life in every situation. For example, children are to honor their parents, God, and the Word, with the Cross and through grace. Also they are to honor the office of the pastor, their teachers, and youth leaders, and to love them for their work's sake. Then they are to honor the value of being obedient for Christ's sake and esteeming the honor code toward one another.

It is vital that we all live in God's honor code, honoring one another's believer-priesthood and privacy. Never betray a confidence (Proverbs 17:9). It is apparent that honoring privacy is so rare today. You may have told someone not to repeat what you confided, then within a month it comes back that he told it to his best friend. The matter may have come out unintentionally. But, being on the Lord's side means it is the glory of God to conceal the matter, according to Proverbs 25:2 (unless it is for the purpose of counseling, and then only tell it to a qualified person who can be trusted). We

must guard our hearts and always abide in God's honor code. That is the Lord's side.

A person is on the Lord's side when he initiates virtue love. If a marriage doesn't have virtue love, then neither partner is on the Lord's side—even though one party may appear much better than the other in relative righteousness. But virtue love sees the object of love in the Finished Work. Its expression is never dependent on a response, but its source is in heaven.

When I come to the place where I trust Jesus Christ for everything—when I come to the place where I say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him"—then I have come to the Lord's side (Job 13:15).

Christ laid down His life for the guilty. Have we done that recently? Christ didn't spread gossip about the guilty; He laid down His life for them. If I have virtue love, that's exactly what I will do in my desire to restore the other person (Ephesians 4:32). "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

False Oneness, True Oneness

When two people commit adultery, they be-

come one soul and one flesh. When they enter into an affair, the old sin nature becomes connected to Satan's system. They become closer than air (Job 41:16), and cannot be divided. But though they may have one soul and one flesh, they can never have one heart. Because they became one soul, Satan is able to stimulate the affair through the emotions and through the libido, and they fulfill their lust in a soul-power relationship. They ignore the mandate of Galatians 5:16*b*: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

A married couple who are both right with God have one heart, one soul, and one flesh. Only God functioning in their lives can make that happen. This is why no man should try to separate what God has joined. You can't do it. Matthew 19:6 says, what "God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Always remember that love is not just an emotion but an act of the will. So, whenever something comes against that kind of oneness, we must purpose to remain on the Lord's side through a conscious decision of the will.

God's Law in the Heart

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new

spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

"…I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Hebrews 8:10*b*).

So often, success will cause people to lose their vision. Some have even given up missions and soul winning. Though they started out with a goal to serve God, people often become sidetracked and fall into the ways of the world. The problem goes back to choices; they could end up on a path of self-destruction because they were never firmly established on the Lord's side.

We have a beautiful young model attending our Bible college, and she has said, "I'd just as soon give up modeling today." The photographers and designers try to get her to pose suggestively, but she will not do it. "You'll get over this. You're just going through a phase with this religious stuff," they tell her. But she says, "I won't get over this. I've made a commitment, and I'm going to keep it." She is on the Lord's side.

Make sure that no matter what happens, you will be on the Lord's side. If division comes in

the ministry, whose side are you going to be on? Will you stand with the "friend" you go out to eat with every week but whose heart is secretly divided? Or will you stand on the Lord's side? Tests will come into your life to clearly reveal which side you are on.

Jonathan loved David as his own soul (1 Samuel 18:1). They were knit together: one heart and one soul, but not one flesh. Jonathan also knew that God had chosen David to be king, so he gave up his legitimate right to his father's throne. He stripped off his robe and gave David his garment. Jonathan was on Christ's side.

Imagine what would have happened had Jonathan not said, "David, you can be king. Here's my robe. Here's my girdle. Here's my sword. Here's my bow." The question is, who is on Calvary's side? Death's side? Burial's side? Resurrection's side? Ascension's side? Who is on the side of doctrine? Precise light? Virtue love? *Who is on the Lord's side?*

The Sweet Savor of Christ

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and *maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge* by us in every

place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

Those who do not realize that in their flesh dwells no good thing will go through moods, cycles, and have opinions without doctrine. Proverbs 19:2*a* in the Amplified translation says, "Desire without knowledge [doctrine] is not good." God's knowledge must have the sweet incense of virtue love and the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It starts with anyone who is willing to lay down his life for a friend (1 John 3:16). In a marriage it starts with the husband. This way, God makes manifest the spices of His love, and the incense of His knowledge in every situation.

So many issues among believers can be resolved without going to the world for counsel. When there is a problem that requires a judicial hearing, after the parties have prayed, they should turn to their pastor and to the Body of Christ where there are qualified, gifted people

who know the Book. Unless it is a case such as molestation, incest, physical abuse, or murder—judicial crimes that must be handled through the courts to protect children and uphold the law—the Body of Christ will do a far better job than anyone in the world.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 that doctrine gives experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) processed in the right side of the brain, where the new heart and the human spirit are.* As it is worked in, we bring the sweet odor of God's incense every place we go, manifesting Christ's life. And what does the manifestation do but destroy the works of Satan while it builds a capacity in the person who is guilty. "The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

A Scent for Every Situation

There is fun, joy, and peace that comes with receiving and implementing instructions from the Word. The sweet incense of doctrine, virtue love, and the fruit of the Spirit goes with us in *every* place. "To the one we are the savour of death unto death…." This means that the sweet incense we give is repulsive to people who are living in spiritual death. "…And to the other

[we are] the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:16-17). Our lives are a sweet incense before God because *we speak in Christ*.

It doesn't matter who you are. When you are not on the Lord's side, you corrupt the Word of God that is in you. It ceases to give off a sweet incense in your life, and even though you are a Christian, you reveal the unity of Satan's kingdom through the old sin nature which is connected to the world system. You could be a leader in the church and still be on the devil's side. We saw what God thinks of that, in Exodus 32 and Numbers 16. Also, if you don't have a ministry of reconciliation, you are on the devil's side. *What are you going to do?* Let's consider how to get on the Lord's side once and for all.

**Read* The Hearing Heart, *by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Three

COME BACK TO THE LORD'S SIDE

"How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21*b*).

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15*b*). Joshua had already made his decision to serve the Lord. The same is true for many believers today.

"Blessed in he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalm 32:1-2).

"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:6-8).

When David wrote Psalm 32, he had been out of fellowship with God and silent for one

whole year. Now, having acknowledged his sin before God, he starts out the right way: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is *covered*." The Hebrew word for "covered" is *kacah*, which means to be concealed, hidden forever, because of total forgiveness (see Psalm 85:2). Then he goes on to say, "Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity."

It Started in the Garden

Now here's the root of the problem, friends. In the Garden of Eden, Adam entered into personal sin, but Eve entered into *iniquity*. Ezekiel 28:15 tells us that Lucifer was perfect until iniquity was found in his heart. In 1 Timothy 2:14, it was not the man who was deceived, but the woman. She was deceived through her emotions, which rebelled against authority because of her vulnerability to emotional vibrations outside of her covering. Adam sinned in his mind, but Eve sinned when her emotions acted in place of her mind—but emotions can't think. Therefore, she was deceived, but Adam entered into sin willfully.

Things have been this way, more or less, ever since the Fall. A man sins through his mind, and a woman sins by her emotions rebelling

against authority. In her rebellion, she becomes resentful, where a man tends to become angry, even when he knows better. Anger is one of the worst sins in the Bible, because in a moment of rage, with unteachable emotions ruling, lives can be destroyed.

We must learn to rule over our human spirits through the Word of God (Proverbs 16:32). This is done by building walls of doctrine in the soul (Proverbs 25:28) and allowing the Holy Spirit to bring a sweet incense and the fruit of virtue love into experiential knowledge so it can be manifested in and through us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Effects of Anger

In Psalm 32, David described what anger did to him: "My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." "Roaring" is *sheagah*, a word that speaks of a person who is angry mentally, emotionally, and physically because he is not right with God. During this time in his life, David was on the devil's side. He was an angry man for one whole year!

In Psalm 32:3, "All the day long" is *yowm*, an adverb referring to an extended period of time when David manifested his frequent mood

swings. He could hide it for a while, but then the mood would be revealed in cycles. All during that time he was in the flesh. The best David could do was try to change the wretched 'old man' by living in human good, and that didn't last long. He was only trying to change because of guilt. The guilt that controlled him was never dealt with in truth. Day and night it continued to roar. David couldn't sleep because God's hand was "heavy" upon him (*yad kabad*), which speaks of something heavier than sand (Job 6:3), like a heavy chain (Lamentations 3:7), or sin (Genesis 18:20), or of being conquered by another (Judges 1:35)—it was the heaviness of God's hand of chastisement.

The Cooling Effect of Confession

Psalm 32:4*b* says "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer," meaning that vital moisture in his vessel was drying up. "Summer" refers to the time of cutting off the harvest of fruit in areas that never get any rain, especially midsummer, the hottest time. People who suffer with certain kinds of arthritis know what it means to lose precious moisture in their joints. The stiffness and inflammation cause excruciating pain with the slightest movement. David's

body was reacting to the wearing down of his natural defenses.

But watch how David got out of his cycles, his mood swings, and his guilt. First, he stopped living in denial. Many men and women think that they don't live in denial. David, however, knew where he stood. He said in Psalm 32:5, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee…" (*yada chattah*). In other words, David was saying, "I know what I've done, and I'm going to face up to it and make it right." *Chattah* means an offense against God that produces guilt, and the punishment is to be separated from fellowship with God. David acknowledged his sin unto God. He faced the reality that he had been living in his old sin nature for a year.

In verse five he continues, "…mine iniquity have I not hid." "Iniquity" is *avon*, referring to emotional rebellion against total repentance. David had been angry. He had no joy, he couldn't sleep, and he wouldn't get right because of pride and arrogance in his position as king. Then, he got a visit from the prophet Nathan. I'll tell you, if Nathan were around today, he would go straight to our national leaders (beginning with Christians). He wouldn't be speaking smooth and flattering words to immoral politi-

cians, but he would say, "Get right with God. I come to you in the name of God!" But Nathan would go alone, just as he went to David; he wouldn't tell the news reporters and make a spectacle. He would do everything in God's order with a purpose to draw the leaders to God's side. It worked with David, because God honors His Word.

Acknowledging Sin and Iniquity

David acknowledged his sin before God. He would no longer conceal the sin of his mind, or the rebellion in his emotions. He would no longer live in denial. He said, "I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD" (Psalm 32:5). "Transgression" (*pesha*) means to go against known authority and known truth. The Hebrew word for "confess" is *yadah*, meaning that David made an exact confession concerning the thing he had done, and made himself accountable to make it right. He said, "I refused to obey what I knew to be true and right. I knew what I was doing, but then I concealed it because I couldn't face what I was doing, so I entered into denial."

We have to deal with personal sin in order to reign and rule over our emotions. We have to deal with the authority of rebellion in our emo-

tions against the precise Word of God. And then we have to deal with our transgressions when we know the truth.

What happened when David acknowledged his sin? God forgave the iniquity of his sin. "Thou forgavest" (*nasa*, a kal preterit) describes God bearing the punishment of sin for us (see Genesis 4:13, Leviticus 5:1, Numbers 5:31).

"You forgave the iniquity of my sin." In other words, "For one year, I was so one with Satan that no air could come between us. It destroyed me physically, emotionally, and psychologically. My sin caused my emotions to rebel, to be angry, and to roar. But You, God, forgave the emotional rebellion that caused my mind to live in the old sin nature. And in Your forgiveness, You bore it instead."

That's how to stop living in denial. The heart is the premise for motivational thinking, the basis for operational behavior, and the supreme center for communication in the inner man. Therefore, when we allow the conviction of the Holy Spirit to begin the process of repentance in the heart, our thoughts and emotions will adjust to truth, and our decisions will be right. God came through beautifully when David finally acknowledged his sins and stopped living in a lie.

He will also come through for us.

Did the Lord wait for us to get right before He made a way for us to come over to His side? No. Did He say, "Now if you get right, I'll guide you, and then you can have a chance to believe"? No. Jesus said, "I'll die for you *before* you believe, and I'll bring you over to my side purely by My grace." Now we can have a ministry of reconciliation with a word of reconciliation that glorifies God and draws men to His side.

Study every category that reveals the Lord's side. Be a steward of grace. Love as Christ loves (John 15:12), and be willing to lay down your life in every situation (1 John 3:16). We need to have the virtue love of grace and forgiveness. Then, be willing to make a stand with the Body of Christ. Recognize that you are a member of His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). That's what it means to be on the Lord's side.

CONCLUSION

To be on the Lord's side, we need to have His priorities. His priority is for us to seek *first* His Kingdom and His righteousness. His priority is for us to hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6) and to have a single eye (Matthew 6:22).

Make it a priority to win the lost. How can a Christian go six months without evangelizing one time, and still think that he is on the Lord's side? That person may be right in many areas of his life, but he is not on God's side when it comes to obeying the Great Commission. If people *can't* go, they can pray.

Make it a priority to be on the Lord's side. Make it a priority to be one with people who bring peace, love, and patience into situations that desperately need reconciliation. May we all have priorities which manifest the sweetness, and spice, and virtue love of God's essence as we walk with God on His side.

Why Did God Create Satan?

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Why did God create the devil? The answer is simple: He didn't!

Yet, why did God, who knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), create Lucifer, the brightest and most beautiful angel, knowing he would become the manifestation of evil? Why did He create the angels that would fall with Lucifer (one third of them, according to Revelation 12:4)? And why would the omniscient God create Adam and Eve, knowing they would fall?

The answer is in Psalm 18:30, which says that God's ways are perfect. He created all things perfectly. In a perfect environment in heaven, however, a prehistoric angelic contest started when Satan (who was Lucifer) rebelled against God. And in a perfect environment on earth, that angelic conflict led to the historic consequences of Adam and Eve's fall.

Often, when we speak with unbelievers about the gospel, we hear questions such as

"Why do children suffer? Why do people get cancer?" Few Christians have very good answers from the Bible. The truth is this:

God has an absolute will for heaven and earth (Psalm 135:6); yet, along with a perfect creation, God gave the gift of free volition—first to the angels and then to mankind.

This booklet will show that because of God's gift, we have a right to self-determination. We have the right to privacy and the power to make choices, decisions, and determinations in every aspect of our lives. If our choices violate the law of God or the law of the land, we have consequences to pay. But on Calvary, the debt for sin was paid in full. Now God has set before us a choice between life and death, blessing and cursing (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Chapter One

VOLITION AND AUTHORITY

With free volition comes tremendous responsibility to make decisions that do not hurt others. Why would God give the angels and the human race free volition if He knew that we would use it to go against Him? There is a very good reason. God isn't interested in being worshipped by robots who are merely going through the motions with a "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5).

On the other hand, who would want to be a puppet, a product of *eggastrimuthos*, one of the demon armies of Satan (Isaiah 8:19)? That Greek word simply refers to someone who voices what comes to them through demons, such as ventriloquists do with their dummies, for example. Few would enjoy being a puppet—subject to someone else who does all the thinking and all the talking.

Satan—who weakened the nations, turned

the world into a wilderness, and destroyed cities (Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:17)—was beautiful until iniquity was found in his heart (Ezekiel 28:15). As Lucifer, the angel who guarded the throne of God, he was deceived by his own beauty and wisdom in the brightness of his reasoning. Through arrogance (which was the original sin), he exalted himself and determined that he would not submit to authority. He was cast out of heaven as "profane" (Ezekiel 28:16), irreverent and defiling the purity of heaven.

On earth, we have legitimate authority which protects our privacy, our personal life, our property, and our happiness. That is the purpose of the government and national entity. But when we submit to God's authority, we receive God's life and are protected from the powerful influence of Satan and his demons. Unfortunately, some Christians act as if they do not believe Satan is working, so they go through hell on earth.

Satan's Prehistoric Attitude

God cannot, will not, has not, and does not coerce a person's free volition. Free volition was God's first gift to the angels and to the human race. Therefore, God does not force His will upon anyone. He has an absolute will, but in His

absolute will, He allows men to exercise *their* will.

Satan took his prehistoric mental attitude of arrogance and rebellion to earth. "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," Jesus said in Luke 10:18. And when he fell, Satan fell to the earth.

The devil, the father of lies, was here when Adam and Eve were perfect, and he disguised himself as a serpent (see Genesis 3). "You shall not surely die," he told Eve, about eating fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. "God never said you would die! When you eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, your eyes will be opened and you will be as gods, knowing good and evil."

The Blame Game

Eve looked and saw that the tree was pleasant for food, good to eat, and desirable to give her wisdom. She took it and then gave it to Adam. Their eyes were opened, and they saw that they were naked. Self-conscious for the first time and wanting to cover their nakedness, they sewed together fig leaves as aprons.

Later, "in the cool of the day" (late afternoon), the Lord came to teach them doctrine as He did

regularly.

"Where art thou?" God asked.

"I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

Then came those questions: "Why did you do it, Eve?" She blamed the serpent, and God said, "Satan you are cursed. You are cursed above all the beasts of the field and you shall forever crawl on your belly in the dust.

"Why did you do it, Adam?" Of course, just as so many men do today, he told God it was because of Eve, "the wife *You* gave to me!" You may laugh, but that is a true story. In fact, the entire chapter of Genesis 3 is very real and pertinent for today. The evidence remains: Eve was cursed with pain in childbirth, and women still have pain when they deliver children. Also, men still labor by the sweat of their brow, battling the ground that brings forth its problems—droughts, thorns, and thistles.

Chapter Two

COSMIC INFLUENCES

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:12-14).

God did not create the devil. He created Lucifer, the star of the morning, a beautiful creature filled with wisdom who was the guardian of worship and the teacher of doctrine to the angels of heaven. But by his volition, in his amazing beauty and wisdom, Lucifer said "I will…" five times. His desire was to rise up to be as the Most High. What's more, he was able to convince one third of the angels to take his side against God.

Today, the entire world system is under Satan's influence (1 John 5:19). He has established a cosmic system of philosophy that has spread through Ivy League colleges and into many high schools. It is a philosophy of religious humanism, made by man, for man, to deify man, and to remove God from our consciousness. This philosophy also mixes, twists, and distorts the Scriptures. It brings in music that discredits God and distorts the emotions of young people, as it brings negative vibrations of demons into the world. Satan's system takes away the amazing beauty of the family and the sacredness of marriage. He is able to accomplish this through wrong choices people make with their free will that was given by God.

We live in a very dangerous world. The god of the entire world is Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4*a*). He is the prince of the power of the air, and he is the one who deceives the minds of everyone who has bought into his lie.

From Antagonist to Accuser

First, the devil causes people to become antagonistic toward God's plan, God's purpose, His ways, and His nature. But most of all, Satan hates God's Word and is antagonistic toward it.

Those who follow Satan mock God's Word and put it behind their backs.

The world is filled with very real spirits of antagonism, arrogance, and deceitfulness. That is why the Lord Jesus Christ came down to earth in His incarnation. In His hypostatic union, He was both God and man at once. Though He was Deity, He came as a man to take on Satan with His humanity. Tempted in His humanity by Satan, Jesus overcame him. How? He lived by every word of God (Matthew 4:4). Jesus Christ came as a man in the weakness of human flesh, but without sin. He was the prototype for every child of God who will ever live.

Today, Satan stirs up accusations against God whenever God allows men to reap the consequences of natural choices. For example, some women who were impure before marriage cannot enjoy sex with their husband. Satan has degraded them based upon their defilement in the past. Ezekiel 28:18 says the devil defiles the sanctuaries by the multitude of his iniquities.

It is vital, though, for everyone who has received those accusations to hear what God has to say on the subject. The moment we believed and received Christ as our Saviour, we became absolutely clean, purified by faith (Acts 15:9).

Regardless of any woman's background, when she believes, she becomes just as pure as a virgin. If the husband has been down the road of promiscuity, he can believe and become absolutely pure. Still, Satan tries to keep men and women from accepting their true liberation and freedom by causing them to live in the "truth" about the past, which is a lie according to the Finished Work.

"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.

"Again, I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry" (Jeremiah 31:3-4).

Israel was worshipping idols when God called her a "virgin." He saw her in His Finished Work and His grace in the process of her transition and in the process of her changing.

Hell's Four-Step Program

Satan, on the other hand, comes in and offers mankind four "gifts" to lure us into his scheme to attack God: arrogance as a defense mecha-

nism; human viewpoint, so men go their own way (Isaiah 53:6); psychological living through the soul instead of the human spirit, without God and God's truth; and private interpretation of the Bible according to feelings and emotions.

Satan goes around seeking those who are not living in resurrection power, whose minds have not been crucified with Christ. These people he can devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Because he cannot possess any believer, Satan uses demonic influences to cause demonic obsessions (Ephesians 2:1-2). He comes in with counterfeit Christianity through self-righteousness. He establishes false standards that are not God's standards at all.

Satan hates the grace of God! He despises forgiveness; he rejects reconciliation; he refuses the principle of restoration. He is against the believer having peace, and he doesn't want us to be able to execute the authority of God's love or the authority of a Finished Work provision by Jesus Christ. But remember the gift! Through our free volition, we have both the right and the authority to resist the enemy (1 Peter 5:8-9).

It is time for God's people to take authority over Satan. It is time to take authority over his lies (John 8:44). Let's take authority over the way

he assassinates the emotions and attacks the bodies of believers and causes many to become sick through a hundred different demonic causes.

Chapter Three

STAND IN GRACE, CONFESS TRUTH

It is time for God's people to define and discern Satan and his prehistoric ways that were revealed in eternity past. It is time that we define what happened with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. She was completely deceived, and Adam went along with her without resistance.

It is time that we learn to stand in the grace of God and with our mouths confess our victory and Satan's defeat. It is time to start confessing by faith our healing and our victory over sin. It is time to admit that we have power over immorality, power over mental pornography, and power over the deceitfulness of hypocrisy.

Make a stand with God! Stand on His side as God's children in Satan's cosmic world system. Represent Jesus Christ and His Kingdom on earth.

We should wake up every morning and say,

"I am in Christ and Christ is in me." Satan hates the fact that every sin we have ever committed has been paid for forever! Jesus Christ has placed every record of our sins in the depths of the sea, and no one can enter that place (Micah 7:19). If anyone tries to find out those sins, He just says, "Get out of here. You cannot enter. There is no entrance, and that place is forbidden."

Things Satan Hates

Satan calls God unjust because God will not impute sin to us. Yes, God will discipline us. He chastises us to bring peace back into our lives, but He will not impute sin to us (Romans 4:7-8). Oh, Satan despises this fact.

Satan hates the fact that when God forgives, He forgets. He hates that God is patient, waiting for every man to come to repentance through His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering (Romans 2:4), because God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). Satan despises God for not dealing with our sin beyond Redemption.

"You dealt with us by sending me and one third of the angels to hell, without any chance for mercy" the devil accuses God. "You prepared hell for us with an everlasting fire (Matthew 25:41). Yet, You let the human race be-

lieve in Christ as their Savior—just believe—and You justify them while they are ungodly (Romans 4:5)! You set them apart and justify them without works and apart from the Law. It's not fair!"

Satan twists the Scriptures as he argues against God, "You say, 'Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord won't impute sin.' That is what *You* say. That is not justice, and it is not right. That's why I have started religious movements throughout the world, based on a works system with standards of self-righteousness."

Have you ever met someone who is self-righteous? Have you ever been self-righteous? After seeing someone fail, have you ever thought, "I hope he gets it!"? That is a satanic attitude. God wants those who fail, to come back to Him and go on (Proverbs 24:16; Micah 7:7-8).

Give the Battle to God

According to Jude 9, there was a dispute over Moses' body after he died. Michael the archangel would not accuse the devil pertaining to it, but he let the Lord handle it. When God created the angelic host to serve the Trinity, He

maintained order in heaven's government by assigning them positions according to rank. And even though Lucifer had been banished from his position as the chief over all the angels, Michael was still lower than Lucifer in rank, therefore he could not take on the devil. So what did he say? "The Lord rebuke thee."

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves… for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (see Romans 12:19). If your enemy is hungry, feed him. That way, you will heap coals of fire upon his head (see Romans 12:20). In other words, Jesus is saying, "Turn your problems over to Me."

Yet, so often we refuse to trust God in the circumstances we face. A wife tries to fight her husband instead of turning him over to the Lord while she remains with a meek and quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:4). The husband continues to have conflicts with his wife instead of completely turning her over to God.

If we refuse to operate with the mind of Christ, we can't see beyond our problem. Yet, God sees the end from the beginning. Our understanding is limited by time and space, but His ways are past finding out. His plan and His provision are always perfect.

Chapter Four

PUT SATAN ON THE RUN

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

"Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing….

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Peter 3:8-9, 12).

It is difficult to get people to turn things over to God. Of course, to keep order, there must be a table of organization to administrate proper procedures in governments, businesses, schools, and churches. But when it comes to the battles we face, we need to turn them over to Jesus Christ. Don't fight with words. Don't fight with angry countenances. Don't fight because it is

your volitional right. Turn things over to Jesus Christ and let Him do what is absolutely right with His proper authority. He will handle the consequences of choices by allowing whatever is needed to correct the situation.

With self-determination, with the right to protect privacy, property, and sacred happiness, God wants His people to be blessed. He doesn't want us to argue; He doesn't want to see hostility or antagonism toward another brother or sister. He doesn't want arrogance. He wants us to love as brethren, to have good emotions, and to let Him take over and be our spiritual leader and our spiritual head (Ephesians 5:1-2).

Jesus is saying to us, "All power is given to Me on earth and in heaven. I want you to use your volition to accept Satan's defeat. I want you to be free from demonic attacks of diseases. I want you to be totally free of emotional harassment and sublimation. I want you to be able to have the joy of the Lord as your strength. Communicate My life so that Satan will run and flee" (see James 4:7).

God Almighty can control our hearts individually through the Word of God to make Satan flee.

So that the Word of God can operate freely,

people need to confess God's truth about marriage and family. The moment we are saved, we are made as righteous as God is (Galatians 3:22). Nothing can separate us in any way from God's love (Romans 8:35-39). Therefore, go forward with practical obedience to faith and exercise your authority as a child of God and an heir to the riches of His kingdom.

We are not victims: Satan is. We are not the ones who are destined for hell: Satan is. We are not under his feet: Satan is under our feet (Ephesians 1:22-23). The devil doesn't have the Word, which is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). He hates every word of God and is antagonized by Christians who use it. Satan will try anything he can to get rid of those people and their testimonies.

Accept Abundant Life

Christians need to wake up from their spiritual slumbering and begin to walk circumspectly (Romans 13:11; Ephesians 5:15). When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are filled with authority. When we are filled with God's Word, we are filled with the power that makes the devil run—as he did from Jesus in Matthew 4:10 when Christ proclaimed for the third time,

"It is written…."

It is time that we accept the life that is ours—the abundant life, the overflowing life. It is a healthy, healing, wholesome, and positive life. It is a peaceful life in which we go forward and not backward. Even if we fail and do go backward at certain moments, we can still go forward through rebound.

Fear that comes through projections and feelings has no place in the love of God (1 John 4:18). Deuteronomy 28 outlines the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience among God's people, Israel. Several times in Deuteronomy, God commanded his people to "Fear not." Still, except for Joshua and Caleb and those under twenty years of age, the entire nation was kept from entering into the Promised Land because of their unbelief and rebellion against God. His curse contains the Hebrew word *shiggaon* in Deuteronomy 28:28, which means madness. That whole nation was filled with madness because they were arrogant, antagonistic, preoccupied with self, trapped in psychological living. They resorted to human viewpoint in going against the authority of Moses and the Word of God.

We can have a life just as good as we want if

we will just be willing to think right and meditate the right way on the Word of God. If we will relate to the Cross daily, if we will accept the fullness of God's grace and give it out, if we will become subjects in whom the love of God is shed abroad, if we will use our tongues as silver tongues to confess Satan's defeat and our victory, then we will see our enemy as God does: defeated! There may be brief times of testing and trials, but still we have no idea of the authority and power that will be ours if we will simply obey God.

Get Excited! Pray and Believe

Be excited in prayer. Say, "I believe." Say, "I will." Say, "God did it." Go forward. Take some steps to reveal the fact that Resurrection power has healed your body, your mind, your soul, your heart, your family, your business, your marriage, and your potential. Let God heal your emotions so that you won't have to use drugs and you won't need alcohol because you have Jesus instead.

We can give Satan the worst time he has ever had. Let's recognize that he is walking about seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). Say to the devil, "You are a loser! You are not going

to stay around me. I will submit to God and to His authority, and I resist you. James 4:7 says that you have to flee, so get out of here—and I mean it! I have authority over you."

"Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" (Song of Solomon 6:10). This is how God sees His people, always winning victory after victory. We don't have to be people who live in what appears to be a defeat when our faith will overcome in a moment, and God's love will give us communion instantly.

CONCLUSION

God did *not* create Satan. Lucifer had a choice, and he chose to go against God's authority. We also have a choice.

We do not have to ponder the negative when we have everything positive—the Finished Work, Holy Spirit power, and the living Word of God. When we pray, let's believe. When we talk, let's express that we are going forward. Walk in the knowledge that every place the sole of our feet shall touch is ours, just as it was for Joshua (Joshua 1:3).

Satan won't try to devour anyone who makes him look like a weakling and causes him to flee. As Christians, that is what we can do. We have resurrection power in our human spirits that becomes resident in our souls. Let's not stop short of believing! We can demonstrate the Holy Spirit's power and authority in the will of God. The Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us and will quicken our mortal bodies (Ro-

mans 8:11). Meditate on that verse, and let it bring in God's resurrection energy.

Father, we pray that You will heal all manner of illnesses as we recognize Your authority. Heal us from the bondage of Satan and from accusations within that say we are not as good as someone else. Let us enjoy our victory by faith, just as we did at the point of salvation. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Why God Hides Himself

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

A dwelling place for the Lord had been established; King David's beloved son Solomon, obedient to the vision, built the temple. Everything was set in place exactly according to God's specifications. All the vessels, the gold and the silver that had been dedicated for the Lord's service were "put among the treasures of the house of the LORD" (1 Kings 7:51).

At last, came the event all of Israel had waited for. The priests assembled with all of the elders and carried the ark of the covenant into the most holy place in the tabernacle. There, it was set under the wings of the cherubim. But once the staves were withdrawn and the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord. No one could stay, and the priests could not minister because of the cloud, for the *glory* of the Lord filled the place (1 Kings 8:1-11).

"Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he

would dwell in the thick darkness" (1 Kings 8:12).

When we think of 'glory', we usually picture an exceeding brightness. And what is our first response when something very bright appears? Turn on a lamp after several hours in darkness, and the average sighted person will shut his eyes tight. As we become accustomed to the light, we are able to see some of the things that creep around in darkness, scattering to escape the light. But that too causes us to turn away, hoping the evil will just disappear.

This booklet will help us to understand that sometimes God hides so He can stay near in the times when we could not otherwise stand in His presence. As we learn to trust in Him whom we cannot see, God promotes us to greater degrees of glory, vessels fit for a King among the treasures in the Lord's house.

Chapter One

THAT WE WOULD KNOW HIM

"Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?" (Psalms 44:24). Many of us have experienced times when we could say that God is hiding. But it's what we do with those times that makes the difference.

"Why are You hiding Yourself from us, Lord?" the psalmist cried out. "Have You forgotten our affliction? Have You forgotten how our enemies oppress us? Lord, it seems that You really do not care."

Don't cast aspersions upon the psalmist. We have all been there! Oh, we may have been very careful with our words because we know that God is omnipresent. Of course, according to Psalm 139:2, even if we don't say a word we know that He knows our thoughts (which reveal what we would have said if we dared!) afar off.

"LORD,…why hidest thou thy face from

me?" (Psalm 88:14). God deliberately hides Himself in His plan toward believers. It is for us to search the Scriptures to find out why.

First of all, we know that faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not yet seen (Hebrews 11:1). And we know that without faith, it is impossible to please God. Everyone who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Therefore, it is necessary to understand that God has ordained faith for every thought and for every step we take. He has ordained that only faith can please Him.

Forget Not His Benefits

For example, several people I know were going through very lean times—some spiritually, others materially. They were not being blessed the way they wanted to be. Then they prayed, and others prayed for them. They heard the Word of God preached and began to receive blessings. In twelve months, their lives have turned around. But here is an interesting observation. There were actually people among them who didn't recognize what God did for them in that year. Some who saw it have since forgotten

what God did. Yet, they have been totally blessed by God. He met their circumstances with a providential reversal.

Whatever happens, never forget the Lord's benefits toward you (Psalm 68:19, 103:2). Remember, God always honors commitments to the Cross. He honors a man's commitment to Resurrection life, and He always honors a person who practices faithfulness as a good steward of God's mercy.

Be Glad and Give Thanks

As we consider why God hides Himself, thank God that He does!

God always has a provision for His people, "who passing through the valley of Baca [which means weeping] make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools" (Psalms 84:6). But notice the next verse: "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

In the valley of trials, we, the children of God, left there a well. The well was dry, but the rains filled it, and we went from strength to strength in a terrible valley. We were able because God dwells in thick darkness (1 Kings 8:12). Clouds and darkness are round about Him (Psalm 97:2), and He was there in our darkness.

I heard the most beautiful prayer from a blind man who said, "God, I thank you for the *gift* of blindness." He had prayed for healing and attended healing services for several years. But one day he said, "I thank You for this, and I dedicate my handicapped life to glorify Jesus Christ"—a wonderful commitment. He wanted to be healed, but in his case it didn't happen.

Dedicated to God's Purpose

Ralph Montanas along with his wife, Bea, traveled to sing in churches across many states. When visiting our area in Maine, they would stay at our house. I remember when Ralph became blind. He tried everything to be healed. As he traveled across the nation, he told everyone he knew of who prayed for the sick, but his eyesight kept becoming more dim until finally he was blind.

Ralph tells the story of how he beseeched God for a healing. He pleaded with God, and then God said, "Now why don't you dedicate your life as a blind man to Me?" "But," he argued, "I want to always be able to see the faces of my three children!" And God only said, "Will you dedicate your blindness to Me?"

Ralph had a family prayer meeting where he

dedicated his blindness to Jesus Christ. Through his ministry of providing Gospel literature in Braille text, he began to reach hundreds of people. Scores of the blind got saved. He also had a program to teach them the Word and to make disciples of them.

God said, "Because you identified with my suffering, you have a ministry not to hundreds, but to thousands you have led to Jesus Christ." Yet when Ralph Montanas prayed for healing, God hid Himself. At first, he didn't understand, though God was hiding in his darkness.

The Word of God says in Isaiah 50:10, "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the *name* of the LORD, and stay upon his God."

To trust in the 'name' of God means to trust in His character. So that verse is saying that when you walk in darkness and you have no light, trust in the character of God. Let your mind stay upon the character of love, mercy, kindness, longsuffering, and forgiveness—His character that so loves you. Trust in who He is.

Chapter Two

THAT WE WOULD WALK BY FAITH

One reason why God hides Himself is so that we will learn through experience to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Then we can study the character of God in the Holy Spirit's power, and as a result we learn to trust in His character. That glorifies God, and the Bible says in Isaiah 43:7 that we were created to glorify Him.

A woman had waited for years to have her first baby, but at two months old, the baby died suddenly. Screaming in anger, she came to my home. Angry, hurt, and wounded, she didn't want to serve that kind of a God.

But God knew that deep within she was harboring a spirit that didn't know His character. She had a spirit that couldn't walk by faith and wouldn't go from strength to strength in the valley of suffering. God desired to work that out of

her as He worked *His* life in, but she wouldn't draw near and she refused to come to church.

I called her often, but she never returned my calls. After one year, I finally went to her home and said, "Have you let God deal with your infectious heart so He can heal you?" It seemed harsh, yet the Holy Spirit led me to confront the issue directly, with a heart of love.

That woman responded beautifully and with such brokenness. She wept as she began to share some of the sorrow that had caused her to resist God instead of run after Him. The next Sunday, she came back to church and we anointed her and prayed that she would have another baby. She has had three children since then, and they have all been well. It took her fourteen months before she would draw near to God, but she responded by faith, got right with God, and was healed.

"For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness" (Psalms 18:28). God shines a candle on a mind that is in darkness, and by His light, we walk through darkness. The light is the Word of God (Psalm 119:130).

Friends, we are always going to go through something, but we *will* go through it—always.

We will walk *through* darkness.

Testing for Maturity

We read in Job 28:3, "He setteth an end to darkness…"—but what was the darkness for? The verse continues, "…and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death." "Darkness" here refers to the shadows of death—the suffering and the trials—that God allows us to go through to make us aware of how short our life on earth is.

While we think we are living in the shadow of death, the Lord is searching out who is mature. When God sees that we *are* mature and that we will go from faith to faith, trusting His character and love no matter what happens, He gives us a glimpse of the shadow of death.

"He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death" (Job 12:22). Another reason that God hides Himself is so we will discover the deep things of darkness.

What are the deep things of darkness? In the midst of pain, there is a purpose behind the pain. Even in the midst of dying, there is dying grace. Behind whatever God does, there is something that He is going to teach us.

I love the precious verse in Isaiah 45:2-3: "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And *I will give thee the treasures of darkness,* and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel." There are treasures in darkness, and it is there that we learn to trust the Lord.

For Ralph Montanas, the treasures in darkness were the thousands of people who were saved through his ministry. For Amy Carmichael, who continued her ministry to needy young women in India despite an accident that left her bedridden, it was her volumes of devotionals that still minister to Christians in every part of the world today. She understood Numbers 31:23, that if anyone can abide in the fire, let him go through the fire, that he may be purged and helped by the waters of separation. If he cannot go through the fire, put him through the water.

God will put us through whatever we will give Him the right to do in our lives. We are visitors in Satan's world system, and God is saying, "I am taking you through exactly what you *can* go through. I have treasures in darkness and

hidden riches in secret places."

God Has Surnamed Us

According to Isaiah 45:4, "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have *surnamed* thee, though thou hast not known me." Where many people share the same first name, a surname is given to describe more specifically who a person is. Often we think of it as the family name, but it may be a name derived from a personal characteristic or relevant circumstance that identifies the individual. Because of His omniscience, God calls us according to who we are in the Finished Work.

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Genesis 32:28). In other words, God said, "Your name Jacob means 'double-minded one'. But from now on you will be known as Israel, 'a prince with God who has power with men.' You will prevail. Before you know who I am, I have known you and named you."

Of course, if you study Genesis 28 through 35, you see that "Israel" kept going back to being "Jacob," the double-minded hypocrite.

But God never took back His name. He said, "I am adding to you a wonderful name. I will know you not after the flesh but by your new surname. I will gird you, though you have not known Me. It is all by grace. I will bring you through everything that's been going on in your life. When I do, *My name* will be glorified."

As we consider the secret riches, the treasures, think of this: We can measure everything by the unsearchable riches of Christ. No matter what happens in our lives, those unsearchable riches of Ephesians 3:8 should be our standard.

Get to Know God's Name

What do you measure your life by when you are going through a valley? The unsearchable riches of Christ. What do you measure your life by when there is a conflict in your marriage? The unsearchable riches of Christ. How do you do that? Walk by faith and get to know the name of Love, the name of Kindness, the name of Longsuffering, the name of Forgiveness, the name of Mercy. That is God's name, and it reveals His glory. But people who do not walk by faith through darkness will not discover Jesus Christ hiding in the plan of God as a faith provision for everything. I know this from personal

experience.

The measure of your anointing with God today is the measure you have gone through darkness. The measure that you are broken before God is the measure that you were broken because of His love. That brokenness never stops living inside a man who has been broken by God.

A lot of people don't understand broken preachers. The apostle Paul suffered for the Gentiles (Acts 9:16), and he wept day and night for three years (Acts 20:29-32). The Holy Spirit called Jeremiah "The Weeping Prophet." Why did they weep? Because those men had been where God was. They discovered God in darkness, and they discovered that He dwells there!

So beautifully the Bible says that we discover "deep things out of darkness" (Job 12:22). What is it that we discover in darkness? We find that what is real in life is simply Christ in us.

Chapter Three

THAT WE WOULD BE SET APART

God gives "momentum tests" in order to sanctify His people, setting us apart to Himself. Though these tests may include sickness and undeserved suffering, they are often tests of blessings and material prosperity.

Some people cannot handle the momentum tests of blessing because they tend to withdraw from commitment. But anyone who is going to reign with Christ must discipline his life through suffering. In 2 Timothy 2:12, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us."

We need to be taught suffering from the viewpoint of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles. Otherwise, we will never learn to find the treasures of darkness. We will never find hidden riches in secret places, and we will never get to know the name of God nor how to have our mind stayed upon Jesus Christ.

When we are in darkness, we are not in *utter* darkness. According to Psalm 18:28, "For thou wilt light my *candle*: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness." The "candle" represents my human spirit. Though darkness is still my experience, the Holy Spirit causes my candle to shine, bringing light into my darkness.

The next verse says, "For by thee I have run through a *troop*" (Psalms 18:29*a*). Though we see *people* coming against us, God has clearly defined who our enemy is: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the *rulers of the darkness* of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). We can run right through a troop of demons because God enlightens our darkness. He gives us His Word for the moment we are going through. He gives us a revelation of Jesus Christ. And because we know there is a purpose for the situation we are facing, we can run through the troop.

To See the End of Darkness

"He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder" (Psalm 107:14). "He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones

of darkness, and the shadow of death" (Job 28:3).

Thank God for the times when—for whatever reason—you were hurting so much that you couldn't see God and you couldn't feel His presence. Nothing made sense, and yet He took your hand in darkness. You met Him in thick darkness. You met the real Christ there, and He held your hand. You met His love without necessarily being blessed by sight. You met His character, you met His compassion toward you, and you went away with treasures that you discovered in darkness and hidden riches in secret places.

But, God sets an end to darkness. So now, the question is, "When?" He does it when we have glorified Him in the angelic conflict. It is when a person becomes a broken vessel who doesn't rely on the flesh, on pride, on circumstances, or on people. When we come to the place where we simply rely on God, He sets an end to our darkness.

When we, as Christians, enter into this amazing blessing, we enter into really knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as all and in all, intimately, moment by moment. We are richly blessed because we realize that we have been in the furnace with the Fourth Man and that not a single

thing can hurt us (Daniel 3:13-30). In the darkness, we began to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. In the midst of our calamity, the Lord was our stay, and we came out into a "large place" (Psalm 18:19).

To Identify with Others

Now that we have been through darkness, our identification with others is much greater than ever before. We can identify with failure. We can better identify with the sick and the weary, and we begin to enter into intercession for people because of that identification. Everything about us is more spiritual.

We are no longer self-centered; we are Christ-centered. Eventually we may be able to say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust him" (Job 13:15).

The man said, "Lord Jesus, I thank Thee for the gift of blindness! I dedicate my handicap to glorify Your name." He discovered hidden riches. And when that man gets up to speak, you *know* he has been with Jesus Christ. When he just walks into a room, you sense that he has been with God.

The woman I mentioned who lost her first child became a wonderful, broken, precious

woman of God. She found God in her thick darkness. God took her baby home to heaven so that she could find treasures in darkness—so that she could see herself as God sees her.

God Sees, He Knows, He Cares

God tests us. He tests our hearts and our emotions so we can see that He knows what our need is. He knows where we should walk. He knows exactly what we need to go through to become real as we walk by faith and not by sight.

It is an amazing thing to have Jesus Christ personally living in our hearts. It is no longer a religious experience or legalism. No longer do we settle our problems by somebody laying a trip on us, but we settle them with an indwelling Christ.

Deuteronomy 31:17 says that God hides His face from those who refuse to get right with Him, who refuse to get saved. There are times when God hides His face from those who will not come to Him while they are still unclean because of iniquity and sins—and He is the only one who can take care of their filthy garments (Zechariah 3:3-4).

Remember this: God hides Himself so that

we will get to know His character by faith, and faith alone. That is His ultimate purpose. Get to know Him, to be just like Him. Then you will come to Him with praise and thanksgiving on your lips and in your heart. You will come to Him, not because you are hurt but because you have fallen in love with Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Glory is who God is. It is the revelation of His name, His character. Because Moses' face shone with the glory of God, the children of Israel could not look at him, so he covered his face. Wherever impure flesh is around, God must shroud His presence in darkness. It is for our sake, because no man can see God and live.

But the day is coming when we shall see Him face to face. We shall behold Him in all of His glory. "*He setteth an end to darkness….*"

Very soon, we will see the Lamb of God, who is the light of heaven. Until that day, we are being conformed to His very image. And when it seems the darkness will overwhelm you, draw near instead of withdrawing. There are vessels among the treasures in God's house prepared to reveal His glory in the measure that you will receive it.

Wise Words

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

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INTRODUCTION

Skillful communication is such a lost art among people today. It is even very rare among Christians. Knowing exactly what to say and when to say it is so important. In a marriage, skillful communication makes such a difference. We have to understand just what needs to be said to the person we love. Intimacy in the purpose of God is so necessary. Godly love must be exchanged in communication between husbands and wives.

There is a lot of surface communication. You know this type of talk—people saying the same old things just for the sake of saying something. We waste hours saying things that mean so little.

This booklet will reveal that, as believers, we need to communicate deep things from the heart of God to each other. This can happen when the Holy Spirit is allowed to take over our human spirit and the ego of our soul. It is then that we become very thoughtful and skillful in our com-

munication. It is then that we begin to speak only wise words.

Chapter One

TENDERNESS AND MEEKNESS

"David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

"And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

"Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed.

"Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against

thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.

"The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

"As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

"After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.

"The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

"And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

"And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil" (1 Samuel 24:8-17).

Why did David call himself a dead dog and a flea when he was speaking with Saul regarding this incident? Later on, David, now king of Israel, referred to himself as great because God's gentleness had made him great (Psalm 18:35; Psalm 71:21). But here, he was very skillful in his

conversation with a deranged ruler who was bent on destroying him. David was exercising wisdom.

In this business of skillful communication, I know when it is necessary to take my wife's hand and be very sensitive and tender toward her. There is an exchange that goes from my heart to her heart. This love relationship is far from a surface relationship. Our talks aren't centered on what's on TV, or on what bills we owe, or on what we will have for supper. We have communication that goes far deeper.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

"And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:17-18).

This passage reveals the essence of skillful communication. Words from this type of communicator are words of peace, words of joy, and words of wisdom. It makes such a difference when a person relates to another person with spiritual skills to communicate a true heart, true compassion, and true love.

Careful, spiritual initiation draws out a specific, spiritual response. A specific, spiritual re-

sponse brings joy and soundness to our hearts. I believe in learning how to be a good initiator and a good responder. If I can become a good, godly initiator and responder, then I will be someone people love to be around.

The Savior's Identification

If I have a "bad" day, I won't get moody. I will be filled with the Spirit and I will make right choices in the words that I use. I will walk circumspectly and speak to the atmosphere with truth.

Read of how Jesus responded when he went to Bethany after Lazarus had died. In John 11, Jesus wept and groaned in His spirit. He was not living in a surface relationship. The crowd was weeping over their dead friend and brother. And now Jesus was there, weeping in deep identification with their loss.

Jesus was saying, in effect, "I understand what death has done to you. I know how much you miss Lazarus and how sad you are because of what has happened." They watched as He groaned and wept.

That was spiritual communication in the spiritual realm—pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy. This communication and exchange of

wise words is easy to be intreated and full of good fruit. It is without hypocrisy and partiality. It sows in peace and reaps in joy (James 3:17-18).

For young people and older people, for new Christians and longtime Christians, for all people everywhere, it is so important to learn and to exercise spiritual skills with each other.

Chapter Two

RESCUE, RESTORATION, AND EDIFICATION

"And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.

"And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

"And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

"And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

"And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and

eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

"And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

"And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people" (Genesis 14:10-16).

Lot was in trouble, mostly because of his own bad choices. Still, Abraham went out and brought his nephew Lot and Lot's family home. Family matters required a family response. Sure, Abraham could have left Lot in his problems. A man reaps what he sows, and Abraham could have dismissed it all as not being his business.

Abraham made it his business to rescue Lot.

In Jeremiah 31, Israel was in the midst of a massive failure. God spoke through His prophets and communicated many harsh realities toward His people. Yet, read what the Lord said in verse 4 of this chapter: "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry."

God's wise words to Israel focused upon

what she would become and the expected end God ordered for her. He skillfully communicated His heart of love toward His people. That's the great design of God in His wisdom. He always speaks truth in love, and He always loves according to truth.

As men, we would simply see these people as miserable idolaters. Instead, God says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). These folks were far from God's design. Some were worshipping idols under trees that God Himself had made (Ezekiel 6:13). Yet, through the prophet, God spoke wise words full of love and kindness to them.

We can use God's wisdom in this wonderful and precious way ourselves. I know one man who calls me after every sermon I preach, and he always leaves an edifying message. He's been doing this for ten years now. He speaks right from his heart, and it makes my day every time he does it.

This is how husbands and wives should talk to one another. This is how children should communicate to their parents. We should all develop precious communication skills because our days are few upon the earth.

I love to meet someone in the hallway and truly express my appreciation for his life. That's great substance for some people. Unskillful communicators spill milk all over the place, and milk left out in the air too long spoils. But those who are mature use strong meat, and they are able to express stable and sure words that serve to bring discernment to the hearers.

The Substance of Loving Communication

Consider the woman taken in adultery in John 8. Jesus could have spoken something to her that would have torn her down and frustrated her. Instead, He said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." That is a compassionate statement of substance toward a guilty woman. She was guilty. She was feeling much shame. There was great fear that she was about to be stoned to death.

But Jesus gave her God's heart of love. He protected her. He forgave her. He cleansed her. He gave her something she could live on, hope in, and treasure forever—wise words that were substance and truth.

I can remember a little girl in one of my first churches. She had an alcoholic father. One afternoon she went home and made a statement she

had heard in church. “Daddy, will you let me love you just as you are?” He had been drinking and said to her, “No, honey: I am no good.” But she pressed on and said, “Please just let me love you just as you are.”

Well, who do you think came to church for the first time the next Sunday? Daddy and Mommy were there with the little girl. Who went forward at the altar call to receive Christ? Daddy did. Who soon had a glorious baptism? Daddy did. I never had more fun in church than watching that man come forward. I really wanted to just take that little girl and dance her around the whole building.

Loving communication motivated by God got through to that man. He came to see the substance of God’s love. He realized that he didn’t have to change for his daughter to love him, and he found that he didn’t have to change for Christ to love him.

Chapter Three

THE INITIATIONS AND RESPONSES OF CHRIST

"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:4).

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

It is a very precious thing when God's people, in the power of the Spirit, learn how to initiate and respond. Response is so crucial because, as humans, we are so prone to getting in the habit of living in reaction. We easily fall into ruts of exhaustion and tiredness. That is all understandable. Still, it is so much better for us to learn how to stir up the gift that is within us.

Jesus Christ so beautifully initiates to His people. He is so creative with that initiation. When others attack, Jesus initiates. He loves His own until the end (John 13:1). In 1 Corinthians 1, Jesus initiated grace. Thank God for that great, great gift. He initiates peace, but not the peace that the world gives. He makes us the righteousness of God by putting us into Himself (2 Corinthians 5:21).

In our distresses, Jesus hears us and He answers our call. The things we pray, if we believe, we shall receive them. Wise words—words that come from the throne of God—warm our hearts. They are Jesus' initiations and His beautiful responses. A relationship is so alive when there is initiation and response in the power of love, the power of mercy, and the power of identification with others.

Some husbands think their wives are rebellious in their failure to respond. Let me tell you, it is all on the husband. He should pray and communicate to his wife in love and gentleness. He should learn to lay down his life as Christ laid down His life for the Church. A man needs to be creative and learn how to touch his wife's heart. Then, I believe, you will see a beautiful, thoughtful, and sensitive response. She will

begin to build her husband up in what God wants him to be.

Learn to Hear God

All of us so much need to learn more how to hear the voice of God in His initiations. He initiates to us and calls us by name. He leads us in this great way. His initiation is never condemnation or indictment. His initiation is never intimidation.

In Romans 7, we see Paul struggling with his self-image and wrestling with issues about his performance. In Romans 8, God initiates and says, "Paul, there is therefore now no condemnation. You are in Christ Jesus. There is not a thing that can separate you from My love."

Those are wise words from God—wise words that build up and do not tear down.

There isn't anything sweeter in the world than to see someone restored in pure love because of wise words. The pure initiation of love is brought out in confidence. It is so great to discern that there has been a misunderstanding and just embrace someone in the love of God. You really love that person, and you reveal a precious initiation of wise words.

God said, "Who will go for us?" in Isaiah

6:8. The initiation came and the prophet responded, "Here am I; send me."

We are trained by God to respond and initiate—to respond to Him and then initiate to others. God gives us time and His Word so that we can study and develop spiritual skills.

One of the greatest things that can come between administrators, family members, parents, and children is a dialogue of wise words. Dialogue that is filled with purity and peace and gentleness comes from initiations that reveal the heart of God and the mind of Christ. There is nothing better on earth than a believer who engages in conversation that is from above.

CONCLUSION

"In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve" (Jeremiah 50:20).

Oh, how I love this chapter! Go and look for the sins and iniquities of Israel and Judah. They cannot be found. There is no record of them, and in wisdom we should not bring them up.

All of our sins were placed upon the God-Man, Jesus Christ, at Calvary. For me to judge and discuss sins that have already been judged once and for all is just not wisdom. Words spoken about someone's failure are not wise words. God gave His law so that every one of our mouths would be shut (Romans 3:19).

In Song of Solomon, there are verses about the sweetness of the Bridegroom's lips and the sweetness of his mouth. We savor the tongue that speaks the truth in love. We rejoice to hear

speech that is wise. Oh, wise words would do so much to change our relationships. They would be absolutely revolutionized by executing spiritual life and exercising grace and mercy in communication from God.

Words for the Wounded

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour," an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Many people in our society carry unbelievable wounds within. These people are in our families and in our churches. Some know nothing about what is going on inside of them. Others recognize their wounds, but are helpless to change. As a result, their potential to live by faith is paralyzed. They simply do not see the place of influence these wounds give to the world system and to Satan.

There is a real sense of denial among some who are wounded. Even in churches where the Bible is honored and preached as the whole counsel of God, people fail to see the way to be delivered from their wounds. I think it is safe to say that many atrocious crimes are committed by people who have allowed their wounds to control them.

For example, a recent murder case in Florida exposed a nurse at a cosmetic surgery office as the killer. She gave an overdose of painkiller to a 39-year-old patient who had "stolen her boyfriend" when the two women were in high school. That

wound festered for years in that woman, and now someone has died as a result of it. Oh, the things that are derived from wounded people who choose to react to their wounds.

In these pages, we will show how very real wounds are. We cannot diminish their effect in people's lives. Yet, we want to understand from the Scriptures how people can get beyond deep feelings of hurt and enjoy a tremendous, joyful relationship with Christ and His people.

Chapter One

THE DISEASE OF SIN

"And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

"And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and what-

soever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

"And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:30-37).

"For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me" (Psalm 109:22).

"My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness" (Psalm 38:5).

Psalm 38 speaks of stinking wounds. These wounds began to fester because of foolishness. Wrong, corrupt decisions cause us to smell. The wounds are out there, and many are wounded, but they do not know why.

We know that John 3:16 says that God loves everyone in the world right where we are. Furthermore, the Lord understands that every one of us is wounded—but He died for those wounds. He took the wounds upon Himself at the Cross. *He* was wounded. Why? It was for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5).

Mentally, every person is the world is somehow diseased because of the Fall. In the Garden of Eden, Satan tempted Adam and Eve into making the wrong decision, and every man and woman has been infected ever since. All hearts

are deceived and desperately wicked (see Jeremiah 17:9). Our heads are sick and our hearts are weak (see Isaiah 1:5).

In Psalm 51:5, David wrote that he was "conceived in sin." Sin is part of being human. It is passed down. We have all seen little children become selfish and tell lies at very early ages. No one had to teach them how. It is because sin dwells in our mortal bodies.

Some people may seem to be very good, humanly speaking. They do the best that they can. Yet, the entire world system lies under the sway of the wicked one.

Satan's desire is destruction. Choices have consequences, and boy does he know it! More than destroy a marriage or family, Satan would like to see corruption spread like crazy. We see this in the story of Abraham and Hagar (Genesis 16). Sarah was barren, so she made a suggestion. "Take my maid and let us raise children through her," Sarah said. This bad idea produced a bad result from the start. Hagar conceived and she almost at once despised Sarah. Ishmael, the boy born from the union, is the father of many nations, and almost all of them have given Israel trouble over the centuries.

For the devil, the issue was not Abraham's one encounter with Hagar. It was a matter of multiplying a group of people who could come

against God's people.

The Lingering Effects of Sin

In Genesis 19, we read an awful story. After being delivered from the depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's daughters made their father drunk on consecutive nights, and each of them slept with him. In the end, both daughters gave birth, and two nations, both enemies of Israel, came from those terrible affairs. Read through the Bible and make note of the trouble that was brought on by the Moabites and the Ammonites.

We mistakenly think that we can sin and that it simply hurts us and our relationship with God. But the truth is that our sin finds us out, and through living in our wounds we infect many others. The only solution for us is to come to the One who is true, according to 1 John 5:20. It changes everything. He gives us eternal life. We become a part of the One who is whole, the One who is perfect, the One who gave Himself up for us and for our failures.

We make our confession to God and He heals us, and then we can start living according to His way and His purpose. This makes such a difference for us.

Chapter Two

RISING ABOVE THE STROKES

"Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them" (Job 24:12).

"Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound" (Isaiah 30:26).

Thousands of people, including many in churches across the world, are smiling, but they are covering up terrible wounds. They have deep hurts, and there are things that they feel so troubled by, but they cannot speak about them. I know of people who suffered great abuse when they were younger. It is a terrible, terrible thing.

What often happens is that these people will internalize what happened to them. When the wounds are opened up on the inside, only God can do the work that will heal them. If left unresolved, their wounds can lead to a real mistrust

of an authority figure. One woman I counseled was molested at a very young age. Later, she became a Christian and married a wonderful man, but she could not receive from him. Nearly every man she knew made her uneasy.

Happily, I can say she is healthy today. The Word of God and much prayer healed the strokes of the wounds in her soul (Isaiah 30:26).

Those paralyzing strokes freeze the capacities of many to follow God. A young boy came to my office. He was in our Christian day school, and he had been quite rebellious. After several minutes, the stroke of the wound that was prompting his misbehavior was revealed, and he just wept and wept.

He hated his father. The man left the boy's mother without a word and ran away with another woman. He didn't call and didn't write and didn't support the family. The boy entered into a pattern of hatred that he transferred to every authority figure in his life, starting with the teachers and administrators at the school.

He was deeply wounded, and we helped him through that time. He has been getting love and attention and constant counsel from the Bible. Things are happening in his life.

"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3)

Pour the Oil and Bind the Wounds

The story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30 speaks of how we can help the wounded. A man was going from Jerusalem (the name of that city means peace) to Jericho (which represents decay, ruin, and rebellion). Halfway to Jericho, the man was robbed and left half-dead. Physically, he was alive, but spiritually he was dead.

Three kinds of people went by this man. The priest went by. He was bound by his religious duties. He had an appointment and had to get where he was going, and he moved to other side of road, passing by the beaten man. A Levite, representing the works of the Law, came upon him and he, too, passed by on the other side. Then "a certain Samaritan" came and had compassion on the man, binding his wounds and pouring in the oil and the wine. The Samaritan picked up the man, put him on his beast and set the injured man up in an inn.

This is a picture of the way Jesus Christ wants us to help those who have suffered under strokes and wounds. We cannot avoid them. They need our love and our help. We give grace and help these folks to develop new identities in Christ.

In Baltimore City, we have tremendous number of single-parent homes, and the majority are run by mothers. Now, God is in all things and

He can redeem any situation. Yet, many of the young men in those homes have great identity problems because of the missing relationship that they desire. They want to know their fathers, but sadly so many never find out who their real father is.

The government's answer has been to give out money and housing. Surely, there are those who really need a hand, and those who really need money ought to get it. But this won't heal the trouble that is on the inside. They need the words of God. His words will comfort the wounded. Counselors and social workers say many things and do much good for these struggling families. Still, unless the love of God is given, in season and out of season, those wounds will fester and spread.

The love of God and the power of Jesus Christ revealed in a compassionate local assembly can do wonders. That's right. I am saying that these people need church. They need a fellowship where love is the rule. They all need a place where they can come and be built up and edified. God then can lift these folks above their wounds and their strokes and teach them to set their affections on Him and on the things that are above.

Just plain love from God can do wonders.

Chapter Three

BECOME A GOOD FORGETTER

Identity crises are very real for some people. People really long to know who they are. It is bad to have an identity that is tied to any relationship. When something happens to the relationship, then the identity is stricken and paralyzed. Identities that are not resting in a healthy relationship with Jesus Christ are very open to difficulty. Attachments and extensions seem to help some folks with their identities, but those things lack any true connections to what is real. Many people may come around a person who is handsome and well accepted. Yet, that identity is on very shaky ground. Those good looks and good feelings are sure to go someday.

Love Makes a Difference

Our identities must come through the love of God. We must recognize every day what His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension mean to us. Jesus Christ speaks to each of us and says, "I love you, I will heal your strokes and your

wounds, and I will restore you to good spiritual health."

I want us to understand why the Bible says that Jesus Christ came to heal the broken hearted. In Ezekiel, the Lord had words for the prophets who did speak words of healing to the people of God. We need to have healing ministries—and I am not talking about ministries such as we see on television. I am talking about ministries in which the Word is preached and the hearer is healed through the deep calling unto the deep (Psalm 42:7).

In the deep places, healing comes through love. In these places, healing comes because of compassion. In these places, healing comes because there is real care being given. Notes are sent. Calls are made. Letters are written. People are met right where they are.

There is a thief. Satan wants to rob and kill and destroy. But Jesus Christ came to give us life. We can have abundant life. He forgives us totally and completely. The eternal life that He gives us is a life that has no beginning and no ending.

God gives us precious lives that can be filled with the Holy Spirit. By His grace, we don't have to remember so many of the bad things that have happened to us. I heard one country preacher say that some people need to "fix their forgetters."

The Lord can do that, and, really, only He can

make you a forgetter, in the good sense of the word. The things that have pierced and hurt you can be healed. It is a promise from heaven. The strokes that linger in your unconscious mind can be erased as you receive the love of God and the Word in power.

These lingering troubles are dangerous, and we all need to let God do a deep work inside of us to heal old wounds. Perhaps you have recognized that something isn't quite right in your heart. At times, you fly off the handle. You find that you cannot govern your behavior. Your decisions just veer the wrong way. Your self-image is fractured, cracked in some place. Therefore, your responses are sometimes out of order at best. At their worst, your responses may just be downright violent.

Let Him Have the Lost Areas of Your Life

Jesus said in Luke 19:10 that He came to seek and to save the lost. Let Him heal you. Let Him draw back that lost part of your self. He doesn't want you to be constantly occupied with some bad habit that has plagued you for years. He will give you victory over those psychosomatic details that are trapped in your unconscious mind. He can break your bondage to certain sins that are really the outworking of past wounds.

Yes, certain things are the result of just plain

wrong decisions. Things can happen and things can be said when we hang around with the wrong crowd—the worldly crowd, the gossipy crowd.

Jesus Christ has come to deliver us from all of those problems. Don't be trapped in the game of blaming yourself and keeping yourself in chains. Let God release you. Hear His Word and be free. He came that we might have life more abundantly. God's healing will penetrate into the three parts of your mind—the conscious, the subconscious, and the unconscious. In the area of volition, the Lord can train you to reign with Him and make right choices that line up with His Word.

He can heal you right now and He can keep you healed. These are the words that wounded souls need to hear. Hear them and let God make you whole and complete and well.

CONCLUSION

"Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

"My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

"They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

"The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

"The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD" (Lamentations 3:19-26).

These words come to us from Jeremiah. He was a faithful prophet in a very desperate time in Israel. Still, he spoke the truth in love. Jeremiah's Lamentations are just that. He was recalling the downfall of what was once the greatest,

most blessed nation on earth. Now, he sees that soon Israel will be desolate and in captivity to its enemies.

But Jeremiah knew something that we all need to know: God's mercies are new every morning. His compassions will not fail. All of my wounds, and all of the strokes that develop from those wounds, can be healed once and for all by the Word that was sent to us. The Lord is the portion of my life. The problems of the past, the dilemmas of the present, the fears of the future—none of these have to fester and stink within my heart.

God is our life. Jesus calls us to come to Him every morning. We can run to His arms and find absolute safety. No one can touch us there. "Come," He said in Matthew 11:28-30. "You are weighed down and surrounded by cares." Of course we are this way. It is a part of being human. The diseases and distractions of life have been handed down to us, and we do have wounds that need God's balm. We need to let Him pour the healing oil upon us and bind up our broken hearts.

Run to Him. If you sense that that an old wound is opening up again, run to Him. He will make you prosper as your soul prospers. Don't take an afternoon off from fellowshipping with Him. Go to Jesus. Don't take a morning off. Run

to Him. Don't vegetate in front of the TV in the evenings. Go to the Lord and to His Word. It is God who heals you.

Let Him give you His love, His grace, His forgiveness, His joy, His peace, and His miracles. The miracle of God's love will do a deep and real work that you can live in forever.

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Words of Power

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour", an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the real problems we have as Christians is that we do not realize how much time it takes for us to gain ground. This happens to be true even when we are very honest and objective.

We know what we believe. We believe in the sovereignty of God. This means that we believe that godly people can get sick and still have just as much faith as another believer who gets healed. Paul wrote to Timothy this statement: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Godly people experience trials. We also know from Luke 4:18 that Jesus declared that He came to heal the brokenhearted, deliver the captives, bring sight to the blind, and take the Gospel to the poor. Christ set at liberty those who were hurting and bruised. He healed the sick. He cast out demons from many people. In Mark 1:27, unclean spirits had to obey Jesus.

Others were given this power as well. Jesus gave His disciples power to heal the sick (Matthew 10:1). He gave them authority over all demons and power to cure diseases (Luke 9:1).

The purpose of this booklet is to reveal the power that we have been given from the Lord. Much is made in the world about authority. In these pages, we shall examine the words of power God has committed unto us for deliverance, for victory, and for transformation.

Chapter One
SUBDUE SUBJECTIVITY

There is something that I have learned over my years as a pastor: certain people are never going to overcome their subjectivity. For some, it is really a religious exercise. A subjective person takes a piece of something and exaggerates its importance. Now, God certainly equipped all of us with a measure of subjectivity. Yet, some magnify the subjective—the part—far above the objective, or the whole, the sum of all things. Therefore, unhealthy subjective attachments are developed, attachments God never intended to exist among His people or with Him.

True subjective faith comes from an understanding of sovereignty, which means we recognize that God will do anything He wants in different situations. In other words, He doesn't do things the same way every time.

"And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the build-

ers rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

"Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

"And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

"And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor" (Luke 20:16-20).

At times, according to this passage, righteous people are delivered over in the power of Satan's system as it moves in human government. This can happen for reasons of persecution and attack, and it can happen to Christians when they do not purpose to guard their hearts. Those in the latter category are believers who do not internalize the Book, the Word of God.

Satan really wants to bind up believers and keep them in terrible bondage. Saul (who later became the apostle Paul after an encounter with Jesus) bound up believers. He was given amazing authority to persecute God's people. For a

season, during the Great Tribulation, Satan's government will have authority and will attack all things that pertain to God (see Revelation 13).

The pressure that comes from these persecutions can cause believers to faint. Demas is said to have forsaken the will of God for the things of the world (2 Timothy 4:10).

Power Trips

John, the old gentleman apostle, the one whom Jesus loved, makes reference to Diotrophes in 3 John. This man wanted more than what God had already given him, and he was causing difficulties in the church.

"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

"Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church" (3 John 9-10).

Diotrophes had a problem with power and control. It was not enough for him to have the position of pastor in his church. He wanted John's power and authority. He was not content,

and he discouraged the brethren. It is always a dangerous situation when subjective people take on a measure of authority.

In Matthew 20, Jesus speaks of how the Gentiles exercise authority and rule. But He then says this: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

"But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

"And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:25-27).

In God's economy, those who want to be great must learn to be the servants of all.

Chapter Two

THE WORD: THE SOURCE OF ALL AUTHORITY

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

"And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

"And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

"The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

" For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

"When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I

have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matthew 8:5-10).

"Speak the word only" is a powerful statement for us. This centurion, this Roman soldier, understood something about the power of a command. Jesus took note and commended his great faith.

Three Important Words

The Gospels include three important Greek words that Jesus constantly used in reference to power. These words are exousia, dunamis, and megaleiotes. In Matthew 9:6, Jesus said, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." "Power" in this verse is exousia, which speaks of capacity and delegated influence. This same word appears in Matthew 10:1 and Mark 3:15 when Jesus sends out the disciples with exousia, power to heal diseases and sicknesses.

First Corinthians 11:10 tells us that women have exousia, or capacity and influence, when they take care to submit to their husbands as it is fit in the Lord. Women who take heed how they hear, who come under the authority of the Word

of God and the godly leadership of godly men ,are women of great influence. They are vital to the furtherance of the Gospel.

The same capacity and influence is given to any believer who hears from God and answers his call to serve in a particular local church under a pastor-teacher. I am little tired of hearing that this power and capacity belonged only to the apostles. What of Stephen? He was a deacon, and yet Acts 6:8 says that he had exousia. He was full of faith, and God used him to demonstrate many signs and wonders.

The Power to Stand

In Luke 9:1, the power referred to is dunamis, the power of force and abundance. Here, Jesus is telling the apostles that they have power over devils and diseases. This kind of power is especially important to individual believers, as we see in 1 Corinthians 7:37: "He that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will."

Steadfastness of heart in the hearing of doctrine gives me dunamis. I have abundance from God combined with the force of my will, meaning that I can choose to resist the devil. With this power, I don't have to allow myself to be influ-

enced in the areas of pornography and promiscuity.

The Lord Alone Is Mighty

Megaleiotes is the last word for power that we will look at. It is found in three places in the New Testament:

"And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God" (Luke 9:43a).

"So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth" (Acts 19:27).

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16).

This Greek word was used to express magnificence and majesty. Megaleiotes referred to something bigger in scope and authority; it spoke of a perception and reality that went beyond the natural.

By His divine power, a power that exists so far beyond our natural frame of reference, Jesus

Christ has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. This is the magnificent truth of His majesty. Our King of kings and our Lord of lords has equipped us to live and to succeed in the purpose that He has called us into.

Chapter Three

THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF GOD'S POWER

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

"And hath put all things under his feet, and

gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

"Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:17-22).

We are to live in the epistles, the Scriptures, the oracles of God moment by moment. In these we find the exceeding greatness of His power. We see the words of power that speak to our forgiveness, to Satan's defeat, to saving souls, and to our healing.

The Word of God gives us a supernatural inherent ability; it supplies capacity and wholeness for us. No matter what kind of day I may be having, the energy of God's impartation is at work in me. These kinds of power are available.

Dwell on these realities and not on the way your mother or your father treated you. Dwell on these realities and stop deriving your identity from your job or your employer.

The whole secret to succeeding in this thing we call life is to recognize that God has given us words of power.

What is keeping us from victory?

Is it fear? Is it insecurity? Is it past experiences?

Perhaps the problem is that people just haven't had enough communion with the Lord

in meditation.

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah" (Psalm 68:19-20).

"He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

"Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

"And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing" (Psalm 107:20-22).

Live in His Benefits

The Scriptures were given for our healing. It is not through screaming and jumping up and down for two hours that people are healed. The Word does the work. The Word carries the power of God. He sent the Word to heal.

He daily loads His people with benefits. Daily benefits simply involve taking what God gives you and releasing it. He supplies. He satisfies. He freely gives us all things.

The Lord knows our frame. His expectations of us are not unrealistic. He considers those who fear Him and He provides for them.

The great problem for some people is just that they do not have their minds stayed on Him. Therefore, they do not have perfect peace and the strength that comes from Him (see Psalm 26:3).

When our minds are stayed upon God, there comes a great release. The power of the Word and the power of the Spirit bring deliverance and transformation.

CONCLUSION

It is extremely crucial that we understand that the power within us does not work unless it is in us through the Word of God. We have to exercise faith and submit to Christ in order to use this great power.

If you arrived home today and saw that all of your lights were out and noticed that you refrigerator wasn't running, your first thought would be power outage. Some people, I suppose, go home and sit in the dark and do not turn on the appliances that are available to them. They are people who choose not to use the power that is provided for their benefit.

It is the same with many Christians who remain stuck in different situations. The power and the words of power are available to them. The abundance and capacity of our majestic Lord is ready to magnify His Word and lift them up. All they need do is exercise faith.

Our God supplies all of our needs according

to His riches in glory. He loads us with benefits (Psalm 68:19)! So, let us be people who freely receive all that the Lord provides.

Your Capacity and God's Ability

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ came to earth and finished the work of redemption so we might have life that is more abundant. Our whole purpose is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to glorify God.

Soul winning and serving one another were meant to be outward expressions of abundant life working in us. It is simply a matter of working out what He is working in, until we become testimonies of His grace and love.

This booklet will show that eternal salvation is worked in us, but we work out our salvation when we actively believe and receive from God. We have a capacity to become salt and light to a hurting and dark world when we experience, express, and reveal the life of the Word through God's ability.

Chapter One

KEEPING DIVINE APPOINTMENTS

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13).

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul sets forth the im-

portant principle of obeying God in the absence of the pastor. It is most commendable when a congregation will attend church faithfully and will pray and honor the local assembly in every realm. But it is even more commendable when we obey God from the heart when we are all alone with no one watching us. Then Paul proposes an interesting topic that has often been misunderstood among Christians: "…work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

How can we "work out" our own salvation? Jesus Christ describes this process in one of the most practical provisions that the true child of God can experience. In Hebrews 12:1-2, He says: I am the Author of your faith." God tells us, "You didn't start the work that is being done in you—I did. And you will do absolutely nothing to finish it. I am the Finisher." Still, the key is to 'work it out'.

To "work out" your salvation means to believe it so much that it is manifested in and through you. You reveal godly confidence, peace, and boldness because of the Finished Work. In John 6:28 and 29, Jesus says "This is the work of God…that you believe." Believing the truth comes first.

"Work out your own salvation…." No one

can work out his own salvation, in terms of performing good works. No one is ever going to work out what he has heard from the Word and make it "happen" by his own efforts. The great truth is that we have to believe when we receive the truth until it becomes integrated and internalized. We have truly believed when a specific truth is used, experienced, expressed, and revealed in our lives. This is what it means to "work out" our salvation.

Accountability to the Pulpit

The pastor's responsibility in preaching the Word of God is to stick with that theme, doctrine, or truth until it has been worked out of the believer. It must be integrated in our souls as we internalize divine truth. There is no benefit in hearing even the best of messages unless that message is imparted and then worked out through the Word of life and the Holy Spirit.

Whatever the pastor preaches combined with your own vertical relationship with God is what God is working into you. The message that is preached in the assembly where you are called is the message God wants to work into you. Both the pastor and the congregation will be accountable for the messages, because that is what

God wants to work into them.

What is presented from the pulpit is not just a sermon. It is not just another church service. It goes far, far beyond that. That is why church attendance three times a week is so vital. I am dogmatic about that, because I have to introduce you by name to Jesus Christ, before you go in alone to the Bema Seat. I will be held accountable before God for preaching the whole truth. It is the same for any pastor with his congregation. Every pastor must realize that he will have to give an account of his people according to Hebrews 13:17. We should never be indifferent about faithful attendance.

Some people react to a message that is convicting, because they do not like the preciseness of the whole counsel of God. Grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. Sometimes grace teaches us what not to do—a 'negative' message. The positive result is that we then can live filled with the Word of God in this present evil world.

The most spiritual Christians in this universe are those who obey the Word because they love God—even when no one else takes notice.

Recently while soul-winning, we arrived at a building where loud rock music was playing. When we knocked on the door where the music was coming from, a lady answered.

I said, "What's your name?"

"Angel," she said.

"Nice to meet you," I said.

Then, as we slowly presented the Word of God to her, I began to weep. Tears came down my cheeks. I told her about grace, how salvation was a free gift—I presented the whole plan of salvation. Then, I asked, "Would you like to accept Jesus?" And she said, "Oh, yes." We all knelt down with her, and she received Jesus Christ as her Savior. That was a divine appointment.

You never know what is behind a closed door. By going there, we were working out what the Great Commission has worked in us. It is very simple. A pastor shared the Great Commission with me years ago, and that doctrine was worked into me. Although he was just a man, he was used by God to work that in me. Today, our ministry is the result of working out what God has worked in.

Chapter Two

THE KEY TO PEACE: ACQUAINT THYSELF WITH HIM

In marriages, families, and friendships in a godly ministry, problems continue because doctrines that were presented from the pulpit are not received by faith and then immediately worked out. God is the Author and Finisher of our faith. We cannot finish it, and we cannot live up to His demands. But we can become what He wants us to be. We can grow in grace and knowledge of Him. He must do the perfecting.

According to Psalm 17:15, when we finally awake in heaven, we will finally be satisfied because we will be like Him. Full satisfaction will never come to us until we get to be with Him.

Job 22:21 says, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee."

"Acquaint" actually means this: Be absolutely on the road to knowing Him as an inti-

mate friend, not just as an acquaintance.

God says, "If you know Me, you will be at peace, and divine good will come to you." Divine good cannot come to me if I do not have peace, and peace cannot come to me if I don't really know Him intimately in my walk.

Peace Makers, Grace Givers

Consider the following passages:

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto [God]: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

"Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

"Be not overcome with evil [(infection)], but overcome evil [(infection)] with [divine] good" (see Romans 12:18-21).

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

"And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

A peacemaker is a grace taker; and a grace

taker becomes a grace giver. Galatians 6:10 says, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

These scriptures have become guidelines for dealing with other people. I have used them throughout my ministry. When a problem arises, I just pray and pray and pray and give grace in the situation as much as I can. I am not bringing this up to praise myself, but to praise the Word for its clarity. Instead of letting those problems with people overcome me, I overcame them with divine good through grace.

Quieting Your Enemies

Here is the key. Good has come to me because of the peace promised in Job 22:21. When dealing with a problem, it is best to consider Proverbs 16:7: "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

I read that passage one time when I was going through a lot of private, emotional pain. I realized that the issue was not my problems. The key to peace was to see that my ways please God. So if I make sure all my ways please God, I will have peace in spite of problems. Even my

enemies will be at peace with me.

Proverbs 15:1 says that a soft answer turns away wrath. God says you can still give an answer, and you can still tell the truth. But pause and do it softly, in love, without raising your voice, and that will turn away the wrath.

By His Word, God is giving us a supernatural way of life. In business, in marriage, and in whatever we are called to, God is giving us a Cross philosophy, a resurrected life psychology. He has given us the face of faith, a head crowned with grace, a mind crowned with mercy, and speech crowned with silver.

Now, we work it all out, and this is how: As soon as we hear doctrine, we obey it, as it says in Psalm 18:44. This means the truth is received and believed so deeply that it is ready to be revealed in us immediately, whenever and wherever it is needed.

Chapter Three
SALVAGED FOR SUCCESS

Do you know what revival is? Revival is this message in practice: God's provision in process, men's obedience in spontaneity. God's Word in life, God's Spirit in power, and God's plan in our purpose—that is revival.

God works His character into each Christian as we work out our salvation. The word salvation means to be salvaged from something. So while salvation is eternal, the salvaging comes while God is working. He is constantly doing things in us, even though we have eternal life forever. He is salvaging us from something. We are always being salvaged. Even when we don't fail, we are being salvaged from failure.

To Will and to Do

How do we get salvaged from failure, from problems, and from dilemmas? It happens by working out what God has worked in us. We

keep actively believing what we have received, and it becomes resident in the memory center with residual power through the Holy Spirit. Specific categorical truth is now available for revelation when the plan of God calls for its manifestation. In other words, it is in there, ready to be recalled.

Those who strive in their flesh keep failing. Their problem is that they never let God work in the doctrine that they hear. God cannot work it in because they are not careful how they hear; they are passive listeners. The ears may hear it, but the precise truth never gets into the memory center.*

"Work out your own salvation, My beloved, for it is God that worketh in you." It is God who is working in us, toward our faith, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. What's more, God provides the will to do what He works in me.

Experience Your Faith Potential

Philippians 2:14 says we are to "do all things without murmurings and disputings." "Murmurings" speaks of disputing within yourself the capacity and ability to have something happen. In this case, murmuring isn't referring to

outward murmuring against someone, although it could result in that. It speaks of disputing your own capacity and God's ability. You do not work out your salvation because you have a low spiritual self-image.

As an illustration in a recent Bible College class, I gave two students ten dollars each. It was a gift. What they did with the money was their business. But they both were given the same amount. In the same way, each of us has been given faith from God. What we do with our faith in allowing God to work in and work out His plan is what makes the difference.

We all have the same measure of faith. God gives each of us the gift of faith and tells us that we can do anything we want with it. Each of us has just as much as anyone else in the world. We can either use that faith to do very little or use it so well that God will one day reward us and allow us to reign with Him forever (Matthew 25:14-30).

*Read The Hearing Heart, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.

CONCLUSION

Blameless does not mean faultless. Most assuredly, we are not faultless. None of us are, and we can prove it so quickly. But a person who is born again is blameless. We are blameless because Jesus Christ took the blame Himself by voluntarily taking every sin that we have committed or will commit upon Himself at Calvary. He died as us so we could become as He is, therefore we are blameless.

We are harmless because, as sons of God, we show and manifest the light of obedience by receiving the Word of God in this wicked, crooked, evil world system. We display God's light in the midst of the entire world system, which is totally and completely embedded in and enveloped by darkness (1 John 5:19). And as lights, we must let Him shine.

If we are to be lights while we are God's ambassadors in Satan's world, then we must believe the Word for it to be worked in, to keep it

in, and to work it out. When the Word comes out of our memory, it does no harm to others. Instead, it only serves to reveal Christ and to heal.

God never told us to just speak the truth. He said, "Speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). He said, "Let your speech be seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). "Salt" means "resurrection seasoning." Our speech must be seasoned with resurrection seasoning, and it must be spoken in love. Our lives must be lived inside the kingdom of love, speaking from the source and by the means of the Kingdom of God.

We are not the author of our own salvation, and neither can we finish it. But by God's grace, we must be the means of God revealing His work in us.